

## Dan Brown's *The da Vinci Code*: A Quest of the Secret of the Holy Grail

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### Abstract

*The Da Vinci Code*, a controversial and highly debated novel written by American novelist Dan Brown in 2003, is one of the most thrilling and mysterious detective novels, and is considered a best-seller. The story revolves around the conflict between the Priory of Sion and the Opus Dei sect over the theory of the marriage and procreation of Christ and Mary Magdalene. It also features a professor of symbolism and a woman working in the field of cryptography. This paper examines how Brown reveals his opinions on the idea of the Holy Grail, exploring the complete story of this fabled cup. The research highlights the significance of the symbols related to the Grail's possible location and their relation to Christ and Mary Magdalene.

**Keywords:** Jesus, Magdalene, secrets, grail, Christianity, symbol, connotations, lineage.

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## شفرة دافنشي لدان براون: بحث عن سر الكأس المقدسة

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قسم اللغة الأنكليزية / كلية الآداب / جامعة البصرة

### المستخلص

تعد رواية دافنشي ، وهي رواية عالمية ومثيرة للجدل كتبها الروائي الأمريكي دان براون في عام ٢٠٠٣ ، تعد واحدة من أكثر الروايات البوليسية إثارة وغموضا ، وتعتبر من أكثر الكتب مبيعا. تدور القصة حول الصراع بين دير سيون وطائفة أوبوس داي حول نظرية الزواج والإنجاب للمسيح ومريم المجدلية. كما يضم أستاذا عالما بالرموز وامرأة تعمل في مجال التشفير. ان هذا البحث يتقصى كيفية كشف براون عن آرائه حول فكرة الكأس المقدسة ، واستكشاف القصة الكاملة لهذه الكأس الأسطورية. يسلط البحث الضوء على أهمية الرموز المتعلقة بالموقع المحتمل للكأس وعلاقتها بالمسيح ومريم المجدلية. بالإضافة إلى ذلك ، فإنه يبحث في قصة اتحاد يسوع ومريم وفقا للتقاليد اليهودية والمسيحية. كما تسلط الدراسة الضوء على سرية الاخوية في سيون ومعتقداتهم فيما يتعلق بالكأس المقدسة والنسب الملكي ، مع البحث عن الأسئلة المتعلقة بالمسيحية.

كلمات مفتاحية: يسوع ، المجدلية ، الأسرار ، الكأس ، المسيحية ، الرمز ، الدلالات ، النسب.

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## **Introduction**

*The Da Vinci Code* has won great admiration for its new and innovative content, offering readers a vision full of mystery and exoticism. The novel is constructively based on the seamless blending of history and fantasy in a narrative form. Interestingly, another book, *Holy Blood, Holy Grail*, published in 1982, cast a shadow over Dan Brown. This book served as a source of inspiration for Brown, the author of *The Da Vinci Code*. There is significant intertextuality between his novel and *Holy Blood, Holy Grail*, to the extent of using the name of the hero in his novel, 'Saunière', derived from the name of the central character in *Holy Blood, Holy Grail*. Some events in *The Da Vinci Code* are similar to those stated in this book. Since we are not going to discuss the intertextuality in this novel here, we leave it to another critic to explore and analyze the similarities, connotations, and quotations between *The Da Vinci Code* and *Holy Blood, Holy Grail*, whose material is formulated in a novel-like way.

*The Da Vinci Code* is a novel that may not appeal to everyone, particularly those with religious sensitivities, especially within the Catholic Christian community. This concern arises if the book is read as a historical account rather than as a work of fiction that blends imaginative storytelling with historical references. Despite containing historical facts, it remains a product of the author's imagination, who employs historical references to create a semblance of realism. The reader might be taken aback by the novel's conclusion, which undermines the ideas presented throughout the narrative. This twist displays the author's skill in using historical elements to serve his narrative goals and captivate the reader. Dan Brown asserts, "All descriptions of artwork, architecture, documents, and secret rituals in this novel are accurate" (Brown, 2003). *The Da Vinci Code* transports the reader into a world of ambiguity, mystery, myth, and secrets. However, these secrets are based on ideas and theories found in historical texts and among a limited number of researchers. Readers are not necessarily expected to believe these ideas but are encouraged to investigate their credibility. Brown references the work of fifty researchers and historians to substantiate his narrative, stating, "It is a classic example of a good story taking precedence over solid historical research. As the basis for a novel, it was an excellent choice" (Newman, 2005). Brown is aware that his portrayal of the Holy Grail is provocative and may not align with Christian tradition or the preferences of Christian readers.

Overflowing with symbols that prompt reflections on the interpretation of the universe and the beginnings of life, *The Da Vinci Code* requires deep contemplation. For those who engage in a profound reading of its symbols and connotations, the novel opens a world of fantasy previously unheard of. It intertwines reality, fantasy, and art to unveil its secret. Upon its release, the novel sparked considerable controversy in cultural and religious circles, leading to its ban in some parts of Europe by the Church's order. As noted, "From the book's inception and release, Brown drew on the power of CT to spark debate about important personal and public issues steeped in religion." (Kennedy, 2020). Despite the controversy, the novel has achieved remarkable success, being translated into about fifty languages and selling approximately eight million copies.

*The Da Vinci Code* is a novel that urges the reader to explore its depths to solve its mysteries alongside the author. While some may perceive novels rich in mystery and symbols as detached from reality, leading them into a realm of imagination and fantasy, this is not the case. Mysteries and symbols are integral to the human experience. The author seeks to unravel these symbols and decode the ambiguities of life. As observed, "Dan Brown's *The Da Vinci Code* is full of riddles with biblical references and religious symbols, depiction of architecture, artistic history, religious history, and secret societies. The work is in the thriller genre, and it gives the full pleasure of reading a suspense-laden novel" (Rani, 2022). By using one or several events as a backdrop, Brown conveys a message about the significance of the world's symbols and their roles in human life. Symbols, whether mathematical or social, are part of reality. Humans live in a world teeming with symbols, and whether they understand their meanings and connotations or not, these symbols are an inescapable part of reality.

