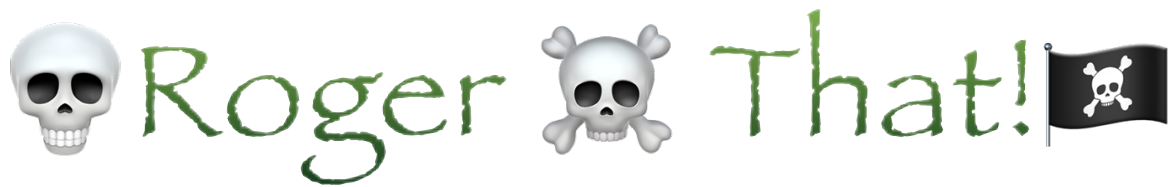


ROGER THAT!

HOW PIRATES STOLE THE SKULL & CROSSBONES





How Pirates Stole the Skull & Crossbones

It is one of the most recognizable symbols on earth - the Skull & Crossbones. A harbinger of dread in days past and a warning of poison in our present world, this bold logo has a complicated and convoluted history that dates back to antiquity, though then antithetical to what it has since become.

In our time the Skull & Crossbones is most notably the symbol for poison. Quite universally actually, yet no one seems to know for sure when or how this came to be the planetary agreed-upon emblem of toxicity. Another mystery lost to history. It started early in just the last century and took off.

Prior however, the Skull & Crossbones was most notably the emblem of piracy. Placed prominently upon a black field, this logo was feared far and wide as the flag flown by those brigands who plundered the Seven Seas. Known most often as the Jolly Roger, a corruption (it is thought) of the French term “Joli Rouge” meaning Pretty Red, the symbol of the Skull & Crossbones was for several centuries a herald of dread and doom, and its association with piracy has become its most legendary meaning to date.

Prior to this incarnation however, the Skull and Crossbones enjoyed a rather long history of ambiguity within the organization known as *Pauperes Comilitones Christi Templique Solomonici* or the Poor FellowSoldiers of Christ and of the Temple of Solomon...but better known to history as the *Templars*. Secretive in the extreme in most areas of their existence but especially in matters of symbology, the Templars utilized various forms of skulls and skeletons, among many other symbols, to illustrate aspects of their inner beliefs and practices, to depict for the illiterate various Bible verses and Calvinian virtues, traditions and theological doctrines which would otherwise prove impossible to explain without pictographic representation.

Following the fall of the Templars at the official dissolution of their indispensable Order by the command of the accursed church council of Vienne, Templars fled in all directions taking up differing positions based predominantly on their given occupation. Some knights were murdered by the church and the government of France, while others escaped to found surreptitious societies serving the same purpose of protecting pilgrims. And still many more were allowed to join different chivalric orders such as the Hospitallers and the Teutronics, to retire into monastic life mainly among the Cistercians, or to form new Orders such as the *Order of Christ* and the *Order of Montessa* in Portugal and Spain respectively...which were of course the Templars themselves under another name, being all the same people, holding all the same rights and properties and serving entirely the same purpose...and bearing all the same symbols.

Of those who were not knights however, men such as masons, farmers, smiths, herdsman, horse breeders, sailors and more found work for other Orders or in secular life. And of all those who made their way away from the Templar Order, the sailors perhaps had the biggest impact. According to secondary sources, Captain Emanuel Wynn was first to fly the Skull and Crossbones in 1700, but that is nearly 300 years after the fall of the Templars and their dispersal over the whole world. How then did Templar sailors have so great an impact if they never flew the banner for almost 3 centuries?

According to legend anyway, Captain Jean-Paul Curie was originally a Templar priest in 1312 when the order was officially suppressed. Though not of the Knightly class nor Sergeant, he himself had nevertheless been rounded up with their number as were many priests and monks in November of 1307. Held for half a year and tortured, Jean-Paul suffered the loss of his left hand and right leg before being released and relegated to a monastic life as a Cistercian. As one can imagine however, Curie was extremely angry with his treatment by the Roman Church and the French monarchy. And he was not alone. By the time the order was officially dissolved in 1312, Curie had organized a band of Templar survivors who began meeting regularly at the harbor to discuss plans for exacting compensation from the church for the wrongs done to them. But in 1314, when the church unjustly burned alive Jacques DeMolay, their Grand

Master, and with him, the faithful, Geoffrey DeCharnay, the nine vengeful Templars forsook all plans for seeking clemency and instead swore a bloody pact of undying retribution against the kingdom of France and the Roman Catholic Church, vowing to spend all their lives working for the undoing of each.

