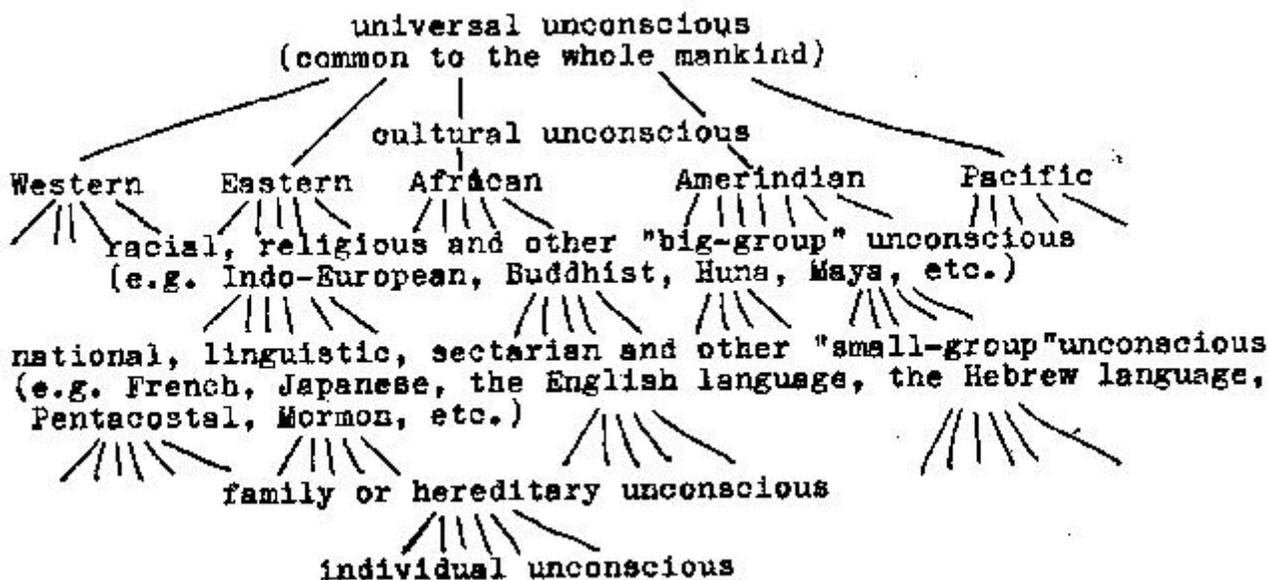


# THE OCCULT MEANINGS BEHIND POLISH HERALDIC DEVICES

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The question of different traditions of magic or secret teachings is generally accepted as an important one but is seldom dealt with. Usually it is stated that all traditions lead to one and the same goal: realization of one's Higher Self Atman, King or whatever it is called, and a division into several great traditions or paths to enlightenment is then given encompassing the Western Tradition of magic, the Eastern Tradition of Yoga and similar techniques, plus sometimes the African Tradition, the Amerindian Tradition, and perhaps the Pacific Tradition. Further, more subtle divisions are used in connection with the Eastern Tradition especially but almost never appear in the Western ones. The only exception seems to be in Witchcraft, where racial and national differences are clearly displayed by Anglo-Saxon, Celtic and other traditions. Witchcraft however should be treated rather as a religion with some admixture of magic than as a branch of magic proper (as defined in SSOTBME). . One of the key concepts of all occult teachings and the region where most of the occultist's work is performed is the Astral Plane with all its inhabitants which is nothing else but the collective unconscious of Jungian psychology with all its archetypes and atavistic memories. This collective unconscious can be seen as possessing several strata corresponding to different levels of the Astral Plane, not all of which are accessible to everyone. This may be represented diagrammatically as follows:



This "genealogical tree," of the unconscious is in several respects similar to the Cabalistic Tree of Life: all we have to do is to add something infinite like Ain Soph or

cosmic consciousness, at the top of the diagrams and the individual consciousness at the bottom of it and we will obtain a scheme of development from Kether (i.e. the most universal and therefore the most abstract, archetypes which lie in the remotest layers of the unconscious mind) to Malkuth (i.e. the world we live in which is our individual consciousness). Of course this scheme is not as clear and simple as the Tree of Life. In fact it is rather confused, since one's unconscious may draw on many sources from the higher levels which are themselves interrelated and the number of elements is too great to remember. Then what is the use of this "tree" other than an intellectual (conscious) exercise?

