

The Ancient Mysteries
~~THE HISTORY OF THE~~
 (BABYLON EGYPT & GREECE)

Having briefly traced the authoritative and comparatively modern history of the Craft, there remains the somewhat speculative, but perhaps more romantic, story of the early beginnings.

In this field we are confronted with the, at present, insuperable difficulty of deciding whether the various cults, having such an astonishing affinity the one to the other, were in fact a continuance of the one system, or whether they were merely copies by later civilisations, adopted for convenience, but having little in common with the originals in their fundamental principles.

A few writers boldly claim to have established an almost unbroken chain from ancient Egypt to the present day; but the majority of accredited Masonic authors, observing the injunction "to be cautious" merely describe the sequence and leave their readers to resolve their own conclusions.

For many years Egypt has been considered as the cradle of civilisation, although Bible students have maintained that an earlier race must have inhabited the region of the Euphrates now known as Mesopotamia. This latter contention has been abundantly proved by the excavations of the ^eWoolly Expedition whose discoveries have, to an amazing extent, confirmed the old Bible narrative.

At Ur in the Chaldees, evidence has been found of a civilisation more ancient than any remains so far known in Egypt. The expert investigation of these discoveries has yet to be completed, but the legend of the "old charges" says that in this district resided a people well versed in the sciences of geometry and astronomy, and whose religion was monotheistic. It was from Ur that Abraham migrated to Palestine, and the house in which he lived has been definitely identified.

It was the pressure of Khamurabi, the sixth king of the First Dynasty of Babylon which drove the Semitic people of Canaan into alliance with the nomadic tribes of Arabia, and as a result of this warfare it is probable that there was a famine in the land.

In Genesis we are told that there was a famine which caused Abraham to further migrate into Egypt, where he arrived during the reign of the Pharaoh Senusert III. (Dynasty XII B.C.1916.) *Abraham and his followers were thus the forerunners of that Semitic invasion for as is known, the first believer in Monotheism to enter Egypt.*

Consisting of the Arabians and their allies, ^{who} under continual pressure, migrated westward also. They overwhelmed the Egyptians and set up the Shepherd Kings or Hyksos Dynasty (Circa B.C.1900) *in the Delta.*

Prior to this invasion the Egyptians had been governed for some 1000 years by twelve Dynasties of Priest Kings. *There* also was a civilisation well versed in geometry and astronomy, and it was during this early period that the famous pyramids were constructed. The most famous of all, the Great Pyramid was built in the reign of Khufu (Or Cheops) Fourth Dynasty (Circa B.C.2641) Another remarkable product of this era was the Egyptian "Book of the Dead" from which much valuable data of the ideas of that time have been deciphered. These Priest Kings were devotees of a form of nature worship known as the Mysteries of Osiris, Isis and Horus.

The flooding of the Nile was always preceded by the rising of the Dog Star "Sirius". This star was represented on Egyptian monuments by Anubis, a male figure with a dog's head. Osiris was the Sun God, represented by the blazing star or the all-seeing eye. Isis was originally the Goddess of Earth, subsequently becoming the Moon Goddess, whilst Horus was the Sun God of the northern hemisphere, or the reborn Osiris.

According to Plutarch, Osiris was the type of the active, generative and beneficent force of nature; Isis on the contrary is the passive force, the power of conceiving and bringing forth into life. Horus was the conqueror of Typhon, or flooded waters.

In the Mountfanton collection at Paris is a complex figure, painted on a mummy, representing the death and resurrection of Osiris. This is described by Pluche as follows; Osiris is shown laid out as dead on a couch, under which are four canopi of various capacities. The first is terminated by that of a dog's head, which gives warning of the approach of the overflow of the Nile; the second by the head of a hawk, the symbol of the Etesian wind, which tends to swell the waters;

the third by the head of a heron, the sign of the south wind, which contributes to propel the water into the Mediterranean Sea; and the fourth by that of the moon, which indicates that when the sun had passed that sign the inundation would have nearly subsided.

Bending over the couch is the figure of Anubis in the act of raising Osiris from the dead, *by the "lion's grip"*

Mr. Pluche does not claim to elucidate the story of the picture, but ~~the description is such that~~ Masons will readily recognise the points of interest which have given rise to the suggested Egyptian origin of the craft symbols.

Gould in his History of Freemasonry states that "of the ceremonies performed at the initiation into the Egyptian mysteries, we must ever remain ignorant", and Sir Gardner Wilkinson expressly states "that our only means of forming any opinions respecting them are to be derived from our imperfect acquaintance with those of Greece, which were doubtless imitative of the rites practised in Egypt."

With the coming of the Hyksos, the nature worship of the Egyptians was overthrown and a form of monotheism was established in the Delta. They did not however completely subdue the Egyptians and were ejected from the country by Amosis I Dynasty XVIII B.C.1824, who restored the worship of the old Gods.

During the reign of Tahutmes III Dynasty XVIII (B.C.1700) Joseph the son of Jacob became the chief steward of Egypt, and following the reconciliation with his brethren there was a steady inflow of Semitic peoples, who eventually impressed their religious views on the native inhabitants.

