

**LAS RUINAS ENTERRADAS DE POMPEYA Y
UN ANTIGUO EJEMPLAR ENIGMÁTICO
DE EPIGRAFÍA FORTUITA ROMANA**

**THE SUNKEN RUINS OF POMPEII AND
AN AGE-OLD ENIGMATIC SPECIMEN OF
ROMAN INCIDENTAL EPIGRAPHY**

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Resumen: Artículo en el cual se ofrece una visión general de las tempranas excavaciones arqueológicas españolas en el Golfo de Nápoles y en otros lugares (siglo XVIII) así como un análisis a fondo y un intento, debidamente documentado, por elucidar definitivamente el famoso cuadrado enigmático ROTAS-SATOR hallado dos veces en Pompeya (siglo XX) y en otras ruinas a lo largo del Imperio Romano.

Palabras clave: Alcubierre, Arqueología, Círculo (Cuadratura del), Cruz (Griega), Cuadrado Mágico, Encrucijada, Excavaciones, Gnosticismo (Cristiano), Herculano, Laberinto, Mandala, Metafísica, Mismidad, Nápoles (Reino de), Palenque, Pompeya, Psicología (Profunda), Rotas-Sator y Rueda Solar.

Abstract: An article giving a brief overview of early (18th century) Spanish archaeological excavations on the Gulf of Naples and elsewhere, as well as an in-depth analysis of, “and a properly documented attempt at”, finally elucidating the famous enigmatic ROTAS-SATOR square found twice at Pompeii (20th century) and at other ruins over the length of the Roman Empire.

Keywords: Alcubierre, Archaeology, Circle (Squaring the), Cross (Greek), Crossroads, Excavations, Gnosticism (Christian), Herculaneum, Labyrinth, Magic Square, Mandala, Metaphysics, Naples (Kingdom of), Palenque, Pompeii, Psychology (Depth), Rotas-Sator, Selfhood and Sunwheel.

EARLY EXCAVATIONS IN POMPEII

As American writer Ignatius Donnelly (†1901) commented in 1882, [...] “for a thousand years it was believed that the cities of Herculaneum and Pompeii were

myths”. That, incidentally, was just the case also with Troy which was discovered by Schliemann, the German archaeologist at that time (late 19th century), and with Ur, which was discovered by Sir C.L. Woolley, his English colleague, succeedingly (20th century).

Actually, the ruins of Herculaneum and Pompeii were identified and thoroughly excavated much earlier, in the late 18th century, by a Spanish amateur archaeologist¹ who ought to be given full international recognition for his accomplishments, thus expanding that duet of pioneering archaeologists to a trio. For the most part, this man has hardly been identified abroad in the relevant literature and, when rarely identified, he has either been merely mentioned by his real surname or described as a ‘Neapolitan gentleman’ by the name of Rocco Gioiachino. Truth to say, his real and full name was Roque Joaquín de Alcubierre (†1780) who, at the outset, was a Major in the Neapolitan Royal Engineer Corps. It is believed that he was transferred from Spain as a member of the Spanish military expedition that recovered the Kingdom of Naples from Austria in 1734.

I therefore take this opportunity of vindicating the Spanish glory and the memory of this noted compatriot to whom full credit is due for having (i) encouraged and persuaded the then ruling King Charles VII (1735-59) of Naples, a member of the Spanish Branch of the House of Bourbon, who later became Charles III² of Spain, to sponsor regular archaeological excavations on the Gulf of Naples and (ii) been, for most of the last forty-two years of his life and as the king’s loyal and trusted Aide, directly or indirectly concerned with the overall project of excavating a grand total of no less than nine sites in the area, namely Herculaneum, Pompeii, Stabiae, Polion, Sorrento, Capri, Pozzuoli, Cumas and Fusano. He had a succession of assistants and cooperators, among whom his comrade-at-arms the Neapolitan-born Spanish colleague engineer Francisco de la Vega is noteworthy because, according to Salvatore Nappo, the Italian authority on Pompeii, he [...] “was undoubtedly the best and most farsighted of the 18th century excavators” in Pompeii.

¹ Other early Spanish archaeologists were Ocampo and Morales (16th century), Caro (17th century) and Flórez and Ceán (18th century).

² This king (†1788), a truly enlightened monarch, also promoted and sponsored from 1734, the first archaeological excavations in Spanish America, which included discovery of the ruins of Palenque (Mexico)[Alcina]. He played a prominent role—together with the French king—in supporting the American Revolutionary War in different ways, to the inclusion of such major accomplishment as that of successfully selling the ‘armed neutrality’ policy to Catherine the Great, the Russian empress, an invaluable action which served to prevent Russia and her allies from intervening in the conflict on England’s side, this being another fact for which Spain has apparently not received any credit in the USA, except perhaps at the academic level.

Eventually, those accomplishments materially enabled Italy to boast of having the world's richest archaeological collection in the *Museo Aqueologico Nazionale* in Naples.

As to Spanish sovereignty over Naples, Bellechasse, the Swiss historian, in writing about Pompeii and Herculaneum, comments that Naples, up to 1713 (Treaty of Utrecht), had been [...] "a kingdom which Spanish Viceroys had brilliantly ruled for over two centuries".

The sunken ruins of specifically Pompeii are remarkable not only because they constitute the unique survival of an old and almost intact Roman city, but because they preserved a baffling, epigraphic and quasi-palindromic square (Fig. 1) which, since its discovery there twice in the 20th century, has succeedingly rekindled considerable interest among scholars, notably classicists. Pliny the Elder was, apparently, the first Roman scholar to mention it. (Ref.: *Naturae historiarum libri*, completed in 77 AD). [*Britannica*].

