

— ROSICRUCIAN —  
BEACON 

March 2018, Vol 28, No. 1





# Find Your Deeper Self

**Y**OU MAY not be an accomplished musician yet, but you could probably become one. You may also not be an accomplished author yet, but equally, you could probably become that too. For within you lies a slumbering genius, a deeper self, eager to help you express your hidden talents with greater refinement and sophistication than you've ever considered possible.


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direction of your life simply by learning how to contact and regularly commune with that deeper self. If you are searching for a way of accomplishing the most fulfilling and rewarding things in life, in a fair and ethical way, then learn from the ineffable wisdom of that inner perfection.

To find out more about the Rosicrucian Order and how it can help you to achieve your most treasured goals, visit our website or contact us for a free copy of our introductory booklet "The Mastery of Life."

[membership@amorc.org.uk](mailto:membership@amorc.org.uk)  
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# ROSICRUCIAN BEACON

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A.M.O.R.C.®

Greenwood Gate, Blackhill,  
Crowborough TN6 1XE  
UNITED KINGDOM

Tel: +44-1892-653197

Fax: +44-1892-667432

Email: info@amorc.org.uk

Web: www.amorc.org.uk

### EDITOR

Bill Anderson

### Design and Layout

Cloud White

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### Cover spread

Spring Symphony  
of the Senses



# Saint Columban

## The Beginnings of Europe's Development

by *Christian Bernard*  
Imperator of *AMORC*

*"Dear God, please awaken me from the lethargy of my indolence; make the Fire of Divine Love burn within me; let the flame of Your Love rise up higher than the stars; may the desire to respond to your infinite gentleness burn inside me, and never cease."*

*-- Saint Columban, 6<sup>th</sup> Century --*

**W**ITHIN the *Ancient and Mystical Order Rosae Crucis* we make reference to all religions, for they are an integral part of the history of our world, this history in itself being inseparable from what in overall terms is known as "The Tradition", which includes Rosicrucianism.

We are often familiar with the history of Christianity and its saints, even if not followers of this particular religious path. Over the centuries, this history has become every bit as much to do with culture as with spiritual matters, and many proverbs and sayings that we use in everyday speech make references to it without





*Megalithic standing-stones Carnac, France.*

our even recalling where they originated. The Bible and other sacred texts are always close to hand, and we come across the faces and lives of those called saints at places and landmarks we visit wherever in the world we go; so widespread are the countries which have been touched by Christianity.

Although non-religious, AMORC is imbued with this Christian culture, as well as with others: for example, reference is made to Saint John in the Traditional Martinist Order. By means of this short article, therefore, I would like to acquaint you with a figure who is less well-known than the saints who are more often mentioned, such as Saint Peter, Saint Joseph, and Saint John the Baptist: this figure is Saint Columban.

In the last few years I had the opportunity when in Brittany, north-west France, to stroll around a picturesque little hamlet by the name of Saint-Colomban (“Saint-Columban” in English), very near to the small town of Carnac which is famous throughout the world for its alignments of megalithic standing-stones. I naturally pondered on this name “Columban”, that of an Irish monk who played an important role in the converting of a number of countries in western Europe, and was also renowned for his humanitarian feats and the vision he had of the unity between peoples. Not being a theologian and having had no in-depth education on the history of Christianity, I had never taken an interest in this religious and historical figure; and yet, although, as I mentioned earlier, he is less well-known than many others in the Church, as a result of what he thought, said and did, he is not only one of the cornerstones of Christianity, but also part of the very foundations of the European mindset.

At a time when the concept of Europe is coming under the spotlight more than ever, with some countries wanting to leave this union of nations while others wish to become part of it, it is worthwhile dwelling on the subject

and approaching it not in strategic or economic terms, but by taking a look at one of its roots.

This great and wonderful principle of unity between peoples is, unfortunately, one that has often been envisioned in a spirit of conquest, and therefore by means of warfare: many have made such attempts, including Julius Caesar, Charlemagne, Emperor Charles V, Napoleon, and others... This utopian concept has also been kept alive, fortunately this time, by means of spirituality and a coming together of minds. In this connection we are familiar with the thoughts and actions, and role of the philosophers – including the part played by the Rosicrucian, Comenius – who worked for a better and more humanistic world, and who “dreamt” of it in a peaceful manner.

One of such people is the man who in his individual way, started the development of Europe: Columban (Columbanus or Columbatlus in Latin). As a true “Messenger of God”, throughout his life he encouraged the uniting of peoples. At this early point in the Middle Ages, often referred to as the Dark Ages, his ideas led to closer relations between the various tribes occupying Gaul at the time, the former Roman colonies, and the new kingdoms created following the invasions of the barbarians, and also brought together the religion of Christ with the pagan religions that were still very active. Columban, who was made a saint some 30 years after his death, thereby made an enormous contribution to the constructing of Europe.

Numbering almost 750 million, we Europeans are spread out across some 50 countries in a continent whose past history, and particularly its recent one, is quite appalling, punctuated as it is with abominable conflicts causing millions of victims; a landmass that is divided up by political frontiers that have been made and unmade through wars that no one wanted, except of course those who had a vested interest, rather than the interest of Europe’s peoples, in them.

And yet over the centuries, there have sprung up many signs of hope. New ideologies have intermingled with the old ones, and little by little built up this union of nations made out of rapid changes, yet also worrying divisions. It is said that “Rome was not built in a day”, so what can be said of Europe? A long road has been travelled and there still remains a long way to go, but if we look back with a fresh perspective, we can see and appreciate what St Columban has contributed to our civilisation and to this project that is not only the Europe of peoples, but also the Europe of minds and spirits – or rather, of “the spirit.”

Dozens of localities throughout the world, large and small, bear the name of St Columban. The respects



paid to him are remarkable, not only across Europe, but also in other countries including the USA, Canada, Australia, Peru, Chile, Japan, China, and others, this being the case because his work went hand in hand with the missionaries over the centuries. Nowadays, his message is still being spread via a number of missions and organisations, and dozens of works have been written about him. I have not read them personally but I know that they exist, and if this subject interests you and you want to know more about his story, you will be able to find these works in whatever language you wish. There is one point I would like to emphasise: not having received a traditional religious education, I am not a specialist on the life of St



*Fresco of Saint Columbanus on a column at Brugnato Cathedral in Italy.*

Columban, or any other saint for that matter; and as I mentioned before, I have not read any of his works; I do not know all about his life and journey or what he did, but initially was simply attracted by his name, and then by the principal idea that radiates from him – namely, the uniting of peoples in cultural sharing and peace.

And so 1400 years ago, one of these innovative

**In the chaos of a divided Europe, he was a beam of light. He put forward a concept that was modern, practical, and redeeming: that of unity and humanism.**

thoughts permeated people's minds and saved a Europe that was in crisis, through the actions and work of a monk from Ireland. Accompanied by 12 disciples, Columban criss-crossed a part of this continent that was being consumed by tribal conflicts. In the chaos of a divided Europe, he was a beam of light. He put forward a concept that was modern, practical, and redeeming: that of unity and humanism. He was convinced that human beings can all get on together and, beyond their differences, live in peace. Most certainly he converted people, but without using weapons or torture, and throughout his life's journey he had no qualms about contradicting or lecturing kings and bishops, and even the Popes that he rubbed shoulders with.

Columban was born into a wealthy family in the year

543, in the province of Aileach in the north-west of Ireland, a land which had now ceased to be a remote, windswept place – quite the reverse, it was a society with a rich culture. It was one of the few western countries not to have been conquered by the Romans. Far away from everywhere, 6<sup>th</sup> Century Ireland still abounded in ancient customs that were often harsh and violent. The Druids, who had been sole rulers there until that time, had gradually given way to Christian thought. It was in this environment of profound change that Columban grew up, in the midst of pagan beliefs and the appeal of the new religion that was coming in. The century in which Columban was born witnessed a radical revolution in a land said to

be primitive and backward. Ireland naturally felt the influence of Rome as well as other civilisations, with recent discoveries revealing that links had been forged not only

**He was convinced that human beings can all get on together and, beyond their differences, live in peace.**

with Gaul but also with the African continent.

Known to be a good-looking young man, Columban turned his thoughts at an early age towards mysticism and the monastic life; an excellent student in numerous fields, his brilliance in science, literature, and geometry made him a fine scholar; at the same time, he nurtured his spirituality, standing out for his piety; and, sensing a deep and genuine vocation, he donned the monk's habit at the age of about 20. His inner quest directed him to enter the Abbey at Bangor, near Belfast, where he led a very austere and devout life.

Columban's mind was a gifted and visionary one, and he was known for his intelligence. He liked the strict, military-style monastic rules: emphasis was put on obedience and



*Bangor Abbey, near Belfast.*





*St Colombano Abbey Bobbio.*

asceticism in his particular monastery, and he was not scared by the harshness of the regulations – quite the opposite, in fact; his monastery appealed to him above all for the teaching he was able to obtain from the manuscripts in its scriptorium.

He was noticed and liked by all, and it was with nothing but regret – at being deprived of his presence and influence on the whole of the community – that its leadership agreed to his request to travel and carry the Christian thought beyond his own country. In the tradition of the travelling monks, Columban felt he had a mission, and had no fear at leaving his monastery, his colleagues, and Ireland, his country.

At this point in the mediaeval period, which in many lands saw the ending of the influence of the Roman Empire and when many peoples were still steeped in the old religions or in primitive and pagan traditions, there was born in Columban's heart another vision of the world, another faith, another concept of nations: he knew deep within himself that all people are one, and that it was possible for these nations to come together.

Strong in this conviction, therefore, he started out on his journey in 580, accompanied by his disciples: he crossed the Irish Sea and traversed England, where he preached his doctrine; having carried out his work there, in around 585 he landed on French shores, in Brittany; he converted

Ancient Gaul with his particularly ground-breaking and innovative ideas, and uncommon strength of spirit.

In an exile from which he never returned, he journeyed throughout the western part of Europe, his little group of travelling monks going among other places to Reims, Rouen, Soissons, and other important sites. He was welcomed and befriended by the King of the Franks, Chlotar II. Columban's reputation was such that the King of Orleans and Burgundy, as well as several bishops, requested him to build monasteries. Wherever he went, it was the same. He appealed for more restraint from kings and churchmen, and openly opposed the Merovingian bishops. At times he put his life in danger, by criticising those in power whose failure to adhere to the rules he had no time for, leading as it too often did to a life of violence and debauchery.

The strength of his persuasive powers opened up frontiers and the gates of palaces to him, and what he said touched the hearts of those who heard it. After Queen Brunehilde had ordered him to leave her lands following a difference of opinion, Columban received permission from Childebert II the King of Austrasia, which was then the eastern part of the kingdom of the Franks, to take up residence for a while in his kingdom, and went as far as the Vosges. Having carried out many good works such as clearing of woods, constructing buildings, educating



the local population, treating the sick, and so on, in 587 Columban founded a monastery within the former castle at the holy site of Annegray, built on top of an old Roman temple at the foot of the Saint-Martin mountain. In 590, he founded a new monastery at Luxeuil on the site of a Christian church erected in the 5<sup>th</sup> Century, near curative natural thermal springs which still exist today. He then built a third monastery, followed by numerous others across the whole of Europe, thereby giving Christianity a firmer foundation; he travelled across several countries, constantly promoting the idea of peace among people and unity between nations.

In the company of his fellow travelling monks and others whose calling he had inspired by his example, he led a life that was contemplative, as well as active in the



*Abbey of St. Colombano, Bobbio.*

**...may we... also find within ourselves the inspiration, energy and determination to create a world that is happier, fairer and more noble.**

service of others and of his faith. Throughout his life, with great conviction, he continued his work of converting. Just as he had during his youth in Ireland, he drew the admiration of those around him who listened to him and believed in him, such was the extent to which his sincerity penetrated people's hearts. His virtues were contagious, and his conduct and that of his companions inspired devoutness, for everyone wanted to follow their example. With his fine understanding of the human soul, Columban was politically very astute and knew how to have a positive influence on those he mixed with: this was why kings and the powerful listened to him, and took his advice. He continued his work, particularly in Germany, Austria, Switzerland, and Italy, right up to his death which is said to have taken place on 21 November 615 at the age of 72 years at Bobbio, where the King of Lombardy had given him some land to set up a monastery on; this was to be his final work, and the last place he lived.

Columban left us numerous writings, which must of course be approached in the context of the age, as well as his religious vocation. It is through his vision of "universality" and his peaceful spirit, a rare thing in his

era, that we should gauge the work and spirit of this man who left his imprint on his times. I have neither the courage nor the desire to live like St Columban, but I admire the selflessness, fortitude, and strength of soul of this traveller and indefatigable builder.

In 1929, there appeared in the Rose-Croix magazine an article by François Jollivet-Castellot entitled "The United States of Europe". Here is a short passage from it:

*"The peoples of Europe today are not so different that they have to cut themselves off or fight one other. Quite the contrary, the core of their*

*concepts and heritage is a shared one, owing to the way that things have evolved in ethnic, economic, and even geographic terms. All interests therefore can, and should, work together to shape a Europe that is united and better, prosperous and peaceful, within which countries and people alike would find security in stability and contentment, at least relatively, in the work undertaken under truly democratic forms of government."*

This vision of the future, inspired by the great tragedy of the World War (1914-1918) that Europe had just undergone, already existed in centuries past in the minds of many men and women, known and unknown, in the form of a hope, a prayer, a natural and instinctive attraction to that which is Good. St Columban was one of these "people of goodwill", with a heart overflowing with kindly and altruistic sentiments.

Just like St Columban and the Rosicrucians of the past, may we, men and women of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, also find within ourselves the inspiration, energy and determination to create a world that is happier, fairer and more noble. So Mote It Be!



*Remains of Columbanus, Bobbio Abbey crypt.*

*Image: Daniela Papadini / Wikipedia*







# LET THERE BE PEACE

by *Laura Kacoutié*

*“Peace manifests externally but begins internally, that is, in the thinking, idealism and mental discipline of each individual. Peace must begin with the individual and work outward.”*

*-- Ralph M Lewis --*

**M**ANY believe that peace must exist on a grand-scale, otherwise it doesn't exist at all. In our search for peace, we may feel a bit overwhelmed in trying to find something that will make the biggest change or have the biggest impact in the world. We want to solve everything at once, and once we realise the immensity of the task ahead we may be tempted to give up before we even start. We find ourselves thinking: *“Is peace in this world really possible? What difference can I really make? I am just one person.”*

By frantically searching for peace outside of ourselves, we forget about the individual roles we have to play. Gandhi, Martin Luther King Jr, Mother Theresa..., we are so used to reciting their names and living in their legacies that we forget that they were once individuals. Yet, it takes an individual with a single thought, a single idea,

and a single belief to inspire change. In this way, peace has a ripple effect, but it must exist in the centre of our beings first before it can spread outwards.

How much do our thoughts, lifestyles and relationships with others align with the peace we are striving for? It takes time and much love to face our inner conflicts and cultivate peace within ourselves. But once we do, our entire being will radiate with such peace and authenticity that others will seek to emulate our actions; and that will draw towards us fellow agents of peace, love and harmony.

As Rosicrucians, our studies provide us with invaluable tools to implement peace. Let us always remember the valuable role we have to play in bringing peace to our immediate surroundings and to the wider world.



# Choice, Challenge & Change

by Dini Jacobs

*The significant problems we face cannot be solved at the same level of thinking we were at when we created them.*

-- Albert Einstein --

**I**N THE universe, everything is related to everything else, and thus we too, as humans, are part of nature itself, related to everything and everybody else. In order to relate well however, we have to learn to understand well. If we want to be understood ourselves, it is imperative that we must first learn to understand our fellow beings, which means learning to listen for feelings, for the real meaning behind the words of another person.

However, just knowing that we have to listen, and even knowing how to listen, is only the beginning. We need to feel an urgent inner desire, an inner challenge, and inner need listen. We must really want to listen and choose to do so with gratitude. Intense, honest listening

can make us aware of what is inside the minds of others. Slowly we can acquire an understanding of how they feel the way they do, why they feel that way and consequently why they react to events in life the way they do. The more deeply you understand others, the more respectful you will feel towards them, for it is almost as if you have been given the privilege of communing with their Soul.

