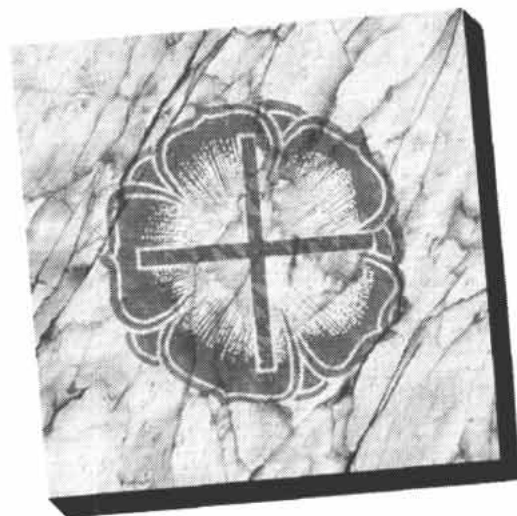
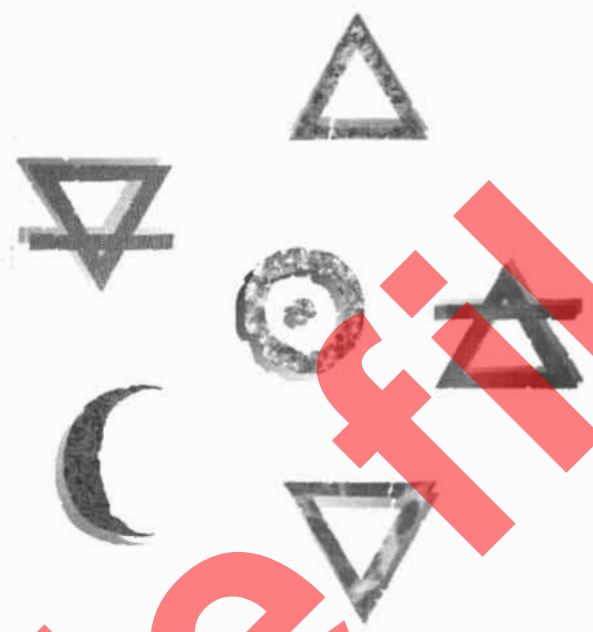
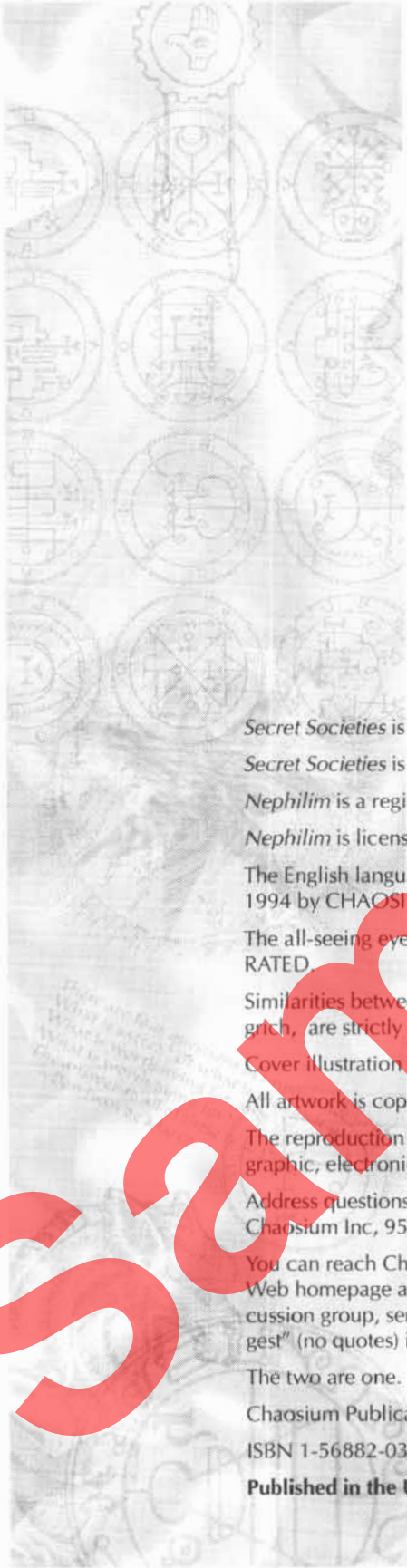