It is said that Curie and his compatriots were present at the burning of DeMolay and DeCharnay and searched the ashes in the aftermath looking for their martyrs' bones. Finding only a skull and two femur bones, they took them away and held them as semi-sacred forevermore.

So what's all this to do with the Skull & Crossbones becoming a pirate symbol? It began with the skull of DeMoley (or DeCharnay) and the two femur bones, but those wouldn't be set in place for a decade or two. Curie and his band didn't swear an empty oath nor one hastily made in the heat of rage. They swore unending enmity against those who personally wronged them, who destroyed their brotherhood, and who murdered their Master. And they did so with tact and intention.

Taking up ordinary vocations, the band used their positions and their patient dedication to plan not only how to enact vengeance but how to do so with anonymity. How else could a band of maimed men maintain such a strategy against a nation state and an institutional religion? They began small and quiet. An assassination here and a theft there, but eventually they grew to all out assault, raids, sabotage, and more. And they left no witnesses nor survivors at all, lest they themselves could be identified and executed.

In time the band grew so proficient as to begin blaming church rivals for the deaths of officials and foreign kingdoms for attacks on royal treasuries and troops. And when one man escaped who could possibly identify Curie, the whole band took to the high seas, where they carried on raiding, and plundering leaving none alive. They flew no flag nor declared official war on anyone determining that it was better for their enemies to suffer and not know the true reason, than to risk alerting their enemies of their existence and failing to fulfill their vows of vengeance.

Jean Paul Curie took command of the ship he named *Judas' Hammer*. Setting the skull and femur bones of DeMolay (at that point caste in bronze) in

the familiar shape on the wall of his cabin and a larger replica image of them fashioned on the prow, Captain Curie reeked havoc on fleets and kingdoms all loyal to Rome for the better part of 3 decades before disappearing entirely off the face of the earth. It is said by some that he sailed to Eleuthera (a Templar name for the new world). Still others say, he sailed to Ethiopia to assist the Sabbatarian Christians in their war with the Catholic Church. But it is most probably that after harrying the catholic world for decades, the *Judas' Hammer* came to rest in Portugal given sanctuary by the Order of Christ, who were themselves (unofficially of course) a continuation of the Templars under another name. In all likelihood, the Order of Christ, accounting Curie a hero for their cause, offered him and his crew a retirement among their brothers, and sent them off to one of their commanderies in the far east for the remainder of their days.

It seems the Cruossa, the Skull & Crossbones symbol, as an pirate emblem, was *remembered* in 1700 rather than being *invented*. Remembered not as an emblem of Templar vengeance but of No Quarter. But however it came to be, it was taken up by various pirate captains over the decades who each added to it and adapted it to their own imaginings. Thus to date the Skull & Crossbones calls to mind first poison and secondarily piracy.

The Templars did not originate this emblem however. Much like how pirates adopted it in after years, so the Templars themselves had already adopted this symbol from the early days of Christianity.

Infact the Skull & Crossbones even predates both the Cross and the Fish as Christian symbols, by at least a century. Dating all the way back to the second century, the Skull & Crossbones first appeared among the disciples of the Messiah carved on coffins and grave stones. The implication of death was obvious, but there was much more too it. The markings on these graves found both in and out of the catacombs, the Skull & Crossbones symbol signified the location of the congregation. The totality of the religion was embodied by this sigil as the religious gatherings were regularly held in catacombs, a fact necessitated by the persecutions against their kind which grew to the greatest severity during this time.

The Skull & Crossbones moreover ironically embodied not only the notion of death but life aswell, and more-so even, it stood for immortality and the standing up of the dead on the Last Great Day. The Skull & Crossbones was a symbol that asked a question, the question the Creator called the prophet Ezekiel to consider. In the 37th chapter of Ezekiel, the prophet is shown a vision of a great and vast valley full of dead mens' bones. Countless dead were laid out over all the land before him, corpses long, long dead, decayed away and whose bones had been lying in the sun so long they were dry. And the Almighty Maker of Heaven and Earth, asks Ezekiel, "Can't these bones live?"