## Change

To improve our relationship with others, we have to change ourselves first. That's pretty obvious. We don't sit down to a formal dinner unless we've washed our hands and dressed appropriately. We can't force others to change;





*That thousand-mile journey begins always with just one step, and you eventually must take that step and continue taking steps, one at a time until the pace picks up and you journey through life starts resembling a summer day's walk through a park.*

in fact it is very difficult to make anyone even faintly understand how lives, theirs and those closest to them, could be transformed in wonderful ways if they would just start the process of appropriate change. So, we look at ourselves first, and understand what it was that made us understand that we needed to change, and only then try to pass that blessing on to others.

And to accomplish change in ourselves, we have to start by changing our perceptions. That means changing our mind patterns, the fundamental fabric of our thoughts, which form our character and personality, and are responsible for the way we view the world. As long as we can accept the challenge to change and recognise the necessity for it, believe me, half the battle has already been won.

By carefully watching our attitudes and behaviour we can easily bring about minor changes in our attitudes. But if we want to make significant, quantum-leap type changes, we need to work on our most basic ideas, and that will take time and much effort. But remember, that thousand-mile journey begins always with just one step, and you eventually must take that step and continue taking steps, one at a time until the pace picks up and you journey through life starts resembling a summer day's walk through a park.

Our basic ideas form our inner core, our spiritual self. They naturally draw upon the sources that inspire

and uplift us, and urge us on to experience more of the same. Without that changeless core inside us, it would be difficult to accept the challenge to change. To be able to make truly crucial changes, we must develop a deep sense of who we are and what our values are.

### Self-Awareness - Reality

The unique human capacity for self-awareness, enables us to see ourselves from the outside, sometimes as others do, but often more kindly than others do, for we, after all, know the details of our challenges and are usually more lenient with ourselves than with others. But when we are able to see ourselves, warts and all as most others see us, and still think that life is worth the great adventure, we are ready to begin writing the script for the remaining years of our life. And that script creates the circumstances we seek, but always of course in close consultation with our karmic obligations. We are not our feelings, our moods, or even our thoughts. The very fact that we can think about these things separates us from them. It affects not only our attitudes and behaviour, but also how we see other people. Self-awareness acts as our map of human nature.

We simply assume that the way we see things (our realities) is the way they really are (actualities). We interpret everything we experience through our mental maps, which affect our attitudes and behaviour. Each of us



tends to think we see things as they are, that we are truly objective; but we do not see the world as it is, only as we are and the way we are conditioned to see it. We must learn to look at the lens through which we see the world, as well as at the world itself through that lens, and understand that the lens shapes how we interpret the world.

It is most important that we train the mind to stand apart from itself, to enable it to examine its own programme. The important thing is not what happens to us, but our response to what happens to us. It either hurts or uplifts us. The way we respond to what we experience in life is vitally important. In choosing our response to circumstances, we powerfully affect our circumstances.

Basically, our character is a composite of our habits. As these are consistent, often even unconscious patterns, they express our character, which is constantly interacting and communicating with others. From these interactions, we come to instinctively trust or distrust various people we meet. But we are not our habits; we are not subservient to them. We can replace old patterns of self-defeating behaviour with new patterns. People can only experience enduring peace of mind as they learn to integrate the basic principles of the desired, perfect way of living into their basic character.

## Decisions and Commitments

Fundamentally, and at the deepest levels of our beings, and despite the unfair things others do to us, we are still primarily responsible for our own lives and how they unfold. Our behaviour is a function of both our decisions and our conditions, but for most people, much more so for the former than the latter. Within bounds, we have the initiative and the responsibility to make things happen, and we are what we are today very much because of the choices we made in the past. And even if those choice were constrained and limited, we had to make the best of what



was available to us at any given time.

If we begin each day with an image of the eventual end of our life as a frame of reference, and we keep that end clearly in mind, we can ensure that whatever we do on any particular day does not violate the criteria we have defined as important to that ideal. We can ensure that each day of our life contributes in a meaningful way to the vision we have of our life as a whole. When we make a promise or commitment, we must adhere to it the best we can. And when we set goals, we must work to achieve them. This way we build an inner integrity, which gives us the awareness of self-control, and the courage to accept

**The way we respond to what we experience in life is vitally important. In choosing our response to circumstances, we powerfully affect our circumstances.**

more responsibility for our lives.

Each of us should work out a personal mission statement, focussing on the values and principles upon which our actions are based. Because we all have unique personalities, personal mission statements will reflect that uniqueness, and the obligations we have to people, animals and the environment. And as we share what we are learning with others, we may be surprised to find that negative ideas or perceptions others may have of us, tend to disappear. Achieving unity, or oneness, with ourselves and others, is the highest ideal we ought to strive for.

## Free Will

We can decide for ourselves how circumstances will affect us. Between what happens to us and our responses to them, lies our freedom of choice, what our responses will be. If we see a certain problem as being “out there”, then that very thought is the problem. We empower what is

**We must learn to be followers of our own deep values and their source first and foremost.**

“out there” to control us.

People who daily exercise their inborn freedom of choice find that, gradually, that freedom expands. Those of who do not make use of their freedom, find that it withers away until they are literally “being lived”



by circumstances, rather than controlling or trying to alter those circumstances. They are acting out the scripts written by parents, teachers, associates, society and social media; not a good place to be.

We must learn to be followers of our own deep values and their source first and foremost. We do have the will, the power and the integrity, to overcome our negative feelings, our wild impulses and our moods affecting the values we have set ourselves to be of primary importance in our lives.

## Visualisation

Expand your perspective by expanding your mind. Visualise your desired goal in rich detail. Bring into your visualisation as many emotions and feelings as possible, and involve as many of the senses as you can. Through visualisation, we can create worlds of potential that lie within us.

As we continue to grow and mature, we become increasingly aware of the interdependence of all of nature. We further discover that the higher reaches of our nature depend on our relationships with others; that human lives are also interdependent.

## Karma

Cecil B. De Mille in *“The Ten Commandments”* said: *“It is impossible for us to break natural law. We can only break ourselves against the law.”* We will always reap what we sow, no more, no less, as the Cosmic law of justice is immutable. When our life is in harmony with Cosmic principles and values, we will experience true Peace Profound.

## Priorities

Realise the abundance of the Cosmic. There is not just one pie out there, which leaves less for us if someone else



*Reading too is important, and we should expose ourselves to great minds.*

gets a bigger piece. There is an abundance of everything for everyone.

Decide what your highest priorities are and have the courage to say “no” to other thoughts.

Don’t rationalise for other people’s shortcomings. Don’t rationalise for your own. When you make a mistake, admit it, correct it and learn from it immediately.

Maybe we are limited, but we can push back the borders of our limitations. Understanding the principles of our own growth enables us to find the correct principles.

Keeping a diary of our thoughts, experiences and insights, promotes mental clarity. Communicating on the deeper level of thoughts and feelings, either by correspondence or direct conversation, also helps us to reason correctly, and to be understood effectively. Reading too is important, and we should expose ourselves to great minds.

How different our lives will be once we really know what our true values are, and, keeping that in mind, we must learn to have control over ourselves to be and to do what really matters most. By centring our lives on timeless, unchanging principles, we can fulfil our personal mission statement of meaningful living.

The most powerful investment we can ever make is investment in ourselves, in the only instrument we have with which to deal with our daily lives. We are responsible for our own happiness.

An Eastern philosopher once said: *“We seek not to imitate the Masters, rather we seek what they sought.”*

*“We are not human beings having a spiritual experience, We are spiritual beings having a human experience.” — Teilhard de Chardin*



*Keeping a diary of our thoughts, experiences and insights, promotes mental clarity.*



# Spirituality and the SWEAT LODGE

*by Josh Afrit*

*Despite overwhelming modernity among 21<sup>st</sup> Century Native Americans, the spiritual heart of their ancient pan-American heritage still lives on. This article discusses one part of that heritage, the Sweat Lodge, and its deep roots to a spiritual heritage possibly dating to long before humans first arrived in the New World around 16,000 years ago.*

**I**N Central America, the Aztec term Temazcal denotes what has become popularly known in Western culture as the “sweat lodge.” Its cousin the sauna, found in every gym or hotel of note throughout the world, was initially borrowed from an ancient Finnish tradition. But rooms designed for the specific purpose of causing the body to sweat, have roots

extending deep into the Neolithic regions of Northern Asia and may have been the original source of the sweat lodges of the New World and the saunas of Europe.

In principle, a sauna or sweat lodge consists of heating stones over a fireplace, removing them from the fire and then pouring water over the hot stones to rapidly raise the temperature and humidity in the room. Saunas





*A Temazcal from the Codex Magliabecchi.*

were common throughout the Roman Empire and all over Europe until 1500s when the culture died out on most of the continent. Finland was a notable exception however, and may be the key reason why the sauna culture is nowadays largely perceived as being of Finnish origin. Of course, modern saunas are electrically operated and there is no need to move the stones before water is applied to them, but the principle is the same as for the sweat lodges of the New World and no doubt their ancestor equivalents thousands of years before the Americas were populated by humans.

**In ancient Mesoamerica, the sweat lodge or Temazcal was used as part of a curative ceremony thought to purify the body, physically and spiritually, after great exertions such as a hunt, a ceremonial ball game or warfare.**

In the West, we associate saunas with health, rejuvenation and cleansing, but we don't tend to associate them with any deep spiritual experiences: Go in, endure the heat, go out, have a shower or a swim, then then go home feeling refreshed. Almost certainly, this is a purely modern phenomenon, but the use of the progenitors of sweat lodges throughout Northern Europe and Asia, and especially in the New World, has since time immemorial been associated with a coming together of people in friendship and bonding of traditions, though especially as a group attunement with higher ideals and a sense of spiritual kinship with others.

In ancient Mesoamerica (Mexico and Central

America), the sweat lodge or Temazcal was used as part of a curative ceremony thought to purify the body, physically and spiritually, after great exertions such as a hunt, a ceremonial ball game or warfare. One of the primary spiritual purposes was to achieve rejuvenation of the body and a reconnection with the "Great Spirit", roughly, in intellectual terms, the Western concept of God or a supreme deity. The sweat lodge was also used for healing the sick, improving fertility and general health, and sometimes for women to give birth. And it continues to be used for wholly spiritual purposes as well in some indigenous communities remote from modern influences.

But in modern times, the sweat lodge has been influenced by imported concepts of spirituality, including Christianity, that have little to do with any of the truly ancient spiritual lineages, including those of the Americas. In broad principle though, sweat lodges are today social places of bonding between families and friends, and are used primarily as a means of cleansing both body and mind. But that does not apply to all of them, and the authentic ancient rites of sweat lodges are still alive in isolated places, far from the modern mind-set.

In the Náhuatl (Aztec) culture of central Mexico, the goddess of the Temazcal (sweat lodge) was Temazcaltóci, "our grandmother of the baths." She was in turn one of several manifestations of the goddess Teteoinán, "mother of the gods", "our grandmother", the principal goddess among the higher Náhuatl divinities. She was also the goddess of medicine and medicinal herbs and was venerated by healers, surgeons and midwives. Temazcaltóci was venerated in households that had a sweat lodge or Temazcal, and a statue or painting of her was placed inside the sweat lodge. The cult of the goddess of the Temazcal extended



*An ancient Maya Temazcal (sweat lodge).*



throughout Mesoamerica and was also found in the other great cultures of the region, the Mixtecs, Zapotecs and Maya. It was in great part because of this close relationship between the worship of a goddess and the Temazcal that the Spaniards found it so important to ban the use of sweat lodges.

Physical cleanliness has always been a matter of great importance to the indigenous people of Mexico. When the Spaniards arrived, the people of Mesoamerica bathed daily whenever possible. The Europeans on the other hand, placed little importance on personal cleanliness and it was not uncommon for a month or more to pass between even partial immersion bathing. We have some information about the French King Louis XIV's (1638-1715) bathing habits:

Doctors of that time were convinced that water was a direct health hazard and advised the King not to bathe. On one occasion when the King fell ill, his doctors finally decided, as a last measure, to prescribe a bath, but only after they had purged him and even given him an enema!

But such privileged treatment would not have been afforded to the seafaring Europeans who invaded Central America. Contrast this with the following extract from a modern paper by Kevin P. Groark<sup>1</sup> in which he gives a modern account from a Tzeltal Maya village in the southern Mexican state of Chiapas:

The steam bath is an important therapeutic tool in household level preventative and curative medicine. The primary function of steam bath therapy is to "warm the flesh and the blood", to expel pathogenic "cold winds" from the body, and to restore the vital "heat" or "warmth" that is necessary for a long and healthy life. Most common health conditions are treated within the family unit in this small mud structure, usually in combination with a wide variety of medicinal herbs and animals. These herbal and animal preparations are regularly used in conjunction with the steam bath in the treatment of at least 32 discrete health conditions, ranging from mild cases of stomach ache and diarrhoea to such severe conditions as rheumatism, oedema and madness.

## Purification Through Fire and Water

The popularity of the Temazcal (sweat lodge) has increased among a growing number of people keen to try and capture something from their ancient past. Unlike many



*Building a Sweat Lodge.*

other ceremonies local to specific regions only, the sweat lodge or Inipi (meaning 'to live again' in Lakota Sioux) was a universal ritual for Native Americans throughout North America. The communal sweating procedures were ceremonies of prayer and purification of body, mind and soul. The sweating purified the participants by helping to release accumulated toxins through the sweat glands. But for most, the ceremonies and sweating were closely allied to beliefs related to spiritual healing.

For the Native Americans first encountered by European settlers, the American continent was known as "Turtle Island." That, it is related, is why the shape of a sweat lodge originally resembled the shell of a turtle. It was a microcosm of the New World universe within which only the best of human thoughts, words and deeds were permitted. In the centre of the enclosure, earth was piled up to form a small dome-shaped altar in direct line with the fire that was located in the geographical east, outside the sweat lodge.

The stones were arranged around and inside this fire and were brought into the sweat lodge at various intervals and placed on the central altar and small amounts of water were ritualistically poured over them. The altar represented the head of the turtle and the enclosure represented its shell. The turtle therefore faced Eastwards towards the fire, East being the direction from which all good emerged.

## Spiritual Beliefs in Pre-Columbian North America

One story about the sweat lodge describes it as a path towards rebirth. Through prayers, incantations and songs during the ceremonies, a participant was assisted to undergo an experience that was analogous to a spiritual rebirth, thereby discovering a better, more noble version of the self. In such a process, we can recognise symbols common to spiritual traditions from all over the world. Black Elk, a Holy Man of the Oglala Sioux, said:





See I fill this sacred pipe with the bark of the red willow; but before we smoke it, you must see how it is made and what it means. These four ribbons hanging here on the stem are the four quarters of the universe. The black one is for the west where the thunder beings live to send us rain; the white one for the north, whence comes the great white cleansing wind; the red one for the east, whence springs the light and where the morning star lives to give men wisdom; the yellow for the south, whence comes the summer and the power to grow.<sup>2</sup>

dNative American beliefs are like many others: live, respect others, respect the earth, walk as you talk. You can't separate religion from life. It's not a church; it's a way of life.

**Through prayers, incantations and songs during the ceremonies, a participant was assisted to undergo an experience that was analogous to a spiritual rebirth, thereby discovering a better, more noble version of the self.**

The Lakota believed that the first humans originated deep within the earth and emerged through the narrow opening of Wind Cave (now a National Park in South Dakota), where they inhaled the breath of life and stepped onto the grass-carpeted earth. For the Lakota, Wakan Tanka was the term used for the sacred, often also referred to as the "Great Spirit." However, its meaning was closer to the "Great Mystery" as Lakota spirituality is not monotheistic. It is interpreted as the power or sacredness that resides in everything, resembling some animistic and pantheistic beliefs. A wakan man or woman is one who is wise, one *who knows the spirits and has power with the spirits*. Note my italics. Working with the world around us, and unlike in the Abrahamic religions, not seeking to dominate and control everything, is this ancient way.

Interestingly, James R. Walker in his studies of the Lakota reports that they believed that each living person is composed of four things:-

1. The body that the person is associated with throughout life.
2. A *nagi*, translated as "spirit" and known to Rosicrucians as "the psychic body." It was the wanderer, the part of the human that could leave the body, temporarily or

permanently) in order to experience things elsewhere in the world of the living and in the realms above and below it.

3. A *niya*, translated as "ghost", and known to Rosicrucians as "the soul." The *ni* (from *niya*) was the person's life force and was equated with the breath. It was seen as the source of all strength, indeed the source of everything. Without the *ni*, nothing could happen, nothing could come into existence. The *ni* kept clean all that was inside the body. If the *ni* was weak, it could not cleanse the inside of the body. And when the *ni* left the body, the person's life ended. *Niya* (ghost or soul) was what caused the *ni* (life force) to be attracted to and enter the body, and remain with it for the full duration of the person's life.
4. A *sicun*, translated as "guardian", and known to Rosicrucians as the "soul personality", was the influence that forewarned one of danger and admonished one to uphold right against wrong.

