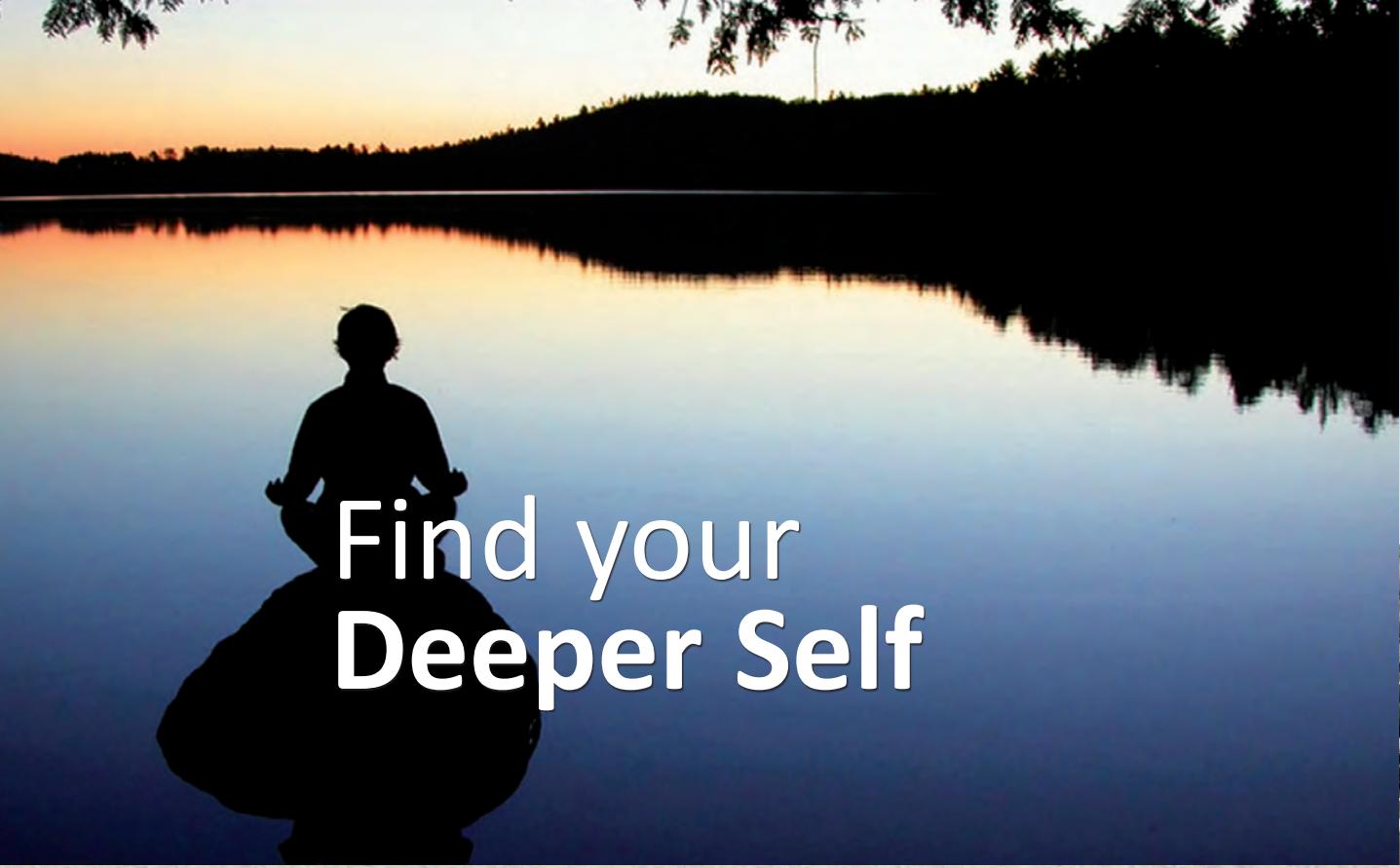

ROSCICRUCIAN

BEACON



December 2018, Vol 28, No. 1





Find your Deeper Self

In THE depths of your being resides your deeper Self, an aspect of your being which breathes in calm reflection the very rhythm of the universe. It is in touch with all things and communicates with all that matters for life on Earth. It seeks to instruct and guide its human ward how to live a good life, and does so with care for its wellbeing, and above all, with love and compassion for all expressions of life.

Your Self knows why you are here and what you are meant to accomplish in this incarnation. It knows what your chances are of attaining the goals you have set for yourself, and whether they are beyond your reach or fully attainable. And it assists you to reach the attainable goals with care and attention to the minutest details.

Your deeper Self is a veritable slumbering genius, eager to help you express your hidden talents with greater refinement and sophistication than you have ever considered possible. The most productive thing we can ever do is to find and communicate with this Self.

For millennia, seekers of universal truths have known of the existence of a kernel of perfection lying dormant in every person, manifesting supreme confidence, calmness, maturity and wisdom. This deeper

Self is called by Rosicrucians, the 'Inner Master', for it has in abundance, qualities of refinement, high purpose and spiritual maturity we would expect only of the most accomplished of humans.

You can discover how to access this high level of achievement and embark upon the definitive, true direction of your life simply by learning how to contact and regularly commune with your deeper Self. If you are searching for a way of accomplishing the most fulfilling and rewarding things in life, in a fair and ethical way, then learn from the ineffable wisdom of that inner perfection.

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

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CONTENTS

Lost Truths Restored - The Life of Elias Ashmole - by Connie James	2
Passing Time - Anonymous	8
Ancient Latvian Religion - Siobhan Morrison	9
The Year Ahead - Benefactor	12
Michael Sendivogius - Citizen of the World - Paul Goodall	13
Great Soul of the Universe - Ailema	23
Reflections of a Mystic - D Weber	24
Songs of Flowers - The Life of Netzahualcoyotl - Bill Anderson	26
The Spiritual Wealth of Islam - Serge Hutin	36
Balancing Spirituality - Benefactrix	42
The Candle - Mary Sheriff	43
A Time for Tranquility - Gail Best	44



Cover spread

Mid-winter
Northern Lights

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Lost Truths Restored

The Life of Elias Ashmole

by Connie James

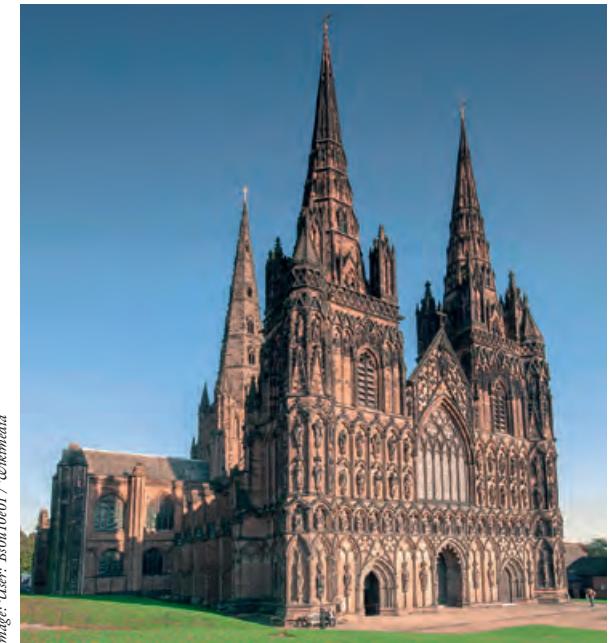
TWO ILLUSTRIOUS scholars exemplified the tenets of the Rosy Cross during the Elizabethan and Stuart Eras in Britain. The first was Sir Francis Bacon, philosopher and statesman of Elizabethan and early Stuart era who, it is believed, served as Imperator of the Rosicrucian Order in Britain up to his death 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.

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 Imperator 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 16, he went to live with his

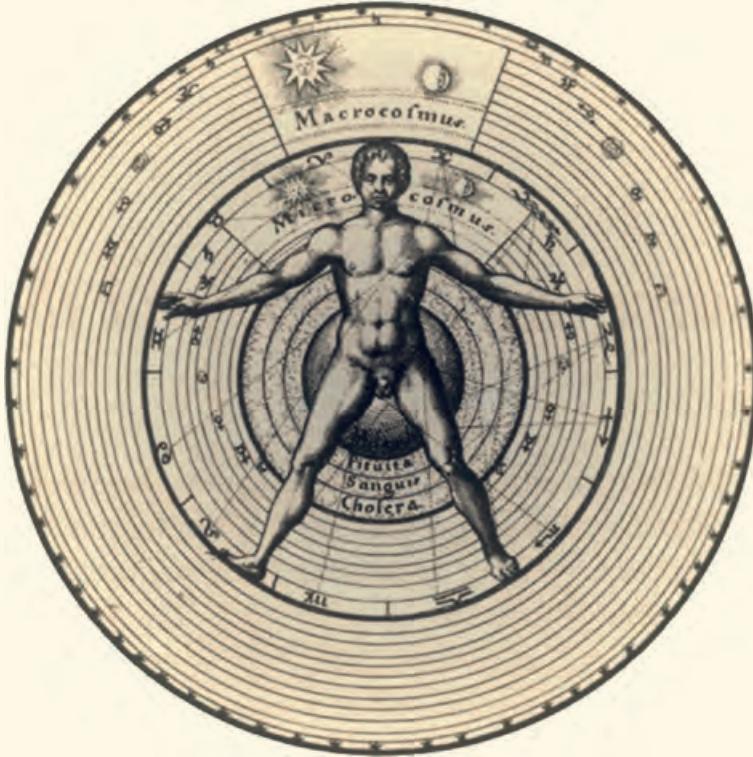
uncle in London. There he soon attracted the attention of several notable Rosicrucians. At 18 he was introduced to Robert Fludd, the erudite country clergyman whose writings so clearly reflected the spirit of the *Fama Fraternitatis*, a written proclamation issued in 1614 in Kassel, Germany, by means of which the Rosicrucian Brethren 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.

Whereas 21st Century Rosicrucians begin their instruction through detailed lessons received on a regular basis by mail or downloaded online, Ashmole no doubt had to pry out the essential principles of the Rosicrucian teachings by poring over Fludd's *Tractatus Theologophilosophicus* (Treatise 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



Robert Fludd (1574 - 1637)



Fludd's illustration of man the microcosm within the universal macrocosm.

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 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 21 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 24.

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-wracking 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 people 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 humankind to the mute pebbles on the ground, were agents.

Experiments and classroom demonstrations showed Ashmole the outer 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 or her 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.

Among *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



Image: Ozze / Wikimedia

Oxford's famous Brasenose College.

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

Wherever he stayed, learned people gathered to advance their 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, at the age of 32, he remarried, his bride being an English noblewoman, 20 years his senior. After

he went to live on her country estate, her son, who was little more than a titled young thug, swaggered into Ashmole's study and close to 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 Elizabethan seer 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

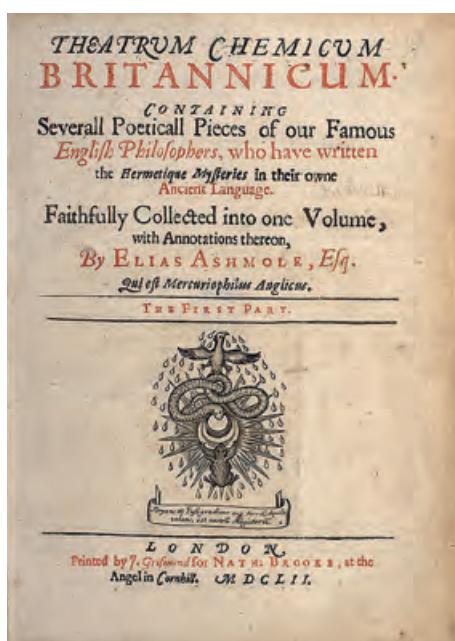
Canterbury Tales, though much less known and read. Ashmole records in his diary that the illustrations in the book were drawn by Thomas Vaughan, who in the same year had published the first known English translation of the 1614 German edition of the *Fama Fraternitatis*, considered by many as the founding treatise of the Rosicrucian fraternity.

Ashmole's 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



Theatrum Chemicum Britannicum



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.

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 warden 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 55 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

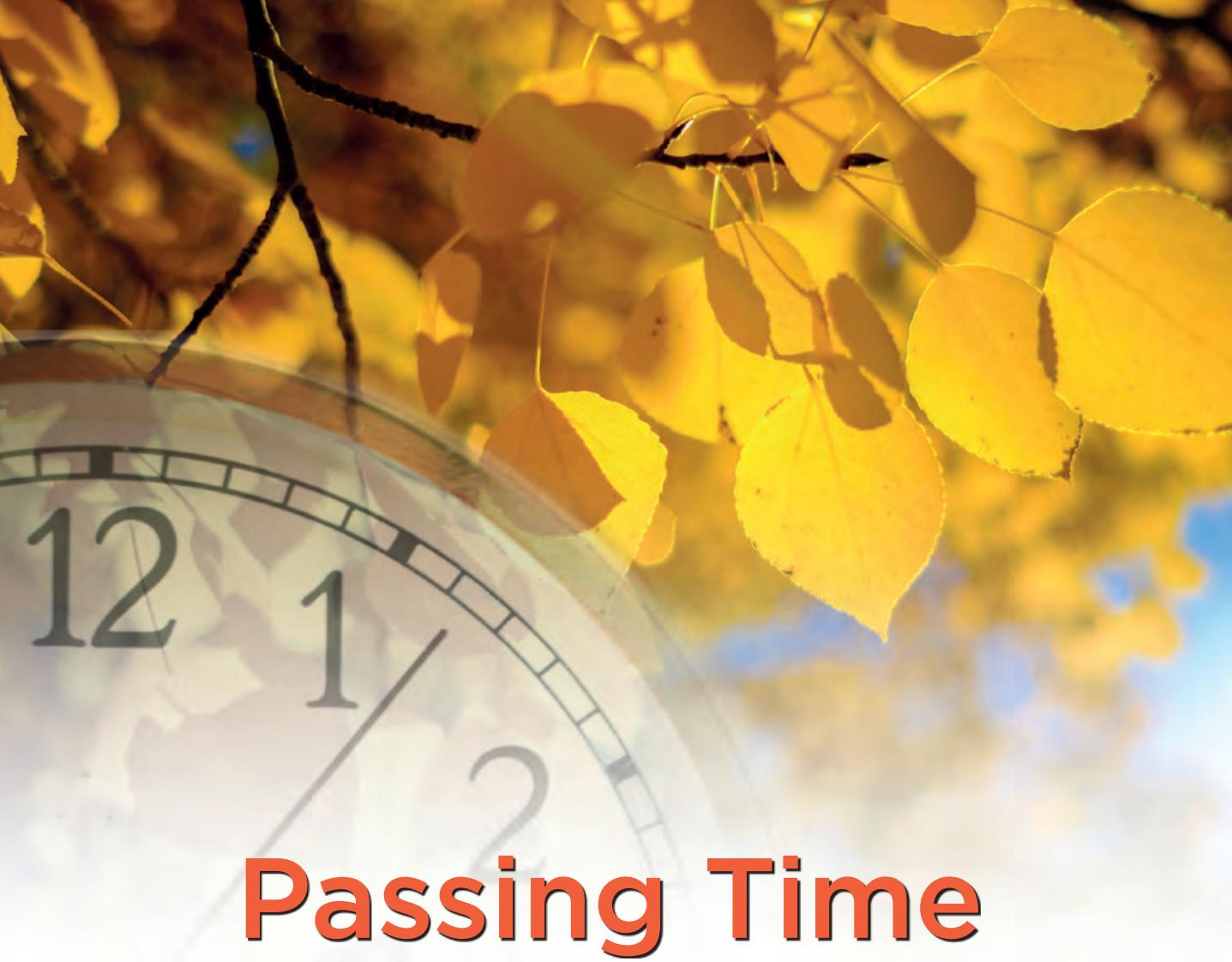


May 1660, Charles II sailed back to England from exile.

an everlasting Rosicrucian legacy of learning.

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.



Passing Time

Anonymous

THERE IS a soft sadness in passing time, a melancholy such as touches autumn days when leaves fall and nature is filled with winter's imminence.

'Time's winged chariot' is ever at our backs and seems to hurry near. Not that one 'feels' older. Inside, the same ego looks out and ponders the world. But when old friends come by, the streaks of grey, the lines around the eyes and the stoop of a spine once erect, make plain that what has happened to them must be happening to us.