This square has to date been defying a proper and convincing solution, as can be determined from the relatively large bibliography available thereon and the absence of a consensus of opinion on its possible meaning.

IDENTIFICATION AND DISCOVERY OF THE SQUARE

The square is conceived in the form of a 5-X-5 matrix, at times loosely described as a magic square, wherein numerals are replaced by letters representing Latin and would-be Latin words. Also, contrary to a true magic square, all the symbols (characters in this case) are repeated--except the central N, a fact which is highly significant because both its key position and its special symbolism, as will be remarked upon later.

From the illustration below (Fig.1) it will be readily obvious that the lettering can, in principle, be read either horizontally or vertically and either from the top or backwards from the bottom. However, it was intended to be read in the Oriental boustrophedon manner³, i.e., the way in which the oldest Greek inscriptions were written [Gelb]. The square, in this original Oriental form, has been found also on an ostrakon (ancient Greek potsherd) on exhibit in the Cairo Archaeological Museum

³ A phrase read alternately from right to left and from left to right. This usage has been affirmed by Diehl (1925), Gelb and Wagner (1950s), Fuchs (1960s), Hoffman (1970s) and Hommel (1990s). This sort of spiral evolution, which is inspired on "the way an ox turns in ploughing", is the way in which the Jewish Bible in Hebrew characters is written. Moreover, "The Romans usually considered the left auspicious, hence the ploughman turned up the clods of earth to the left and drove his plough to the right". [Burriss].

[Bouisson] and in Arabian or Ethiopian talismans.



Fig. 1

The lettering, as shown above within a cippus (a type of ancient Roman gravestone) by way of a posthumous tribute to the anonymous clever Roman originator of the puzzle, is hence to be read as SATOR-OPERA-TENET-AREPO-ROTAS, this version being the Westernised direct form of the square that has prevailed from the 6th century AD. [Becker]. As such, it has been found in inscriptions on several media ranging, roughly, from an early 9th century Latin Bible⁴ to certain 14th century Austrian coins [Ripley and Vignati/Peralta], to the inclusion of numerous buildings erected by the Knight Templars⁵. [Vignati/Peralta]. Additionally, as illustrated by Becker and Wirth, it appeared on a 16th century talisman--known as Postel's pentacle⁶--in which the square is, basically, graven within a circle and lying over two interlaced rectangular triangles. As such, the square drew the attention of Father Athanasius Kircher (†1680), the famous German Jesuit priest, linguist and scholar, but was negatively commented upon by him. (See the Conclusion section, below). It was used in even more recent times for, as stated in the *Britannica*: "As late as the 19th century it was graven on amulets and charms and laid upon pregnant women to ensure safe delivery".

⁴ Held at the Bibliotheque Nationale, Paris, France.

⁵ This fact is a real breakthrough because it is generally held among scholars interested in esotericism that the Knight Templars, through their connections with Semitic and Graeco-Byzantine mystics in the Middle East, believed in the alchemical-gnostic doctrine of dualism and the union of opposites by way of awakening, developing and venerating the female principle, supposedly in the form of 'images of black Virgins' representing Mother Earth, hence the colour black. Gordon, for one, says: "Certainly Eastern dualism entered Templar philosophy early on [...]. Learned in Islamic doctrine, number and science; Jewish Qabalah" [...].

⁶ Postel (†1581), a French secularised Jesuit priest, was a mystic, an orientalist and a philosopher as well as an expert in the Christian cabala. Although this talisman is awkwardly designed, its symbolism agrees perfectly well with the alchemical-astrological tradition for it corresponds to the quaternary nature of the self as described by Dr. Jung.

Discovery of the first of the two specimens found in Pompeii--all in graffito⁷ form--occurred in 1926 during excavations under the supervision of Mauiri, an Italian archaeologist. It was marked on the outside of the house of a Publius Paquius Proculus, an official who had been elected annual *duumvir municipale* (town co-magistrate) in 74 AD. [Comte Corti]. This specimen was indirectly dated by Italian Professor della Corte and his closest colleague at some time before 62 AD, the year of the earthquake preceding the 79-AD Vesuvian eruption.

SUMMARY INTERPRETATIONAL BACKGROUND

The numerous scholars who have written about the square in the 1900s alone exceed 150, from Klein (1900) to Ernst, Guarducci and Keparová in 1991, as gleaned largely from the extensive bibliographical references given by professor Moeller, the Dutch scholar.

Among the other interpretations probably the most important one is the view that the square is of Mithraic origin, as espoused by Moeller, who set forth a well-reasoned and plausible but unlikely argument as discussed in his 1973 essay on the square. His view does, however, contribute to dispelling the belief that it is of Christian origin.

Ferguson briefly summarised the ‘state of the art’ in this abstruse subject when he affirmed quite simply, as fairly recently as 1989, that the meaning of this word square is not clear and that scholars have offered many (utterly) differing interpretations. Indeed, these interpretations range between two radically clashing extremes, namely, at one end, from the view that it is a square [Marcovich as quoted by Keparová and as translated from the German language] “‘which could have been invented by low-class people, such as soldiers, sailors, traders, prisoners, despicable men [‘bastards’ was the actual hard name he used] or even slaves, or at best a mere game””; and, at the other end, that it bears one or more concealed Christian messages.

Notwithstanding all the existing contradictory interpretations, it is a fact that the square has such an evocative power despite the expiry of well-nigh two millennia since its development that, remarkably enough, it captured the imagination of Anton Von Webern (†1945), a pupil of Schoenberg, who is deemed to be the most notable composer of the contemporary Viennese school of music. He very appositely used

⁷ This practice of defacing stone walls is quite old in Italy as evidenced by the graffiti found in Pompeii, but with the difference that markings were graven [not, of course, spray-painted] then. [Montanelli].

the SATOR-ROTAS ... phrase (translation) “in his Concerto Opus 24 as a symbol of ‘universal harmony’. [Simonet], thereby equating it with an Indian mandala. (See the Conclusion section, below).