Secret Societies

Sourcebook of Occult Organizations for the Nephilim Gamemaster





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Secret Societies

By *Kenneth Hite*

COVER ARTWORK: *Mark Ryberg, Sam Shirley*

COVER DESIGN: *Eric Vogt*

INTERIOR ARTISTS: *John Bridges, Kerie Campbell
Mark Ryberg*

EDITORIAL: *Sam Shirley*

GRAPHIC DESIGN and LAYOUT: *Sam Shirley*

PROOFREADING: *Eric Rowe and Jenkins*



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INTRODUCTION

THE WORLD OF THE SECRET SOCIETIES is the interface between normal human existence and the magical realm of the Nephilim. The secret societies of the West all exist in this shadow continuum, some (like the Illuminati) concerned primarily with human politics and finance, others (like the Sarmoung Brotherhood) living a purely mystical and contemplative life. Most of them, however, touch both of these areas as they compete with the Arcana of the Nephilim and with each other for their goals of knowledge and power. All know that the fictions of history are but false fronts, behind which the real wars are fought, the real discoveries are made, and the real power is wielded.

Since the fall of Atlantis, the secret societies have grown, due to Nephilim patronage or human ambition. Many of them have learned to hate the Nephilim. Worse yet, many of them have learned to fight the Nephilim. These invisible empires rise and fall in combat made even more deadly by its secrecy.

This sourcebook is for the *Nephilim* gamemaster to use in devising suitable antagonists for the players. Nephilim, despite their mystical power, are surprisingly easy to thwart given humans with sufficient occult knowledge, resources, and will. Many a Nephilim has found itself impossibly at the mercy of a small band of humans armed with the proper information.

Fortunately, not all secret societies seek to hamper the Nephilim. Some only oppose certain Arcana, while others claim to actively help the Nephilim in their struggle against the Templars and other societies. Others might actually seek the aid of the Nephilim in their own occult battles. It is in the interstices of Hermetic politics that the Nephilim find their opportunity — and also their greatest danger.

This sourcebook does not deal directly with the Templars — here they shine in the light reflected from their allies and rivals. Chaosium will be releasing a sourcebook devoted exclusively to the Templars and their fiendish machinations in the future. Also in the future will come sourcebooks detailing the Nephilim outside the West, which will no doubt also deal with such secret societies as the Mau Mau, the Leopard Men, the False Faces, the Thuggee and the Triads.

"The lunatic, on the other hand, doesn't concern himself at all with logic; he works by short circuits. For him, everything proves everything else. The lunatic is all idee fixe, and whatever he comes across confirms his lunacy. You can tell him by the liberties he takes with common sense, by his flashes of inspiration, and by the fact that sooner or later he brings up the Templars."

— from *Foucault's Pendulum* by Umberto Eco

Author's Note

SINCE THE GAME *Nephilim* is set in, for lack of a better term, the real world, many of the organizations, groups, and sects mentioned in these pages actually existed or still exist. I have no intention of impugning the reputation of any of these organizations, and hope that nothing in these pages is construed as unkindly meant. I certainly don't want to be sued, proselytized, or taken away in a black Lincoln. Personally, as you can see by reading this sourcebook, I don't take secret societies or conspiracies of any kind very seriously, and I hope they return the favor. Lastly, an alarming number of conspiracy theories and theorists promote the vicious lies of anti-Semitism. Please don't give these people money or credence — buy their lunatic ravings in used bookstores if you must own them.

Kenneth Hite
Halloween, 1994

DEEP BACKGROUND

THE SECRET SOCIETIES in the Western Tradition are deeply incestuous. They fission and rejoin, cross-fertilize and plagiarize like so many amoebae in a stream. Indeed, the "Underground Stream" is a term that is often used

for the whole tradition of mystical resistance to or rejection of the orthodox structures of Western religious or political power. To understand secret societies and the role they play in both Western occultism

and the world of the Nephilim, it is important to realize that many of them draw on four main currents of the Underground Stream. Although there are other important elements to secret societies' traditions and organization, these four have been central to the mindset, organization and evolution of Western Tradition secret societies.