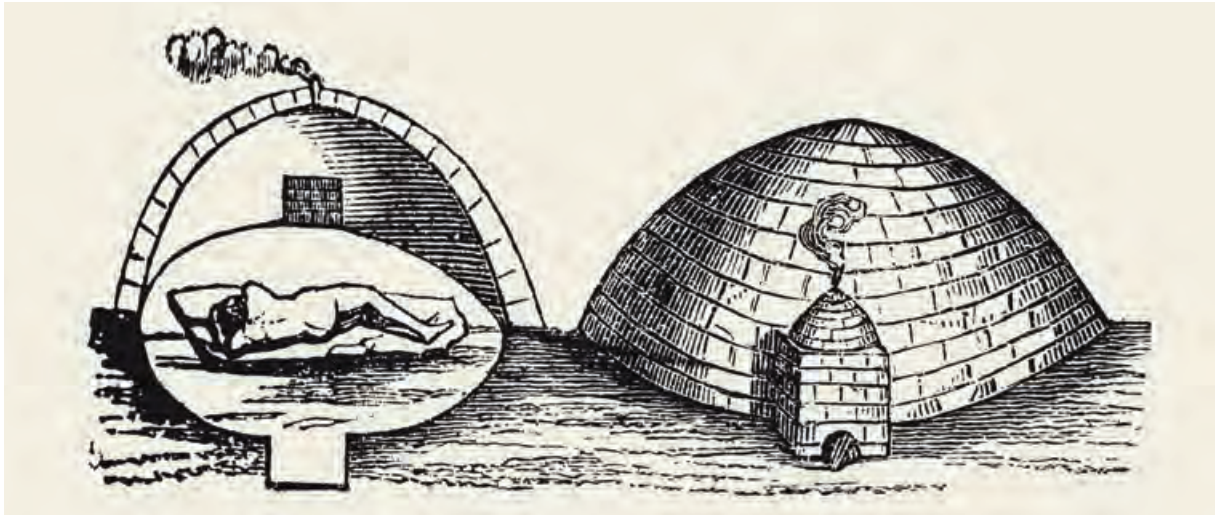
This three-fold characterisation of the non-physical being is reminiscent of the ancient Egyptian concepts of the *Akh* (*nagi* or psychic body), *Ka* (*niya* or soul) and *Ba* (*sicun* or soul personality). It just shows that humans everywhere can touch and access the one universal mind from which all reality emerges.

The sweat lodge has a circular base enclosure which is made by placing eight to 16 willow branches in specially prepared holes in the ground. The branches are curved over to form a dome and meet at the top centre where they are tied together with willow bark strips. Willow branches are used because they bend easily when freshly cut. Then thinner branches are woven horizontally around the main willow branch structure, resulting in a dome or igloo structure approximately 1½ metres in height. The dome is then covered with buffalo or elk hide, or in dryer



*The Black Hills – sacred to the Lakota.*





*Mexican Temazcal, showing cross-section of the chamber (left) and the pit (right).*

areas it may be covered with mud instead. The purpose is to shut out the daylight and to maintain the heat. A blanket or hide is used as a door covering and is fastened

**Dawn was the end of the time of test and trial for the solar deity, and the culmination of that journey was enlightenment, power, and for the Pharaoh, the ability and authority to rule as the god incarnate on Earth.**

above the entrance so it can easily be opened.

In both ancient Egyptian and Native American cosmology, understanding, wisdom and illumination came from the East, the direction from which the morning solar light emerged. The East therefore represented the power of life itself. For the ancient Egyptians, the sun rising over the eastern horizon was the culmination of an arduous and dangerous journey through the realms of darkness. Dawn was the end of the time of test and trial for the solar deity, and the culmination of that journey was enlightenment, power, and for the Pharaoh, the ability and authority to rule as the god incarnate on Earth.

The Native Americans considered the sun as a living fire starting its daily journey in the east and travelling across the sky to its final rest at the end of the day in the west. The fire heating the stones in the sweat lodge was the solar deity as well, bringing the power of life into the people seated around the walls of the sweat lodge. Seven stones, representing the seven sacred directions were blessed with tobacco smoke blown upon them prior to the start of the ceremony. They were then placed on the

altar, the mound of earth in the centre of the structure, and positioned in their respective directions.

The fire represented the solar deity and another mound or ridge of earth partially encircling the fire pit represented the crescent moon. The moon represented the outer world, visible universe, while the central hearth where the fire burned, represented the inner world which all participants wished to commune with. The hearth, or rather the fire within it, and place in this setting, represented the womb of the universe from which all souls were created before birth, and “living souls” were rejuvenated and re-created.

For the Lakota, when the rocks were at maximum temperature and the leader of the sweat lodge had finished his preparatory rituals and incantations, the participants formed a row outside the sweat lodge’s door. The person leading the line kindled an aromatic herb, usually a sprig of sage in a shell of abalone and then censed each participant, namely, he spread the smoke with his hands around them with the intention of ritualistically cleansing them before they entered the sacred precincts of the sweat lodge. Then each person crawled towards the entrance, touched the ground with his or her forehead and said “Mitákuye Oyás’in,” “All my relations”, before entering the dark belly of mother earth symbolised by the interior of the sweat lodge. Thus, each participant came to the sweat lodge to pray and to leave anger and resentment at people at the door. Mitákuye Oyás’in reflects the world view of interconnectedness held by the Lakota. It translates in English as “all my relatives,” “we are all related,” or “all my relations.” It was a prayer of oneness and harmony with all forms of life: other people, animals, birds, insects, trees



and plants, and even rocks, rivers, mountains and valleys.

## Rebirth

Inipi is a purification rite and is necessary in order to help the vision quest seeker enter into a state of humility and to undergo a kind of spiritual rebirth. The sweat lodge is central to Inipi. Prayers offered there draw on all the powers of the universe. In the old days, Inipi was done before any major undertaking to purify the body and gain strength and power.

As each person crawled on all fours, entering the darkness of the sweat lodge, they entered the womb of mother earth to undergo a metamorphosis. Because the opening of the enclosure had little height, you needed to kneel and lean with your hands to enter, symbolising humility before the creator. Participants entering the room moved clockwise around the perimeter of the altar. This was because in the Inipi ceremony, like most Native American rituals, all things moved in the sense of the apparent movement of the sun (clockwise in the northern hemisphere).

As the assistants were introduced to the enclosure, they were honoured in some way. After all, they represented seeds sown in the womb of mother earth for the purpose of regeneration and purification. During the Inipi ritual, the door was thrown open four times to represent the four ages described by Sacred White Buffalo Calf Woman. The fourth time, participants left the lodge, emerging from dark to light which represented the liberation from the physical universe. All that was impure was left in the sweat lodge to dissipate into the earth. When they left the sweat lodge, they did so in a squatting position, symbolising the foetus that comes from the womb of their mother, for a new birth fully regenerated to begin a new cycle of life and death.



*Hupa Indian Sweat House*

## Health

The practice of inducing sweat has long been known to be beneficial in sicknesses of the skin, liver and circulation, in problems of rheumatism, arthritis, gout and other chronic diseases, as well as acute problems like muscular pains, colds and congestions, and sweat baths are one of the ways used to bring about healthful sweating. The sweat lodge, because of its special methods, is perhaps the most effective of this kind of curative technique, and the list of conditions for which it has been used in the course of centuries is the most extensive.

Overheating of the body produces a series of reactions: it stimulates both the superficial and the deep blood circulation, accelerates the frequency of heartbeats, as well as increases their force, calls into action the mechanisms of thermal regulation, activates the metabolism, and promotes sweating. All of these effects produce a great internal movement of energy and liquids, somewhat similar to the way in which strenuous exercise does, bringing increased circulation to muscles, organs and tissues. While all sweat baths produce these effects, the sweat lodge, because of the way it works and the precision with which it can be regulated by the healer in charge, controls these body reactions to high heat in order to maximise their curative effects.

As a final word, I can't help but what great benefits would accrue to the world if some of its more antagonistic political leaders would spend some quality time with their adversaries in sweat lodges, swapping family stories, discussing the things closest to their hearts, and getting to realise that despite their sharp differences, they are ultimately merely humans with many of the same private concerns that others have.

Ho Mitakuye Oyasin – Everything is Related.

## Reference

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- Lakota Belief and Ritual by James R. Walker. ISBN: 0-8032-9731-9
- Oglala Religion by William K. Powers. ISBN: 0-8032-8706-2
- Stone Boy, Legend of Inipi by S.W. Laro. ISBN: 9-7815-4724-286-3
- The Lakota Ritual of The Sweat Lodge by Raymond A. Bucko. ISBN: 0-8032-1272-0

## Footnotes

1. Kevin P. Groark - *To Warm the Blood, to Warm the Flesh: The Role of the Steam bath in Highland Maya* (Tzeltal-Tzotzil) Ethnomedicine.
2. John Neihardt - *Black Elk Speaks*.



# Sacred Symbol of Oneness

John Dee's  
HIEROGLYPHIC  
MONAD

## PART 2 Numbers and Emanation Attributes

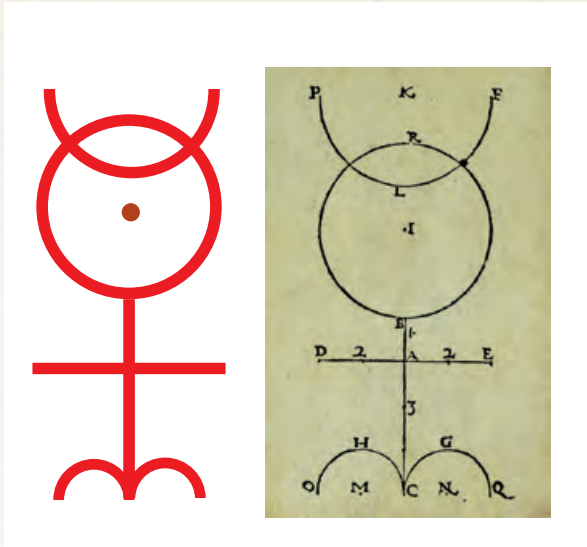


**T** AT THE beginning of his treatise, the *Monas Hieroglyphica* ('Sacred Oneness'), John Dee states that he will explain his cosmic figure in a series of 24 Theorems "mathematically, magically, cabalistically and anagogically" (folio 12 of the treatise). Within these interpretations there are also astrological, alchemical and linguistic aspects.

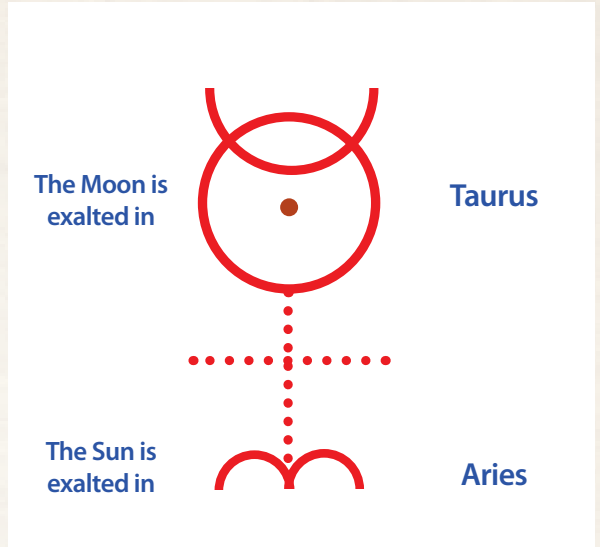
Taken together, they form a comprehensive

and integrated mystical and scientific expression of the manifesting nature of his *Hieroglyphic Monad*, illustrated above, namely, the 'Sacred Symbol of Oneness.'<sup>1</sup> After a brief discussion of the figure's essential structure this article will introduce the reader to the first of these approaches in Dee's explication of the hieroglyph that concerns its numerical aspects alongside its *emanation* attributes. A clearer picture is gained if the reader refers to the illustrations and diagrams while reading the text.





*Figure 1: The hieroglyph, while deceptively simple in appearance consisting of a geometric arrangement of lines, curves and a circle, required John Dee to write of its complexities so that the observer might engage with it on a particular level. As one reads through his 24 Theorums his enthusiasm for his subject is clearly felt.*

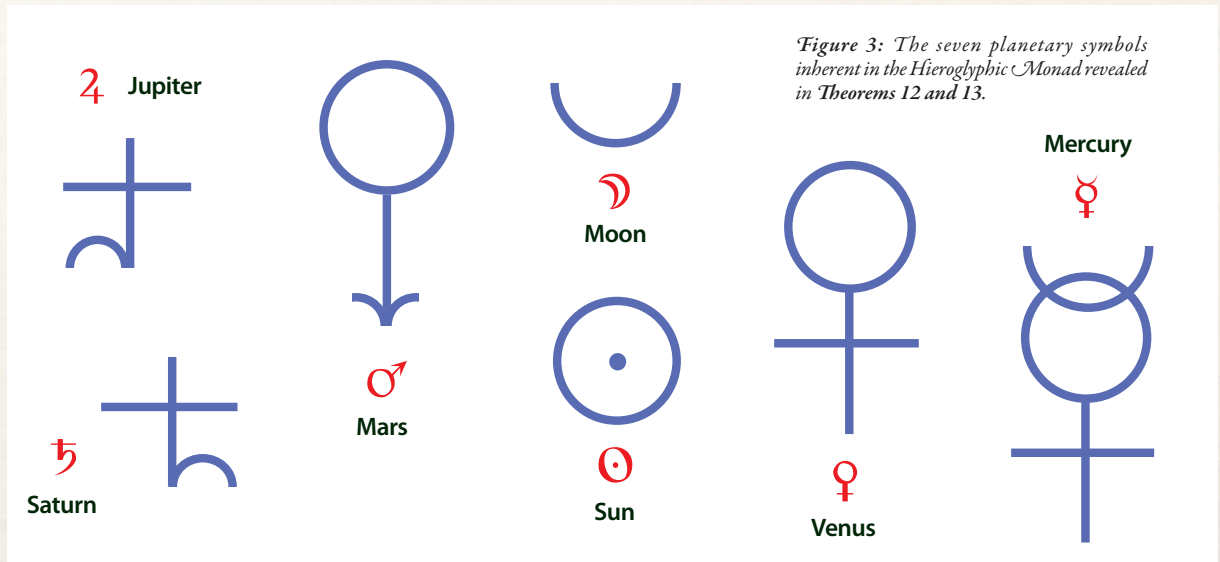


*Figure 2: In Theorem 15 the positioning of the astrological signs of Aries and Taurus is demonstrated which naturally conveys their astrological import.*

### Essential Structure

Visually the figure presents itself as a modified astrological and astronomical sign we know as Mercury (see Fig. 1).<sup>2</sup> The use of Mercury is consistent with Hermetic and alchemical thought as Dee states that [Philosophical] Mercury embraces all mysteries in its form.<sup>3</sup> This Mercury figure is combined with the sign of Aries at its base in the form of two reversed lunar crescents (semi-circles). Understanding that Aries is the first sign of the Fiery Triplexity

in astrology, we read in Theorem 10 that Dee has added this feature to signify that the element of fire is required to operate (actuate) the hieroglyph. There is a combining of astrological and alchemical theory here. A modern proposal suggests that the inclusion of Aries might represent fiery Sulphur, meaning that the two medieval components of the Philosophers' Stone (i.e. Mercury and Sulphur) are present in the figure.<sup>4</sup> It must have appeared to Dee a fortunate, if not revelatory, discovery that such a simple combination of celestial components in this figure would resonate so suitably to his purposes, and demonstrating under



*Figure 3: The seven planetary symbols inherent in the Hieroglyphic Monad revealed in Theorems 12 and 13.*





Celestial  
Realm  
.....  
Sublunary  
Realm



Moon  
Sun  
Elements  
Aries

**"THE SUN AND THE MOON OF THIS MONAD DESIRE THEIR ELEMENTS, IN WHICH THE DENARIAN PROPORTION WILL BE STRONG, TO BE SEPARATED, AND THAT THIS BE DONE WITH THE AID OF FIRE"**

**THEOREM 10**

*The first sign of the fiery triplicity, the others being Leo and Sagittarius.*

*Figure 4: The main divisions and components of the hieroglyph in Theorem 10.*

analysis an embodiment of the entire celestial system.

