

THE HISTORY AND THE DESTINY OF THE PREMKA TEMPLAR KNIGHTS

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Abstract: *It is known that the Knights Templar are an ecclesiastical and military brotherhood dedicated to safeguard the secrets of Christ. Macedonia and the Macedonians are mentioned 30 times in the Bible, the Apostles came and lived in Macedonia and the first European woman to embrace Christianity was Lydia from Macedonia. All this indicates that Macedonia was a central Christianity crossroad connecting the East and the West. These facts are sufficiently important to engender the brotherhood of Templar Knights in modern-day Macedonia. In the beginning the Knights Templar protected the pilgrims to the tomb of Christ in Jerusalem against tyrants and Muslim terrorists. Premka is a village in West Macedonia, through which caravans were passing. It is bordered by the Porechie region and the Knights Templar were located in the old part of Premka to keep the gangs away from the village. On one occasion a few Knights Templar confronted a great Muslim army, twenty of them were killed and the others reorganized and retreated towards the Porechie villages.*

Introduction

The head of the Knights Templar was the Great Master. The first one was the founder, Hugo de Payens, and the last one was Jacques de Molay, who was burnt at the stake in 1314. The Knights Templar were divided into several classes (brotherhoods):

- Knights, from the high-class armed as heavy cavalry
- Light cavalry, a lower-class knights
- Feudal elders, managing the property and the lands of the Knights
- Clergy, responsible for the spiritual life of the knights.

Although they are organized as a clerical order, and strictly observed the rules of the Cistercian order, the Templar knights were one of the best-trained military forces of their time. Each knight had at least 10 assistants. The knights were widely famous, and their garment was easily recognizable by the large red cross that they wore on their shield as well. The Knights pretending to enter the Templar order, had to pass through a series of ceremonies that proved their bravery and dedication to the Order. The most important rule that had to be observed by each Templar knight was their motto - **No surrender**.

Jerusalem Crusaders. The knight Hugo de Payens is considered as the founder of this order. Twenty years after the first Crusade he gathered a group of nine knights whose duty was to provide safety for the numerous pilgrims. Christians from whole Europe were visiting the Holy City, but were often attacked by brigands on the way. Thus Hugo de Payens and his group of knights were given, by the king Baldwin of Boulogne, the responsibility to provide for safety on the roads and care for the lives of the pilgrims. Godfrey de Bouillon led the First Crusade and became the King of Jerusalem. Hugo and his brethren did not at all fit the image of a knight that we now have. They were named after the location given to them as a fortress, where the Temple of Solomon was located; soon, they became known to the whole world as Knights Templar (from the English word *Temple*). They did not have any finances at the beginning, wore clothes that were given to them for charity; it often happened that two knights rode the same horse, which is depicted on many engravings, stamps and drawings from that period. Yet, they managed to become a great economic, political and military authority in the ten following years. Although they mostly fought on the Holy Land, their treasure and the great economic power were concentrated in Europe. Macedonia is a country that is mentioned in the Bible 33 times. A certain number of the saints originated from Macedonia, and the first European to receive Christianity was Lydia of Macedonia, christened by Apostle Paul. In that period Macedonia was one of the largest and most important spiritual centers. Hence the fact that many Knights Templar were from Macedonia. The main trading and military routes also passed through Macedonia, one of them being

the Via Egnatia and others, connecting the most prominent trade, spiritual and military centers of the time. There are age-old churches, some of them decrepit nowadays that are still called “white monasteries”, after the garments with a large cross worn by the monks. One such monastery is located on the left side of Via Egnatia, on the Kichevo-Ohrid road. Legends say that the white monks attacked the Roman military convoys at night and robbed them in order to weaken the Roman Empire, while they lived as priests during the day, helping the people by dividing the stolen goods among the people.

The connection between the Knights Templar and Christianity in Macedonia The Macedonian contribution to Christianity and to the Knights Templar is seen in many facts transmitted from one generation to the other, dating from the Bible, from the stone art and archeology as well as the old scripts. The world history knows that Christianization began in Macedonia, through the first Christian communities established there by Apostle Paul. Hence the first European Christians were Macedonians embracing Christianity as a result of the second mission of the Saint Apostle Paul.

According to the Bible scripts, after the Apostle Paul started to spread Christianity in Asia Minor, he arrived at Troas. There, he had a vision of a Macedonian inviting him to come to Macedonia and help the people. The Acts of the Apostle it says: “That night Paul had a dream: A Macedonian stood on the far shore and called across the sea, “Come over to Macedonia and help us!” In the dream he gave his map to Paul. “We went to work at once getting things ready to cross over to Macedonia. All the pieces had come together. We knew now for sure that God had called us to preach the good news to the Europeans.”

