

# Grimoire Shamanism

## The Shaman and the Solomonic Path

Aaron Leitch

For at least the past two or three generations, the Solomonic grimoires have been popularly associated with lodge-style ceremonial magick and secret societies. Therefore, when I first suggested the grimoires are more intimately connected to paganism and folk/witchcraft traditions, than to men like MacGregor Mathers or Aleister Crowley, I expected the idea would become somewhat controversial. Instead, to my surprise, it has stirred much more interest than controversy. I have not only received requests for more information, but I have also heard from many modern-day sorcerers who have come to similar conclusions about the Solomonic material. (If you have read my essay *Modern Grimoire Magick*, you have seen how I stumbled upon an entire Solomonic movement among the same people who practice Hoodoo, Hexcraft and other folk-magick traditions.) So, it turns out my message was given directly into the hands of a waiting audience!

I would dare say such an audience has not existed since Gerald Gardner's publication of *High Magick's Aide* in 1949. Written to mask real magickal practices in the cloak of historical fiction, the story depicts a medieval Solomonic wizard and a Pagan witch working hand-in-hand, as if their practices were closely related. (Which, of course, they were!) In Gardner's day, the Solomonic grimoires were still held in high regard by practicing witches. For example, you can find elements of the *Key of Solomon the King* within "Old Religion" covens- such as the New Forrest- and even in Gardner's Wicca.

Today's students have apparently come full circle. They want to break away from the "self-help occultism" of the past two or three decades. They are now willing to learn about the very same Old Magicks from which- just a few years ago- they would certainly have been told to steer clear. Santeria, Palo, Voodoo, Hoodoo, Hexcraft- even Solomonic magick itself (especially the *Goetia* and similar texts)- were so recently subjects to be avoided or derided. Now, people who desire magick that "really works" are exploring systems descended directly from tribal shamanic worldviews, where Angels and spirits are *real* rather than mere psychological constructs.

With all of this in mind, I feel there is a place for this essay- especially for those who would like more information about the shamanic nature of the Solomonic texts. In what follows, I will briefly summarize the premise you can find elaborated within *Secrets of the Magickal Grimoires*, and then

offer some illustrations of modern Solomonic mages at work.

## **Shamans and Exorcists**

First and foremost, I would like to take a moment to explain my use of the term "shamanism." I am aware that many scholars are moving away from using that label as a universal "catch-all" for any system of primitive tribal spirituality. It does, in fact, make it easier to assume that different cultures in different times and places all practiced "the same thing", viz.- "shamanism." Nothing could be further from the truth(!), and I can assure the reader that I do not use the term in such a manner. Instead, I am using the term to indicate the social conditions surrounding the shamanic vocation as opposed to those social conditions that typically surround the Temple Priest in history. The "shamanism" I describe can be found in *any* culture, ancient or modern, tribal or metropolitan.

Given my broad use of the term, I cannot attempt to offer a cohesive definition of shamanism. Instead, I can only outline those practices that *collectively* make a tradition shamanic: Common aspects of the Shaman's vocation are withdrawal into solitude, ritualized death-rebirth, the gaining of Patrons and Familiar Spirits (from whom the Shaman learns most of his magick) and learning a secret language of some sort (such as the languages of birds or animals). Once he gains mastery, he must be able to exorcise the dead, demons and nature spirits without falling prey to them. He must also develop relationships with the Gods of the tribe or community, so that he can petition Them for aide in times of distress (such as plague, drought, failed hunts, crop shortages, etc).

Perhaps most universal to shamanism is the ecstatic trance- often obtained via drugs or physical discomfort/exhaustion- which allows the Shaman to visit the Gods in the celestial realm, or descend into the underworld to retrieve the lost souls of the sick and dying. These ecstatic states are his primary source of power - not only making his astral journeys possible, but also granting him such superhuman abilities as invulnerability to pain/injury from fire, snow and freezing water, blades or blunt weapons.

Also, many of the Indo-European tribal cultures that bear directly upon the development of Western civilization shared a common cosmology. They believed in a three-fold universe- consisting of a celestial world, a physical world and the underworld. The celestial world was the home of the Gods, beginning with a transcendent Father God who was most often the Creator and directly associated with the Sky. This "Father Sky" was followed by a number of Sons or Messengers - often in groups of seven or nine, and associated with visible heavenly bodies (such as the seven Planets). These younger Gods were not transcendent, but regularly interacted with the physical world and human beings. Shamans were charged with gaining the favor of these Gods for the good of the tribe, and it

was often one of these Gods who would become the Patron or Spiritual Spouse of the Shaman. He was also charged with keeping the spirits of the underworld either appeased or at bay.

Of course, no single culture or tradition will include all of these aspects, or place them within the same context, or even place the same importance upon them. They are not even the exclusive jurisdiction of the Shaman, as the Priest will often fulfill shamanic roles when the Shaman is not available. (Such as when the medieval Church drove out Pagan healers and replaced them with their own clergy.) However, the Priest is much less likely to engage in astral trips, or acquire Spirit Familiars. He usually comes by his knowledge in a university-style setting, rather than a death-rebirth initiation in solitude. Plus, the Priest performs his work under the authority of an established religious body, while the Shaman almost never does so.

Where it comes to the Solomonic grimoires, we find a curious mixture of the shamanic and priestly vocations. While the *intent* of the magick hearkens back to tribal witchdoctors, the *content* borrows much from established Church ritual and procedure. Thus, we find spells for such things as retrieving lost property, divining the future, healing sickness and getting ahead at work, that require such things as the performance of a Mass, the use of a consecrated Host and the singing of Psalms.

