



The Knights Templar: The Pocket Essential Guide

Sean Martin

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The Knights Templar were the most powerful military religious order of the Middle Ages. Formed to protect pilgrims in the Holy Land, they participated in the Crusades and rapidly gained wealth, lands and influence and were answerable to none save the Pope himself. In addition to having a fearful military reputation, they were also Christendom's first bankers, and invented the modern banking system that is still in use today, and were also involved in exploration and engineering.

Seemingly untouchable for nearly two centuries, the Templars fell from grace spectacularly after the loss of the Holy Land: in 1307, all Templars in France were arrested on charges of heresy, homosexuality, denial of the cross and devil worship. The order was suppressed by the Pope in 1312, and Jacques de Molay, the last Grand Master, was burnt at the stake as a heretic two years later.

The myth of the Templars was born and in the ensuing seven centuries, they have exerted a unique influence over European history: orthodox historians see them as nothing more than soldier-monks whose arrogance was their ultimate undoing, while others see them as occultists of the first order, the founders of Freemasonry, possessors of the Holy Grail and creators of the Turin Shroud. Sean Martin considers both the orthodox and conspiratorial version of events, and includes the latest revelations from the Vatican Library.

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