

THE PHRYGIAN CAP



A Greek man wearing a Phrygian Cap

The Phrygian cap, the classic Mithraic cap, the sacrificial cap, or *Bonnet conique*, all deducing from a common symbolic ancestor, became subject. The Mithraic or Phrygian cap is the origin of the priestly mitre in all faiths. It was worn by the priest in sacrifice. When worn by a male, it had its crest, comb, or point, set jutting forward; when worn by a female, it bore the same prominent part of the cap in reverse, or on the nape of the neck, as in the instances of the Amazon's helmet, displayed in all old sculptures, or that of Pallas-Athene, as exhibited in the figures of Minerva. The peak, *pic*, or point, of caps or hats (the term "cocked hat" is a case in point) all refer to the same idea. This point had a sanctifying meaning afterwards attributed to it, when it was called the *christa*, *crista*, or crest, which signifies a triumphal top, or tuft. The "Grenadier Cap," and the loose black Hussar Cap, derive remotely from the same sacred, Mithraic, or emblematical bonnet, or high pyramidal cap. It, in this instance, changes to black, because it is devoted to the illustration of the "fire-workers" (grenadiers), who, among

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modern military, succeed the Vulcanists, *Cyclopes*, classic “smiths,” or servants of Vulcan, or Mulciber, the artful worker among the metals in the fire, or amidst the forces of nature. This idea will be found by a reference to the high cap among the persians, or Fire-Worshippers; and to the black cap among the Bohemians and in the East. All travellers in Eastern lands will remember that the tops of the minarets reminded them of the high-pointed black caps of the Persians.

The Phrygian Cap is a most recondite antiquarian form; the symbol comes from the highest antiquity. It is displayed on the head of the figure sacrificing in the celebrated sculpture, called the “Mithraic Sacrifice” (or the Mythical Sacrifice), in the British Museum. This loose cap, with the point protruded, gives the original form from which all helmets or defensive headpieces, whether Greek or Barbarian, deduce. As a Phrygian Cap, or Symbolising Cap, it is always *sanguine* in its colour. It then stands as the “Cap of Liberty,” a revolutionary form; also, in another way, it is even a civic or *incorporated* badge. It is always masculine in its meaning. It marks the “needle” of the obelisk, the crown or tip of the *phallus*, whether “human” or representative. It has its origin in the rite of circumcision—unaccountable as are both the symbol and the rite.

The real meaning of the *bonnet rouge*, or “cap of liberty,” has been involved from time immemorial in deep obscurity, notwithstanding that it has always been regarded as a most important hieroglyph or figure. It signifies the supernatural simultaneous “sacrifice” and “triumph.” It has descended from the time of Abraham, and it is supposed to emblem the strange mythic rite of the “*circumcisio preputii*.” The loose Phrygian bonnet, *bonnet conique*, or “cap of liberty,” may be accepted as figuring, or standing for, that detached integument or husk, separated from a certain point or knob, which has various names in different languages, and which supplies the central idea of this sacrificial rite—the spoil or refuse of which (absurd and unpleasant as it may seem) is borne aloft at once as a “trophy” and as the “cap of liberty.”

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It is now a magic sign, and becomes a talisman of supposedly inexpressible power—from what particular dark reason it would be difficult to say. The whole is a sign of “initiation,” and of baptism of a peculiar kind. The Phrygian cap, ever after this first inauguration, has stood as the sign of the “Enlightened.” The heroic figures in most Gnostic Gems, which we give in our illustrations, have caps of this kind. The sacrificer in the sculptured group of the “Mithraic Sacrifice,” among the marbles in the British Museum, has a Phrygian cap on his head, whilst in the act of striking the Bull with the poniard—meaning the office of the immolating priest. The *bonnet conique* is the mitre of the Doge of Venice.

Besides the *bonnet rouge*, the Pope’s mitre—nay, all mitres or conical head-coverings—have their name from the terms “Mithradic,” or “Mithraic.” The origin of this whole class of names is Mittra, or Mithra. The cap of the grenadier, the shape of which is alike all over Europe, is related to the Tartar lambskin caps, which are dyed black; and it is black also from its association with Vulcan and the “Fire-Worshippers” (Smiths). The Scotch Glengarry cap will prove on examination to be only a “cocked” Phrygian. All the black conical caps, and the meaning of this strange symbol, came from the East. The loose black fur caps derive from the Tartars.

The “Cap of Liberty” (*Bonnet Rouge*) the *Crista* or *Crest* (Male), and the Female (Amazon) helmet, all mean the same idea; in the instance of the female crest the knob is, however, depressed,—as shown in the figures below.