Writing about *The Da Vinci Code* is never a substitute for reading it; such writing serves merely as a stimulus to encourage reading. A writer or critic cannot encapsulate everything the novel encompasses, as it is rich in details, events, facts, symbols, connotations, ideas, and visions that bridge the past and present, merging imagination and history. As noted, "He uses symbols in this novel that are related to Christianity and its sects, architectural codes, riddles, masonic symbols, and legends about Christ's Last Supper and of Holy Grail quest. He uses Numerology and various Christian symbols like the five-pointed Pentagram in a circle, the upward pointing triangle (referred to as the chalice) symbol of the womb, and the triangle moving upward

(symbol of male force)" (Rani, 2022). One of the most striking aspects of the novel is its precise descriptions of locations, which make readers feel as though they are walking through Parisian streets, visiting the Louvre, or exploring British or French churches. The novel is filled with the names of streets and squares, train stations, airports, crossroads, forests, old palaces, castles, and churches.

Because of this richness, a writer or critic typically selects a particular aspect of the novel's events or character movements to explore, often excluding many details, to uncover the meaning and message of the work. A significant focus is placed on the question of the Holy Grail and its historical and intellectual implications and dimensions. This focus highlights the novel's engagement with profound questions and its challenge to established narratives, prompting readers to explore and question the symbols and histories that shape their understanding of the world.

Therefore, this is not a critical reading of the novel, but rather a literary reading to answer the question: How does the writer link the Holy Grail to Freemasonry, and what is the relationship of the Church with this Grail and its significance? What is Israel's relationship with the Holy Grail? And is what the writer puts forward a historical fact or just the illusions of researchers and historians seeking to falsify consciousness and history?

Therefore, this is not a critical reading of the novel, but rather a literary analysis aimed at answering specific questions: How does the writer link the Holy Grail to Freemasonry, and what is the relationship of the Church to this Grail and its significance? What is Israel's relationship with the Holy Grail? Is what the writer presents a historical fact, or merely the illusions of researchers and historians seeking to falsify consciousness and history?

In his novel, the writer presents the Holy Grail, or the Holy Female, as a symbol with historical and religious significance, intricately woven into the novel's events. He uses history as a backdrop, or as material from which to draw the novel's events. Thus, *The Da Vinci Code* is a historical novel where history blends with fiction to create a depiction of reality that may appear different to the average person. The novel aims to portray significant events in a compelling narrative style based on historical data, attempting to convince readers that the story is true and that the events described are part of real history. Brown bases his novel on written documents, letters, books, and works, attributing them to their authors. Consequently, the novel is rich in imagination, surprise, confusion, and a profound sense of bewilderment and astonishment.

### **Symbolic Characters**

Robert Langdon is the central character in the novel, serving as the protagonist. An academic and symbolist at Harvard University, he arrives in France to lecture on "Pagan Symbolism in the Stones of Chartres Cathedral." Langdon is scheduled to meet with Jacques Saunière after his lecture because Saunière, an art expert and curator of the Louvre Museum, received a copy of Langdon's book, 'Symbols of the Lost Sacred Feminine', from its editor. Saunière, who has dedicated his life to studying the history of female deities, is murdered, and Langdon finds himself unknowingly accused of the crime. Dan Brown may have used Langdon's character as a vehicle to express his own opinions, positions, and ideas, particularly regarding the Bible.

Brown said that the Bible was written by the hand of human being and did not descended from heaven. It is human's creation to record historical events, conflicts, and disputes in those eras. He developed, changed, translated, and added many changes in myriad ways, which means it was written by the monks and it faced many changes in its content through ages.

(Rasheed and Albiyatia, 2021)

Many characters besides Langdon contribute significantly to the shaping of events. Sophie Neveu, a cryptology expert in the French Judicial Police, is a young Parisian woman who studied decryption at Royal Holloway, University of London. She has a great enthusiasm for the science of code analysis and deciphering. When she arrives at the Louvre to help with the investigation of Saunière's murder, she meets Langdon. Sophie informs Langdon that he is in danger and accused of Saunière's murder and that he was summoned to the museum to incriminate him. She reveals that Jacques Saunière is her grandfather and explains their estrangement of ten years, which began after she witnessed a disturbing scene in the basement of their house involving her grandfather and a group of others performing mysterious rituals. Uncomfortable with her grandfather's explanation, Sophie distanced herself from him.

Langdon, however, understands the nature of the rituals Sophie witnessed and provides an interpretation that changes her view of her grandfather. Sophie also discloses that her family died in an accident, leaving only her grandfather, who consistently warned her that she was in danger. She believes her grandfather used a simple code to bring together two people who did

not know each other, without revealing the reason or purpose, and that the letter he wrote was intended for her.

Bezu Fache is the commander of the French Judicial Police, responsible for investigating the murder of Jacques Saunière. His attitudes reveal much about his personality. He becomes angry when he learns that Sophie Neveu is the agent sent by the encryption department to analyze the codes, as his relationship with her is strained. Fache considers her presence a significant mistake by the Judicial Police Directorate. Due to his extreme Christian background, he opposes women's involvement in work. He wears a cross around his neck, has a photograph with the Pope, and maintains a secret relationship with Opus Dei, the extremist Catholic organization. Fache's extremist views align with the Catholic Church's rigid perspective on women, if there was a God, Bezu Fache would be on His A-list. The captain attended mass and confession with zealous regularity—far more than the requisite holiday attendance fulfilled by other officials in the name of good public relations. When the Pope visited Paris a few years back, Fache had used all his muscle to obtain the honor of an audience. A photo of Fache with the Pope now hung in his office. *The Papal Bull*, the agents secretly called it (Brown, 2003).