Professor Petrie states that by B.C.1660 under Amenhotep III Egypt had, in language, become Semiticised (i.e. less than a century after Jacob's entry). The next king Amenhotep IV, himself Semitic on his mother's side, overthrew the worship of Osiris and other Gods and set up monotheism again. The new religion was Semitic in its origin, its ideas, forms and ceremonies. The one God was worshipped in the form of Aten (Egyptian for the Semitic Adon = Lord) and his symbol was the plain solar disc. Aten worship was probably a debased form of the worship of the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Eventually however the

devotees of the old Sun God Amen-Ra regained the supremacy, and in B.C.1486 the Israelites were expelled by the Pharaoh Menephtah Dynasty XIX.

When the Israelites left Egypt they were assisted, according to Exodus XIII, by two miraculous pillars, one of fire and the other of cloud, in their passage across the Red Sea. The pillar of fire was to give light to the Israelites, whilst the cloud was to hinder the pursuing Egyptians. Having regard to the Israelites long stay in Egypt there seems to be some ground for the suggestion of Bro. J.S.M. Ward that these symbols were derived from the Egyptian pillars "Tet" and "Tattue", which signified light and darkness or life and death in the Egyptian mysteries. In the Book of Kings we read that Solomon caused two pillars to be erected at the entrance of the Temple to commemorate the deliverance of the Israelites, and they are further perpetuated in Masonic lodges by the chairs of the S.W and J.W whose columns they bear.

After the exodus the fortunes of Egypt under their old Gods wavered between external conquest and internal disorder until the Dynasty of the Ptolomies when the country was penetrated by Greek merchants & philosophers. In due time the Greeks became attracted to the Egyptian mysteries and in various forms they were adopted in Greece. We then find Osiris as Dionysius, Isis as Demeter, Horus as Apollo and Anubis as Hermes - not to mention others - appearing in the Mysteries of Eleusis.

In a book on Egypt, Mr. G. Maspero writes "If the Eleusinian ceremonies were mysteries for the ancients, they are in another way equally ineffable mysteries for us, and we console ourselves for our ignorance, with the fact that the experts themselves know very little on the subject. It seems certain to me that they are Egyptian by execution and intention; Egyptian thought dominates them, and the manner in which the thought is expressed is Egyptian. The Egyptians, always occupied with life beyond the grave, tried in very remote ages to teach men the art of living after death, and of living a life with the Gods resembling their existence on earth. The initiate into Eleusis, like that of Osiris, encountered dangers on his way, passing through darkness, reached islands bright with light

offered asylum on giving the password".

How little is really known of the "secret teachings of the Mysteries will readily appear from the following resumé.

Selden believed that they taught the unity of God. Euchenbachius that they disclosed the nature and origin of human life, as well as the means of preserving it, and foreshadowed also the hopes and fears of the life to come. According to Warburton, Moses was the only great legislator who did not proclaim the future state, and that this alone is proof of his inspiration. Following this up, he states that the Greek Mysteries, in which the true religion was disguised, was an invention of the Egyptian priests for their own ends, though why, if found efficacious, they confined its teaching to a select few he does not explain. The worship of the phallus, which we are told by Kisser, formed the essence of the Mysteries, is stated by Warburton to have been its only corruption.

Baur declares that the fundamental principle is that of a Deity who suffers & dies, and who afterwards triumphs over death, and has a glorious resurrection.

Schelling thought that the doctrine included a pure Monotheism, and that Christianity is the only publication of their secret.

Still it is tolerably clear that the Mysteries contained the germs of those great moral truths which we find implanted in the heart of man in all ages.

Amongst the Pythagoreans it was an old maxim that everything was not to be told to everybody. They had common meals, and it appears they had secret symbols by which members of the fraternity could recognise each other, even if they had never met before.

In Lawrie's History of Freemasonry it is alleged that the Dionysian architects present in their internal as well as external procedure the most perfect resemblance to the Society of Freemasons. They seem to have granted honorary membership, and admitted speculative members; and it has been asserted that they had grades and secret signs of recognition. It is claimed that they employed in their ceremonial observances many of the implements which are now used by the Freemasons for a similar purpose.

Gould, however, does not attach much importance to this, as

it would be impossible to identify any period or place with the invention of architectural symbolism.

The Mysteries of Eleusis were supplanted by the worship of Mithras which will be dealt with in the next paper.



Refer; Gould's "History of Freemasonry"

Maspero "New Light on Ancient Egypt"

Monckton Jones "Ancient Egypt from the Records".



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NOTES ON THE HYKSOB DYNASTY OF EGYPT.

A graphic account of the Hyksos invasion of Egypt and the rise and fall of the Dynasty of Shepherd Kings is given in "The Ancient History of the Near East" by H.R.Hall. The invaders were composed of an allied force of Bedouin Arabs and Semitic Canaanites, the latter of Chaldean origin, and they owed their success primarily to the use of the war chariot; a weapon hitherto unknown in Egypt.

Mr. Hall states that the chariot, drawn by asses, had been used by the Babylonians in war from time immemorial, and must have been known, at least by hearsay, to the Egyptians for centuries, but they never adopted it for use with their asses. When the horse was introduced, probably not much before 2000 B.C into Western Asia from Iran, where it was first domesticated, it replaced the ass in the chariot, which now, with fiery steeds yoked to it, became a terrible instrument of war. But the Egyptians still knew nothing of it; neither horse nor chariot are represented on any Egyptian monument or mentioned in any document before the Hyksos invasion. After it, however, they appear in common use, and in the Semitized Egyptian language one of the words for chariot is that used by the Semites - "markabata" which in turn was derived from the Assyrian "markabtu".

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