It is strange that we should all grow old and that time affects what we feel to be our inmost self. Maybe we judge too much by the grey and the lines and too little by the feeling.

After the first stab of realisation of passing time, we may observe that friends have not really

changed; underneath, they are the same recognisable personalities despite the repeating cycles of the years. Let the grey, the colours and the lines be forgotten. Let experience, patience, tolerance and peace be the intangible marks we recognise.

And if there be a soul, these things will surely be of it. If we take with us what we do *not* leave behind, then these things will march forward with us. Why go back a day? Why should the river not press to the sea? Why should spring not come again or the flower return to the seed; or the leaf to the branch; or the egg to the nest?

Down the incarnations, greeting old friends, why should we not say: "*Why you are here, and you have not changed! The flower has left its seed and has returned. The intangible that ever was still is. Your beauty enhanced in repetition makes you lovelier than ever.*"





by Siobhan Morrison

Ancient Latvian Religion

Contemporary depiction of the solar goddess Saule, the common 'Baltic solar deity in ancient Lithuanian and Latvian mythologies.'

IN THE December 2014 and March 2015 issue of the Rosicrucian Beacon there were two articles about the ancient Indo-Europeans. In this article we will have a look at an offshoot of the Indo-European family, the Baltic tribes who inhabited the modern countries of Latvia and Lithuania.

Ancient Greek and Roman writers such as Herodotus and Tacitus described the Baltic tribes as peaceful farmers who lived in a society where men and women were equals. Christian missionaries arrived in the Baltic lands in the 11th and 12th Centuries, and although they largely succeeded in Christianising the tribes, some of their

ancient beliefs and traditions have survived as traditions to modern times. Latvia held on to their traditions longer than Lithuania which became a Grand Duchy with their Grand Dukes, in turn becoming kings of large areas of Polish speaking Europe. The result was that the Polish Commonwealth lost much of their earlier traditions when they became fully Roman Catholic.

Dainas

Although much of the belief systems and traditions of the inhabitants of the eastern Baltic were lost already by the 19th Century, it is known that they believed in





reincarnation, and had reverence for sacred groves, specific trees, fields and river courses as was common elsewhere in Europe. Fortunately a large collection folklore called *daina* has survived giving us a view of a long vanished traditional way of life. And some of these sung stories of the past are believed to be of great antiquity.

Dainas concern themselves with native mythology and traditional festivals, but have no legendary heroes. The stories often revolve around pre-Christian deities like the sun goddess *Saule* and her husband the moon god *Mēness*. Elsewhere in Europe it was the opposite with a male sun god and a female moon goddess. Some *dainas* do not have a mythical theme, concentrating instead on the daily life of agrarian society and nature. And such stories are in many ways far greater value than epic mythologies, for they are far more likely to be accurate descriptions of daily life a thousand or more years ago.

Another *daina* theme is the human life cycle, especially the three major events: births, marriage and death (including burial). The *dainas* concerning birth are deeply emotional, and usually feature a mother figure not only as the person who gives birth, but also as the one who determines the fate of the child. These also often feature *Laima*, the goddess of fate, and were historically sung immediately after birth, which traditionally took place in a bathhouse. The *dainas* devoted to death describe an individual preparing for death and describe

funeral customs. These often feature a female god related to the world of the dead, variously known as *Zemes māte* (Earth Mother), *Velu māte* (Mother of Ghosts), *Kapu māte* (Mother of Graves), and *Smilšu māte* (Mother of Sand).

Deities

Prominent female goddesses shared power with the incoming Indo-European male gods such as *Dievs*, the shining sky god who rode on horseback through the heavens, and *Mēness* the moon god. He was the shepherd of the stars who taught humans how to count. *Perkins* was the god of thunder and *Auseklis* was the personification of the planet Venus, the first “star” to appear in the mornings on the east side of the sky. *Ulsins* was worshiped mainly as the guardian of horses, but might also have been the god of bees and of light. Ensuring a good harvest was the primary function of *Jumis* who was believed to live in the fields.

The patriarchal Indo-Europeans met with and integrated with the original inhabitants of the Baltic lands many thousands of years ago, but the great natural powers that govern the affairs of the world remained female. The sun who drove her chariot across the sky was female, bringing to mind the only other sun-goddess I have heard of, *Arinnitti*, the sun goddess of *Arinna*, who was worshipped by the Indo-European Hittites in modern-day Turkey but belonged to the pre-Hittite pantheon.

Saule (Lithuanian: *Saulė*) is a solar goddess, the common Baltic solar deity in ancient Lithuanian and Latvian mythologies. *Saule*, one of the most powerful of the pantheon of deities, determined the well-being and regeneration of all life on earth. She was the goddess of life and fertility, warmth and health and patroness of all people undergoing hardship or in unfortunate circumstances, especially orphans.

The sun goddess *Saule* rose each day through the sky on a chariot with copper wheels, drawn by horses



Hittite Goddess and child from Anatolia - 15th-13th Century BCE





Dezsor / Wikimedia

Old Latvian bathhouse with pond.

who neither tired nor rested nor sweated. Toward evening *Saule* washed her horses in the sea, sitting on top of a hill, holding the golden reins in her hand. Then she entered through silver gates into her castle at the end of the sea (sunset). The red ball of the setting sun, one aspect of *Saule*, is portrayed in Baltic art as a ring, a falling red apple or a crown. As the full light of the sun, she was also represented by a daisy, a wheel or a rosette, and it was *Saule* too who ensured that the souls of the dead were safely ferried across the sea to the world of the hereafter. Her daily movement can be related to the cycle of human life with her birth occurring each day at sunrise. The world of the living was called *pasaule*, the land beneath the sun.

The notion of a solar or world tree, is one of the most important concepts regarding the cosmos.

The concept that *Saule*, unseen during the night, makes her way from west to east in the ocean beneath the earth so she can begin her course anew over the sky mountain, is familiar to at least one other culture we know very much about, namely the ancient Egyptian 24-hour journey of Ra from dawn to dusk to dawn again, though with many differences of detail. It is possible to see in *Saule's* journey through the airy heavens and watery netherworld the ancient concept of a world ocean on which the earth, as a round plate, floats, an idea that has largely disappeared under the influence of Christianity but still exists in the ancient Persian Zoroastrian religion.

The notion of a solar or world tree, is one of the most important concepts regarding the cosmos. We also find this concept in the Mayan religion of Central America.

For the Baltic tribes, this tree grew at the edge of the path of *Saule*, and the setting sun hung her belt on the tree in preparation for rest. The solar/world tree was sometimes described as an oak but was also described as a linden or some other type of tree. It was believed to be located in the middle of the world ocean which, for those East Baltic tribes could only have been west of their homelands.

Other female deities include *Zemes māte*, the earth goddess, *Jūras māte*, the sea goddess and *Meža māte* who ruled over the forests, which were and still are extensive in Latvia. *Laima*, often equated with fate, brought riches and blessings. She lived on Earth and was closely involved in intricate and intimate moments of human life. Her most important function was related to childbirth and deciding a child's fate.

Māra, the goddess of all living creatures, was also known as *Lopu māte* (Mother of livestock) and *Pienas māte* (Mother of milk). Her function was to ensure that cows gave milk. She was also often mentioned in connection with water, rivers and the sea. Water deities are *Jūras māte* ("Mother of the Sea"), *Ūdens māte* ("Mother of the Waters"), *Upes māte* ("Mother of the Rivers") and *Bangu māte* ("Mother of the Waves"), while atmospheric deities are *Vēja māte* ("Mother of the Wind"), *Lietus māte* ("Mother of the Rain"), *Miglas māte* ("Mother of the Fog") and *Sniega māte* ("Mother of the Snow").

Epilogue

It was an Indo-European custom to bury their dead in large mounds, known as the '*white hill of the dead*' In the ancient conception of life and death, the souls or *dvēseles* left the visible world to cluster at the white sandy hill before journeying on to the realm of eternal light.

The religion of the ancient East Baltic peoples showed a concern for the well-being of the land and the heavens. It fostered a sense of kinship and reciprocity between humanity, the natural world and the spirit realm. It was their view that the entirety of nature was sacred, and humans were an integral link in the great chain of beings. The equality between men and women, and the integration of the pre- and post- Indo-European belief systems, which existed together in harmony, has a lot to teach us in our increasingly troubled 21st Century.

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The Year Ahead

An Open Door to Rich Opportunity

by Benefactor



THE BEGINNING of the New Year is like the opening of a great portal that has been closed and sealed in ages past. None of us knows completely what lies beyond it, and a lot that may be there will be as strange and new to us as the things beyond the closed and sealed portals of an ancient Egyptian tomb.

Standing upon the threshold of this portal however, we are sure of one thing: the door will be opened for us to enter one day. All the experiences of life that fill the 12 alcoves of the chamber of mysteries will reveal their startling surprises and marvellous benefits as we pass through each of them in succession. Even those who may pass through transition that is death on the very eve of entering the portal will find it still open to them.

But there is one other thing we can be sure of: as full as this new chamber may be with surprises and startling revelations, new lessons to learn and trials and tribulations...., it is also filled with opportunities. The opportunities which a new year offers us are free and unlimited. The poorest of the poor and the wealthiest of the wealthy will find their opportunities waiting for them. The only requirement is that we walk through the portal of the coming year keenly alive to the subtle appeals, the quiet calls that may come from each corner, from each little part of the great chamber, so we miss no opportunity and let no advantage pass us by.

This coming year can be likened to a great museum in which the opportunities, lessons and experiences of life are on display for each of us to see and understand. All that is required to enter is to prepare ourselves to see and understand, to hear and realise, to sense and inwardly comprehend. So many of us go through life and miss the most beautiful and most important things that benefit and bring us great satisfaction! How many of us will pass into life's museum of this year and exit again next December

without having learned all of the lessons and derived all possible benefits?

In many ways, the coming year is full of possibilities that have never been so completely offered to humankind before. New opportunities unheard of in the past, new standards of living, new methods of doing things and new directions in life will be shown to us during the next 12 months and will offer us the long sought for way to happiness and prosperity. We may enter this new chamber and cross over the threshold, and we may leave it when the year is done. But while we are in the chamber, everything it has to offer is ours for the asking if we but know how to ask and how to appreciate what is offered.

In past centuries and millennia, people had a way of making the months of the year of particular interest through studying the lives of the deities and saints associated with each month. As each month came, its special purpose was studied and analysed to discover the keys to success for that particular period of the year. Many cultures have their New Year at different times and even the traditional Rosicrucian New Year begins at the equinox in March. But if we take the month of January, commonly recognised throughout the world as the first of these 12 alcoves, we find that it was called the month of statesmen. So, if you were born during January, the January influence will awaken in you some interesting facts hidden in your consciousness, and everyone who makes January a month to read biographies will turn this alcove of life's museum into the first of a number of intellectual benefits.

Enter into this first alcove of the year and awaken the statesmanship qualities within your consciousness in preparation for your visit to the second alcove in February! In this way, from month to month, you will make your journey through the year a complete course of preparation for the recognition of the opportunities it and life has to offer.



MICHAEL SENDIVOGIUS

Citizen of the World

The Life of an Alchemist

by Paul Goodall

IN 1617 at Frankfurt, the Rosicrucian apologist Michael Maier (c.1568-1622) published his *Symbolae Aureae Mensae Duodecim Nationum* (*Symbols of the Golden Table of Twelve Nations*). The title page bears the engraved portraits of the 12 great adepts of 12 nations beginning with *Hermes the Egyptian* and ending with the intriguing *Anonymous the Sarmatian*. *Sarmata* was a contemporary 17th Century name for a Polish nobleman, as these were believed to have descended from the ancient Sarmatian tribes. Maier gives a clue to the identity of this figure on page 555 by the use of a caption to accompany an illustration of the adept; he is named as *Heliochanthus Borealis* (*Glorifier of the Northern Sun*).¹ Moreover, there is a veiled remark in the margin that links this name with the initials M.S.²

Oswald Croll (c.1560-1609) was the first to use this particular name to refer to Michael Sendivogius in his *Basilica Chymica* (1609). Croll was a prominent Rosicrucian³ and physician to Christian of Anhalt (1568-1630), the main architect of the political aspect of Rosicrucianism.⁴ He did this in a cryptic fashion by the use of capital letters within words which when read in sequence, spelled out Sendivogius' real name. Another catalogue of adepts and alchemical authors was produced by Johann Daniel Mylius in his *Opus Medicochymicum* of 1618, which incorporates Maier's list. In his *Viridarium Chymicum* (1624), Daniel Stolcius also refers to Michael Sendivogius as one of the 12 great natural philosophers fully revealing him as Michael Sendivogius Polonus.⁵



He is also mentioned in the writings of other alchemical authors of the early 17th Century as an 'unknown philosopher' but as this century wore on, his actual name became more widely known. This obsession with secrecy on the part of Sendivogius in hiding his real name in his writings has led to the vilification of his character by historians and the loss of his correct place in alchemical history until recently.

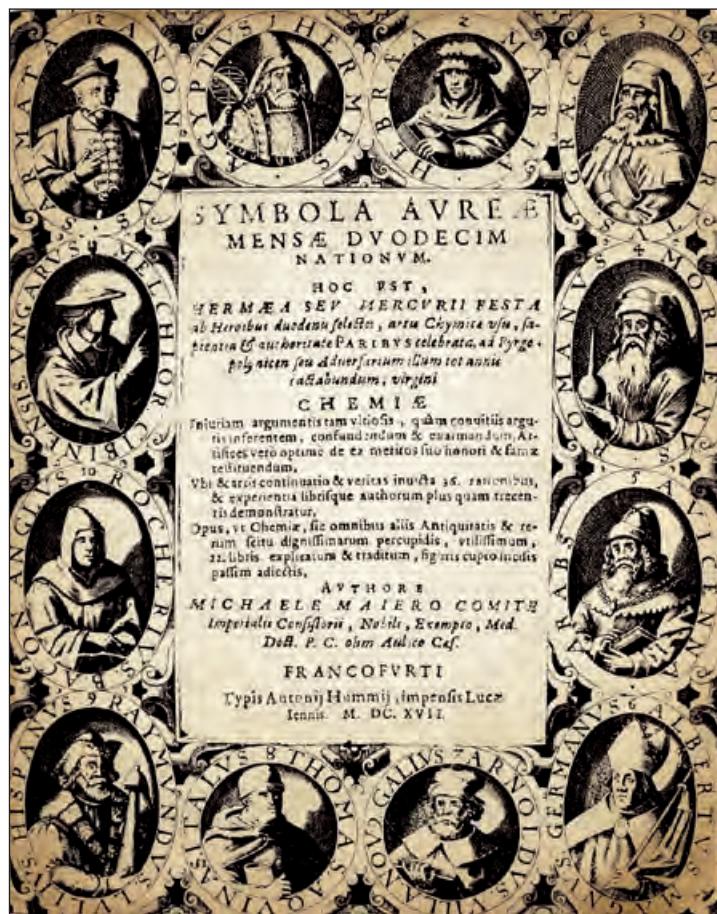
Beginnings

Michał Sędzimir was born in 1566 in Poland at Łukowica between Kraków and the Tatra mountains. At this time the kingdom of Poland was one of the most powerful countries in Europe, controlling the modern Ukraine, Belarus, Lithuania and Latvia. His father was Jakub Sędzimir and his mother, Katarzyna Pielsz. They were both of noble descent and owned a small estate near Nowy Sącz in the Kraków district. Later, Sendivogius changed his name to Sędziwój after consulting the genealogist Bartłomiej Paprocki.⁶ Sendivogius is the Latinised version of Sędziwój.

Around 1582 he entered the Jagiellonian University in Kraków, one of the great centres of learning in Europe of the Renaissance period. Several of his contemporaries there had formed a group with an interest centred on the

philosophy and teachings of Paracelsus. Polish interest in alchemy was derived largely from the dissemination of the iatrochemistry (the use of medicines, tinctures and the extract of plants) of Paracelsus but also the hermetic philosophy coming out of Florentine Italy following Ficino's translation of the *Corpus Hermeticum*. Another factor that may be taken into consideration was the extensive mineral and rock salt deposits throughout the country resulting in the expansion of metallurgical and mining activities.