The astrological sign of Aries, the first zodiacal sign, at the base of the hieroglyph serves as an analogue of the whole zodiac and fixed stars.<sup>5</sup> Taurus is symbolised in the upper half formed by the circle and semi-circle (see Fig. 2). To grasp how remarkable the positioning of these components in the hieroglyph are, consider this: each of the seven traditional planets has its *exaltation*, or greatest influence, when passing through a particular zodiacal sign; the Moon is exalted in the 3<sup>rd</sup> degree of Taurus, while the Sun has the greatest benefit in the 19<sup>th</sup> degree of Aries. The astrological significance of Aries and Taurus is reinforced on the title page of the *Monas Hieroglyphica* where they are observed flanking the ovoid shape surrounding the hieroglyph.<sup>6</sup> Along with Mercury the role of the sun and moon in alchemy is essential and so we see that these two important zodiacal signs are positioned in such a way as to convey their astrological and alchemical import.

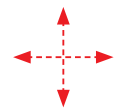
And as you study the figure more closely other planetary symbols become evident, such as the Sun, Moon and Venus; less obvious are the symbols of Jupiter and Saturn. A combination of the Sun and Aries produces Mars (see Fig. 3 demonstrating the extraction of these astrological and planetary symbols from the hieroglyph). The *celestial* sphere is represented by the circle (sun) and semi-circle (moon) which together surmount the cross, symbolising the *sublunary* elementary (earthly) sphere. We can observe visually in this a figurative representation of the whole of the universe underneath which is the fiery Aries sign, the agent under which creation takes place (see Fig. 4).<sup>7</sup> The whole hieroglyph is enclosed within an ovoid or egg shaped boundary on the title page which effectively synthesises these celestial components into a coherent astrological and alchemical whole.

The 24 Theorems that comprise the *Monas Hieroglyphica* provide a supporting exposition of

Point



Line



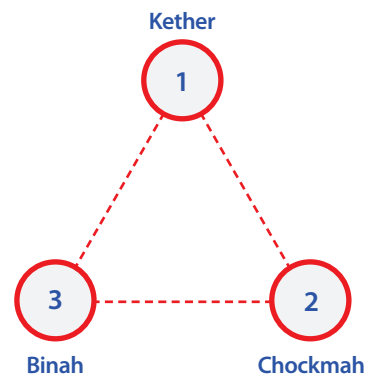
Rectilinear  
Movement

Circle



Circular  
Movement

*The same process at work in the Supernal Spheres on the Cabalistic Tree of Life*



*Figure 5: The process of manifestation outlined in Theorems 1 and 2.*





While the elemental cross is not depicted equilaterally both lines are of equal length. Dee describes it as being 'Rectilinear, Rectangular and Equilateral' in Theorem 16

**Ternary      Quaternary**



Two lines and one point

Four lines

$$3 + 4 = 7$$

**Septenary**

$$3 \times 4 = 12$$

**Duodenary**

**Quinary**



Four lines and one point

$$5$$

**Octonary**



The Quaternary doubled

$$8$$

Figure 6: Development of the symbolic, numerical and metaphysical permutations inherent in the sublunary realm of the hieroglyph in Theorem 6.

the figure in which Dee opens by justifying its component parts in Theorem I. This sets the key as it states that the simple representation of things is achieved by the line and circle, but a circle cannot manifest without a line and a line cannot come into existence without a point, a *monad* (Theorem 2). This essential Pythagorean concept must be kept in mind when considering the Hieroglyphic Monad as a whole. We can compare the same emanatory creative process at work in the supernal triangle of *Kether*, *Chockmah*, and *Binah* on the Tree of Life in Cabalistic philosophy (see Fig. 5). The monad represents the initial point of creation out of which the universe manifests itself, followed by projection into a line (rectilinear movement), and then the formation of the circle (circular movement).<sup>8</sup> This aspect is discussed in more detail below.

It is important to emphasise at this point that the cross in the figure is not drawn equilaterally (see Fig. 6). Dee labels it as 'Rectilinear, Rectangular and Equilateral'. In his formation of the cross he ensures that its form resonates at different philosophical,

religious and metaphysical levels. He justifies this form of the cross at the beginning of Theorem 16 where he says (folio 15v):

Though our CROSS has been made, as we have said, from two straight lines of equal length, they do not divide each other into equal lengths. In the Mystical distribution of our Cross, we wanted equal parts and unequal parts. However, hidden in the power of these Two lines divided this way is also the virtue of an Equilateral CROSS (because the two lines are of equal Length).<sup>9</sup>

**Numerical Aspects**

The numerical progressions inherent in the geometry of the figure are essentially explained in Theorem 6 and mostly concern the rectilinear cross (see Fig. 6). Dee begins by telling the reader that the cross beneath the circle is firstly of a *ternary* nature consisting as it does of two lines crossing with a central point. He relates these to Body, Spirit and Soul (*corpus, spiritus*

$$1 + 2 + 3 + 4 = 10$$



$$\begin{matrix} \text{Ternary} & \times & \text{Septenary} \\ 3 & & 7 \\ & & \\ & & = 21 \end{matrix}$$

The Denary is produced by adding the numerical series which Dee terms 'a cabbalistic expansion of the quaternary'.

When the cross is rotated 45° the Roman numeral for ten (X) is produced.

The letter 'X' is the 21<sup>st</sup> letter of the Latin alphabet. (see also Fig. 13)

Figure 7: Development of the Denary inherent in the sublunary realm of the hieroglyph in Theorem 8.



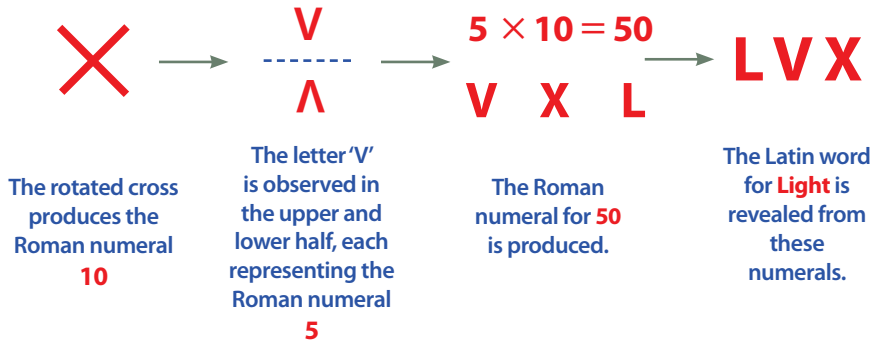


Figure 8: Revelation of the final and magisterial word LVX (Latin: 'light') in Theorems 16 and 17.

and *anima*). He also demonstrates a *quaternary* aspect, visually depicted by the four lines (Theorem 6) representing the four alchemical Elements (Theorem 7). Although not discussed in Theorem 6, the addition at the intersection of the monadic point produces the *quinary* principle, symbolising Spirit over the four Elements.<sup>10</sup> Dee also explains how the *octonary* is produced "in a most secret manner" by theoretically duplicating the four lines of the cross wedged by a common point. Its *septenary* nature is deduced from the sum of the ternary and quaternary principles (3 + 4 = 7), while the product of these same two (i.e. 3 x 4) generates the *duodenary* or twelvefold principle. We might symbolically equate these to the seven traditional planets and twelve astrological signs.<sup>11</sup>

The *denary* or tenfold is also produced in Theorem 8 (see Fig. 7) by adding the sequence of the Elements together (i.e., 1+2+3+4 = 10) which, Dee says, is a "cabalistic expansion of the quaternary" and links it to the Pythagorean *tetractys* (tetraktys) discussed further below. The number 10 is also later

produced in Theorem 16 by rotating the rectilinear cross 45 degrees representing the Roman letter 'X'. Continuing with Theorem 8, when the ternary and septenary are multiplied (3 x 7) the number 21 is produced and Dee reminds his readers that the letter 'X' ("chosen by the oldest of the Latin philosophers to signify the number ten") is the 21<sup>st</sup> letter of the Roman alphabet (see Fig. 7).<sup>12</sup>

As mentioned above, in Theorem 16 Dee states that by rotating the cross 45 degrees the Roman numeral 'X' (i.e. 10) is produced (see Fig. 8) in which, it will be observed, the upper part displays a 'V' shape (Roman numeral 5). By multiplying these (5 x 10) we derive 'L' (i.e., 50). In this way the Latin word 'LVX' (pronounced 'lewxx') is obtained and hinted at by Dee at the conclusion of Theorem 17 where he says:

Our cross having suffered itself to be divided into two pairs of letters, we shall, as formerly we dealt with their numeral quality, now try in turn to compare their verbal power with that cross, because

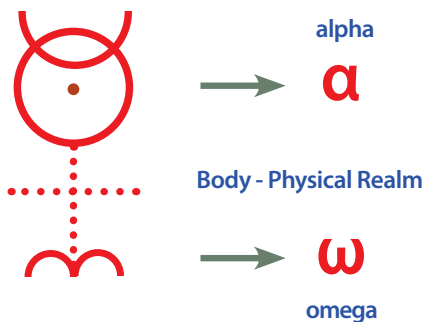


Figure 9: There is an interesting relationship to be discerned by observing the placement of the cross (representing the body or physical realm) between the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet.

$$5^2 \quad (5 \times 5) = 25$$

The Roman letter **V** (5) is the 20<sup>th</sup> letter and the 5<sup>th</sup> vowel of the Latin alphabet (see also Fig. 13).

$$20 + 5 = 25$$

Figure 10: Analysis of the number 5 in Theorem 16 which is, according to Dee, a 'circular number'.





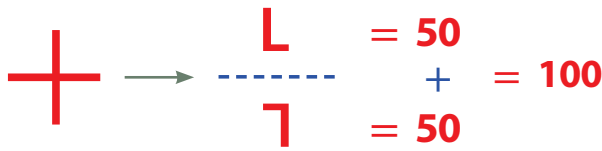


Figure 11: The 'power of the denary in its quinary virtue' (as 'Dee states) is revealed in the position of the twin numeral 'L' in the cross producing the 'Centurio' or 100.

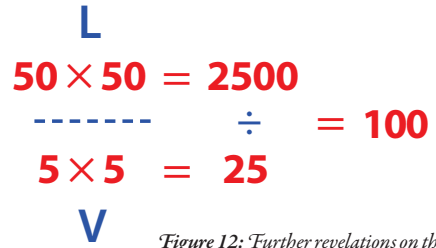


Figure 12: Further revelations on the 'denary virtue' of the cross producing the 'Centurio' or 100.

a light may thence appear: We shall perceive and greatly admire the final and magisterial word....<sup>13</sup>

Within this particular Latin word, which means 'light', the mystery of the Risen Christ (Osiris) is revealed. Allied to this last point is another feature of the hieroglyph: the Greek letter *alpha* ( $\alpha$ ) is seen in the upper half on its side (formed by integrating the solar circle and lunar crescent) and the sign of Aries in the lower half can be seen as an inverted *omega* ( $\omega$ ) (see Fig. 9). These are significantly the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet. Positioned between them is the cross which, when taken as representative of the body or physical realm, presents an interesting relationship pertaining to life's journey.<sup>14</sup> We might also read Theorem 5 in this context of beginning or creation where Dee says:

And, surely, one day was made out of evening and morning by joining the lunar half-circle to its solar complement. Be it accordingly the first [day] on which the light of the philosophers was made.<sup>15</sup>

To continue: in Theorem 16 the number 5 is half of 10 and these pair of fives are visually observed in the letter 'X' as an *upright* and an opposite *inverted* 'V' (see Fig. 8). Dee expands this and states that 5 is the square-root of 25 (5 x 5). Embodied in the number 25 then, Dee continues (folio 16), is "...a CIRCULAR

NUMBER, the number FIVE" which is both the twentieth letter in the Roman alphabet and, at the same time, the fifth vowel (see Figs. 10 and 13). He is not finished here, however: he observes that the cross is also composed of a repeated letter 'L' (or the Latin number 50), the upper one being *upright* and the lower being *inverted*, but reversed (see Fig. 11). Dee refers to this letter as that which "is indeed a notation of the quinary, essentially derived from our denary [i.e. 5 x 10] of the cross."<sup>16</sup>

Moreover, the 'DENARIAN Strength' (referring to the number ten) of the cross is also reinforced by adding one 'L' to the other (50 + 50) to produce the 'CENTARIUM' or 100. Elaborating further, Dee then multiplies 50 by 50 to produce 2,500; following which he divides 2,500 by the previously produced number 25 (5x5), which brings the arithmetic back to 100 (see Fig. 12). "Thus, the CROSS, explaining itself by its DENARIAN Strength, will be perceived as referring to CENTURIO [the number 100]."<sup>17</sup> Furthermore, the letter 'L' is positioned exactly halfway between 'A' and 'X' in the Roman alphabet with ten letters either side reinforcing the denarian symmetry (see Fig. 13).

Dee is so taken by these mathematical mysteries that he exclaims (folio 16): "O, mi Deus, quanta haec Mysteria?" ("Oh, my God, how great are these Mysteries?"). He concludes Theorem 16 by stating (folio 16v):

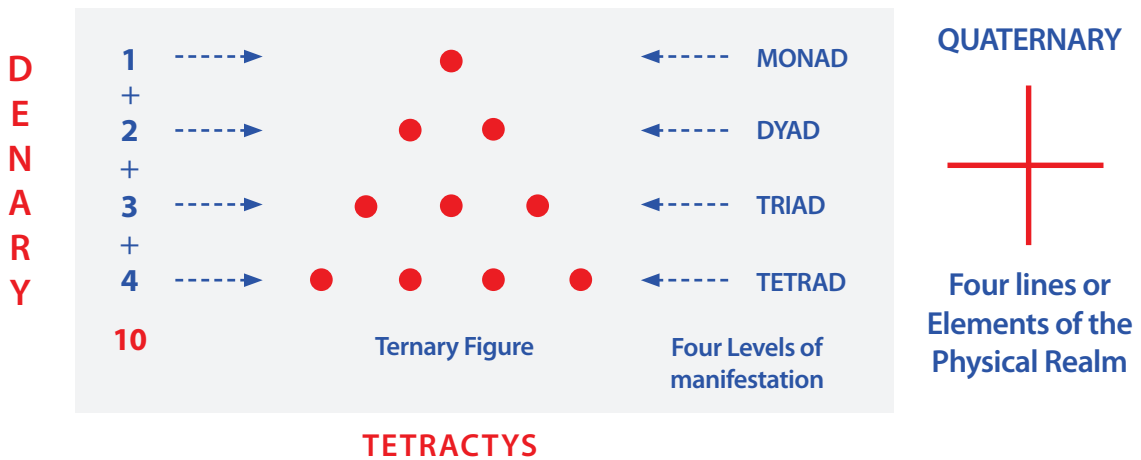


Figure 13: The Latin alphabet of 22 letters. The denarian symmetry of the cross is observed in the positioning of the letter L in the Latin alphabet. The letter X owes its position from the product of the ternary and quaternary (see Fig. 8). Regarding the placing of the letter V (see Figure 10).

Therefore we are now taught (besides other things worthy of being noted) by these theories of the CROSS to enumerate and proceed in this manner: One, Ten, Hundred. We are carried upwards by the DENARIAN Symmetry of the CROSS. Nevertheless, as the Character of the CROSS is unique, it also represents One."<sup>18</sup>



Figure 14: The relationship of the Denary to the Pythagorean Tetractys and the Quaternary.