I believe this is because the grimoires were written by a group of people who fell somewhat between the two extremes of Priest and Shaman. On one hand, many of them were clerics of one type or another. Some of them were priests or even higher-ranking officials, while a likely greater number were low-ranking scribes and other Church personnel. (Called the "purified ones", these clerics performed minor duties such as carrying holy objects, preparing the altar, writing music, transcribing texts, etc.) On the other hand, their occult practices were most certainly *not* sanctioned by Church authorities. While this put many Solomonic mages' lives at great risk, it also afforded them some freedom to act as freelance shamans within their communities.

It is possible that much of the Solomonic genre was created by members of the clerical Order of Exorcists. Consider, for instance, this quote from the *Key of Solomon the King*:

He who hath attained the rank or degree of Exorcist, which we are usually accustomed to call Magus or Master according to grade...

The *Key* and other Solomonic texts often refer to the operator as an "Exorcist", and we can see from the above quote that the term indicates some kind of rank. When we look into the medieval use of that term, we find it within the hierarchy of the Catholic Church.

The medieval Church was divided into three major and four minor Orders. The first three

(Priesthood, Deacon and Subdeacon) require ordination, while the final four merely require appointment and are mainly composed of the low-ranking "purified ones." These minor Orders have changed according to time and place, and have included such offices as Acolyte, Reader, Doorkeeper, Porter, Lector and- of course- Exorcist.

The Exorcist was charged with "laying hands" upon new converts- to cast out lingering spirits before one was baptized. It was also his duty to tend to the sick, exorcising the demons of disease. Thus, ailing peasants in a medieval village would visit the exorcists at the local church, just as they would have previously visited the local witchdoctor. Because of this, there were few requirements for the role of Exorcist beyond a charismatic personality and (preferably) a knack for faith-healing.

In many ways, the Exorcists lived on the outer fringe of Church dogma. Unlike ordained Priests, the Exorcists would often break with the official rituals (such as the *Rituali Romanum* found in the Catholic *Book of Exorcisms*) and develop their own styles and techniques. I suspect they got away with more than their share of heresy, because their vocation called for what really *worked* at any given time and place.

This likely contributed to the fad for exorcism in medieval Europe- during which appeared countless "exorcism manuals", each one outlining its author's favored methods. They commonly begin with exhortations for the operator to live a clean and pure life, to obey religious laws, observe chastity, etc. They describe spiritual preparations involving prayer, fasting and solitude. They include discussions of what to expect when the spirits appear, and how to behave toward them during the exorcism. Finally, they outline the ritual itself- usually including confession, Psalms, the *Pater Noster* and other established Church prayer. They also contain lengthy conjurations, repeated multiple times, that admonish the spirits in the Names of God, Saints, Angels, Prophets, etc.

In fact, I believe these manuals are where the Solomonic grimoires come into the picture. Books like *The Key of Solomon the King*, the *Goetia* and even parts of the *Book of Abramelin* follow the form of medieval exorcism manuals. The difference is that the Solomonic grimoires are extreme examples, and incorporate much more Pagan and occult lore than the Church would tolerate. (Again, see my essay *Modern Grimoire Magick*, where I discuss the "receipt-book" or "wonder-book"- another grimoiric parallel known for inclusion of such pagan lore.) Possession of these grimoires led many clerics to prison, torture and execution.

Regardless, the grimoires proliferated so far and so fast the Church was unable to burn them all. There was just something in the human spirit that kept people writing, transcribing and preserving them, even at their own peril. I suspect that "something" was the same thing that called the most primitive tribal shaman to his duty, and every shaman, prophet and mage that followed. There will

always be a need for humankind to interface with the spirits of the world, and thus there will always be a need for the Shaman. In medieval Europe, one form the Shaman took was that of the grimoiric mage.

## **The Solomonic Magus and the Way of the Shaman**

We can easily find several examples of such shaman-mages in action. In the *Book of Abramelin*, we follow the journeys of Abraham the Jew as he heals the sick, offers magickal aide to kings and princes and even raises the dead across Europe. In his journals, Dr. John Dee recorded instances of himself and Edward Kelley performing magick and divinations for their community, colleagues and even the Queen herself. (Legend has credited Dee with creating the storm that sunk a Spanish fleet before it could attack Britain.) Henry Cornelius Agrippa, author of the famous *Three Books of Occult Philosophy*, once confronted a local Inquisitor on behalf of a poor woman suffering imprisonment and torture on charges of witchcraft. He succeeded in securing her release, had her accusers arrested, drove the presiding Inquisitor from office and (some say!) ended the Inquisitor's life via magickal means.

The above are merely the more popular examples of grimoiric mages working to protect their communities, nation or humanity as a whole. If you would like to read more anecdotes about the grimoires and the people who wrote and used them, I highly recommend the *Magic in History* series from Penn State Press. Take special notice of E. M. Butler's *Ritual Magic* and Richard Kieckhefer's *Forbidden Rites*. Both books include in-depth discussions of the culture that gave rise to the Solomonic texts, as well as excerpts from medieval records depicting both masters and amateurs attempting to use the magick.

At this time, I wish to focus upon the manifestation of the Shamanic Arts within the grimoires themselves. I have already outlined many of the points that can earn a practice the label of "shamanism." Therefore, I can now revisit that list and provide examples of the same principles within a few of the more popular grimoires.

To begin with, I should mention that the Solomonic texts generally adhere to the same tribal-shamanic cosmology I described earlier: a celestial Father God (the Creator) who charges His many Sons or Messengers (Angels) with the governance of the physical world. While the Father God can be invoked for aide and authority, He truly remains transcendent and far-removed from reality. It is His Angels and spirits whom the mage summons for any given purpose.