Certainly the entities belonging exclusively to the individual unconscious are the easiest to approach as they inhabit the realms lying just beyond the threshold of consciousness. Therefore they may be comparatively easily evoked and then stripped of everything that comes from our own past experiences. What is left belongs to a higher stratum and should in turn be stripped of all that is inherited biologically and so on, until the single universal truth, which is the core of all existence is uncovered and seen in its simplicity. The final step would consist in going still further and merging with the all-pervading cosmic consciousness thus reconciling this last pair of opposites: Self and Non-self. This is somewhat similar to "working the Paths" or "climbing up" the Tree of Life as well as to the "going back" techniques of A. O. Spare.

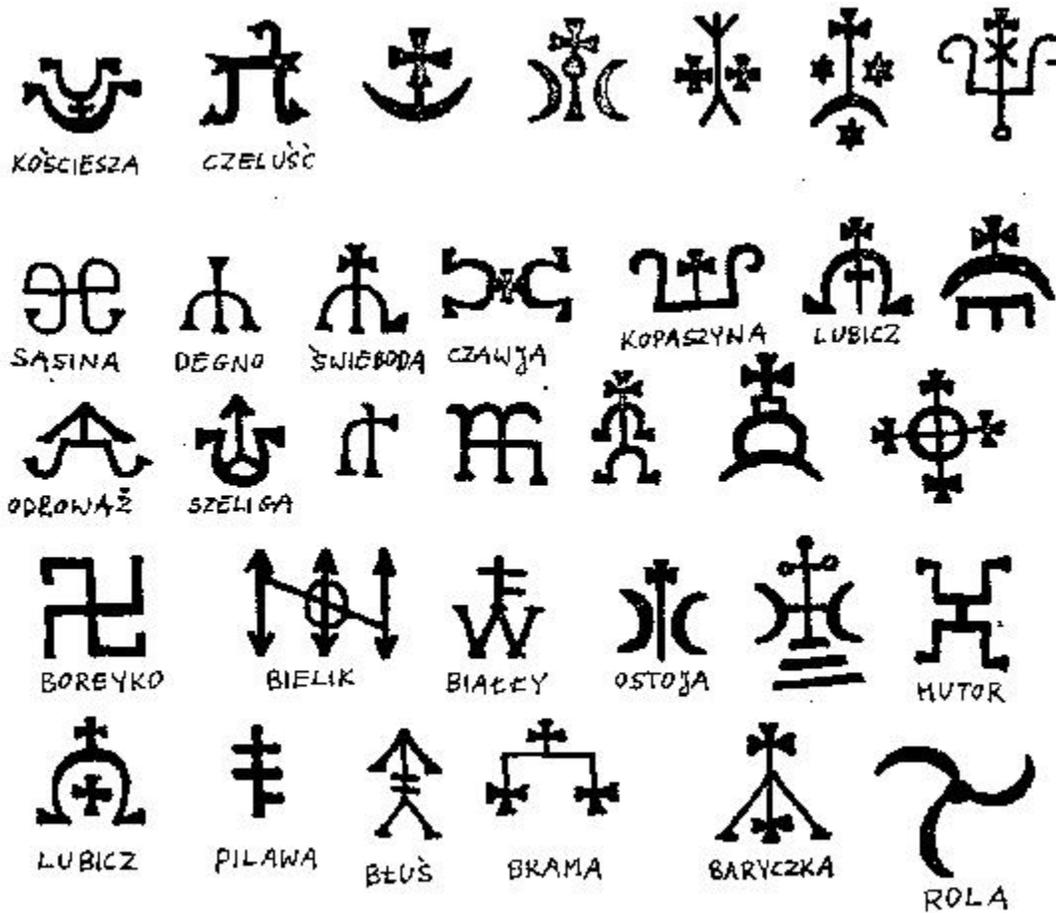
One may also consciously accept a whole body of any single tradition and force its symbols, images, ideas, correspondences etc, into his own unconscious thus changing it actively and creating an unconscious the content of which is not as individualistic as it used to be but gradually becomes more and more similar to the group unconscious of the particular tradition. Knowing the contents of our unconscious we can utilize it better. This technique may be compared to "drawing Kether to Malkuth"