This last aspect concerning ‘One’ is explained below; see also Fig. 15. We might observe that Dee’s mathematical construction of the Hieroglyphic Monad in terms of its numerical genesis reflects the mathematical genesis of the universe.<sup>19</sup> Dee says of his hieroglyph (folio 3v): “*Even though I call it Hieroglyphic, he who has examined it closely will confess that a sort of mathematical light and strength exists in it...*”

### Emanation Aspects

In Theorems 1 and 2 (folio 12) Dee espouses an essential philosophical and geometrical creation process that initially involves a *point* from which a *line* extends; the line rotates around the point to form a *circle*, the ‘periphery’ (see Fig. 5). Dee’s source was likely to have been Proclus (c.412-485 BCE) in his *Commentary on the First Book of Euclid’s Elements* of which he had read before 1563.<sup>20</sup> Euclid lived in Alexandria around 300 BCE; most of his Theorems were not his own discovery but were the work of former Greek mathematicians such as Pythagoras, Hippocrates of Chios, Theaetetus of Athens and Eudoxus of Cnidos. He is, however, acknowledged as having arranged these Theorems in a logical manner. The majority of the work consists of number theory, geometry

and proportion.<sup>21</sup>

In the *Monas Hieroglyphica* this emanatory process of point, line and circle *only* applies to the celestial part of the hieroglyph, i.e. the circle and semi-circle (the sun and moon). The physical elemental realm (the cross in the hieroglyph) is generated by linear movement. This is brought about by the extension of four lines from the central point to form the cross. Embodied within the cross structure is the Pythagorean *tetractys* (see Fig. 14), a numerical construct that Dee was familiar with since it was often associated with cosmogonic theory during the Renaissance period. He was particularly interested in incorporating its numerical power into the Hieroglyphic Monad because of its relationship to the quaternary, the realm of three-dimensional (earthly, physical) solids; it appears visually as a triangular arrangement (ternary) of ten dots and presents a numerical series of numbers 1 to 4 (quaternary), which are stacked on four levels or planes and defined as follows:

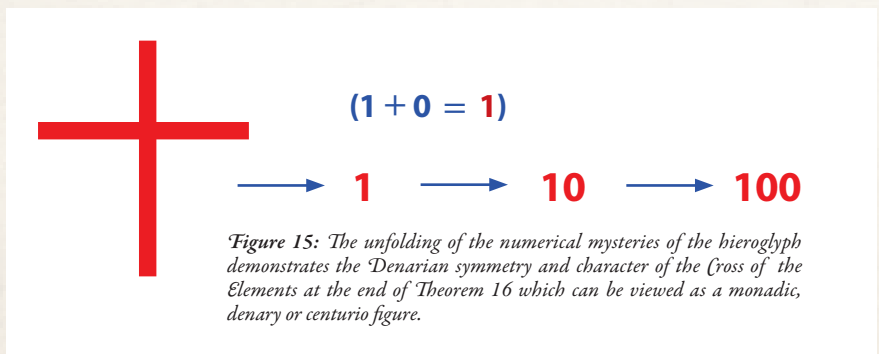


Figure 15: The unfolding of the numerical mysteries of the hieroglyph demonstrates the Denarian symmetry and character of the Cross of the Elements at the end of Theorem 16 which can be viewed as a monadic, denary or centurio figure.



1. One: the *Monad*; a point and source of all numbers; not a number itself; associated with God.
2. Two: the *Dyad*; the single dimension of the line, even and divisible, corresponding to unlimited, formless original matter.
3. Three: the *Triad*; formation of a triangle and the first surface.
4. Four: the *Tetrad*; defines the first three-dimensional solid body.<sup>22</sup>

These numbers demonstrate the metaphysical generation of the physical world in terms of emanation into solid three-dimensionality. But because Dee believes that there is a *creative limitation* inherent in the Pythagorean tetractys he only applies this construct to the sublunary part of the hieroglyph, the elemental cross in the figure. This limitation is implied in the last line of the quotation above: “*Nevertheless, as the Character of the CROSS is unique, it also represents One.*”

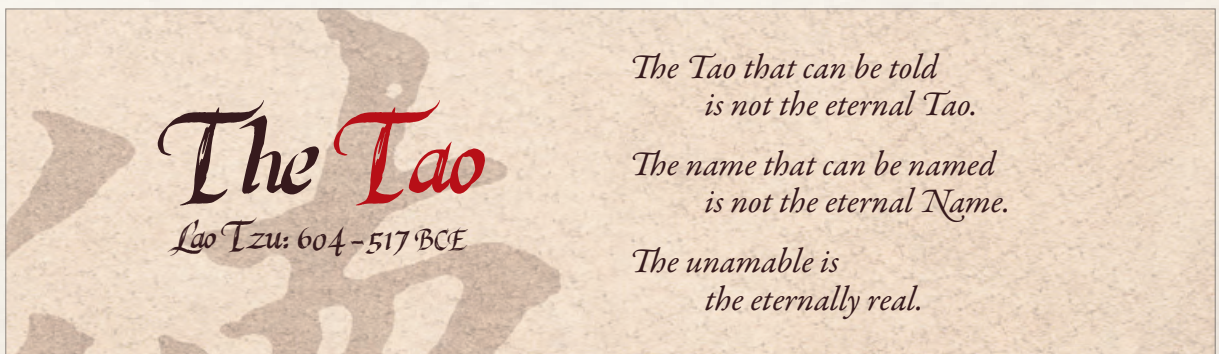
To explain: when the Pythagorean series of four numbers is added (1+2+3+4) the number 10 is produced. This progression then returns to unity and perfection through the further addition of the one and the zero: 10=1+0=1 (One). And this was the problem for the mathematically minded Dee, in that the tetractys appeared creatively limited to the geometric progression of monad, line, surface and ultimately solid rather than through a purely mathematical genesis. Therefore, Dee limits the Pythagorean construct of the tetractys to the sublunary (physical, elementary) realm of the cross.

So, while the whole of the Monas symbol and its parts are generated from the point and line there is a qualified difference between the generation of the celestial and the elementary realm. The physical realm progresses up to the line and forms the cross, whereas the celestial realm evolves beyond the line to the circle, which is ‘monadic and therefore perfect’.<sup>23</sup>

Having been introduced to the geometric and mathematical intricacies of the structure of the hieroglyph we will next survey the alchemical, Cabalistic and linguistic aspects of John Dee’s Hieroglyphic Monad in Part 3.

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- See Gareth Knight, ‘John Dee’s Hieroglyphic Monad’ in *The Hermetic Journal*, No. 3, 1979, p. 25.
- Translation from Jim Egan, *The Works of John Dee*, Cosmopolite Press, 2010, p. 96.
- Knight, op. cit., p.26.
- Ibid.*
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# Emerson & Transcendentalism

*by Robin Thompson*



**R**ALPH Waldo Emerson (1803-1882) — philosopher, writer, poet, lecturer and mystic — was the spokesman for a new American thought emerging in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> Century. Though he spoke clearly to his own generation, he speaks just as clearly to us today, and his thoughts and ideas are just as meaningful in a world much changed from his era. Through most of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, Emerson was one of the most often quoted of all Americans, and his writings have been translated into many languages. His philosophy is widely respected and his ideas remain a regular and popular topic of discussion throughout the world.

Emerson was the chief spokesman for New England Transcendentalism, a system of thought stressing, among other things, the underlying unity of all things, the innate goodness of humanity, the transcendence of intuition over tuition for reaching profound truth, and the spiritual potential of the individual. While transcendentalism borrowed from both European and Eastern philosophies, its origin was in the hard-working New England area of the USA, with a generation of intellectuals seeking independence from traditional thought.

This transcendental view of life is particularly American...., practical, open, optimistic, full of vitality, encouraging people to question, think for themselves, and seek a healthy individuality. Emerson may have captured part of its spirit in the phrase, “plain living and high thinking.” Henry Thoreau, Walt Whitman, Nathaniel Hawthorne, Margaret Fuller, Bronson Alcott, and Theodore Parker were all part of, or closely connected with, the Transcendentalist movement.

**Throughout his life, Emerson sought a more complete understanding of profound truth.**

Emerson believed in the potential of each individual. He stressed this idea throughout his writing and public speaking. Central to this idea of individual potential was his concept of the “Over-Soul”, a divine power of which all people are a part. In this concept of Over-Soul, social and class distinctions are nil because all men and women share in this great democracy of spirit. All are brothers and sisters on the path of life; all share great potential. The highest part of self—the intuition, the “still, small voice within”—is part of Over-Soul. And each individual can reach for higher understanding of self and the universe through establishing rapport with the Over-Soul in him or herself.



*Ralph Waldo Emerson, 1878, by Sam W. Rowe.*

But humanity is held back by a closed mind, by accepting without question or thought the ideas of others. Instead of listening to the voice within, following our own star, we too often put ourselves down, allowing others to tell us what to think and how to live. Emerson felt that the one thing of value in this world is the active soul. He encouraged us to establish rapport with our inner being and think for ourselves. To quote directly from Emerson:

*A man should learn to detect and watch that gleam of light which flashes across his mind from within, more than the lustre of the firmament of bards and sages. Yet he dismisses without notice his thought, because it is his. In every work of genius we recognise our own rejected thoughts; they come back to us with a certain alienated majesty. Great works of art have no more affecting lesson for us than this. They teach us to abide by our spontaneous impression with good-humoured inflexibility then most when the whole cry of voices is on the other side. Else, tomorrow a stranger will say with masterly good sense precisely what we have thought and felt all the time, and we shall be forced to take with shame our own opinion from another.<sup>1</sup>*



Throughout his life, Emerson sought a more complete understanding of profound truth. As the leading philosopher of Transcendentalism, Emerson believed in the innate goodness and spiritual potential of humanity, the active soul seeking higher truths about self and the universe. Seeing the human being as primarily a spiritual being within a physical body, Emerson encouraged each individual to become more attuned with the inner self, our spiritual nature. Profound wisdom comes to us through communication with our inner self (soul). In the human quest for higher understanding, Emerson saw nature as the great teacher awakening each of us to our inner self, instructing



*Illustration of Emerson's transparent eyeball metaphor in "Nature" by Christopher Pearse Cranch, ca. 1836-38*

us about life, our potential, our spiritual destiny. It's a lonely quest because most choose to live only in the outer world, and we live where our thoughts are.

In a little book entitled *Nature* (1836), which challenged conservative religious thought of the day, Emerson put forth in lyric prose his personal experiences and realisations concerning nature's many levels of instruction to man. Most of Emerson's later writing reflects basic ideas put forth in this little book.

At the outset of *Nature*, Emerson discusses the attitude necessary for truly observing and learning from nature:

The sun illuminates only the eye of the man, but shines into the eye and heart of the child. The lover of nature is he whose inward and outward senses are still truly adjusted to each other; who has retained the spirit of infancy even into the era of manhood. His intercourse with heaven and earth becomes part of his daily food, In the presence of nature a wild delight runs through the man, in spite of real sorrows.<sup>2</sup>

Nature stimulates us to observe. In our observation, we employ reason, thought, contemplation, creation.

Until this higher agency (reason) intervened, the animal eye sees, with wonderful accuracy,

sharp outlines and coloured surfaces. When the eye of Reason opens, to outline and surface are added grace and expression. These proceed from imagination and affection... If the Reason be stimulated to more earnest vision, outlines and surfaces become transparent, and are no longer seen; causes and spirits are seen through them. The best moments of life are these delicious awakenings of the higher powers, and the reverential withdrawing of nature before its God.<sup>2</sup>

Emerson believed that we create our own world through thought. We are instructed and guided by our observation of nature, but the world we create

in our own mind is the world we inhabit. Through his or her creative mind each person will draw "beautiful faces, warm hearts, wise discourse, heroic acts." Seeking a better world of beauty and truth, the human being creates, in form and in thought. The artist seeks beauty; the philosopher, truth. But the aim is the same.

The true philosopher and the true poet are one. And a beauty which is truth, and a truth which is beauty, is the aim of both.<sup>2</sup>

Emerson encouraged people to aspire to their highest ideals. Toward the end of *Nature*, he explained:

Every spirit builds itself a house and beyond its house a world and beyond its world a heaven. Know then that the world exists for you. For you is the phenomenon perfect. Build therefore your own world. As fast as you conform your life to the pure idea in your mind, that will unfold its great proportions. A correspondent revolution in things will attend the influx of the spirit.<sup>2</sup>

## Footnotes

1. "Self-Reliance" from *Essays, First Series* (1841) by R. W. Emerson.
2. From "Nature", by R. W. Emerson.



# Inner Light

by *Albert van Wyk*



**U**NDERLYING all nature is a hidden world of spiritual light. Unlike sunlight, it is so intensely radiant that it cannot be perceived by mortal eyes. Sunlight is the visual aspect of this “greater light”, and is but a shadow of the radiance of the true light. This spiritual light exists in every part of the universe and manifests both spiritually and physically. It is an unseen universal force giving life to plants, animals and humans, and giving molecular and atomic order to all inanimate objects. Nature is the living, visible garment of the Divine, and for those who can see it, the spiritual force of Life, is visible as a radiant Light, emanating from all things, even the inanimate.

This all-embracing essence contains the potentiality of every plant even before it emerges from seed, every flower, bush and tree. Although plants contain immaterial qualities, they also require substances of the earth, such as soil and water. These terrestrial substances are the physical building blocks of the plant, but immaterial qualities are also there, and these qualities are responsible for its life and continuity.

As living matter within a seed develops, it follows the growth pattern of the characteristics of the plant it will become. The DNA of every living thing ensures this, and the Life force ensures the DNA carries out its mission of replication with accuracy. For example, a geranium seed sprouts and grows into a plant of exquisite beauty, filling hearts with happiness at the perfection

found in nature. Through the individuality of its species encoded in its DNA, the geranium differs from every other flower by its special characteristics of colour, form, fragrance and growth cycles. This can be regarded as the plant’s personality, and such can be said of each species of plant. This primitive awareness, which exists in all plant life and distinguishes one flower from another, one vegetable from another, one tree from another, and so on, ad infinitum, is the intangible expression of consciousness made possible by the Life force operating through the DNA of the species.

Every plant, even the “lowly” weed, exists for some purpose. After it has served its purpose, or if its growth cycle is terminated before fruition, the unseen Life force with its distinguishable awareness, is neither lost nor destroyed. In principle, as a potential, it remains to bring life into newly created earthly counterparts. It is a common everyday occurrence, and has existed from the dawn of creation.

An infinite guiding intelligence dwells not only in the higher creatures, but also in fields of wheat, in forests of trees on land and forests of kelp in the sea. It is an intelligence which humankind in its infancy has called God, the Great Eagle, the Protector, Divine Light and many other things. Whatever terms have been used over the millennia, it remains the same indwelling force of creation, the same God of our deepest understanding.



# Maat & Asha

## Egyptian and Persian Concepts of World Balance

by Bill Anderson

*For Rosicrucians, the universe is in a state of balance and harmony called by mystics “Cosmic Order,” or simply “The Cosmic.”*



**T**HROUGHOUT the 3000-year plus history of ancient Egyptian civilisation, though many things changed, there was a constancy of certain key concepts that lasted throughout the whole of their history. One of these concepts was *Maat*. Rosicrucians will be familiar with *Maat* which means roughly truth, balance and cosmic order.





As the Indo-Iranian tribes swept south into Iran and India, they brought with them a similar concept called *Asha* in the ancient Persian religion, Zoroastrianism. Without any known contact between the Egyptian and Indo-Iranian civilisations until much later in their history, it is fascinating to speculate on how they both arrived at the same concept.

## Maat as a Principle of Cosmic Order

*Maat* does indeed mean truth, but this is too simple a translation of the Egyptian term. To the ancient Egyptians, *Maat* represented the principle of Cosmic Order as well as eternal renewal. *Maat* is right order in nature and society, as established by the act of creation, and means, according to the context, that which is right, that which is correct: law, order, justice and truth. It was considered that this state of righteousness had to be preserved and established in all matters great and small.

Originally, *Maat* seems to have been something simple, a concrete geometrical and physical term denoting “straightness” and “evenness.” The earliest hieroglyph for it probably represents the base of the pharaoh’s throne which may in turn be regarded as a stylised form of the primeval mound, the first piece of earth to appear after the act of creation. This straightness later came to mean “right” and “correct” in an ethical sense. The transference of meaning gave the concept its significance and made it a fundamental concept in Egyptian thought and behaviour.

*Maat* originated with creation: it was brought into being by the primordial god and then constantly refreshed or restored by each pharaoh. This is plain

from the following two texts: “*the sky is at peace, the earth is in joy, for they have heard that Pharaoh will set right in the place of disorder,*” and “*Tutankhamun drove out disorder from the Two Lands and Maat is firmly established in its place; he made lying an abomination and the land is as it was at the first time.*”

## Maat From the First Time. The Act of Creation

The crucial points are these: *Maat* is equated with the “*First Time*”, namely, with the act of creation. The pharaoh who drives out disorder, is an incarnation of Atum, the primeval god of creation from Heliopolis. The end of disorder goes hand in hand with the establishment of *Maat*: “*Maat is great and its effectiveness lasting; it has not been disturbed since the time of Osiris.*” There is punishment for him who passes over its laws. There is an extant *Hymn to Maat* where emphasis is laid upon its unbroken continuity from the mythical time of Osiris onward and its everlastingness, for *Maat* outlasts human life.

