**"The Thunderstones"**

**from "The Veil of Isis", Rene Guenon**

*Les Pierres de Foudre*, May 1929.

In his article devoted to the Tarot in the special issue of *Voile d’Isis*, Mr.

Auriger, referencing the sixteenth Arcanum, wrote this sentence: “It

seems that there exists a relationship between the hails of stone that surround

the Lightning Tower and the word *beith-el*, the House of God, of

which the Semites designated as the aeroliths of lightning stones.” This

link is suggested by the name of ‘House of God’ given to the Arcana in

question which is indeed the literal translation of the Hebrew *beith-el*;

but it seems to us that there exists some confusion between several differing

things, and that a clarification of the issue may be of some interest.

Firstly, it is undoubted that the symbolic role of aeroliths or stones

falling from the heavens is very important, because these are the same

‘black stones’ that are mentioned in so many different traditions, from

the figure of Cybele, or the ‘Great Goddess,’ to the black stone enshrined

in the Kaʿabah in Mecca, which is also related to the story of Abraham.

In Rome as well, there was the *lapis niger*, not to mention the sacred

shields of the Salians that were said to have been carved from a meteorite

in the time of Numa.25 These ‘black stones’ can certainly be classified in

the category of ‘baetylus,’ which is to say stones considered as ‘dwellings

of the divine,’ or, in other words, as supports of certain ‘spiritual influences;’

but did all the baetylus have this origin? We do not think, and, in

particular, we have seen no evidence that this may have been with the

case with the rock which Jacob, according to the account of Genesis, gave

the name of *Beith-el*, a name applied to the very place he had rested his

head on while having his vision.

25 Mr. Ossendowski reported the story of a ‘black stone,’ once sent by the ‘King

of the World’ to the Dalai-Lama, then transported to Ourga in Mongolia, where

it disappeared one hundred years ago: not knowing what the stone was, the

Dalai-Lama tried to explain certain phenomena, such as the appearance of characters

on the surface of the stone, assuming from this that it was a kind of slate.

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The ‘baetylus,’ strictly speaking, is the representation of the *Omphalos*,

which is to say, a symbol of the ‘Center of the World,’ which is naturally

identified with the ‘divine interior.’26 This stone could have taken

a variety of forms, including that of a pillar; this is why Jacob says: “And

this stone, which I have set for a pillar, shall be the house of God;” and

among the Celtic peoples some menhirs, if not all, had the same meaning.

The *Omphalos* could also be represented by a conical or ovoid stone, such

as the ‘black stone’ of Cybele; the cone evokes the sacred mountain, a

symbol of the ‘Pole’ or the ‘Axis Mundi;’ as for the ovoid form, it relates

directly to a very important symbol, that of the ‘World Egg.’ In any case,

the ‘baetylus’ was a ‘prophetic stone,’ a ‘talking stone,’ which is to say,

a stone that made oracles, or with which oracles were made, thanks to

the ‘spiritual influences’ of which it was the support; the example of the

*Omphalos* of Delphi is very characteristic in this respect. The ‘baetylus’

are therefore essentially sacred stones, but not necessarily of a celestial

origin; however, it is perhaps true that, symbolically at the least, this idea

is true in a certain way. What makes us think this is so is their relation

to the mysterious *luz* of the Hebraic tradition, this relation is certain in

the case of the ‘black stones,’ which are actually meteorites, but it should

not be limited to this one case, since it is stated in Genesis, when speaking

about the *Beith-el* of Jacob, that the first name of this place was precisely

the same, *Luz*. We may even recall at this point that the *Grail* had

been, it was said, to have been carved from a stone fallen from the heavens,

between all these there are very close ties, but we will not ponder

on it anymore, for these considerations may lead us astray from our subject.

27

Indeed, whether they are ‘baetylus’ in general, or ‘black stones’ in the

specific, neither have anything in common with the ‘thunderstones;’ it is

especially on this point that we recall a serious confusion in the sentence

quoted at the very beginning, which can be explained quite easily. One

is certainly tempted to suppose that the ‘thunderbolts’ or ‘thunderstones’

must be stones that fall from the sky, aeroliths, and yet it is not so; one

could never guess what they are without have learned from the peasants

who have preserved the memory of it through the oral tradition. In fact,

by their very nature, these same peasants have committed an error of

interpretation, showing the true nature of tradition escapes them when

they believe that these stones to have fallen with the lightning, or that

26 This designation of the ‘divine interior,’ known as *mishkan* in Hebrew, was

also later attributed to the Tabernacle: as it indicates itself, it is the seat of the

*Shekinah*.

