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# The Double Headed Eagle and Scottish Rite Masonry

A COLORADO COUNCIL OF KADOSH ORATION

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Long used as the insigne of a Scottish Rite Mason, the "Double Headed Eagle of Lagash" is now the accepted emblem in the United States of America of the 32 Degree. It is the oldest crest in the world. It was a symbol of power more than two thousand years before the building of King Solomon's Temple. No other heraldic bearing, no other emblematic device of today can boast such antiquity.

According to many historians, however, the two-headed eagle appears to be of Hittite origin. Early examples of the symbol come from the Hittite empire in central Anatolia, where two-headed eagles can be found on seals and also on sculptures. Turkish village Boguskoy, where once was the capital of the Hittite state, it was found the oldest two-headed eagle (13th century BC), carved in the rock.

From cylinders taken from the ruins of this ancient city, the double-headed eagle seems to have been known to the kings of the time as the Storm Bird. From the Sumerians this symbol passed to the men of Akkad, from whom it was brought to the Emperors of the East and West by the Crusades.

What we have discovered is the Double Headed Eagle of Lagash is the oldest Royal Crest in the world. It is stated that it passed from the Sumerians to the men of Akhad, from the men of Akhad to the Hittites, from the denizens of Asia Minor to the Suljukian Sultans and from there brought by the Crusaders to the Emperors of the East and West. When this emblem was first adopted it had been in use as a symbol of power for five thousand years. It was in use a thousand years before the exodus from Egypt and more than two thousand years before the building of King Solomon's Temple.

There seem to be some who believe that the double-headed eagle may have been a Masonic symbol as early as the twelfth century, but, it probably was first known to Freemasonry in 1758, upon the establishment of the Council of Emperors of the East and West in Paris. This was a part of the Rite of Perfection, a rite of twenty-five degrees, from which was evolved a large part of the present system of Scottish Rite.

The successors today of the council of Emperors of the East and West, are the various Supreme Councils of the Thirty-third Degree throughout the world. They have inherited the insignia of the personal emblem of Frederick the Great, First Sovereign Grand commander, who conferred upon the rite the right to use in 1786; at which time seven additional Degrees were "Adopted" making thirty-two "Ancient" and "Accepted" Degrees to which was added a governing Degree, the 33rd.

From Origin and Progress of the Supreme Council 33rd Degree of the Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite for England, Wales and the Dominions *"On the 1st of May, 5786 Anno Lux, The Grand Constitution of the Thirty-third Degree, called the Supreme*

*Council of Sovereign Grand Inspectors General, was finally ratified by His Majesty King of Prussia, who as Grand Commander of the order of Prince of the Royal Secret, possessed Sovereign Masonic power over all the Craft."*

Double-headed eagle was used by Persian shahs of the Sassanian dynasty (1st century AD), and then by replaced them Arab rulers who put the logo even on their coins. The double-headed eagle was adopted by Byzantine Emperor Isaakios Komnenos (1057-1059) being influenced from local traditions about such a beast (the haga) in his native Paphlagonia in Asia Minor. Local legends talked about this giant eagle with two heads that could easily hold a bull in its claws; the haga was seen as a representation of power, and people would often "call" it for protection.

Emperor Michael VIII Palaiologos recaptured Constantinople from the Crusaders in 1261, he adopted the double-headed eagle which symbolized the dynasty's interests in both Asia and Europe. During these two centuries of the dynasty's reign though, the flag became identified not just with the specific family but with the Empire itself. Additionally, in the eyes of the Byzantines the double-headed eagle gradually became the absolute symbol of Orthodoxy, symbolizing the unity between the Byzantine Orthodox Church and State, which was governed by the principle of "Symphonia", thus the "symphony" between the civil and the ecclesiastical functions of Byzantine Orthodox society.

Since the end of the 14th century, a gold double-headed eagle on a red field increasingly appeared on various state regalia of Byzantium. With fall of Constantinople in 1453, Moscow emerged as the New Holy City, the new Rome and the See of the Patriarch of the Christian Eastern Orthodox Church. Here the double head represents the "symphonie" of Church and State, as contrasted with some others in the US that believe the double head was to watch out for both organized religion and government.

Since Peter I of Russian, the eagle was adopted as the ancient emblem of Moscow. It portrayed the Rider of Heaven who embodied the image of the Holy Great Martyr, George the Victorious, spearing a serpent, symbolizing the eternal struggle between Light and Darkness, Good and Evil. Some say that "The double-headed eagle represents the possibility of amplification of power, its extension to the west and east. Allegorically an ancient image of a two-headed bird could represent an unsleeping guardian who sees everything in the east and the west."