It seems obvious that the first of these techniques is applicable more to individual work because every person has a different unconscious (which is clear from the diagram) just as each one has a different horoscope. (Cf. the statement in Liber AL "Every man and every woman is a star".) The second method is mostly though not only, for group work, and probably an obligatory one for members of occult schools and orders as they have to share at least the general structure of their unconscious.

I have sketchily discussed my little theory of the evolution of the unconscious before passing to the main subject of this article in order to show the place and importance of the national unconscious and hereditary unconscious in the constitution of the individual Microcosm. I believe that many national arms, emblems, symbols, etc., as well as those of old families contain a wealth of occult meanings and there is a number of their possible applications.

The Polish nation possesses a body of such symbols which are much older than its known history. The national colours white and red, as well as the arms of Poland, the white eagle are at once recognized as important occult symbols frequently used in

alchemical imagery. Less known however and far more interesting are the coats of arms of Polish nobility.



As can be seen from some examples of these coats of arms in their earliest known forms (Table I) there is a striking resemblance to some magical sigils from medieval and later grimoires. In later times under the influence of the West European heraldry, the elements of the coats of arms were conventionalized and represented as realistic objects such as stars, swords, arrows horse shoes etc. but it is still possible to reconstruct the original forms of these signs.

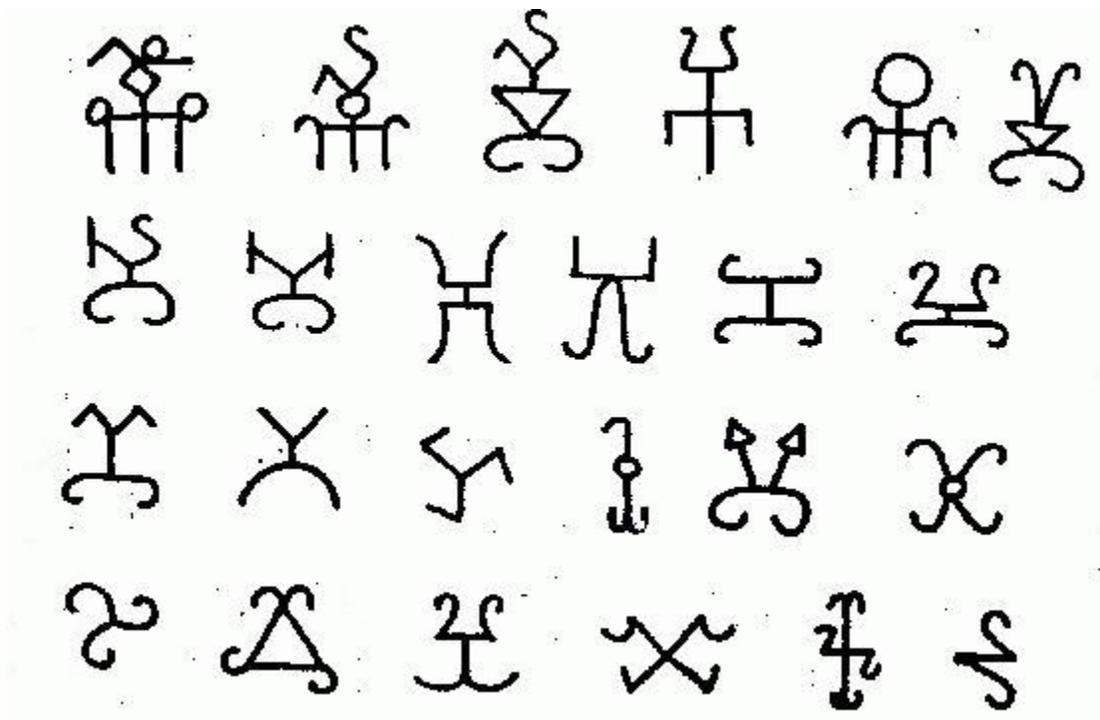
A distinctive feature of Polish heraldry is that one arms could have been used by dozens and in some cases by hundreds of families, all of which were believed to be related to one another though the exact genealogical links were so remote that they were no longer remembered. In fact they preceded the formation of family names. On the other hand, families of the same name may have used different arms which was the sign that they were not related and having the same name was just a coincidence.

