

Rosicrucian Heritage



No:2-2013

The wonder of Life

The Rosicrucian Order
www.amorc.org.ng

Think for a moment that you were not here, no longer a living person on our beloved planet Earth. No breeze on your face, no warm sunshine to enjoy, no twitter of birds, no smell of rain following the dry season, no loving hand to hold, no music to hear, no inspiring words to read. All that we value, every single thing we care about is down there...., on our home planet, our world. What intense longing we would feel if we were not there.

It takes so little to understand the privileged state of our existence on earth. How precious the world is to all its forms of life, but how few people take the time to truly appreciate the uniqueness of this rare gift and return the blessings received.

If you seek a closer connection with all that surrounds you..., if you seek a deeper appreciation of all things on earth..., if happiness, peace and justice for all is what you really seek..., then learn to commune with your inner self, find the deeper you, and through it find the universe itself.

By reading this magazine you have an open mind, and this message was meant for you! To find out more about the Rosicrucian Order, visit our website www.amorc.org.ng or contact us for a free copy of our introductory booklet "*The Mastery of Life.*"

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ISSN 1118-0242

Published biannually by the
ROSICRUCIAN ORDER, AMORC
(Europe, the Middle East and Africa)
REGIONAL ADMINISTRATION
State Housing Estate, PMB 1220,
Calabar, Cross River State,
NIGERIA

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Issued free to members of the
ROSICRUCIAN ORDER
as an incidence of membership

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Changes of address must reach us
by the first of the month preceding
publication.

Rosicrucian Heritage

2013 - Volume 20, No: 2

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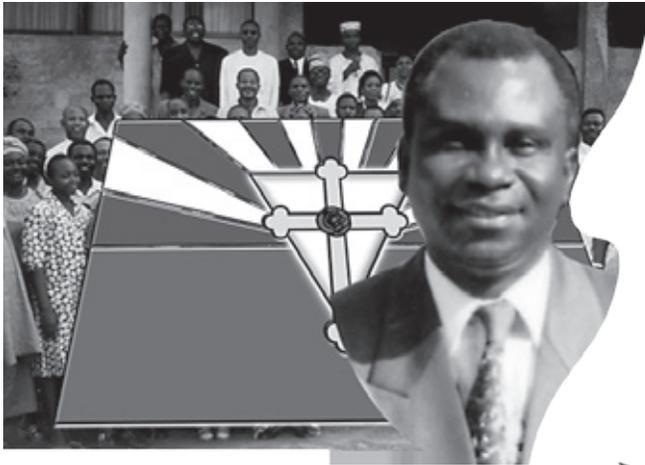
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COVER SPREAD

“The Tunnel of Light.”





Sanctum Musings



by Kenneth U Idiodi, FRC

Grand Administrator for English speaking West Africa of the Rosicrucian Order

Rosicrucianism for Personal and Societal Integration

Edited keynote address at the Lagos Zonal Conclave, 11 May 2013

WE HAVE AN inborn desire for orderliness, feeling comfortable only when we understand the function, purpose or reason for things that exist or occur around us. Things we see and interact with must make sense to us, and unexpected events or surprises can throw us into a state of confusion or even panic. In a bid to protect ourselves from avoidable dangers, we constantly analyse our experiences and try to make sense of them. And in doing so we are in fact looking for an underlying pattern connecting the phenomena around us into a single unifying whole. Usually it is an unconscious process, but it can also be a deliberate mental activity.

The perfect understanding of the pattern or system behind all the phenomena will give us the ability to accurately predict all future occurrences. With such an understanding, we can go beyond mere prediction of future events to the creation of the future we desire. This would be easy to do since we would know exactly what to do in order to have our dreams fulfilled. In other words by performing certain tasks, we would knowingly produce the specific results which must manifest according to law. If we then aim to have our personal goals or dreams as an end result, then these would manifest without fail. This is clearly not the case for most persons however. The

average human life experience is fraught with many disappointments, dashed hopes and failed aspirations, and for many, life appears to be a game of chance, of good luck and misfortune where we have to exist at the mercy of unpredictable powers.

However, it is the stupendous complexity of life that makes it appear random to persons who have not taken the time to carry out a deep and careful study of it. The Universe and all that exists in it is integrated into a single system functioning according to eternal and infallible laws. It is the full and comprehensive realisation of this great truth and the spontaneous application of this knowledge in our daily activities that brings about the condition of personal integration in an individual and societal integration with the community.

And when we are in a state of personal and societal integration, we become Masters of our own destiny by harnessing the power of the creative and constructive forces of Nature within and around us for our purposes. To attain this state, we have to overcome the limitations of ignorance, superstition and wrong education that has held most people in bondage.

The Search for Truth

Our lives could be described as a journey from



darkness into light or from ignorance into knowledge and awareness. The battle against ignorance begins in infancy with parents investing time and money on the education of their children. The worldwide cost of education has been estimated by UNESCO at over \$2 trillion (or N320 trillion) per year. Ultimately, the goal of education is to equip people with knowledge and skills that will enable them to thrive in society and contribute positively to its sustenance and development.

But the education we receive from formal academic institutions is only a fraction of the education we need in order to really thrive in the world. In the words of Valdivar, from the book *Whisperings of Self*: “Educated men must be more than textbooks, or computers, or single volumes of knowledge. They must in all their learning, think of themselves as being an integrated part of mankind. Their knowledge and personal success must contribute to society.” This implies the necessity of men and women to seek and find Truth in all its ramifications. The search for Truth is ultimately the search for God. However, the discovery of Truth has been so challenging to mankind that some philosophers have remarked that God appears to be playing hide and seek with Man.

In concurrence with this, a quotation from *Job* 23:8-9 in the Old Testament says: “Behold, I go forward, but he is not there; and backward, but I cannot perceive him: On the left hand, where he doth work, but I cannot behold him: he hideth himself on the right hand, that I cannot see him.” Complete education involves the intriguing search and discovery of Truth and God. It is the journey of the soul personality. It is a journey from a condition of fear, discord and ignorance to a state of being where there is a realisation and expression of the Divine unity of being.

Religion versus Science

The several religions of the world carry out the sacred work of revealing the word of God to mankind. There are 22 major religions in the world today with Christianity having the highest number of followers numbering up to 2.1 billion followed by Islam with 1.5 billion followers. These major religions have diverse doctrines and teachings which sometimes appear to be in conflict. However, there is only one Truth and part of this may be found in the common thread running through them all. This common thread could be summarised as the acknowledgement of a higher power to which man should pay obeisance and the importance of virtuous conduct.

Science on the other hand is another channel that has served to reveal God to Man through the understanding and application of the laws of Nature. Through a rigorous method involving research and experimentation, science has been able to prise secrets out of the clutches of Mother Nature. These have been applied in technology towards a great improvement in the material lives of human beings. In the process, many erroneous ideas held by the religions of the world have been exposed. Much of what used to be taken as literal truths in religious scripture have been relegated to the realm of mythology and symbolical stories containing moral lessons.

The unfortunate result has sometimes meant that people have lost faith in religion and now consider all spiritual teachings as false or irrelevant. In a metaphorical sense then, they have “*thrown out the baby with the bath water.*”

Far too many people today do not believe in the existence of God, and instead place their faith in science rather than religion. On the other hand many religious adherents consider science to be an evil influence in that it has turned many away from God. For this reason they condemn and oppose anything that science offers. In a metaphorical sense then, they too have “*thrown out the baby with the bath water.*”

Rosicrucian Philosophy

The vastness, depth and universality of Truth make it beyond the monopoly of any section or group of human beings. The scientific approach to discovery is powerful but has its limitations. Interestingly, some of these limitations can only be overcome by reverting to teachings propagated by the religious bodies. The need to harmonise the views of the Religious and Scientific communities has been obvious to Rosicrucian students for many centuries. In fact the Rosicrucian philosophy is a potent blend of scientific and religious thought.

The Rosicrucian approach to seeking Truth is based on an earnest and sincere desire to unravel the mysteries of life. This is to some extent exemplified in the method of investigation applied by the eminent and renowned mathematician, scientist, philosopher and Rosicrucian Rene Descartes. The method developed by Descartes was based on the following rules in his own words:

“The first rule was never to accept anything as true unless I recognised it to be evidently such: that is, carefully to avoid precipitation



and prejudgment, and to include nothing in my conclusions unless it presented itself so clearly and distinctly to my mind that there was no occasion to doubt it.

“The second was to divide each of the difficulties which I encountered into as many parts as possible, and as might be required for an easier solution.

“The third was to think in an orderly fashion, beginning with the things which were simplest and easiest to understand, and gradually and by degrees reaching toward more complex knowledge, even treating as though ordered materials which were not necessarily so.

“The last was always to make enumerations so complete, and reviews so general, that I would be certain that nothing was omitted.”

In summary, his most important rule was not to accept anything as true if there was any doubt in his mind. This was followed by his rule of breaking down the subject of his investigation into smaller parts for easier study. His third rule concerned his method of thinking, which involved moving gradually from simple ideas to more complex ones. He also took all things as having order even when they appeared not to be. Finally he always made thorough and all-encompassing reviews of his work and calculations. Nothing was too complex or mysterious for Rene Descartes to investigate. Having observed the illusions of material existence, he investigated for evidence of the very existence of self. He came to a conclusion of which he was totally convinced without a doubt and in one of his most famous quotes declared Cogito, Ergo Sum..., *“I think, therefore I am.”*

The Rosicrucian teachings require the student to put aside all preconceived notions and maintain an open mind in the search for Truth. The existence and operation of Cosmic Laws are tested and demonstrated through experiments devised for this purpose. There is no Rosicrucian dogma, it is understood that the knowledge and understanding of man evolves. All teachings are therefore expected to be subjected to scrutiny and questioning by the student. In fact a Rosicrucian should be a walking question mark.

In his acquisition of knowledge, the student must pass through the three points of the triangle of concentration, contemplation and meditation.

By concentration we focus on an issue of interest, by contemplation we establish its associations and connections and by meditation we become illumined with revelations and solutions by the higher intelligence of the Divine.

Ecosystems of Nature

As the Greater Light of Wisdom is awakened in the student, the unity and integration of all things is experienced. The ecosystems of Nature are perfect models of this integration. Everything in the natural world is connected. An ecosystem is a community of living and non-living things that work together. Ecosystems have no particular size. An ecosystem can be as large as a forest or a lake or as small as a plant or a puddle. Let us consider a lake as an ecosystem for a demonstration of the principles of integration.

The radiations from the sun into the lake cause the algae in it to grow. The algae produce oxygen for water animals like fish and also serve as food for microscopic animals. Small fish eat the microscopic animals and absorb the oxygen produced by the algae and in turn expel carbon dioxide into the water. The plants then use the carbon dioxide to produce energy for their growth. So the sun rays, the water, the algae, the micro organisms, the plants and small fish are all components of one ecosystem.

If the algae as simple as they are happen to disappear for any reason, everything in the ecosystem would be affected. Microscopic animals would not have enough food, fish would not have enough oxygen and plants would lose some of the carbon dioxide they need to function. All ecosystems in nature work in this manner. All the parts work together to make a balanced integrated system!

To the Rosicrucian, the ecosystems of Nature reflect the operation of a Divine Intelligence expressed through eternal laws. As a lesser being, man must submit or attune to the Cosmic forces if he wishes to enjoy health, happiness and peace. Quoting from an old edition of the Rosicrucian Manual:

“The word Cosmic used as both a noun and adjective refers to the universe as a harmonious relation of all natural and spiritual laws. It is the Divine infinite intelligence of the Supreme Being permeating everything. It is not a place but a state of order and regulation.

“The Cosmic is the totality of the laws and phenomena that manifest in Man and



nature – the forces, energies and powers that account for the finite and infinite worlds. It is therefore a unity; the particulars which man experiences are but expressions.”

Submission or attunement to the Cosmic is only possible when we study, investigate and understand the nature and operation of the Divine Laws. In words of Ralph M Lewis, Emperor of AMORC until 1987...

“Life is the Great Initiation..., a crossing of the threshold from non-existence to self-realisation. Its rites consist of the vicissitudes of life, each with its symbolic value. Ultimate attainment is the integrating of the total experience into an order of personal understanding and meaning.”

When the integration of our total experience gives us a true understanding of the meaning of life, we will then be able to command Nature by obeying Nature. Our lives would in this way be a perfect demonstration of personal and societal integration, an expression of the Divine Unity to which every Rosicrucian aspires.

Societal Integration and National Development

Many countries are faced with the multiple challenges of insecurity, child trafficking, social malaise, endemic corruption and of course, terrorism. If a country is not safe, stable and secure after decades of efforts at political, social and economic integration, what else can be done by individuals, organisations or the collectivity to move such a country into genuine nationhood?

The heterogeneous nature of a country must be seen as an asset not a liability! The diverse nature of a people is a reflection of the diverse nature of our global ecosystem or environment. Nigeria is a diverse but a highly religious oriented society. If Nigerians are sincere in their meditations, prayers and attitudes towards nation building, we will see the beauty of unity in our diversity. As in our former national anthem: *“Though tribe and tongue may differ in brotherhood we stand.”*

If by our individual and collective thoughts, utterances and actions we are diligent in our pursuit of national development and cohesion, then national peace, stability and progress shall be ours. And as in our current national anthem: *“the labours of our heroes past shall never be in vain.”*

Unfoldment

by Winifred Taylor (1906 - 2010)

Unfoldment: the mystic's Path. But how can it be found? It can be found by all, who seek aright, and hold the passports to the Light!

And they? Each seeker must possess the purpose of sincerity, allowing all the right to their own truth. With this dual equipoise, one may embark upon the Mystic Way.

Problems are the creation of our inward state of mind. Met with confidence and courage, naught but blessed strength they presage. Principles and applications are the causes, true unfoldment the effects, human created in our wisdom and judgement, wrought through learning from experience, lessons needed for our eminence.



Control of thoughts, emotions, acts, determine what effects shall be. Harmonious thoughts, conditions blest, give power, for good to manifest. Predominant and pregnant thoughts held in the human heart and mind, act like a magnet, and they draw to us conditions of like kind. Desires, ideals and consciousness, are our portals to blessedness.

Thus, as mystics we are our creator! We are conscious of our calling, we understand the great adventure, and seek unfoldment's overture.

Thus the Rose, the Personality of our beloved Soul blooms, unfolds and defuses its perfume, spreading kindness, inspiration, harmony, health, aid, peace and successes helping both us and our neighbour to understand.



Lost Truths Restored

The Life of Elias Ashmole



TWO ILLUSTRIOUS scholars exemplified the tenets of the Rosy Cross during the Elizabethan and Stuart Eras in Britain. The first was Sir Francis Bacon, philosopher and statesman of Elizabethan and early Stuart times who it is believed served as Imperator of the Rosicrucian Order up to his transition in 1626. The second was Elias Ashmole, the Stuart era scientist, antiquary and historian, who has been called "the greatest virtuoso ever known in England". Of Bacon, much has been written, but of Ashmole, far less is known. This article recounts the life and importance of the latter.

by Connie James

ELIAS ASHMOLE was born on 23rd May 1617 at Lichfield in the county of Staffordshire. Originally he was to have been christened *Thomas*, but when the minister officiating at his baptism asked the infant's name, his godfather answered *Elias*, which in Hebrew means *God's own*. No other member of Ashmole's family had ever been named Elias and later his godfather

declared in veiled language that he had been moved to choose this name "*by a more than ordinary impulse of spirit*".

Early historians sometimes referred to Rosicrucians as "*brothers of Elias*" after the learned priest and adept who instructed the prophet Samuel. And so the circumstances surrounding Ashmole's baptism suggest that the man who





Lichfield Cathedral

gave him his name was an initiate who thus consecrated his godson to the service of truth.

The young Elias was a slight, sensitive boy with finely chiselled aquiline features. He grew up in Lichfield, a town which was often visited by Francis Bacon who was Emperor of the Rosicrucian Order in Britain for part of his life. It is not beyond the realms of possibility that the boy occasionally glimpsed the celebrated statesman riding by in his coach to confer with fellow members of the Order pursuing their mystical work within the city's cathedral.

Through the influence of his uncle, Baron William Paget, a government financial officer, Elias was enrolled in the Lichfield Grammar School. In this institution whose alumnae included Joseph Addison, David Garrick and Dr Samuel Johnson, the brilliant youngster received an education that laid the basis for his later studies in science and the arcane. He mastered Latin at a young age and became an accomplished organist and chorister in the cathedral choir. Although not fully provable, it is almost certain that he was influenced by Rosicrucians in high positions in the academic world he had entered.

Move to London

In 1633, at the age of sixteen, he went to live with his uncle in London. There he soon attracted the attention of several notable Rosicrucians. At eighteen he was introduced to Robert Fludd, the erudite country clergyman whose writings so clearly reflected the spirit of the *Fama*

Fraternitatis, a written proclamation issued in 1614 in Kassel, Germany, by means of which the Rosicrucian Order launched a cycle of intense activity in Europe. This association between Asmole and Fludd proved to be a deciding factor in the course of Ashmole's life.

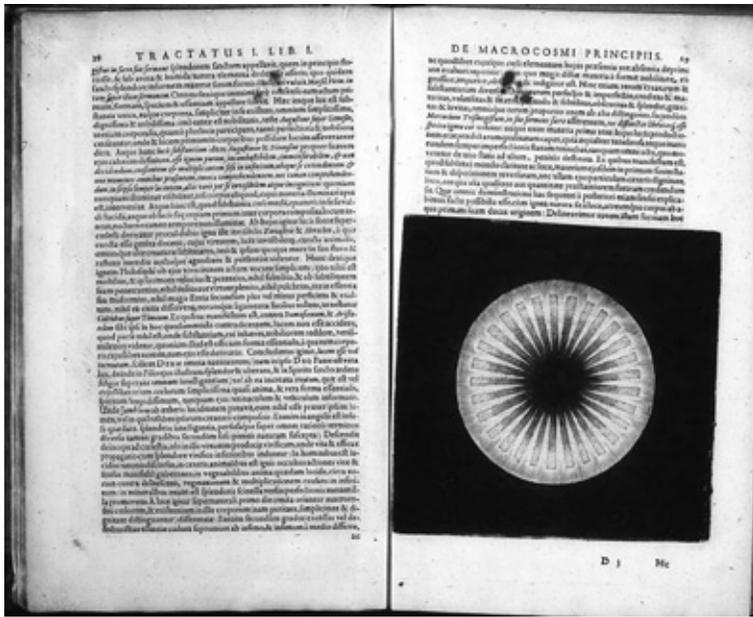
In this, the 21st Century, most Rosicrucian students begin their instruction through detailed lessons received on a regular basis by mail. Ashmole however, probably had to pry out the essential principles of the Order's teachings by poring over Fludd's *Tractatus Theologophilosophicus* (Tracts of Theological Philosophy) in Baron Paget's private library, Francis Bacon's *New Atlantis* and John Heydon's *Rosae Crucian Infallible Axiomata*.