Silas, a member of the Opus Dei group, acts as the group's assassin, carrying out killings under the direction of Bishop Manuel Aringarosa, the leader of the ultra-Orthodox Catholic organization. This group has historical roots and suspicious links with the Vatican in their fight against the sacred feminine. The British royal historian Sir Leigh Teabing has spent most of his life searching for the Holy Grail. He plays a major role in the novel's events as the hidden leader or "Teacher" of Opus Dei. He orchestrates murder and violence in his quest to obtain the Holy Grail for personal glory. Together, these characters embody the struggle over the Holy Grail, driving the main events of the novel, while other characters play secondary roles in the unfolding drama.

In Dan Brown's novel *The Da Vinci Code*, Jacques Saunière is depicted as one of the four elders of the Priory of Sion, an organization believed to guard a significant secret. The extremist Catholic organization Opus Dei, with the backing of the Vatican, is determined to uncover this secret because its revelation could potentially challenge fundamental Christian beliefs and disrupt centuries-old religious doctrines. According to Tridiarto (2021), "Teabing continued

Langdon's explanation by confirming that the figure of Holy Grail was not just human being, but she was a person who could destroy the foundation of Christianity that had existed for centuries." Saunière is murdered by Silas, a devout member of Opus Dei, at the Louvre where Saunière worked. Prior to killing Saunière, Silas had already murdered three of Saunière's associates who were also members of the Priory of Sion and knew the secret. Each of them, facing death, revealed that the Keystone, a crucial element related to the secret, was hidden beneath the floor of the Saint-Sulpice church in Paris. This narrative sets the stage for a high-stakes chase and confrontation in the novel, where different factions vie to control the secret of the Holy Grail and its implications for Christianity and history.

The choice of locations and buildings in *The Da Vinci Code* holds significant symbolic and historical importance. The church of Saint Sulpice, for instance, is not merely a backdrop for events but a deliberate selection rich with implications. As noted, "It is the key that can show where the presence of the Holy Grail and the secret the Holy Grail itself, ... And the keystone is present in the church of Saint Sulpice..." (Al Aziz, 2015). Built upon the remains of an ancient Egyptian temple dedicated to the goddess Isis, the church carries profound symbolic connotations, particularly associated with sacred femininity. Notably, figures like the Marquis de Sade and Baudelaire were baptized there, and Victor Hugo's marriage ceremonies were held within its walls—all notable members of Freemasonry. Additionally, the church's halls have historically hosted meetings of various secret societies. These historical and symbolic layers make Saint Sulpice a fitting setting for the novel's exploration of hidden truths and the quest for the Holy Grail. Dan Brown intricately weaves these elements into the narrative, using the church's rich history and associations to deepen the mystery and intrigue of the story. Thus, Saint Sulpice becomes not just a physical location but a pivotal symbol that enhances the novel's exploration of themes related to history, religion, and secret societies.

The idea of the novel is about what Jacques Saunière does in the last minutes of his life after Silas shoots him inside the Louvre. He shapes his body in a strange position after he stripped his entire body, and writes a set of symbols on his body and the floor of the museum to keep the secret after the murder of the three seniors who keep this secret deep down.



In this symbolic writing, Saunière tries to bring Sophie and Langdon together, although they do not know each other. Saunière realized this when he reviewed the draft of Langdon's book due to his extensive experience in deciphering. Saunière is an excellent fan of Leonardo Da Vinci's work, and his life and works represent many aspects of Saunière's life. This is related to the title of the novel, which is interpreted through the interpretation of the novel and the connotations and symbols that Saunière uses to form the secret. Langdon realizes that the set of symbols drawn by Saunière constitutes the keys to the mystery, ideally in harmony with each other: the five-pointed star, the Vitruvian man, Da Vinci, the gods, and even the Fibonacci sequence, together forming a symbolic set logically interconnected in the language of symbolists. So, there is a relationship between what Saunière painted and the five-pointed star in terms of the female relationship. Da Vinci is a puzzling topic for historians, especially concerning the Christian tradition, his ambiguous relationship with these traditions, and the connotations of mystery and secrecy in his artworks. Here, the title highlights the relationship between Da Vinci and Saunière, the former's influence on Da Vinci's works of art, and the secrets that surrounded them. Saunière shares many spiritual beliefs and principles with Da Vinci, including concern that the Church would expel the sacred female from the modern religion, and turn her into a demon. To highlight the position of the Church on the Holy Grail or the Holy Female, the author tries to highlight the conflict between the Catholic Church and pagan religions, and its obliteration of all the symbols related to these pagan religions, as well as the conflict between the Church and the Priory of Sion over the Holy Grail and its relationship with the Christian religion. The Christian Catholic Opus Dei, radical in its ideas and attitude towards women, has taken the task of searching for the Holy Grail hidden by fraternity in a secret place. It strives with all its might to remove the female from the life of the Church because of the connection that the fraternal believes between Christ and Mary Magdalene, who represents the sacred female and her symbol is the Holy Grail "Langdon enlightens Sophie about the history of the Priory of Sion and their armed forces, the Knights Templar. He discloses that the Priory guards secret documents known as the Sangreal, or the Holy Grail."(Nezdařil, 2009) Hence it is war against the fraternity to obtain the keystone that leads it to the mysteries of the Holy Grail, whose place is known only

to the fraternal community, with its documents related to the Holy Grail, which in their view seeks to change the Christian religion.

The Opus Dei organization, led by Bishop Manuel Aringaroz, recruited one of its members to carry out the task of searching for the keystone. The group brainwashed Silas, who belonged to the church, to achieve its goals. Silas carried out all Aringaroz's orders without hesitation. Aringaroz is not the one who decides whether to find the Stone or the Holy Grail. There is someone Aringaroz knows only by the title of professor or teacher, who communicates with him on the phone and directs his movements. He is the teacher who can obtain information, and through it, he directs Aringaroz, who, in turn directs Silas. The reader discovers in the course of events that the teacher and engine of the Opus Dei group is the British royal historian, Sir Leigh Teabing, as mentioned before. Teabing has a friendship with Langdon "In the Da Vinci Code novel, Dan Brown portrays a character, Sir Leigh Teabing who has studied the Holy Grail for many years. One day, Teabing discovers a secret from Da Vinci's painting, The Last Supper, which provides some clues to release the secrets of the Holy Grail that can shake the world." (Tridiarto.2021) Langdon represents an important part of his inspiration in writing about the Holy Grail. It is the station where Langdon and Sophie disappeared to escape from the police. In the house of the teacher, Langdon reveals the secret they carry and asks for his help, only to discover later that the teacher is the head of evil and the engine of all conspiracies to receive the Holy Grail.