We can also see that the shamanic three-fold cosmology was adopted by mages like Agrippa-who based the structure of his *Three Books of Occult Philosophy* upon it. (Agrippa actually described a

celestial realm, an *intelliectual* realm and a physical realm. He recognized the infernal realm, but left it "unspoken" in his three-fold cosmology. Instead, he added the intellectual realm to represent the mind, where man and God meet. This may have been a Gnostic influence- as the Gnostics tended to view the physical world and Hell as the same place, and placed much importance upon the Mind of God.)

Moving forward in our list: The initial vocation (or calling/initiation) of the Shaman often involves a long period of seclusion, during which a death-rebirth ordeal must be endured. Often during such an ordeal, the spirits of sickness and injury will attack the would-be Shaman in a kind of spiritual-alchemical process. As each attack is endured and survived, the aspirant is further purified and strengthened- until the spirits eventually lose all power over the new Shaman. It is this ordeal that grants the Shaman his primary source of spiritual authority. As the spirits have already failed in their initial attempts to kill him, the Shaman enjoys a position of superiority to- and invulnerability from- the dangers they might pose to a layperson.

It is not difficult to find parallels in the Solomonic texts. Nearly all of them insist the aspirant must remove himself from public life, preferably spending his time alone in ritual purification and prayer. Each text outlines its own regimen, but it is generally agreed that the longer and more intense the seclusion and preparations, the more powerful the magick. Also, I note that these preparations are more often associated with evocation of spiritual entities, rather than with folk-magick spells or talisman creation.

A great example is the *Book of Abramelin*, which requires a full year and a half (or, in the French version of the text, a mere six months) of seclusion and ritual preparation before attempting contact with the Guaridan Angel and the infernal spirits. Every single day, the Abramelin aspirant must wash, enter an established Oratory and recite prayers before an Altar. As the regimen progresses, more prayers and ritual preparations are added until- by the time the evocations begin- the aspirant has become consumed by the process. Not only that, but he is also experiencing the mental stress associated with such long periods of seclusion. This creates an altered state of consciousness that allows one to perceive the Angel and spirits.

The *Book of Abramelin* is also the best example of the ordeal of death and rebirth in a Solomonic text. I have covered this aspect of the system in another essay, *The Holy Guardian Angel: Exploring the Sacred Magick of Abramelin the Mage*, so I will share some excerpts with you here. These are from my descriptions of the final seven days of the Rite:

The second day is the first day of the invocation of the Angel. This is where the funerary

symbolism of the Rite comes into play. At dawn, one is not to wash or don the White Robe, but instead must put on the Robe of Mourning [made of black sackcloth]. Once inside the Oratory, ashes are taken from the Censor and placed upon one's head (a funeral custom found in Biblical literature- such as the Book of Job), and a black veil is placed over the head and face.

[...]

Day three ... continues the funeral rite. At dawn, one enters the Oratory as in the previous day, wearing the same Robe of Mourning. Now, the aspirant must lay prostrate upon the floor, with his head at the foot of the Altar, and pray silently for three hours or more. This is the symbolic "laying within the tomb" found in many solar Dying and Rising God myths.

[...]

The fourth day ... progresses from the death symbolism of the previous two days into the rebirth half of the equation. Here at last the White Robe is worn once more- symbolic of the resurrection and spiritual purity of the aspirant. (The donning of a white robe at the end of such an initiation is found as far back as ancient Egypt.) One is to kneel at the Altar and begin to offer prayers of thanks to the Highest as well as invocations to the Guardian Angel. If all has gone well, it is here the first tentative contact with the Angel will be achieved.

The objective of the Abramelin process is to bring an end to the old way of life, and initiate an entirely new path. Thanks to the extended seclusion, social contacts will have waned, old habits have been broken and the aspirant faces an entirely new life on the other side of the process. The death-rebirth symbolism of Abramelin merely symbolizes this fact, and associates it with the death and resurrection of holy figures like Christ and Osiris.

The next point is perhaps the most obvious: A shaman's vocation usually involves the reception of his spiritual Patron and Familiars. He then learns his magick directly from those spirits, and has the ability to communicate with them in times of need. We can find examples of this dynamic in *nearly every grimoire*.

The *Book of Abramelin* is dedicated entirely to this process - beginning with the permanent invocation of one's Holy Guardian Angel. That Angel, then, is supposed to teach the aspirant countless magickal secrets - including the methods of summoning and binding the infernal spirits. The infernal spirits are also expected to teach the aspirant some magick, as well as provide the names of any number of lesser spirits who will serve the aspirant as familiars. Four of these lesser spirits, in particular, are charged to stay with the aspirant at all times for the rest of his life. Having achieved all of this, the

final book in the grimoire provides hundreds of talismans for use in communicating with the spirits for any necessity or desire.

The *Pauline Arts*, one of the five books of the *Lemegeton*, also pays special attention to the aspirant's Patron Angel. This time the Angel is one of a group of 360 who govern the degrees of the zodiac. According to the text, you share a special relationship with the Angel who rules the ascending degree of your own nativity. By following the process outlined in the book, you can establish contact with that Angel and learn magick, gain information, receive guidance, etc.

At the other end of the spectrum are books like the *Goetia*, also of the *Lemegeton*. Here we find no mention of Patrons or Guardian Angels. However, we do find a list of 72 ranking spirits of the infernal hierarchy, any of whom can teach the aspirant mysteries (magickal, scientific, philosophical, etc) or provide personal familiar spirits. Such spirits can be bound to a brass vessel (or something similar) and become permanent members of the household. (This is also covered in depth in *Modern Grimoire Magick*.) I will go further into this aspect of the grimoires below.