According to some theories, that Macedonian was Luke the Evangelist; according to others it was Christ himself, as he was the only one who could address the Apostle Paul, knowing that the latter will certainly follow his orders.

The Bible (Zagreb, 1983, p. 1248), in the comments on Saint Paul’s Missions regarding his stay in Macedonia, says:

“Soon after he separated from Barnabas, Paul and his followers began his second missionary journey in the years 50 to 52 and through Asia Minor came to Europe, where he established the first Christian communities in Macedonia: in Philippi, Thessaloniki and Veria”.

So, there is no doubt that the first Macedonians were Christianized after around two decades after the crucifixion, and that they were the first European Christians. It happened only two centuries after the decay of the independent ancient Macedonian state, when the Macedonians could not accept the Roman occupation of their land. The hardest resistance felt by the Romans on their conquered territories was in Macedonia. Macedonia is shown on one of the four maps that still exist, engraved on the wall in the modern-day Via Imperiali Street, leading from the Coliseum to the Roman forums in Rome (Ohrid Blog, Start Mk. 03.11.2016)“.



Fig. 1. The map of Macedonia on one of the four marble maps in Rome

The four maps are marked with different historic periods indicating the constitution and the progress of the Roman Empire since 700 – 800-ra BC onwards. This is an incontestable proof of the states that had existed on the now Balkan, and then Macedonian Peninsula upon the Roman invasion. Hence the fact that the Knights Templar were present in Macedonia and also in the village of Premka, Kichevo area, during the Roman and Post-Roman times thanks to the importance of Christianity, the geographic location of the territory and its direct connection with Christianity.

This is supported by the fact that the holy Apostles started their mission from Macedonia. Saint Apostle Paul preached Christianity in the synagogues. But, when he arrived at Philippi, there was no synagogue, the rule being that there had to be at least ten Jews to establish a synagogue.

This means that the Philippi population consisted mainly of indigenous Macedonian people.

Not having found a synagogue, Saint Apostle Paul and his followers came to the nearby river, where people were praying. It is well-known that the ancient Macedonians had a special cult towards water, that is, rivers, which is a fact found in the earlier Macedonian history. In her *Studies on Ancient Macedonians*, (p.166), Professor Nade Proeva emphasizes that the Ancient Macedonians made sacrifices to the rivers and worshiped them. Therefore the Philippi river prayer was an ancient Macedonian custom indicating the dominance of the Macedonian ethnicity in its population. The early Christian script entitled *Acts of Paul* (from The Apocryphal New Testament, M.R. James – Translation and Notes Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1924) mentions a lady named Stratonica which is a frequent name in Ancient Macedonia.

The Financial power of the Knights Templar. It is known that the Knights Templar possessed and disposed of large investments. To acquire such power and force in the period of immense influence of the Church upon politics in all European countries, it was necessary to have the support of the Pope. In the period from 1139 to 1145 the Pope published three so-called bules giving the Knights Templar almost absolute power and the right to be responsible only to the Pope for their deeds. The Knights Templar's reputation soon became so high that many aristocrats than living in the Holly Land bestowed their property and money to the Knights Templar; sometimes they would entrust their riches to the Templar knights for safeguarding. Their activity were much larger than their primary task – the control and maintenance of peace of the roads. The Knights Templar gradually developed a system of credit securities, by which the money entrusted to them to be kept in some of the well-defended Templar fortresses, could be withdrawn in another one, only by a presentation of the said credit security document. Many historians agree that these were the first cheques, and that the Templar knights were the founders of de first European banks. Gradually, even the Popes became financially dependent on the Templar knights, as they were exhausted by the Crusades. The interest rates became too high for them and, as a consequence, the financial power of the Templar knights and the indebtedness of the European rulers of the time were a peril to the very existence of their countries. This was the reason why, the King Philippe IV of France (Philippe le Bel) started to prosecute the Templar knights: their last Great Master Jacques de Molay was accused of heresy and burnt at the stake.