There were no easy, clearly laid out paths of inner development available in those days since church domination of every aspect of life, including church attendance, was still a dangerous fact of life. It was also perhaps Fludd who introduced Ashmole to Freemasonry, for by the testimony of the German scholar, Sonnenkalb, Fludd was associated with London Freemasons and in fact presented them with an improved and more arcane *Book of Constitutions* at the turn of the 17th century, well



Robert Fludd (1574 - 1637)





Fludd's illustration of the Creator's cleavage of the "Great Darkness" into the polar opposites of Light and Dark.

before the re-launching of the Rosicrucian Order in 1614.

It is very likely that Ashmole was already a Rosicrucian by conviction if not actually by initiation when he entered the profession of law at twenty-one in 1638. Definite proof of his induction into the Rosicrucian Order has never been found due perhaps to the loss of a large part of the corpus of private documentation that the Order kept for a while in a certain building in London which also housed a notable Freemasonry Lodge.

Speculative as this may seem, it is likely that Fludd was Ashmole's sponsor for eventual initiation into the Rosicrucian Order. As a lawyer, Ashmole had "*an indifferent good practice*" and at the beginning of his legal career married a gentle English girl, Eleanor Mainwaring, who passed away three years later, leaving her grief-stricken husband a widower at twenty-four.

After her transition, he increasingly devoted himself to occult studies and antiquarian researches. The practice of Law was profitable enough but also a contentious, nerve-racking way that rubbed Ashmole's sensitive temperament raw. As much as he disliked the brawl-ridden courtrooms, he also abhorred military battlegrounds where maddened men slew and maimed each other.

Return to the Country

When the English Civil War came, his personal sympathies were with the Royalist party of King Charles I, fighting to maintain a regime challenged by the extreme puritanical faction of Oliver Cromwell. But like many

scholars before him, Ashmole hoped to preserve the sacred values on which men might rebuild once swords had been sheathed. He therefore fled London with its fierce partisan feuds and endless parades of soldiers and settled in his mourned Eleanor's native county of Cheshire. There, among her kinsmen, he devoted himself to his old books while Cavaliers and Puritans slaughtered each other in battle after battle across the length and breadth of England.

Economic necessity eventually forced him to accept a royal appointment as Commissioner of Excise at Lichfield, his hometown. Here he began his memorable association with Oxford University and may well have attended private Rosicrucian meetings in the august halls of the university itself. The Rosicrucian Master of Oxford Lodge was Sir George Wharton, a captain in the

Royalist army, soon to become a close friend of the young Ashmole. From Fludd himself and from the writings of other learned scholars, Ashmole already had a good grounding in the philosophical aspects of mysticism.

On the basis of this intellectual background, Wharton began teaching him the elements of astronomy and alchemy. Later, in order to deepen his understanding, Ashmole began the study of mathematics and physics at Oxford's famous Brasenose College.

Penetrating the Mundane

Through geometry he visualised the structural design of the universe typified by such symbols as the Square and Triad. In algebra, with its formulae of the unknown quantity, he saw mirrored the quest for hidden truths to be realised through comparison, analysis and correct methods of reasoning. Physics he recognised as the universe set in motion by the Creative Force of which all things, from men to the mute pebbles on the ground, were agents.

Laboratory experiments and classroom demonstrations showed Ashmole the exterior manifestations of the physical sciences, while private study and investigation helped him grasp their interior and esoteric meanings. His erudite master Fludd had taught him that a Rosicrucian must use his knowledge to guide others who may be searching for what lies beyond the veil. It was therefore in a spirit of gratitude that Elias soon set about assisting another fraternity to reclaim a



heritage it had all but lost: the Masonic fraternity.

Amongst 'Free' or 'Speculative' Masons it was believed that somewhere, there still existed a great body of teachers prefigured in the ritual as the Ancient Brethren, and that once found, these instructors would restore the 'lost wisdom'. Being Master Builders, they would re-erect the Landmarks and provide needed support for the structure of Masonry of the 17th century. Several reputable scholars have claimed that Masons identified the Builders as being Elias Ashmole and his circle of Rosicrucians. More than one historian echoes the judgment of the distinguished Mason, Eugen Lennhoff who once said: "...many Masonic symbols point indisputably to a Rosicrucian origin."

It was on 15th October 1646, a few weeks after leaving Oxford, that Elias Ashmole was initiated into a lodge of Freemasons at Warrington near Liverpool. Some writers, unfamiliar with the fundamental meanings of the Rosy Cross, have concluded that he embraced *Masonry* only in order to learn certain hermetic mysteries which he believed it contained. These people have argued that he therefore became a Rosicrucian as an accidental result of his Masonic affiliation. Others have maintained that admission into Freemasonry was equivalent to admission into the Rosicrucians and that a lodge of one was identical to a lodge of the other. All these viewpoints are confusing, no less bewildering because they were sincerely expressed. As we have seen, Ashmole was already well versed in the arcane truths for which the Freemasons were seeking.

Return to London

Since the Rosicrucian Order never surrendered its independent status, Ashmole's first concern on returning to London was the erection of a 'house' where the Order could function satisfactorily. He found this 'refuge for truth' among the Freemasons, who were grateful to their Rosicrucian colleagues for the valuable assistance that was being given to them in formalising their degree system. During that same eventful year of 1646, Ashmole organised a Rosicrucian lodge named *Solomon's Temple*, holding their meetings at Mason's Hall in London.

This name reflects the arch-symbol of Masonry. But actually the group functioned as a supreme lodge of the British Rosicrucians who never restricted their membership only to Masons. Its members were all

Temple adepts including, besides Ashmole, William Lilly, the famous astrologer; Thomas Wharton, the eminent physician; and William Oughtred, the gifted mathematician.

Through the interregnum period of Cromwell's rule, those leading Rosicrucians functioned unmolested in the Masonic headquarters sharing a roof with the Handicraft society. Whatever the turmoil outside, those were genuinely great years for the followers of the Rosy Cross. Equally, they were memorable ones for Elias Ashmole.

He worked at alchemy and in a few short months, mastered botany. He studied secret teachings under William Backhouse in England and Peter Staehl in



Oxford's famous Brasenose College

Germany. A Jewish rabbi taught him Hebrew, since he wished to read the Kabala in the original. Afterwards, as his writings reveal, he studied the ancient Druid manuscripts of Wales in order that he might equate Britain's native arcane tradition with the universal truths of the Rose Croix.

Wherever Ashmole stayed, learned men gathered to advance their own knowledge by conversing with him. Thomas Vaughan, who first translated early Rosicrucian documents into English, became his close friend. So did John Tradescant, the noted British botanist and bibliophile, who ultimately bequeathed to Ashmole his magnificent private museum of books, rare manuscripts, and scientific specimens.

In 1649, when he was thirty-two, he remarried, his bride being an English noblewoman, twenty years his senior. After he went to live on her country estate, her son, who was nothing but a titled young thug, swaggered into



Ashmole's study and almost succeeded in murdering him. But neither violence nor his wife's ignorant disdain of his studies could keep Ashmole from the work to which he devoted himself. A few months after the miserable match, he edited and published a tract on alchemy by the brilliant Rosicrucian scientist, Dr. John Dee. Accompanying this edition of Dee's essay was a tract, dealing with the same subject and written by Ashmole but signed with the anagram of James Hasolle.

A Museum Begins

Meanwhile the industrious Ashmole was busily engaged in collecting material for one of the most ambitious projects ever undertaken by a Rosicrucian scholar. Britain's own submerged occult tradition had kept haunting him. National pride and the need to strengthen truth by incorporating the old landmarks required that the tradition be revived. He sent out an appeal for British arcane manuscripts and the response was surprising even to such an inveterate antiquary as Ashmole. Some writings that were in a state of ruin, he rescued from obscurity.

Many other manuscripts were lent to him by "worthy and intimate friends", easily identifiable as Rosicrucians and many of whom chose "not to see their names in print." Being a poet as well as editor, Ashmole transformed each work into fine metrical verse that reflected his own genius with words. For "poetry," he declared, "has a life, a pulse, and such a secret energy as leaves in the mind a far deeper impression than what runs in the slow and evenless numbers of prose."

Through two long, laborious years he collected, wrote and revised. Then in 1652 there appeared the crowning masterpiece of his life, his magnificent *Theatrum Chemicum Britannicum*, preserving the thought of "... our famous English philosophers who have written the hermetique mysteries in their owne ancient language." Ashmole's masterpiece ranks as the greatest occult anthology of its time. Considered purely as English literature, it compares for subtlety and sharp double-edged wit with Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*, though much less known and read. Ashmole records in his diary that the illustrations in the book were drawn by Thomas Vaughan, who in the same year had

published the first known English translation of the 1614 Geramn edition of the *Fama Fraternitatis*, considered by many as the founding treatise of the Rosicrucian fraternity.

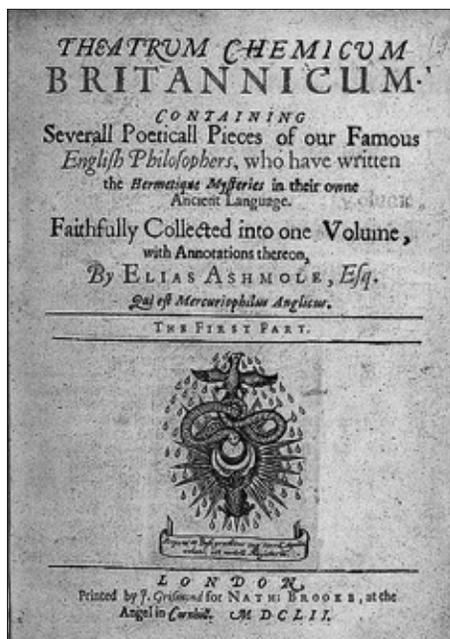
Ashmole book consists of approximately 500 pages with the various authors, Rosicrucian and others, discoursing on every arcane subject from alchemy to levitation, from transition to reincarnation. Equally compelling is Ashmole's own highly developed thinking as expressed in his pithily written prologue to the collection. By implication, he shows that the Rosicrucian Order secretly flourished in England during the reign of Elizabeth I before its launch in 1614 on the continent. Modern research has long since confirmed this, which refutes those misinformed writers who regard the Order as a vagrant offshoot of later English Freemasonry.

In guarded language, Ashmole discloses that the mysterious 'I.O.' (one of the four brethren mentioned in the *Fama Fraternitatis*) was an Englishman and learned physician. However, he did not reveal the name represented by the cryptic initials. He states further that: "the wisdom of policy of our 'Fathers' was finding ways of both how to teach and how to conceal." Ashmole does tell us however a bit of Britain's own veiled mystical ancestry.

First among these "were the famous and mysterious Druids that were Priests, Diviners, and Wise Men." Next were "the Bards who celebrated the illustrious deeds of famous men, which they ingeniously disposed in heroic verse, and sung them to the sweet melody of the harp." The Druidic-Bardic tradition itself he dates back to two learned "kings of the Celts" who ruled over Britain more than 2,000

years before the Christian era. This reference reflects his belief in a great Celtic civilisation that flourished during antiquity in the British Isles.

To the Celtic-influenced *De Occultia Philosophia* of St Dunstan, Ashmole traces the larger part of his own formulations. This book, he says, was one that "E.G.A. made much use of". This refers to Elias Ashmole himself with a "G" added for disguise. St. Dunstan, educated by Irish monks of the Druidic Culdees, was not only an English Christian archbishop, but, as his secret and almost unobtainable writings implied to Ashmole, was also the head of the Christianised Druids who flourished in Britain during the 10th century.



Theatrum Chemicum Britannicum



Four Stones

Four Stones, Ashmole asserts, constitute the foundation of the “Sacred Arcana”. First is the *Mineral Stone*, the powers of which embody what we know today of nuclear displacement, enabling us to change one element into another. Through this stone, says the author, we can transmit any imperfect matter into its utmost degree of perfection, thereby converting the basest of metals into perfect gold and silver. The holy grail of cold fusion seemed to him at least to have been already discovered.

The second of the four stones was called the *Vegetable Stone* and signifies growth and development in all living things. Next followed the *Magic* or *Prospective Stone* symbolising the psychic phenomena that we moderns would define as imagination, intuition, precognition and telepathy. Finally he mentions the *Angelic* or *Supreme Stone* that St. Dunstan called “the Food of Angels” because it stands for all-inclusive Wisdom and the immortality of the human soul. The Tree of Life, mentioned in Genesis, is one of its archetypes, and since it manifests the indestructibility of truth, “it will lodge in the fire of eternity” without ever being dissolved or changed.

Many other rare manuscripts remained in Ashmole’s possession after the publication of *Theatrum Chemicum* and he had intended to compile these into even more books, all of which would have comprised a rich and monumental heritage of Anglo-Celtic arcana. Due to the pressures of public office which soon encroached into his private life, he survived to write only one more esoteric work, his treatise entitled *The Philosophers Stone*, published in 1658.

The Stuart Restoration

With the Stuart Restoration of 1660, King Charles II remembered Ashmole’s unswerving loyalty to the Royal house and showered him with honours. As work quarters, he was assigned a spacious apartment once occupied by King Henry VIII and several major posts were conferred upon him. The most important of these was the office of Windsor Herald, or the official historian of the great order of chivalry known as the Knights of the Garter.

Twelve years after this appointment, Ashmole published one of the great classics of heraldry, *The Institution, Laws and Ceremonies of the Order of the Garter*. This book set a standard for heraldic documentation and

interpretation that writers on such subjects have followed ever since. It brought the author wide acclaim not only in his native land, but also in every country of Europe.

Ashmole was fifty-five and he could look back on an accomplished career. He had fulfilled that dedication to truth that had bound him at his christening and he had no need to worry about money either, for the King had granted him an annual pension of four hundred pounds, a large sum in those days. Marital happiness had returned to him as well in middle age when he married Elizabeth Dugdale, daughter of his friend and fellow-herald, Sir William Dugdale.

He was a respected member of Britain’s greatest scientific organisation, the Royal Society, which brethren of the Rosy Cross had been instrumental in founding. He ranked as one of Britain’s leading Masons and one of Europe’s outstanding Rosicrucian thinkers. So, appropriately, he devoted the last two decades of his long life to providing memorials, which would ensure Britain an everlasting Rosicrucian legacy of learning.



May 1660, Charles II sails back to England from exile.

Assisted by his friend, Sir George Wharton, he catalogued the scientific objects that he had received from Tradescant. He presented the whole collection to Oxford University whose officials housed them in a fine new building appropriately named the Ashmolean Museum. It was the first museum of natural history in Britain and continued in existence for almost two centuries. Here biologists of the 19th century came to study mounted animal specimens while they were developing the theory of evolution that was later perfected by Charles Darwin. Ashmole’s immense personal collection of books and manuscripts was donated to the famous Bodleian Library of Oxford and can today be consulted for an authoritative history of Rosicrucianism in Britain.

Elias Ashmole passed through transition to his next plane of evolution on 18th May 1692, just five days before his 75th birthday.





The Importance of MUSIC

by Dr A Ike Nwaje

IT IS OFTEN said that the measure of civilisation is in the culture of its people. By this we are referring to how well cultivated or refined the people are. Music in all its forms has played an important part in influencing the development of civilisation. According to Biomusicologists at Pennsylvania State University, music entered the world from the time animals roamed the earth. It is theorised that animals used a form of music to communicate. Certainly the songs of birds is musical and is a form of communication among their species. Whales are said to sing sonatas as a form of communication.

Primitive man, it is thought, quickly learnt the value of harmonious sounds. The songs of birds, the rustle of the wind through the trees, and the flow of water cascading down the valley are all musical. Primitive man also had a fear of all discordant sounds, which he took as a warning of impending danger. Thunder and high winds, as well as the sound of wild animals, made him take shelter and fear for his life.

When man first began to speak and utter sounds, in an attempt to convey ideas to his fellow man, it is more than likely that, in order to convey satisfaction, he



would utter pleasant or musical sounds, and for anger, the opposite, or unpleasant noises. However, when intelligent man first created language, he selected vowel sounds, which correspond to musical notes. We should note however, that long before this time early man had learnt to sing and create primitive musical instruments.

Early Origins of Music

The first musical instruments were probably whistles carved out of animal bones and were also used for communication. About 5000 years ago, people were making musical instruments for pleasure, as well as for use in ceremonies. The breakthrough in music came about 2,500 years ago when the Greek scholar Pythagoras devised a mathematical formula for what is today's musical scale. Each note would be one step higher than the next. Each note was then assigned a letter so that music could be written.

It was over the next thousand years that music became more complex. Various cultures adapted their own type of music. Consequently the number and type of musical instruments expanded. In Europe, music developed mainly from the Christian religion. The music played and sung in Christian monasteries 1,500 years ago became the basis for modern music in the Western world.

As musical forms developed, together with the invention of musical instruments, so did its influence have a marked effect upon developing mankind. Harmonious



Old illustration of Karagué court orchestra, Lake Victoria region.

sounds, as found in musical forms, it was discovered, had a great effect upon the human emotions. In fact, any of the emotions could be stimulated or soothed by music. The more refined and cultured the person, the more the love for musical expression.