There are so many wonderful examples of this dynamic in the grimoires, I couldn't hope to list most of them here. To my knowledge, no Solomonic grimoire in existence fails to include this to some degree- and most of them are dedicated to this subject alone. Outside of a few folk recipes their authors may have found useful, the bulk of the grimoires focus upon the evocation of Angels and/or spirits, and assume the aspirant will learn the magickal arts directly from them. As the author of the *Book of Abramelin* states:

In time, I have become able to recognize the holy angels and the good spirits. I now share their friendship and have discussions with them. They have explained to me the basis of true magic and how unredeemed spirits need to be- and must be- controlled. To finish, I need to say that I learned the holy secrets through Abramelin's teachings from God himself; and I learned to do the true, not false, magic from the holy angels.

The above is also related to the next aspect of shamanism- the ability to command the dead, demons and nature spirits without falling prey to them. We have already seen that both *Abramelin* and the *Goetia* outline how to exorcise and bind the infernal spirits as familiars. To these we can add texts like the *Theurgia-Goetia*, the *Key of Solomon the King*, the *Heptameron*, the *Fourth Book of Occult Philosophy* and the *Magus*. All of these, and hundreds of similar and derivative texts, include directions for commanding, binding or overcoming the infernal spirits- or communing with the spirits of nature and the Elements.



Unfortunately, this aspect of the grimoires has led to many generations of misunderstanding. Because the books describe how to "summon the demons of Hell" (or the lesser spirits of nature), many have assumed they must- by definition- be rituals of black magick. The question, perhaps asked first by the medieval Church itself, was why a God-fearing person would wish to deal with devils.

However, I feel that question misses the point entirely. As we have already seen in this essay, there was a time when holy men were *expected* to work with infernal spirits. Just like the exorcists who cast demons out of peoples' homes and bodies, and the shamans and witchdoctors that preceded them. While there are a few rare examples of grimoires that call upon Satan or Lucifer instead of God and His Angels, we find that most demonology grimoires place the mage on the side of God and directly invoke Holy Names and Angels to control the infernal spirits. As mentioned above, the intent is usually to overcome and bind them- placing the mage in a position of superiority and authority. Only with that spiritual authority can the Shaman cure disease, retrieve lost souls from the underworld and protect his community from demonic spirits.

Let's now examine another aspect of the shamanic vocation that bears directly upon the grimoires - learning a secret language. In ancient tribal cultures, this was often associated with the languages of animals or birds- with whom the Shaman was believed to communicate directly. (An important skill for any tribal shaman who practiced animism.) By the time we reach the point of written history, we find that magickal languages have become the dead languages of past human civilizations.

For example, the Priests of Babylon used ancient Sumerian as their sacred language. The Egyptians, too, utilized older forms of Egyptian hieroglyphs in their magick. The point was that the language had to be obscure- unspoken by the common people and known only to those who study it. A dead language remains static- unchanged by linguistic evolution resulting from common daily usage. It should also have some foundation in the history of a given culture. All of this makes it sacred- something that can be set aside, and allows mystics to assign correspondences to the letters or sounds, incorporate them into established rituals, etc. Thus was Sumerian useful to the later Babylonian Priests. So, too, were Hebrew, Greek and Latin sacred languages within medieval Judeo-Christianity.

For the Solomonic mages, nearly any ancient tongue was sacred. They adopted names and conjurations from Egyptian, Chaldean, Babylonian, Sumerian, Hebrew, Latin, Greek, Coptic and even more sources. Of course, it was rare for an author to have any real knowledge of more than one or two of these languages (such as Latin, Greek or Hebrew). As such, many of the ancient names and conjurations were handed down in a haphazard fashion. I suspect the words were transmitted orally for

some time, during which they would certainly have mutated to some degree. Then, when the grimoires were penned, their authors simply recorded the words phonetically, writing down what they had heard from their teachers. The problem was further compounded as the magickal texts were circulated and transcribed. For example, scribes who did not understand Hebrew made glaring errors- quite often mistaking one Hebrew letter for another letter with a similar shape. It was even worse when they attempted to transliterate the Hebrew characters into English, as every individual scribe had his own style of transliteration. (The same is true today, which is why we can see the Hebrew QBLH- Qoph, Beth, Lamed, Heh- spelled "Qabalah", "Kabbalah" or even "Cabala.")

Over time, small errors were compounded on top of small errors until (in many cases) the words had lost all semblance of their original forms. In the grimoires themselves, we can find truly bizarre conjurations such as the following from the *Key of Solomon the King*:

I conjure ye anew by these other names of God, most holy and unknown, by the virtue of which names ye tremble every day - BAZUC, BACURABON, PATACEL, ALCHEGHEL, AQUACHAI, HOMORIONS, EY, ABBATON, CHEVON, CEBON, OY, ZOYMAS, CAYE, EHEIEH, ABBAMACHI, ORTAGU, NALE, HELECH, YEZE - that ye come quickly and without any delay into our presence...

Today we call words like these "Barbarous Names of Evocation"- which simply means "foreign words of command." The phrase is taken from *The Chaldaean Oracles of Zoroaster*, which is neither Chaldean nor Zoroastrian. It first appeared during the Renaissance, making it contemporary with Solomonic mystics. The relevant passage from the text states: "Change not the Barbarous Names of Evocation, for there are sacred Names in every language which are given by God, having in the Sacred Rites a Power Ineffable."

The admonishment to leave the "barbarous names" unchanged likely arises from a recognition that the ancient languages were not understood. They were already corrupt in the Solomonic texts, and it would therefore be unwise to attempt to alter them further. This philosophy resulted in the establishment of a new sacred language- of sorts- as we see in the above quote from the *Key*. Having been committed to record, these words are as static as those of a real dead language. They are never spoken in common business, and their derivation from the ancient Western languages gives them a cultural foundation and history.