The clergy, however, did not countenance the practice of alchemy, particularly since there were many pseudo-alchemists making money by deceit. A short work by Father Stanisław Poklatecki (1554-1591), *Pogrom Czarnoksięskie Bledy* ("Rout of the Magicians" Errors, Kraków') of 1595, condemned alchemy as having no value within the human sphere. The group at the university were thus fortunate in having a sympathetic protector in the shape of one Olbracht Łaski (1536-1603) who was a powerful personality in society and well known as a pretender to the Polish throne.⁷ He was also instrumental in bringing John Dee and Edward Kelley to visit Poland and Bohemia in 1583.



Another figure making his appearance in Sendivogius' life at this time was Mikołaj Wolski (1553-1630), a very influential man who had been brought up at the imperial court and had a great interest in alchemy. He had been educated at several European universities and was employed at the court of Rudolf II (Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire) in Prague.

As was the custom of learned men of the Renaissance, Sendivogius took to travelling over the next few years to widen his knowledge and horizons. A little before 1588 he was journeying to Constantinople via Greece where, it is rumoured, a patriarch of the Greek Church gave him some instruction in the alchemical process. At Constantinople, he says in his *Philosophical Letters* (c.1616), he copied two rare treatises by Hermes while elsewhere in his writings he mentions at this time a strange figure, which he calls his *praeceptor* from Egypt who, apparently, gave him the *white tincture* to effect the transmutation of metals.⁸

He continued his Renaissance education by visiting several major universities throughout the continent: Rome, Padua, Naples, Venice and less certainly, Frankfurt, Rostock, Wittenberg and Cambridge. He eventually entered the University of Leipzig in 1590 for the winter term and matriculated from Vienna the following year. It was while studying at Leipzig that he befriended Joachim Tancke, a physician and alchemist, and Johann Thölde, editor and possible author of the works attributed to Basilius Valentinus.⁹

Michael Maier is known to have been a student at Altdorf in 1589 or 1590 and, as Sendivogius was living in the area of Nuremberg, it is quite possible that the two met during this period. In 1594 he was at Altdorf, either as a student or an official, where he became acquainted with the Scottish alchemist, Alexander Seton, who was studying there too. An unusual relationship, while at Altdorf, between Sendivogius and a "certain Armenian" is mentioned by Andreas Goldmayer in his *Harmonia chymica* (Onoltzbach, 1655). He had apparently helped this figure financially and in return had received a tincture for transmuting base metals.¹⁰

Title page of Michael Maier's Symbolae Aureae Mensae Duodecim Nationum of 1617, depicting Michael Sendivogius at the top left as "Anonymous the Sarmatian."





*Symbolic engraving depicting Anonymus Sarmata and his teachings from Michael Maier's *Symbola Aureae Mensae*.*

Later Life

Around 1590 Sendivogius married Veronica Stieber. The Stiebers were from the Franconian nobility and held estates in the area of Nuremberg, which included at least three castles.¹¹ By 1594 they had had two sons and two daughters. It was in this year that Sendivogius and his family arrived in Prague. At first they stayed in lodgings where Sendivogius became friendly with Mikuláš Löw of Löwenstein, a pharmacist and physician, who was so impressed by Sendivogius' knowledge of alchemy and medicine that he brought the whole family to live at his own house. Through Lev he made a number of acquaintances leading eventually to one Ludvík Korálek, a rich merchant with a great interest in alchemy. He had a large library and laboratory, where he and his friends worked at alchemical experiments. Among these, was a doctor of law and councillor to Rudolf II, Jan Kapr. Sendivogius was invited to participate in their work, eventually becoming their teacher. While here he performed several transmutations of base metals into silver. It is through Lev that we learn of Sendivogius' encounter with his 'praeceptor' from Egypt and the gift of the white powder. According to Lev, he was using red and white tinctures in his alchemical experiments.¹² During

this time he also met and worked with the great Czech alchemist, Bavor Rodovský of Hustiran.¹³

Probably, as a result of the influence of Mikołaj Wolski and other contacts he had made in Prague, Sendivogius eventually found himself at the imperial court. An indication of his increasing stature can be found on documents from 1595 naming him as the personal secretary to the king of Poland, Sigismund III Vasa. It is likely that Sigismund employed him in a diplomatic role, as it is known that there was a clandestine relationship between the Polish and Habsburg courts.¹⁴ His fame as an alchemist would not have escaped the notice of Rudolf II. The Emperor had more than a passing interest in hermetic philosophy

and supported many alchemists that came to his court. As a measure of his ability, Sendivogius performed a transmutation of a base metal into gold in front of the Emperor and a large number of witnesses. Rudolf was so impressed that he ordered a marble tablet to be built into the palace wall to commemorate the event with the Latin inscription: *'Faciat hoc quispiam aliis quod fecit Sendivogius Polonus'* meaning 'Let anyone else do what Sendivogius the Pole has done'.¹⁵ Sometime later he demonstrated a similar transmutation before Sigismund III Vasa.

In 1597 Sendivogius was invited to the court of Elector Christian II of Saxony at Dresden, no doubt by dint of the fame that he was now attracting, but he may also have been used by the Emperor in a diplomatic role. The next year he was made privy councillor by Rudolf

II whilst still retaining the position of secretary to the king of Poland. The reputation and respect accorded to him is further reflected in the publications dedicated to him and his family. Jiří Carolides of Karlšperka, the imperial court poet, published in 1598 a number of poems in praise of the family and dedicated it to Sendivogius' son Michael Christopher. Others appeared by Bartoloměj Paprocký, a Polish and Bohemian herald and poet and genealogist, in the same year. When Sendivogius' wife died along with two of his children of the plague that swept Prague in 1599, Johannes Chorinský, a Moravian nobleman and poet, wrote an elegy for Veronica Stieber.



The Holy Roman Emperor Rudolf II





*Michael Sendivogius' coat-of-arms
(from Ogród królewski by Bartosz Paprocki).*

The popularity of Sendivogius had made him enemies too. Ludvik Korálek had fallen ill through alcoholism and after his untimely death in 1599 his family accused Sendivogius of poisoning him by the administration of a medicine. Sendivogius by now was well known as a healer. Apart from this, they also made accusations of extortion against him, which caused Korálek's bankruptcy. A brief summary of events leading up to these circumstances is required here.

Before Sendivogius and his family had come to Prague they had stayed at a house in Jílové in Bohemia owned by Edward Kelley, the one time companion of John Dee. Kelley had been ennobled by the Emperor in 1588 shortly after Dee's departure for England and in 1590 granted substantial land near Jílové by his patron, Vilem Rožemberk (1535-1592). He later purchased the Fumberk estate consisting of a number of buildings in Jílové and a town dwelling in Prague. Kelley and Sendivogius had apparently met during 1590 while both on their travels and Kelley had invited Sendivogius to stay in Jílové. After Kelley's death in 1597, Sendivogius bought the Fumberk estate from Kelley's widow. In order to do this he borrowed 5,695 Meissen marks, a large sum of

"The court alchemist, Hans Heinrich Mühlenfels, hatched a scheme to keep Sendivogius a prisoner until he disclosed his secrets to him."

money, from Ludvik Korálek.

The court case began on 28th July 1599 and lasted three months. Sendivogius pleaded innocent to the charges against him and told the court that the loan had been a perfectly legitimate one. He was eventually acquitted and ordered to repay the loan in six weeks. As to the allegation of poisoning, the evidence was circumstantial and unproven. During the trial Oswald Croll was called as a witness and spoke in Sendivogius' defence. Croll was not only a Rosicrucian, but also a fellow physician who shared Korálek's patronage with Sendivogius.¹⁶

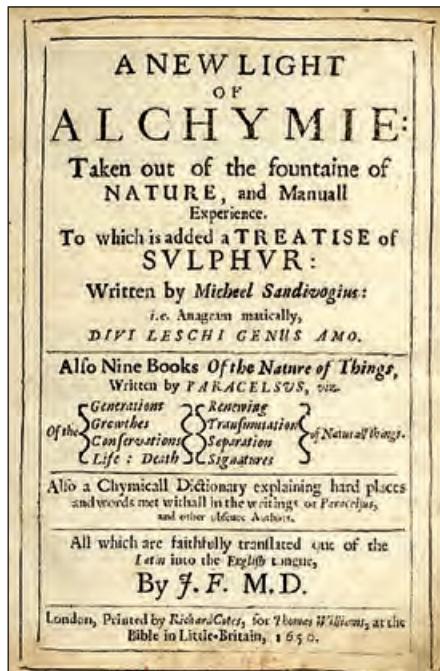
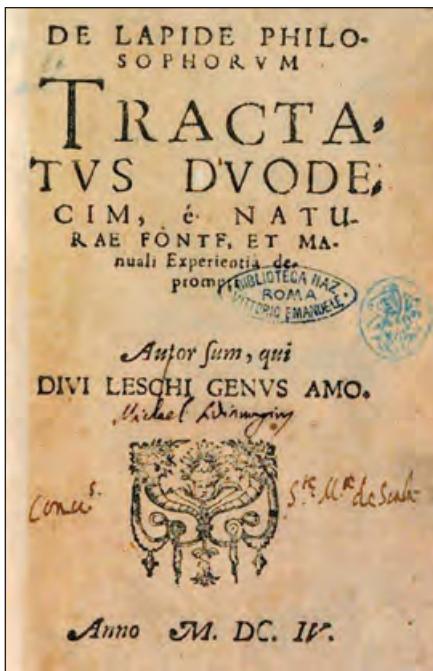
Although he was spending most of his time in Poland between 1600 and 1604, Sendivogius still continued with his diplomatic activities for Rudolf II and Sigismund III. A letter from the Polish king to the Emperor of 13th June, 1600, refers to the despatching of Sendivogius to 'solve the problems of Moldavia'.¹⁷ There was a dispute between Poland and the Habsburgs over rights of access to the Black Sea. He was also employed, among others, on missions to Moscow and Constantinople.

The year following publication of his influential *Twelve Treatises on the Philosopher's Stone* (1604), Sendivogius received an invitation from Duke Friedrich of Württemberg¹⁸ to visit Stuttgart. It is possible that Sendivogius had been here before in 1593. The Duke received him with great hospitality and after many discussions, asked to see a transmutation. Friedrich probably had information already on the ability of Sendivogius as an alchemist. Sendivogius swore him to secrecy and performed two transmutations of mercury into gold. After this the court alchemist, Hans Heinrich Mühlenfels, hatched a scheme to keep Sendivogius a prisoner until he disclosed his secrets to him. Such was Sendivogius' importance to Rudolf II and Sigismund III that they demanded his release and Mühlenfels was hanged in June 1607. It is not known for certain whether Friedrich was implicated in this plot, but the affair became widely known throughout Europe.

During the period of 1607 to 1616, Sendivogius lived in Poland. His long-term patron Mikołaj Wolski became the Marshall of Poland from 1613 and was at the same time responsible for the development of the metallurgical industry. Sendivogius worked with Wolski and lived at his castle in

Krzepice conducting experiments in the laboratory there. In 1616 he went to Marburg in Germany at the invitation of Landgrave Moritz of Hesse who had a keen interest in alchemy. While there he visited the university and the iatrochemical laboratory of Johann Hartmann where he





subsequently worked preparing a number of Paracelsian medicaments. While here, Sendivogius renewed his friendship with Michael Maier who was currently serving as court physician. In his *Symbolae Aureae Mensae*, Maier wrote that he had seen a transmutation performed by Sendivogius which made a lasting impression on him.¹⁹ It is likely that he was referring to Sendivogius' visit to the Landgrave's court at Kassel. Another important figure residing here was Johann Daniel Mylius who was a creator of alchemical emblems. He also happened to be the son-in-law of Hartmann.

Rudolf II died in 1612 and was succeeded firstly by his brother Matthias (as king of Bohemia and Emperor) until 1619, when the Emperor Ferdinand II transferred the imperial court from Prague to Vienna, and then Sendivogius continued his employment as a diplomat between Vienna and the Polish court at Kraków. It seems that he was also given a well-paid appointment by Ferdinand, supervising the construction of a new lead mine in Silesia on the Polish border. The Emperor could not pay him regularly, however, since political and religious strife had caused the Thirty Years War to break out in 1618. After repeated appeals over many years to be paid, Sendivogius was eventually offered two large villages in 1630 and a substantial sum of money. Unfortunately, the previous owner's debts came with the estates and although he later freed himself from these obligations they continued to be such a problem that he decided to sell them in 1636. They were still unsold when he died later in the same year.²⁰

His Works

Sendivogius is known to have produced at least

LEFT: Title page of the first edition of *De Lapide Philosophorum Tractatus Duodecim*, 1604, in Latin.

RIGHT: Title page of the English edition of *Novum Lumen Chymicum*, 1650, (*A New Light of Alchymie*).

ten works.²¹ His most influential and frequently published book was *De Lapide Philosophorum Tractatus duodecim* ('Twelve Treatises on the Philosopher's Stone'), published in Prague and Frankfurt simultaneously in 1604.

This ran to 56 editions up to 1787 in Latin, German, French, English, Russian and Dutch. Sir Isaac Newton owned a copy, which is presently housed in the British Library and has marginal notes in his handwriting and corners of pages turned down to mark particular passages. The French chemist, Lavoisier, also had a copy.²² *De Lapide Philosophorum* is made up of twelve short chapters followed by an epilogue and ending with a 'Parable or Enigma of the Sages'.

Sendivogius advocates a new approach to alchemy, and this is reflected in the change of title in later editions

Greeting to my most honoured Friend and a most worthy Companion of the Society of Unknown Philosophers. M.S.

"I shall not be wanting to intimate to you the rocks which may stand in your way and to direct your deviating conceits, as often as you will take occasion to consult me about what you are reading or doing. And I protest to you that I will hide nothing from you except those things which you cannot learn but by ocular demonstrations and manual operations. For every art hath its own way and manner of operating and above all, ours which cannot be expressed so well in words but that a particular demonstration and an experimental disquisition be also necessary, which for the most part answers but slowly, the hopes and expectations of philosophers."

Extract from Letters of Michael Sendivogius to the Rosicrucian Society, Epistle 1, 1646.

(Source: <http://www.levity.com/alchemy/send10.html>)





The Alchemist Michal Sędziwój by Jan Matejko (1867) depicting Sendivogius demonstrating his alchemical skills to Emperor Rudolf II of the Habsburg Empire.

to *Novum Lumen Chymicum* ('A New Light of Alchemy'). He wrote this with the benefit of many years of practical experience and experimentation. In the preface and epilogue, he explains his reasons for producing the work. He wants the adept to understand how change occurs in nature and not be led astray by fraudsters, but also to familiarise the reader with his own experimental findings.

This work has been linked by Rafał T. Prinke to the *Consideratio Brevis* (*A Brief Consideration*) by Phillipus à Gaballa that prefaces the second Rosicrucian Manifesto, *Confessio Fraternitatis*, of 1615. Prinke sees similarities between the general style and phrasing in the first Rosicrucian publications and the statements made in the prefaces and epilogues of Sendivogius' treatises. He goes on to say that the purely alchemical references in the Consideratio are clearly based on *De Lapide Philosophorum*.²³ Allied to this premise is the fact that while Sendivogius was visiting Stuttgart at the invitation of the Duke of Württemberg in 1605, he may have had contact with the members of Johann Valentin Andreae's circle at Tübingen. They would certainly have heard of him, since the Mühlenfels incident was widely known. The importance of Andreae in producing the Manifestos needs no qualification, since he was the author of

the allegorical *Die Chymische Hochzeit des Christiani Rosenkreutz anno 1459* (*The Chymical Wedding of Christian Rosenkreutz*), the third Rosicrucian tract.

Of the other nine works by Sendivogius, there was *Dialogue of Mercury, the Alchemist and Nature*, 1607, a satire. In 1616, *Treatise on Sulphur* dealt with the four elements of Aristotle, the three principles of Paracelsus, and included a dialogue, *On Sulphur*. The year 1618 saw the publication of his most extensive work, *Harmony*. This concentrated on the relationship between the elements, principles and planets. It particularly dealt with the part played by air and the 'universal spirit' within air. Its second section paid attention to the principle of the philosophical salt.