DISCUSSION AND FINDINGS

General

From a cursory review of the bibliography on the subject it seems that the favourite interpretation among academic scholars is that the square is of Christian origin because the lettering therein, when rearranged, happens to show phrases admitting of a Christian interpretation. One of these phrases even leaves two remaining letters, A and O, in duplicate, which are believed by such scholars to represent the Greek letters Alfa and Omega as used in the Christian sense.

But Ferguson states that although the result of associating the square with Christianity is striking, it appears to be coincidental, for the interpretation rests on unlikely assumptions and **a non-Christian meaning is more probable**. Etienne indirectly supports this view in commenting that Tertullian (†c220 AD), the Carthaginian-born Church Father, presumed that there were no Christians in Campania (the region encompassing Pompeii) in 79 AD. He adds that even if there had been any isolated Christians in specifically Pompeii, they would not have understood the Christian phrases because though Pompeians prayed in Greek they would have been unaware of the special Christian meaning of the letter-words Alpha and Omega.

The Biblical Acts of the Apostles (28: 13-14) do assure, though, that Saint Paul was met by brothers-in-the faith when he visited Pozzuoli, in Campania; but this large international port cannot be compared with Pompeii, a small provincial city (Etienne), which had a population of only some 18,000-20,000--including a relatively large floating community of wealthy, Roman summer residents--at the time of the volcanic eruption. And the neighbouring Herculaneum had merely 4,000 inhabitants at the time.

There is no convincing evidence of Christian cruciform symbolism either at Pompeii or Herculaneum [Dinkler as quoted by Ferguson] in the 1st century AD. The oldest Christian crosses found in Italy, which are those seen in the catacombs, in Rome, date to the 2nd century [Comte-Corti]. Ceram, the celebrated German populariser of archaeological discoveries, said in 1957 that there are no indications of the existence of the Christian cross any earlier than the 2nd century. Ferguson,

exactly thirty years later, reaffirmed this when he made the sweeping statement that "It is now generally accepted that there are no securely datable Christian archaeological remains before the late 2nd century or about 200 AD."

In my opinion, absolutely all the unapparent indications definitely point to a Jewish origin, and more specifically to a Judaeo-Gnostic origin. The theory of the probable Jewish origin of, or Jewish influence on, the square has already been remarked upon by such scholars as Dornseiff, Cumont, Jerphanion, and Fishwick [Moeller], and also by C. Comte-Corti. The last-named more specifically suggests that it 'could be a Jewish **hieroglyphic**'. (Emphasis added). As stated by MacHendrick, "The Roman state religion, cold and formal, offered little comfort: the warmth and promise came from Oriental religions" and cults.

Therefore, for the purpose of correctly identifying the origin and the meaning of the square, it would appear, to begin with, that its discovery at Pompeii is very important because Roman mystery religions prevailed there in the 1st century AD, a fact which affords we Rotas-Sator enthusiasts with an invaluable first clue.

More specifically, the house of *duumvir* Proculus, where the second Pompeian specimen of the square was located, revealed the existence of drawings showing **rosettes**, **seven-step** stairs, and other items which could have been used as models by pupils of a technical school for apprentice masons and craftsmen [Ibidem]. It so happens that Roman building guilds, who learned from Jewish practices, left their symbolic elements (including compass, cube, mallet, level, plummet, and square), as were recently **excavated in Pompeii**, curved on stone [Sinclair]. Needless to say, those same elements form part of the symbolism of Freemasonry.

Simon Magus, who hailed from Samaria--a region which in New Testament times was to some extent a centre for Hellenistic culture--was a 1st century AD Jewish teacher and the first Gnostic about whom something can be said with confidence. [Britannica]. **He visited Rome**, from Alexandria, Egypt, at some time during the reign of Emperor Claudius (41-54 AD) **and recruited followers there from among the numerous members of the Neo-Pythagorean movement**, who, it is said, practised **initiatic Pythagorean cabalism** as far back as the 1st century B.C. [Ferguson]. (Emphasis added).

Indeed, evidence is available, from the archaeological excavations made in Pompeii, to the effect that initiatic rites pertaining to the Dionysian-Ariadne mystery cult of Greek origin, in keeping with the Neo-Pythagorean movement, were held there since at least c. 60 B.C. [Etienne]. In the 2nd century AD "Justin Martyr reported that Simon had engendered a cult in Rome". [Ibidem] The name *Faustus*,

which “was bestowed on Simon early in the Christian era” [Walker], means ‘Favoured One’ and represents, according to Goethe, the myth of (Translation) “the restless and ambitious human spirit of striving after knowledge of the supreme and eternal Truth”. [*Espasa*].

As in Roman, Greek, and Middle Eastern initiatic labyrinths, and in Indo-Tibetan mandalas⁸, the square⁹ responds to "the need for the *fallen*, in the Neo-Platonic sense, to seek out the way back to the spirit through the Centre[!]" [Cirlot] (Emphasis added).