Fig. 203.
Phrygian Cap
(Male.)



Fig. 204.
Phrygian Cap.



Fig. 205.
Peak, pic or cock
("cocked").



Fig. 206.
Phrygian Cap
(Classic Shepherds).

The forms of Grenadier caps, and of those worn by Pioneers also, are those of the head-covers of the Fire-workers or Fire-raisers (Vulcanists) of an army.

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All the black fur caps—militarily called busbies—are Bohemian, Ishmaelitish, heathen, irregular; their origin lies in the magic East.



Fig. 207. Pallas-Athene.
Fig. 209. Jitra, Persia.

Fig. 208. Athene (Minerva).
Fig. 210. Persia.

Few would suspect the uniform of the Hussars to have had a religious origin; both the flaps which depend from their bushy fur caps, and the loose jacket or dolman which hangs from their left shoulder, are mythic. “The long triangular flaps, which hang down like a jelly-bag, consist in a *double* slip of cloth, which, when necessary, folds round the soldier’s face on each side, and forms a comfortable



Fig. 211.

Motley or Scaramouch:
“Bonnet Conique,”
cloven and set about
with bells.



Fig. 212.

Knight’s head-gear,
with “torse.”



Fig. 213.

Cap of Maintenance.

night-cap. In our service, one *single slip* is left to fly.”—Sir Walter Scott to T. Crofton Croker, 7th July 1827. (Qy. whether the above-named double fly of the Hussar Cap be not the dependent ears or horns of the original Motley?)

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The Hussars wear the original fur cap of Tubal-Cain, or the Smiths, or “Artful Workers in Nature.” The name Hussar is borrowed from the Oriental exclamation to (or invocation of) “Al *husa*” or “Al-husa,” or Venus, or Aphrodite,—the

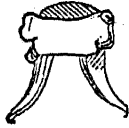


Fig. 214.
Tartar or Cossack Fur
Cap. with double
pendants.



Fig. 215.
Mediaeval Cap
of Estate.



Fig. 216.
Double Mitre—Horns
of the Jester or Buf-
foon, set about with
bells or jingles.

original patroness of these Ishmaelitish irregular light troops. The dolman or pelisse, properly worn on the left shoulder of the Hussar, has its signification and origin in the following act related in Scripture, which refers to a certain Rosi-



Fig. 217.
Fool's Cap. This shape
has Egyptian indications.



Fig. 218.
Bulgarian; also worn by
the Pandours.



Fig. 219.
Hussar and
Cossack.

crucian myth: “Shem and Japheth took a garment” (a cover or extra piece of clothing), “and laid it upon both their shoulders” (on the left shoulder of each), “and *went backward*, and covered their father Noah.” It is astonishing



Fig. 220.
Hussar Conical Cap.



Fig. 221.
Artillery.



Fig. 222.
Sapeur, Pioneer.

how successfully this mythic act, with its original strange Rosicrucian meaning, should have been hidden away in this apparently little corresponding, trivial fact, of the wearing of the Hussar loose cloak or pelisse (*pallium* or *pall*)

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on the left or sinister shoulder; which is the shoulder nearest to the woman: because the *Talmudists* say that *Man was made from the left hand*.

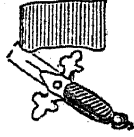


Fig. 223.
Fur Cap of the Sword-bearer
(mythic *gladius*) of the City
of London..



Fig. 224.
Turkish.

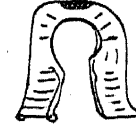


Fig. 225.
Judge,—in imitation of the
Egyptian Kluft; the black
Coif placed on the sen-
sorium, is the mark or
“brand” of Isis (Saturn).



Amazone's helmet

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Headgear has been part of the lives of ancient civilizations for millennia and the style and type of headgear often reflected royalty, ranks, social status, profession, religion, etc. One type of headgear that has fascinated me for a long time is the Phrygian cap. It is the cap that Mithra is wearing in the bull-slaying fresco and it even made its way to the French Revolution where it was worn as a symbol of liberty and freedom. It is even worn by story book dwarves. But what is the origin of this cap that has survived through all this time?

