

## Freemasonry from a historical perspective

Freemasonry is an initiation society, which has proved to be of great influence on European culture since its foundation in the beginning of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Through the lives and works of individual members of the order, masonic ideas and symbols found their way into literature, the arts, science and politics and during three centuries became a part of our society. As local organizations, lodges and their members have often played an important part in local developments. Freemasonry stood at the cradle of many charities, commercial enterprises, social reforms and academic organizations, of which the masonic roots have since long been forgotten.

## Academic research into freemasonry

Over the last decades academic chairs and research centers for the study of freemasonry have been founded at universities in Brussels, Sheffield and Zaragoza. In the Netherlands freemasonry is studied at the Chair for Freemasonry as an Intellectual Current and Socio-cultural European Phenomenon at the University of Leiden (founded in 2000), as well as the Sub Department for History of Hermetic Philosophy and Related Currents at the University of Amsterdam (founded in 1999). Two unique collections of source material in this field are also located in the Netherlands: the historical library, archives and museum collection of the Order of Freemasons under the Grand East of the Netherlands in the Cultural Masonic Center in The Hague and the Bibliotheca Philosophica Hermetica in Amsterdam. The foundation of these chairs has stimulated a growing number of students and scholars from diverse disciplines such as history, art history, literature, political and religious studies to focus their studies on the history of Freemasonry and its influence on western society and culture.

## The importance of funding

The academic climate for the study of freemasonry seems excellent, but in practice it is very difficult for students and scholars to find funding for their research. Freemasonry is still an unknown field of re-

search for many organizations and subsidiaries, and university budgets are limited. Research is costly, it involves both material and travel costs. It is of the utmost importance that funds are made available to support academic research into the history of freemasonry.

## Aims of the OVN

The OVN was founded after a private initiative by a group of academics and is not associated to any existing (masonic) organization or institute. The board is advised by an international committee of recommendation, consisting of professors of chairs in relevant fields of study. The OVN aims to 'stimulate academic research from all disciplines into the history of freemasonry in The Netherlands and its former territories from the time of its foundation until the present day, as well as to stimulate the (international) exchange of knowledge and the results of research into this field'.

## Research grants

In order to reach this goal, the OVN makes research grants available to students and scholars of all nationalities. These grants are made possible by donations from individual supporters (students, scholars and others interested in the field of study), who pledge a yearly donation of € 25,- or more. In 2007, a grant of max € 5000,- was made available. As the number of donors continues to grow, the support offered takes on a more substantial form.

All grant applications have to meet the criteria specified in the OVN Grant Regulations, a copy of which is made available at request. Candidates are kindly asked to register as a donor of the OVN, so others may benefit of a grant in the future.

An independent committee of academic specialists in relevant fields of study examines the grant applications and advises the board of the OVN.

## Newsletter

Until 2007, the OVN informed its supporters on a regular basis through a printed newsletter, which was available in an English and a Dutch version. It has now been substituted by a weblog (blog) at

[www.stichtingovn.blogspot.com](http://www.stichtingovn.blogspot.com), which is accessible to registered users (OVN donors) only. The weblog informs readers on the most recent activities of the OVN as well as new publications, conferences, exhibitions and other international developments in the field of study.

## Conferences, publications and projects

In order to stimulate interest in the history of freemasonry the OVN regularly organizes lectures, international conferences and other events for a wide audience. Past conferences include: *Masonic and Esoteric Heritage. A New Perspective for Art and Heritage Policies* (The Hague 2005) and *Symbolism in 18<sup>th</sup> Century Gardens. The Influence of Intellectual Currents, such as Freemasonry* (Schwetzingen, 2006). The published papers are available to order.

The OVN also contributes to the preservation of masonic cultural heritage for future generations, and efforts to make this heritage more easily accessible for research. In 2006/2007 the OVN initiated several projects, including a pilot study of surviving 18<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup> century lodge buildings in the Netherlands and the stock taking of masonic archives and documents in public archives, and the publication of an overview. In 2008 a project will be aimed at the registration, conservation and accessibility of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century archives of mixed masonic orders in the Netherlands. All these activities and projects have been made possible by support from academic and cultural funds.

The OVN aims to continue developing its information and advisory services to students and academics, heritage professionals and the general public.

## International cooperation

The OVN aims to cooperate with academic chairs and organizations in the Netherlands and other countries on projects which stimulate the further development of the discipline. The support of an international committee of recommendation facilitates international contacts, allowing the OVN to represent Dutch scholars in the field of study of freemasonry at an international level and to participate in newly formed academic networks. Suggestions for joint confe-

rences and other projects are welcomed by the board.