At a personal level I lost my opportunity of learning to play the piano, a cherished possession of my father. At the time I preferred to engage my free periods in playing football and table tennis. In due course my father disposed of our piano and I can honestly say that to this day one of my greatest regrets is missing that precious opportunity. During my teenage years in the late 1950s and during the 1960s, I got wrapped up in the 'Pop' and 'Rock-n-Roll' music of Elvis Presley and the Beatles. As time went by I found that I enjoyed a wide variety of music ranging from Highlife music, Egwu Aguba of my Asaba tradition, Apala music, the melodious Efik and Kalahari rhythms and of course both jazz and classical music. Music did something for me; it lifted me up and helped me out of every bad mood or period of depression.

So what is it that attracts us so much to music? These days as we walk along the streets we find all kinds of people hooked up via their earphones to their mobile phone which is neatly tucked away in a pocket and contains hundreds of songs. We like music and listen to music because of the emotions it stirs in us. So, with so much 'new' music coming on the scene all the time, why do we listen to the 'oldies'? Nostalgia no doubt, for it brings us back to times when we were younger and life was more carefree. The old tunes take us back in thought and emotion to times we lived well, and to an extent wish we



Senegalese drummer.



could experience them again. The music we cherish so much is usually related to good memories or a time that is particularly sweet to us.

Music is for every age. Mothers sing lullabies to their babies to put them to sleep, and often sing during their chores to give their children a sense of calm, order and security. It has for example been proven that the foetus in a mother's womb responds to music, something which has been observed through detailed studies whereby various types of music have been played while the agitation or otherwise of the foetus is observed through ultrasound examination. When young pre-school children are placed in an environment of pleasing music, it is believed it helps them to better grasp the beginnings of mathematics. For many years scientists have experimented with music as a therapeutic agent in an endeavour to help those who are mentally and emotionally disturbed; and there is strong evidence to suggest that the right type of music can produce a type of calming and healing that no drugs or other therapy can. Music is also used to calm patients pre-operatively and it helps surgeons in their work in the operating theatre.

Music, the Key to Creativity

Music is the key to creativity as it inspires and fuels the mind and spurs us on to ever greater creativity. A creative mind has the ability to make discoveries and create innovations. The greatest minds and thinkers like

Albert Einstein, Mozart and Frank Lloyd Wright all had something in common in that they were constantly exploring their imagination and creativity. Listening to instrumental music challenges people to listen intently, sometimes only to specific parts of it, and to weave a story around what they hear.

In the same sense, playing a musical instrument gives one the ability to experiences stories without words, whether from real life or imagined. Both require proper and optimum usage of the brain which not only exercises one's creativity, but also one's intellect. This is the basis of the use of music in rehabilitating patients who have suffered stroke with brain involvement. It is well recognised that the strength of the Arts discipline

namely writing, painting, singing, dance and theatre have the ability to create a similar effect.

On all levels, music makes education more enjoyable. It can be very engaging in the classroom and is a great tool for memorisation, like teaching multiplication tables for young children who associate specific tables with specific musical passages. In raising children, music education can be used to keep them focused and keep them off the streets instead of running around and causing mischief. Sadly though, some forms of music can influence children in negative ways, and it is well known that just as music can calm and bring peace to one's life, it can also agitate and bring the mind into some of its more shadowed areas of thought.



Music certainly influences us deeply and has the power to influence the way we dress, think, speak and live our lives. Profane and violent lyrics that are often found in modern popular music has a negative influence on children especially, but certainly on adults as well.

It is well recognised that music teaches us self discipline and time management skills that one cannot acquire anywhere else. When you study an instrument on a regular basis, you work on concrete ideas and take small steps to achieve larger goals. This way of thinking organises the wiring in the brain thereby making one to start looking at learning in a new light. A whole new area of the brain develops when one plays or listens to music often. And

the new facilities offered by this brain region helps one develop further in many other seemingly unrelated areas.

Music, the Language of the Universe

Music is the language of the universe in that there are no boundaries in understanding music. It transcends all boundaries of communication because one you speak and tell stories to someone on the other side of the planet even though you both do not speak the same language. Music truly is for all creatures a universal language and one that casts down barriers of all sorts. Historically, one of the most commonly known uses of music has been in



religious, sacred and tribal events.

In Mayan civilisation music was used in celebrating victory at war and also in the burial of influential personalities, and in Modern Africa the immensely complex and enthralling rhythm of a good group of drummers never ceases to bind people together to a common cause. Music helps people to grieve and there have been many memorable songs sung or music played specifically for funerals. Elton John's Candle in the Wind, played and sung at the funeral of Princess Diana in 1998 is one of those that will be remembered by millions the world over for many years.

Music is of course vibratory in nature, physical compression waves in the air which the wonder of our ears can pick up. It is quite amazing that such clusters and clusters of clusters of vibrations can produce such amazing effects upon us, particularly on our sympathetic nervous system, quite apart from anything we objectively think about or experience. We usually think of music only as the sound we interpret in the brain. But music is also the physical vibrations created by the musical instrument that enter the whole body and set up ebbs and rippling flows of energy throughout the nervous system producing a tonic effect on us, whatever we may be doing at the time.

Just as music can affect us deeply, so too can colour. Each colour or blend of colours has its own clusters of electromagnetic frequencies which affect our nervous system, not only through our eyes, but it is also believed, can affect us directly through contact with the skin. In fact, each sound or note in the musical scale has a corresponding colour or blend of colours associated with it, and music and colour therefore play an important part in our lives. Their daily, combined influence determines our state of mind, our emotional balance, and the degree of inner harmony we achieve, often with us not even being aware of it.

Dr H Spencer Lewis

Of course music has many qualities and not only are we affected by the notes of the musical scale, but the volume of the music plays an important part too, as do the harmony, rhythms and blending of instruments. About this, former Imperator of the Rosicrucian Order Dr H Spencer Lewis said in an article from the 1920s:

“Rhythm or motion, and the periodicity of time between motions and the cycles of the periods are fundamental principles throughout the universe. Everything in the universe works according to the law of motion and in rhythm

with all other motions. Your heart beats in rhythm with some of these other rhythms and so are the actions of various organs and parts of your body.

“Your entire being, therefore, has a rhythm of its own that is in harmony with certain other universal rhythm. If this rhythm is upset and you are out of harmonic tune with fundamental Cosmic rhythm, illness is bound to result. Because each of us has a fundamental rhythm of our own, we are naturally attracted to certain kinds of music that have a harmonic rhythmic relationship to our own rhythm.

“Reading, thinking, meditating, and other Cosmic exercises can change the rhythm of the human body and therefore certain pieces of music that were pleasant at one time may now become unpleasant or inharmonious or distasteful.”

Once we realise the value of music and colour in our lives, we should endeavour to use them to assist us in creating mental and emotional harmony for ourselves. But more importantly, we should utilise music and colour to enhance our mystical and spiritual development. We all know that it can at times be difficult to enter a true meditative state unless we are physically, mentally, emotionally and inwardly prepared, and music is a very good means of establishing the right background preparatory conditions for meditation and for any period of serious study and reflection.

As for selecting the most suitable music which is best and most effective for you, only by experience and listening to music over a long period of time, will you come to know which music has the most desirable effects. No one type of music is suitable for all people. It is sometimes best not to consistently use music which we are overly fond of or with which we are too familiar. We all know of those tunes that once heard, seem to go on incessantly playing in the mind for the rest of the day. So, some music distracts while other types soothe, leaving no footprints to distract our attention from our purpose, namely of entering a state of deep meditation.

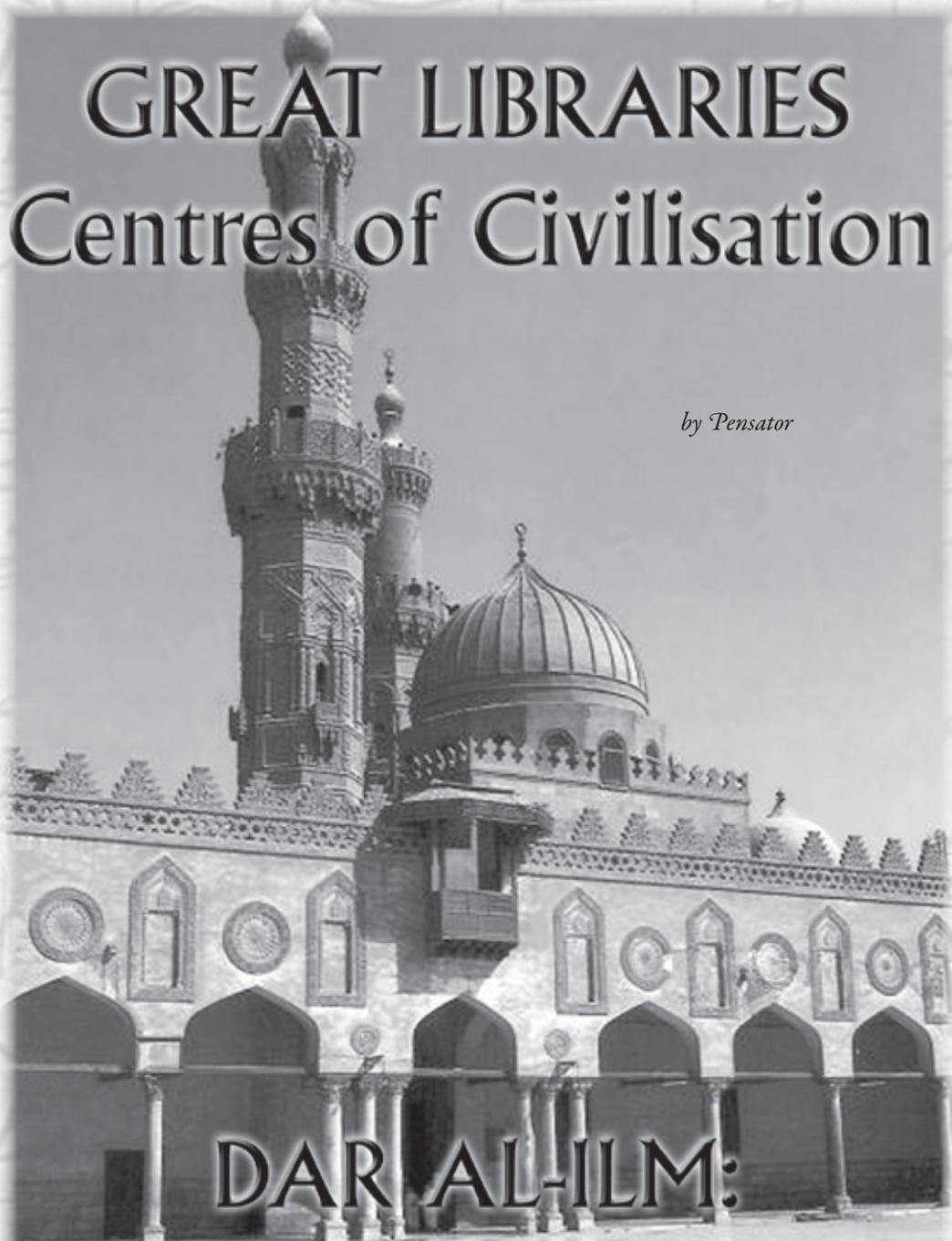
So, given the remarkable powers music has to soothe, heal and harmonise our beings, as well as to entertain and bring happiness into the lives of others and ourselves, let us treat music with the respect it deserves and always endeavour to find the right place and the right time for it to interact positively and in an inspiring way with us as we go about our daily chores.



GREAT LIBRARIES

Centres of Civilisation

by Pensator

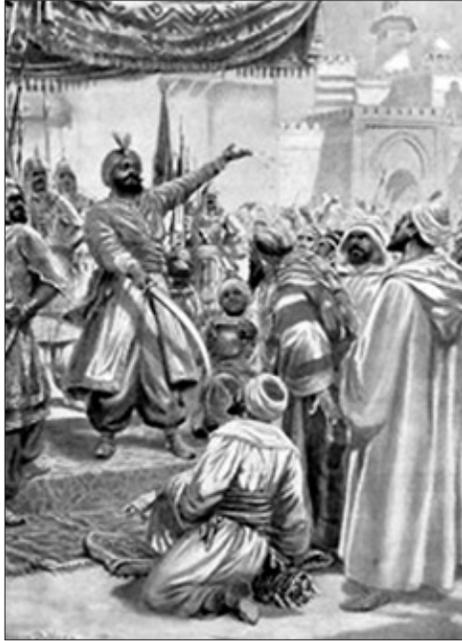


DAR AL-ILM:

The House of Knowledge in Cairo

CAIRO, THE CAPITAL of modern day Egypt is known primarily and for many exclusively for the Sphinx and Pyramids. Don't be fooled however, for Cairo is a whole lot more than this. It is a teeming, fascinating city in its own right, as ancient and important as any of the Roman cities of Europe, indeed maybe more ancient even than any other city in the world. In their hurry





In the reign of Imam-Caliph Al-Mu'izz (953–75), Fatimid fortunes reached their height.

to see the ancient Egyptian monuments on the Giza plateau, many tourists forget that Cairo is an Islamic city, and as such, has a wonderful inheritance. If you ever have the chance of visiting Egypt, especially if on a formally sanctioned tour organised by the Rosicrucian Order, be sure to stay in Cairo longer than the usual two days. Pause to consider the wonders of this medieval city and its glorious place in history.

Cairo is huge. The district of *al-Fustát* lies over the ruins of the Roman fort of Babylon, named by the Romans after the famous Mesopotamian city. However, its north-eastern part and the district of *Matariya* lie over the ruins of one of the most illustrious cities of ancient Egypt: Heliopolis, after which the north-eastern part is still named. Heliopolis, the city of the sun, was the home of Ra. His temple, which is calculated to be about four times as large as the temple of Amun at Karnak, was a famous centre of knowledge and wisdom and one of the first massively organised places of worship in the world. It drew not only ancient Egyptian seekers, but

many famous ancient Greeks too.

As this article will demonstrate, Cairo, though today a predominantly Islamic city and today torn by deep religious and political differences, has a proud history as a centre of knowledge, both mundane and spiritual.

The Victorious City

On 10th June 973CE, the Fatimid Imam-Caliph al-Mu'izz rode into his new capital city situated a few miles to the north-east of Fustát. It was officially founded on 3rd May 970CE as al-Mansúriyya, now renamed Madinat al-Qáhira al-Mu'izziyya, The City of Victory of al-Mu'izz, or more simply al-Qáhira: from which we get Cairo. The name al-Qáhira also refers to the planet Mars, which was in the ascendant on the day the city was founded. Al-Mu'izz decorated the city's four suburbs with luxurious buildings and delightful gardens, as he made Cairo into the metropolis of a great Islamic empire, stretching from Sicily and Tunisia to Syria and the holy cities of Mecca and Medina in present-day Saudi Arabia. Cairo, as a great centre of civilisation, rivalled Baghdad, Cordoba and Constantinople. Egypt under the Fatimids is generally recognised as one of the most brilliant periods of Islamic history.

The arts and sciences, philosophy and religious learning flourished in Fatimid Egypt.

Who were the Fatimids? This Arabian dynasty claimed descent from the prophet Mohammed through Fatima, his daughter, and her husband, the prophet's cousin Ali, who was also the fourth Caliph. This direct descent from the prophet himself gave the Fatimids high status in the Islamic world. They were what we would term today, Shi'ites, from the Arabic *Shi'a Ali* (The Party of Ali). They termed their ruler the Imam-Caliph because he combined spiritual and political power and the primary purpose of the new city of Cairo was to house the Imam-Caliph, his government and army.

Under the three outstanding Imam-Caliphs: al-Mu'izz (953-975), al-Hakim (996-1021) and



Gold coin of Caliph al-Mu'izz, Cairo 969 CE.





Fatimid tombs at Aswan.

al-Mustansir (1036-94), Egypt became a world power. Cairo was the focal point in the east-west trade routes, linking Spain to India and there were commercial contacts with the Italian city-states. In addition, the Fatimids had the only sizeable Muslim navy of the period.

The arts and sciences, philosophy and religious learning flourished in Fatimid Egypt which had a policy of religious toleration. The majority of the population were Sunni Muslims and could practise their religion quite openly, while Christians and Jews were, on the whole, well treated. The Fatimid government even entered into friendly relations with the Orthodox Christian Byzantine Empire.

The House of Knowledge

After the demise of the Beit al-Hikma (House of Wisdom) in Baghdad, in 991, Abu Nasr Shabur ibn Ardashir, the vizier of the Abbasid Caliph ar-Radi, founded a library, the so-called Dar al-Ilm (House of Knowledge) in al-Karkh, a suburb of Baghdad, and consisting of some 10,000 books. It was probably this institution that served as the prototype of the great Fatimid library in Cairo.

Contrary to popular opinion, when the Arab army conquered Alexandria in 641CE, they did not order the wholesale destruction

of the famous *Library of Alexandria*. For a variety of reasons, the once great Library was no longer as important as it was a few centuries before. It still contained many books, but these seem to have been acquired by many different people, and many eventually found their way into the library of the Imam-Caliphs. Here was direct continuity from the ancient world, and after the translations of ancient books and knowledge had finished in Baghdad, it was continued in Cairo.

During the 10th and 11th centuries, the Fatimid court engendered some of the liveliest theological and intellectual debates in the Muslim world. Astronomers, poets, grammarians, physicians, legal experts, theologians and other members of the intelligentsia flocked to the capital and were given generous salaries for their creative work; much like Alexandria some 1,300 years before. Many philosophers were also drawn to this exciting intellectual milieu in Cairo. Among the most famous were Hamid al-Din al-Kirmani, al-Mu'ayyad fi'l Din al-Shirazi and Nasir-e Khusraw. Some of their works are currently in print in English.

Al-Hakim wanted people from all walks of life to be able to access the library.

On Saturday 24th March 1005 (10 Jumada II of the year 395 of the Islamic calendar) the Imam-Caliph al-Hakim, one of the most intriguing figures in Egyptian history, officially opened the Dar al Ilm, the House of Knowledge, otherwise known as the Dar al-Hikma

(House of Wisdom). It lay at the northern end of the Western palace, housed in the former residence of a Slavic court officer named al-Mukhtar, who was *Sabib al-Qasr* (Steward of the Palace) under the Imam-Caliph al-Aziz, opposite the later Aqmar mosque which is still in existence today. Entrance was through a gate called the *Bab al-Tabbanin*. The building was re-furnished and re-decorated and new doors and curtains were provided. And finally, it was equipped with a library unmatched



The mosque of al-Azhar, built 970 CE.



anywhere in the contemporary world. In the library precincts you would find Koranic scholars, grammarians, philologists and even doctors consulting.