*"Where Alph, the sacred River ran
Through caverns measureless to Man
Down to a sunless Sea"*

— from *Kubla Khan*, by Samuel Taylor Coleridge

Hermeticism

The term Hermeticism comes from Hermes Trismegistus ("Hermes the Thrice Great"), who was originally the Greek name for the Egyptian god of magic, Thoth. Later, Hermes Trismegistus was considered to be the first sorcerer, using his magics to become "prophet, priest and king" (the "thrice" in "thrice great"). Although the stories vary, he is given credit for designing the Pyramids, inventing astrology, creating the Tarot deck and giving the secret of hieroglyphics to the Egyptian priesthood. Who Hermes Trismegistus actually was is a matter of conjecture, although he is almost certainly a "composite" figure of Akhenaton, Imhotep, and an Agarthan Nephilim. Certainly the Hermetic manuscripts are the work of more than one author.

"No, we must overdo it. If we admit that in the whole universe there is even a single fact that does not reveal a mystery, then we violate hermetic thought."

— from *Foucault's Pendulum* by Umberto Eco

In the second or third century A.D., a body of work ascribed to Hermes Trismegistus began circulating as the *Corpus Hermeticum* (the "collected works" of Hermes). The central work was called the *Tabula Smaragdina* ("Emerald Tablet"), and was supposedly discovered by Abraham's wife Sarah or by Alexander the Great in a cave in Palestine. The *Emerald Tablet* contained thirteen precepts which defined the laws of magic and the nature of reality, although their exact order and contents differ depending on the translation.

The central tenet of the *Emerald Tablet* is the maxim "As above, so below", implying the essential interconnectedness of all things in the macrocosm (the world of forms, powers and realities, signified by the motions of the planets) and the microcosm (the material world of the Earth and its inhabitants). This sense of interconnectedness, of a "cosmic web" linking all things above and below, is the basis of astrology, alchemy, kabbalism, the tarot, and virtually all elements of the Western occult tradition. Hermetic thought influenced the Gnostics, Jews, Christians (St. Augustine quotes the *Hermeticum*), and pagan philosophers, especially the "neo-Platonists" like Plotinus, Iamblichos and Damascius. Iamblichos wrote a number of works which were suppressed by the Church and lost in the Dark Ages, and only survive in fragments today. He described the 22 Arcana and the influences of the planets on magic, implying that he was possibly a Nephilim. Contrarily, both the Order of the Golden Fleece and the Rosicrucians claim him as a member, so the truth must (like so many matters attached to Hermeticism) remain vague.

Hermeticism's influence did not end with the fall of Rome, however. During the Middle Ages, the *Corpus Hermeticum* was preserved by the Arabs, and it was translated into Latin in 1471 by Marsilio Ficino, a Rosicrucian adept and Mithradite in the employ of Cosimo de' Medici. This translation sparked an explosion of magical interest in the various secret societies and created great consternation among the Nephilim of the time. Using the *Corpus*, groups like the Rosicrucians, the Golden Fleece, or the Templars were able to apply the Nephilim's own magical knowledge against them. The Church also panicked, as any increase in magical knowledge or Nephilim activity was bad for its position, and the magical explosion of the early Renaissance rapidly became the great witch hunt, which all sides used against their enemies.

Finally, an Empress Arcanum Nephilim, incarnated in a Swiss classicist named Isaac Casaubon, produced a work "proving" that the *Hermeticum* dated only to the 2nd century A.D., and that its magical knowledge was useless. Although this did little to end Hermetic influence on human initiates and secret societies, it did prevent many humans from looking further into Hermetic thought.

Gnosticism

Gnosticism is susceptible to as many meanings and as many interpretations as its ancient cousin and rival, Christianity. The word comes from the Greek word *gnosis*, meaning "knowledge", and refers to the core Gnostic belief that the key to enlightenment is the attainment of knowledge, whether from secret texts, instruction from a mentor, or sudden personal illumination. This is in contrast to the Christian belief that enlightenment is revealed to all men by God in prophecy, revelation, or Scripture, and not susceptible to purely mortal attainment.