The decline of the Knights Templar: When in 1292 Jacques de Molay (Fig. 2) was proclaimed Great Master, Europe was struck by several unfavourable events. The Holy Land was again in the Muslim hands, and a new Crusade was in sight. It is thought that one of the reasons were the discrepancies among the Teutonic, the Hospitaller and the Templar Knights, and that there was a need to reorganize and unify into one and only Order. At the same time, several Knights were unjustly accused of homosexuality and heresy, which was a subject of investigation against the Knights Templar by Pope Clement V, Fig. 3. Although he was not yet ready to finally confront the Knights Templar, his opinion was not shared by the King Phillip IV of France (Philippe le Bel), Fig. 4. On Friday, October the 13th, 1307, the royal agents arrested all the Knights Templar on the French territory under suspicion of heresy, sodomy, perjury and denial of Jesus Christ. The explanation, given to the Church by the Great Master, that the over-indebtedness of the French king was the background of the accusations and that they were a blatant lie were in vain. Under the pressure of threats and torture, he and also his knights admitted their "guilt". This was a sufficient reason for the Pope to issue a decree to arrest the Knights Templar all around Europe. Luckily for them, some of the European kings did not follow the Pope's decree and provided shelter to the Knights Templar who fled to their countries. Many knights escaped to Scotland and Portugal where new Orders were constituted and a large part of the treasure was transferred to. The arrested Knights Templar were subjected to extreme tortures admitted the unproved crimes and almost all of them were burnt alive.

The death of Jacques de Molay The Great Master was left to live a few years longer, even negotiating upon his public denunciation of the Templar Order and repentance over his sins, but his refusal meant a definite death penalty. Thus, the Templar Order officially ceased to exist when the last Templar Great Master was burnt at the stake in the year 1314.

When, on the 21st of January 1793, on the Place de la Concorde in Paris, the King Luis XVI (Fig. 5) was executed on the guillotine, and when the executor raised his head high, holding it by the hair, a man jumped onto the platform, dipped his fingers in the blood of the dead king shouting: "Jaques de Molay, thou art avenged!". The name of Jacques de Molay is subject to another legend: the curse that he cast to the King and the Pope from his execution pyre that, within a year and a day, he and Philip IV would be obliged to answer for their crimes in God's presence. Philip and Clement V both died

within a year of Molay's execution: Clement finally succumbing to a long illness on 20 April 1314, and Philip dying due to a stroke while hunting.

There are many elements proving that there is some cosmic judgment and information. In Macedonia, there are numerous historic and spiritual elements related to the Knights Templar and to the Freemasons, represented by the compasses and the right angle, Fig. 6. There are grid-shaped engravings where the grid lines are grouped as 3 x 3, Fig. 7. The Freemasons and the Knights Templar's greeting has always been associated with 3 x 3 combination. On the other hand, there are three cosmic grids: Curry's, Hartmann's and Stojan's grid. The third one was officially presented in 2006. This indicates that the ancient civilizations maybe knew about the said grids. There are also Templar and Freemason features dating from 1,500 years ago, which are still in use. Those are huge sculptures, around 10m high, as the "Sleeping lion" in the Prilep region which also gravitates towards Premka and the Porechie and the Skull of the Osogovo Mountains, Fig.12 and 13.



Fig. 2. Jacques de Molay



Fig. 3. Pope Clement V



Fig. 4. Philip IV of France (Philippe le Bel)



Fig. 5. Luis XVI

The whole history of the Knights Templar is covered in mystery, as a source of myths and legends about their power. Therefore, many historians are asking: what secret were they hiding and what enabled their so intensive economic and military development? Many relate the secret of their success with the myth of the Holy Grail and the Arc of Covenant. Namely, when the Crusaders reached Jerusalem, some of them found the secret scripts about Jesus Christ and Mary Magdalene, who allegedly married and had offspring. It was believed that the Knights Templar kept the secret of the Mary Magdalene's grave and were in the position to blackmail the Church, which engendered and gave rise their political and economic power. Another legend says that the Knights Templar did find the Holy Grail and brought it to Scotland upon their escape in 1307.



Fig. 6. Masonic sign



Fig. 7. Fragment on stone 3 x 3



Fig. 8. Templar Cross found in the Zrkle village, Porechie area

But perhaps the most unbelievable is the legend that relates the Knights Templar with the discovery of another relic, the Arc of Covenant, where Moses brought the Ten Commandments. The

legend says that the Knights Templar were entrusted to transfer the Arc of Covenant and its location remained a secret to this day. The name of the Knights Templar is often relates to two more powerful organizations which still exist: the Freemasons and the Priory of Zion. According to some historians, the Knights Templar grasped the building secret of the Freemasons and erected many temples according to it. This is supported by the closeness in the organization of the Freemasons' and the Knits Templar's Orders, as is the establishment of the Great Master as the Order head. The relation of the Knights Templar and the Priory of Zion reflects in the already mentioned myth about the alleged offspring of Jesus Christ and Mary Magdalene. There are still diverse explanations concerning the existence of the Priory of Zion. Being expelled and almost destroyed, the Knights Templar, according to some theories, bestowed the secret about the descendents of Jesus Christ to be safeguarded by the Priory of Zion, which exists to this day.