As for fraternity, the writer refers in more than one place in his novel to the link between fraternity and the Masonic movement and mentions its symbols and members. In Langdon's conversation with Sophie, as she tells him about her grandfather's strange key and the symbols it carries, she asks Langdon to tell her about Sion's brotherhood.

I've written about this group," he said,... They call themselves the *Prieuré de Sion*—the Priory of Sion.... In fact, they are one of the oldest surviving secret societies on earth." ... The Priory's membership has included some of history's most cultured individuals: men like Botticelli, Sir Isaac Newton, Victor Hugo... Da Vinci was in a secret society?...Da Vinci presided over the Priory between 1510 and 1519

(Brown, 2003)

As for the fraternity's historical roots, this brotherhood is founded in Jerusalem in 1099 AD by a French king named Godfroi de Bouillon immediately after his occupation of the city "According to *The Da Vinci Code*, which got much of its information from *Holy Blood, Holy Grail*, the Priory was a secret society founded in Jerusalem in 1099 by Godfroi de Bouillon, count of Flanders and duke of Lower Lorraine before he became the conqueror of Jerusalem."(Newman, 2005) It is said that King Godfroi kept a great secret, a secret that had been in his family since the time of Christ. Fearing that the secret would be lost after his death, he founded a secret society, the Sion Brotherhood. He tasked its members to protect his secret by passing it on from one generation to another and during the years they spent in Jerusalem. Members of the brotherhood heard of the existence of secret documents buried under the ruins of the temple of Herodotus, which in turn was built on the ruins of Solomon's Temple "The Knights spent the better part of a decade or more in the Holy Land before returning in triumph to Europe and Bernard's glowing reviews. It is highly probable they had discovered scrolls which contained ancient Judaic knowledge, both scriptural and practical along with the Temple's most sacred of holy objects."(Cornwall, 2015). According to their belief, those documents proved the mystery of the great Godfroi. They are also serious in their content to the extent that the Church is willing to do anything to get it.

To keep the secret, the members of the fraternity create a military squad of nine knights known as the Knights Templar. These are the ones who discover something under the rubble, something that makes them rich and powerful beyond imagination. They carried their treasure and documents from the temple and travelled to Europe, where their influence became very wide overnight, and Pope Inost II gave them great power and autonomy. Through this power, they expand by strength, influence, and money, and they begin to provide bankrupt kings with interest-bearing loans, which increases their wealth, and thus they are the nucleus of modern banks "The Priory of Sion,...claims to have been founded in 1099, during the First Crusade...They claimed to be behind the creation of the Knights Templar—that curious body of medieval soldiermonks of sinister reputation." (Picknett and Prince.1998)

The military and political power formed by the Knights Templar made them a threat to the Church, and Pope Clement V decided to get rid of them with the help of King Philip IV of France

and seize their treasure, consisting of a collection of documents, the source of their strength. In October 1307, the process of eliminating the Knights Templar is carried out, and some of them managed to escape with the treasure of documents, and it became in the custody of the Priory of Sion. Over the years, this secret moved from one place to another without reaching it, and it became known to historians and researchers as the secret of 'Sangreal' or 'Gharil' or the Holy Grail. This cup is not a glass in the literal sense but a collection of documents for a great secret.

The Priory of Sion has taken it upon itself to keep this secret, and it is the protector of the Holy Grail. So, the members of the Brotherhood wait decades to prove that they are trustworthy before they are promoted to the highest ranks set by the Brotherhood to know the location of the Grail. Although the number of brothers is enormous, only four of them know where the Grail is hidden; they are the Grand Master and his three followers. The secret of the place has never been written over the past centuries. It is passed on orally for security reasons to the member who rises to the highest rank (Senichel) in a secret ceremony. But at some point in the last century, rumours were launched that the Brotherhood had changed that policy. The reason is modern technologies are capable of electronic eavesdropping, so the Brotherhood swore never to mention the place where the Holy Grail is hidden.

Langdon does not rule out that Jacques Saunière is the most outstanding teacher of the fraternity, as the former teachers are prominent social figures. Those figures have a relationship with the arts "The mysteries of the Priory of Sion have often manifested in the arts and can be seen in the works of notable figures who are considered to have been aligned to their cause. Leonardo da Vinci, Nicolas Poussin, Jules Verne, and Jean Cocteau all carried on the tradition of the Gothic cathedral-builders and incorporated the Hermetic sciences into their works" (Howells, 2011). The documents found in the National Library of Paris revealed this concept. These documents included many names of teachers of the fraternity, including da Vinci, Botticelli, Isaac Newton, Victor Hugo, Jean Cocteau, and others. Researchers and scholars revealed that the documents found in the Paris library were forged and not authentic, and the French police arrested those who planted these documents in the library.

In the course of Langdon's talk and his revelation of the connotations and symbols associated with the Holy Grail, he tries to link Saunière and Da Vinci on an artistic level. The two men share

a historical fraternal bond and agree in their fascination with the icons of the female goddess, the reverence for nature, the divinity of women, and the contempt for the Church. Da Vinci dedicates his life to the ancient worship of the female goddess, and his famous painting 'The Last Supper.' manifests this worship. "Brown spreads the idea of the sacred femininity in the novel. The idea of the sacred feminine side or Mother goddess has happened since ancient times. Most people worshiped female deities" (Janah, 2013). It expresses symbols hidden in unimaginable places that carry great indications for the sacred female. Langdon asserts that fraternity is the pagan doctrine of the female goddess. But the most important thing is that they are known as the protectors of an old secret that makes them strong. Da Vinci knew all his life where the Grail was hidden and that this cached secret has changed several times, so historians and researchers are busy searching for hidden evidence to guide them to the secret.