Relevant Historical Background and Additional Supporting Facts

1. Even the cross-like marks on the 1st and 2nd century Palestinian ossuaries should not be interpreted in a Christian sense [Smith as quoted by Ferguson].
2. During roughly the 50 years before and 50 years after the Common Era, a number of geometrical symbols, mostly **rosettes** [...], were put on many of the ossuaries used at that time for the internment of bones [*Judaica*] in Palestine, Simon Magus’ native land.
3. Judaism made an important contribution to the conceptions and the development of Gnosticism [Ibidem], as evidenced by the fact that ‘many Gnostic speculations can be explained as arising from reflections on the early chapters of Genesis’. [Ferguson]. Coptic codices found in the Nag Hammadi Library in 1945-46 have yielded extensive evidence for Jewish tradition in the formation of Gnostic speculation (Ibidem). And "Elements of Gnosticism bear striking similarities to **Neo-Pythagoreanism** [...] and Middle Eastern Platonism" [...] (Ibidem). (Emphasis added). Alexandria, Egypt, “arose from Israel and Athens”. [Frank]. Here, in the 1st century AD, the syncretic systems that nourished the complex of hermetic philosophy known as Gnosis and Neoplatonism came together [Roob]. "The view which has found a great deal of favour in recent years is to

⁸ The link between this seemingly astro-alchemical square and a Hinduist-Buddhist mandala lies in that the latter, as used by Dr. Jung in the treatment of his patients, is “a device aiding psychic integration”. He adds that “the symbols of the self in mandala form, as are spontaneously produced by the unconscious mind, have a mathematical structure which both expresses and creates order and which generally appear in times of psychic disorientation to offset a chaotic state or as a formulation of a numinous experience.

⁹ Cardinal Nicholas of Cusa († 1464), an influential philosopher, said that search for truth in man is comparable to the task of converting a square into a circle and that the centre, where the most concentrated energy lies, is where opposites coincide (*coincidentia oppositorum*).

regard the **Gnosis** as a kind of philosophy derived from the Orient [...], a philosophy which is supposed to have been current in the **eastern parts of the Roman Empire** during the centuries that followed Alexander the Great" (†323 BC) [Burkitt] (Emphasis added). "This view has been upheld [...] by such scholars as Biousset and Reitzenstein" [...] (Ibidem). "The character of Gnosis essentially consists in intuition, in an illumination by the spirit of God" [Weizsäcker as quoted by Cheyne], the intuition being therefore in the nature of the special perceptiveness of mystics. The effect of Gnosticism "was most clearly felt on nascent Christianity in which it led to the formation of the canon, creed and episcopal organisation. [Britannica]. An all-encompassing intuition is the element that can reach the heart of a thing and hence grasp its essential reality [précis of a fundamental point in Bergson's *Introduction to Metaphysics* as summarised in the *Britannica*]. All the great Ionian Greeks--Thales, Heraclitus, Empedocles, like the almost divine Pythagoras--taught a Gnosis. [Burkitt].

4. Gnosticism is *Mater Alchymica* (the Mother of Alchemy) and draws upon astrological speculations. [Singer]. Zosimos, a 5th century Greek historian, states that the Jews acquired the secrets of the 'sacred craft' [alchemy] from the Egyptians' (...).[Judaica]. "Here [Alexandria], in the **1st century AD**, in the former centre of Greek culture on Egyptian soil, with its highly diverse mixture of peoples [...], the threads of all the individual disciplines making up the complex of hermetic philosophy came together: **alchemy**, astral magic [**astrology**] and the **cabala**. The complementary syncretic systems that nourished them, hybrids of Hellenic philosophies and Oriental religions and mystery cults, are known by the two concepts of **Gnosis and Neo-Platonism**". [Roob] (Emphasis added).
5. European (spiritual) alchemy developed from ancient mystery teachings taken up by the gnostics in the early Christian Era [Yates as quoted by Gordon]. The object of spiritual alchemy and of initiatic psycho-astrology consists in the issue of achieving selfhood from personhood, as pioneered--from a seemingly Gnostic origin--in early Christianity [Kelly] by St. Augustine himself, hence his famous phrase *noli foras ire, in teipsum redi: in interiore hominis habitat veritas* as quoted in his *De Vera Religione* (XI. 72) [Ibidem]. This was seemingly prefigured in contemporary times in Gestalt

psychology (1912) and was shortly thereafter (from 1916) developed notably by Dr. C.G. Jung (†1961), the eminent Swiss psychologist and psychoanalyst.

6. The use of the letters of the alphabet as numerical signs, the first Jewish traces of which are found on Hasmonean coins (c. 135 BC), may have been an imitation of the Greek custom. [*Judaica*].

Analysis

Readily Apparent Symbolism:

In keeping with the foregoing, the obvious key to the square, therefore, lies in its centre, which is occupied by N, **the only unrepeated letter** as noted above. This letter, which happens to be **emphasised** as explained below, symbolises, in brief, the central point of Creation in space-time or, simply, the geometric centre of the Universe and, in an extended sense, the centre of our own selves, plus "the point of resolution and reconciliation where all opposites disappear" [Cooper].

Indeed, the letter N was represented in the Proto-Sinaitic¹⁰ alphabet, according to inscriptions dating "from approximately the beginning of the 16th century BC" and apparently 'influenced by [...] Egyptian hieroglyphic writing' [...] [*Britannica*], by a gliding or a recumbent **snake**¹¹--i.e., [Walker] the female serpent regarded in the Middle East as the embodiment of illumination.

Additionally, the letter N¹² (i) is the **thirteenth** (13th) letter in the Proto-Sinaitic alphabet and in both the Greek alphabet and the classical Roman alphabet (see Fig. 2, below); (ii) stands also for number 14--its position in the Hebrew alphabet--a number (2X7) which, in the Hebrew cabala, symbolises **transmutation** and **metamorphosis**, i.e., spiritual rebirth, a condition which in turn is symbolised by the serpent because of the "sloughing of its wornout skin" [Bayley]; and (iii) has

¹⁰ An early alphabet originally consisting of 17 characters [*Judaica*], close to one half of which bore the influence of Egyptian hieroglyphics. [*Britannica*].

