

THE MYTHOLOGICAL IMPORT OF THE OFFICER'S JEWELS

By Jaime Paul Lamb

In Masonic regalia, the role of each officer is designated by a particular jewel which is either appended to a collar or fixed atop a rod. The Senior and Junior Stewards' rods are ornately capped with a cornucopia within a pinecone, both of which come to us direct from Classical Mythology. The cornucopia is considered to be the horn of Amalthea, the she-goat that suckled Zeus in his infancy. The cornucopia also appears as a symbol associated with the grain mother, Demeter, whose Roman counterpart is Ceres, the etymological namesake of our word *cereal*. The pinecone has been associated with Dionysus and his Roman counterpart Bacchus. The *Thyrsus*, which was a fennel staff woven with ivy and acanthus leaves and capped with a pinecone, was frequently depicted in Dionysian imagery. The pinecone atop the *Thyrsus* was said to drip honey and was commonly used in Dionysian and Bacchic religious rites.

The Senior and Junior Deacon's rods are adorned with depictions of the Sun and Moon, respectively, within a square and compasses. This is mythologically significant in the case of the Senior Deacon who carries the Worshipful Masters' orders 'from East to West' – following, of course, the apparent path of the Sun from the perspective of the Earth. The Sun, which was universally anthropomorphized in ancient mythologies (as in the cases of Shamash, Ra, Horus, Helios, Phoebus-Apollo, Sol Invictus, et. al.), was made to occupy a solar barque or chariot during its diurnal circuit from East to West.^[1]

By this analogy, it could easily be construed that the Junior Deacon's lunar symbolism is in relation to his position in the West of the Lodge – i.e. 'at the close of the day'. It is a common understanding, mythologically and otherwise, that the Sun is associated with the daytime and the Moon with the night – or, as it is stated in a certain Masonic lecture referencing the Three Lesser Lights of Freemasonry: "As the Sun rules the day and the Moon governs the night [...]".

Most mythological systems have some sort of lunar archetype – some with more developed narratives and attributes than others – to contrast and/or complement that of the solar. Some examples of these are Djehuti (Egyptian – an early, regional Thoth prototype whose attribution is lunar when depicted as an ibis or baboon with the Moon disc), Sin (Assyro-Babylonian), Cybele (Phrygian), the tripartite Hecate (Greek) and, of course, Luna (Roman).



Hecate, the tripartite *Greek Goddess of the Crossroads*, Mallarmé, 1880

The crossed keys of the Treasurer's jewel are also a notable mythological motif, as they are also associated with the Anatolian, and later Greek, goddess Hecate^[2], and also with the Leontocephaline, a lesser figure found in the iconography of Roman Mithraism.^[3] Hecate, a lunar crone-goddess, was associated with crossroads, silver and currency – which is pertinent to the office of Treasurer. The Leontocephaline (who we will discuss in further detail in Section IV, which centers on Mithraism) is sometimes depicted with crossed keys held over the chest – in the manner of Osiris' ever-present crook and flail, which later morphed into general symbols of pharaonic authority – and a set of hammer and tongs, the working tools of Hephaestus, at his feet. This gains significance, Masonically, when we consider that Tubal-cain inhabits the same archetypal role in the Abrahamic canon (i.e. metallurgical artificer) as Hephaestus and Vulcan do in the Greek and Roman pantheons, respectively.^[4] Notably, most depictions of the Leontocephaline also include the caduceus, or wand of Hermes. It is also suspected that this figure was a zoomorphic representation of the *Leo* Grade in the Mithraic initiatory cycle.^[5]



The Leontocephaline

The Masonic Tyler's jewel, being a sword, is obviously a martial symbol. The Tyler's duties are, in part, "to keep off all cowans and eavesdroppers and see that none pass or repass [...]". In these regards, and considering the fact that the Tyler is sworn to guard and maintain the security of the Lodge, his office may be construed as the most aresian or martial. The jewel of the Lodge Historian – the quill and scrolled parchment – could easily be considered a modernized reworking of the ever-present stylus and papyrus of Thoth-Hermes, particularly in his chthonic role. As we have mentioned, Thoth was the designated scribe of the Egyptian *Ennead*. This also applies, albeit to a lesser extent, to the crossed quills of the Secretary's jewel.

The jewel of the Lodge Organist is the lyre and, therefore, has some of the most developed mythological significance. The lyre is most commonly associated with Orpheus, to whom it was given by Phoebus-Apollo (Apollo in his most solar aspect). Orpheus is said to have charmed man and beast with the instrument and to have used it to gain access to Hades in order to fetch Eurydice, his ill-fated bride. This he accomplished by enchanting both Charon, the Stygian boatman, and Cerberus, the three-headed dog, with his music.[6] The myth of his chthonic descent/ascent is said to have formed the basis of the Orphic Mysteries, which were an initiatory cycle in 6th Century Greece.[7] The influence of the Mystery Traditions, such as the Mithraic, Orphic and the Eleusinian, have been speculated to have survived in modern Freemasonry.[8] One may readily find depictions of the lyre in statuary and/or bas-relief adorning the many Orpheums and Lyric Halls across the Western World – these are, of course, in reference to Orpheus and his lyre, respectively.

[1] Spence, *Ancient Egyptian Myths and Legends*, Barnes & Noble, 2005, pp. 105-106.

[2] Bulfinch, *Bulfinch's Mythology*, Barnes & Noble, 2006, pp. 130-131.

[3] Cumont, *The Mysteries of Mithras*, Cosimo Classics, 2007, p. 105.

- [4] Mackey, *The Symbolism of Freemasonry*, Forgotten Books, 2012, p. 361.
- [5] Cumont, *The Mysteries of Mithras*, Cosimo Classics, 2007, p. 105.
- [6] Hamilton, *Mythology*, Grand Central, 2011, pp. 139-142.
- [7] Hutchens, *Pillars of Wisdom*, The Supreme Council A.A.S.R., 1995, pp. 128-131.
- [8] Vail, *The Ancient Mysteries and Modern Masonry*, Forgotten Books, 2012, p. 32.