Finally, I can't let the subject of sacred languages pass without mentioning John Dee's and Edward Kelley's Angelical Language. It is especially relevant to our discussion, because it adheres so

well to our model of shamanism. Not only did Dee record for us a large portion of a new Secret Language, but he received that language directly from the Angels themselves. Most of the invocations Dee recorded (consisting of 48 Angelical Callings) are intended for use with a specific magickal system. However, his journals reveal that Angelical was used for several purposes beyond the Callings, and the Angels told him they preferred it "before that which you call Hebrew"- presumably meaning the Hebrew Dee would have used in his occultism. (In fact, there is one example in the records of Dee creating a talisman with Angelical characters for a woman in trouble.) Both Dee and Kelley were assured that the Angelical language would grant them unprecedented ability to communicate with Angels and command spirits.

Since Dee's lifetime, the Angelical language has had a large impact on Western Esotericism. Most of that impact has come through the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn - which had its own particular approach to the language and rules for its pronunciation. Several groups who followed the Golden Dawn have also created their own recensions. Today, scholars have a much better grasp of Dee's original system, and are revisiting his journals to study Angelical in its original form (with its original pronunciations). We should see some of the results of these newer studies within the next couple of years.

At long last we reach our final aspect of shamanism- the use of the ecstatic trance to produce magickal power. This included nearly everything the Shaman accomplished- communing with spirits, physical strength/invulnerability, celestial flight, divination and- of course- creating visions. All of these things depend on the alteration of consciousness to an ecstatic mental state. It is literally the opening of the mind to the greater spiritual universe, so that one can perceive the Angels and spirits who live there.

Agrippa gives a lot of space in his *Three Books...* to this subject: Book I dedicates seven consecutive chapters (61-68) to explaining the passions of the mind and their importance to magick. In Book III, he returns to the subject in six chapters (45-50), where he explains the ecstatic trance or "phrensy." In chapter 45 he describes this as the vacation of the spirit from the mage's body, followed by the entrance of the Holy Spirit to fill the space. Once the Holy Spirit has "possessed" the mage, both prophecy and magick are possible:

...prophesying is not made according to the will of man, but holy men spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.

When oracles and spirits descend from the gods or from daemons upon them, and are delivered by them; which descendings the Platonists call the falling down of superior souls on our souls. ... Of which sort of daemons ... were wont to enter into the bodies of men, and make use of the voices, and tongues, for the prediction of things to come...

But these kinds of fallings down, or senses, come not into our souls when they are more attently busied about anything else; but they pass into them, when they are vacant. Now there are three kind of vacancy, viz., phrensy, ecstasy and dreams. [*Three Books...* Book III, Ch. 45]

These phrensies and ecstasies are outlined by Agrippa over the next four chapters. The first type he describes is the phrensy "from the Muses"- which basically indicates revelation through inspiration. The second type is "from Dionysus"- indicating ecstasy through religious fervor (such as we see in modern faith-healing). The third type is "from Apollo"- indicating ecstasy gained by the creation of mind-altering drugs and medicines. The fourth type of phrensy belongs to Venus- indicating ecstasy gained through obsessive love and devotion.

Finally, in chapter 50, Agrippa explains that the removal of oneself from earthly distractions (seclusion and ritual purity) and turning the mind toward celestial things (invocation and prayer), results in the elevation of the soul to a near-God-like state. In this state, the human vessel becomes fit for habitation by divine things. Thus, while the human mind is flying through the heavens with God, the Holy Spirit might enter the body to prophesy or perform miracles.

When we understand the Art of Ecstasy, it brings into focus many grimoiric spells that might otherwise *appear* to defy reason. For example, the *Book of Abramelin* contains a chapter of talismans for "Traveling in the Air"- on a ship, a cloak, a cloud, etc. A more obscure grimoire, today called the *Munich Handbook of Necromancy*, contains experiments for obtaining horses (winged and otherwise) and even a flying throne. Richard Kieckhefer classifies these as "illusionist experiments", meaning that these horses and thrones are not to be taken literally. Instead, they represent visionary trips the mage can take into the heavens, to meet with and petition the Angels.

Kieckhefer also classes spells to create visions and illusions (of castles, armed men, banquets, etc) under the same heading. In some cases, these visions are seen only by those engaged in the magick, and witnesses often report seeing nothing unusual at all. For example, in the *Book of Abramelin*, Abraham the Jew describes a woman who concocted a flying ointment, which the two used with apparent success. However, when Abraham later asked to observe the woman as she took such a

trip alone, he only witnessed her fall the ground and sleep as if dead for a couple of hours. Eventually, she awoke and described her journeys to Abraham, but her trip had been entirely visionary.

Much the same can be said for most instances of spirit evocation "to physical appearance." The grimoires are ever romantic in their tone, and they tend to imply that the spirits will literally take on flesh and stand before the Circle. However, according to the records we have of actual Solomonic mages at work, the summoned spirits hardly take on physical form. Previously, I mentioned such records can be found in Butler's and Kieckhefer's work on the grimoires. Likewise, the journals of Dr. Dee and Edward Kelley are extremely enlightening- as Kelley could always see the Angels while Dee most often could not. In some cases, the participants will drink or eat some kind of mind-altering brew- and even offer it to those witnessing the rites. (Such as the flying ointment with which Abraham the Jew experimented). If such a concoction is not offered- or is refused by a spectator- then the Angels and spirits are generally perceived only by the person(s) skrying the entities.