¹¹ This is a symbol corresponding to the winged serpent [or sea-snake] symbol in the Greek Orphic-Dionysian cult. [Campbell]. The Greek daimon (the Genius or guiding spirit) was in Roman classical times "often conceived as appearing in the form of a snake". [*Britannica*]. "The first meaning of 'wiseman' was priest to the serpent". [Pichon]. (Translation) As we penetrate into farther removed chambers of our inner castle we progressively become our truer selves [...] and get nearer to what is incomparable, i.e., to what is indefinable and ineffable in our personal selves. [García Morente]. As quoted from *Don Quixote*, "I know who I am--the one I want to be".

¹² ENE (in Latin and Spanish), NY (in Greek) and NUN (in Chaldean, Hebrew and Arabic). Sieveking illustrates the early Egyptian hieroglyphic for the letter as a gliding snake.

the numeric value of 50, which is a highly significant number as explained below. See 'Rosette' in the Findings section, under the letters R-O-T-A-S).

The far-reaching significance here of this letter is highlighted by the facts that not only is it (i) unique in, and (ii) central to, the square but it is (iii) spelled out there as **ENE**, and this spelling, read horizontally and vertically, is (iv) in the form of a cross.

Quite coherently, M, the immediately preceding letter (of which the N is an abbreviation) of this alphabet, "is the wavy sign symbolising the sea or Ocean" [i.e., the unconscious mind] [*Judaica*], as per the corresponding Egyptian hieroglyphic. This would appear to be confirmation of the belief, as held by certain symbologists, that the animal involved is precisely a female sea-snake.

The word cross, in this context, indirectly refers us to 'crossroads' and to the correlated words 'cruces' (plural of 'cruce'), 'crucial', and 'crucible' in the symbolic Gnostic sense. Hence the connection between particularly, on the one hand, 'cross' and 'crucible'¹³, and on the other, between initiatic death and number 13, will surely be apparent to the knowledgeable reader.

The end result, as mentioned in contemporary times by both Dr. Jung and Joseph Campbell, is the conjunction of opposites (*coniunctio*, or *conjunctionis*, *oppositorum*) involved in the mystical marriage of Gnosticism, which is also known as the alchemical wedding, as described below.

The 15th-century German Neo-Platonic philosopher and churchman Nikolaus Krebs, better known as Nikolaus Cardinal von Cusa (*Cusanus*), in his work *De visione Dei*, as quoted by Campbell, spoke about "the door of the coincidence of opposites which an angel guardeth". Such conjunction or harmonisation entails the operation in a person of symbolic fire and water, the two purification and regeneration elements which lead to the alchemical wedding or mystical marriage and which are "related to (Kantian) noumenon and the hermaphrodite" (the androgyne) [Cirlot].

Although the earliest extant alchemical literature dates only to the 3rd century AD, it reflects doctrines that could have been transmitted orally by a few masters to a small number of disciples for a long time previously [*Grazanti*]. One, if not the first, of such masters would of course be Simon Magus, the Samaritan Jew. (See subdivision 14, below).

¹³ The crucible symbolises the severe crisis or trial in the form of psychic chaos, a condition which, if overcome, is capable of causing the reconciliation or union of opposites via a resultant purification, the Greek terrifying catharsis. From contemporary scientific investigation (notably in the USA) it would seem that the union in point consists in the mental linking of the left and the right cerebral hemispheres.

As described in modern psychoanalytic terms, "Analysis probes, goes into, takes apart: it is a masculine, dynamic function. Synthesis contains, combines, encloses: it is a feminine, magnetic function. The first fusion of male and female energies, known as the **conjunction**, is the central process of alchemy". [Metzner as quoted by Singer].

I would first draw attention to the momentous fact that both the apparent ENE and TENET crosses represented in the centre of the square are Greek equal-arm and not Latin or Christian unequal-arm crosses. In hermetism the Greek cross is regarded as the emblem of Hecate--the goddess of **crossroads** (Emphasis added), the place where a man moves from one realm to another--and symbolises the union of the upright (male) and horizontal (female) principles. [Jobes]. Moreover, in Greek antiquity a cross was placed on the breast of an initiate after his 'new birth' (rebirth) in the Dionysian and Eleusinian mysteries. [Ibidem].

Roman, Greek and Middle Eastern initiatic labyrinths, can even be seen on the floor of some Italian medieval Romanesque churches [*Monitor*] and in certain similarly old French medieval cathedrals, notably at Chartres [Bayard], and in Indo-Tibetan mandalas. As to specifically magic squares, Dr. Carus (†1919), the German-born American philosopher, stated that they "are like a mirror which reflects the symmetry of the divine norm immanent in all things, in the immeasurable immensity of the Cosmos [...] no less than in the **mysterious depths of the human mind**". [Andrews] (Emphasis added).

Concealed Symbolism:

A thorough analysis of the respective numbers after reduction to a digit basis (See Fig. 5 in the 'Methodology' section, below) shows the following impressive and comprehensive symbolism relevant to my theory: (i) four ones, which digit symbolises the active principle and the creative spirit; (ii) four twos, which digit symbolises conflicting or tense dualism; (iii) two sixes, which digit symbolises the rays of the sunwheel and the union of opposites, i.e., the fire and water involved in the *opera alchymica*, as represented by the magic hexagram, a figure which is described below; (iv) four sevens, which digit--understood as four plus three--, prominent in the Bible, symbolises mysticism and final victory of the Spirit over matter; (v) two eights, which digit was prominent in the temples built by the Knights Templar, presumably because of its special symbolism, as enumerated below; (vi) an inner Greek cross (*crux quadrata*) consisting of five Mercurial fives corresponding to the ENE Greek cross in the original square (5X5, the order of the square); (vii) an imaginary or skeletal, major central TENET Greek cross consisting