There are two main theories concerning the origin of these typically Polish coats of arms. Both of them are very interesting and meaningful from the occult point of view, though the first one is considered historically incorrect. They are shortly as follows:

- 1) The runic theory: it was developed by Prof. Piekosiziski at the end of the past

century. He believed that the heraldic signs evolved from the Scandinavian runes brought to Poland by the Viking invaders who later settled in this country and became the noble class. Several books of his expounded a very elaborate system showing the way in which the coats of arms were generated from runic letters claiming for instance, that the crosses were added after adopting the Christian religion as a sign of "sanctifying" the symbols.

2) The Sarmatian theory: This is a current theory saying that the coats of arms of Polish nobility developed from magical characters of the Sarmatians which were called "tamgas". According to tradition Polish nobility were the descendants of the ancient Sarmatians, and in fact Poland was often called Sarmatia or Sauromatia. In the 19th century this traditional belief was regarded as a myth, but now it is held to be based on truth. The tamgas were magical signs the exact purpose of which is not known. They were found on various objects of everyday use, on weapons, jewellery, etc. and were brought to Europe by the Sarmatians in the early centuries A.D, from their homeland on the Black Sea and the Caspian Sea where they bordered with the Persian Empire the land of the Magi. It is easy to see the similarity of the tamgas and the coats of arms of Polish nobility (Table II).



Another interesting and magically significant feature of Polish heraldry is that each coat of arms has a special word associated with it. This word is known as "zawolaniell" which means "a call" or "a cry" and very often its meaning and etymology is not known.

So having a magical character (coat of arms) and a word of power ("zawolanie"), it seems possible to apply traditional magical techniques in order to get in contact with the "genius" of the family or its collective unconscious. As every individual has his

Holy Guardian Angel similarly every family may be said to have its "Holy Guardian Archangel", which may be contacted in this way.

These heraldic signs may also be looked upon from a different angle. They may be considered to be sigils which used to express some kind of a desire when they were created as the emblem of the family and later the desire itself was forgotten on the conscious level activating the unconscious level. This is similar to the technique used by A.O Spare, but on a grand scale and with the difference that the sigil itself is not forgotten only the desire is.

Besides the magically looking, typically Polish, coats of arms, Polish nobility use also a number of arms of the Western European type. These include several familiar occult symbolic figures, as for example raven, pelican, long serpent, unicorn, griffin, salamander, sphinx, etc. Of special interest may be two kinds of Caduceus, one of which is a conventional representation with the winged wand of Hermes, surmounted by a triangle of three stars, reminding us of the three Supernals (Kether, Chkmah, Binsh) of the Tree of Life. The other is a pair of black snakes and a golden elemental cross above them (incidentally its "zawolanie" may be translated as "Golden Freedom"). There is also a Pentagram with a fleur-de-lis on its upper point. The fleur-de-lis is symbolic of the spirits and this is the elemental attribution of that point of the Pentagram. Next comes a red rose surmounted by a golden cross placed on a cross of silver feathers and finally a man opening the jaws of a lion, reminding us of a similar Major Arcanum of the Tarot.

This article does not claim to unveil the hidden wisdom known only to initiates. It simply presents some ideas which appear interesting to me and possibly may open new areas of research for occult students. If anyone has similar ideas or experiences with similar techniques as those suggested here, I would be very glad to hear about it.