Mind-alteration is also a big part of divination. Whether one is summoning a spirit to ask about hidden information, or attempting to skry directly into far away places, the foundational purpose of the ritual is to create a vision that reveals the desired information.

Perhaps understandably, the subject of mind-altering drugs in the grimoires (Agrippa's "Apollon phrensy") generates the most controversy today. Unfortunately, there are even some who insist that drugs have nothing to do with either shamanism or Solomonic mysticism. (Such a stance comes from fear of the modern Inquisition called the "drug war.") In truth, however, drugs have always been an established aspect of these practices. Ancient cultures have used tobacco, alcohol, cannabis, mushrooms, ayahuasca, belladonna, henbane, hemlock and *many* more mind-altering substances in their mysticism. And, as I mentioned previously, medieval records indicate the grimoiric masters were no exception.

Agrippa obviously knew about such techniques, and wrote about them in more than one place in his *Three Books*. A great example is found in *Book One*, chapter 43:

So, they say that if of coriander, smallage, henbane and hemlock be made a fume, that spirits will presently come together; hence they are called the spirits' herbs. Also it is said that a fume made of the root of the reedy herb sagapen, with the juice of hemlock, and henbane, and the herb tapus barbatus, red sanders, and black poppy, makes spritis and strange shapes appear.

Today we have a good understanding of these "spirits' herbs" and their effects on the human brain.

Plants like henbane, hemlock and black poppy produce hallucinogenic chemicals, and have traditionally been associated with the evocation of spirits, production of visions and illusions, etc.

Unfortunately, these particular drugs are also deadly neuro-toxins that tend to accumulate in the brain over time. Their physical side effects include such things as nausea and convulsions. As such, these drugs are generally associated with goetic evocation and necromancy- contacting demons and the spirits of the dead. They open one's mind to the infernal side of reality, and will eventually kill you.

It is very likely that such a drug was intended for use with the *Goetia*- which instructs one to apply an Anointing Oil to one's eyelids and temples. We can find the same instructions given with “flying ointments” of the same era – just like the Witch's ointment given to Abraham the Jew. It is necessary to rub the oil upon the body where it can be absorbed directly into the bloodstream. The temples and other pulse-points of the body are good places. There is a rather large vein in the center of the forehead- the “third eye” spot where anointing oils are most often applied. And, of course, the eyelids offer a very thin bit of skin to absorb the oil. (The descriptions of the demons in the *Goetia*- as fearsome and dangerous creatures who inspire terror on sight- could very well be records of henbane or belladonna trips.)

Some typical recipes- taken from Scott Cunningham's *Complete Book of Incense, Oils and Brews*- follow:

**Flying Ointment #1:** Cinquefoil, Parsley, Aconite, Belladonna, Hemlock, Cowbane.

**Flying Ointment #2:** Hog's Lard, Hashish, Hemp Flowers, Poppy Flowers, Hellebore

Notice that *most* of the ingredients listed are psychoactive (many of them listed by Agrippa as “spirits' herbs”), and several of them also happen to be deadly.

It is also possible to create oils with more benign drugs. For example, there is much speculation that the Holy Oil described in the Bible (Exodus 30) was intended to include extracted THC from cannabis. (This Biblical recipe was adopted whole-cloth into the *Book of Abramelin*- though there is no evidence the author believed that cannabis was intended.) However, such an oil would not likely have the astounding effects we see with toxins like henbane and belladonna- which is likely why we find the latter in most flying ointments.

Before I end this section, I should point out that the other phrensies described by Agrippa also come into play in the grimoires- especially those involving religious fervor and devotion. In fact, these play a larger role than mind-altering drugs, and are achieved via the extended periods of prayer,

confession and rituals of worship adopted from Christian and Jewish religion. We also find a heavy emphasis upon fasting, seclusion, vegetarianism and general stimulus deprivation (abstinence and moderation in all things). Taken together, all of these combine to create a shift in brain chemistry for the grimoiric magus. I cover all of this in considerable depth in *Secrets of the Magickal Grimoires*.

## **Modern Solomonic Shamans**

Last year, I was invited to speak at the first Austin, Texas Western Mysteries Conference. For my lecture, I chose to read my recently-published essay *Modern Grimoire Magick: Folk Magick and the Solomonic Path*. However, I also wanted to add something new- in case anyone in attendance had read the essay on their own. Therefore, after the reading, I went on to discuss the work of a fellow Solomonic mage, who drew from my work and had posted his results for all to see. I hoped to give the audience an idea that this isn't all theoretical, but that real people are out there, right now, actually *doing* this kind of work.

Now, I would like to do the same in this essay. First, I will relate the same anecdotes I shared at the conference. Then, I would like to share some entirely new anecdotes- this time about the magickal quest of a young lady who once came to me for advice on Solomonic magick in general, and the *Lemegeton's "Pauline Arts"* in particular.

### **Frater R.O. and the Goetia**

Our first Solomonic magus is best known by his motto- Frater Rufus Opus (or, at the time I gave my lecture, Frater Redactum Opus). Frater R.O. was hardly a beginner when I first encountered him. However, he had been inspired upon reading my essay *Modern Grimoire Magick*, as well as some forum discussions concerning "Spirit Pots."

To explain briefly: the creation of a Spirit Pot is an extremely ancient method of working with lesser spirits and familiars. It appears in cultures around the world- though the most common in America are likely the *gnangas* fashioned by practitioners of the Afro-Caribbean faiths *Santeria* and *Palo*. A *gnanga* is often an iron cauldron- sometimes a terracotta pot- filled with substances that are in natural sympathy with the familiar spirit. (For example, the *gnanga* of an ocean spirit will include water, plants, fishes and objects taken from the sea. A river spirit would require such ingredients taken from a local river, a mountain spirit would require items taken from a natural high place, etc.)