of four Lunar (*Luna* = Moon) nines and representing the perfect number 33, which number appears both horizontally and vertically by adding up all the digits in either the central column or the central row and which symbolises completion of the alchemical process in the psyche, a feat which is symbolised by the 33-rung Byzantine mystical ladder; (viii) number 13, from both the sum total of the individual letters in the square and the position occupied by the letter 'N' in the Hebrew alphabet as well as in the classical Roman alphabet, symbolising an initiatic 'death' (a mere coincidence?); (ix) number 27, the converse of number 72, symbolising the sacred 'womb' (in alchemy, *vas Hermeticum*, the alchemical alembic or retort) and intuitive understanding, which number appears in the lower-left angle of the square, forming an imaginary triangle with its converse number 72; (x) number 72, symbolising the Gnostic Solar Logos and the Hebrew Cabalistic Sacred Names *Tetragrammaton* and *Shem Ha Mephorash*) of Yahwe as well as the steps in Jacob's ladder, which number appears in the upper-right angle, likewise forming an imaginary triangle with its converse number 27 and (xi) the central 50, which symbolises, in the Hebrew cabala, the gates of understanding, individuation and celestial man (in the Christian cabala, the Holy Spirit). Finally, but merely for the sake of further argument, it should be noted that the 1-50 series in question, i.e., ignoring the 'divine' number 72, adds up to 161, a palindromic figure which surprisingly enough happens to appear in the upper-left and the lower-right angles, likewise forming two imaginary triangles.

It will be clear to anyone who is acquainted with the alchemical process that the three major symbolic elements (mercury, silver, and gold), the required 'retort' and the other key factors as well as the immediate goals and the ultimate objective, are symbolised in the square within the twelve-number 1-2-5-6-7-8-9-13-27-33-50-72 series, as analysed above.

Furthermore (also by mere chance?) the number of individual letters in the square (A-E-N-O-P-R-S-T) happens to be eight, a figure which, in initiatic numerology, symbolises regenerative potential, universal harmony and life everlasting or immortality.

Enel points out most conclusively the importance of number 50 as well as of the letter NUN and the word ROTA--without any reference to the square under analysis--when he remarks that (TRANSLATION): "The 50 gates [of understanding], which are sealed by the letter **NUN**, are opened by the key-word (**ROTA**) to Wisdom". In view of the foregoing it would seem that this square was conceived upward from the centre and not *vice versa*.

Consequential Meaning of the Latin or Would-be Latin Words:

My interpretation of the Latin, or would-be Latin, words in the order appearing in the westernised version of the square, in the light of the symbolism of the above numeric values of the letters, is as follows:

S-A-T-O-R, in my opinion, stands for the contraction of the forename Saturnilo¹⁴ (equivalent to the Roman Saturninus), possibly identifying some Gnostic from Antioch.

O-P-E-R-A clearly stands for the Latin plural of the word 'opus', i.e., the *opus parvum*¹⁵ and the *Opus Magnum*, meaning the lesser work and the Great Work entailed in the dual process involved in the *opera alchymica*. This process can be defined as the strenuous and lengthy endeavour of, as mentioned above, eventually joining the symbolical fire and water (the Jungian *animus* and *anima*, which are partly correlatable to the ancient Chinese *yang-yin* concepts) in the psyche, which was the aim of Pythagorean philosophy resulting in the development of 'celestial' or 'cosmic man'.

T-E-N-E-T, as could be inferred after interpreting the meaning of the remaining quasi-Latin word ROTAS (see below), and disregarding the word AREPO for the reason set forth hereunder, might well have been arrived at by the originator of the square as residual letters. But it does, however, exist as an actual Latin word with the meaning of 'he holds', and can accordingly be perfectly incorporated in my interpretation of the Gnostic phrase or message, as given below, subtly concealed in the square in a coded form.

AREPO can be regarded as a nonsense word, i.e., not a true Latin word, required to complete the phrase, this being a fact which renders the palindromic phrase imperfect. Note that it is the reverse of the word OPERA.

The letters R-O-T-A-S do not strictly form a true Latin word either, since the plural of *rota* (= wheel) is *rotae*. It was obviously a licence, like the use of AREPO, taken by the originator of the square for the same reason. However, the basic word 'rota' in this context must refer us to the symbolic rotating--or more precisely spirally rotating--sunwheel representing spiritual evolution via soul-centred astrology and, as

¹⁴ The *Dizionario Enciclopedico Italiano* has an entry on a 2nd-century Antioch Gnostic by this name. As a rare coincidence, 'satori' in Japanese Zen Buddhism means 'illumination' (= spiritual rebirth), in keeping with the meaning of the name 'Buddha' (= awakened or illuminated man). Dr. Jung refers to [...] "the unawakened who are still unconscious of themselves, who have not yet integrated their future more extensive personality, their 'wholeness', or, in the language of the mystic, 'the ones who are not yet illuminated'".

such, it is equivalent to the alchemical message symbolised by the rosettes or rose windows in medieval Gothic cathedrals. Nevertheless, the inclusion of an implied plural word is not by any means out of place because of the said dual alchemical process, in that it is symbolically represented by the operation or influence of specifically a 'reversible' celestial or solar wheel constituting the means of accomplishing both the lesser work and the Great Work. Emerson, the noted American essayist, said that 'Rotation is the law of nature'; hence the 'rebirth' sunwheel¹⁶.

I wish to raise the academic question that the originator may also have concealed in the square a reaffirming message in the form of two erect snakes, representing the male and the female energies, confronting each other as in anticipation of becoming entwined round the staff¹⁷ of the mythical Hermes-Mercury. As we are dealing with a would-be palindromic phrase when read in the boustrophedon manner, as noted above, the two snakes can imaginarily be visualised in the square when it is viewed starting alternately both from right-to-left and left-to-right, as shown below (Fig. 2).