## Maat in the Judgement of Humans

There was an aspect of *Maat* as a measure of judgement upon humanity. So important was the concept of *Maat* that it applied not only to religious and ethical matters but to earthly justice as well. As justice, *Maat* was the basis of the Egyptian legal system. The vizier, who was responsible for the administration of justice, was, from the 5<sup>th</sup> dynasty onward, called the “*priest of Maat.*” In later times judges wore an image of *Maat* on a chain about their



*Book of the Dead*



neck. *Maat* also appears personified in human guise, wearing the headdress of a large single ostrich feather.

The Egyptians believed that during some past golden age, when all aspects of human life were allegedly in harmony, the law instinctively took account of all facets of human conduct, so that justice and ethics were integrated and social justice prevailed. They wrote for instance that in the era of the primordial gods, “*Maat came from heaven and joined those who lived on earth.*” At that time, it was believed, there was no injustice, no pain, no hunger, in short, no everyday problems whatsoever.

The judgement of the dead is dealt with in its most developed form in the *Book of the Dead*. Here the vignettes in the papyrus of Hunefer or the papyrus of Ani accompanying the text show that the dead man’s heart, deemed to be the seat of the intellect and will as well as the life-giving centre of the physical body, is weighed against a symbol of *Maat*, usually depicted as a feather, which serves as an ethical standard. The jackal-headed god Anubis, who has become an attendant of Osiris, lord of the *Duat* (the underworld), is master of the balance, and is in control of the pointer; Thoth, the scribe of the gods, records the verdict and

**To the ancient Egyptians, Maat represented the principle of Cosmic Order as well as eternal renewal.**

announces it. If the verdict should be unfavourable, the person falls victim to the “*devourer*”, a hybrid monster waiting hungrily nearby. If the verdict should be favourable, the deceased is invested with the attribute of *Maat* and as one who is “*true of voice*” (*maat kheru*), is brought before Osiris on his throne.

Many statements of innocence were voiced by the deceased before the actual weighing of the heart took place. These are at times referred to as the Negative Confession or the *Confession to Maat*. They correspond to an ideal way of life to which all should aspire, and constitute a moral code that prevailed for millennia in Egypt. Ideally you were expected to conform to *Maat* in your speech and actions. Statements to this effect are to be found among ancient funerary inscriptions. The range of human affairs permeated by these ethical principles was as broad as it could be. It included people’s conduct toward their fellow human beings, toward the



*Symbol for Zoroastrianism.*

gods and toward society. *Maat* imbued justice with an ethical spirit.

## Asha

Zoroastrianism, the religion of the ancient Persians, is a vibrant religion to this day. As a religion it has influenced Judaism, Christianity and Islam, and its effects can be seen both in Neoplatonic philosophy and Muslim Sufi thought.

The vastness of the Eurasian steppes encouraged the Indo-Iranians to conceive their gods as cosmic, not local, divinities. They understood a universal principle known in Avestan (the language of the Zoroastrian texts), as *Asha*, the principle that governs everything, from the workings of nature to human law and all human conduct.

## The Amesha Spentas

The ancient *Asha* or *Asha Vahishta*, later known as *Ardvahišt* under the Sassanian dynasty (224-637 CE), was one of the divine Heptad of Zoroastrianism, comprising *Ahura Mazda*, the Wise Lord and the six *Amesha Spentas*, the Bounteous or Holy Immortals (archangels), the six aspects of God’s own nature, through which all people came to know God. It is through these seven primal emanations that God’s will is done. It is through them that we reach God. This doctrine was an ancient, mystical way of looking at reality, and this distinct group of seven play a central role in Zoroastrian myth and ritual. Each *Amesha Spenta* protects and can be represented by one of the seven creations, which Zoroastrians believe collectively constitute the divine creation. In myth, the Holy





*The Goddess Maat.*

Immortals care for and protect their creations, and in the rituals, a token of each creation is present to represent the spiritual presence of that Holy Immortal.

*Asha*, considered as the most beautiful of the Holy Immortals, represents not only the opposite of untruth, but also the divine law and moral order in the world. *Asha* preserves order on earth as he smites disease, death, fiends, sorcerers and all vile creatures. He is truth and cosmic order and is considered to be the closest of the Holy Immortals to God.

*Asha* connotes the eternal, immutable law that governs the universe, and regulates both the spiritual and corporeal worlds. In Zoroastrianism, natural law and divine law are the same. *Asha* constitutes the yardstick for determining right and wrong. He sets normative ethics and provides the standards that apply to all people at all times. He represents absolute values. The assumption is that right deeds produce benefits alike for the author of the action and for society at large. The accrual of benefits to the author of the act is automatic. As with the law of Karma, the law of *Asha* ensures that happy consequences accrue to good acts. An individual reaps what he or she sows.

## Asha is Truth

*Asha* means many related things, and can't be translated by just one English word. You need a whole constellation of words to translate it: righteousness, law, cosmic order, truth and justice. But *Asha* is first and foremost "Truth", the opposite of the "Lie" (*druj*).

The concept encompasses all clear and objective vision, all honesty and unclouded thoughts, words and deeds. Then it is "Righteousness" which involves a commitment to good actions that build society and lead toward health, peace and good will. These actions are not prescribed, as they are in Jewish or Islamic sacred law, but they will vary as the conditions of history or society vary. The underlying call to right action

however, remains the same.

*Asha* is also "Law"; not a prescribed set of commandments, but a description of the laws that rule our lives and the universe around us. *Asha* is impersonal. In Zoroastrianism, *Abura Mazda* is not the type of God who suspends the laws of reality in order to make a point or to help someone. In Zoroaster's concept of divine governance, there are no suns standing still, miraculous healings, miraculous plagues or deliverances, no resurrections from the dead. In all the *Gathas* (Zoroastrian hymns), there are no miracles or supernatural occurrences; this is astonishing for something composed at least 3500 years ago. In *Asha*, God set up the laws of reality, both in the natural world and the social world; and he will not break them.

The law of *Asha* describes what actually happens, not what should happen. It encompasses the law of gravity and all physical laws discoverable by science as well as the laws of consequences governing our own behaviour, which are discoverable by sometimes painful experience. Throw a rock in the air and, if unhindered in its descent, it will come down: that is *Asha*. Overindulge in alcohol one night and you will wake

**To the ancient Egyptians, cosmic order was portrayed as a beautiful young woman, the goddess Maat.**

up with an unpleasant hangover; that is also *Asha*, the law of consequences. If you do wrong, quite often the world itself will punish you, either by its own laws, or by someone taking the law into their own hands.

But what of those who do wrong and prosper, who die happily after a life of evil? Then we must look to the world to come, which is also under the rule of *Asha*, where, as Zoroaster states, the "Best Existence" (heaven) is waiting for those who choose good in this world, and where the "Worst Existence" (hell) is reserved for those who have done evil. This "hell" is not eternal, since all things will be purified by the end of time; but it is long enough to purify evildoers.

Therefore, to praise *Asha* as the "best" (Avestan: *vahishta*) is to put yourself in harmony with cosmic order, and to commit yourself to the search for Truth in your spiritual, moral and working life. *Asha* dwells within you, as it does in everyone, and it is divine. Every time you do a righteous deed, no matter how small, you are bringing yourself closer to God through *Asha*.



## Light and Fire Temples

*Asha* is clearly associated with light for it is “most fair, bounteous, immortal, made of light and is all good things.” Truth is also associated with light. The ritual fire in all Zoroastrian temples was associated with *Asha*, as fire was the creation most associated with it. Today, in Zoroastrian Fire temples, the *Babram* fire, the most sacred of all fires, is necessary to fight the forces of darkness and evil and is regarded as the symbol of truth. In their Fire temples, the Persians did not worship fire; rather it was a symbol of Light and cosmic Order. Similarly in Rosicrucian temples, this tradition is perpetuated with the vestal flame.

*Asha Vahishta* is the spirit of universal law, which should be the choice of all who wish to be numbered among the *ashavans*: followers of truth or righteousness, the worshipers of the Wise Lord, as opposed to the followers of the lie and unrighteousness. The Lie is the principle of evil. In the *Yasna* ceremony, *Asha* is represented or more accurately, epiphanised, by fire. Fire played a major part in Indo-Iranian religion, and this is an example of Zoroaster’s enthusiasm for retaining elements of his pre-revelation religious upbringing and training. *Asha* is the quality of the divine Heptad which most effectively opposes the demonic *druj* or “Lie”, the instrument of deceit by which the evil spirit attempts to seduce humanity away from the true path.

### Summary

*Maat* was the order established at the creation. It was the cosmic and rightful order that the Pharaoh and every member of society had to maintain. *Maat* was the heart of Egyptian ethics. The goddess *Maat* was the personification of physical and moral law, order, truth and justice. She was the highest conception of physical and moral law and order known to the ancient Egyptians. There is a small ruined temple dedicated to *Maat* at Karnak. The temple is inside the Precinct of



Zoroastrian priest performs a ritual at a fire temple.

Montu, the smallest of three enclosures at Karnak. The temple seems to have been built by Queen Hatshepsut, then reconstructed by Tuthmosis III.

The Indo-Iranians believed that there was a natural law that ensured that the sun would maintain its regular movement, the seasons would change and existence would continue in an orderly way. To the Indians this law was known as *rita*, to the Persians as *Asha*. Truth, honesty, loyalty and courage were felt to be proper to mankind. It was considered a person’s



Hymns of the holy Gathas.

duty to uphold the great cosmic and moral principle, and thereby help to sustain all the good in creation.

The Persian Great King or *Shâhanshâh*, was the leader in the great cosmic battle between Truth and the Lie. He established order and peace on Earth with the aid of the Wise Lord *Ahura Mazda*. To the ancient Persians, *Asha* is sublime righteousness and justice. It is a universal justice and ideal truth to which we should all aspire, and emanates from the light of the Holy Mind itself. Even today the second month of the Persian year (April-May) is called *Ordibehesht*, a modern version of *Ardevahisht* or *Asha Vahishta*, the spirit of universal law.

To the ancient Egyptians, cosmic order was portrayed as a beautiful young woman, the goddess *Maat*, while for the Persians it was a handsome young god *Asha*. In both lands, the inherent beauty attributed to cosmic order is axiomatic. Both concepts arose independently in different parts of the world: Africa and the Eurasian steppes, yet both had so much in common, a recognition of inherent order to the universe and the right way for people to behave; in other words, what we now call *Karma*.

*As long as I shall be able and strong,  
so long shall I look in quest of truth.  
Truth, I shall see thee, as I acquire good thinking  
and the way to the Lord. (Y28.4-5).*



# A Spiritual Coming of Age

## Do you know who you are?

by *Laura Kacoutié*



**W**HEN I reflect on this question, I try to think of a particular moment in my life when I somehow understood myself better and gained greater certainty of my identity. Naturally, I look back to my childhood and my transition into adulthood, and I focus on my adolescence, the period of my life when I was trying to assert my identity and discover who I was..., for it was here that I started making decisions for myself in my education, my career and my relationships. Many experiences from that time made me question my purpose, my identity and my reason for being on our planet.

This narrative aligns with the concept of a “coming of age” moment. It is a particular experience or defining moment where the innocence of childhood is replaced with the maturity of an adult. The boy becomes a man, the girl becomes a woman, the adult within emerges and we gain a new perspective of ourselves and the world. But as defining and life-altering as this moment can be, is it truly the moment when we fully come to understand ourselves? Is the transition from childhood to adulthood all it takes to know ourselves?



## Coming of Age Ceremonies

For centuries in many traditions, this transition from childhood to adulthood has been seen as the defining moment when a new identity is assigned to a person. Upon reaching the age of maturity, the newly found adult is given more responsibility, more accountability and a greater purpose in the community. This naturally strengthens their sense of identity and alters how they see themselves.

The purpose of a coming of age ceremony is beautifully illustrated in the “*Sunrise Ceremony*” practised by the Apache in Native American culture. An Apache girl will partake in the Sunrise Ceremony the summer after she begins her first menstrual cycle, and for four days and nights, she will undergo various spiritual ceremonies, prayers, songs and dances as she re-enacts the life of the first ever woman as described in the Apache creation story known as the “*White Painted Woman*” or the “*Changing Woman*.” Throughout the days and nights of this solemn induction into adulthood, the girl performs special dances towards the four directions, starting with the East.

**Discovery and expression of that inner spiritual life is ultimately the firm bedrock upon which all else in life depends, and sets out for each of us a clear roadmap for the rest of our life.**

The girl’s mental and physical endurance is tested. She must overcome her weaknesses and draw upon the influx of Divine feminine energy which is at her disposition throughout the ceremony. Indeed, throughout this days-long sacred ordeal, the girl is imbued with the physical and spiritual energy of the *White Painted Woman* and is transformed into a *Changing Woman*.

At the end of the ceremony the little girl is no more, for she has become a woman with new roles and responsibilities in the community. Although she will receive gifts from the community to commemorate the experience, it is the mental shift above all which is the most significant and permanent. Many women have expressed that they no longer saw themselves as children when the initiation was over. They had gained new confidence, new strength, and above all, a new identity.

The impact that such a ceremony can have on a person’s identity and sense of purpose is clear. Yet, in this day and age, the coming of age ceremony is far less common and adhered to. It still exists in some cultures and religions but arguably does not carry the same weight

as it did a long time ago. But wait a minute, are there any remnants of those old ceremonies that have survived into a modern-day equivalent? Do we have a ceremony that truly compels us to reflect upon our identity or that assigns us an entirely new one?

## A Modern Equivalent

There are many milestones in modern life that have an impact on our identity. Wearing the cap and gown at your graduation ceremony, your first job, getting married, having a child, these are just examples of life-changing moments that may have truly made us reflect on who we are as people, or altered the way we saw ourselves.

Nevertheless, none of these milestones can be reasonably be viewed as being stages that one must forcibly go through to reach adulthood. Many are experiences of choice, though some of them may carry more social pressures than others. They aren’t automatically triggered by virtue of reaching a certain age in the same way the coming of age ceremonies were.

It is also clear that merely reaching a certain age does not mean we will suddenly know ourselves. Reaching the age of 18 does not guarantee self-knowledge as there are many adults in their 40s or 50s who are still trying to find themselves. The so-called ‘mid-life crisis’, though widely humoured, is the time of life when the spiritual impulse of the inner Self starts to become more prominent, and the ego is required to take a back seat. During this time the bigger questions in life become more urgent and we start questioning who we really are. At the same time, there is a popular sentiment that our 30s are now the new 20s. Our 20s are now reserved for greater exploration and less commitment, for we are settling down later, having kids later and studying longer. Age is clearly nuanced and not a definition of self-knowledge.

So have we stopped thinking about who we are as a society? Does the absence of a wide-spread coming of age ceremony mean we don’t really know who we are anymore? I don’t think this is the case. As with most things, mind-sets evolve and change. The absence of a coming of age ceremony does not equate to an absence of self-knowledge and we need to look at the essence of what coming of age ceremonies were trying to achieve.

By being assigned a new identity, and having to undergo various ordeals to demonstrate the child’s worthiness to receive the identity, it was really a ceremony that allowed girls and boys to reflect on who they were and the sort of person they wanted to become. In our modern era, I believe that for this type of reflection to





carry any form of lasting resonance with us, we absolutely must consider our spiritual identities as essential to our life-long wellbeing, and hasten the advent of that *spiritual* coming of age that every human being must eventually reach, whether in their teens, 20s, 40s or 60s. Discovery and expression of that inner spiritual life is ultimately the firm bedrock upon which all else in life depends, and sets out for each of us a clear roadmap for the rest of our life.

## A Spiritual Coming of Age

When I am asked the question “who I am?” I can’t help but answer it from a spiritual perspective. By spiritual I mean not restricted to my purely physical identity. I can’t simply answer the question by giving my name, occupation, race or gender because these features are not all that I am.

“Who am I?” automatically leads me to several follow-on questions equally important to my knowledge of self: Why am I here? What is my purpose? What am I meant to contribute in life? These important questions can’t simply be answered by listing my physical characteristics only. My external circumstances don’t paint the whole picture — I need to have some understanding of my soul, my core personality, my inner-self.

It is no coincidence that this knowledge of inner-self seems to be the missing piece for a lot of people who constantly search for that ‘something.’ We can see it in the world around us now, that there is an attraction towards spiritual things, a yearning for more substance to life and the need to explore new ways of thinking. Our souls are calling us to recognise our spiritual identities in many of the ways we go about our daily lives. For example, many of our interests involve a spiritual dimension — hobbies such as yoga, meditation, retreats and well-being workshops are becoming more mainstream.