"These texts are not addressed to common mortals... Gnostic perception is a path reserved for an elite.... For, in the words of the Bible: Do not cast your pearls before swine."

— Kamal Jumblatt, Druze Gnostic leader, 1967

The origins of Gnosticism predate Christianity, with the traditions of a secret knowledge running back into the mists of Egyptian and Sumerian antiquity. It achieved its first independent form in the schools of thought that gathered in the first century B.C. around what would become the *Corpus Hermeticum*. Many sects and cults in the centuries surrounding the Jesus Incident shared portions of the Gnostic tradition, although the first groups to actually call themselves "gnostics" appeared in the late first century A.D.

These groups had widely differing theologies, aims, origins and fates, but the general pattern of Gnostic thought and religion was repeated all across the Roman and Persian world. Fundamentally, Gnosticism is the religion of the self, as its tenets hold that there exist sparks of divine spirit trapped in the base matter of the Earth which crave reunification

with the pure light of another plane. Each Gnostic is such a spark, indifferent to the corrupt world and seeking only the necessary knowledge of the method to return to the divine — to become as God. Many Gnostic sects went so far as to identify the God of the Old Testament, whom they referred to as the Demiurge, as an evil or corrupt being who created the imperfect, evil, material universe. Those who accepted Christ denied his connection with the God of the Jews, arguing that he was simply a spirit in an absurd house, or a "ghost in the machine" as Descartes was to put it later.

Most Gnostic sects argued that not all humanity possessed the divine spark, that there were purely gross material beings, "psychic" beings who served the evil Demiurge, and the "pure" or "elect" or "illuminated" beings, who were destined to rejoin the "aeons" or perfect beings of spirit. This justified, for some Gnostic orders, the deliberate concealment of the truth from the world at large, and even lying to their own lay members about the order's theology. Some Gnostic sects created hierarchies of gods and demons, primary among them being Sophia, the feminine principle of Wisdom, which must be rescued by Illumination from the Material.

If Gnosticism ever had a common thread, it was in the teachings of Valentinus (100?-161), who tried to organize the Gnostic mythos through the light of the Jesus Incident, and created the Gnostic schools of Alexandria and Rome which spread throughout the Mediterranean. Gnosticism's other founding father was Mani (216-276), who tied the Zoroastrian dualism of Ahriman and Ormazd into the Gnostic cosmology of matter and spirit, creating Manicheanism, the doctrine that God

and Satan are equivalent in power, and that Satan has lordship over the material and earthly.



All forms of Gnosticism were roundly condemned by the Church as heretical, and stamped out before they had the chance to cohere into anything like a common theology. The result of this persecution and scattering was that Gnosticism came to be identified with any rebellion against traditional authority, and that its various sects rang interminable changes on the basic themes until no two Gnosticisms were alike.

Many earthly secret societies and religious cults were wholly or partially Gnostic, from the Druze Muslims to the Joachimite Christians of 14th-century Italy. The Cathars, the best-known Gnostic sect, were rare in that their central group of "elect", the Perfecti, were actually Nephilim, attempting to proceed with their own plans at the expense of the equally Gnostic Templars.

The Gnostic myth is the central, empowering myth of virtually all secret societies, both the selfish and the selfless. It is easy to see how a doctrine putting emphasis on knowledge, secrecy, destiny, and the existence of a chosen few would "supercharge" the ritual of any secret group. And indeed, following the Gnostic formulation, the number of secret societies has continued to increase. Groups like the Templars see themselves as the rightful lords of the earth, due to their superior knowledge of occult matters. Groups like the Mithradites see themselves as benevolent stewards of the Light for humans who are not yet able to know the Truth. It has been theorized that the entire structure of "overt" Gnosticism, every Gnostic sect, creed and secret society, is based on misunderstood eavesdroppings on Nephilim truths.

The irony, of course, is that Gnosticism is "true" (whatever that means) only for the Nephilim. They are spiritual beings trapped in an Orichalka-soaked, hateful world. Their destiny is to be reunited with the light at the end of the Golden Path in Agartha, and only they are capable of its attainment. They are superior in knowledge to the common run of humanity. They must work in secrecy, and learn from each other in complex ritual and initiation. For humans — even enlightened, occult, initiated humans — Gnosticism may be fundamentally self-deception.