The writer or Langdon refers to a wide range of symbols and connotations associated with the Holy Grail or divine female. He takes the interpretation of its concepts and links them with the narrative of events, highlighting the relationship between Da Vinci and Jacques Sonnière. He employs these symbols through his broad culture and familiarity with the secrets of fraternity, and its relationship to the conflict with the Church that denies the sacred female and fights her existence. Meanwhile, fraternity elevates its status because its existence means a balance of life. "Priory of Sion, protecting the Holy Grail is very important for them because the secret of the true Holy Grail including protecting the body of Mary Magdalene which they regard as their idol goddess, the Great Mother." (Al Aziz, 2015) He relies on historical references in an attempt to convince the reader of the truthfulness of what he is proposing. The secret that restores the balance of life is the Holy Grail or the secrets that this cup holds that strike at the heart of Christian belief and question the Bible, says Sir Teabing, the former royal historian to whom Langdon and Sophie turned to protect them, and he began to tell them about what the Holy Grail is, its relationship to the Bible, the New Testament, and Leonardo Da Vinci.

*The Da Vinci Code* is so determined to make its point about Mary Magdalene that it makes a number of preposterous claims for her, including that she is the Holy Grail (not the chalice), that this was taught by Jesus (!) and that this was depicted by Leonardo da Vinci in his *The Last Supper*, but that the Catholic Church has smeared her up until the present by depicting her as an

evil woman ... According to the New Testament, she was a woman from whom Jesus expelled demons, and who, as a close follower of Jesus, witnessed the crucifixion, Jesus' burial and the empty tomb, and to whom Jesus appeared.

(Porter, 2005)

As the Grail has been associated with many symbols, here the writer confirms that one of the disadvantages of the profession of the scientists of symbols is the constant attempt to extract hidden meanings from simple situations that do not carry any ambiguity. Therefore, he formed his novel through many symbols through which he reaches the holy grail, namely: the pink line, the five-pointed star, the Sonnière symbols on the floor of the Louvre, the Da Vinci painting The Vitroni Man, the Fibonacci sequence, the two letters P.S., the game of tarot, the sacred ratio PHI, the number 1.618, the lily flower, Da Vinci's Mona Lisa, Da Vinci Lady of the Rocks, Keystone, Da Vinci's The Last Supper, Triangle, Sword, and Mug, Six-pointed Star, Pyrrhus Gamo's Celebration, Baphomet, and Atpach Code "Symbols which are used in this novel represent a holy woman Mary Magdalene. It reveals the background story of Mary Magdalene through many secret symbols such as The Last Supper, the Holy Grail, The Mona Lisa, Rosa Rugosa, the Pentacle, and The Vitruvian Man." (Abhinaya and Muthuraman, 2018). Many of these symbols derive from Judaism, express Hebrew in their connotations, or derive from this language.

The connotations of the Holy Grail were not only in the symbols put forward by Langdon / the writer but based on their interpretation and historical associations. The story of the Grail is everywhere, or the Holy Grail is all around us, but it is not in a direct way. By suggestions and hidden connotations, the writer or Langdon says: "When the Church forbade talking about the exile Mary Magdalene, her story and significance had to be passed down through generations in indirect and more conservative ways, in ways based on metaphorical and symbolic expressions." (Brown, 2003) So, it is everywhere in paintings, music, books, animation, Walt Disney World, amusement parks, and popular cinema movies. The arts of literature and music today are more influential in telling the story of Jesus and Mary Magdalene in indirect ways. "The Holy Grail is, arguably, the most celebrated piece of tableware from the last two thousand years... Over the centuries, it has inspired great art and literature, as well as the writing of Dan Brown." (Wreglesworth, n.d)

It exists in the works of Da Vinci, Posan, Bernini, Beethoven, Mozart in the Symphony of the Magic Flute, Wagner Parsigal's opera, troubadour's music, Shakespeare, Victor Hugo in his masterpiece The Hunchback of Notre Dame, immortal legends such as Sir Gaden, The Green Knight, King Arthur, and The Sleeping Princess, All tell the story of the Holy Grail in a suggestive rather than direct way. Immense volumes have been written about the relationship between the Freemasons and the Templars, the Priory of Sion, and the Holy Grail .Thus, Dan Brown confirms that his novel falls within the framework of future literature that deals with the Holy Grail and seeks to consolidate it in the mentality and memory of generations and people.

The story of the Holy Grail has figured in several literary works by different authors and it is a favoured theme in contemporary films and TV-series. Rosalind Miles published a trilogy based on this myth; Guenevere, Queen of the Summer Country (1998), The Knight of the Sacred Lake (1999), and The Child of the Holy Grail (2000).....Baigent, Leigh and Lincoln published The Holy Blood and the Holy Grail in 1982 which, together with The Templar Revelation (1997) by Lynn Picknett and Clive Prince, served as inspiration for Dan Brown when he wrote The Da Vinci Code (2003). They were the first to spring the idea of the marriage between Jesus and Mary Magdalene, that there must be descendants alive in our days, hence 'Sang Real' implying that the womb of Mary Magdalene was the Holy Grail.

(Juhlin, 2018)

Sophie recalls her ninth birthday, and while searching for her grandfather's gift, she finds in a drawer a shiny gold key tied to the end of the chain, which looks like none of the ordinary keys. It is a triangular column covered with small and large holes. Its large golden head is in the shape of a cross, but it is not an ordinary cross. It is equilateral as a sign of plus, in the middle of the cross is embossed a strange symbol, two intertwined letters linked by a design in the form of a kind of flower P.S... When her grandfather discovered it, he told her: "This key is very special... It opens a box... where I keep many secrets."(Brown,2003) Her grandfather reveals that the flower on the key is the lily flower, and the letters P.S. are coded, which are the initials of their secret name. Her grandfather promised to give her the key if she kept his secret of existence. Langdon unleashes his imagination by associating the lily flower with the letters P.S., assuring Sophie that her grandfather is a member of a secret synagogue, an ancient brotherhood

operating secretly (the Sion Society), because if the lily flower and the letters P.S come together, the official symbol of the fraternity, their Nobel slogan, and their distinctive mark is formed.