Phrygia was a kingdom in central Anatolia from around 1200 to 700 BC. They were Indo-Europeans that migrated from the Balkans and caused the fall of the mighty Hittite Empire. They worshipped the goddess Cybele who was called “*Mother Mountain*”. Her priesthood was made up of eunuchs who willfully castrated themselves in service of the goddess and in consolidation with the castrated Attis, her consort. “*By the 4th century BC (early Hellenistic period) the Phrygian cap was associated with Phrygian Attis, the cult of which had by then become graecified. At around the same time, the cap appears in depictions of the legendary king Midas and other Phrygians in Greek vase-paintings and sculpture. Such images predate the earliest surviving literary references to the cap. The Phrygian cap came to be applied to several other non-Greek-speaking peoples, most notable of these extended senses of ‘Phrygian’ were the Trojans and other western Anatolian peoples, who in Greek perception were synonymous with the Phrygians. Other Greek earthenware of antiquity also depict Amazons and Scythian archers with Phrygian caps.*” As described by Herodotus, the name of the Scythian tribe of the tigrakhauda (Orthocorybantians) is a bahuvrihi compound literally translating to “*people with pointed hats*”.

Maybe because of honouring Attis after his castration, the Phrygian cap came to resemble manhood or the phallus. Through the Indo-European traditions, it was transferred all over Europe and Asia. For example: Originating from the Japanese Heian period, the kazaori eboshi was worn by aristocrats to indicate rank. Still worn today for ceremonial purposes, this black linen hat was used during a samurai's ceremony in attaining manhood. Phallic worship and gods are nothing new in antiquity. Every culture has had phallic worship and in some parts of the world this custom still continues. One great example of this is in Iran at the Khalid Nabi Cemetery. “*In popular media the stones are often described as examples of phallic architecture and a major tourist attraction. Touristic visitors often have perceived the cylindrical shafts with the thicker top as depictions of male phalli. This gave rise to popular guesses about pre-Islamic fertility cults as background to such perceived depictions*”.

Interestingly the gallbladder is also called the Phrygian cap due to its shape similarity to the hat and gallstones or removal of the gallbladder can cause erectile dysfunction in males, again indicating the link between the hat and the phallus. Our ancient forefathers were much more in touch with the human body and how to cure it, and they often wore headgear that resembled important glands, etc. as can be seen by the Egyptian gods. Thus worshippers of Cybele wearing the Phrygian caps were honoring the goddess, the gallbladder and the phallus as fertility symbols.

The Golden hats are a very specific and rare type of archaeological artifact from Bronze Age Europe. It is assumed that the Golden Hats served as religious insignia for the deities or priests of a sun cult then widespread in Central Europe. Their use as head-gear is strongly supported by the fact that the three of four examples have a cap-like widening at the bottom of the cone, and that their openings are oval (not round), with diameters and shapes roughly equivalent to those of a human skull. The four hats found so far are:

- Golden Hat of Schifferstadt, found in 1835 at Schifferstadt near Speyer, c. 1400–1300 BC.
- Avanton Gold Cone, incomplete, found at Avanton near Poitiers in 1844, c. 1000–900 BC.
- Golden Cone of Ezelsdorf-Buch, found near Ezelsdorf near Nuremberg in 1953, c. 1000–900 BC; the tallest known specimen at c. 90 cm.
- Berlin Gold Hat, found probably in Swabia or Switzerland, c. 1000–800 BC; acquired by the Museum für Vor- und Frühgeschichte, Berlin, in 1996.

The Papal tiara in the Middle Ages is sometimes shown as more pointed than in more recent centuries, though also shown with no point. Popular among Burgundian noblewomen in the 15th century was a type of conical headgear now called a hennin. The whirling dervishes from the 13th century wore hats similar to the hennins,

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and the Ottoman Janissaries wore similar headgear to show their veneration for Hadji Bektash, founder of a Sufi order. Conical hats were also popular in late medieval Vijayanagar, India.

Medieval Jewish men wore distinctive headgear as required by European Christian authorities. This included the pointed Jewish hat (or "Judenhut") already worn by Jews, a piece of clothing probably imported from the Islamic world and perhaps before that from Persia. The shape of the hat is variable. Sometimes, especially in the 13th century, it is a soft Phrygian cap, but rather more common in the early period is a hat with a round circular brim—apparently stiff—curving round to a tapering top that ends in a point. In Europe, the Jewish hat was worn in France from the 11th century, and Italy from the 12th, presumably arriving from the Islamic world. Under Jewish law, observant Jews should keep their heads covered almost all the time and the Christian authorities made this law later on, to distinguish not only who the Jews are but also the Saracens.

Apart from hats that symbolized phalli (even though it may have lost this specific meaning over time), there are also many architectural examples, such as minarets, obelisks and niches/mihrab. These symbols are present in many Persian carpets with the niche design.



An 8th century Tang dynasty Chinese clay figurine of a Sogdian man. Zoroastrian priest engaging in a ritual at a fire temple?



Head of Attis wearing a Phrygian cap (Parian marble, 2nd century AD)



Double-faced Mithraic relief. Rome, 2nd to 3rd century CE