The Knights Templar of Premka. The caravan route connected to Via Egnatia road passed through the village of Premka, near the town of Kichevo, over the mountain and location of Kondikitsa to descend towards the villages of the Porechie region. Premka was located on the very mountain saddle named Kondikitsa, and consisted of 52 stone houses, with stables for the domestic animals and a cellar for the food supplies. At least fifty Knights Templar lived in the village, their task being to defend the mountain saddle against the enemy bands and soldieries. The name of the village originates from the word *prepka* – a trap to the enemy armies. With time, it was changed to Premka. All this functioned until March 1380, when the Muslim armies charged to the mountain saddle to reach the Porechie villages and further to the towns of Makedonski Brod, Prilep and Bitola. Having noticed this intention around 50 Knights Templar from Premka confronted the enemy forces. The battle lasted two days reaching its peak at the location named Bojni Kamen (Battlestone) (Fig. 10) over the village fountain. Twenty Knights Templar were killed in that battle and the survivors were forced to retreat. The women and children abandoned the village with one of the Knights Templar and headed towards the Porechie villages. The village was burnt and ravaged. The following summer three families decided to move to the village foot, where the Knights Templar were killed. Among the three families were the Volchev family, whose surname indicated their belligerence as Knights Templar. A church was built in the lower part of the modern Premka village, on the spot where the warriors were killed and buried. The tombs were made of stone in Templar style, i.-e with the sword-shaped cross placed behind the head of the buried warrior. The location was later used as a cemetery by the villagers, but several of the Templar tombs are still well-preserved (Fig. 9 and 10). Such tombs can be found in other villages in the Porechie region as well.



Fig. 9. Templar tombstones in Premka village



Fig. 10. Bojni kamen (Battle Stone) - Premka

According to some legends the path of the Holly Grail or the Arc of Covenant led exactly through Premka, where the Knights Templar were protecting it and participating in its transport and safeguarding. Fig. 11 shows a rock engraving of the Premka Templar Knights found in the Porechie region:

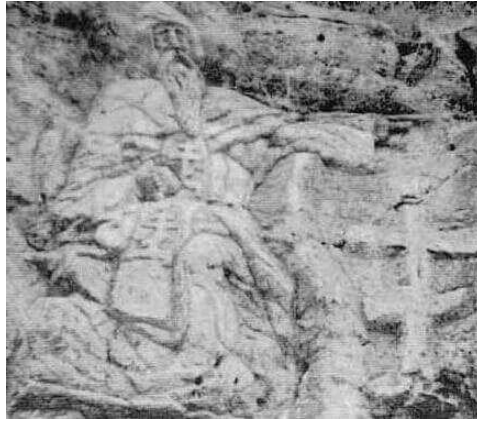


Fig. 11. A Premka Knight Templar with the old and the suggested new symbol

This engraving depicts the body and the face of a Premka Templar, a Brsjak wearing the ancient Templar markings and crosses. But the present Templar cross, engraved in front of him is bigger. This indicates that the latter, i.e. the bigger cross was to be the new Templar symbol. This means that the engraving dates as far in the past as to the beginnings of the templar Order and that the idea to change the cross was probably initiated by the Premka knights.



Fig. 12. The Sleeping lion – Prilep region

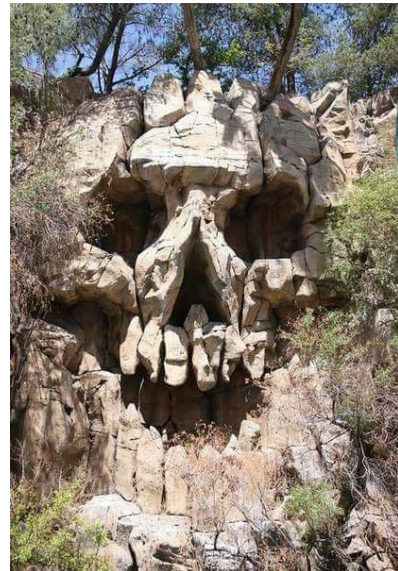


Fig. 13. A skull in the Osogovo Mountain

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