### Register as a donor

The OVN depends on donations to realize its goals, because the research grants and other activities of the foundation are solely financed through donations and subsidies. Students, scholars and others interested in the history of freemasonry, as well as organizations or companies who wish to support the activities of the OVN, can make a valuable contribution by pledging a donation.

Donors are asked to pledge a (yearly) contribution of € 25,- or more. Registered donors can access the digital newsletter (blog), receive a discount on the registration fees for conferences and other OVN-events, as well as a discount when ordering OVN-publications.

Donations can be transferred to bank account no. 22.81.76.832 at F. van Lanschot Bankers in Den Bosch, the Netherlands (IBAN NL90FVLB0228176832 / BIC FVLBNL22), on behalf of 'OVN' in The Hague, the Netherlands, clearly stating 'donation 2008'. Payments by credit card are not accepted.

When making a donation in order to register as a new donor, please send us an e-mail with your full contact details for our administration.

### More information

For more information, requests for the OVN Grant Regulations, or registration as a new donor, please contact:

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www.stichtingovn.nl  
(English version under construction)

### Committee of recommendation

- *Prof.dr. Wouter Hanegraaff*  
Chair for the History of hermetic philosophy and related currents, University of Amsterdam (the Netherlands);
- *Prof.emerit. Anton van de Sande*  
Chair for the History of freemasonry as an intellectual current and socio-cultural European phenomenon, University of Leiden (the Netherlands);
- *Prof. Luc Nefontaine*  
Institut d'Etudes des Religions et de la Laïcité, Université Libre de Bruxelles (Belgium) ;
- *Prof.emerit. Antoine Faivre*  
Chaire d'Histoire des courants ésotériques et mystiques dans l'Europe moderne et contemporaine, l'Ecole Pratique des Hautes Etudes, Section des Sciences Religieuses, Sorbonne, Paris (France) ;
- *Dr. Andreas Önnarfors*  
Centre for Research into Freemasonry, University of Sheffield (UK);
- *Prof.dr. Andrew Prescott*  
University Research Centre, University of Wales, Lampeter (UK);
- *Prof.dr. Helmut Reinalter*  
Wissenschaftliche Kommission zur Erforschung der Freimaurerei / Institut für Geschichte, University of Innsbruck (Austria);
- *Mrs. prof. Margaret C. Jacob*  
Department of History, UCLA (USA);
- *Prof.dr. Robert-Jan van Pelt*  
School of Architecture, University of Waterloo, Ontario (Canada) ;
- *Prof.dr. J.A.F. Benimeli*  
Centro de Estudios Históricos de la Masonería Española, Zaragoza University (Spain).

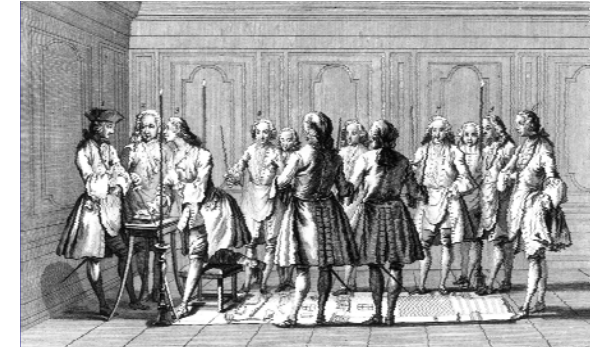
### Board members

- *Mrs. drs. A.A. Kroon, MA (chairwoman)*  
art historian, specialized in the material culture of freemasonry, PhD-researcher University of Leiden;
- *Mrs. dr. M.Th. Bax, MA (secretary)*  
art historian, specialized in the relationship between western esotericism and the arts around 1900;
- *J.H. Kroon (treasurer)*  
financial adviser;
- *Dr. J.A.M. Snoek (board member)*  
theologian, specialized in the history of Freemasonry and the historical development of the Masonic ritual, senior researcher at the University of Heidelberg;
- *Mrs. drs. Anat Harel (board member)*  
theologian, specialized in the history of Freemasonry around 1900; PhD-researcher University of Leiden.

OVN

Foundation for academic research  
into the history of freemasonry  
in the Netherlands

Stichting ter bevordering van  
wetenschappelijk Onderzoek naar de  
geschiedenis van de Vrijmetselarij in Nederland



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