



Cult Exposed: Chapter 4

The Believers of Red Hook

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History

The Yezidis are a small, persecuted religious sect of Kurdistan, said to have been founded by the Sufi mystic Sheik Adi (1076-1162). According to their sacred doctrines, when Melek Taus – “The Peacock Angel”, or Lucifer – fell from heaven, the Yezidi tended to his wounds. Since then, Melek Taus and the Creator have made their peace, and the Yezidi still revere the angel as their special link with God. From time to time, Melek Taus and other angels come down to proclaim new revelations to their chosen people. The Yezidi shared one trait with the Ismaili sect of Islam – their religion gives them the freedom to deny their faith to avoid persecution. As such, the Muslims have regarded them with particular hatred, though their status as “People of the Book” prevents them from being wiped out.

Beneath the shadow of the Yezidi once lurked another sect, the Qabidi. This group also placed special reverence in a fallen angel, but theirs was female and unrepentant. The Qabidi hid themselves among the Yezidi, the worshippers of the pre-Muslim earth deity al-Uzzi, and orthodox Muslims who adored Fatima, the daughter of Muhammad. In truth, they worshiped the Black Goat of the Woods in isolated places at the dark of the moon.

Around 1250, a Qabidi mystic had a vision from the Dark Mother. The goddess had entrusted her sect with an important task – the uncovering of a spiritual principle that would make their patron mightier than the Creator. The angel said little more, save to search for this power “as a beggar searches for buried treasure.” These words baffled the Qabidi, who nonetheless searched for the truth behind these words. Exhausting their own lore, the group contacted its Nestorian and Jewish neighbors at first, and later set out along the eastern Mediterranean in source of wisdom that might help their quest.

Through their journeys, the Qabidi found snippets of useful magical lore and spoke with magicians and soothsayers of many backgrounds. In addition, at forgotten sacred sites in Ephesus and Pergamon, they found their goddess worshiped under many names, including Diana, Cybele, Astarte, Hecate, and Lilith. Their wide array of metaphysical readings created a new pantheon, filled with a wide array of spirits and demons. Finally, they became skilled at developing secret contacts over large distances with individuals of many different ethnic backgrounds, an ability that would become useful when the group moved to the New World.

In January 1892, the United States opened its borders to the Ottoman Empire. Many Qabidi, persecuted for their faith in their homelands and following the prophecy, traveled to the New World, often pretending to be Christians persecuted for their faith. Taking up residence in the Red Hook district of Brooklyn, they joined the criminal underworld, working for the opium and slave trades while slowly recruiting among the other ethnic groups crammed into the tenements in this area. While most immigrants networked within their own communities, the Qabidi found strength in tying themselves to a wide variety of individuals of other ethnicities.

The leadership of the cult worked slowly. A group of Believers acquired work in maintenance and uncovered a series of tunnels beneath the town, possibly remnants of an ancient cult from Colonial times. The cult turned these into chapels for ritual as well as

Deity: Lilith, with other subsidiary beings worshiped as demons. Formerly a Shub-Niggurath cult.

Era: The Believers were strongest in the mid-1920s, though its historical roots and tenacity make it appropriate for all eras.

Goals: Maintain control over a criminal empire through rites in propitiation to “demons.”

channels for smuggled goods, while closing off those passages already occupied by unsavory creatures like ghouls or worse things. The area beneath the crumbling tenements near Van Brunt and Visitation was a nexus for these connections. A corrupt minister allowed them to use the Church of Saint Anthony of Padua as a front; when the nature of the group’s rites became known, most of the congregation left. Undismayed, the group took over the church entirely, turning it into a cheap dance-hall. As their power increased, the group brought in illegal immigrants who owed the church for their passage into America, and who were forced to repay it by whatever means available.

Among those smuggled into this country were a few transformed humans from the Qabidi of Turkey and Iraq. Their presence added more legitimacy to the sect’s pronouncements of divine contact with a great mother-goddess. By this time, the rites to Shub-Niggurath had been forgotten due to increased persecution and the American sect’s involvement in more secular matters and recruitment among Christians, Jews, and Muslims. The Believers pronounced the Gofn Hupadgh to be such traditional demons as Astaroth and Moloch, and turned to the worship of the demon Lilith (see *H.P. Lovecraft’s Dreamlands*, p. 137-38). According to legend, Lilith was Adam’s first wife, cast out of Paradise for refusing to submit to him. She became the mother of monsters who attacked sleepers in the night. The priests’ words were now backed with the physical presence of the demons, and the group flourished.

This was not to endure for long, however. In 1924, the National Origins Act was passed, setting quotas for non-European immigrants. This did not deter the steady flow of illegal aliens through the cult’s networks, but the cult did find it difficult to recruit members who could travel in respectable circles. The Believers also ran into trouble after recruiting Robert Suydam, a wealthy antiquarian and amateur folklorist who had made a study of many groups of Middle Eastern mystics. At first helping with the financing of the society, Suydam balked when the group demanded a ritual marriage with the goddess Lilith, instead marrying a local heiress and setting off on a cruise. The cult – or the goddess – caught up with him on the ship, murdering the couple. Suydam’s body was passed to representatives of the Believers, who hoped to restore him to live to fulfill his duty.

The investigation into this death proved to be the group’s undoing. On June 8, 1925, New York City police officers, led by Thomas Malone, raided the group’s church and tenements. The apartments collapsed, killing police and cultist alike, but the numerous arrests and deportations afterward effectively broke the group’s power. Still, even in modern times, prayers to Lilith and Hecate may be heard in the poorer sections of Brooklyn...