27 There have been ample considerations on the issue of *luz*, as well as on the

*Omphalos*, in our study on *The King of the World*.

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they are the lightning themselves. They say that the thunder falls in two

manners, ‘of fire’ or ‘of stone;’ the first case is when it burns, while in

the second it breaks; but they know very well of the “thunderstones,” and

they are only in mistaken in attributing to them, because of their name,

a celestial origin which they do not have and never had.

The truth is that the ‘thunderstones’ are stones that symbolize lightning;

they are nothing more than the prehistoric flint axes of the ‘World

Egg,’ just as the fossilized sea urchin is the material figuration of the

‘serpent’s egg.’ The stone axe is the stone that breaks and splits, and this

is why it represents lightning; this symbolism harkens back to an extremely

remote era, and it explains the existence of certain axes, labelled

by archaeologists as ‘votive axes,’ ritual objects that never had any practical

usage as weapons or instruments.

This brings us quite naturally to recall a point that has already been

treated: the stone axe of Parashurama and the stone hammer of Thor are

one and the same weapon, and we will add that this weapon is the symbol

of lightning.28 We also see that this symbolism of the ‘thunderstones’

is of a Hyperborean origin, which is to say that it is related to the oldest

of the traditions of present humanity, to that which is really the primal

tradition of the present *Manvantara*.29

It should be noted, moreover, the very important role that lightning

plays in Tibetan symbolism, the *vajra*, which represents it, is one of the

principal insignias of the dignitaries of Lamaism.30 At the same time, the

*vajra* symbolizes the masculine principle of the universal manifestation,

and thus lightning is associated with the idea of a ‘divine paternity,’ an

association which is found just as clearly in Western antiquity, since

lightning is the main attribute of *Zeus Pater* or *Ju-piter*, the ‘father of the

gods and men,’ who besides blasts the Titans and the Giants with thunderbolts,

just as Thor and Parashurama destroy their equivalents with

their respective weapons of stone.31

28 See the article by P. Genty on *Thor and Parashurama*, in the *Voile d’Isis* of

December 1928.

29 Let us note in this connection that some, by a peculiar confusion, speak of a

“Hyperborean Atlantis;” Hyperborea and Atlantis are two distinct regions, as

much as North and West are two different cardinal points, and as a starting point

for one tradition, the first is well before the second. We think it is all the more

necessary to draw attention to this fact that those who make this confusion

would attribute this error to us, but it goes without saying that we have never

done this, and that we do not even see, in all that we have written, what could

give the slightest credence for such an interpretation.

30 *Vajra* is the Sanskrit term for lightning; the Tibetan form of the word is *dorje*.

31 It is interesting to note here that the thunderbolts of Jupiter are forged by

Vulcan, which establishes a certain relationship between the ‘celestial fire’ and

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There is even, in relation to this connection, even in the modern West

itself, another link that is quite unique: Leibnitz, in his *Monadology*, says

that “all the created monads are born, so to speak, by continuous *fulgurations*

of Divinity from moment to moment;” thus, in this way, through

the traditional points we have just recalled, lightning (*fulgur*) is linked to

the idea of the production of beings. It is likely that the academic commentators

have never noticed this, nor does it have exactly the same

meaning as that of the great Tibetan Lamas; but who, then, in modern

Masonry, could boast of actually possessing the mysterious power, one

in its essence, though double in its apparently contrary effects, of which

this attribute is the sign? We do not think that we are going too far in

saying that in what remains of the Western initiatic organizations, no

one has even a remote idea of what this is about; the symbol remains, but

when the ‘spirit’ has withdrawn, it is nothing but an empty form; is it

necessary to maintain, despite everything, the hope that a day will come

when this form is revitalized, where it will once again respond to the

reality of its original *raison d’être* and which alone gives it its true initiatic

character?

the ‘underground fire,’ a note which is not established in cases where it is a

question of stone weapons; the ‘underground fire,’ in fact, was in direct relation

with the metallurgic symbolism, especially in the Kabiric mysteries: Vulcan also

forges the weapons of heroes. It should be added that there is another version

according to which the *Mjolnir* or the hammer of Thor would be metallic and

would have been forged by the dwarves, who are attached to the same order of

symbolic entities as the Kabiris, the Cyclops, the Yakshas, etc. Also note, regarding

the fire, that the chariot of Thor was dragged by two rams, and that in India,

the ram is the mount of Agni.