



**THE GRAND COMMANDERY OF KNIGHTS TEMPLAR
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" Another reference equating the ritual act of drinking from a certain cup with that of baptism can be found in The Gospel of St. Matthew, wherein Jesus says reassuringly to his disciples: "Ye shall drink indeed of my cup and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with..."³ The Baphometric skull venerated by the Knights Templar has been variously identified as the head of Bran, the mythical king of Britain, and more significantly, the head of John the Baptist. In the present article, we will examine yet another possible candidate for the historical validation of the cherished skull-grail, the head of the Gorgon Medusa, but before we get to that, let us take a moment look at still another famous skull that was said to have been in the possession of the historical Knights Templar.

In his 1921, work *Freemasonry and the Ancient Gods*, Worshipful Brother J. S. M. Ward, the founder of the Anthropological School of Masonic research, recounted a disturbing yet fascinating tale that has allegedly come down to us from the very trials of the historical Knights Templar. While the story is in all probability a fiction which was concocted in an attempt to slander our Fraternal ancestors, it is not without pertinence regarding our task at hand. According to Ward, "[a] great lady of Maraclea was loved by a Templar, a Lord of Sidon; but she died in her youth, and on the night of her burial this wicked lover crept to the grave, dug up her body, and violated it. Then a voice from the void bade him return in nine months' time, for he would find a son. He obeyed the injunction and at the appointed time opened the grave again and found a head on the leg bones of a skeleton (skull and crossbones). The same voice bade him "guard it well, for it would be the giver of all good things," and so he carried it away with him. It became a protecting genius, and he was able to defeat his enemies by merely showing them the magic head."⁴

Drawing from this account, Carl A. P. Ruck and his co-authors, Mark A. Hoffman, and Jose Alfredo Gonzalez Celdran, added that, "The Knights Templar adopted the *Crux decussata* as their flag and emblem. They depicted it as crossed leg bones beneath a skull, supposedly as a reference to Golgotha, the Hill of Skulls, but perhaps not without knowledge of the [Gorgon head]...This is especially likely because in Templar lore the skull [was used] as a magical weapon, just as Perseus used the Gorgon head."⁵ It is this amazingly perceptive injunction on the part of Ruck, Hoffman, and Celdran which provides the key to understanding precisely what is being implied by the name and essential nature of Baphomet.

According to myth, Perseus was the first of the Greek heroes and was the legendary founder of the city of Mycenae. In order to win his bride, Andromeda, who was being forcefully wed to the king of the island of Seriphos, Perseus was charged with the impossible task of recovering the head of the Gorgon Medusa who, like Baphomet, was described as being part human and part beast, in this case half serpent. Perseus' quest for the Gorgon head has been rightly associated by scholars with Herakles' search for the golden apples of the Hesperides and more importantly, Jason's quest for the golden fleece. The reader is kindly asked to note that the Greek word for fleece, *mela*, is also translatable as apple. The golden apples of Herakles and the golden fleece of Jason therefore, in all probability, refer to the same object. In each of these cases, the prize was finally discovered in a serpent-guarded tree amidst a sacred garden or grove. Significantly, this too can be said of the hero Perseus.

The version of the Perseus ordeal with which most are familiar describes his confrontation with Medusa as having taken place in the Gorgon's cave located far beyond the lair of the Granae sisterhood. However, other accounts place the Gorgon Medusa in the very Garden of the Hesperides, the same locale where Herakles discovered the golden apples. An example of this stream of transmission was preserved and can be seen depicted on a Greek vase housed at the Staatliche Museum in Berlin, Germany, which has been dated back to the third quarter of the fourth century B.C. This amazing artifact features the hero Perseus standing directly beneath the golden apple tree in the Garden of the Hesperides. Before him is seated a decapitated Gorgon Medusa, while the victorious Perseus bears her severed head. In the painting, however, the eyes of Perseus are not directed toward the Gorgon but instead are aimed solely at the golden fruit dangling from the tree, thereby subtly identifying the Gorgon head with the golden apples. It may therefore be safely assumed that the head of Medusa, the golden apples (*mela*), and the golden fleece (*mela*) are all three synonymous.

So, aside from the inherent notions of an epic quest, what have these to do with the Holy Grail and thus with Baphomet? Well, according to the sixth century chronographer John Malalas, "Perseus cut off [Medusa's] head and then used it as a "skull-cup" (*skyphos*) to teach the rite of Zoroaster to the Persians who took the name of Medes (*Medoi*) in honor of the Medusa."⁶ The similarities do not stop there. According to both versions of the story, Perseus was aided in his task by Athena, the goddess of wisdom,⁷ who told him how to defeat Medusa. Following Perseus' victory, the Gorgon head was thus entrusted to Athena as a gift. From thenceforth she employed the *skyphos* or "skull-cup" as a decorative brooch used to fasten her goatskin aegis, which is considered by many to be the wise goddess' defining characteristic. In modern parlance, the word aegis has come to suggest the covering of protection offered to a worshipper by a given deity. The word itself, however, simply means goatskin and is frequently depicted as being draped over the shoulders of the goddess Athena. The association between the Gorgon skull-cup and the hide of a goat points of course directly back to Baphomet which, if the reader will recall, was depicted by Levi as being related to the goat. Furthermore, it takes no great leap of speculation to see that the golden fleece for which Jason was searching, which is consubstantial with the Gorgon head, is referring to this same goatskin covering. It is therefore demonstrable that the Holy Grail and the golden fleece are indeed implicative of the same mystery. Additionally, and perhaps more than simply a meaningful coincidence, the mother of Athena was none other than the goddess Metis. It very nearly goes without saying that this would appear to be the source of the latter half of the name of Baphomet, i.e., Baphe Metis.