What a question? Can those who died long, long ago live again? Can those of whom nothing remains but bones ever return to join the living? Obviously not. But that wasn't the prophet's answer. Instead he said, "YHWH, you know." (YHWH being the Four Letters of the Divine Name most probably pronounced as YAHWEH though not all agree.) Who are we to tell the Author of Life what He is capable of? It is best for us all to do likewise unto Ezekiel and look-on in wonder at what will happen.

Ezekiel watched and waited and wonder of wonders, the process reversed on these corpses. They're muscles and organs regrew. Life was breathed back into them and they stood up alive once more as before. Miracle of miracles. The dead will live again...if the Almighty Above should will it and work it so.

The emblematical aspect of the Skull & Crossbones is not only a reminder that we all shall and must someday die, not merely a promise of vengeance upon the monsters that murdered our loved ones and left us maimed, but moreover, a recollection of the prophetic promise that all the dead shall rise again on the Last Great Day, both good and evil. The Skull & Crossbones recalls to our recollection that there will be a resurrection, but also a reconning. The dead shall not only be raised but will rise to stand in judgment.

Both the wicked and the righteous shall stand once more and one and all shall be forced to face the Throne, to rise or fall forevermore. The Skull & Crossbones is a call to keep in mind that matter and commit it not only to memory but daily reminder and practice. We will fall and rise again. So we ought work deeds of righteousness, because we will have to answer for our

actions. And it's a reminder of justice aswell. We won't just stand for ours. All will be called to answer. There is no deed unseen by the Eyes of the Almighty. And none which will not be paid for in full. If we received no justice this side of life, we will when that Last Great Day arrives.

But there remains yet one more meaning inherent in the Skull & Crossbones logo. Poison in modern times. Resurrection promise in ancient times. And piracy hundreds of years ago. Yet before the Templars were destroyed and vengeance was all that remained to the likes of Captain Curie and many others like him, during their tenure, the Templars also held this symbol as a remnant emblem and a prophecy of restoration of the nation of Israel.

Adorning the back of the grand master's char was a form of the Skull & Crossbones but not with the X shaped pattern. Rather with one bone vertical and the other horizontal, this version of the Skull & Crossbones spoke of the full meaning of Ezekiel 37. Yes it prophecies a resurrection in the end times, but moreover and most of all it specifically foretells of Israel - that these dry bones in the vision are not merely representative of physical people coming back to life, but even more than that, they are representative of the ancient nation of Israel coming back to life again. Not just the Jews as modernity views it. They are a part of Israel but not all of Israel.

In the ancient world the patriarch Jacob was given the name Israel, and he had 12 sons, who were also called by his name. But in the end of his life, Jacob blessed his son, Joseph's two sons adopting both of them in his place and giving them each equal inheritance with all his genuine sons, making a total of 13. Over time their descendants grew into 13 tribes, all of whom were known as Israel. When Moses freed the people of Israel from Egypt, they became a nation. But after the death of King David's son, Solomon, the nation of Israel divided into two kingdoms. One to the north and one to the south. Both remained Israel, but the southern one was named Judah and the northern most often called Israel. The northern kingdom was eventually conquered and exiled, never yet to return...however, the prophet Ezekiel specifically gave this resurrection prophecy about their return. Of all the people of Israel, ten whole tribes out of thirteen are lost among pagan peoples and nations. And the Templars not only

believed that restoration was destined to take place but were actively attempting to bring it to pass and to be themselves that return.

So which of all these meanings does the Skull & Crossbones hold today? All of them at once. As any symbol it is always different things to different people depending upon their knowledge and intention, and as always in spite of a symbol's intended implication, it can in fact mean differently to the viewer. It can call to mind more to the one who knows more...which is the entire intention behind this endeavor to explain more about the Skull & Crossbones.

Is it a poison symbol? A pirate logo? A commitment to give no quarter and enact unending vengeance? Is it a promise of resurrection? A call to restoration? Is it a prophetic question? Is it one or all? Yes. It is indeed one and all, though not all will know. But now you know. Do with the knowledge what you will. And decide for yourself, by how you live, what this symbol means.



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