Ancient secrets that were once buried and no longer remembered by history have surfaced, and with these events and symbols crystallized by Saunière, they come to life from the depths of history. The first threads began to unfold with the link between Saunière, Da Vinci, and the Sion Association. When Langdon shone the spotlight on the Mona Lisa, his vision begins to expand: "The fleur-de-lis... the flower of Lisa... the Mona Lisa. It was all intertwined, a silent symphony echoing the deepest secrets of the Priory of Sion and Leonardo da Vinci."(Brown, 2003)

The lily flower is not an ordinary flower but a flower with indications and symbols. The meanings of the flower refer to femininity, tenderness, and peace. It has been known in this sense since ancient times, as J.E. Cirlot noticed in his *A Dictionary of Symbols*(2001) says, " Lily An emblem of purity, used in Christian—and particularly mediaeval—iconography as a symbol and attribute of the Virgin Mary." People employ these meanings in many slogans and symbols; during the Middle Ages, the lily flower overlapped with Christian art, and it is gradually associated with a hymn of King Solomon, 'Lily among thorns'. It refers to the Virgin Mary, the lily symbolized in religious literature by purity and innocence. It is also believed that the lily flower represents the Holy Trinity. The flower is painted on the crowns of many European kings.

While Sophie searches for her grandfather's letter in the Mona Lisa, she finds her grandfather's strange key, which opens a box with secrets, as he told her, behind Da Vinci's *Lady of the Rocks*. She grabs it and hides it in her pocket. They drive off to escape the police chase. In the car, she gives Langdon the key, and he is astonished to see it, especially from what is printed on the side of the cross, the lily flower and the letters P.S. This is the seal; it is the emblem of the Sion fraternity, which keeps the mystery of the Holy Grail he said.

Langdon refers to the relationship of the keystone to the Masonic movement since the time of the free builders, who made this key as an architectural technique part of their secrets. The Keystone is a coded map that reveals the cache of the secrets of the Holy Grail. This is the Grail whose features and secrets are revealed by Da Vinci's painting 'The Last Supper.'

Teabing presents Sophie with the painting of the Last Supper, which depicts Jesus Christ and his disciples at the moment he announces that someone will betray him. He begins to explain the



significance of the painting and the thirteen wine cups that are in front of his disciples to reach his interpretation that the Holy Grail is not a material thing but a specific person. She is a woman. When Sophie looks at the painting, she discovers that there is a woman in Christ's right hand. A young, pious girl with a sobriety and modest body. Their clothes are contrasting in color; Jesus is wearing a red robe with a blue cloak over, while she is wearing a blue robe with a red cloak over. When she asks about her, Teabing replies that she is Mary Magdalene, and spontaneously, Sophie says, 'The prostitute.'

Teabing argues that Mary Magdalene is not a prostitute, but rather, this idea is a historical legacy left by the Church to discredit her in an attempt to cover up her secret, her role as a female or Holy Grail. He then mentions that Jesus and Mary Magdalene are a couple, and Da Vinci knew this from historical records; the painting of the Last Supper is his cry to the world to draw their attention to the fact that Jesus and Mary Magdalene are a couple " They [The Priory] that the Holy Grail is really a metaphor for Mary Magdalene. They believe that Jesus and Mary Magdalene were married" (Hoglin, 2007). Teabing seeks to convince Sophie of the marriage of Jesus and to emphasize that Jesus is a Jew. Judaism forbids a man to be single "I am by no means certain that the notion of Jesus's marriage can be disproved, but it is equally certain that it is not proved by the assertion that Jewish custom condemned celibacy and virtually required a Jewish man to be married."(Lacy, 2004) So he married Mary Magdalene and granted her his inheritance when he felt that he is about to be killed and crucified, based on Papyrus documents found in Hammadi Oasis and the Dead Sea, which confirm this marriage in contradiction to the Christian view that Jesus lived single.

In *The Da Vinci Code* there is a link made between Mary Magdalene and the Holy Grail, involving all sorts of supposed indicators, such as belief regarding the sacred feminine, various signs and symbols, and supposed interaction between Jesus and Mary.... In fact, Brown's attempt to link the Holy Grail with is a false etymology. The term "grail" only goes back to 1330 in English, with the word "grail" from a Latin word that represents a type of platter used in medieval banquets. In other words, as one might have thought before reading *The Da Vinci Code*, the Holy Grail has always been associated with the chalice or cup used at the Lord's supper.

(Porter, 2005)

The truth of the Holy Grail and the documents of royal blood contradict what religions say about the truth of Christ, denying that Jesus is a prophet and born of a virgin mother, considering him a historical figure. The Masonic fraternity is the one that possesses the truth, as the novel and history books mention. Hence, the Church fights them and tries to seize their documents and prevent them from revealing them because it will destroy all the foundations on which the Church is founded, as well as the Holy Bible. What confirms this is that some writings indicate that Freemasonry refuses to accept atheist members among its ranks. An atheist is a denier of religion necessarily, and it is not easy to convince him of the idea of religion. At the same time, Freemasonry wants to plant the idea of a new religion, so faith in religion is required. Striking at the foundations of Christianity and the truth of Christ and his mother Mary strikes at the heart of the Islamic religion in Surat Maryam and what it says about Christ that he is born of a virgin mother and that he is a prophet, thus questioning the monotheistic religions.

The aspect of the novel that has provoked the most...objections is the anti-Catholic bias that many readers perceive in the novel. Of course, it is not only Catholics who may be troubled by the supposed marriage of Jesus and Mary Magdalene; Yet, in addition to suggestions of anti-Christian bias in general, there have been accusations that Brown's novel is specifically anti-Catholic.