The library proper contained a great many bookshelves spread around several enormous halls. The shelves were divided into compartments by vertical partitions. Each compartment was secured by a hinged door with a padlock. There were more than 200,000 bound books, amongst which were manuscripts in all domains of science and culture; books on jurisprudence of all the schools, grammar, philology, traditions of the prophets, history, biographies of rulers, mathematics, astronomy, spiritual knowledge and alchemy. The door of each compartment had a label of contents attached.

In 1010, al-Hakim endowed the income from some of his own properties in perpetuity for the upkeep of the Dar al-Ilm. There were servants to look after the needs of the public who used the library, which was open to everyone. Al-Hakim wanted people from all walks of life to be able to access the library, it didn't matter whether they wanted to read the books, just have a quick look or even copy them. Everything they might need was provided: ink, inkstands and paper. A sum of 257 dinars per year was set aside for this alone. Of this, 90 dinars was for paper, 48 for the librarians (*al-khazin*), 12 to buy water, 12 for repairing books and pages, 15 for ink and pens, 10 for reed mats, 1 for the repair of curtains and 4 dinars for carpets during winter.

Al-Hakim appointed a teaching staff of experts



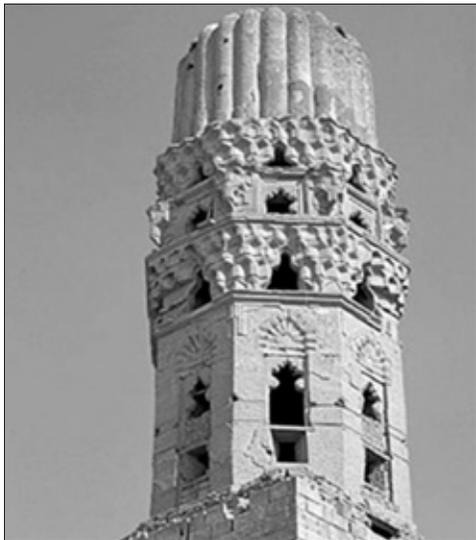
Courtyard of al-Hakim mosque.

of various academic subjects with all their salaries paid by the treasury. Those whose names are known were all Sunnis.

After the time of troubles in 1068, the total loss of the library was replaced and the collections were reassembled. The Dar al-Ilm reopened later in a new

Unusually for the times, women were also allowed into these esoteric lectures.

location, at the east side of the Great Eastern Palace, and was, as a result of this, no longer directly in contact with the centre of political and military power. It remained there until the end of the dynasty. Books from the palace library were once more transported to be housed within its walls. Despite our lack of information on its development and operation during the later Fatimid period, the Dar al-Ilm stands out as an exemplary medieval institution of knowledge.



The minaret of Al-hakim mosque.

Emanation of Light

The presence of the Imam-Caliph and his sanctity conferred a particularly special position on Cairo, for the Imam was regarded as the terrestrial incarnation of the universal intellect. He was also considered to be an emanation of the divine light. At the heart of the new city stood the palace complex, and as the palace was deemed to be the depositary of the spiritual knowledge of the Imam-Caliph, it was deemed to be the appropriate place for the dissemination of such knowledge.

In Baghdad, the ceremonial of the Abbasid Caliphs took place mainly within their palace, whereas in Cairo, Fatimid ceremonies were processional and designed to be seen by all the citizens. To the Fatimids, the world could be interpreted on many different levels, and Cairo, conceived of as almost a ritual city, was the setting for state ceremonies par excellence. They





A medieval map of Cairo.

invested their ceremonials with multiple meanings which were not intended to be understood by everyone who witnessed them.

There were two palace-complexes, one Eastern and the other Western with a parade ground between the two palaces called the *bayn al-qasrayn*, meaning *Between the Two Palaces*. This was the main thoroughfare of the new city. Ritual had a prominent place, especially in the Eastern palace. When seen from afar it was said that the Eastern and Western palaces loomed like mountains behind their high walls enclosing the ritual space where the Imam-Caliph lived.

The Sessions of Wisdom

An Imam is a spiritual leader. Knowledge (*ilm*) and wisdom (*hikma*) are regarded as gifts from God. The believers considered the Imam-Caliph as the gift of God to humanity, who served as a guide to mankind. His duty was to teach the mystical truths of the universe, transmitting the esoteric and mystical aspects of God to everyone on earth. The form of Islam promulgated by the Fatimid rulers mixed Gnostic and messianic ideas that became interwoven with Neoplatonic philosophy.

The Fatimid rulers had a high esteem for learning. During their pre-Egyptian years they had developed a series of public lectures addressed to different audiences. These gradually developed into an elaborate programme of instruction which were termed the *Majális al-Hikma* (Sessions of Wisdom). Essentially there were two types of teaching session: public lectures for large audiences on the *zâhir* or exoteric subjects, and private lectures on the *bâtin* or esoteric subjects. The people who attended the esoteric lectures referred to themselves as the *awliya Allah* or friends of God, or simply *awliya*. The Sessions of Wisdom were open to both men and women, unusually for the Islamic world. Their cosmological speculations, which were extremely modern for those days, were at the peak of contemporary thought.

The private *Majális al-Hikma* were held on Fridays, some also on Thursdays. Texts read at these Sessions of Wisdom had to receive the prior approval and authorisation of the Imam-Caliph. All the texts were written down and archived. Some are still extant.

Once the initiate or *mustajib* had solemnly taken the oath, he/she would undergo a step-by-step induction into wisdom. From time to time they were tested. The lessons in the *bâtin* or esoteric wisdom were only accessible to these initiates and were held in the palace where privacy was easier to guarantee. There was a special audience hall (*majlis*) used purely for this. The person who directed these sessions, the “Master” in Rosicrucian terminology, was called the *Da’i al-Du’at* or Supreme Da’i.

It was he who took these sessions in person on a Friday. We still have a book containing the teachings taught by the most famous Supreme Da’i, Mohammed ibn al-Nu’man in his compendium *Ta’wil da’aim al-Islam* (The Interpretation of the Pillars of Islam). Each of its 120 chapters is termed a “session.” Part of their esoteric teachings seems to have been the descending triangle from the universal intellect down to man, and an ascending triangle showing the progression of the individual soul on its way back upwards to the creator, a theme familiar to many later European mystical traditions.

The Supreme Da’i personally taught the initiates, who addressed one another as *Ikhwan* or brothers. As we have said, unusually for the times, women were also allowed into these esoteric lectures. The discourses took place in the palace of the Imam-Caliph, where the men were taught in the *iwán* or audience hall, while women received their instruction in another palace audience hall called *al-Muhawwal*.

The Supreme Da’i had to have his manuscripts



personally authorised by the Imam-Caliph before he delivered them at the Sessions of Wisdom. He also had to have extensive educational qualifications, combined with extraordinary moral and intellectual attributes, as well as excellent organisational abilities. He needed to have sufficient knowledge of the *zâhir* and *bâtin* to be able to explain them to many different types of people on various intellectual levels. He was also often trained in jurisprudence. He was expected to be knowledgeable not only in the Koran, but well versed in other non-religious subjects such as philosophy and history, as well as the teachings of non-Islamic religions. In total, the Supreme Da'i was a highly learned and cultured individual.

The Final Chapters

Under the Imam-Caliph al-Mustansir, Egypt was plagued by a series of crises, food shortages, even famine due to low Niles for seven consecutive years. In November 1068, the palaces and the library of the Dar al-Ilm, consisting of forty rooms full of priceless books and other objects, were plundered by the Imam-Caliph's Turkish guard and some high officials during a complete breakdown of law and order. The works of classical authors alone that disappeared comprised 18,000 volumes and there were also 2,400 Korans decorated with gold and silver. Of these books, 25 camel loads found their way to the palace of the vizier Abu l'Faraj Mohammed ibn Jafar!

A month later he had to flee from Egypt, his house was plundered and the books strewn to the wind. Other books from the House of Knowledge ended up with a certain Imad ad-Daula Abu l'Fadl ibn al-Mukhtariq in Alexandria, and when he was murdered, the books were dispersed all over North Africa. Many books were just thrown in the Nile, but others found their way to the other great Islamic cities.

Saladin, the Sunni Kurdish general from Iraq, who had become vizier of Egypt, overthrew the last Fatimid Imam-Caliph al-Adid (1160-1171) on 10th September 1171. A few days later, the 14th and last Fatimid Imam-Caliph died

after a brief illness. Saladin placed the remaining members of the Fatimid family in permanent captivity in various districts of Cairo. The immense treasures of the Fatimids, including their vast libraries were pillaged or sold. The Dar al-Ilm was turned into a hospital. In 1174, Saladin went a step further and proclaimed himself Sultan, under the auspices of the Abbasid Caliph in Baghdad, and thus began the Ayyubid dynasty that ruled Egypt, Syria and the Holy Land, and got drawn into the Third Crusade with Richard the Lionheart.

Although the medieval Islamic world was superior to Europe in the same period in all scientific disciplines, there was no such thing as a university, except for the Dar al-Ilm. It was a worthy successor to the great Beit al-Hikma of Baghdad and the university at Jundishâpur in Iran, whose stories were covered in earlier editions of the Rosicrucian Beacon. Today, little remains of the old Fatimid city, except the mosque of al-Azhar. The original royal mosque of al-Azhar, (the Radiant One) was the first mosque of the Fatimid city.

Completed in 971CE, it is the oldest university in the world and is still the principal teaching centre in the Islamic world. It offers free instruction and board to students from all over. There also remains the mosque of al-Hakim, and some old Fatimid-period city gates.

Today, very few of the tourists that visit Cairo and do their shopping in the Khan el-Khalili bazaar realise that beneath their feet lies part of the site of the now vanished brilliant palaces of the Fatimid Imam-Caliphs, and the remains of one of the world's greatest educational and cultural institutions.

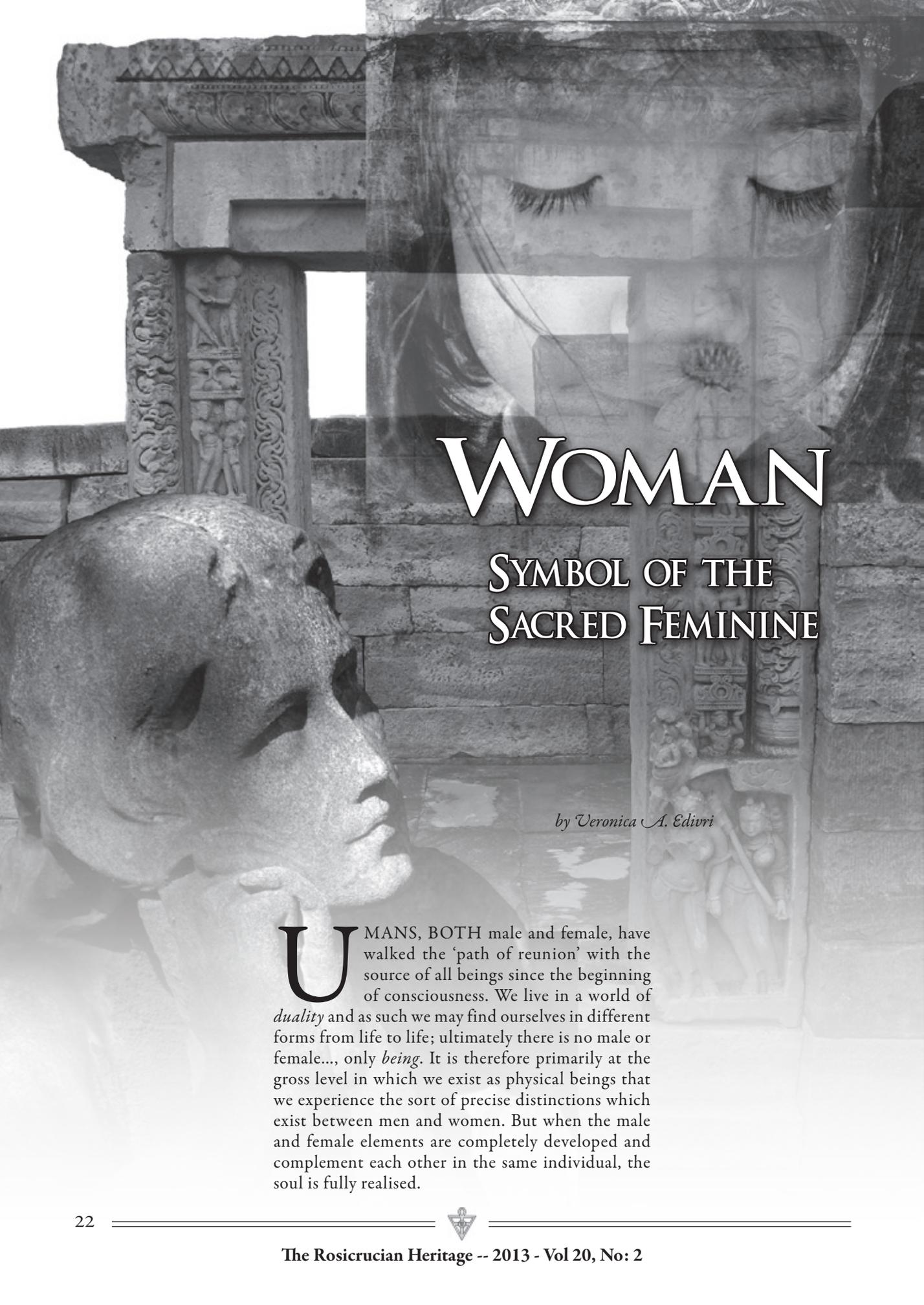


The gates of Bab Zuweila defined the southern limit of Cairo, 1092 CE.

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WOMAN

SYMBOL OF THE SACRED FEMININE

by Veronica A. Edivri

UMANS, BOTH male and female, have walked the 'path of reunion' with the source of all beings since the beginning of consciousness. We live in a world of *duality* and as such we may find ourselves in different forms from life to life; ultimately there is no male or female..., only *being*. It is therefore primarily at the gross level in which we exist as physical beings that we experience the sort of precise distinctions which exist between men and women. But when the male and female elements are completely developed and complement each other in the same individual, the soul is fully realised.



The sacred feminine, the feminine face of God, has been expressed in different religions and cultures all over the world. Mevlana Jaleleddin Rumi, a renowned sufist defines woman as: *"one of the great manifestations of the highest creator, the most perfect example of God's creative power on earth. Woman is the light of God, not just the beloved. It is as if she is creative not created."* From the perspective of Sufism, all humans are feminine first, before having any other qualities; which is to say that we are first surrendered and submitted to God's creative command. Difficulties arise in our human situation when we fail to see that we are by nature women first and foremost. The way to do so is to recognise our own receptive and created nature for what it is. Once we feminise our feminine nature, then we would have recognised our Lord's Mastery and Authority. According to Sufism, woman is the ultimate secret, for woman is the soul. This branch of Islam sees woman as the Hidden Initiatrix, the shadow Guide, the blackness that births the Light. True divinity is female and makkah is the womb of the earth.

In the *Tao te Ching* the author Lao-tzu writes: *"...the gateway of the mysterious female is called the root of Heaven and Earth. Though constantly flowing, it seems always to be present."* Women are God ordained and universally valid. They are co-creators of the wonders of Heaven on earth. Put in Prophet Mohammed's words: *"Heaven is under the feet of mothers."* No wonder, Seva Ananda writes: *"It is a very special gift to acquire a feminine body. For the secret path may be more accessible in a feminine form."*

Woman as the course of our existence is a monument to generosity, devotion, affection, love, wisdom, justice, beauty, harmony and compassion. Thus, women are the most effective weapon in creation through their sensitivity and intelligence. Those who are magnanimous hold them high and treat them with respect. We commend to our beloved Order at this time who long ago, recognised women with special respect and special position as well as for the graciousness and harmony of nature.

The Goal of Humanity

All human beings have the same goal in life. This is to know the Divine light and to become illuminated by it. To recognise the Divine light, we need to recognise ourselves as light. We therefore have to know who we are, and how we are situated in relation to ultimate reality.

Only when we find light in ourselves can we recognise God as Light. Dr. Celebi Celeleddin comes to mind at this time, when he said:

"All the nations of the world should break the cups of their egos and be unified in the love of God, the creator of all of us; in love of mankind, without discrimination of races, beliefs and nations; living all together in a world of love with happiness and peace.."

The Imbalance in Today's World

The unrest in today's world can be attributed to the lack of respect for the feminine aspects of manifestation. This self created condition has led to excessive aggression, wars, political dominance and economic greed. Because the feminine aspect has not been brought forward, love and nurture of living beings have come to be considered of secondary importance. And when the welfare of living beings is not considered of primary importance, what happens.

Today, so many species of living beings are being eradicated from the world: and human beings are suffering in mass numbers without care. Those who are caretakers, who would nurture and care for others are not given proper respect; while those who would push forward for Political and Economic dominance or for corporate power are given free reign and respected. Women suppressing their feminine nature and learning to only assert their masculine qualities, further the difficulties already created. This is due to the great imbalance which lies within society between the feminine and masculine aspects.

When the qualities of the feminine face of God are again recognised and expressed with momentum, it is then the society will turn around and many of the most troubling problems in this world will be resolved. The loving kindness and compassionate care which is expressed naturally by a mother for her children which emanates from the hearth of the Divine Feminine, brings with it that aspects of creation needed to heal today's world. If women return to their power, their motherly qualities, their connectedness with creation, nurturance and preservation, then they will find strength they have not known for ages. Women are disconnected from themselves because they have adopted the patriarchal view. They think understanding their feminine nature will



diminish their status. No, they are incorrect! It will only make them aware of themselves. From this awareness, they can become harmonious with their psycho-physical yearnings and they will find a different kind of power. Not one based upon dominance, but one based upon creation and nurturance.