There are just a few examples of this concept in the grimoires- the most famous being the Brass Vessel of the *Lemegeton's Goetia*. According to that text, King Solomon attempted to entrap 72 ruling

spirits of Hell within a vessel of brass, which he then tossed into the sea. His goal was thwarted, however, after the Babylonians witnessed him dispose of the vessel. Believing it to be full of treasure, they later fished it out of the water. Much like ancient Pandora opening the forbidden box of Human Woes, the Babylonians broke the seal and released the evil spirits into the world again. The *Goetia* further implies that a Solomonic mage can use a similar Brass Vessel to bind any of the 72 spirits, or any spirit at all.

Part of my *Modern Grimoire Magick* essay was dedicated to explaining Spirit Pots in detail, and suggesting ways to incorporate the same ideas into the *Goetia*'s Brass Vessel. Most modern occult texts suggest one summon, question and finally banish the spirits each time we have need of them. However, I made the suggestion that the spirits could be bound to the Brass Vessel instead- creating what I facetiously called a "Solomonic *Gnanga*." This appealed to Frater R.O., who began his own experiments with the process.

The spirit he chose to work with is the 26th of the *Goetia*, named Bune- who is described as bringing riches to the Exorcist:

He is a Strong, Great and Mighty Duke. He appeareth in the form of a Dragon with three heads, one like a Dog, one like a Gryphon, and one like a Man. He speaketh with a high and comely Voice. He changeth the Place of the Dead, and causeth the Spirits which be under him to gather together upon your Sepulchres. He giveth Riches unto a Man, and maketh him Wise and Eloquent. He giveth true Answers unto Demands. And he governeth 30 Legions of Spirits.

According to the *Goetia*, Bune is a Duke of Hell- which makes him a spirit of Venus whose Seal should be fashioned from copper. However, Frater R.O. decided to use the correspondences outlined in Crowley's 777, which assigns Bune to the zodiacal sign of Sagittarius. Personally, I would have suggested he stick with the attributions of the *Goetia* itself- though I must stress that Frater R.O. was not "incorrect" in his choice. Spiritual entities are not restricted to the correspondences we assign to them, and it is possible to work with any spirit from the standpoint of various "Paths." Thus, Frater R.O. simply chose to work with a "Sagittarian Path" of Bune, rather than the more traditional Venusian Path.

To begin with, Frater R.O. obtained a brass pot with a lid, and decorated it according to the instructions in the *Goetia*. (The Divine Names of the Goetic Magickal Circle are inscribed around the circumference of the Brass Vessel, which our Frater did using the letters of the *Malachim* Magickal Alphabet.) He also fashioned a Secret Seal of Solomon and placed it under the vessel's lid.



He then followed my instructions by filling the vessel with objects sympathetic to Bune (as listed in 777 for Sagittarius)- such as Rush grass, incenses of lignum aloes and sandalwood, dates and raisins, an arrow carved from cedar wood, etc. Most important, of course, is the Seal of the spirit itself- which is the main focus for the entity inside the vessel. Frater R.O. reported that Bune's presence was distinctly felt as soon as the vessel was created- and he placed small (appropriately-colored) candles around the pot to attract and feed the entity until it was time to formally bind him to the vessel.

At last, Frater R.O. performed the full evocation ceremony outlined in the *Goetia*. (Remember that modern systems usually *begin* at this point!) He placed the completed vessel into the Triangle of the Art, summoned Bune and asked the spirit if it would like to reside therein. The spirit agreed and was commanded into the vessel once and for all. There was no banishing.

It was only afterward that the *real* work took place. Frater R.O. began to interact with Bune and the vessel on a daily basis- eventually developing a relationship with the spirit. It took some trial and error in order to learn how it operates: at first, he hoped Bune would help him win the lottery. That didn't work at all, but he soon found that Bune was perfectly willing and able to bring new clients and contracts to his job. Before long, Frater R.O. had more work than he knew what to do with, and the collective profit he stood to make went into the thousands of dollars! (Sagittarius is ruled by Jupiter, and Jupiterian spirits are notorious for bringing riches through *labor* rather than free and easy money.)

This has only been a brief introduction to Frater R.O.'s experiments with Bune and the Brass Vessel of the *Goetia*. If you would like to follow his experiences as they developed- including photographs of his work- simply visit [www.rufusopus.com](http://www.rufusopus.com) and click the link for "Spirit Pot Operations."

### **Kathy McDonald. and the *Pauline Arts***

Kathy McDonald is one of my favorite success stories. Not only is she one of the most seriously dedicated Solomonic mystics I have met, but she also came to it through much trial and tribulation in her life. Her experience has truly been a shamanic vocation.

I first met Ms. McDonald through my Solomonic Group at Yahoo. At the time, her life had recently undergone drastic changes. She had incredible emotional obstacles to overcome- the worst of which was her feeling of helplessness in facing a big and often dangerous world with her young daughter. Because of this, I believe Kathy came to us on a quest- even if she wasn't sure *what* exactly she sought. I didn't mark her as someone with much interest in grimoire-style magick (an erroneous observation, as we shall see!). She seemed more interested in simply talking with people she felt had attained some spiritual advancement. Eventually, as often happens in these on-line encounters, Kathy

simply vanished from the forums.