Dr. Jung, in commenting upon a symbolic poem (1952) by Frenchman Noël Pierre, says that the 'spiral rotation' (See Note 16, second-half) mentioned therein 'is

¹⁵ In the seeming absence of a quoted Latin name for the 'lesser work', I dare call it *opus parvum*, as a term related to the *Opus Magnum* or the Great Work.

¹⁶ The cross stands for the conjunction of opposites [Cirlot] and hence the connection with the symbolic four-spoke sunwheel when viewed as the dual axes on a natal psychoastrological chart serving as a personal mandala for meditation and subsequent self-knowledge and spiritual evolution in times of existential crises. Indeed, according to Montelius as quoted by Moeller: "There is a well-founded theory that the cross was in origin the four spokes of the Sunwheel removed from their mandala". The symbolic sunwheel (or the effect of the zodiac on a person as the Earth revolves within its orbit in relation to the sun's apparent annual path thorough the heavens) is viewed astrologically in the sense that it prompts major psychological changes (wheeling revolutions) as it figuratively rotates—anticlockwise, clockwise and ultimately anticlockwise again—around the imaginary axis represented by an individual's self, from birth and throughout his or her lifetime. This accounts for the fact in depth psychology that, as commented upon (1927) by Ortega, the noted Spanish philosopher, a former professor of Metaphysics at Madrid University, (TRANSLATION) "Personality, in the course of a lifetime, experiences [except in case of involution] two or three major transformations, which are like different stages on one same journey of the spirit. It seems as if our deep-lying being, in each of such two or three stages, **shifts to another quadrant of the Universe and turns towards new constellations.**" (Emphasis added).

¹⁷ As commented upon by symbologists, the double-helix molecular structure of the DNA sequence is uncannily reminiscent of these snakes when intertwined round the staff (*caduceus*). The origin of the two snakes has been traced to Ningishzida, the Sumerian god of Medicine, because: "When pictured in human form, two serpent heads grow from his shoulders" [...] [*Britannica*]. The symbolism of this god and his reputed mother corresponds with that of the likewise Ninazu [= water knower] Sumerian deity, who in turn is "considered the son of [...] the goddess of the netherworld". [*Britannica*]. Campbell, the late American mythologist, adds that Ningishzida "was the ultimate archetype or dark power [= the Greek Pluto] of the watery abyss".

often represented by a snake'. Furthermore, the caduceus or staff of Hermes-Mercury, which bears two entwined serpents symbolising union of the female and male energies, represents inner balance leading to illumination.

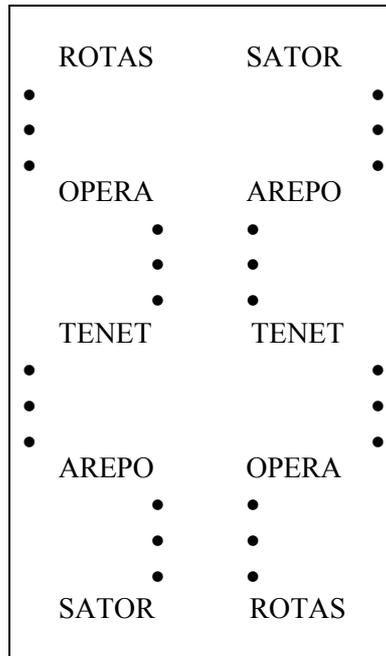


Fig. 2.

The number five (5) in Fig. 5, in bold face, which stands for the reduction of the 50 representing the letter N and which is in the centre of the basic 1-9 series of numerals, would represent here the theoretical 'heart'--most vital part--of the snakes.

The rosettes--or rose windows--in medieval Gothic cathedrals were known as *rotas* (= wheels) according to Biedermann. Precisely the rosette on the north façade of Notre Dame cathedral in Paris is still known as the 'alchemist's rose'. [Bayard]. In the alchemical symbolic language, the white rose represents completion--after a proper purification, hence the colour white--of the lesser work, and the red rose--representing uplifting love-passion--symbolises completion of the Great Work [Chevalier], which facts would be exemplified by the two crosses.

Therefore, both the ENE and the TENET crosses are relevant to the Gnostic message and, by extension, to Christian Gnosticism as expounded by Saint Augustine when talking of human transcendence and exploration of the self (as implied in subdivision 5 under Additional Supporting Facts, above).

METHODOLOGY

Apart from observing the symbolism directly apparent from the square, as already discussed herein, I intuitively had the thought that there might be some significant numerical message concealed in the lettering. However, before converting to numeric values the letters in the square, I had to find what might reasonably be regarded as the generally accepted correlation, among contemporary numerologists applying the Christian cabala, between the classical Roman alphabet and the corresponding Hebrew letters, and I hence proceeded as follows:

In my pertinent search, I found that there is a table by the Hispanic-American numerologist Bucheli as originally published in Chile in 1936, which has been adopted, or otherwise derived from a prior common source, by several other numerologists, such as the French Fontaine; and which I deem could be regarded as the standard table because it has yielded a comprehensive—and a virtually exhaustive--series of findings relevant to my theory.

Moreover the cabalist Zev ben Shimon Halevi (Jewish) and the numerologist Turner (Anglo-Saxon), as well as Llaugé (Spanish), have tables identical to the Bucheli-Fontaine 'standard' table, except for the numeric value of Q, a letter that does not appear in the square. The table of the symbologist Becker (German) is likewise identical, except for the variant value of the letter H, which letter does not appear in the square either. Finally, the table of Dr. Encausse (penname *Papus*), the famous Spanish-born French cabalistic numerologist, shows variant values for the letter C, H, and K, but these do not appear therein either.