All are capable of greatness only that the path for those in masculine form and those in feminine form may not be identical due to physical differences and resulting psychological variations. Women have their own unique capabilities and potentials that is why they are different from men in various ways. In the physical realm, the differences between men and women are obvious. In the mental sphere, they become more obscure; and in the spiritual realm, they do not exist. The special characteristics and influence which mark the path for one in a female body must be acknowledged and utilised for maximum realisation of one's innate potentials. We have to step beyond our biologically driven and culturally sanctioned roles so that a new, free space of relationship is created in culture in which to catalyse a new expression of the feminine, and given how essential it is for transforming our world.

Such an endeavour is nothing less than sacred. Put in the words of Cota Robles: *"The greatest gift female mystics can give to humanity and the world at this time is to model the Truth of who they are and through example blaze a path of love back to God for everyone to follow."* As mystics, we should no longer feel that we inhabit the body of a particular gender. The Divine feminine is urging us to discover a new ethic of responsibility toward the planet, focused beyond tribal and national concerns. This will in turn bring us a new vision of the sacredness and unity of life.

Concept of the Divine Feminine

The Divine Feminine is the irresistible power that destroys old form and brings new one into being, the inspiration of the love-in-action that is so needed to transform a culture radically out of touch with its soul. It is this unseen dimension of soul to which we are connected through our instincts, our feelings, intuition and the longing imagination of our heart. It helps us to return to consciousness, reconnecting us to the dimension of the instinctual that has been shut away like the sleeping beauty behind the hedge of thorns. The power and luminosity of the Divine Feminine are needed to arouse the will and energy to act on behalf of life and to restore wholeness and balance to our image of God and so to ourselves.

The Divine Mother is asking us to trust and protect life, to work with her in all we do, opening our

understanding to the knowledge that we are not separate from her but an expression of her being. She urges us to open our minds to a new vision of reality, a revelation of all cosmic life as a divine unity. The mind is impoverished, rigid, dogmatic and inflated when we are cut off from the universal soul. In compensation for the loss of our relationship with it, we are driven by a need for ever more power and control. We have to relinquish the certainty of deeply held beliefs and obstructing barriers. The way is opening in our time for greater recognition of equal partnership. We need to recognise each other so we can strike a balance within ourselves as well as creating balance in the outer world.

The male attributes of strength and determination also belong to women, while the feminine attributes of receptivity and beauty also belong to men. As we look to the divine in us, encouraging each other to rise to the fullness of our own inner divinity, we push against our limitation until they dissolve and a gift unfolds. As we learn to appreciate the miracle of creation, a time comes when *"wheresoever you look, there is the face of God"* and everything perishes except for the face of divinity. And seeking to appreciate this, implies that we must open ourselves to discovery, *self* discovery, through which we will be born into a world lit by an invisible radiance, enshrouded by incandescent light and love.

Whether we choose celibacy or commit ourselves to a partnership or marriage, whether male or female, the same work remains of polishing the mirror of the heart. Each moment, we must reaffirm the inner marriage, until there is no longer lover or beloved but a unity of being. Men and women are from the same divine spark of God. We complete each other and form an undivided and unified whole. Woman as an individual has the high destiny obligatory upon every human being of acquiring moral perfection. As a member of the human race, she is called to union with man to represent humanity and to develop it on all levels.

Both tasks are indissolubly united, so the one cannot be fulfilled without the other. The freedom of all women consists in the possibility of fulfilling unimpeded this double task with its rights and privileges both in public and private life.

Quotes

1. *"The Eternal Feminine draws us heavenward."* -- Goethe
2. *"Woman is the radiance of God; she is not your beloved. She is the creator – you could say that she is not created."* -- Mevlana Jeleleddin Rumi
3. *"Where there is love, there is no Darkness."* -- African Proverb



Russian Cosmism

by Vladimir Koptelov
*General Administrator for the Russian
Administration of AMORC*

FROM AN HISTORICAL point of view, Rosicrucian activity first appeared in Russia in the 18th Century during the reign of the Empress Catherine II 'the Great' (1729-1796), thanks mainly to the efforts of that remarkable personality Nikolai Novikov (1744-1818). Unfortunately, the Empress, disturbed by its activities and alarmed by the French revolution, outlawed all Rosicrucian activity. The subsequent history of Rosicrucianism in 19th century Russia is veiled for the time being because during the 20th century all archives remained inaccessible for reasons we know all too well. However, we know that until the 1930s, Rosicrucianism existed in small isolated groups in which those who had usually been members of various Lodges in different countries orally transmitted the teachings.

Catherine II 'The Great' (1720 - 1796)





Nikolai Novikov (1744-1818)

The totalitarian regime that lasted for more than 70 years, forbade all philosophies that were not materialistic, in the philosophical sense of the term, namely, those that did not emphasise matter over and above consciousness. This materialistic view is an inheritance from the 19th Century. All spiritual or spiritualistic approaches to the problem of existence were first considered to be

For Rosicrucians, the spiritual basis of the universe's existence is not in doubt.

superstition, and later as criminal. All sciences had to be materialistic. However, the human spirit does not always conform to the demands of worldly life, and it is in this context that I am writing about 'Russian Cosmism' as a movement of universal spirituality.

For us as Rosicrucians, the spiritual basis of the universe's existence is not in doubt. As inheritors of a tradition which unites people and cultures across time and space, we have the privilege to study the mysteries of life. We also know that the Cosmic spreads its beneficent vibrations among all of our fellow human beings. These vibrations often cause them first to follow their quest under the guise best described as scientific, philosophical or cultural, but sooner or later they come to discover the

Light. We see here the manifestation of the principle of Universal Evolution and we can only rejoice in this fact. It is with this feeling of satisfaction and joy that Rosicrucians will find within the history of their respective peoples the signs marking out humanity's path towards the noblest ideals we hold so dear. And it is from this perspective that I would like to inform you about Cosmism, a mystical movement that has made itself evident in Russia's spiritual life during the last two centuries.

A Naturally Existing Unity

The basis of Russian Cosmism as a scientific, philosophical, religious and cultural phenomenon was set in motion in the 19th Century, but the term 'Cosmism' itself did not appear until the 20th Century. The concept of Cosmism covers a set of ideas regarding the universe, humanity, the world, the relationship between the microcosm of humanity and the macrocosm of nature, and the links uniting all the elements that make up Creation into one Harmonious Whole. Such a concept is prevalent in several cultures and we can consider Russian Cosmism to be an integral part of such a global cultural view with, nevertheless, a unique vision that distinguishes it from other cultures.

The basis of this vision is an understanding that there is a naturally existing unity between the individual, humanity and the universe. This unity allows us to see Creation and its laws as an integral Whole. Such an approach is evident in philosophy, science, culture, and art. The great natural scientists of the 19th and 20th centuries, Vladimir Vernadsky (1863-1945), Konstantin Tsiolkovsky (1857-1935), and Aleksandr Tchigevsky (1897-1964) saw the universe as an enormous living organism while materialistic scientists viewed it as a huge machine. We find the same approach in poetry (Fedor Tiutchev,

Valeri Brioussov, Konstantin Belmont, and Nikita Zabolotsky), in prose writing, (Vladimir Odoievsky, Andrei Bely, Andrei Platonov), in painting, (Mikhail Vrubel, Mikhail Nestorov, and Nicholas Roerich), and in music, the symphonies of Tchaikovsky, Scriabin, and Rachmaninov, all expressing a pluralist approach to Cosmism.

Russian Cosmism is also found in the philosophical works of Vladimir Soloviev (1853-1900), Sergei Bulgakov (1874-1944), and Lev Karsavine (1884-1952) in which the new ontology is introduced. The basis of Cosmism is that Mankind and the Universe is one and the same thing; the human soul and the cosmos belong to the same order of phenomena. Anything



artificial degrades human life, separates people from each other, and separates civilisation from Creation. The cosmos is natural and man is merely an organic particle of it, a free agent, yet responsible for his free will and therefore responsible for his choices. He is in a position to create a civilisation in which the natural and the artificial can prevail. The doors providing access to nature are not entirely shut, but man does not yet have the notion of opening them.

In Cosmism, the concept of the unity is not based on socio-political, economic or ideological doctrines, but has an ecological basis, and this was formulated well before the ecological disasters of our era. Cosmism should not be viewed as a local phenomenon, separated from worldly philosophies. We find it in ancient cosmologies too, in neo-Pythagorean philosophy and the mathematical description of nature. In Russian Cosmism we can see the idea according to which the conscious activity of man is not excluded from, but on the contrary, underpinned by natural laws. Man is not outside the sphere of nature; he acts from within it like an inherent universal particle. In this way, he serves Cosmic Evolution.

What is obvious to Rosicrucians is that 19th century science, which through its most eminent proponents considered itself as purely materialistic and rational, was confronted by enigmas that it could not solve without recourse to spiritual or non-rational ideas. This acknowledgement, made by so-called materialistic researchers, is all the more significant as a result of the most serious research efforts, and we cannot suspect its authors of scientific complacency towards opinions they had never shared before.



Konstantin Tsiolkovsky (1857 - 1935)

Konstantin Tsiolkovsky

Konstantin Tsiolkovsky (1857-1935), a modest teacher, great scientist and father of interplanetary rocketry said: *"The imperfection of the Earth and humanity is only the result of their young age, and this has led almost all thinkers to the error of pessimistic thought. Sometimes we say: 'Everything depends on us.' Yet we ourselves are only creatures of the universe. The universe is arranged in such a way that it is immortal, and its particles in the form of living and blessed creatures are immortal too. The universe has no end and nor do life and beatitude. We want to prove that the universal will is beautiful because, in the general image of the Cosmos, we are only goodness, intelligence, and perfection."*

Tsiolkovsky spoke of the atom as a living and immortal particle which travels from one organism to another. This is why he considered death as an illusion

For Tsiolkovsky, the Cosmos contains only joy, contentment, perfection and truth.

arising from human emotions. Towards the end of his life, he said that his entire work was designed to prove one thing: the Cosmos contains only joy, contentment, perfection and truth. He also said that in millions of years' time, matter will become pure consciousness that will be all-knowing, and so the physical existence of individuals in the material and corpuscular worlds will have no useful purpose. This matter (or consciousness) will attain a state of perfection radiating from a higher level that will know all and desire nothing, in other words, a state considered divine. And then the universe shall be one immense Perfection. Having transformed itself into a form emanating from a high level, humanity will become immortal in time and infinite in space. According to him, this concept of 'a radiant humanity' cannot be fully understood by anyone today.

Vladimir Vernadsky

The academic Vladimir Vernadsky (1863-1945), one of the most remarkable personalities of Russian Cosmism, went beyond the geocentric framework of natural sciences and introduced into science the concept of the universe as a 'biosphere'. For him, the biosphere, a thin layer of living matter on our planet, is a cosmic phenomenon that intensifies all processes of development on Earth, thanks to its capacity to harness and transform the energy of the Cosmos, especially solar radiation. Man's appearance as a conscious being intensifies this development even more,





Vladimir Vernadsky (1863 - 1945)

and the biosphere will sooner or later be transformed into a sphere of consciousness, called a 'noösphere' in Greek.

Vernadsky believes the noösphere to be the cosmic 'realm of reason', which tends to spread itself out and so became the structural element of the Cosmos. One of the central ideas of the noösphere is therefore the necessity of harmonising relations between man and nature. As Rosicrucians, we can see an astonishing similarity in this concept with the Rosicrucian concept of an Egregore, known for so long by enlightened mystics.

For Vernadsky, the process of geological evolution underpinned the biological unity and equality of all humanity.

Vernadsky thought the process of geological evolution underpinned the biological unity and equality of all humanity that is Homo Sapiens and all their ancestors. The descent of races is constantly and endlessly developing according to the law of nature. It is not possible to go against the principle of people as equals because they are an integral part of humanity. According to him, the important thing for us is that democracy should resonate in harmony with natural geological processes, with the laws of nature and that they respond to the noösphere.

The spiritual world of Vernadsky is a bridge between natural science, philosophy, and religion.

He espouses a mystically based non-confessional religiosity. We could even say he had a cosmic religious quest, which, for various reasons, is unfolding more and more in the spiritual life of modern society. He wrote: *"Unfortunately, the present scientific understanding of the cosmos contains nothing that is cherished by humanity. But today we are experiencing a very important turning point; we see a weakening of the contradiction between the scientific view of the cosmos and its philosophical and religious understanding."*

As a materialist from the beginning, he asked himself the question: *"If thought is not a form of energy, how can it influence material phenomena?"* He approved of Goethe who said: *"In science we can know how things work, but not why."*

Wisdom Of The Cosmos

The philosophical and religious current of Russian Cosmism is represented by Vladimir Soloviev, Pavel Florensky, Nikolai Losski, Lev Karsavine, and Nicholas and Elena Roerich. It is not a uniform movement but despite its differences, the central idea is very clear: It is a spiritually based pursuit of the union of man with his surrounding world. The source of this idea lies in ancient philosophy. In Plato's philosophy, for example, the Universal Soul plays an intermediary role between the ideal and corporeal worlds. The soul is the beginning of universal order. For Soloviev: *"Real unity does not oppose plurality but comprises everything and is associated with Sophia, the Wisdom of God."* Later, Florensky calls Sophia not only *"Wisdom of God"* but also *"Wisdom of the Cosmos"*, a Wisdom that gives matter its grandeur, beauty and order. He sees in her the ideal Wisdom of the world, supporting its unity, its 'real infinity'.

As a mathematician, art critic, engineer, philosopher and man of letters, Pavel Florensky (1882-1937) was one of the 20th century's last encyclopaedists. He used to say that culture stood in contrast to the second law of thermodynamics, the universal law of entropy, which condemns everything to decay, and the reduction of potential to zero. In his view, culture is a conscious struggle against the levelling on a world scale. It means widening the differences of potential in every domain as an obligatory condition of life. Conversely, levelling is the equivalent of death. We see here confirmation of the Rosicrucian postulate on the negative and positive potential present in the various domains of existence, but especially with regard to the Vital Life Force with its positive and negative polarities as an absolute condition of life itself.



Nikolai Roerich

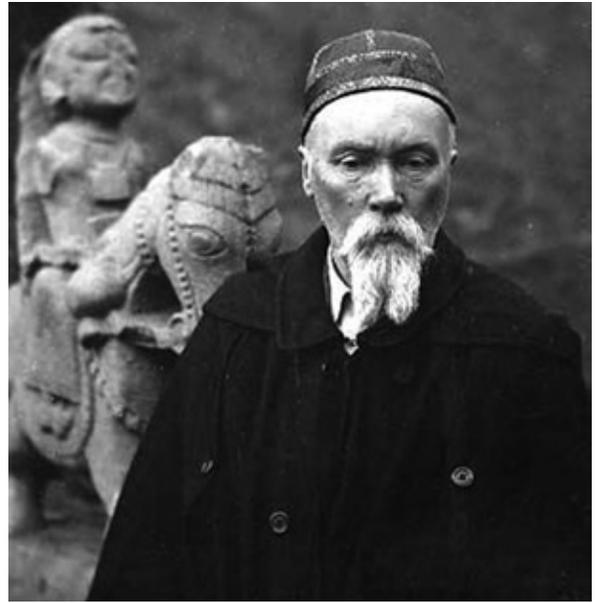
Russian Cosmism cannot be understood without a study of the Roerichs' spiritual heritage. Their vision of the world is expressed in a philosophical system that tries to explain the mysteries of life and death, the place of mankind in the evolution of the cosmos, and the role of the cosmos in the evolution of mankind. They created a philosophy contributing to the awareness of self and the self-development of man who is discovering the links uniting him with the Cosmic and with the Cosmism of life itself. According to the Roerichs, the 'living ethic' is concentrated on the 'inner man', on his thoughts, sensations and emotions. Through self-knowledge, man can direct his gaze away from himself and become the 'Power of the Light', thereby establishing a powerful and indestructible link between himself and the Cosmos.

Nikolai (Nicholas) Roerich (1874-1947) corresponded with Harvey Spencer Lewis, first Emperor of AMORC in the 20th century, and collaborated with him on the spiritual path. Their paths crossed because of their similar aspirations. Roerich's perseverance in seeking the Greater Light contributed to the great respect with which his name is held by all Rosicrucians. He believed that mankind's inner world has a cosmic dimension and that all actions of the Soul can bring about changes in the world. This is why not only our acts, but also our thoughts have such great importance. From this flows the natural necessity of integrity, moral purity, and humanism in relations between people.

Nicholas Roerich's aesthetic credo is based on the human soul's indestructible attraction to Beauty: *"Through tempests, humanity will reach the shores of Beauty. Through thunder and lightning, it will learn to venerate Beauty. Without Beauty, new fortresses of the spirit cannot be built."* The famous *Roerich Pact* on the defence of cultural values was called *The Red Cross of Culture* by his contemporaries. His artistic heritage is immense, about 6,000 canvasses and paintings, and his creative force proves that his philosophical precepts were effective because he experienced them at first hand.