(Lacy, 2004)

The writer delves into Teabing's historical documents on the royal dynasties to discover with the mystical amazement of Sophei that Mary Magdalene is a descendant of Benjamin (Jewish), a royal dynasty. Jesus is a descendant of David's Jewish dynasty "The Gospel of Matthew states explicitly that Jesus was of royal blood -a genuine king, the lineal descendant of Solomon and David."(Baigent. etal, 1982) He is a descendant of King Solomon, the king of the Jews. By marrying the influential Benjamin family, he united two royal dynasties in a way that created a strong political union with the possibility of legitimately claiming the throne and restoring the dynasty of kings, as was the case during the reign of Solomon. This is what Freemasonry seeks to restore the kingdom of Solomon and to emphasize that the origins of Christianity and royal dynasties in Europe are Jewish by origins. So it prompts the Vatican to retreat from accusing the Jews of crucifying Christ "The Jews everywhere and always have been strangers. parasites and revolutionaries, moreover, during the Middle Ages they were regarded

as the putters to death of Christ. The accusation of putting Christ to death, having with the weakening of Christianity lost its vigour" ([De Poncins](#), 1929). It also ended the conflict between Judaism and Christianity in this matter and united them by working for the return of Solomon's kingdom. This is why many Christian sects, such as Protestantism and Anglicanism, have arisen that demand the return of the Jews to the Holy Land.

The symbols that Langdon derived in dismantling the painting *The Last Supper*, emphasize the union of the male and female. The male is Jesus, who bears the symbol of the triangle and represents the man's phallus. While the female is Mary Magdalene, which is the opposite of the symbol of the man, carrying an inverted triangle that represents the female's womb. When the two triangles overlap, they produce the six-pointed (Jewish) star "Then again, in both the Leonardo..., we see the Lady M—surely in both cases Mary Magdalene. Now, what we know of the Priory belief that she was married to Jesus would explain just why she was at the Last Supper, on her husband's right hand, and why she—as his 'other half'—is wearing the mirror image of his clothes"(Picknett and Prince, 1997). Hence the relationship between Judaism and Christianity is firmly established, and Pope Benedict XVI declared in 2011 that Jews are not responsible for the death of Christ.

Teabing detonates another surprise, asserting that Jesus not only married but had a daughter and is a father. Mary Magdalene is the sacred vessel that carried Jesus' royal lineage. This is the greatest mystery in the history of humanity, so the myth of the Holy Grail that carried the holy blood revolves entirely around the royal lineage "Taken in conjunction with the emphasis on genealogy and lineage, however, there is not much room for doubt. And, for that matter, the traditional associations - the cup which caught Jesus's blood, for instance - would seem to reinforce this supposition. Quite clearly, the Grail would appear to pertain in some way to blood and a bloodline."( Baigent. etal, 1982). He stresses that this issue is not only concerned with Da Vinci, as there are dozens of books that have talked about this topic, and he mentions the names of these books, the most important of which is Dan Brown's inspiring book 'The Holy Blood and The Holy Grail' , which is the bestselling book in the world.

It is Mary Magdalene who gave birth to the royal dynasty that rules Europe today, according to information from the Priory of Sion. Mary Magdalene is pregnant when Jesus is

crucified, and to preserve the safety of her fetus, she flees to the Holy Land with the help of Jesus' uncle Joseph to France "Magdalene was pregnant at the time of the crucifixion and fled to France, then known as Gaul, with the assistance of Joseph of Arimathea." (Mickler, 2005) There, she finds a secure haven in the Jewish community and gives birth to her daughter, whom she named Sarah. This daughter is a descendant of the Jewish kings David and Solomon. Historians have coined a family tree and all the events that were passed on to Mary and her daughter, and these documents are considered secrets of the Holy Grail.

Joseph of Arimathea, the biblical 'uncle' of Jesus, is said to have travelled to France to spread the word. The Vatican librarian, Cardinal Baronius, said that Joseph first arrived in Marseilles in 35 AD and later went on to Britain. Mary Magdalene and offspring of 'Jesus' are also said to have headed for the South of France after the 'crucifixion'. This is the foundation of the Holy Grail story which claims that the Jesus bloodline became the Merovingians in France.

(Icke, 1999)

The dynasty of Christ flourished secretly, under different names, in France until it made a bold move in the fifth century when it was mixed by marriage with French royal blood, creating a dynasty known as the Merovingian. "The secret is the burial place of Mary Magdalene, who was taken secretly to what is now the south of France after the crucifixion of Jesus. There she gave birth to his son, and eventually, his descendants became the Merovingian royal family." (Cohen, 2005) In the late seventh century, the Vatican sought to get rid of the kings of this dynasty until it became almost extinct. But it gives birth to Godfroi de Bouillon, the founder of the Priory of Sion from its dynasty, who moves the documents of the Holy Grail from its hiding place under Solomon's Temple. The Priory of Sion remains vigorously preserving and protecting this legacy. The history of the Church is full of blood and violence to obtain the mysteries of the Holy Grail, so it seeks to get rid of the men of the Brotherhood in an attempt to obtain their treasure. If the Church finds the Holy Grail, it will get rid of it to erase the traces of Mary Magdalene, her documents, and her secrets "Teabing claims Mary Magdalene is the woman who singlehandedly could crumble the church for her marriage with Jesus Christ manifests the earthly aspects of Jesus' life, but the early Church needed to convince the world that the mortal prophet Jesus was a divine being." (Zhao, 2020) With the loss of the documents of royal blood, the truth will be lost

forever, and the Church will have won its war against the fraternity, and rewrite the history that will erase the past forever. "The only possible theological argument against Mary having Christ's authority is that women could never be counted as disciples or apostles... Significantly, the early church fathers knew about her importance and her relationship to Jesus, but deliberately chose to suppress it in a cynical campaign to rob women of their power..." (Olsen., 2006). Because history is always written by the victorious when a war occurs between two civilizations, the loser is banished into oblivion, and the winner makes history books, books that glorify his cause and despise the opponent; as Napoleon once said: History is nothing but a lie, agreed upon.