After a couple of years passed, she suddenly reappeared in the groups, and we were surprised to meet a very changed woman. I'm not precisely sure what we told her, or what exactly she took away from her encounters with us, but she returned with her emotions and her mundane life much more in check. We also learned that, during her absence, she had obtained a copy of *Secrets of the Magickal Grimoires* and was avidly devouring the book! She had returned because my presentation of the *Lemegeton's "Pauline Arts"* had piqued her interest, and she had further questions. As she related in a Yahoo post:

Yes my focus started with a desire to learn more about astrological magic and timing and a desire to work with a system as opposed to winging it. The Pauline Art offered both a structure and a planetary focus that sat well with me. Contacting the angel of the degree of my nativity is the goal. Also after reading your book I was keen to try a few things out and have increased things like preparation, timing, attention to details and exploring their origins.

Now, I have already described part of the *Pauline Arts*- involving the Angel of the zodiacal degree of your nativity. In order to summon this Angel, it is necessary to make its talisman from a specific metallic alloy. Then, the Angel must be summoned at a specific magickal time- on the proper day and hour attributed to its Planet, and when the Sun has entered a zodiacal sign of the appropriate Elemental Triplicity.

Kathy wished to know if it is truly necessary to fashion these complicated alloys and wait the necessary months for the Sun to enter the correct sign. Couldn't she just fashion the Talisman from colored paper and get on with it? We answered that it was certainly possible to use simpler methods of evocation, but the results would only be as impressive as the effort she put into the work. Not only that, but simplifying the Rites would mean she was no longer working the *Pauline Arts* system of evocation, but merely drawing from it.

What set Kathy above so many who ask such advice was the fact that she took it to heart! It was going to be a full year before the Sun again entered the sign of her birth, and she decided that was just enough time to *properly* prepare for the evocation of her Angel. Over the next months, she completely analyzed the *Pauline Arts*- even tracing the alloy recipes to their original source (Paracelsus, for those keeping score) and *deciphering* them. She was meticulous about the magickal timing, and had the Renaissance astrologer Christopher Warnock go over her astrological election in detail. (He even corrected a mistake she had made.) And she also had plenty of time to create the Holy

Table and other magickal tools necessary to the Rite.

In a particularly interesting twist, Kathy *did* in fact perform a simplified invocation after all. Soon after she began the *Pauline Arts* project, she fashioned a paper Sigil for the Angel she wished to contact and offered invocations and candles. She placed the entire process under the governance of the Angel, who provided both guidance and continuity throughout the work. (Notice how Kathy used this method as a smaller part of the larger operation, while most folks settle for this in place of the Rite itself!)

Most fascinating was Kathy's exploration of metallurgy. This isn't something with which I have experience, and I learned much from her prolific posts about what she was learning- including photographs of the tools and equipment she accumulated. One by one, she tackled each metal called for in the alloy Talisman. She learned what equipment was necessary to melt each metal (easy for the soft metals, but progressively more difficult and dangerous for the harder metals). Like a true alchemist, she learned through trial-and-error how these metals behave when heated and cooled, and thereby learned *tons* about the Planetary spirits who are associated with them. She experimented with making several metal talismans, each one revealing what she had done right or wrong during the process.

By the time her year ran its course, Kathy had gained a solid education in the Solomonic magickal arts. She had learned how to create magickal tools, prepare her Temple, choose astrological elections and magickal timing, design and paint Talismans, work with metals and forge alloys- and that merely scratches the surface! She also discovered the writings of past occultists like Paracelsus, Trithemius, Agrippa and more. Further, she learned much from the growing relationship between herself and the Angel with whom she was working: what the Angel liked or disliked, and what it expected of her.

Perhaps you've heard the term "Renaissance Man"- indicating someone who has education in many different areas. Kathy's year-long quest earned her a true Renaissance education in the magickal arts, which she would have missed entirely had she chosen the "easy" route instead. She could have performed the simplified evocation and therefore say "I've done that." But, instead, she undertook a longer journey of truly life-changing significance. She learned that the Rites outlined in the grimoires are not the end-goal, but merely the keys with which to unlock greater mysteries.

This is a point I have tried long and hard to make with would-be students of the occult. The constant search for an "easier way" to perform the magick is counter-productive. Contrary to popular belief, mere "intent" is *not* the most important aspect of magick. In fact, it is relatively unimportant when compared to virtues like effort, discipline and dedication. Like the Knight searching for the Holy

Grail, the Solomonic mage gains his (or her) power from the Quest to achieve what might otherwise seem impossible.

In the end, Kathy's evocation of the Angel was successful. You can read her write-up of the entire process in *A Pauline Arts Magical Adventure* ([www.zapgarden.com/MCDONALD](http://www.zapgarden.com/MCDONALD)). After the ordeal was over, she took some time off from the Yahoo Groups in order to rest and reflect on her accomplishment. During that time, her house was struck by lightning! No one was harmed, but a lightning strike is an age-old sign of true Shamanic initiation. It was a perfect sign that she *had* succeeded in drawing vast energy to her home, and in gaining the attention of her Angel.

There is much more I could add about Kathy and Frater R.O., but I'll leave it to the reader to follow the links I have given to learn more about them. Each of these aspirants are perfect examples of how modern Solomonic mages should work. You may also gain much from these essays about the grimoires (all of which I have mentioned in this piece):

Medieval Magick (Ch. 1 of *Secrets of the Magickal Grimoires*)

[http://kheph777.tripod.com/secrets\\_chap1.html](http://kheph777.tripod.com/secrets_chap1.html)

Modern Grimoire Magick: Folk Magick and the Solomonic Path

<http://jwmt.org/v1n10/modern.html>

The Holy Guardian Angel: Exploring the Sacred Magick of Abramelin the Mage

[http://kheph777.tripod.com/art\\_HGA.html](http://kheph777.tripod.com/art_HGA.html)

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Contact Aaron: [kheph777@yahoo.com](mailto:kheph777@yahoo.com)