Courage To Open Our Eyes

The essential aspect unifying all the movements of Russian Cosmism consists of the need to perfect the 'inner man', the soul of humanity, to attain maximum harmony with nature and the cosmos, and to fully accept humanity's responsibility towards planet Earth. Cosmism eloquently demonstrates a very important fact: when man turns his attention to the fundamental questions of existence, when he pursues his research with sincerity and perseverance



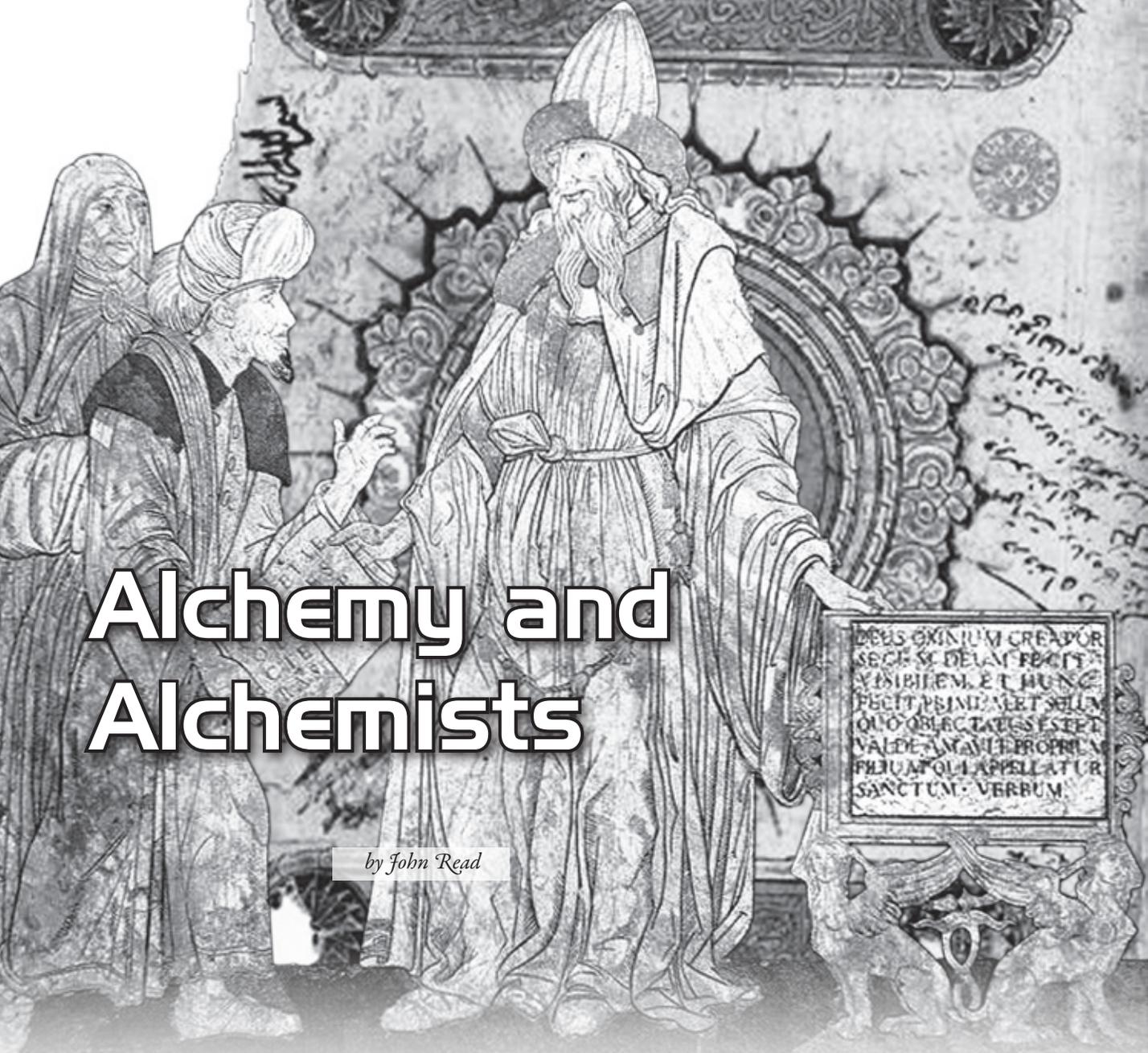
Nicholas Roerich (1874 - 1947)

into no matter what domain, he sooner or later arrives at 'spirituality'. And spirituality provides him with the answers he is looking for. The Cosmic inspires human beings in different ways, intuitive or rational, and we discover that Light is not far away; indeed it is very close, for it is after all, everywhere. Quite simply, all we need is the courage to open our eyes.

Evolution follows its course and we may rejoice in the thought that fellow Russians of the illustrious personalities mentioned above, now have every possibility and privilege of travelling along a *proven path* without useless detours, something which can lead them towards the ideal they seek. The path I speak of is of course the *Rosicrucian Path*. Despite the diversity of languages served by AMORC, as Rosicrucians, we are all travelling in the same direction and are all part of a single, worldwide Order. I would like to end this message with a quotation taken from the works of Nicholas Roerich, for it illustrates so well what I have said about Russian Cosmism:

"Culture is the veneration of Light; Culture is the love of Humanity, Culture is the unity of Life and Beauty; Culture is the synthesis of the realisations that elevate and inspire. Through study, esteem and admiration, we can become true co-operators in Evolution, and it is from Light that true knowledge can emerge. This real knowledge is based on genuine tolerance; from this genuine tolerance comes absolute understanding; from absolute understanding is born enthusiasm for Peace, which enlightens and purifies. And so Culture and Peace make mankind truly invincible because, being aware of all the spiritual conditions necessary and indispensable for them, humanity becomes tolerant and capable of embracing all."





Alchemy and Alchemists

by John Read

MOST PEOPLE who think about alchemy in the present age regard it as the pretended art of transmuting a base metal such as lead, into one of the noble metals such as silver or gold. Most scientists hold the view that alchemy was never anything more than basic chemistry, and from this point of view one may look upon alchemy as the chemistry of the Middle Ages. In its widest and truest sense however, alchemy was a lot more than this, and in many respects it was an entire philosophical system aimed at penetrating the mysteries of life and creation. It sought to place the microcosm of man in adjustment with the macrocosm of the universe; the transmutation of one form of inanimate matter into another was merely an incidental alchemical goal.

The more one studies alchemy, the more complex it appears, for it was truly a vast network of rudimentary chemistry, interwoven with philosophy, astrology, mysticism, theosophy, magic and many other strands. The associations of alchemy with religion and with psychology still offer wide fields of study. Carl Jung in particular, expressed the opinion that alchemy is no less important to psychology than to chemistry. Alchemy endured for at least a millennium, namely from early Christian times until the end of the 17th century. But as a personal path of discovery, it has long been outmoded, and there is little realisation today of the extent to which alchemical concepts and imagery permeated the thought and art of the Middle Ages.

Sketched in broad outline, the fundamental ideas



of alchemy were: first, that all forms of matter are one in origin; second, that these forms are produced by evolutionary processes; third, that matter has a common soul which alone is permanent; the body, or outward form, is merely a mode of manifestation of the soul, is transitory and may be transmuted. Here are views that in their essentials, bear a remarkable resemblance to those of modern physical science. Indeed as early as the first decades of the 20th Century, 'modern alchemy' as Lord Rutherford called it, had already demonstrated the possibility of element transmutation through nuclear fission and fusion. Alchemical reasoning was mainly deductive and based on two a priori assumptions: first, all forms of matter are of a single unity; second, there exists a potent transmuting agent known as the Philosopher's Stone. From the postulate of the unity of matter it followed that this 'medicine of the metals' was the ultimate 'medicine of man'. In this guise the Philosopher's Stone was known as the Elixir Vitae, or Elixir of Life.

Alchemy then was much more than an experimental science. It was a deep and intricate philosophical system, many details of which have passed down to us in our Rosicrucian ontology. In their true significance, the efforts made by adepts to transmute metals were sincere attempts to demonstrate the truth of the broad philosophical system of alchemy by means of material experiments.

Origin of Alchemy

The universal patron adopted by alchemists from early times and throughout the Middle Ages was *Hermes Trismegistus*, or 'Hermes the Thrice-Great'. In this Greek equivalent of the Egyptian god Thoth, often referred to as the 'deified intellect', the alchemical fraternity recognised the father of the Hermetic Art, the author of



*Hermes Trismegistus - engraving from Michael Maier's
Symbola Aureae Mensae (1617)*



One of the many 'Emerald Tablet' texts produced from the Middle Ages up to the early Renaissance. This treatise is attributed to Arnoldus de Villa Nova (1235–1311) who was responsible for translating some of the extensive Arabic hermetic literature into Latin.

a treatise called the *Emerald Tablet*. The thirteen precepts of this document formed the articles of association of the so-called 'Sons of Hermes' by laying down in cryptic language the guiding principles of their creed.

Thoth, as depicted in Ancient Egyptian temples, was sometimes shown with the crux ansata (the symbol of life) in the right hand, and a staff in the left. Linked with the staff were a serpent, a scorpion, a hawk's head, and a circle. Each of these representations had its particular symbolical meaning. Such symbolism was later characteristic of alchemy, and even modern chemistry, the daughter of alchemy, is to a large extent a science of symbols. The origin of alchemy has often been ascribed to Egypt, otherwise known as Khem, the Biblical land of Ham. It has been speculated that alchemy arose farther to the east, in Chaldea, or even in China.

As exponents of astrology, the Chaldeans associated the sun, moon and planets with specific metals, and also

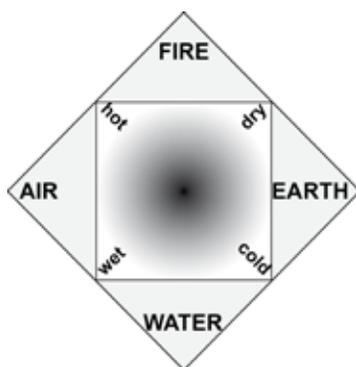


with human organs and destinies. Still farther east, in ancient China, alchemical ideas may be traced to the 5th Century BCE in the comprehensive religious and philosophical system known as Taoism. Much later, in the 2nd Century CE, Wei Bo-Yang, 'the father of Chinese alchemy' wrote the first treatise in Chinese dealing with alchemy, in which he described the preparation of the 'pill of immortality', known in the West centuries later as the Elixir Vitae.

The ultimate origin of alchemy is thus a vexed question. There is little doubt, however, that alchemical knowledge and ideas were gathered from the ancient civilisations of Egypt, Babylonia, India, and China, and brought to a focus in Greece. From Greece this corpus of alchemy was transmitted to Islam, mainly through Syria and Persia, and eventually the accumulated knowledge of the Muslim alchemists, drawn from these various sources and augmented in its passage through Islam, was brought into Western Europe, chiefly through Spain.

Alchemical Theory

Like modern science, alchemy had its guiding theoretical principles. The fundamental theory of alchemy was that of the Four Qualities and Four Elements, often represented in a diagram formed of an outer and inner square. The corners of the outer square carry the names of the four elements: fire, earth, water and air. The corners of the inner square, situated at the midpoints of the sides of the outer square, are allocated to the four fundamental qualities: the hot, dry, cold and wet.



The Four Qualities and Four Elements.

The diagram shows that fire is hot and dry; earth, dry and cold; water, cold and wet; air, wet and hot. These four elements may also be looked upon as representing energy (fire) and the solid, liquid and gaseous states of aggregation of matter (earth, water, air).

This theory, usually ascribed to Aristotle, may be traced in Egypt and India as far back as 1500 BCE. It is by far the oldest theory of physical science, and was widely believed in over a long period. It bears out the statement that "there is a great oneness in the human mind in the matter of broad principle in crude cosmical ideas."

usually ascribed to Aristotle, may be

According to the theory, water, one of the four elements of the material world, is an embodiment of cold and wet qualities. When the cold quality is replaced by the hot one, the element water is changed into the element air, embodying the wet and hot qualities. The idea of transmutation is thus implicit in the theory. Nowadays, of course, this process is viewed simply as a change of state from liquid to gaseous form of the same substance,

The chief experimental task of the alchemical adept was to imitate and even surpass Nature.

and there is no question of actual element transmutation taking place.

In essence, this ancient theory is based upon a primitive mode of thinking sometimes known as the *Doctrine of the Two Contraries*. This is dependent upon the recognition of a distinction between opposites, such as cold and hot, dry and wet. An apposition of outstanding importance in alchemy was that of the two opposed or contrary elements, fire and water. These two opposites came to light in a new guise in the sulphur-mercury theory of the metals, which seems to have been propounded by Muslim alchemists during the 9th Century.

The principle known as 'sulphur' was essentially an embodiment of combustibility, and 'mercury' denoted the mineral spirit of metals as well as liquidity or fusibility. It was held that when these two natural principles, engendered in the bowels of the Earth, came together in a state of purity, the result was gold; if they were slightly impure they gave silver; if they were markedly impure they furnished only the baser metals. Beyond this, it was supposed that in states of supreme purity they could give rise to something so much purer than ordinary gold that a small amount of this product (the Philosopher's Stone) would be able to transmute a very large quantity of a base metal into gold of ordinary purity.

The chief experimental task of the alchemical adept was to imitate and even surpass Nature in accomplishing such changes. In the cryptic expression and symbolic representation of alchemy, sophic sulphur and sophic mercury (as the two principles were often called) assumed many forms. For example, they were known respectively as Osiris and Isis, sun and moon, Sol and Luna, brother and sister, masculine and feminine, active and passive, giver and receiver, fixed and volatile, wingless lion and winged lioness, and so forth.

It was supposed by esoteric alchemists, or adepts, that the pure 'seeds' of gold and silver (or quicksilver)



could be extracted from these metals in the form of sophic sulphur and sophic mercury. These ‘seeds’ could then be combined, often in a liquid menstruum, to yield the Philosopher’s Stone. The succession of processes here concerned was known as the Great Work, leading to the preparation of the Philosopher’s Stone, or Grand Magisterium. The Stone, resulting from the union of masculine and feminine principles, was often symbolised as an infant. According to these views, in order to prepare the Philosopher’s Stone an initial quantity of gold was necessary. The Stone (often described as a red powder) could then be used to convert base metals into more gold, so that the original gold was ‘multiplied’. Their favourite metal for this ‘multiplication’ was mercury.

In modern terms, one could call the Philosopher’s Stone a catalyst, for what more potent catalyst could be imagined than the neutrons which start and maintain the explosive disintegration of uranium-235 into other elements during nuclear fission? “*Every thing possible to be believed*”, wrote the English poet and mystic, William Blake, “*is an image of truth. What is now proved was once only imagined.*” Alchemical literature abounds in cryptic descriptions and pictorial representations of the blending of sophic sulphur and sophic mercury in the synthesis of the November Stone. For example, a wingless lion and winged lioness are shown in playful conflict with a watery background, representing the liquid menstruum, or Hermetic Stream; an alchemist is depicted in the act of balancing equal weights of fire and water; the Hermetic Androgyne, half man, half woman, stands above a dragon, signifying the menstruum.

“Everything possible to be believed is an image of truth.”

Incidents from the Bible and from classical mythology were also freely adapted to alchemical ends. In an illustrated manuscript in the St. Andrews collection, the birth of Eve from Adam’s rib, with the Serpent as onlooker, is depicted to symbolise the same fundamental idea as the Hermetic Androgyne. As an example of another kind, taken from a different source, Apollo and Artemis with the terrorising serpent of Juno, are selected from classical mythology in order to furnish a further pictorial illustration of the same conception. Some alchemists went so far as to insist that the whole corpus of classical mythology was nothing more than a complex medium designed expressly to record alchemical truths in concealed allegories and “*abstract riddles of our Stone*”, as Ben Jonson phrased it in his play, *The Alchemist* (1612).

Alchemical Symbolism

Pictorial symbolism is an ingredient of prime importance in alchemy, and many of the designs were characterised by colour schemes suggestive of heraldry. Among medieval examples, the so-called ‘figures of Abraham the Jew’, dating from the early years of the 15th Century, were held in great reverence by alchemists of succeeding ages. These figures were ascribed to Nicolas Flamel, a Parisian alchemist of great repute. They took the form of a series of elaborate frescoes, decorating the arcade of the churchyard of the Innocents in Paris. The designs, executed in colour, were capable of a dual alchemical and religious interpretation.

The Biblical story of the massacre of the innocents by King Herod formed a central feature of the series. Herod was pictured as “*a King with a great Fauchion*”. Mothers were shown in the act of weeping “*at the feet of the unpitiful Soldiers; the blood of infants was put in a great vessel, wherein the Sun and Moon came to bathe themselves*”. In other words, infants’ blood was merely a cryptic representation of the liquid menstruum, which was supposed to aid in the conjunction of sophic sulphur and sophic mercury.

As another example, an illustration entitled the First Key of Basilius Valentinus (c. 1600) shows a King and



Michael Maier's Atalanta Fugiens (1618)



Queen as the central feature. Below the King a wolf leaps over a heated crucible, and near the Queen an old man with a wooden leg manipulates a scythe around a cupel. An accompanying 'explanation' directs the operator: "*Take a fierce grey Wolf. Cast to him the body of the King, and when he has devoured it, burn him entirely to ashes in a great fire. By this process, the King will be liberated; and when it has been performed thrice, the Lion has overcome the Wolf, who will find nothing more to devour in him. Thus our body has been made fit for the first stage of our Work.*"

The alchemical wolf, *lupus metallorum*, was 'antimony' (stibnite, or native antimony sulphide) used in the heated crucible as an agent for purifying gold, since it 'devoured' traces of metallic impurities. The wooden-legged ancient signified Saturn, that is to say, either the slow-moving planet of that name or the dull, heavy metal, lead. The scythe, like other sharp implements, symbolised fire. This part of the design therefore represents the cupellation of argeltiferous lead, furnishing pure silver. Briefly then, the First Key of Basilus shows how to begin the preparation of sophic sulphur and sophic mercury, in readiness for the next operation of the Great Work.

Probably the finest artistic examples of the avowed symbolism of alchemy are the beautiful copper-engravings of Johannes Theodorus de Bry and his associates; these occur notably in various alchemical works of Michael Maier, such as *Atalanta Fugiens* and *Symbola Aureae Mensae*, published at Oppenheim and Frankfurt during 1617-18. These plates are boldly engraved, textures are conveyed by different systems of shading, human figures are drawn forcefully and correctly, and the compositions have an effect of brilliance and solidity, enhanced by strong modelling and shadows.

Apart from such ad hoc pictorial representations of alchemical tenets, a strong alchemical influence pervaded much of the art of the Middle Ages. It found expression repeatedly in the painting, decorative architecture, sculpture and coloured glass of this era. Alchemical ideas and symbolism may be traced in detail for example, in the work of such artists as Dürer, Cranach, Giorgione and Campagnola. It may even be claimed that every detail in Dürer's masterpiece engraving, *Melencolia* (1514), is capable of alchemical interpretation. The doctrine of melancholy is inseparably bound up with the mysticism of Saturn which so powerfully permeates alchemy.

Decline of Alchemy

The outstanding practical aim of alchemy until the 16th Century was the transmutation of base metals into gold, whether from purely philosophical or mercenary motives. Early in the 16th Century Paracelsus endeavoured to give

a new direction to operative alchemy by insisting that its main goal should be the healing of disease rather than the making of gold. He envisaged alchemy as a handmaid of medicine, to be applied in the preparation of chemical remedies of mineral origin. He sought to liberate medicine from the obsession of the ancient Galenic order, and in this sense he takes rank beside such contemporaries as Luther, Copernicus and Columbus as an emancipator of mankind from the trammels of authority. The ensuing period of iatro-chemistry or medico-chemistry, lasting until the 18th century, witnessed a slow decline of the old alchemy.

