

The Owl and the Odyssey of the Chair

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*“A wise old Owl sat on an oak; The more he saw the less he spoke; The less he spoke the more he heard;
Why aren't we all like that wise old bird?” -- Nursery Rhyme*

Athena was the guide for Odysseus as he endured the trials set upon him by Poseidon. The Odyssey was about Odysseus' ten year journey home. Home, where we are recognized for who we are: nothing more; nothing less.

Symbolically for me the Odyssey represents the journey of a Chair, and in the case of the Keepers of the Flame, it represents our own transformation as we leave one successful career and search for meaning and purpose in the second half of life.

The Owl as a talisman reminds us of the solitary work we do with ourselves and with our members. The vigilance to see clearly in the dark. The ability to fly silently through careful listening. Finally to seize a moment as we sink our talon like questions into the heart of a growth opportunity for ourselves; for our members and for our fellow Chairs and Keepers of the Flame. While in the service of others, it is about us and first and foremost leading ourselves. The Owl's "who" echoes and we are reminded: Know Thyself.

Where else can one confront one's own journey and transformation while being handsomely rewarded for this noble work. We travel inward and outward. The restless heart searches for home/meaning/ purpose /making a difference/challenging oneself to be present, in the moment, awake and aware and living life intentionally.

In this our Odyssey we like Odysseus unite the sacred and the divine. We become the crucibles that hold the stories of life and our life's story. Like Odysseus, know it or not, Athena watches over us as we journey home.



The Owl as Symbolic of Athena

In ancient Greece, owls were often seen as a symbol of good fortune. The idea of the 'wise old owl' may have come into being from the association of the [Little Owl](#) with the Greek goddess of wisdom, Athena.

Athena's totem, symbol and talisman was the Owl.. The Minerva owl native to Greece was associated with Athena. The ancient Greeks attributed the owl to Athena, goddess of wisdom and foresight. When traveling the earth, Athena often took the form of the Owl.

The Athenians minted a coin with Athena on one side and her sacred totem, the Owl, on the other side. Dealers in rare coins stated that these coins “marked a coin as true silver.” This symbol on these Greek coins became associated with wealth.

The Naming of Athens

Cecrops, whose name means "face with a snake," was half-man and half-snake. He was also the founder and first king of Athens. [Athena](#) and Poseidon both wanted to be the patron of it. They were on the verge of attacking each other, when the wise [Athena](#) came up with an idea about who could win the city. It was decided that whoever gave the city the best gift would get it as her/his own. Cecrops was the agreed upon arbitrator.

Leading a huge crowd, they ascended to the Acropolis to give their gifts. Poseidon was first, and he lifted his trident and struck the earth with it. A spring shot forth and began pouring out water. The people sighed in wonder, but when they tasted it, they were not so impressed for the spring was as salty as the sea Poseidon ruled.

Athena, on the other hand, merely knelt and buried something in the ground. It was an olive tree. Simple, yes, but the olive tree was also a rich gift. It gave the Athenians the olives (food), oil, and wood. Cecrops deemed Athena's the better gift. As the winner, Athena became the patron of Athens, and named the city after herself thus becoming its protector.

Unique Among Birds

Owls are one of the oldest species of vertebrate animal in existence, fossils have been found dating back 60 million years, showing the bird to have changed very little in that time.

Throughout the history of mankind, the owl has featured significantly in mythology & folklore. Owls are one of the few birds that have been found in prehistoric cave paintings. Owls have been both revered & feared throughout many civilizations from ancient to more recent times.

Unlike most birds, owls are nocturnal with a large head and forward facing large eyes. Their eyes are fixed in their sockets, and some are able to rotate their head up to 270 degrees. With exceptional vision, acute hearing, and the ability to fly silently, they are a stealthy and effective hunter.

Nocturnal creatures are symbolic of inner-knowing, psychic ability, and intuition. Birds are considered by many cultures to be messengers between earthly creatures and spirit.

Global Reverence for the Owl

The owl is deeply connected with magic, shamanism and heightened senses throughout the ages. Some have thought of the owl as a “cat with wings” as they share similar characteristics of personality.

In some middle and far eastern cultures, the owl is a sacred guardian of the afterlife, ruler of the night, a seer and keeper of souls transitioning from one plane of existence to another.

Ancient Greece

The ancient Greeks attributed the owl to Athena, goddess of wisdom and foresight. This symbol was used on Greek coins and therefore also became associated with wealth.



America

Native Americans attributed owls with wisdom and sacred knowledge. The shaman would call upon Owl medicine for insight into the truth of ill-intent. Plains Indians wore owl feathers to protect against evil spirits.