The rest of his works were published posthumously. 'Treatise on Salt' in 1656, *A Philosophical Letter*, 1659, and in 1671, *Fifty-Five Philosophical Letters* which clarify further the ideas brought out in his main works. This was in the form of an address to a new member of the *Cabalistic Society of Unknown Philosophers*. It was translated into English by Ebenezer Sibly in 1791 and retitled: *Letters of Michael Sendivogius to the Rosey Crucian Society*. This was followed by *Process on the Central Salt* in 1682, describing the preparation of the Philosopher's Stone. As Dr Zbigniew Szdlo tells us:

[This] work is interesting from the standpoint of practical chemistry and demonstrates Sendivogius' excellent command of the subject.²⁴



Statutes of the Unknown Philosophers published in 1691 in French, is a set of rules in the form of a handbook for the *Cabalistic Society of Unknown Philosophers*. It is in effect a manifesto, on similar lines to the Rosicrucians, for the formation of a new Philosophical Society. Whilst in the preface he states that the gift of knowledge can do so much to help the “poor and miserable”, he goes on to say that the ‘malice of men’ would manipulate the fruits of any labour and effectively prevent these ideals from being carried out. He speaks of the danger to his life that has occurred on many occasions; a direct reference to the Mühlenfels episode among others to reinforce the covetousness of men. He proposes then, to form a Society of members whose true identity will be concealed, although the Society will become generally known.

Finally, in 1968, *Operations on the Philosophical Elixir* describe Sendivogius’ first attempts to prepare the Philosopher’s Stone. This work was unknown until some fifty years ago, when it was discovered by Roman Bugaj, a Polish academic who has been one of the principle biographers and researchers into Sendivogius. He found it in the archives of Count Wiktor Baworowski in Lwów (now Lviv, Ukraine). It is dated 1586, when Sendivogius was just twenty years old.²⁵

Sendivogius, Nitre, and the Discovery of Oxygen

In 1621 an altogether extraordinary event took place in London. The Dutch inventor and alchemist, Cornelius Drebbel (1572-1633), had constructed a wooden submarine that was propelled by twelve oarsmen. Witnessed by James I and a large audience of Londoners, this vessel made the journey from Westminster to



A diagram of a retort-flask being heated on its own appeared in several editions of Drebbel's Treatise on the Elements of Nature. Was this a depiction of the early production of Oxygen?²⁷

In his Treatise on the Elements of Nature (1608), Drebbel gives a clue to how he might have manufactured oxygen. In a passage on the origin of thunder, he writes: ‘Thus is the body of the saltpetre broken up and decomposed by the power of the fire and so changed in the nature of the air’. This suggests he was aware that heating saltpetre causes it to give off a gas – and realised that this gas was the same substance that allows humans to breathe.²⁸



A depiction of Cornelius Drebbel's submarine event which took place under the waters of the Thames in 1621. From a painting by G. H. Tweedale in the Royal Submarine Museum, Gosport.

Greenwich, reportedly remaining underwater for some three hours. Diving bells of various designs were not uncommon at this time, but a craft that could stay underwater for a considerable period was quite spectacular.²⁶ Drebbel must have been using some type of air freshening technique to sustain the rowers and himself. But for one reason or another he kept his technique to himself and it remained a secret. The only feasible explanation was that he had, somehow, utilised oxygen,



The Hieroglyphical Seal of the Society of Unknown Philosophers.

Let no man judge this present Character to be invented and erected for us for nothing. For the Trident is the Neptune of our Parable which comprehends the whole hermetical Science hieroglyphically and compendiously, as well the Theory as the Practice. But that these Mysteries may be well understood we shall proceed in twofold Order geometrical namely by resolution and Composition or analysis and synthesis.

1. *By way of Analysis first the Maxus is to be considered or the Total Unity of the Figure.*
2. *The Duality, or that Part of Conus or that of the right Pyramids.*
3. *The Trias, or Triplicity of the sines, or that of the angles, and*
4. *The Quaternarium of the Lines, and last of all the utmost Points, the Dimension of the whole figure and the Breadth of the Lines.*

Each of them have their cabalistic Significations. But the way of Synthesis or Composition, the Reversion of the Quaternarius of the Linse, to a Trias takes Place. Then of the Trias into a Binary of the Cones. [And finally], That of the Binary into a Monas.

(Source: <http://www.levity.com/alchemy/sendseal.html>)

which today is the method by which humans can remain in sealed vessels like submarines and aircraft. Although many versions of this feat gained widespread circulation in Europe, oxygen was not officially discovered until 1774. The question arises how (firstly) this discovery of oxygen came about and (secondly) how its preparation took 150 years or so to become public knowledge?

The answer to the second part of this question is to be found in the way that alchemists communicated in their writings. The style of their writing and use of language was complex and characteristic of the time, employing alchemical allegory in its literature, the cornerstone

SOMMAIRE ABREGE
De tout ce qui est contenu dans ces Lettres, renfermé dans un Sceau ou Hieroglife de la Société des Philosophes inconnus.



Hieroglyphic seal of the 'Society of Unknown Philosophers' bringing together the teachings of John Dee's *Monas Hieroglyphica* and Michael Sendivogius' *Parabola seu aenigma philosophicum*.

of which was the hermetic philosophy espoused in the Emerald Tablet of Hermes. The reasoning behind this apparent obscurity was to prevent their knowledge from being understood by the unworthy and put to misuse by evil men.

The key to answering the first part is in the role of a substance called *nitre*. Throughout the 16th and 17th centuries, nitre, often referred to as *saltpetre* (potassium nitrate), figured prominently in the philosophy of



A typical nitraria (Germany, c.1580) with leaching deposits (C) filled with decaying vegetable material mixed with manure. A worker collects effloresced saltpetre from deposits, transporting it then to be concentrated in the factory (B) boilers. (Source: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nitraria#/media/File:Salnitrera.jpg>)



alchemy. It had a number of properties and applications and was the principle component of cooling mixtures, medicines and gunpowder, and was used as a liquid for dissolving metals. The manufacture of saltpetre was in fact a large industry during this period.

Paracelsus (1493-1541), wrote extensively on the function and use of nitre. He elevated it from a substance into something much more significant from a mystical point of view and saw it as having a vital role as a salt in living organisms. He also brought about the concept of *aerial nitre*, reasoning that since nitre was the agent that produced the explosive effect of gunpowder, then it followed that it had to be responsible for thunder and lightning in the air. By the middle of the 16th Century, alchemists were writing of a *universal spirit* pervading all matter.

Sendivogius (among others), who had a grounding in the teachings of Paracelsus, developed these ideas concerning nitre and its link to living processes on earth. He observed over a period of time the main source of saltpetre, namely farmyard soils, and concluded that the 'food of life' was condensing out of the air. The life-giving power of nitre was visibly seen in the enhanced growth of plants when fertilisers were applied to them. We find written in a later edition of *A New Light of Alchymie* (London, 1650 edition, p.44):

Our water that wets not our hands [i.e. nitre], without which no mortal can live, and without which nothing grows, or is generated in the world!

Sendivogius' work was always in accordance with hermetic principles as expressed in the text of the *Tabula Smaragdina* (the Emerald Tablet). Its fourth precept reads:

Its father is the Sun, its mother the Moon; the wind carries it in its belly, its nurse is the earth.

Here we can discern the one invisible substance that exists everywhere, is necessary for life, and which forms the key for Sendivogius' theory. It is *aerial nitre* (oxygen), the "*secret food of life*" within the air. Several principles of the Rosicrucian teachings are embodied within this concept.

He wrote extensively on this subject in his first publication, *Novum Chymicum Lumen* (1604), and also throughout his other works, but always in the language of alchemy. He had discovered that by heating a vessel full of liquid nitre, he could separate off a gaseous product that is known today as oxygen. Cornelius Drebbel, who knew Sendivogius from his visits to Prague, and who also must have read or been acquainted with his works,

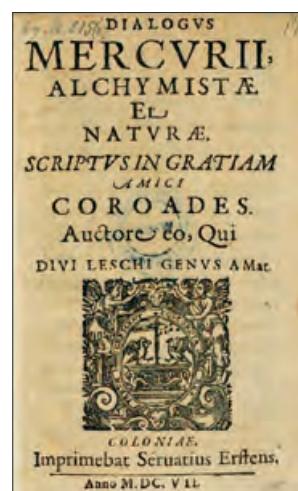
could understand the terminology used and repeated Sendivogius' experiments. Sendivogius' theory described a "*secret food of life which is concealed in air*", while Drebbel used, in his own words, "*aerial food of life*" in his submarine. This method of producing oxygen could have been employed to sustain everyone in the wooden submarine that made that underwater passage in 1621.

Conclusion

Michael Sendivogius suffered much at the hands of his biographers whose derogatory and erroneous accounts of his life originate ultimately from a poorly researched publication by a Frenchman named Pierre Des Noyer (d. 1693). Des Noyer's chronology of Sendivogius' life written many years after the latter's death, was appended to several editions of Sendivogius' works and displayed a certain antipathy toward Poles and Poland.²⁹ Subsequent biographies state that Sendivogius had stolen the secret of the manufacture of the Philosopher's Stone from the Scottish alchemist, Alexander Seton, after his death. Some even go on to say that *A New Light of Alchymie* was written by Seton. However, over the last forty years, a number of scholars have compiled a much more accurate and truthful history, working from contemporary documents and primary evidence. In reality there is nothing to substantiate these aspersions on his character.

Sendivogius was, however, obsessed with secrecy, as stated at the beginning of this article, and this may go a long way to explain his legendary and celebrity status. There was an element of danger in being known as an alchemist of some stature, and he had to be on his guard against unscrupulous and greedy men who would even go to the lengths of imprisoning him to extract his secrets. One aspect of this secrecy was in the way that he used pseudonyms to hide the authorship of his

works. Examples of these are: *Divi Genus Leschi Amo*, *Angelus Doce Mihi Ius*, and *Cosmopolite*. The first is an anagram of his Latinised name *Michael Sendivogius* and



An example of Sendivogius' use of a pseudonym to hide his authorship. The title page to his *Dialogus Mercurii, Alchymistae et Naturae* (*Dialogue concerning Mercury, Alchemy and Nature*), 1607, shows an anagram of his name.



is translated as “*I love the divine race of the Lechites (Poles).*” The second is also an anagram and means “*Angel, teach me justice.*” The third translates as “*Citizen of the World.*” It can be appreciated therefore how difficult it has been in identifying Sendivogius’ works.

Another factor here concerns the custom in this period of dedicating one’s work to persons of note, such as rulers. Sendivogius never followed this practice, which reflects his humility on the one hand and his desire to remain anonymous on the other. It may well be that the ‘praeceptor’ from Egypt that he met during his early travels who gave him the white tincture, and the strange Armenian while at Altdorf university who also gave him a tincture, were fictional characters used to hide his own ability to manufacture these.³⁰

If Sendivogius was not a Rosicrucian, then he at least had a close association with members of the Rosy Cross. He was certainly highly respected by his contemporary adepts, as was shown by Michael Maier in his *Symbolae Aureae Mensae* of 1617 where Maier reiterates the name *Helioantharus Borealis* given to him by Oswald Croll. A telling extract from a poem by John Gadbury in the preface to an English edition of Sendivogius’ *Harmony*, which was entitled *Sal Lumen & Spiritus Mundi Philosophici* (1657), shows another connection to the Rosicrucians and his stature as an adept:

Nor dare I, without Sendivogius’ Torch,
approximate you nearer then the Porch, lest I
(presumptuous) should be gazed upon by those
that have their Wedding-Garments on.³¹

This is a clear reference to *The Chymical Wedding of Christian Rosenkreutz* (1616). It infers that unless you know the teachings of Sendivogius, you must stay in the porch of the church and not be allowed to witness the ceremony inside.

Endnotes

1. A name of some significance that is related to the ‘Fourth Monarchy’ or *Quarta Monarchia*; an important political concept of the Rosicrucian *Fama Fraternitatis* that espouses a utopian vision of a perfect society. Sendivogius refers to a ‘Fourth’ or ‘Northern Monarchy’ being established in his *Treatise on Sulphur*, Cologne, 1613. In February of this same year Friedrich V, Elector Palatine of the Rhine married Princess Elizabeth, the daughter of James I of Britain; a marriage that was meant to fulfil the aspirations for a Protestant League in central Europe. Discussed in Frances Yates, *The*

2. Rafał T. Prinke, ‘The Twelfth Adept’ in *The Rosicrucian Enlightenment Revisited*, Lindisfarne, 1999, pp. 146-147.
3. Croll was the main character to be attacked by Andreas Libavius (c.1560-1616), an early chemist, who was a well-known critic of the Rosicrucian Manifestos. Frances Yates, op.cit. p. 51.
4. See Yates for more on this aspect of 17th century Rosicrucianism.
5. Rafał T. Prinke, ‘Michael Sendivogius and Christian Rosenkreutz: The Unexpected Possibilities’ in *The Hermetic Journal*, 1990, p. 91.
6. His coat of arms of the Ostoya clan has been traced back to the 14th century by Rafał T. Prinke in his article ‘Hermetic Heraldry’ in *The Hermetic Journal*, 1989, pp. 62-78.
7. Prinke, op.cit., ‘Michael Sendivogius and Christian Rosenkreutz’, p. 74. The nature of the Polish monarchy was elective rather than hereditary (see John Hale, *The Civilization of Europe in the Renaissance*, TSP, 1993, p. 24.)
8. Prinke, ‘Michael Sendivogius – Adept or Impostor?’ in *The Hermetic Journal*, 1982, Vol. 15, p. 19.
9. See Stillman, John Maxson (Prof.), ‘Basil Valentine: A Seventeenth Century Hoax’ in *The Popular Science Monthly*, 1912, pp. 591-600 where the author provides a convincing argument identifying Valentine with Johann Thölde.
10. Prinke, ‘Michael Sendivogius and Christian Rosenkreutz’, p. 76.
11. Prinke, ‘The Twelfth Adept’, p. 171.
12. Prinke, ‘Michael Sendivogius and Christian Rosenkreutz’, p. 77.
13. Prinke, ‘The Twelfth Adept’, p. 176.
14. Zbigniew Szydło, *Water Which Does Not Wet Hands: The Alchemy of Michael Sendivogius*, Warsaw, 1994, p. 36.
15. Prinke, ‘The Twelfth Adept’, op. cit., p. 178.
16. Prinke, ibid. pp. 172-178.
17. Prinke, ‘Michael Sendivogius and Christian Rosenkreutz’. op. cit., p. 79.
18. The political and ideological relationship of Duke Frederick of Württemberg to the Rosicrucians of this period is important and is discussed in detail by Frances Yates in *The Rosicrucian Enlightenment*.
19. Szydło, op.cit. p. 38.
20. Ibid. p.41. Sendivogius’ daughter, Maria Veronica von Eisendorf, eventually inherited all of his worldly goods.
21. See Szydło, ‘The Written Works of Michael Sendivogius’ in *Water Which Does Not Wet*



- Hands*, pp. 43-66.
22. Zbigniew Szydło and Richard Brzeziński, 'Alchemy: New Light on a Dark Art' in *History Today*, Vol. 47, Jan. 1997.
 23. Rafał T. Prinke, 'Michael Sendivogius and Christian Rosenkreutz: The Unexpected Possibilities', op. cit., p. 84.
 24. Szydło, pp. 58-59.
 25. Ibid., pp. 59-60.
 26. See Szydło, 'The Mystery of Cornelius Drebbel and his Wooden Submarine' in *Water Which Does Not Wet Hands*, op. cit., pp. 1-4. See further a detailed account in Rebecca Stefoff, *Submarines*, Marshall Cavendish, 2006, pp. 22-23.
 27. Szydło, p. 83.
 28. Zbigniew Szydło and Richard Brzeziński, op. cit., 'Alchemy: New Light on a Dark Art'.
 29. Rafał T. Prinke, 'Michael Sendivogius - Adept or Imposter?' in *The Hermetic Journal*, 1982, Vol. 15, p. 19.
 30. Prinke, 'The Twelfth Adept', op. cit., p. 174.
 31. Quoted in Szydło, op. cit. p. 121.



