

At the Source of Arin: Initiatic Chevalerie in the Orient and the Occident

By Nigel Jackson

'The fata is he who breaks the idol. And the idol of each man is his ego.'
Qushayri

The essence of spiritual chivalry, the 'eighth sacrament' as it was termed in medieval Europe—the ideal of *noblesse* manifested through honourable behaviour—must invariably consist of concerted mystical combat against the potencies of evil. This involves battling against those infernal forces which, as a consequence of the Fall, persecute, sow conflict amongst and misguide, the souls of humanity. Spiritual chivalry can thus be defined as the inner struggle against the powers of the unregenerate man who is in thrall to the tyranny of the Adversary (humanity in the corrupted profane condition which the Judaic Kabbalah has personified under the form of *Adam Belial*). *Chevalerie* in its proper sense is the effort waged in and against the tenebrous domain of the fallen world and against the Evil Inclination (*Yetzer Hara*) of contingent selfhood. As René Guénon has stated, this kind of war "as long as it is directed against those who create disorder and aims at bringing them back to order, constitutes a legitimate function, which is fundamentally but one aspect of the function of 'Justice'."¹

The waging of the holy war against the forces of the Adversary and the consequent resolution of the oppositional and conflicting powers of multiplicity is synonymous with the quest for Unity—for the Divine Centre where Original Oneness is realized and the qualities of true peace and justice are attained. Most essential to such holy combat or interior

¹ 'The Sword of Islam', ch. 27, pp.178 in *Symbols of Sacred Science*.

war is the theurgic weapon of quintessential orison, the sharp-edged radiant sword of the Logos-Name which, in this Iron Age, is the method most suited to the spiritual capacities of contemporary man.

Justice as the Axial Virtue: The Metaphysics of the Sword

‘There is no hero (*fata*) except Ali, there is no sword except Zulfiqar’.

The ‘sword of gnosis’ is the pre-eminent symbolic weapon epitomizing the function of mystical knighthood and the archetypal emblem of Justice. In the Shia Islamic tradition it is seen under the symbolism of the double-bladed scimitar Zulfiqar, supernaturally gifted from Heaven by the archangel Jibrail and preserved under the custodianship of the Hidden Imam until the consummation of the age. Traditional chivalric romance-cycles from the orient and occident alike eulogize the image of the sword as the liberating weapon of illumination, from King Arthur’s sword ‘Excalibur’ (*Calad-vulch*) to Iskandar’s mythical blade called ‘Lightning’, and always under the recurrent axial symbolism linked with the virtue of divine Justice, the principle of equilibrium and the cosmological conception of the centre-point. The centre-point is the ‘pivot’, the sword point-uppermost upon which the balances of the scales are poised in suspension. The astrological imagery of Libra, which sign in Vedic astrology is known under the Sanskrit appellation *Tula*, resumes the intricate complex of concepts which René Guénon expounded upon in his 1927 book *Le Roi du Monde* in connection with the central ‘Abode of Peace’—the ‘Middle Chamber’ marked celestially by the ‘Jade Pivot’. This symbolic ‘Heart of the World’ is the ‘Holy Kingdom’ which the Primordial Tradition has, in various cultures, named Thule, Tula, Tlallan—the ‘White Land’ which is the locus of the Sacred Centre. This is identified with the circumpolar region of Hyperborean Apollo, the ‘orient’ world of light of Suhrawardhi and the Illuminist school, and which is recalled in a verse by the ancient Chinese poet-sage Hao Tai-ku:

‘The Sword of Wisdom hangs high among the cold north stars’.²

The pole-star conceived as the glittering sword-point upon which the cosmos revolves was in Northern European cultures associated with

² c.f. ‘Seven Taoist Masters: A Folk Novel of China’ trans. Eva Wong pp.109, Boston 1990.

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