There is a greater emphasis on the non-physical aspects of our health — mental health, counselling and therapy are subjects which are less taboo. We are more considerate of the health of our planet and the quality of the food we put into our bodies — organic food, ethical trading, vegetarianism and veganism are on the rise. We are so much more conscious of our impact on the world and the things we put into our bodies. Our soul is yearning for us to keep a healthy body and mind, and to preserve the beautiful nature around us.

The amount of social awareness is also demonstrative of our soul’s inner yearning to express itself. Protests, social justice, speaking out..., we don’t just want to live, we want to live a ‘good’ life, be ‘good people’, do the ‘right thing.’ Our soul is calling us to reflect its highest qualities of peace, love, fairness and equality in the societies we live in.

## The Answer Within

We can see from these examples that our spiritual identities are constantly trying to assert themselves in this modern world. The absence of a coming of age ceremony does not mean we do not know ourselves anymore. In fact, it has probably faded away because so many people have understood that the simple process of growing older or reaching an age of physical maturity does not necessarily mean we know ourselves better.

Who am I? Why am I here? What is my purpose? Why is the world like this? What can I do to change the world? If, despite our various titles and the years we have lived on our blessed planet, we are still asking these questions, then we are having our spiritual coming of age. We want to understand our source, the power within us and who we are in a context that extends far beyond any earthly title or identity.

The spiritual coming of age is not dependent on when we menstruate or when we form an Adam’s Apple. It is a prompting that arises when we are ready, and which will continue until we finally take the step forwards and begin the initiation.

Like the Apache girl awaiting her *Sunrise Ceremony*, we must also cross the threshold into understanding a part of ourselves we have yet to discover but which is the key to our identity. If we continue to ignore the calling and the answers to the questions our inner-self is asking, then regardless of our age, we will remain in an eternal adolescence, never really crossing the threshold or beginning the path to understanding ourselves. But when we do, we are truly on the road to discovering who we are.





# The Journey Into Self

by Lynn Hodgkinson

**T**HE ESSENCE of any esoteric tradition worth its salt can be summarised in the following statement: “*Any sincere quest for the understanding of Self, journeys from the outer to the inner.*” If we seek to scale the limitless heights of the inner landscape and discover our oneness with the wider Whole of which we are a part, we must get a fuller measure of the person in us that operates in the world, interacting with and responding to its myriad daily events.

Viewing things in the full light of day, we intuitively know we can't reasonably hope to know our inner realms until we have thoroughly grasped the outer world.

## Character

Since every venture into the unknown begins with that first metaphorical step forward, let us begin our journey by focusing our attention of our character and the outer





impression we make on others. Character is constantly becoming, it evolves and adjusts to circumstances ceaselessly, thanks to the many influences acting upon us as we journey through life. Character also seems to be in many respects merely outer aspects of something already fully formed but deeply hidden within us. Character gives shape and expression to a personal ideal or standard, which also ever evolves and changes, as each day passes.

Character is the conscious code of thought and practice, emotion and action, which the school of personality has established for [us] and which our outer traits emulate as an ideal.<sup>1</sup>

Personal evolution is about learning to analyse and assess which traits are right, which need to be modified, and which need to be abandoned altogether. And this requires a closer look at our Personality which ultimately sets all the inner standards by which we govern our lives.

## Personality

Personality may be revealed or veiled. It is the subtle quality of the inner person that reveals itself at times in ways that pleasantly surprise us. The question is: does that hidden, inner personality change too? Or, as we evolve, is our inner 'school' occasionally simply selecting a different standard with which to express itself? Reflecting on our personal journey through life and our responses to it, can yield some revealing new knowledge about ourselves. The theosophical writer, Mabel Collins, wrote:

The entire true meaning of earthly life consists only in the mutual contact between personalities and in the efforts of growth. Those things which are called events and circumstances, and which are regarded as the real contents of life..., are in reality only the conditions which make these contacts and this growth possible.<sup>2</sup>

Ultimately, what is it that drives us to respond to those conditions? What is it that prompts us to engage with them, thereby precipitating inevitable inner growth and maturation? Indeed, what lies even deeper than that inner, subtle personality? Do we have an inner 'engine room', and if so, who or what is directing it?

## Mysticism and Science

To our ordinary, daily thought processes, our deeper, immaterial levels of cognition are extremely subtle and

elusive. For most people there is a complete unawareness that anything of a deeper nature exists in deeper layers of their being. Therefore, if we are to apprehend those refined and softly spoken thoughts of the deeper self, a new method of research and discovery is required. And it is here that the path begins to divide between the sort of life that is revealed through mysticism, and the sort of life that the present state of science alone can reveal, resisting, as it does, recognition of any forms of human perception outside of the normal five senses of sight, sound, touch, hearing and smell.

But it is early days yet, and times are changing fast. The pioneering spirits of science are now increasingly recognising the existence of often unseen yet indisputable causes behind most of the effects we encounter in the world, and causes which can be apprehended by faculties within us that lie beyond our usual five senses. But as long as we continue to limit our exploration to only those things that we can physically perceive, our journey of discovery will remain impeded. Emphatically, we can't rely *exclusively* on our five objective senses to discover what lies beyond them. To "see beyond", we must turn to our unseen but ever-present helper, the conscious, independent volition of the deeper parts of our Self.

## The Higher Self and the Unity of All Things

Both the perceivable and non-perceivable worlds have one thing in common: they inherently possess all qualities of the Cosmic, which can be described as 'the unity of all things.' This unity, known to many simply as "the Cosmic", is within all things and crucially for us, it is within us too.

This Cosmic or universal unity, has order and intelligence, and we can learn how to tap into the higher aspects of our own being, the personality of our own deeper Self, and come into intimate contact with that font of wisdom and experience, gaining much insight and inspiration from it. Rosicrucian meditation techniques and exercises provide us with the map and compass we need to accomplish this first and all subsequent contacts. Our discoveries from this secret inner chamber can then be brought into the clear light of day where we can apply the acquired knowledge in practical, useful ways in our dealings with life and the world around us. Moment by moment we are extending our inner keyboard. That is the wonder and the glory of our human existence.

## Footnotes

1. From a 1960s monograph of the Rosicrucian Order - Degree 8, No: 3.
2. "The Story of the Year: A Record of Feasts and Ceremonies" published by George Redway, 1895.



# Navajo Sand Paintings

## Sacred Healing

by Pensator



**I**N THE *Four Corners* region of the Southwestern United States, where Arizona, Utah, New Mexico and Colorado meet, is the Navajo Indian Reservation, the largest in the country. The Navajo or *Diné* call it *Dinébtah*. It is strikingly beautiful country, and was the home of one of the ancient civilisations of North America.

The Navajo tell stories about Rain Boy, a gambler who lost all of his family's possessions. Fleeing his angry

relatives, he arrived at the house of a beautiful woman. Her jealous husband shattered him with hailstones. Some Holy People from the spiritual world took pity on him and restored him. After further adventures, he returned to his own people, bringing with him the healing ceremonies he learned from the Holy People. It is now thought that these ceremonies and the paintings associated with them were originally learned from the Pueblo tribes of the Rio Grande valley, the descendants



of the Anasazi civilisation. Among the Navajo, who came later to this land, the ceremonies evolved a more complex and important role, emphasising their innate sense of “oneness.”

The Navajo concept of the universe is an ideal one, an all-inclusive unity, delicately balanced, full of enormously powerful forces with potential for both good and evil, in which all parts are maintained in interrelated harmony. Only humans can upset this balance. Illness, physical and mental, is seen as the result of upsetting this harmony. It is for the preservation or restoration of this harmony, that Navajo religious ceremonies are performed. During the complex series of healing ceremonies or chants, designed to restore harmony to the patients, the Navajo create pictures on a one to three inch bed of sand, some as small as a foot square, while others can be as much as twenty feet across. Most average about six feet. The drypaintings, perhaps a more accurate term than sandpaintings, are made with pigments obtained from pulverised gypsum, yellow ochre, red sand, charcoal, pollen, cornmeal and crushed flowers. The colours may vary, but the four principal colours: white, blue, yellow and black are always present, reflecting the four directions. They are intricate, highly stylised, and beautiful. These sandpainting designs duplicate the images that the Holy People used in their rituals, and are a type of mandala.

The images depict the legendary supernatural heroes and heroines (or gods) known as the Holy People. This vast pantheon includes First Man and First Woman; Spider Woman, who taught women to weave; Big Fly, who conveys messages between the Navajo and the Holy People; and others like the Mountain People, the Snake People, and the Corn People. Especially revered is Changing Woman, the mother of the Hero

Twins, the sons of the Sun, called Monster Slayer and Born For Water. They made the world a safer place for the Navajo by slaying many threatening creatures.

The Navajo term for sandpainting is *íikááh*, “the place where the gods come and go.” Summoned by a singer or *hataáalii*, (a medicine man or woman), the Holy People enter a sandpainting, infusing it with their healing power. By sitting in the middle of the painting, the patient is able to attune with and absorb this healing power. Such sandpaintings are considered gifts from the Holy People and must be started at sunrise and be completed by sunset.

**The Navajo concept of the universe is an ideal one, an all-inclusive unity, delicately balanced, full of enormously powerful forces with potential for both good and evil, in which all parts are maintained in interrelated harmony.**

Typically, the sandpaintings are used in night rituals conducted inside an eight-sided log Hogan or Navajo house. The Hogan is a gift of the Holy People, and as such it occupies a place in the sacred world. Its door faces the east, so that the first thing a Navajo family sees in the morning is the rising sun. The sandpaintings in the Hogan cannot be made by just anyone. The singer who supervises the construction is a specialist whose apprenticeship to another medicine-person, sometimes lasting many years, initiates him as a practitioner of a ceremony known as a “Way.” Each “Way” is named for the forces addressed by its songs, chants, prayers and sandpaintings: among which are the “Blessingway”, performed for general well-being, and to ensure that one may “walk in beauty”, “Mountainway”, “Nightway” and “Windway.” The cause of the sickness determines the ceremony needed to effect a cure.

Some “Ways” may last as long as nine days and nights.

A “Way” may have as many as a hundred sandpaintings associated with it, and over five hundred different sandpaintings have been recorded. Although the “Ways” may differ in length of ceremonies, number of sandpaintings and forces toward which prayers are directed, all share a common goal: the restoration of *hózhó*.

*Hózhó* has no English equivalent. It can be grasped by blending concepts such as “sacred”, “holy”, “blessed”, “balance” and “harmony.” It has also been referred to as “beauty” and is the equivalent of the Ancient



*Navajo sandpainting, photogravure by Edward S. Curtis, 1907, Library of Congress*





*Navajo Chief and woman with child.*

Sacred Mountain of the East (Sierra Blanca peak in the Sangre de Cristo Mountains near Alamosa, Colorado). Blue represents *Tsoodzil* or Turquoise Mountain, the Sacred Mountain of the South (Mount Taylor in the San Mateo Range near Grant, New Mexico), and represents the sky. The western part is yellow and represents *Doko'óosliid*, the Abalone Shell Mountain, the Sacred Mountain of the West, (Humphreys Peak in the San Francisco Mountains north of Flagstaff, Arizona). It represents the twilight. Black represents the north, associated with *Dibé Nítsaa* or Obsidian Mountain, the Sacred Mountain of the North (Mount Hesperus in the La Plata range near Durango, Colorado), and represents darkness. Within the area encompassed by these four were another three sacred mountains.

Egyptian concept of Maat. To the Navajo, *hózhó* is fragile and easily disrupted by the forces of chaos.

When life tips out of balance, disorder ensues. Someone in need of, for example, “Mountainway” can suffer from a range of ailments including arthritis, rheumatism, fainting, nerves or stomach disorders. By contacting the elemental forces of the cosmos through chanting ceremonies, the singer tries to alleviate the suffering. Through the sandpaintings and ceremonies, the singer appeals to the Holy People, summoning them to heal the patient by reinstating *hózhó*.

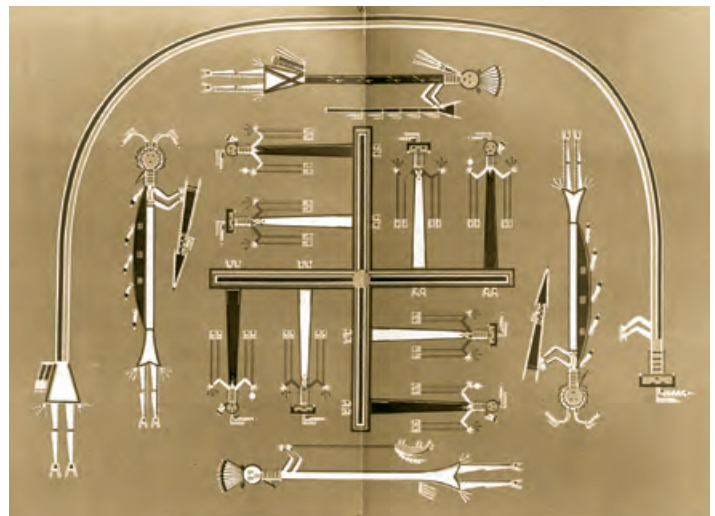
The designs were an integral part of the religious ceremonies of the Holy People themselves, recounting the lessons of life. The construction of each sandpainting follows a prescribed formula. If it is not made correctly, the Holy People will not come. Properly constructed, it functions as a beacon the Holy People cannot ignore. Sandpaintings face east, which is always at the top of the painting, and open to let in the dawn’s light. The east is the direction from which the Holy People enter. It is sacred and one from which no harm or evil can enter. The painting must then be ceremoniously destroyed before dawn.

Sandpaintings convey complex and symbolic messages. The principal colours white, blue, yellow and black link the four sacred mountains rising up at the farthest borders of *Dinéhtah*, within the boundaries of which they believe the Creator placed them. White, the dominant colour in the eastern part of the sandpainting, represents the dawn and *Tsisnaasjini* or White Shell Mountain, the

The first part of any chant is devoted to purification, achieved through the use of emetics, herbal treatments or sweat baths. After this, during the second part of the ceremony comes the attempt to attract the Holy People to restore balance or *hózhó*. This is when the sandpaintings are made.

**Sandpaintings convey complex and symbolic messages.**

The Singer, patient, friends and relatives sit around the sandpainting joined in common purpose by the singer’s prayers, a melodic recitation of repeated refrains



*Navajo sandpainting, photo by H.S. Poley, published c. 1890-1908, Library of Congress.*



reflecting the universal need for meaningful ritual. The ceremony reaches its climax as the singer escorts the patient into the sandpainting itself, which is a centre of transformation. The patient sits facing the east, the direction from which the Holy People will arrive. For a few moments, as the singer rubs pigment from the sand painting onto the patient's body, one part at a time, the Holy People, sandpainting and patient merge into one. During this physical contact a pathway between the patient and the gods is established, allowing healing to begin. The patient then rises to "walk in beauty" once again.

At the conclusion of the ceremony, the participants destroy the sandpainting. It is swept on to a blanket and taken outside to be disposed of, to the north of the Hogan. If it was left in place, the Holy People, having no choice but to revisit it, would discover no ceremony under way, no patient, no singer, none of the honour they expect and which is their due. Their displeasure could manifest itself in the patient's loss of *hózhó* just restored by the ceremony.

**At the conclusion of the ceremony, the participants destroy the sandpainting.**

If a patient has confidence in a singer, then he can be cured. Exactly what happens during a sandpainting ceremony is a mystery to Western understanding, but the Navajo maintain that the sandpaintings work because they are gifts from the Holy People. Given attention and surrounded by people who care, the patient follows a trusted singer along the healing pathway. The spectators also share in the blessings



derived from attending the ceremonies, and in the feast afterwards.

The above is all reminiscent of the symbolism in our own Lodges, Chapters, Pronaoi and Atrium Groups. Nowadays, it is possible to buy sand painting designs on textiles, pictures or miniature "sandpaintings." But precautions are taken. Perhaps different colours are used or figures are omitted or included in a scene, to render the designs harmless.

As Rosicrucians, we learn in our studies that when we are ready, the Master will appear. While the tradition of sandpainting may not have the same connotation as the Rosicrucian axiom, we know that for patients it is necessary to be ready, to prepare themselves with the correct inner mental attitude for the Holy People and the healing to manifest. After all, all forms of healing simply augment the body's own natural healing abilities. Medical staff now acknowledge that for many traditional Navajo patients, successful treatment will be done in conjunction with a *hatáálii*, a holistic concept long known to the native peoples of the Americas, but only now being rediscovered by Western medicine.