Michael Sendivogius

Great Soul of the Universe

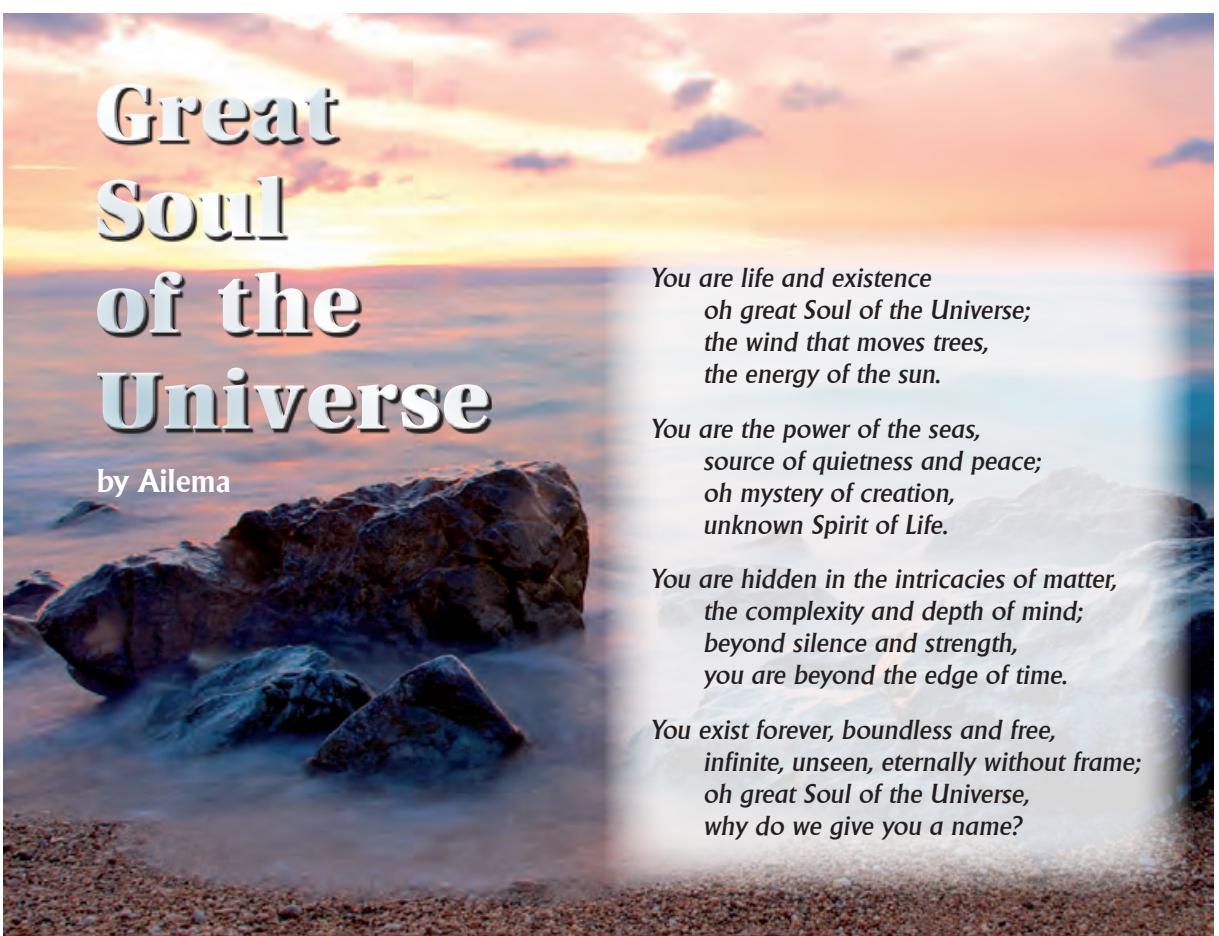
by Ailema

You are life and existence
oh great Soul of the Universe;
the wind that moves trees,
the energy of the sun.

You are the power of the seas,
source of quietness and peace;
oh mystery of creation,
unknown Spirit of Life.

You are hidden in the intricacies of matter,
the complexity and depth of mind;
beyond silence and strength,
you are beyond the edge of time.

You exist forever, boundless and free,
infinite, unseen, eternally without frame;
oh great Soul of the Universe,
why do we give you a name?



Reflections of a MYSTIC

by D. Weber

The sublimity of the human personality is the good.

MYSTICISM as a metaphysical doctrine considers spiritual experiences of greater importance than their physical counterparts. Although Rosicrucians don't negate the crucial role of the physical world, they do however emphasise the development of their inner perception of Sanctity. Their aim is to perceive this Inner Holiness in every act of life, thereby bestowing upon the material world a purity and dignity worthy of their Divine origins.

The mystical life is achieved through a long process of spiritual refinement; one lifetime is only a beginning. Many have sought the mystical life. The ascetic forsakes

the world and seeks only the divine. The person caught in the maelstrom of human responsibilities that cannot or does not wish to retire from the physical world, also seeks the divine in periods of solitude from daily affairs. Both consider the crucible of life an opportunity to temper the metal of the soul.

We seek that for which man has always sought; that which we hope will bring about a union with God and a reintegration of the warring forces within ourselves.

As mystics we yearn for truth; we search for it through meditation and feel an inexpressible happiness when we discover or realise the God within. It is then for us a light,





dispelling the darkness of doubt and confusion. We are able to see and love all life everywhere. Fortified with an inner serenity, we are able to meet adversity and suffering and to accept them as part of the total human experience; to use them as stepping-stones in our ascent toward perfection.

The mystical life is achieved by a long process of spiritual refinement; one lifetime is only a beginning.

Humility is indispensable, being invariably the sweetest flower in the inward garden, and of the most value. Genuine humility implies a profound knowledge of human psychology; it is a cloak that protects and defends true wisdom. Humility is not ignorance. It is rather an introspective consciousness, a progressive realisation of divine unity. It prevents us from arousing envy and keeps us aware of the consequences of our own thought. Thus freed from lower-level thinking, we are protected from our own pride and vanity and realise the inner peace of tolerance and love.

Just as the disciple of mysticism, the teacher, the sage and the saint alike have sought wisdom within silence. Mysticism is not a dazzling light that blinds; neither is it a flickering, perishable flame that confuses the aspirant. It is a permanent, dependable light, dissolving the errors of darkness.

Mysticism Must Be Lived

The greatest mystics of history did not limit themselves by writing their message; it was their life in thought, word, and deed that spoke of who they were. Unlike the artist who leaves a masterpiece to enlighten and inspire posterity, the mystic finds it impossible to sever a part of the total consciousness and make of it a message.

It is well for the aspirant to remember among other lessons the teachings of Jesus the Christ, that "*except a*

corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit." (John 12:v.24) To understand this parable is to understand a profound mystical truth.

Although humanity appears to be spinning toward annihilation, we understand that the race is yet in its infancy and that men are still playing with life, like children pursuing fantasies. Intangibles, sacred and permanent values, are ignored, and men occupy themselves with the trivial and transitory. In a turbulent and disquieting world, only God is real; but many, unfortunately, are not yet conscious of this.

The ancient mystics sought perfection through the practice of moral virtues, and so too the mystic of today. St. Francis of Assisi, St. John of the Cross, eminent Christian mystics, the 17th Century German mystic Jacob Boehme, and many others, have been fountains of human inspiration.

Humility is indispensable, being invariably the sweetest flower in the inward garden, and of the most value.

Time must be allotted for retreat, for meditation; there must be self-discipline in the study and application of the basic principles of life and constant practice of moral and virtuous habits. These are necessary to awaken and develop the psychic and spiritual elements of the aspirant. "*Mysticism is exalted grace*" said Plato. Saint Teresa, in describing her inner ecstasy, spoke of a "...going within to experience the feelings of the soul; closing of the eyes, ears and mind and realising life as pure soul."

These heights are gained by progressive discipline, and the mystic discovers that wisdom thus gained strengthens one in divine light. It girds us with spiritual power and reveals the real treasure of life: *the sublimity of the human soul.*



Songs of Flowers

The Life of Nezahualcóyotl Philosopher-King of Texcoco

by Bill Anderson

It is pure jade, a wide plumage, your heart, your word, Oh my Father! You pity man, you watch him with mercy, and only for the briefest moment is he next to you, at your side!

Precious as jade your flowers burst forth, Oh Giver of Life! As fragrant flowers they are perfected, as blue parrots they open their corollas, and only for the briefest moment are they next to you, at your side!"

*from the Flower Songs
Romances de los Señores (#3722v - 23v)*

IN 1402 of the Common Era, in the city of Texcoco on the eastern shore of the Lake of the Moon, in the Valley of Anáhuac, was born one of the most remarkable men of ancient Mexico, a wise man who became a great king and who has been compared to the Pharaoh Akhnaton as the introducer of monotheism to his people.



History, as they say, is always written by the victors and this is especially true of the Spanish conquest of the Americas. However, in a few rare cases the writings of indigenous peoples of the Americas have survived and they certainly make for fascinating reading.

When the Europeans first arrived in Mexico, it was inhabited by millions of people speaking languages from diverse linguistic families. In our terms, they lived in the Stone Age, but the peoples that the Spaniards found were heirs to a vibrant and sophisticated cultural milieu that stretched back for millennia. They knew about the wheel but did not use it as a means of transport. They used two sophisticated interlocking calendars in everyday life, a ritual one of 260 days and a solar one of 365 days.

The Aztec capital, México-Tenochtitlan, lay in the centre of a large lake, reached by long stone causeways. It had canals, markets, beautiful houses with roof gardens, large palaces, schools, a zoo, botanical and floating gardens and even street lighting at night. These were no cavemen or savages. On the contrary, they had a high culture quite distinct from mainstream Eurasian traditions. This is the background to this story of a king of one of the city states in central Mexico, the founder of the Triple Alliance that came to be known, erroneously, as the Aztec Empire.

Unlike other high-profile figures from the century preceding the Spanish conquest, Nezahualcóyotl was





Geographical extent of the Aztec Empire around 1519. The Aztec capital, México-Tenochtitlan, lay in the centre of a large lake, reached by long stone causeways.

not an Aztec. His people were the Acolhuas, part of the third migratory wave of northern tribes into the Valley of Mexico. The first invaders were the *Toltecs*, whose civilisation was centred in the city of Tollan (present-day Tula in the modern state of Hidalgo, north of Mexico City). They flourished between the 7th and 11th Centuries CE and then mysteriously disappeared. Their age was remembered as one of high culture and civilisation. The Toltecs were succeeded by a people called the *Chichimecs*, believed to have arrived about a century after the Toltecs' disappearance and whose level of civilisation was far inferior to that of the Toltecs.

The late 12th century saw another migration to Central Mexico. The newcomers comprised several tribes of which the most powerful were the Aztecs and Acolhuas. The latter settled at the eastern end of Lake Texcoco, the largest of the five lakes that constituted the Lake of the Moon, and from then on became known as Texcocans, after the ancient Toltec city which was their capital.

Nezahualcóyotl (1402-1472) lived at the same time as Marsilio Ficino and the Florentine Academy in Renaissance Europe. His capital city, Texcoco, also known as Acolhuácan, lies 34 kilometres east of present day Mexico City at some 2,250 metres above sea level. Founded in Toltec times, Texcoco was one of the independent *altépetl* or city-states allied with the Aztec capital of México-Tenochtitlan, and one of the three capitals of the Triple Alliance. Texcoco was known as a centre of learning within the empire; and its famous library included many books from previous Mesoamerican civilisations.



The home of the Aztecs and Acolhua, the Valley of Anáhuac, was some 7,000 square kilometres in size and had a population of about a million when the Spaniards arrived in 1519. Nowadays called the Valley of Mexico, it is to a large part covered by modern Mexico City. In Aztec times the outline of the five interconnected lakes at the centre of the valley looked like the rabbit that you see in the full moon (other cultures may see a man in the moon). *Metztliápan* or 'The Lake of the Moon' is the sight you saw as you entered the valley from the ancient city of Teotihuácan or from the north, as did the Aztecs when they first arrived.

His Early Life

The esoteric understanding of the invisible world of the sacred calendar, and the cosmic forces that adhered to time itself was obtained directly through the divinatory books of the peoples of Pre-Columbian Mexico, which served as portals into the ancient Mexican calendrical system and the cycles of time and meaning they encoded. Thus it was that in the year *Ce Tochtli*, ('One Rabbit' or 1402), on the day *Ce Mazatl*, ('One Deer' 28th April), Nezahualcóyotl Acolmíztl, the son of King Ixtlilxóchitl of Texcoco and Queen Matlalchihuatl, the daughter of Huitzilhuitl, the Aztec king, was born into a world very different from the one we now know.

The succession to the throne of Texcoco was thus assured. The astrologers of the royal household rejoiced, for children born on the day 'One Deer' were said to be noble and generous but somewhat shy. His birth year



Aztec cosmological drawing with the God Xiuhotecuhtli lord of fire and of the Calendar in the centre and the other important gods around him each in front of a sacred tree (from the Codex Fejérvary-Mayer).

however, compensated for the ambiguity of his birth day, because children born in the year ‘One Rabbit’ generally turned out to be prosperous and tenacious; two qualities required of a future king.

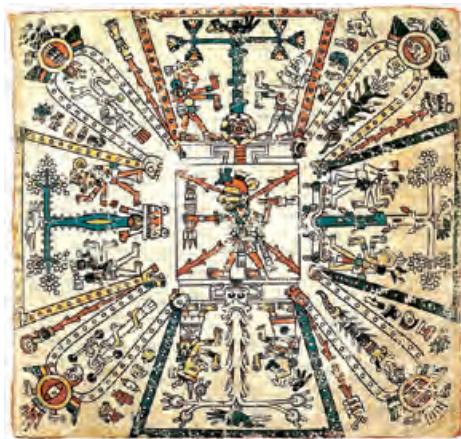
Nezahualcóyotl’s life was not an easy one. At the age of seven he was sent off to the calmécac, a school for sons of the nobility. There he was taught how to live on frugal meals in order to survive during times of war, how to bathe in icy water in order to brave the elements, and how to pierce his body with cactus thorns in order to withstand pain and to draw blood as an offering to the gods.

Though Nezahualcóyotl was born heir to the Acolhuan throne, his childhood was not one of luxury. The Texcocans were then fighting for their very existence against the Tepanecs from the western side of the valley. In 1418, when he was sixteen, the Tepanecs succeeded in subjugating his people. While concealed in the branches of a tree, he watched Tepanec soldiers butcher his father.

Máxtla

The fleeing Nezahualcóyotl was warmly received in Tenochtitlán, but it was too close to the Tepanecs, so he went into exile outside the valley in the cities of Huexotzínco and Tlaxcála, where he lived with the *tlatamatíni* or wise men, and devoted the next eight years to study and intellectual self-advancement.

Along with academic pursuits, Nezahualcóyotl received instruction in duties befitting his station. He had never forgotten the brutal circumstances that triggered his exile and was determined to regain his throne. To that end



Source: <https://www.flickr.com/photos/bibliodyssey/3691975877>

he forged alliances with the ruling lineages of these city-states and with his mother’s relatives among the Aztecs.

He needed a pretext to enter the land of his birth, now part of an expanded Tepanec state. The original Tepanec king had died and was replaced by his son Máxtla. Pretending to be reconciled to Tepanec rule, Nezahualcóyotl went to their capital city of Azcapotzálco and made obeisance to Máxtla, presenting him with a wreath of flowers. But Máxtla spurned the offering, and realising that he was in danger, Nezahualcóyotl slipped out of the palace and returned to his native city of Texcoco.

At length Máxtla’s karma caught up with him. Tiring of his tyranny, a number of Tepanec nobles went over to Nezahualcóyotl. A coalition was formed and Máxtla’s forces were driven out of the Texcocan domains. Then his enemies marched on the Tepanec capital Azcapotzálco. Finding Máxtla hiding in the palace baths, they unceremoniously dragged him out and killed him.

A Kingdom Regained

Having finally attained the throne that was his birthright, Nezahualcóyotl, the seventh king of his line, began to display evidence of his remarkable abilities. His first act was to pardon those who had sided with the Tepanecs and returned them to their towns. So effective was this policy that the other two Alliance members soon

There is not just one Aztec calendar, there are two more or less independent systems. One calendar called the ‘xiuhpohualli’ has 365 days. It describes the days and rituals related to the seasons, and therefore might be called the agricultural year or the solar year. The other calendar was a 260 day ritual cycle. In Nahuatl, the language of the Aztecs, it is called the ‘tonalpohualli’ or the day-count. These two cycles together formed a 52 year ‘century’ sometimes called the ‘Calendar Round’. The calendrical year began with the first appearance of the Pleiades constellation in the east immediately before the dawn light.¹

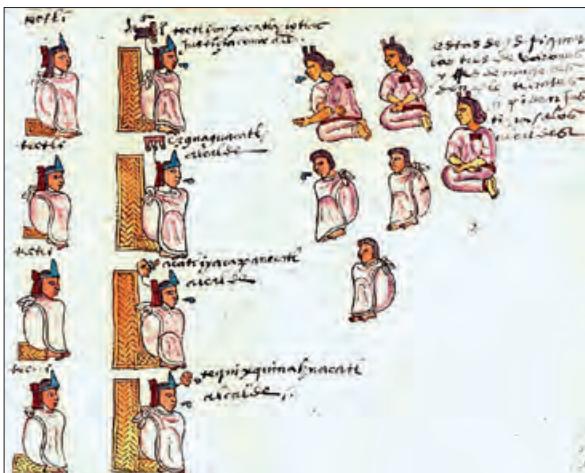


followed suit. There was a stratagem behind this clemency though, as each of the town lords had to spend most of the year at Nezahualcóyotl's court in Texcoco. In this he anticipated Louis XIV's taming of the French aristocracy by some 300 years when he built the Palace of Versailles to accommodate them all.