Paracelsus was essentially a reformer and propagandist of the Renaissance. His chief contribution to alchemy was his modification of the sulphur-mercury theory by the introduction of a third principle which he named salt. In his system of the *tria prima*, or three hypostatical principles, sulphur, mercury and salt stood materially for inflammability, metallicity and uninflammability (fixidity) and mystically for the soul, spirit and body of man. The second half of the 17th Century found both the old alchemy and iatro-chemistry on the wane. Despite their excesses, both alchemists and iatro-chemists had done a great deal to accumulate chemical knowledge and to prepare the way for the incipient science of chemistry which was to arise in the second half of the 18th century.

It is sometimes held that the publication of *The Sceptical Chymist*, by Robert Boyle in 1661, heralded the end of alchemy. It is true that Boyle dismissed to his own satisfaction in this famous book the systems of the four elements and the *tria prima* and put forward the modern idea of an element; but the emergence of modern chemistry had to wait for more than another century. During this Indian summer of alchemy the stage was held by the Theory of Phlogiston, while the four elements and the three hypostatical principles hovered behind the scenes like ghosts reluctant to be laid. Phlogiston finally melted away with the discovery, in the second half of the 18th century, of the chemical composition of the ancient 'elements' air and water and of the true nature of combustion. These discoveries ushered in the era of modern chemistry.

Types of Alchemists

The term alchemist has been used throughout the ages to denote men of many kinds, with a real or professed knowledge of alchemy. These ranged from impostors and charlatans having no claim to the title, through puffers (*souffleurs*), gold makers, skilled practicers, and scholastic philosophers, to adepts and religious mystics.



Scotland figures a good deal in the history of alchemy. Also in Scotland there are some outstanding collections of alchemical literature, particularly the Ferguson and James Young Collections in Glasgow, and others in St. Andrews, Edinburgh and Aberdeen. A century after Damian's exploit, Scotland produced a mysterious itinerant gold maker in the person of Alexander Seton. He has been called "*the chief martyr of alchemy*", for his dramatic career is said to have ended in tragedy at Kraków in 1604, as a result of his experiences in the torture-chamber of the Elector of Saxony at Dresden.

The numerous paintings of alchemists and alchemical interiors, notably by Brueghel, Stradanus, Teniers, Steen, Wijck and other artists of the Low Countries, are mainly concerned with alchemists of the kinds that have been mentioned. Such genre representations of these painters and of artists in Italy, Spain, Germany and other countries, are of great interest and value to historical science.

Alchemists of a severely practical type, who were interested chiefly in chemical phenomena and in

Agricola, Libavius, and Glauber; the scholastic philosophers by Roger Bacon and Albertus Magnus; and the religious mystics, who viewed alchemy as "*the Divine Art*", by Ripley and Khunrath.

Alchemical Music

Among the mystical alchemists, Michael Maier calls for special mention. He was physician, private secretary and alchemist to Emperor Rudolf II (the so-called "*German Hermes*") at Prague, early in the 17th Century. A man of many accomplishments, Maier was also a philosopher, mystic, classical scholar and musician. He was a voluminous writer of great credulity, and he carried to extremes the alchemical interpretation of Egyptian and classical mythology.

This subject forms the chief theme of his *Atalanta Fugiens* (1618), a quaint and fascinating work handsomely embellished with fifty copper-engravings by de Bry and his school. Each engraving is provided with a cryptic title and a Latin epigram written in elegiac couplets. Each epigram is set to music, in the form of so-called fugues, which are in reality canons in two parts against a repeated canto fermo. In allusion to the classical legend, these three parts are termed, "*Atalanta, or the fleeing voice*", "*Hippomenes, or the pursuing voice*", and "*The apple in the path, or the delaying voice*". Presumably, in view of the alchemical belief in the beneficent influence of music, the final processes of the Great Work, carried out in the sealed Vessel of Hermes and directed by prayer as well as by chemical and astrological influences were sometimes undertaken to the accompaniment of musical chants or incantations.

To religious mystics among the alchemists, these processes would partake of the nature of a religious ritual, and it would be natural for them to introduce music from one of these closely related activities to the other. It must be emphasised also that alchemical theories and ideas came largely from Ancient Greece, and that the alchemists followed Pythagoras and Plato in ascribing particular importance to number and harmony in the interpretation of Nature and the universe.

In 1935, some of these alchemical canons were sung in public for the first time by members of the St. Andrews University choir, at the Royal Institution in London. Fuga 18 may be mentioned as typical: "*Whatever active principle there is in nature, it sends out its force in all directions and loves to multiply the same.*" It is of interest that some manuscript notes of *Atalanta Fugiens* made by Sir Isaac Newton and now in the St. Andrews collection, bear a special mark of emphasis beside this particular epigram.

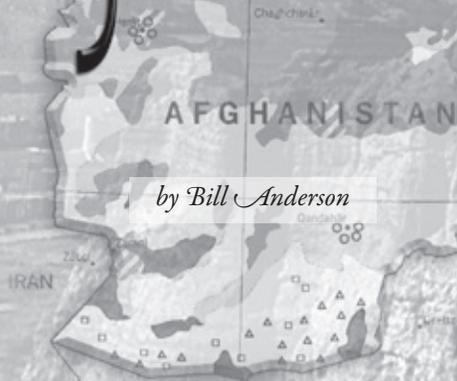


Copper engraving of Michael Maier from his
'Symbola Aureae Mensae Ducecim Nationum' (1617).

the discovery and application of new substances and processes, are typified by such men as Brunswick,



Secrets of Afghanistan



by Bill Anderson



IN 2001, AN ARTICLE in *The Times of London* described a country where warlords roamed the land. In that country, some occasionally obeyed the bizarre commands of their illusive foreign leader in Rome, while others killed and robbed for their own selfish interests. Their followers took no prisoners. Women were treated as chattels and not allowed out on their own, unless closely chaperoned and veiled. Men interpreted literally the taboos and laws of a supposedly sacred but evidently savage text about what they should eat and wear, and every other aspect of their lives. It was a land of no arts; no letters; no society, where there was a continual fear and danger of violent death; and the life of man was solitary, poor, nasty, brutish and short. Their language too was coarse.

You will by now have inferred that the article was talking about Britain in the Dark Ages. It went on to relate how Dari (Persian) and Pashtu, the official languages of Afghanistan, are far older than English and have almost as long a history as Greek, an Indo-European language just as they are. The article ended by stating that during the Dark Ages, Afghan scholars and poets were speaking those sophisticated languages while our illiterate ancestors were grunting with their pigs.

My work brings me into daily contact with people from all over the world. It was in this way that I first met some people from Afghanistan, who had come to the UK in search of refuge. I will be the first to admit that my knowledge of Afghanistan was at first a little



'sketchy'. I knew that it was a beautiful country, with its mountains, deserts and plains. I had heard of the statues of the Buddha at Bamiyan (before their destruction by the Taliban in 2005) and the turquoise lakes of Band-e Amir. Unfortunately the Afgan war had made us all the more aware of the troubles afflicting the country, and the pictures we saw for years on out television screens portrayed one aspect of that land. To see the wasteland that the country had been reduced to through decades of war, first against foreign armies, and then through a brutal civil war culminating in the rule of the Taliban, gave little hint of the glories of the past, and of the importance of this country to the cultural and mystical

“What you see in yourself is what you see in the world.” : The soul is the mirror of the world.

life of the world. This article then is an attempt to redress the balance.

Apart from the capital Kabul, the other main towns are Kandahar in the south, Jelalabad in the east, Herat in the west and Mazar-e Sharif in the north, with the Hindu Kush mountains in the centre and northeast. Nuristan, the *Land of Light*, northeast of Kabul is an unusual region of the country, set in a striking mountain region near the Indian border. It has forests where the Greek god Dionysus features in local legends. Here the people are said to be descended from the Ancient Greeks and still look very European with their green eyes and light complexions.

“I will never forget your beautiful gardens. When I remember the summits of your beautiful mountains, I forget the greatness of the Delhi throne.”

So said Ahmad Shah Durrani (1747-1773), founder of the Afghan Empire and considered by most Afghan historians to be the true founder of modern Afghanistan.

Dawn of History

History places the first people in Afghanistan about 30,000 years ago. By the Bronze Age, in the 3rd to 2nd millennium BCE, Indo-Iranians, part of the great Indo-European family of nations, entered the region and split into 3 branches. One continued south into India, one turned west and

became the Medes and Persians, while the third group, the Eastern Iranian-speaking peoples, stayed in Central Asia and called their land Aryana. Their language was and is still distantly related to our own.

Aryana is mentioned in the Zoroastrian Avesta, where it is described as a beautiful country full of warlike and brave people. The inhabitants of Afghanistan traded with the Indus Valley civilisation, as well as with Mesopotamia and Egypt. Their main export was lapis lazuli. With its unique intense blue colour, lapis can be seen in the funerary mask of Tutankhamun for example, and for over 6,000 years it has been exported from the mines in Badakhshan province in the north of Afghanistan. Apart from Sumer and Egypt, it was in later times traded deep into China and Southeast Asia, as well as into Europe as far as the British Isles and Scandinavia. Although nowadays also mined in Siberia and Chile, the best is still produced in Afghanistan.

Legacy of Zoroaster

Zoroaster, founder of the Persian Zoroastrian religion, preached in Afghanistan. In the 6th Century BCE, the Persians, who had been converted to Zoroastrianism, conquered Afghanistan, dividing it into five satrapies. The satrapy of Bactria had been a powerful sovereign kingdom before the Persian king Cyrus the Great conquered it in the mid 6th Century.

It was so important during the Achaemenid period that it was always governed by a member of the royal family. And it was the Bactrian satrap Bessus who murdered the last Persian King of Kings, Darius III in 331 BCE. Alexander the Great pursued Bessus into Afghanistan and subdued its tribes through fire and sword.

Afghanistan and the Greek Colonies

When Alexander the Great conquered the Persian Empire, another great culture and philosophy came to Afghanistan. On his way he founded many

“The first day you meet, you are friends. The next day you meet, you are brothers.” : Friendship grows into brotherhood.

Greek colonies, fortified cities, fortresses and towns on earlier native cities. Most of them he named Alexandria.





One of the Buddha statues of Gandhara.

For example, Alexandria Areion, modern Herat; Alexandria Prophthasia, modern Farah; Alexandria Arachoton, modern Kandahar. He also visited Bactra, modern Balkh, where he married his wife Roxane before continuing to Zaranj, Ghazni, Kabul and Jelalabad near the entrance to the Khyber Pass. In an extraordinarily short period of time, he partially succeeded in Hellenising the whole country through sheer force of numbers of the Greek many colonists he brought with him. After his death in 323 BCE, Alexander's empire was divided between his generals: Egypt went to the Ptolemies, and Afghanistan became part of the Greek

Seleucid Empire ruled from Babylon.

About 304 BCE, most of present-day Afghanistan was ceded to the Maurya dynasty that ruled northern India. Ashoka, its most famous monarch, converted to Buddhism. About 250 BCE, the Greek satraps of Bactria, rulers of the north of Afghanistan conquered Kabul and the east as far as the Punjab. Their capital was at Bactra (Balkh), and thus began the Greco-Bactrian period, when the Afghans were ruled by kings with names like Diodotus, Euthydemus and Demetrius. The ruling class were descended from the colonists settled by Alexander the Great, as well as subsequent settlers from other parts of the Greek world. Among the greatest kings of this period were Eucratides I Megas (the Great) and Menander I Soter (the Saviour). Afghanistan was in this manner infused by the material and spiritual culture of Hellenism. Plato and the Greek philosophers were being discussed far from their Greek ancestral land. It is still possible to visit the ruins of a typical Ancient Greek city now called Ay Khanum, near Balkh. If it



Royal Cameo profile of a Greco-Bactrian ruler.

was not for the magnificent coins they left behind, and their subtle influence upon ancient India, they would have disappeared into oblivion.

Demetrius I, one of their greatest kings, rebuilt Taxila, the future capital of Gandhara and the Kushans, which had been destroyed by Ashoka, and tried to make his kingdom a union of Greeks, Bactrians and Indians. He even went so far as to mint bilingual Greek-Sanskrit coins. Expanding ever deeper into India, he welcomed Buddhists into his kingdom. Taxila, his capital, became a centre of Buddhism for centuries to come, and the resulting merger of Hellenism and Buddhism gave rise to the distinctive Gandharan school of art and architecture, which was the first to portray the Buddha in human form. Menander I Soter, the son-in-law of Demetrius I is said to have undergone a religious enlightenment similar to Ashoka's. In an ancient Indian Buddhist text, the Milinda-pañho, Milinda (Menander) is said to have been converted to Buddhism. This is however unlikely, for he was Greek first and foremost and a supporter of the Greek pantheon of gods. Although he may in time have come to hold certain Buddhist sentiments, and his coins contained both Greek and Buddhist imagery, this can be seen as serving the cause of political stability rather than any deeper religious convictions.

The Gandharan Experience

Around 135 BCE, five Central Asian nomadic tribes (known as the Yüeh-chih to the Chinese) conquered the Greco-Bactrian kingdom and founded the Kushan Empire. It was a multi-lingual, multi-racial empire every bit as powerful as its contemporaries in Rome, Persia and China, though today its former might is all but forgotten. Its most famous ruler was king Kanishka (78-144 CE) the great patron of Mahayana Buddhism.

His empire stretched from Bukhara in Uzbekistan through northern India to Patna on the Ganges and through Central Asia into



An example of coinage from Gandhara (600 - 300 BCE)



part of present day Xinjiang province in western China, with his capital at modern day Peshawar in Pakistan. He is believed to have been a Zoroastrian before converting to Buddhism of which he was a great patron, spending

“There is blessing in action.” : Help yourself and Heaven will help you.



Engraved representation of Kanishka on a bronze vessel.

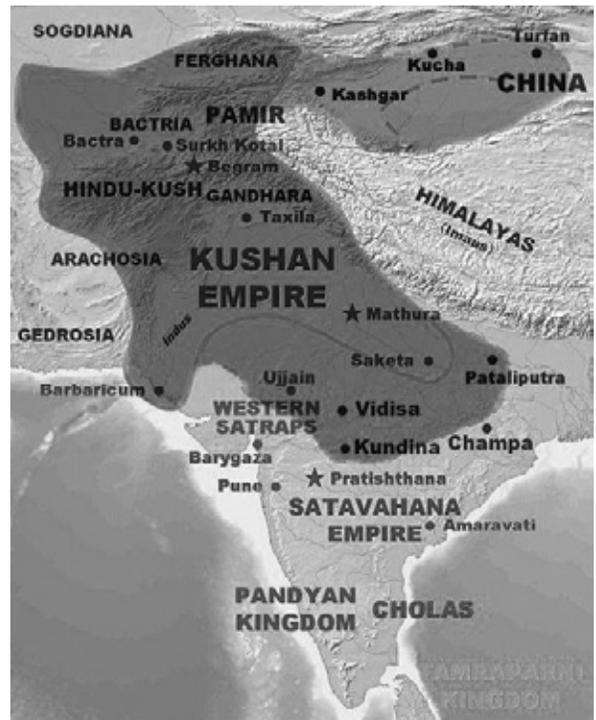
his resources on helping to spread Buddhism in the new form known as Mahayana, a more humanistic form than the simpler Hinayana. Here devotees would look towards an evolving cosmology of Bodhisattvas, and central to this new cosmology was the Buddha, who originally was a revered human being, though in Mahayana Buddhism was transformed into a divine saviour, a veritable god.

It was during Kanishka’s reign that the Buddha emerged for the first time as a god. Kanishka convoked in Kashmir the fourth and final great Buddhist council, a meeting which marked the beginning of Mahayana Buddhism. At this meeting, authorised commentaries of the Buddhist canon were made, after which huge shrines and monastic complexes were built near every major town. He was a tolerant king who honoured Zoroastrian, Greek and Indian deities as well as the Buddha. At least partially as a result of his tolerant approach to the beliefs of others, trade with the mighty Roman Empire expanded significantly.

The Kushans were also great patrons of the arts and literature. Kushan merchants became immensely rich, and much of their wealth was spent on art to adorn Buddhist shrines and monasteries. In the 1970s golden treasures were found in Kushan graves and taken to the museum in Kabul. Unfortunately, during the civil war

of the early 1990s, like so many other treasures, they disappeared. It was during Kushan times that the two great Buddha statues were built at Bamiyan, though sadly in 2001, these statues were blown up on the orders of the Taliban authorities. Buddhist pilgrims came from as far afield as China and Khotan to visit the holy places of Afghanistan. Under Kanishka, a new art form, known as Gandharan, was introduced, and the age of the imperial Kushans is considered one of the most creative periods in Asian history:

“If you would become a pilgrim on the path of love, the first condition is that you become as humble as dust and ashes.”
— Ansari of Herat —



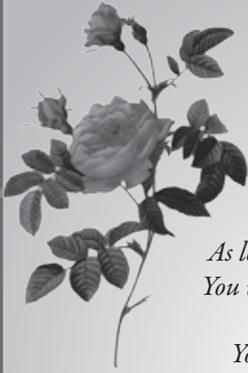
Map of the Kushan empire at its height of power.

Gandhara lay in the northwest of present day Pakistan, and eastern Afghanistan. Its style of art developed between the 1st century BCE and the 7th century CE. This region had long been a crossroads of cultural influences. The Gandhara School which came into being here drew upon the anthropomorphic traditions of Greece and Rome, incorporating many motifs from Roman art, such as vine-scrolls, cherubs bearing garlands, tritons and centaurs in its interpretations of Buddhist legends.



Representation of Kanishka on a coin from around 110 CE.