Regarding the 22 letters of the Hebrew alphabet, "the first ten are given numeric values consecutively from one to ten, the next eight from 20 to 90 in intervals of ten, while the final four letters equal 100, 200, 300 and 400, respectively". [*Britannica*].

It should, of course, be noted that the consecutive order in the classical Roman alphabet does not fully match the consecutive order in the Hebrew alphabet (e.g., the third letter in the former alphabet is C whereas the third letter in the latter alphabet is G).

The resultant Roman-Hebrew correlation is the following:

A = ALEPH	B = BETH	C = KAPH	D = DALETH
E = HE	F = PE	G = GIMEL	H = HE
I = YODH	K = KAPH	L = LAMEDH	M = MEM
N = NUN	O = AYIN	P = PE	Q = QOPH
R = RESH	S = SAMEKH	T = TAW	U = WAW
X = SHIN	Y = YODH	Z = ZAYIN	-----

SOURCE: *Chambers Book of Facts*, Edinburgh (Scotland), 1997, p. 323.

Fig. 3

By application of the standard table, I arrived at the respective full numeric values of the letters in the classical Roman alphabet, which are as follows:

A	B	C	D	E	F
01	02	20	04	05	80
G	H	I	K	L	M
03	05	10	20	30	40
N	O	P	Q	R	S
50	70	80	20	200	60
T	U	X	Y	Z	---
09	06	300	10	07	---

Fig. 4.

For the square then, I reduced to a digit basis the numeric values corresponding to the letters therein read from the westernised version of the puzzle, which digits are as follows (Fig. 5):

6	1	9	7	2
1	2	5	8	7
9	5	5	5	9
7	8	5	2	1
2	7	9	1	6

Fig. 5.

Astonishingly, these digit values enabled me to uncover a real wealth of symbolic numbers and forms, as is fully identified and described above, and gave me the key to interpreting the possible underlying message. The cabalistic symbolism of such letter values, which may well have been in the mind of the contriver of the square, led me, perforce, to the Judaeo-Gnostic theory, as shown in the Discussion and Findings section, above.

OBJECT OF THE SQUARE

It is presumed that the original object of the square obviously was to ensure secrecy as a protective measure for a mystery knowable only by initiates and to protect the Judaeo-Gnostic sect in anticipation of possible antagonism on the part of the Roman state should it assume that the square was of Christian origin.

Whatever may have been the case, there is no denying the fact that the square has for close to two millennia defied proper interpretation, for there is no general consensus on any single one of the varying opinions ventured thus far. This, no doubt, is solid proof of the successful outcome of the intended secrecy object. And if the solution presented herein is correct, I would dare say it is a puzzle that has been far more difficult to crack than any of the secret codes recorded in the history of cryptography.

CONCLUSION

In summary, it will be plain from the foregoing that (i) the repeated lettering ENE and TENET cannot be taken to represent Christian crosses; (ii) the above-mentioned Father Kircher was completely off the mark when he negatively commented upon in his book identified in the Bibliography, below, that [TRANSLATION] [...] “these names [Sator-Arepo-Tenet-Opera-Rotas] were invented by diabolical inspiration, without their having any meaning”; and (iii) the square can be equated to a mandala if only because its key lies in the centre and the words OPERA and ROTAS allude to the process required to arrive at one’s on centre or Self, and because a mandala is described as ‘and aid in meditation toward achieving a harmonious relationship with oneself, with others and with the Universe’.

Father Kircher, though, does illustrate the square in the centre of a hexagram formed by two interlaced or overlaced equilateral triangles (as in the Star of David or Solomon's Seal), all inside a circle, which illustration obviously symbolises turning the square into a circle through the union of opposites as per Note No. 9.

These interlaced triangles, in ancient India, meant union of the male-female principles or, as shown above, "union of the fire and water elements" [Walker], i.e., "joining of the unjoinable" [Cirlot] or Cusano's *conjunctionis oppositorum* yielding both the *principium individuationis* and *sapientia*.

I propose that the phrasing of the concealed message, as read in the regular westernised direction, be expressed as follows: **SATORNILO HOLDS [THE SECRET OF] THE [CELESTIAL] WHEELS AND THE [ALCHEMICAL] WORKS.**

The possible merit of my theory lies, I think, not in hopefully having completely deciphered the cryptic inscription involved, but in having revealed an invaluable perennial message which is valid for men and women at large in overcoming an existential crisis, notably at middle age. This is directly or indirectly vouched for by Gestalt psychology and by symbolic depth-psychology as pioneered by notably the above repeatedly-mentioned Dr. Jung. Oddly enough, he designated his variant school of psychology as 'analytical' whereas, in actuality, it aimed at accomplishing a 'synthesis' in the psyche of his clients.

In closing, this opportunity is also taken to belie a statement in the best known encyclopaedia in English to the effect that the sudden death of the Italian king Ferdinand II in 1496 'opened the way for the Spanish usurpation of the Neapolitan throne.'

The actual historical fact, however, is that well over two centuries before (in 1268) the 15-year-old prince Conradin of the German Hohenstaufen House, the rightful pretender to the Neapolitan throne, symbolically assigned this title to king Peter III of the Spanish House of Aragon, his closest in-law relative, just before the prince was to be beheaded on a charge of high treason made by the king Charles d'Anjou, who represented the true usurper French dynasty of the dual Neapolitan-Sicilian throne. Although Aragon—and later united Spain—could not make good its claim to specifically the Neapolitan throne until 1435, this kingdom had from that time direct or indirect royal ties with Spain, on and off, for close to 350 years in the aggregate. Oddly enough this considerable time-span matches the duration of the ancient (BC 700 to 450) Greek colonies in Italy known as Greater Greece.