He devised a code of laws considered so exemplary that it was adopted by his main allies, the Aztecs. Like Hammurabi, the king of Babylon, he created a unified law code to replace tribal law. His system was designed to ensure government by severe but standardised laws that favoured the state. The system defined behaviour and responsibilities with punishments meted out with strict impartiality.

In the beginning the laws were applied strictly, but mechanically and without regard to mitigating circumstances. The laws in the code were supplemented with a traditional system of justice based on notions of reasonable behaviour, which modified the harshness of the previous system. He determined that those of noble blood, because of all the privileges they enjoyed, had a heavier responsibility than the ordinary man in the street, and accordingly, they were punished more harshly when they broke the laws. The nobility were expected to set a good example to everyone else. Corrupt judges were punished severely and this had the effect of increasing the efficiency and reliability of justice. Confidence in the justice system grew.

He unified the diverse cities of his kingdom into one justice system. On one occasion when the law required that he condemn to death a man who had stolen seven ears of corn to feed his family, he was so touched by the injustice of this punishment for nothing more than the sin of poverty, that he freed the man and instead ordered



An Aztec court in session around 1500. (from the Codex Mendoza at the Bodleian Library, Oxford).



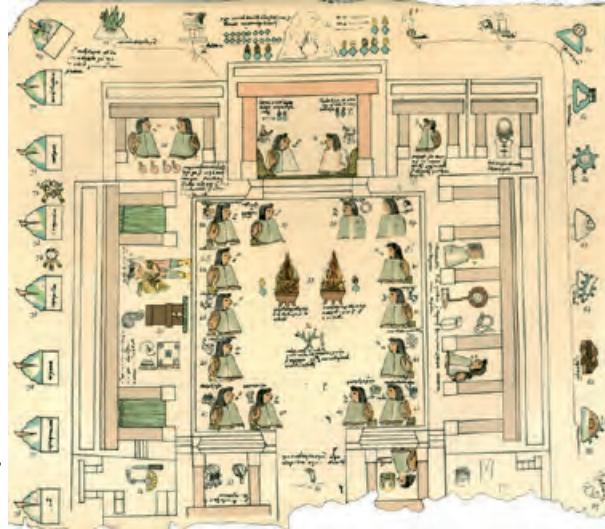
*Nezahualcóyotl, ruler of Texcoco, 1402-1472.
(from the Codex Ixtlilxochitl, folio 106R).*

that at the edges of roads, lakes and canals corn, beans and squash should be planted from which anyone in need could take without fear of punishment.

The Triple Alliance

In 1430, after the defeat of Máxtla, a new political order was established in the Valley of Mexico. Nezahualcóyotl was the driving force behind the foundation of the Triple Alliance, with Texcoco on the eastern side of the lake, México-Tenochtitlan, the Aztec capital in the centre, and the Tepanec city of Tlacópan on the western side of the lake. These three cities founded what is generally called the 'Aztec Empire' which gradually spread outside the valley to cover most of central and southern Mexico.

In each of the three capital cities, a king or *Huey Tlatoáni* would govern his own domain directly and without interference, continuing an already existing political and dynastic tradition. Each of the three great kings kept under his rule a group of kingdoms, each with its own dynasty and ethnic tradition. As the empire grew, it was divided into three parts, each defined geographically as the domain of one of the three Alliance capitals: Tenochtitlan predominant in the south, Texcoco predominant in the northeast and Tlacópan in the



The palace of Nezahualcóyotl in Texcoco with law courts.



16th Century drawing of the main temple of Texcoco, a member of the Triple Alliance with Tenochtitlan. Because of similar architectural details between this and the Templo Mayor of Tenochtitlan this drawing can be considered representative of both buildings. The stepped structure is clearly visible being the main feature of this twin temple. Facing are two wide ascending steps each being flanked by balustrades. Rising at the summit are twin temples the left being dedicated to Tlaloc, the rain god and the right to Huitzilopochtli, the principle war god of the Aztecs. (from the Codex Ixtlilxochitl, fol. 112v Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris, 65-71).

northwest. Tribute from all over the empire was sent to Tenochtitlan, where it was shared out among the three members of the Alliance.

Texcoco

For the next 40 years, Nezahualcóyotl was free to turn his dreams into reality. In the early 1430s he built his administrative palace or *huey tecpancalli* in Texcoco, which measured 1,032 by 817 metres. Spread over one square kilometre, the complex consisted of numerous buildings, extensive gardens, temples, a ball-court, zoo, two large courtyards with a marketplace in one, all surrounded by massive adobe brick walls. The many sections of the palace included living quarters for the king, the queen and attendants, servants' quarters, a throne room, many chambers and halls for judges, councillors, officials and ambassadors, a hall for warriors, a science and music hall, a section for poets, philosophers and historians, an archive room, storehouses for weapons and storehouses for tribute.

Part of the palace compound was a religious sector with over 40 temples and other structures, priests' residences and a *calmecac* for the education of the royal children. There were over 300 rooms in this palace compound which was the administrative centre of his kingdom, and where much of the business of state was carried out.

“Spiritual and ritual functions were ever-present at these pleasure palaces, which were often located at or near existing shrines.”

Beginning around 1420 in the Valley of Mexico, four different types of pleasure parks were established or refined: imperial retreats, horticultural gardens, urban zoological and memorial parks, and game reserves. Spiritual and ritual functions were ever-present at these pleasure palaces, which were often located at or near existing shrines, especially hot

springs and mountaintops with commanding views.

Nezahualcóyotl had a number of smaller palaces scattered around his kingdom, the best known of which was the retreat and pleasure palace at Texcotzínco, a marvel of delight. Here, on a hilltop above Texcoco, on the lower slopes of Mt. Tlaloc, he built a water and flower wonderland for ritual and relaxation that included a royal residence with many separate chambers, a bath complex





and a botanical garden. The canals, aqueducts, stairways, gardens and pools here continue to delight visitors to this day.

The palace gardens were a vast botanical collection that included plants from not only the growing Aztec Empire but also the most remote corners of Mesoamerica. The remnants of the gardens, still extant to this day, have recently been studied by a team of scientists, who were able to demonstrate by means of modelling and computer simulation that the layout of the site had been carefully planned to be in alignment with astronomical events, with an emphasis on Venus, and not simply aligned with the cardinal directions as previously assumed.

The water used to irrigate the gardens was obtained from the springs beyond the mountains to the east of Texcoco. The water was channeled through canals carved into the rock. In certain areas, rock staircases were used as waterfalls. After clearing the mountains, the canals continued downhill to a point a short distance from Texcotzínco. There the path to the city was blocked by a deep canyon that ran from north to south. Nezahualcóyotl ordered that the gap be filled with tons of rocks and stones, thus creating the first known aqueduct in the New World. The whole hill of Texcotzínco was also served by this canal system and converted by his designers into a sacred place for the rain god Tláloc, complete with waterfalls, exotic animals and birds. On the summit of the mountain he constructed a shrine to the god, laid out in hanging gardens reached by an airy flight of 520 marble

"The people of Mesoamerica took a completely different approach as to how they viewed our place in the universe."

The 1524 Nuremberg map of Tenochtitlan (Chicago, Newberry Library, Ayer 655.51.C8 1524b.). To the left is depicted the Caribbean basin, with south at the top. Geographical features include Cuba, visible to the left, below which is the peninsula of Florida. On the left Lake Texcoco and the island of Tenochtitlan is illustrated with west at the top.²

steps, a significant number, since according to Aztec mythology the gods have the opportunity to destroy humanity once every 52 years.

Ometéotl : Androgynous god of Duality.

As he gazed up at the nine-story temple reaching to the heavens high above him, Nezahualcóyotl Acolmíztli, the *Huey Tlatoáni* and *Acolhua Tecúbili*, thought back over the long years of his life that had led to this crowning achievement. He had built this nine-storey pyramid in Texcoco his capital city, representing the nine heavens, dedicated to the god Tlóque Nahuáque. The temple had no image inside, nor any sacrificial

stone. Its innermost chamber was empty save for a ceiling that was black but covered with stars. This was the only god to whom he offered his devotion.

Though the god Tezcatlipóca (the Aztec equivalent of the Mayan god K'awil), was associated with the concept of kingship and the city of Texcoco, Nezahualcóyotl, following his philosophical upbringing, personally



Source: <http://nopalbulizatiniblogspot.co.uk/2010/09/ometeotl-duality-sin-division-possible.html>

Ometéotl was the androgynous god of duality, divided into two forces; Ometecúhtli and Omecíhuatl, the Lord and Lady of Duality, the source of all life on earth.

preferred the worship of the god Ometéotl ('Two Energies' from *óme* [two] and *téotl* [cosmic energy]). Richard Fraser Townsend in his book *State and Cosmos in the Art of Tenochtitlan* says:

Téotl was universally translated by the Spanish as 'god', 'saint' or sometimes 'demon'. But its actual meaning corresponds more closely to the Polynesian term *mana* signifying a numinous, impersonal force diffused throughout the universe.

Ometéotl was the androgynous god of duality, divided into two forces; Ometecúhtli and Omecíhuatl, the 'Lord and Lady of Duality', the source of all life on earth. They symbolise the vowel sounds 'Ra' and 'Ma', positive and negative, the duality and polarity of life and the forces of nature responsible for existence and life. He lived in Oneyócan or 'Place of Duality', the home of the gods. He was the creator of *Cemanáhuatl* the universe or the world. As the creator, Ometéotl, thought or visualised the universe into existence just as Ptah, the creator god of Memphis in ancient Egypt, was also said to have done.

Ometéotl is the principle of intelligence. He is spirit and matter, stasis and movement, chaos and order, life and death, creation and destruction, positive and negative. He is the origin of all cosmic forces. As Tlóque Nahuáque 'he who is near and far', he is everywhere, omnipresent. Ometéotl is a cosmic abstraction through which we know the true god. This mirrors the belief in the Aten solar disc from the days of the Egyptian pharaoh Akhenaten in approximately 1350 BCE, where the sun too was a symbol through which people could come to know the true god.

But what about the many other gods they believed in? They were thought to be the physical and metaphorical representations of Ometéotl, the dual energy which exists

in everything. It is this energy which manifests itself as the various forces of nature and other natural elements. The people of Mesoamerica took a completely different approach as to how they viewed our place in the universe. Using a system of constant observation, experimentation and verification, they concluded that everything within the known universe is made up of a living energy, an energy capable of giving birth to all living things, as well as causing their destruction. This dual energy permeates the cosmos and can be found in the smallest of atomic particles.

Poet and Philosopher

Poetry and praise move one in ways little else can. Just as music moves the emotions to seemingly endless depths, the deep meaning behind words can move the soul to tears.

You, azure bird, shining parrot, you walk flying,
Highest Arbiter, Giver of Life,
Trembling, you extend Yourself here,
Filling my house, filling my dwelling, here.
With Your piety and grace one can live.
Oh Author of Life on earth,
Trembling, you extend Yourself here,
Filling my house, filling my dwelling, here.

Poetry was termed *inxóchitl, in cuicatl* or "flower and song." There were different types of poetry: *xopancuicatl* (songs of springtime), *inocuicatl* (songs of orphan-hood and deep reflection), *yaocuicatl* (songs of war), but the complex surfaces of many *xochicuicatl* or flower-songs often make them difficult to understand for many in our modern culture. Yet they contain many gems of universal lasting value, and offer great rewards, mystically speaking, to those willing to make the effort. The following poem especially moves one at a deep level and it is clear its author was more than a mere conquering emperor; this was a mystic by any definition of the word.

Flowers descend to earth;
Life Giver sends them,
sacred yellow flowers.
Let all be adorned, princes, lords;
Life Giver sends them,
these wailing piles of sacred flowers,
these golden flowers.
What do our hearts want on this earth?
Heart pleasure, Life Giver,
let us borrow your flowers,
these golden flowers, these wailing flowers.
No one can enjoy them forever,



for we must depart.
 Though they may be gold,
 you will hide them.
 Though they may be your jades,
 your plumes, we only borrow them.
 No one can enjoy them forever,
 for we must depart.
 O friends, to a good place we have come to live,
 come in springtime!
 In that place a very brief moment!
 So brief is life!

Nezahualcóyotl was considered by his peers to be the greatest poet of ancient Mexico. His compositions reflected the worldview of the Mesoamerican peoples and had vast influence, stylistically and in content. Filled with thought, symbol and myth, his poetry moved his people's culture so deeply that after his death, generations of poets would sing his poems and keep them alive, even after the Spanish conquest and forced conversion to Christianity of the people. For his deeply mystical poems were meant to be recited or sung at feasts or other open air gatherings, not for the private delectation of the elite, but for the benefit of all.

Nezahualcóyotl was not only a great lyric poet, he was also famed as an architect, engineer, city planner, reluctant warrior, law-giver and philosopher. The cultural institutions he established included a library of hieroglyphic books, a zoological garden-arboretum, and

a self-governing academy of scholars and poets. He led his city-state out of foreign domination, and transformed it into a wellspring of art and culture. The seventh ruler of Texcoco, he promoted a renewal of Toltec learning, based on the peaceful religion of Quetzalcóatl, at the very moment when the Aztec cult of sacrifice was coming into ascendancy. All the Náhuatl-speaking city-states in the Valley of Mexico looked to Nezahualcóyotl's Texcoco as the cultural centre of their world.

Náhuatl: The Clear Language

Náhuatl is commonly known today as the 'Aztec' language. However, the inhabitants of the city-state of Mexiko-Tenochtitlán called themselves 'Mexica' or 'Tenochca' and never 'Aztecs', which is a European appellation. Besides, Náhuatl was the language of much more than just the Aztecs and the Texcocans: it was the *lingua franca* of the entire Valley of Mexico, comprising many city-states, stemming back to the fabled Toltec capital city Tóllan and probably to Teotihuacan, the mega-metropolis that dominated Central America for the initial 700 years of the first millennium CE.