Rosicrucianism

Rosicrucianism is a system of thought, a conceptual framework for utilizing the Hermetic truths and the Gnostic insights. It is the joining of the traditions of mind, spirit and matter into a common framework blessed by an Unknown Order which directs the course of the Underground Stream.

The term "Rosicrucianism" first appeared in 1598 in Germany, and burst on the European scene a generation later with the publication of the "Rosicrucian Manifestoes", three heavily symbolic works which drew virtually every element of the Western occult tradition together into one organizing legend and concept. However, the body of knowledge which made up the Rosicrucian manifestoes goes back to ancient Egypt and Sumeria. Its name comes from its central symbols, the rose and the cross, which together indicate the central tenet of Rosicrucianism, the joining or sublimation of the elements into a perfected whole.

Rosicrucianism is built around three elements, called "magiam, cabala and alchemiam", which are easily recognizable as the three occult sciences of the Nephilim.

"The Rosicrucians were everywhere, aided by the fact they didn't exist."

— from Foucault's Pendulum, by Umberto Eco



The Rosicrucian Order began with the Promethean Brotherhood, and was originally a human auxiliary to the Nephilim-dominated Prometheans. In Mesopotamia it was known as the Sarmoung Brotherhood, and in Egypt it was created as the White Lodge under either Pharaoh Ahmose (1580-1557 B.C.) or Pharaoh Thutmose III (1501-1447 B.C.), both of the Eighteenth Dynasty. The Assyrians splintered the Sarmoung Brotherhood, and the White Lodge went underground following the end of Akhenaton's reign.



Seal of the Holy Vehm

Throughout history, the humans running the Rosicrucian orders began to lose their enthusiasm for selflessly assisting the Nephilim, and began to attempt to achieve sacred knowledge for themselves. These attempts always resulted in splits within orders, with the result that Rosicrucianism, although a system of organizing knowledge, has seldom been able to organize its adherents. The main Rosicrucian brotherhood, the Societate Antiquae Rosae Crucis, has been in continuous existence only since the early 1400s, and has split repeatedly, in addition to taking different names in different locations and times.

All of this tends to leave Rosicrucianism as what it began as, a system for organizing knowledge, for preparing its holder to use it, and for creating a conceptual framework for increasing it.

Masonry

Where Hermeticism is a theory, Gnosticism is a theology, and Rosicrucianism is a system of thought, Masonry is simply a system of organization. However, it is such a successful system that in less than a century, virtually all Western occult groups were organized in some variation of Masonry, even if they swore eternal enmity to Masonry itself.

The form is simple, consisting of individual "lodges" in each city or province, under the rule of a "grand lodge" in the capital, following a series of rituals derived from Scottish Rosicrucian mysticism of the Renaissance. The system of "degrees", in which the Gnostic notion of the exclusivity of Truth is softened to a well-defined initiation into greater and greater power and understanding, began with the three degrees and has expanded to thirty-three or (in some systems) hundreds of degrees. The

organization as a whole serves as a "spiritual knighthood" for those who wish to work or think in fellowship with searchers for truth, justice, freedom or enlightenment without the strictures of outside society.

For secret societies, the attractions of Masonry are obvious. The rituals provide a cover for genuine investigations into the occult, the lodges give a ready-made organizational structure, and the degrees serve to keep motives obscure or totally hidden from the law, the Church, or even insufficiently eager fellow-Masons.

"Masonry was the cover, the pretext behind which all the agents of different groups... met and clashed, each trying to tear a piece of the secret from the others." "Masonry was like Rick's in Casablanca... which turns upside down the notion that it was a secret society."

— from *Foucault's Pendulum*, by Umberto Eco

The simplicity, purity of design, and smoothness of function of Masonry is both a testament to its architects and the secret of its success.

The roots of Masonry, like so many wellsprings of the Underground Stream, are hidden in the mists of history and controversy. Guilds of "operative" masons, people who actually built structures in stone, have been reliably traced to the tenth century in the English kingdoms, and must have existed in the great civilizations of the past.