Mystic of Afghanistan

*As long as you are busy with your own self,
You will not be admitted to the way to God.
Once you are free of your own self,
You will not be deprived of his regard.*

— *Abdullâh Ansâri of Herât* —

The mystic, Khwâja (Master) Abdullâh Ansâri of Herât 1006-1089, was one of the greatest Sufi mystics of Afghanistan. He was a poet, philosopher and mystic, whose poems are an intimate dialogue between the soul and God. He wrote poetry and books in Dari-Persian and Arabic. They include titles such as *The Hundred Grounds*, *The Stations of the Wayfarers* and *The Intimate Invocations*. His fame was so great that he was honoured by the Caliph himself in distant Baghdad. Ansâri's burial place in Herât is still a place of pilgrimage to this day.

We have to remember that there were still Greek traditions from their colony-cities. It represented the Buddha with a youthful Apollo-like face, dressed

Also at the court was Charaka, a Hindu physician and founder of Ayurveda.

in garments resembling togas. The sculptures were originally painted and gilded. Their craftsmen made a lasting contribution to Buddhist art where beautiful images of Buddha were developed in a Greco-Roman style, with graceful bodies and curly hair, reminiscent of Hellenistic sculpture, but also with Indian influences.

Iconographic features of the Buddha, such as the monastic robe and usnisha on his head, the uma or third eye, and the halo made their appearance at this time. Much of their vanished architecture, with its accompanying sculpture and painting, was intended to produce a distinctive atmosphere of mystery and transcendent opulence. Many scholars such as Ashvaghosha, a great poet and master of music, who wrote a biography of the Buddha, adorned

Kanishka's court. Under the patronage of Kanishka, Ashvaghosha was instrumental in spreading the Mahayana (Greater Vehicle) form of Buddhism. He was a much respected, even revered, as an orator on the deeper aspects of Mahayana.

Also at the court of Kanishka was Charaka, a Hindu physician and founder of Ayurvedic medicine, a branch of Indian medicine still in use today. A major branch of the Silk Road passed through Afghanistan, passing luxury goods and ideas between Rome, India and China. The ancient city of Balkh was at the crossroads of this route. Indian pilgrims travelling the Silk Road introduced Buddhism to China via Afghanistan.

At the Kushan summer capital at Bagram, now a huge air-base to the north of Kabul, excavations found painted glass from Alexandria, bronzes, porphyries and alabasters from Rome, ivories from India and lacquers from China. Buddhist Gandharan art provided the basis for the Buddhist art of China, Korea and Japan. The world's largest figures of the Buddha, 175 and 120 feet tall, were carved into the mountainside at Bamiyan in the central mountains during the 3rd and 4th Centuries until tragically destroyed by the Taliban.

In 241 CE, Afghanistan was conquered once again by the Persian Sassanid dynasty who, like their forebears, were Zoroastrians. Again the satrapy was considered so important that members of the royal family were sent as governors. In the meantime, Hindu kingdoms were established at Kabul and Ghazni in the east.

*O Lord, other men are afraid of thee,
but I, I am afraid of myself.
From thee flows good alone,
from me flows evil.
Others fear what the morrow may bring;
I am afraid of what happened yesterday.*
— *Ansari of Herât* —



The ruins of



The Advent of Islam

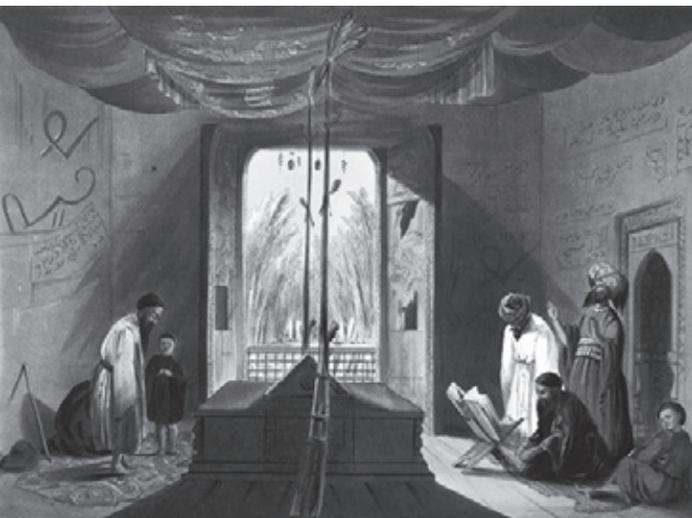
Islamic armies defeated the Sassanid Persians in 642, and quickly swept into Afghanistan. By the mid-7th Century the Kushan Empire was in decline and had split into 27 feuding principalities collectively known as Tokharistan. Although Muslims conquered the land and it became part of the great eastern region known as Khorāsān, they had difficulty holding on to it, as the Afghan cities

regularly rose in revolt against what they considered a primitive and barbaric religious code. Buddhism retained for generations a stronghold on the country, and subsequently influenced mystical sects and Islamic scholars not only in Afghanistan but as far afield as the Maghreb and the Islamic parts of Spain. Long after the advent of Islam, cities such as Balkh, Kandahar and Kabul itself still had large Buddhist populations. Local Muslim dynasties soon established themselves and rejected the rule of the Caliphs in far-away Baghdad.

Under Islamic influence, Afghanistan entered a Golden Age, first under the Persian Samanid dynasty that ruled from Bukhara, (see the June 2001 Beacon



Old Ghazni.



1848 painting of the tomb of Sultan Mahmud of Ghazni (998 - 1030).



Mystic of Afghanistan

From the un-manifest I came and pitched my tent in the forest of material existence, where I passed through mineral and vegetable kingdoms. Then my mental equipment carried me into the animal kingdom.

Having reached there I crossed beyond it. Then in the crystal clear shell of the human heart, I nursed the drop of self in a Pearl. And in association with good men, I wandered around the Prayer House.

And having experienced that, I crossed beyond it, and took the road that leads to Him. And I became a slave at His gate. Then the duality disappeared and I became absorbed in Him.

— Hakim Jāmi of Herāt —

Hakim Jāmi of Herāt (1414-92) was from childhood considered a genius, and he knew it. This made the clergy and literati of his time uncomfortable. His writings and teachings made him so famous that many rulers sent him invitations to their courts. He was born in Herāt, and as a Sufi, cited as teachers in Sufi transmission such westerners as Plato, Hippocrates, Pythagoras and Hermes Trismegistus. This is from his poem *Unity*.

article about Avicenna) then under the rule of one of the most brilliant generals of the Islamic world Sultan Mahmud Ghaznawi (Sultan Mahmud of Ghazni, also in the June 2001 Rosicrucian Beacon article about Avicenna) who ruled from 998-1030. His huge Ghaznavid Empire's capital was at Ghazni, 100 miles south of Kabul. Arab historians likened the city to paradise, and it is still regarded as one of the two principal cultural centres of Afghanistan, together with Herāt. From here he conquered Afghanistan, Kashmir, the Punjab, Gujarat, and most of Iran. He looted Indian cities of their enormous wealth, and used it to turn Ghazni into one of the great centres of Islamic culture, remaining a splendid city for over 200 years, and rivalling Baghdad itself. He patronised scholars, founded colleges, laid out gardens and built mosques, palaces and caravanserais.

For all his destructiveness, he financed a court of high learning and sophistication, quite surprising for one whose father had been a pagan Turkish nomad. He set up a university and employed 1,000 scholars



and 400 poets, rewarding them with ‘elephant-loads’ of gold. Mahmud’s example was followed by his nobles and courtiers, soon transforming the city into the most brilliant cultural centre in Central Asia. The famous medieval Persian poet Ferdowsi (935-1020) completed his epic *Shâhnâme* (Book of Kings) at Mahmud’s court. This book is twice as long as the *Iliad*, and is still regarded by Iranians as their national epic. Also taken captive and brought to the court was the astronomer, historian, poet, geographer and walking encyclopaedia al-Biruni (973-1048), a close friend of Avicenna. He knew the Earth was round 500 years before Columbus, and estimated the radius of the Earth correct to within 12 miles.

Then the greatest misfortune of the medieval world descended on Afghanistan. The Mongol armies of Genghis Khan swept through the country, destroying not only towns, mosques and hamlets, but also the underground irrigation channels called *qanats*, upon which the prosperity of the country depended. After Genghis Khan’s death in 1227, his empire collapsed, and Afghanistan was divided into many small principalities. At the end of the 14th century, Timur (known as Tamberlane in the West), whom many considered worse than Genghis Khan, conquered the country. But his successors, the Timurids, were great patrons of learning and the arts and enriched their capital city of Herât. Under their rule from 1404-1507 the country enjoyed peace and prosperity, Islamic culture returned, and Herât blossomed and became the political and cultural centre of the sub-continent.

In the 16th century the Turkish-speaking Uzbeks invaded Afghanistan. But before that, Herât had become the real centre of Timurid culture where they could indulge their love of painting, poetry, architecture and gardens. Babur (1483-1530), the great, great grandfather of Shah Jahan who built the Taj Mahal, was a descendant of Timur on his father’s side and Genghis Khan on his mother’s. He lost his own kingdom in Ferghana and Samarkand, and, as the kingdom of Kabul became ‘vacant’, he moved there and made the city his base for the rest of his life.

Kabul stands on a plain surrounded by rocky ridges, and here Babur found pleasant gardens, well watered by springs and canals. It was an international world in one

city. You could hear as many as 12 languages on its streets and it was an important trading post on the routes from India to Persia, Iraq and Turkey in the west.

From his fortress in Kabul, he marched into India where he went on to found the magnificent Mughal Empire. He preferred his connection to the highly cultured courts of Timur and his successors. Babur had a considerable talent for poetry, which he wrote in Turkish. His court at Kabul was outmatched only by the Timurid court at Herât, which reached its peak of achievement at this time, and which was the home of Bihzâd, the incomparable painter of miniatures. During his reign Babur was presented with the famous Koh-e Nur ‘*Mountain of Light*’ diamond that is now to be found on the crown of the late Queen Mother, amongst the British crown jewels in the Tower of London.

He would no doubt have been horrified known he known that the dynasty he founded in India would one day be known by a Persian term for *Mongol*, a name synonymous even in his time for barbarity. He cherished loyalty and excellence in any activity, but disliked excess, meanness, vanity, rudeness and narrowness of learning. His remarkable autobiography the *Baburnama* is still extant. After his death, Babur’s body was taken back to Kabul, the city he loved, for burial in a mausoleum in the famous Bâgh-e Babur Shâh gardens, overlooking the city.

For the next 200 years Afghanistan was parcelled between the Persians and the Mughals. In 1747, at the very first Loya Jirga, when the various tribes united, they chose Ahmad Shah Durrani as the first Afghan king. He was the founder of the last great Afghan Empire. The most famous modern Afghan philosopher was Jamaluddin Afghani from Assadabad. This

famous intellectual and political activist was born in 1839. During his lifetime he travelled to Iran, Iraq, India, Egypt, Turkey, Russia, France and Britain. He died in 1897 in Istanbul, where the Sultan had received him. He dwelt on the positive role that religion has played in the moral and spiritual progress of humankind. The Durrani dynasty lasted until 1973. For most of this time Afghanistan found itself at the centre of the Great Game between the British and Russian Empires. Today this brutal ‘game’ continues, though the players have changed, and include several countries of the



Modern statue of Ferdowsi in Rome.



West as well as Russia, China, Pakistan and India.

Balkh

If there is one special place that exemplifies Afghanistan, it must be the ancient city of Balkh. Although now only a small provincial town, it has a glorious past. As the most ancient city of Afghanistan, it is known as the *mâdar-e shahrhâ* (mother of cities). Lying 20 kilometres northwest of Mazar-e Sharif, the reputed burial place of Ali, the fourth Caliph, who is regarded as the founder of Shi'ite Islam, Balkh was also the birthplace of Zoroastrianism, the place where Zoroaster first started to preach. And it was here too that he died.

In this ancient city there was originally a great shrine to Anahita, the water goddess with her crown of stars who was accepted into the Zoroastrian universe, and was the equivalent of the Roman goddess Venus. Her temple was a place of pilgrimage, attracting thousands of devotees. Once considered the most important city in Central Asia, Balkh's resplendence and fame were held in high esteem, its riches attracting the attention of many envious neighbours. At one time it stood on the banks of the great river Oxus, (modern-day Amu Darya), but now the river has retreated several miles to the north. In ancient times it was a well-watered land



Mystic of Afghanistan

*Love becomes perfect only when it transcends itself,
becoming One with its object, producing Unity of Being.*

— Hakim Sanâi of Ghazni —

Hakim Sanâi of Ghazni, (died 1131) another Sufi master, whom Rumi acknowledged as an inspiring author, was one of the most significant poets in the history of Islamic mysticism. He was one of the three great mystical mathnawi writers in Persian, the others being Attâr and Rumi (Mevlana). Sanâi was the earliest Afghan teacher to use the love motif in Sufism. He wrote *"The Walled Garden of Truth"* and *"The Parliament of Birds"* which is an allegory of the human quest for higher enlightenment.

"Knowledge is good, it leads towards God. A learned person is considered God's chosen one; yet over-intellectualism is bad. To acquire knowledge for the sake of dignity and power is a waste of time and labour."

famous for its gold, rubies and lapis lazuli. Alexander the Great chose it as his base in Bactria, and married Roxane there. The Greek satraps of Bactria (the Greco-Bactrians) became independent as the Seleucid Empire weakened, and made Balkh their capital. Under the Kushans, when Buddhism was practised throughout Afghanistan, many holy Buddhist temples graced the city.

Zoroaster was not the only great mystic to have lived here. The city was the home to Rabi'a Balkhi, (Rabia of Balkh) a beautiful princess who lived at the court of the Samanids. She was Afghanistan's earliest and first female Sufi mystic poet, and she was very talented. Her poems are about nature, love and beauty. In a story similar to Romeo and Juliet, after the murder of the man she loved, it is said she committed suicide and, as the story goes, wrote her final poem in her own blood as she lay dying. Balkh was the home of the famous Persian noble Barmakid family,



19th Century painting of Ghazni.



hereditary custodians of the magnificent Nobahar, (New Monastery, the famous Buddhist shrine there), which was a position of great prestige. Pilgrims flocked to this temple from the Iranian lands and beyond.

During the early Islamic period, the Barmakids were forcefully converted to Islam and subsequently joined the Abbasid revolution against the Umayyad Caliphs in Damascus. Later descendants of the family symbolised the opulence and culture of the Golden Age of Baghdad, and its members play a colourful role in the stories of the Arabian Nights. They were renowned for their fairness and generosity, and under their policy of honouring, praising and rewarding scholars, writers and poets, science and literature flourished. The Persian philosopher Avicenna's father came from Balkh before moving to Bukhara. Balkh was also the birthplace of Maulana Jalaluddin Balkhi (1207-1273) better known as Rumi or Mevlana (see the June 2000 edition of the Rosicrucian Beacon), the great mystic who later fled to Turkey before the advancing Mongol hordes.

He wrote: *"The intellectual quest though fine as pearl or coral, is not the spiritual search. That spiritual search is on another level. Spiritual wine is a different substance."* In 1220, the Mongols devastated Balkh, but later under the Timurids, it flowered once again. After that it fell into gradual decline, until today it has been eclipsed by the nearby provincial capital of Mazar-e Sharif. Somehow the story of this city is a perfect illustration of the country's history and impact on the world.

AFGHANISTAN, Enchantment of the World

At his inauguration as Interim President in Kabul on 22nd December 2001, Hamid Karzai spoke the following words: *"In this critical time, when our country is watching our actions, let us come together and be brothers and sisters. Let us be good to each other and be compassionate and share our grief. Let us forget the sad past."* For the first time in nearly 30 years, it looked as though peace would return to Afghanistan. The interim government drew its members from all factions and ethnic groupings, but the peace was not to last and the age old problem of corruption, tribal loyalties above national loyalties, as well as fundamentalist atrocities were soon on open display.

If it ever happens that weapons are taken out of the hands of ordinary people, where in many homes all men and even boys possess guns, then there will be a chance to rebuild this devastated country.

When education has been reinstated, and colleges and universities have been given the freedom of expression and academic enquiry they once possessed, the country can look forward to a bright future. But for as long as fundamentalist Islamic strictures rule the lives of millions, this poor nation will for all intents and purposes remain a backwater of poverty and ignorance. Time is not linear, it is cyclical, and I hope that Afghanistan's time will come again.

They are a people, inaccurately portrayed as savage religious zealots. Instead I see them as a people of prototypical human dignity. In their adversity, they remain stoic, restrained and dignified. They are friendly and hospitable, their hospitality is legendary, and they would do anything for a guest. If they are poor they will still give you the best they have. Religion is an intimate part of their life, not just something to do on a Sunday or Friday. And in this we can see the ideals of the Rosicrucian. Afghans are proud of their country, having never been colonised by any European power, and have a profound attachment to freedom. Respect is very important to them, as can be seen when they shake your hand with both of theirs, and place their right hand over their heart.

If there is one thing we are taught, it is not to judge by appearances. In the past, seekers of wisdom turned to Afghanistan, a natural crossroads for as long as history itself, and to the council of its Sufi mystics. It was the spiritual heartland of Asia, the nexus of converging streams of mystical knowledge: Zoroastrian, Greek, Buddhist and Islamic. As the circle turns again, who knows what the future may have in store for this much maligned country?

"I walked to the edge of the plateau and looked down over the plain that stretched from its base, across an expanse of mud-coloured land sweltering beneath bands of summer haze. The light too had been purified by the elevation. Just then, the sun breached the east and the light poured like a liquid flame over the slope. I watched it creep down the hillside on my right and saw the grey rock turn to purple and the plain beyond it transformed from the colour of dust to gold, and the air was suddenly fragrant with the energy of the new day, as if the earth itself were drawing a life-giving breath. I had never known a sunrise quite so beautiful."

From *"An Unexpected Light - Travels in Afghanistan"* by Jason Elliot.



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Beneath my branches spread
forth the Light, the Dark
and all that has Life.

Myriad forms my children take,
each one to its kind;
bound to the mould of
their creation, their will,
their duty, their delight.

I am the Source, I am the All,
the Mystery Unknown
of Darkness fullblown,
for I am all Life.

From birth to death, to far beyond,
I am with you always,
I am your God.

Beyond the tunnel find realities
anew, the tunnel of Light,
where I await you.

-- Amelia de Calabar --