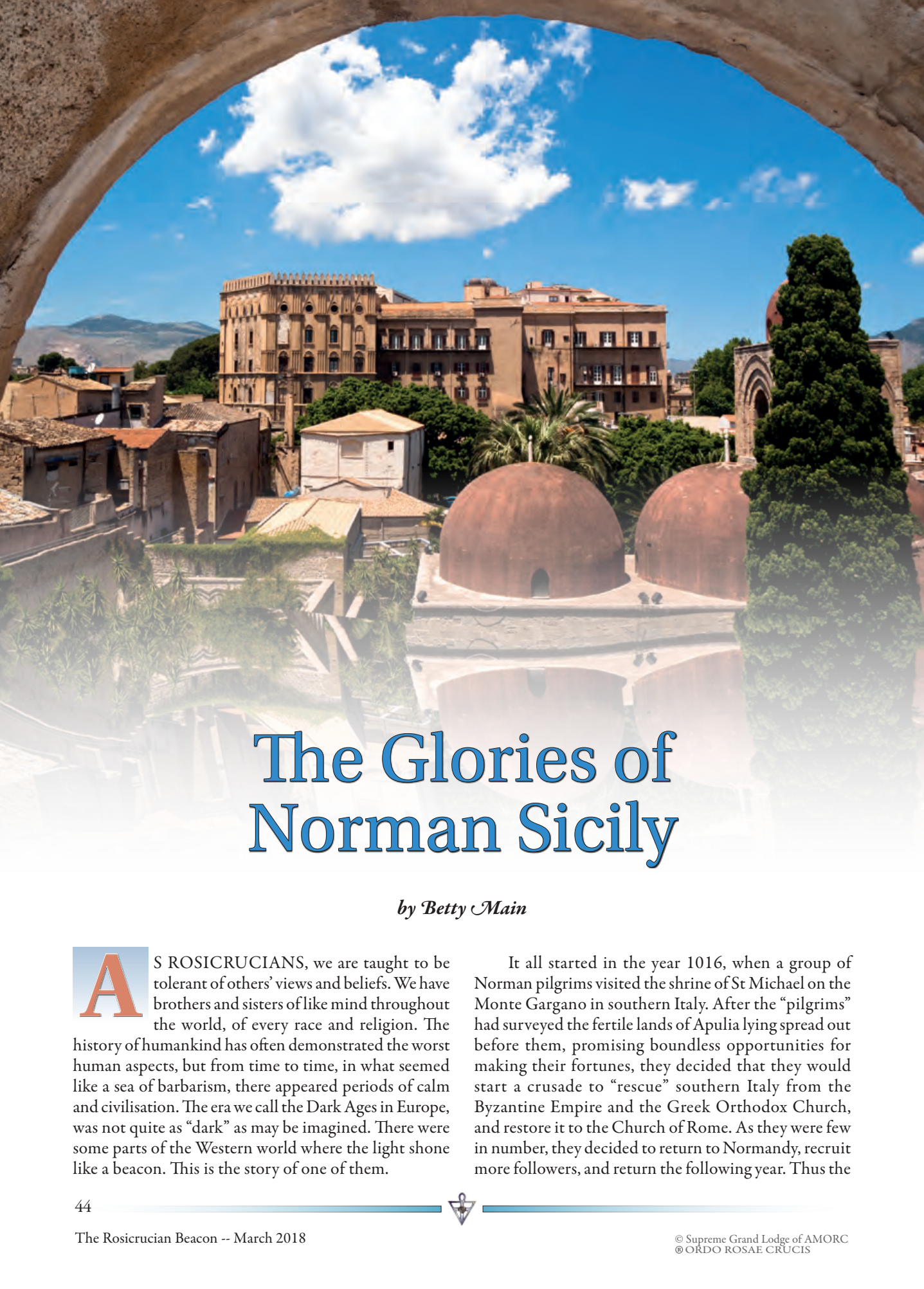


*Navajo sandpainting, "The wind people."*



*Navajo sandpainting, detail.*





# The Glories of Norman Sicily

by *Betty Main*

**A**S ROSICRUCIANS, we are taught to be tolerant of others' views and beliefs. We have brothers and sisters of like mind throughout the world, of every race and religion. The history of humankind has often demonstrated the worst human aspects, but from time to time, in what seemed like a sea of barbarism, there appeared periods of calm and civilisation. The era we call the Dark Ages in Europe, was not quite as "dark" as may be imagined. There were some parts of the Western world where the light shone like a beacon. This is the story of one of them.

It all started in the year 1016, when a group of Norman pilgrims visited the shrine of St Michael on the Monte Gargano in southern Italy. After the "pilgrims" had surveyed the fertile lands of Apulia lying spread out before them, promising boundless opportunities for making their fortunes, they decided that they would start a crusade to "rescue" southern Italy from the Byzantine Empire and the Greek Orthodox Church, and restore it to the Church of Rome. As they were few in number, they decided to return to Normandy, recruit more followers, and return the following year. Thus the



Normans started to arrive in the region, which was to become the hunting ground for Norman knights and others anxious for land and booty. At first they arrived as individuals and in small groups, but soon they came flooding in as mercenaries, to indulge in warfare and brigandage. Their Viking ways had clearly not been entirely forgotten.

## Robert Guiscard and Roger de Hauteville

One of them, Robert Guiscard, having established his ascendancy over the south of Italy, acquired from the papacy, the title of Duke of Naples, Apulia, Calabria and Sicily. The Papacy, caught between the Lombards and the German Holy Roman Empire to the north and the Byzantine Empire to the south, came to regard the Normans as guarantors of its independence.

Robert Guiscard, though primarily a Norman knight, was a shrewd politician and used his natural astuteness to achieve a concordat with Pope Nicholas II, whereby, in return for receiving the title of Duke of Apulia, he agreed to chase the Saracen Arabs from Sicily and restore Christianity to the island. For this purpose he summoned his half-brother Roger de Hauteville to join him from Normandy. Contemporary records describe the youth as being handsome, tall and well proportioned, as well as being strong and courageous in battle, yet always remaining friendly and cheerful.

Roger arrived in Italy in 1056, a mere 10 years before another buccaneering Norman, William of Normandy, invaded England. During his early years, Roger helped Robert Guiscard to establish his rule over southern Italy, fighting not only against the Byzantine forces, but also against dissident Norman and Lombard barons. Together they started the conquest of Sicily, but, after Robert had helped Roger to conquer Palermo, the Arab capital of Sicily, and Roger, in turn, had helped Robert to storm Bari, the Byzantine provincial capital on the Adriatic Sea, Robert remained on the mainland. This



Robert Guiscard.

left Roger a free hand in Sicily. Roger recognised Robert as his overlord, and in return he was granted the title of Count of Sicily and Calabria.

Prior to the Norman *entrada* into Sicily, the Arabs had occupied the island for two and a half centuries. It was divided into three mutually antagonistic emirates. Although the majority of the population was Greek, having been a part of the Byzantine Empire for centuries, the laws and administration were Islamic. Roger appreciated that occupying Sicily would be a challenge, as well as a chance to escape from Robert's shadow. Whenever possible, he and his knights avoided military confrontation, unless they were sure of winning the battle. When they did engage in operations, their discipline and military tactics gave them the victory. Yet it was impossible to administer a country with so few Normans. The terms under which Roger accepted the surrender of Palermo laid down the principles he was to adopt in pacifying the rest of the island.

**The terms under which Roger accepted the surrender of Palermo laid down the principles he was to adopt in pacifying the rest of the island.**

There would be no reprisals, and he would stop looting immediately. All Arab lives and property would be respected. He sought their friendship and would ask only for their allegiance and an annual tribute. In return, he undertook not to interfere with the practice of the Muslim faith or the application of Islamic law. These terms applied to the conquest of the rest of the island, though that took him nearly 30 years to complete. The Arabs lost their independence, but for them it was the beginning of an unprecedented order such as they had never known before, under a strong central government, which enabled them to develop their artistic and intellectual talents.

Roger realised that the Muslims needed to be persuaded to voluntarily accept his regime, and to do so he had to treat them with tolerance and understanding, thereby creating an atmosphere of internal harmony and mutual respect. For this purpose he accepted the Arab bureaucracy which existed on the island, consisting of a mixture of Arabs and Greeks. He also adopted many of their titles; the Christian governor of Palermo for instance, being addressed as "Emir", while his principal minister, George of Antioch, a Greek, who was also the Admiral of his Navy, manned by Greek crews, held the title of "Emir of Emirs." Roger also established a crack force of Arab troops with Arab



officers. By maintaining their traditional fighting methods, the corps provided an outlet for the military instincts of the Muslims, while giving them pride and participation in the new Sicilian state.

Some mosques, which had originally been Christian, were reconverted, but others remained untouched. Islamic law was administered by Emirs in local courts. Arabic became an official language, along with Latin, Greek and Norman French. Where Greek Christians were resentful of these changes, he allowed them to keep their local titles and also provided material aid for the reconstruction of their churches. While encouraging the establishment of Latin cathedrals and abbeys, he himself helped to found Basilian monasteries and churches, using imported Byzantine craftsmen. Arab scientific and artistic endeavours were encouraged, and many who had fled to North Africa or Spain returned to the island. Thus he laid the foundations of a multiracial polyglot state, in which Norman, Greek and Arab, under a firmly centralised administration, followed their own cultural and religious traditions in freedom and concord.

The result was that, when the “Great Count” died in 1101, he had transformed Sicily into a nation, heterogeneous in religion and language, but united in loyalty to its Christian ruler. Sicily was well on the way

to becoming the most brilliant and prosperous state in the Mediterranean, if not in the whole of Europe.

## Floreat Sicilia

His son Roger II (ruled 1101-1154) was nine years old when he succeeded as Count. His mother, a northern Italian from Liguria, acted as Regent for him. During his long minority he was educated by Greek and Arab tutors, who helped him to develop the exotic side of his nature. With dark eyes, hair and complexion, his appearance was that of a southerner. He had grown up in the cosmopolitan atmosphere of tolerance and mutual respect, so he was able to understand the complex system of checks and balances on which the internal stability of his country depended. Unlike his forefathers, he disliked war and preferred to use diplomacy, possibly accompanied by financial inducements. By these means, he was able to acquire the duchies of Apulia and Calabria, and so unite the south of Italy into a single dominion.

During a crisis in the Papal tenure, when two Popes were elected at the same time, he first acquired the triple Dukedom and then in 1128 was named King of Italy south of the Garigliano. By 1140, he was able to depute two of his sons, Roger of Apulia and



*Christ Pantocrator fresco inside Monreale cathedral.*





Alfonso of Capua, to administer his mainland territories, while he remained at Palermo. King Roger II was able to establish a corpus of laws, many of them borrowed from the codification of the Byzantine Emperor Justinian in the 6<sup>th</sup> Century. While making it clear that the existing laws of his subject peoples should continue in force, except where there was a direct clash with royal ordinances, all Greeks, Arabs, Jews, Lombards, and Normans under his rule were to continue to live according to the customs of their forebears.

Roger adopted an almost mystical view of the divinely-held power of the King. The law was the will of God, and the King was its ultimate interpreter. The feudal system which prevailed on his mainland dominions belonged to Western Europe; the civil service in the Sicilian provinces was based on Arabic institutions, but the monarchy followed Byzantine traditions, many of which went back to ancient Persian times, and can still be found in British royal ceremonial. The King also established a coinage for the whole kingdom. A small coin, worth a third of a ducat, minted in Palermo had, on the obverse a Latin inscription surrounding a Greek cross, and on the reverse, in Arabic, the date when it was struck in Palermo, using the Islamic calculations from the Hegira (departure of the Prophet Mohammed from Mecca).

Although Palermo was an Arab city, the Greeks played a part in building the new nation, respecting the balance between Muslims and Normans. In the early days, before the arrival of Latin religious and civil immigrants, they prevented the Latins from being swamped. By neatly counterbalancing the claims of the Latin Church, they gave Roger a powerful bargaining counter in his dealings with Rome.

### Sicilian-Norman Art

During the 12<sup>th</sup> Century there was a flowering of Sicilian-Norman art, as illustrated in their sacred buildings, which were a fusion of Byzantine, Arab and Norman design and construction. They were actively encouraged by the clergy who, along with the Norman barons, were responsible for commissioning them. Their architecture combined various elements,



*Detail of the Normans palace, Palermo, Sicily.*

Muslim, Romanesque, Byzantine and Gothic, producing monuments of composite style, harmony and dignity.

Their secular buildings also reflected Muslim models, whose levels of refinement were unknown in northern Europe. Their architectural remains can be seen and admired in the cathedral of Cefalù, with its colossal mosaic figure of Christ Pantocrator (Ruler of All) holding an open book with words from the Gospel of John in Latin and Greek: *“I am the Light of the World, he who follows me will not walk in darkness.”*

At Monreale, the cathedral was one of the architectural wonders of the Middle Ages, with its aura of majesty and splendour.

In the Cappella Palatina or Palatine chapel, attached to the royal palace, the light changes constantly, highlighting the mosaics representing the Holy Spirit and the theology of light. The Martorana, also in Palermo, founded by George of Antioch, had quotations from Byzantine hymns written in Arab calligraphy around its walls. These illustrated, in their different ways, the fusion of Norman, Byzantine and Islamic art.

They are exemplified by the solidity of Norman architecture, the beauty and elegance of Greek mosaics, and the slender arches supported on twin columns, as well as the honeycombed ceilings, of a style that was purely Islamic. Moreover, in the tolerant atmosphere of Palermo, there were visible advances in style. The static figures of Byzantine iconography gave way to swirling draperies, with rhythm and movement in the drawing. Islamic artists moved away from their abhorrence of the human form to experiment with painting figures in mythical scenes.

The King himself was famous for his insatiable intellectual curiosity, as well as a profound respect for learning. He gave a permanent home in Palermo to many of the foremost scholars, scientists, doctors, philosophers and mathematicians of the Western and Arab worlds. Roger himself was very knowledgeable in mathematics, also studied by Arab scholars, in addition to medicine and astronomy. At his court, Arabic became an intellectual scientific language in its own right. He would spend much of his time in the company of these savants. Such poets as flourished in





*Cefalu cathedral, Sicily.*

Palermo were nearly all Arab, but the King's preference was for science. He encouraged his geographer al-Edrisi to collect information from ships arriving in his ports, about the places, climates, conditions and peoples of the areas they had visited.

From the hard geographical facts elicited, Roger was aware that the Earth was round, with water adhering to it as seas and oceans. There were also flourishing developments in the matter of classical literature. The Norman churchmen stimulated a return to the study of Latin writings, while ancient Greek documents (many originals having been destroyed by barbarian invasions), were released from Byzantine sources, and texts which had hitherto only been known from Arab translations, were now seen in their original form.

Through Roger's enthusiasm, Sicily became the clearinghouse where, for the first time, western and oriental scholars met on an equal footing. Under his inspiration, studies were made in philosophy, mathematics, applied chemistry, medicine and astronomy, by scholars who brought learning from around the Mediterranean Sea. At that time, Roger II was probably the wealthiest ruler in Europe, and his court in Palermo the most brilliant.

Many future developments during the 12<sup>th</sup>

Century can be attributed to the influences of the court of Roger II. There was a transformation of philosophical methods. Legal studies entered a new phase. New styles of architecture were instituted, while poets composed their verses in the secular language. By reviving an interest in the writers of Roman antiquity, scholars learned to express themselves in a graceful and efficient form of Latin, in addition to studying ancient Greek traditions. In the Muslim world moreover, there was an expansion of knowledge in mathematics, science and astronomy.

## The End of an Era

The centralised constitution which both Rogers established in Sicily needed a strong efficient monarch at its centre. Roger's remaining son and grandson, William I and II, lacked that capacity and, in their reigns, the pattern of government began to unravel at the seams.

With the arrival of German influence in 1194, in the person of the Holy Roman Emperor Henry VI Hohenstaufen, the son of Barbarossa, it caused the triumphs of Norman Sicily, except for their architectural achievements, to wither, fade, and die, till today, they are but a memory.





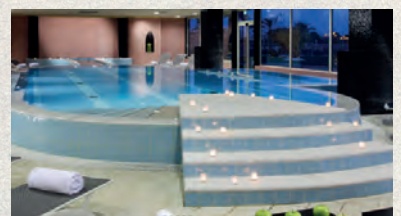
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Nature always wears the  
colours of the spirit.

*Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803-1882)*