"Speculative" masonry, the notion of a brotherhood of like-minded searchers for truth and illumination, goes back much further, at least as far as ancient Egypt, although no doubt in considerably different forms from its current nature. Speculative masonry probably had only the most tangential of connection with operative stonemasonry for millennia, only in such projects as the building of the Pyramids or (traditionally) Solomon's Temple.

The major occultation of operative masonry by speculative masonry came in the Middle Ages, as the Templars used stonemasons' guilds to raise the Gothic cathedrals and arcane fortresses that were the nodal points of their occult network. To properly fulfill the Plan, these stonemasons needed to be directed by occult initiates, and so the Templars created the Compagnons des Devoirs, made up of men high in the stonemasons' operative guilds who could be trusted to learn the occult secrets of speculative hermeticism.

Following the suppression of the Templars' overt knighthood, their occult directorate went undercover in many organizations, among them the Compagnons des Devoirs. These masons, both operative and speculative, were the nucleus of the Masonic system, which developed in Scotland between 1314 and 1641, when the first Masonic initiation outside Scotland took place.

For the next seventy years or so, Masonry began to influence and be influenced by the political-religious struggles between the English and the Scots, the Catholics and the Protestants, and it became too unwieldy for the Templars to retain control of. In 1717, the first Masonic Lodge independent of any of the Compagnons des Devoirs (not all of whom remained Templars) was founded in London at the Apple-Tree Tavern as the Grand Lodge of England. Masonry spread like a wildfire throughout the political-economic structures of the time. Less than a century later, it was the overarching structure of ritual and organization in which almost all Western occult or hermetic discussion took place.

Any hopes for unification died rapidly, as the older secret societies took to using Masonry for their own ends and their own organization, and fighting out their battles under its roof. English Masonry, the nearest thing to "pure" Masonry left after the defeat of the Scottish Pretender in 1745, was split by the American Revolution, as the American Masons went about founding a Masonic Republic in the face of opposition from the Grand Lodge. By the Wilhelmsbad Congress in 1782, with the reintroduction of overt Strict Obedience Templarism and the foundation of the Illuminati, Masonry was unable to agree even on an overarching goal for itself, or on the truth of its own history. Since then, Masonry has been a form for power to hold, not the power itself.

"I declare, and I challenge all mankind to contradict my declaration, that no man can give any account of the Order of Free Masonry, of its origin, of its history, of its object, nor any explanation of its mysteries and symbols, which does not leave the mind in total uncertainty on these points."

— Adam Weishaupt

THE NATURE OF THE BEAST

"In the attempt to conduct the government of this world there are now elements to be considered.... These are Secret Societies... which at the last moment may baffle all our arrangements — Societies which have regular agents everywhere, which countenance assassination, and which, if necessary, could produce a massacre."

— Benjamin Disraeli, 20 September 1876

TO UNDERSTAND, MANIPULATE, create and direct the actions of secret societies in the world of the Nephilim, it is useful to have some general observations on how they operate. Unlike stockholder corporations, military organizations, or Congressional subcommittees, the workings of individual secret societies are often difficult to discover. Hence, in the absence of hard data about any specific society, it is necessary to generalize from known societies the kinds of constraints and unique opportunities that secret societies operate with in the world of the Nephilim. Not all societies follow any one model, but the very nature of secret societies in the West makes it likely they will organize, recruit, communicate, and do battle in much the same fashion regardless of their important differences in doctrine or belief.

A useful parallel can be made with the espionage services of the great powers, which used deceit, trickery, assassination, and false fronts whether they served Godless Communism, King and Country, or Mom and Apple Pie. Indeed, secret societies are somewhat like "freelance" espionage services, like the SPECTRE of the James Bond novels in Templar regalia.

Organization: The Cell, the Lodge and the Pyramid

Most large secret societies are organized in one of three fashions: the conspiratorial cell, the Masonic lodge, or the military pyramid. Obviously, these are not hard-and-fast categories. Cells can be organized pyramidically or at the centers of lodges, lodges can be as small as cells, or the pyramid can be made up of mutually-unknown