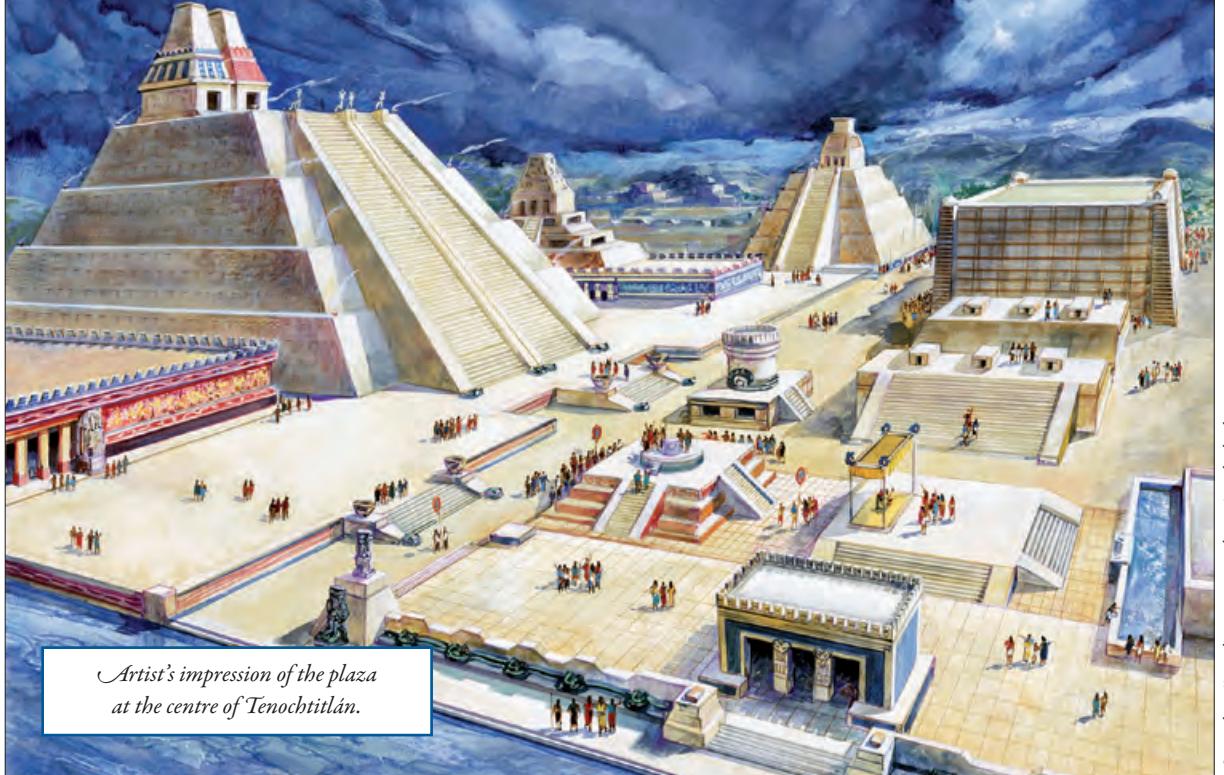
Náhuatl is a beautiful language. It is a member of the Uto-Aztecan family of languages, and is unrelated to most Mesoamerican languages, or to groups such as the Mayas, Zapotecs and Mixtecs. The Uto-Aztecan family originated in northern Mexico or the south-western USA. As the political and economic influence of the Aztec empire expanded, Náhuatl became the language of diplomacy and trade. 'Náhuatl' is a noun having the meaning 'clear, intelligible speech'. English has adopted many Náhuatl words: *tómatl* (tomato), *chocólatl* (chocolate), *océlotl* (ocelot), *mexico*, *átlatl* (a spear thrower), *chilli*, *abuácatl* (avocado) and *cóyotl* (coyote).

Toltecáyotl

Nezahualcóyotl was a magnet for the creative vitality of central Mexico. His encouragement attracted talent and innovation. Colonies of craftsmen, artisans and artists flocked to Texcoco, as did goldsmiths, coppersmiths, feather-workers, weavers, book makers, jewellers, musicians and poets.

Page from the Codex Mendoza depicting the myth of Tenochtitlan's founding. A prophecy told the wandering tribes that they would find their destined site for a great city in a location signaled by an eagle eating a snake while perched atop a cactus. The Aztecs saw this vision on what was then a small swampy island in Lake Texcoco, where they built Tenochtitlan. (Photo: Hlecuanda)





Artist's impression of the plaza at the centre of Tenochtitlán.

Source: <http://www.latinamericastudios.org/tenochtitlan.htm>

His system of government created a number of councils including those of war, finance, justice and the so-called 'council of music'. The members of this council devoted themselves not only to music but also to science, art, literature, poetry and history. They carried out such functions as evaluating the academic qualifications of professors, verifying the accuracy of published works and judging compositions on patriotic and moral themes.

Poets were held in high esteem by the speakers of Náhuatl, a language rich in symbolism and metaphor. Náhuatl poetry routinely uses highly metaphorical language. Words or phrases can have a literal and an inner meaning. Nezahualcóyotl presided over decades of great art, architecture, poetry and philosophy in what became a golden age in the Valley of Mexico. He instituted competitions where artists and poets were judged for their beauty. He exempted musicians, painters and bookmakers from taxes, commenting that "*there is a tribute of beauty.*" All of this is reflected in his poetry. He does not deny war and glories, but neither does he accept the state religion. The Toltec or civilised aspect of his character clearly predominates in his poetry.

There can be little doubt that he had begun to ask the same questions that dominated the thinking of the Pre-Socratic philosophers of ancient Greece. He looked upon the natural world with a sense of wonder that shows the beginnings of philosophy. In his poems he asks questions such as where did we come from? Where do we go after death? How should we act while here on earth? And as with

other great thinkers before and after him, he sought the ultimate meaning of existence.

Given this high cultural level, it is not surprising that Texcoco became known as the 'Athens of the Americas.' Of all the creative intellects nurtured by this "Athens," the greatest belonged to the king himself.

Epilogue

I love the song of the mockingbird,
 bird of four hundred voices.
I love the colour of the jade, and
 the enervating perfume of flowers.
But more than all this,
 I love my brother: man.

Nezahualcóyotl died aged 70 in the year 1472, full of honours. He was a man of character driven by a sense of duty and justice. He is repeatedly shown seeking first-hand information about the condition of his realm by wandering through the countryside in disguise or listening to the words of the ordinary people from

a balcony of his palace. His years of wandering had made a political realist of him and gave him time to dream. He possessed an artistic temperament and a keen intellect and his reign

ushered in a new golden age.

During his long life he had had various wives, many concubines and 110 children. One of his legitimate sons, an eight-year-old boy named Nezahualpílli,

"Nezahualcóyotl was a magnet for the creative vitality of central Mexico."



succeeded to the throne. Nezahualcóyotl died happy, believing that he had set up a dynasty and state strong enough to endure for centuries. His deathbed reverie would have been far less serene had he foreseen the arrival, 47 years later, of pale invaders from across the seas who in but a few years, would snuff out the civilisation of which he was such a brilliant representative.

He was a man who appeared to be almost a precursor of Frederick the Great, a ruler-philosopher who found time to mingle intellectual pursuits with war and statecraft. Nezahualcóyotl was famous as an intellectual, poet and philosopher. He was an expert architect and builder who designed the long dyke that regulated the waters of Lake Texcoco and kept Tenochtitlan from flooding. He also designed the aqueduct that brought the sweet waters from the springs at Chapultépec to the Aztec capital.

A man of many talents, he renounced the use of cult idols, thus becoming the focus of a bitter iconoclastic controversy with the Aztecs. He re-asserted the ideal of Tlóque Nahuáque and commissioned a new nine-storey temple without an idol. Texcoco, due to this man more than any other, became the foremost centre of learning and preservation of ancient Mesoamerican tradition in the Valley of Mexico.

Have the goodness to grant me some light, though it may be no more than a firefly in the night, to go forth in this dream and this life of sleep, which lasts but the space of a day.

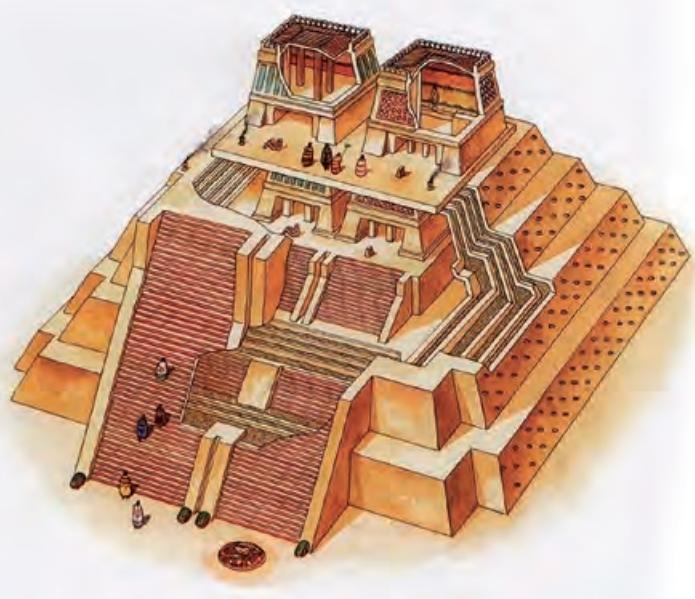
The seven major building phases of the Templo Mayor began with a simple structure, probably dedicated to Huitzilopochtli, built in 1325 when Tenochtitlan was founded. Subsequently the Templo Mayor grew enormously both in size and elaboration resulting in the impressive structure seen by the Spaniards in 1519. Reconstructions and enlargements of the temple were sometimes necessary because of flooding and the unstable lakebed on which it was built. Most often, however, successive powerful rulers enhanced the temple to celebrate their own coronations, to honor the gods, and to validate the power of the Aztec empire. The most spectacular expansion of the Templo Mayor took place in the year '1 Rabbit' (1454 A.D.) under the ruler Motecuhzoma I when impressive art works and architectural elements were added. (Quoted from http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/teno_2/hd_teno_2.htm)

Endnotes

- For a complete description of the Calendar see: <https://theabysmal.files.wordpress.com/2008/10/azteccalendar.jpg> (ed.)
- For a very detailed description of this map see Mundy, Barbara E., 'Mapping the Aztec Capital: The 1524 Nuremberg Map of Tenochtitlan, Its Sources and Meanings' in *Imago Mundi*, Vol. 50, 1998. Available for download online (just key in the title). There is also a concise description at <http://mesolore.org/tutorials/learn/22/Life-Beside-the-Water/70/Community-and-Household> (ed.)

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Source: <http://classconnection.3.amazonaws.com/983/fلاشکارڈs/45983.jpg/>



The Spiritual Wealth of Islam

by Serge Hutin



Dance of Sufi Dervishes

THE FIRST volume entitled *From the Early Beginnings to the Death of Averroes* (1198) of the important three-volume *Histoire de la philosophie Islamique*, appeared in 1964.

It was published in English in 1993 as the *History of Islamic Philosophy*. The trilogy was written by Professor Henry Corbin (1903-1978) who was the director of Islamic studies at the Sorbonne in Paris, and who also taught every year at the University of Tehran. This book is a living testimony of someone who fully understood

the higher meaning of the initiatic, theosophical and mystical currents of Islam. Even today, no better introduction to a serious understanding of these probably exists.

My aim is not to try and give an adequate but bland summary of the magnificent spiritual panorama Corbin offers us, but to extract from it some elements that can make us fully aware of the immense spiritual wealth, still so readily unappreciated in the West, of Islamic esotericism in its traditional forms.



The Secret Meaning of the Koran

Islam is a religion that relies entirely on an inspired book, the *Koran*. The Muslim religion in fact forms the third and last revealed branch of what may be termed the Abrahamic tradition: Judaism, Christianity and Islam are all 'Religions of the Book' of the same monotheistic revelation.

Like the Bible, the Koran is subject to two types of interpretation, both completely genuine. We can see in it "*the rules for living in this world and the guide of beyond this world.*" On the one hand, there are the literal interpretations and on the other, the esoteric exegesis. The problem of the 'true meaning' of the sacred work dictated to the Prophet Mohammed, could not in fact arise for the *initiates* of Islam who are completely loyal to their spiritual convictions and religious practices, while, at the same time, recognising the real existence of inspired people *outside* their traditional path.

This active tolerance is expressed in the significant recognition of the fact that the higher knowledge of thinkers from ancient Greece also came from the 'niche of the lights of prophecy'; while at the same time there is also an absence among Muslim initiates of all mistrust towards sincere representatives of the Abrahamic tree as well as other paths. This extreme form of tolerance even results in the admission of Christians and Hindus among their students by some Sufi masters in Iran and Pakistan.

But to come to the precise problem of the Koran's esoteric exegeses, Corbin states the principle very clearly:

To indicate as a goal the achievement of the spiritual meaning implies that there is a meaning which is not the spiritual meaning, and that between this and that which does not exist, there is perhaps a gradation, leading to a plurality of spiritual meanings.

And he quotes several pages further on a remarkable statement from the 6th Imam (Guide) of the Shi'ites, Ja'far as-Sadiq (702 - 765 CE):

The Book of God is made up of four things. There is the revealed word; there is the allegorical understanding; there are the occult meanings related to the hidden world; there are the higher spiritual doctrines. The literal word is for ordinary mortals. The allegorical understanding is for the elite. The occult meanings belong to the Friends of God. The higher spiritual doctrines belong to the prophets.

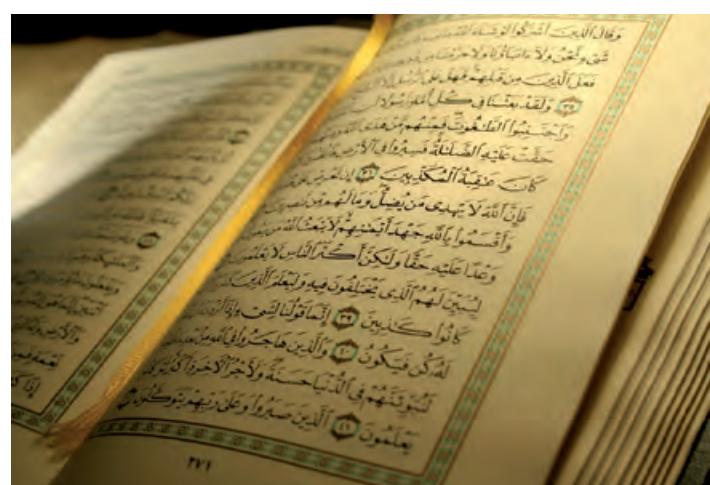
This passage can be interpreted as follows:

The literal word is intended for hearing; the allegory is intended for spiritual understanding; the occult meanings are for contemplative vision; the higher doctrines concern the realisation of the whole of spiritual Islam.

Why is esoterism necessary? The reason is obvious. The great Persian Sufi mystic al-Hallaj (858-922 CE) was careless in revealing his great illumination publicly to the profane in the streets of Baghdad. Many Sufi masters felt that it was inappropriate to share mysticism with the masses, and it earned him his execution 11 years later. Not only the profane and the ordinary believers among them, even the most devout cannot understand the secret truths, but they risk making initiates look like the impious and sacrilegious who despise the beliefs and practices of the exoteric religion; which is what happened to al-Hallaj.

The preceding quotation allows us to understand the existence of not just one esoteric meaning of the Koran, but of several hierarchical meanings, corresponding to the progressive stages of the initiate towards complete illumination. The differentiation of meanings in the Koran is part and parcel of the necessary spiritual hierarchy within humanity. There are three categories among these:

- The ordinary profane.
- Those who have the potential to become possible initiates (hence the need for initiates to make contact with them).
- The initiates who are themselves divided into various grades according to their degree of personal advancement on the path.



A page from the Koran.



Tomb of Mevlana (the Sufi poet, Rumi) with prominent green tower in Konya, Turkey, upon whom, after his death, the Mevlevi Sufi Dervish Order was founded in 1273. Also shown is a modern whirling dervish.

which had its centre in Basra in Iraq during the height of the Abbasid Caliphate. They wrote 52 treatises on mathematics, natural sciences, psychology and theology. Their initiates divided themselves into four grades, corresponding to spiritual aptitudes that develop with age, with initiation not being possible before about the age of 40. At 40 years of age, members began their progress towards illumination. At 50, they could even be ready to perceive directly the spiritual light in the totality of things, into the microcosmic heart of humanity as in the 'Great Book of Nature'. From all evidence, the ages of 40 and 50 are intended to characterise initiatic maturity, and are not to be confused with the temporal time of civil society. The ages of 40 or 50 years (33 is also frequently cited in the Christian tradition) is the age of initiates when they are finally ready, like Dante, to receive the 'great illumination', which could, according to the real advancement of the pilgrim on the path, become manifest before or after physical maturity.

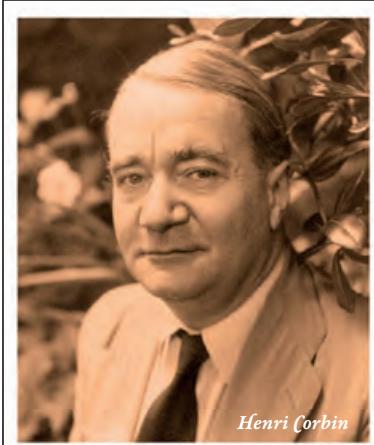
In Corbin's work we find detailed chapters on an area even less well known by Europeans than Sufism, that of *Shi'ism* of which the Ismailis are one of the two great historical branches. The Shi'ite phenomenon is entirely placed within the perspectives of an ardent and persevering search, in the true esoteric sense, of the real spiritual path of the whole of Islamic Revelation, and consequently, of Islamic History. But this esotericism, which developed after the Prophet, is more particularly based on the problem of both an obvious temporal and

The Initiatic Hierarchy

Traditional Islamic initiations are generally unknown if not distorted in a grotesque way, as shown in suspect accounts that sometimes still circulate on this subject. In Europe, we hear confused stories about the *Dervishes*, the *Ismailis* (because the Aga Khan, given more or less equal status as their 'pope', is one of the personalities the world media willingly talks about) and the *Assassins*, the followers of Hassan-e Sabbah, the "Old Man of the Mountain" and friend of the scientist and poet Omar Khayyam, who were finally destroyed by the Mongols when they razed their formidable Iranian fortress of Alamut.