In the discussion of Teabing and Langdon about the royal dynasties, the Merovingian dynasty is extinct and only two families of Christ remain living today, the Plantars and the St. Clairs, living in an unknown secret location under fraternal protection "I'm sorry. I know that would have answered some questions for you. Only two direct lines of Merovingians remain. Their family names are Plantard and Saint-Clair. Both families live in hiding, probably protected by the Priory."(Brown, 2003) When Sophie heard that, she recalled the words of her grandfather Sannière when he said: "Princess... I know I've kept things from you, and I know it has cost me your love. But it was for your own safety. Now you must know the truth. Please, I must tell you the truth about your family."(Brown, 2003) But he died before he showed her, he was keen to inform her through the secrets, puzzles, and symbols that he wrote until she reached the box of secrets, then there was a shudder in her body, royal blood. Princess Sophie. She felt she might be from one of these two families. Based on what Teabing told her: "You won't find the Holy Grail, but she will find you, so I, Sophie says, am sure that the Holy Grail has come to me for some reason, and when the time comes, I will know what to do." (Brown, 2003)

After Langdon opens the box and looks at the map (papyrus) inside, the poem written by Sannière has symbols that lead to the location of the Holy Grail. He takes an adventure with Leigh Teabing to several churches in Britain to search for the location of the cup, then discovers the truth of Sir Leigh Teabing that he is behind all the conspiracies that led to the murder of Sannière and his fellow brothers. He (Teabing) drives Opus Dei through the listening devices that he places everywhere and controls throughout his home in Paris.

Subsequent to the arrest of Teabing and his followers. Langdon and Sophie escaped from them and reached the truth about Sannière's mysteries and secrets. They arrive at Rosslyn Church in London, which Sonnière referred to in his message. They found that the church had many symbols associated with the Jewish religion. There is a pattern that simulates the western wall of Solomon's Temple, and on its floor is the Star of David (the emblem of Solomon), the sword, and the cup, which are the Star of David two columns represent a copy of the entrance to Solomon's Temple. Langdon indicates that every Masonic temple in the world contains these same columns. "The interior of the church positively froths with exquisite stone carvings that marry Christian thought with pagan symbolism; many of the carvings are also said to relate to Freemasonry and the Knights Templar. It was this age-old reputation that made Langdon pause and reflect that Rosslyn was "far too obvious a location" for the Grail to be hidden in." (Paull and Culwell, 2006)

Sonnière's mysterious letter is nothing but Sophie's arrival to her family. She finds her grandmother, where Sophie is her real identity. She is a descendant of the two Merovingian families, which are directly descended from Mary Magdalene and Jesus. Langdon gets to know many of the ideas he heard about, such as the end of days or the end of the world, or the date of revealing the secrets of the Grail; she says: "The End of Days is a legend of paranoid minds. There is nothing in the Priory doctrine that identifies a date at which the Grail should be unveiled. In fact, the Priory has always maintained that the Grail should *never* be unveiled... It is the mystery and wonderment that serve our souls, not the Grail itself. The beauty of the Grail lies in her ethereal nature." (Brown, 2003)

This means that the Grail is a forgotten secret, and the location of its documents is unknown forever. Nevertheless, Langdon insists on reaching the Grail because Sannière's poem refers to Rosslyn and mentions that a sword and a spear guard the Grail. Langdon's view towards their symbolism corresponds to the two triangles of the male and female; the sword is a triangle representing the male, and the mug is an inverted triangle representing the female. When they overlap, they form the six-pointed star (Star of David), which is the guardian of the treasure of the Holy Grail.

### Conclusion

Reading *The Da Vinci Code*, it is possible to identify the origin of the Masonic Brotherhood, its origins, roots and ancient beginnings. It began and evolved from the Templars and then reached the protection of its secrets and sacred documents. According to the novel, these documents are a set of ideas and beliefs that are passed down from one generation to another orally without being documented in some cases. Dan Brown also explained the method of oral transmission to preserve secrets in order not to be revealed and identified by what the Prior of Sion believes is an enemy. One of the most important secrets of the fraternity is the story of Christ and Mary Magdalene, who trace their lineage back to the Jews and from a royal lineage. One of the most dangerous secrets of the Sion brothers is that Christ is the husband of Mary Magdalene. This belief is vehemently opposed to the Church, which holds that such a sacrament undermines Christianity and destroys the Church. Naturally, the Church and the Vatican led a fierce war against the Brotherhood to eliminate and hide its secrets forever.

The novel revolves mainly around the story of the Holy Grail, as it is not a chalice in common sense. In the narrative of the novel, the cup is a person, a woman. All the symbols, literary and artistic associated with this story indicate that she is Mary Magdalene. In particular, what is mentioned in the picture of Da Vinci's 'The Last Supper'. Other places in the account provide a perception that Mary is the vessel that holds the blood, origin, and lineage of Christ. That is why the story is told by multiple characters who express it as the sacred 'cup'.

The novel carries many symbols and drawings, which in turn lead to the truth of the Holy Grail. All these symbols belong to the Sion Brotherhood (Freemasonry). Freemasonry is a Jewish movement based on several Beliefs, which include symbols through which it tries to remove the suspicion that the Jews are the ones who killed Christ, divert attention away from the issue, and get closer to Christ.

Most of the concepts and beliefs in the novel belong to the novel's writer, Dan Brown. The writer disclosed his Masonic beliefs, 'Prior of Sion', hiding behind the opinions of the characters that he chose in the novel. This method spared him criticism after the novel's publication. Langdon, Teabing, and Saunière are all characters with beliefs that are the same as those of the

writer. Dan Brown interestingly marketed his concepts without making the reader feel that they belonged to Dan Brown.

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