Corbin corrects all the overly simplistic ideas on these topics. In particular, he does justice to all the dark stories (like a Gothic novel) spread about the Assassins by their enemies in the first place, and then by generations of Western self-appointed 'historians' who specialised in secret societies. On Sufism, Corbin's book makes the point very clearly. What are the Sufis? They are mystical Muslims who gather in initiatic communities, often in a more or less monastic manner, and which are grouped into the various Dervish Orders.

The characteristic of traditional Sufism is always to develop into an initiatic hierarchy. Just to confine ourselves to the past, let us take for example the secret society of the *Ikhwan as-Safa* or 'Brethren of Purity'



Arabic manuscript from the 12th Century depicting the Brethren of Purity, a secret society of the Ikhwan as-Safa which had its centre in Basra in Iraq during the height of the Abbasid Caliphate.

spiritual supreme authority of Islam. Shi'ism therefore rests on the belief in the Imamate, that is, in individuals considered as 'Guides' (Imam means 'Guide') to the whole gamut of history from the death of Mohammed (considered to be the 'Seal of the Prophets' ending the period of prophets) to the end of the earthly cycle of manifestation.

The historical conception of Shi'ism therefore goes back to the years of Mohammed himself. The Shi'ites were, from the beginning, those who, in contrast to the *Sunnis* (Muslims wanting to maintain rigorous observance of what is called the Sunnah code of the oral traditions which complete the Koran), wanted to put Islam under the supreme governance of an Imam manifest in the holy person of Ali, cousin and son-in-law of the Prophet by his daughter Fatima. The Imamate would always have to remain among the descendants of Ali after his death.

While the Twelver Shi'ites recognise, as their name indicates, 12 successive Imams beginning with Ali, the Ismailis recognise only seven. The real contrast is in fact only an apparent one, because the esoteric implications correspond and appear as complementary. Corbin draws us to the following observation:

While Twelver imamology symbolically corresponds to the 12 constellations of the Zodiac (like the 12 springs gushing from the rock struck by Moses' staff), Sevener imamology of Ismailianism symbolises the Seven Planetary Heavens and their moving stars.

Even the idea of secret initiatic governance in the background of visible history is completely traditional in many forms of esotericism. In Sunni Sufism we find, under a different form from the Shi'ites, the idea of an invisible esoteric hierarchy in which the *Qutb* (the mystical pole or axis) is the summit. In this case, we should remember that traditions of this kind are always played out on various levels in the historical domain as they are in personal initiation. It should also not be forgotten that human initiators still have as their mission and role to allow the initiate gradually to have contact with 'the spiritual entity', with the 'Angel of Philosophy', (a term openly used in Shi'ite esotericism) and with their personal guide, the Master Within who will only appear when the student is ready. This, then, explains the manner in which traditional esoteric documents are simultaneously placed



from a point of view which Corbin calls 'metahistory' and on the level of the visible world on this plane. This is obvious in the chief problem of the succession of great Divine Emissaries on the earthly plane.

Regarding this, Corbin quotes a wonderful text from the Persian Ismaili poet and philosopher, Nasir-e Khusraw (1004-1088 CE):

Positive religion is the exoteric aspect of the idea, and the idea is the esoteric aspect of positive religion. Positive religion is the symbol; the Idea is the symbolised. The exoteric is in perpetual flux with the cycles and periods of the world; the esoteric is a divine energy which is not subject to becoming.

In the course of events in this world, invisible *determinism* always shows through in a visible form. This is essential in truly understanding the traditional idea of historical cycles. Earthly events can only be explained in relation to 'a drama in Heaven'; in fact they prepare the end. In Islamic esotericism, as in the better known perspectives in Europe of the Christian Apocalypse, the problem of the 'last days' plays a determining role.

In Shi'ism, they talk about the 12th or last Imam, the 'Imam of the Time', the Imam "*hidden from the senses but present in the heart.*" Vanished from this

plane ‘the Hidden Imam’ is nevertheless accessible to initiates, gradually becoming their personal invisible guide, their inner master. Until the hour of the Millennium, the Hidden Imam only remains visible in dreams, or in personal manifestations which have a ‘visionary’ characteristic. But when the present cycle comes to an end, the last Imam, the Master Within of the Shi’ites will become manifest on the earthly plane. It is he who will preside over the Golden Dawn, the advent of the New Era. At the end of the present cycle then, the Mahdi, the Hidden Imam who has been living in occultation since 872, will bring complete revelation and supreme fulfilment.

Illumination

The initiatic forms that appeared in Islam intend, like all similar paths whether based on an exoteric religion or not, to enable the inner light to radiate within. In Sufism, we therefore find exercises that are aimed at *internalising* Islamic revelation.

In the quest of complete illumination, the initiate will relive the experience had by the Prophet himself, especially at the time of his Mi’raj or ascension, an experience during which Mohammed, after having been transported in spirit to Jerusalem, rose up through the seven heavens to the throne of Allah. In the same way, Sufi mystics try to understand the Koran inwardly in some way, by again finding through the correct pronunciation of the Koranic Suras, the mystery of the original ‘Enunciation of the Holy Book’.

In the final analysis, the exegesis of the Koran will rest on the parallel between the vicissitudes of history and the ways in which the soul attains the liberating illumination. For example, the marvellous example, in Sura 95 (at-Tin), of the olive tree growing on top of Mount Sinai, is interpreted as follows by an anonymous Ismaili author:



This Sura means the spiritual pilgrim sees that his own personality, as Moses did, is none other than his ‘Sinai’, the inner sanctuary where the theophanic Form can shine..., the Divine Light.

Being able to contemplate ‘in the Soul of the soul’, and being able to radiate the Divine Light within our heart, this is the goal the mystic pilgrim is fixed on, and will attain when illumination has finally blossomed within. Here is a quotation from the great Persian Sufi Abu Yazid Bastami (804-874 CE) who played a major role in placing the concept of *divine love* at the core of Sufism:

When finally I contemplated truth through truth, I lived truth through truth and I existed in the truth for the truth in one eternal present, without breath, without word, without hearing, without knowledge, until God had communicated to me a knowledge thrust from His knowledge, a language issued from His Grace, a regard modelled on His Light.

To radiate a Divine Light within us and to lose ourselves in it, this is the Great Illumination. Here is another marvellous passage from the Persian mystic al-Ghazali (1058-1111 CE) that Professor Corbin quotes:

The moth which has become the lover of the flame, has the light of this aura as nourishment as long as it is still some distance from it. It is the portent of the dawning illumination which both calls and welcomes him. But he must continue to fly until it catches him. When he has reached it, it is not up to him any more to move towards the flame, it is the flame that advances within him. The flame is then not his nourishment but he is nourishment for the flame. And that is the great mystery. One moment a fugitive, he then becomes his own beloved, since he is the flame. And that is his perfection.

And here we find the aim of all initiatic training. Sohravardi (or ‘Suhrawardi’ in Arabic), a great Persian philosopher (1155-1191 CE), shows himself to be an authentic initiate when he tells us that the human soul must tear itself away from the shadows of its ‘western exile’, that is, from the world of sub-lunar matter, to progress towards the East from where the Light comes.

Muhammad Ghawth Gwaliyari was a 16th Century Sufi master of the Shattari Order and the author of Jawahir-i-Khams meaning ‘Five Jewels’ pictured here. This mystical Sufi order originated in Persia in the 15th Century and later developed fully in India.





A 15th Century European portrait of 'Geber' (Codice Ashburnhamiano 1166, Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana, Florence) and a manuscript showing the alchemical apparatus he used in his experiments.

Through the very act of their awareness of self, beings of light will become a presence to each other, and note this, experiencing one of the privileges of the state of Rosy Cross, in the precise meaning of the term.

Alchemy

In Islamic lands, alchemy thrived. To quote one name alone, that of the illustrious *Jabir ibn Hayyan* ('Geber' in the West), the student of the 6th Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq, who is credited with the definition of Hermeticism as "the science of Balance."

It is a question, in fact, of finding the relationship which exists in each body of the manifest and the hidden. These operations apply to the material as to the spiritual, as Corbin rightly points out to us:

It is the transmutation of the soul coming back to itself which will affect the transmutation of the body. The soul is the very place of this transformation.

Alchemy, with its marvellous secrets of total human transformation was undoubtedly known to a number of Muslim initiates, as much within Shi'ism as in the Sufi Orders. Islamic hermeticism has shown itself to be one of the important branches of traditional alchemical filiation.

Henry Corbin was able to show clearly in his remarkable work *Corps Spirituel et Terre Céleste* (known in English as 'Spiritual Body and Celestial Earth') that it is impossible to understand something of alchemical

operations without seeing these as marking out the stages of an initiatic path, the spiritual pilgrimage towards the rediscovery of the Divine within. It is only in this way that it is possible to understand the exact meaning of this teaching from Imam Ja'far:

The human form is the supreme evidence by which God confirms His Creation. It is the book he has written with His hand. It is the temple He has edified through His wisdom. It is the gathering of all universes.

Very explicit also is this declaration from the 6th Imam of the Shi'ites:

The light of the Imam in the heart of believers is brighter than the Sun which spreads its light.

And the golden rule of all initiatic training and all esoteric discipline is found in this Ismaili saying:

He who knows himself, knows his Lord.

As for contact between Muslim and Christian initiates, they merit quite a few pages. Let us be content to remember the contacts, undoubtedly established, between the Knights Templar and the Muslim who formed the so-called 'Assassins'; and let us also remember the legend of Christian Rosenkreutz who came to receive the light from the "wise men of Damcar." Not only do all esoteric traditions meet on the summit, but their interrelationship on this plane is also an incontestable reality.



The Persian mystic al-Ghazali (1058-1111 CE) conversing with a young man.



by *Benefactrix*

Balancing Spirituality

IF YOUR head must be in the clouds, keep your feet on the ground. The rewards of otherworldliness are dubious and besides, it's lonely up there.

Whatever you may think of this physical world, it still remains the arena in which you must perform. The basic instinctual drives propel and necessity presides as ruthlessly as any dictator. A cloud dweller is inevitably precipitated into the earthly melee and, unless the stance is firm, defeat is certain. At best, a person may be badly bruised.

Cloud fabric is tenuous; as disappointing as candy-floss melting immediately in the mouth, however iridescent and captivating it might look. The Ideal wears a material garb; its essence permeates the Here and Now. And knowingly or unknowingly, all have embarked on the same journey. The *Holy Grail* is an earthen vessel, its contents potent with juices fermented from life's experiences. The tools of spiritual growth are at hand and their use is compulsory.

They are earthy tools and seemingly unequally distributed. But if a spade can turn only a little soil, the divinity that sparks each grain is the same that fills an earth mover's load. To ignore the tool fitted to one's hand is foolish, for practiced skill is a prerequisite for mastering another more complex one. This is not to say that the human spirit is earth bound; that it can't soar and enrich itself by temporary respite from physical preoccupations.

But mystic ecstasy is as futile as dervish frenzy unless it is converted into practical utility.

Countless words have been written to express the inexpressible. They are nebulous, distracting and even dangerous if they induce detachment and encourage idleness. Development of the spiritual consciousness is accomplished *in* the world, *for* the world, and for the benefit of human evolution. And that means dealing with the world, not avoiding it. Spiritual development is a turning of the inside out, a chemical-spiritual interaction for which externality is indispensable.

Unless the indwelling gaze sees outwardly as well, there is no transmutation. Instead, there is the danger of spiritual pride and intellectual stagnation, an insularism that precludes true spirituality and contributes nothing to the advancement of humanity. Spirituality is not made of cloud stuff; rather it is composed of struggle and effort, the conversion of spiritual insight into practical action. The technological advances of the modern age have finally reached such a point where veritable spiritual perfection is demanded to harness them to good purposes and prevent them from being used in less effective and destructive ways.

This is the challenge, and the time is Now. Earth substance provides the means, and spiritual perfection *is* possible.



The Candle

by Mary Sheriff



*I rise towards great heights, ever pointing upwards,
awaiting the hand and action that will change my form.*

*My garb is usually white, although oft times
I like to tone in with my surroundings.*

*My purpose is triple, depending on my user.
To some I bring enchantment and romance,
to others memories, memories of love, fun, unforgettable incidents,
often memories of those no longer with us.*

*When the hand I was awaiting, reaches out to ignite me,
the Lucifer it holds and I are for a moment as one flame;
and I flicker with excitement for my form is changing.*

*Long have I been seated upon this candlestick, awaiting my moment of glory.
At last I am alight, an agent by which objects are rendered visible.*

*Steadily I burn, and as the hours grow long, my form becomes short;
I am slipping away. But have I brought into someone's life
both forms of illumination?*

*It is dark and I am gone.
Other candles are waiting to replace me.*



A Time For TRANQUILLITY

by Gail Best



THE BUS was filled with chattering people as it climbed the curving mountain road. All around me people laughed and joked as I sat quietly absorbed in thought. *"Let's get together and relax in the mountains"* my sister had said, but I had not expected the weekend to be tranquil. This was the second anniversary of my nephew's death and his remembrance made my heart feel heavy. Yet Tranquillity rode with me, in fact took me by surprise, as I hadn't known she was coming.

We rode past mile after mile of dark green trees with mounds of fluffy white snow pillow'd upon their branches. The occasional house, with glistening icicles hanging from its eaves, stood out in sharp contrast. In gazing at such beauty, I was filled with contentment, and Tranquillity was definitely there. The murmur of voices and the occasional sound of laughter was a comforting background to my mood of reflection.

Tranquillity first whispers the injunction: *"Be still!"* The 19th Century English economist and journalist Walter Bagehot reminds us: *"An inability to stay quiet is one of the conspicuous failings of mankind."* Tranquillity is a proper guest, but she seldom comes unless invited. To prepare for Her visit, the body must be relaxed. She doesn't feel free to enter where disharmony reigns, though she will occasionally make a surprise visit. I once caught a fleeting glimpse of Her as I watched lovers walk hand in hand at sunset, an island of peace on an otherwise crowded noisy street.

Tranquillity then commands: *"Listen!"* My husband remarked recently: *"Anything attracting your attention*

can disturb tranquillity." Tranquillity has a quiet voice and so you must listen carefully to hear Her. The sounds of breathing, soothing music, distant bells, or of children playing, fill you with well-being when Tranquillity is near. But I have felt content as I listened to raindrops pound a tin roof, or to the wind howling outside as it rattled the windows and tossed the snow into huge drifts.

Finally, tranquillity suggests: *"Look!"* Snuggled up in bed with blankets pulled up to your chin, or sitting by a crackling fire, or watching white clouds drift aimlessly across a pale blue sky, can set the stage for gentle Tranquillity. But I have seen Her flourish in the richness of a busy room. Picture a room with a toddler or two, with toys generously distributed throughout. The children roar like lions and knock down block towers. Can Tranquillity survive here?

Look, over in the chair by the window a mother cradles her sleepy child, softly caressing and speaking to it with words of tenderness. The child visibly relaxes. The tiny fist that was clenched opens, and the little one's eyes take on a faraway look. Tranquillity has arrived and envelops both mother and child.

Tranquillity can enrich your life by Her soothing influence. Open your heart and mind to Her on your most hectic days and she will not desert you. Invite Her in often and she will come to you eagerly. But ignore Her, and she will become as elusive as quicksilver. Tranquillity, the 'Spirit of goodness', the Divine or the Sacred, call it whatever you wish, enters our lives only when we open the door to the inner self and allow it in. The choice is ours, so let us choose to open that door..., often!





2019 – AMORC World Convention

From Wednesday 14 to Sunday 18 August 2019, Rosicrucians and their families and close friends will be travelling from the world over to the ancient Etruscan, Roman and Italian city of Rome to attend the Rome Rosicrucian World Convention.

Rosicrucian conventions — whether in Brazil, USA, Sweden or Spain — attract several thousand members every four years to celebrate and re-dedicate themselves to the higher ideals that people of good will and high spiritual aspiration strive to live by.

Please book as soon as possible. For more information, navigate to the official Convention website at:

<https://www.roma2019.amorc.it/en/>

Plan on being part of another beautiful celebration of Light, Life and Love. See yourself there!





But every night come out
these envoys of beauty, and
light the universe with their
admonishing smile.

Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803-1882)