

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 18th 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 part of the curriculum of the Chair for Freemasonry as an Intellectual Current and Socio-cultural European Phenomenon at the University of Leiden (2000-2010), as well as the Sub Department for History of Hermetic Philosophy and Related Currents at the University of Amsterdam (1999-present). 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 research 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 and related currents 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. As the number of donors continues to grow, the support offered takes on a more substantial form (grants have developed from € 1000 in 2001 to € 5000 in 2007). 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.

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 18th Century Gardens. The Influence of Intellectual Currents, such as Freemasonry* (Schwetzingen, 2006). The published conference papers are available to order.

The OVN aims to contribute to the preservation of masonic cultural heritage for future generations, as well as the accessibility of this heritage for research. In 2006/2007 several projects were initiated with support of academic and cultural subsidies. These included a pilot study into lodge buildings in the Netherlands, built between 1735-1945, as well as stock taking and publishing an overview of masonic archives and documents in Dutch public archives. In 2010-2013 the OVN assisted in the registration, conservation and accessibility of the early 20th century archives of mixed masonic orders in the Netherlands.

The OVN regularly receives requests for information on masonic history, objects and heritage and aims to further develop its advisory function to students and academics, heritage professionals and the general public.

Website and social media

The OVN website (www.stichtingovn.nl) functions as an information portal for the Dutch field of study. Information about the foundations activities and other news in the field of study is available in English in our online newsletter at ovnews.blogspot.com. Information on new publications, conferences, exhibitions and other international developments in the field of study is also distributed in Dutch/English via our Twitter account: @stichtingovn.

International cooperation

The OVN would like to actively cooperate with international academic chairs and organizations in the field of study in order to further stimulate and facilitate interdisciplinary research and heritage projects. The support of an international committee of recommendation helps to facilitate such contacts. Suggestions for joint conferences, heritage and

research projects and participation in academic networks are welcomed by the board.

Register as a donor

The OVN welcomes donations to help realize its goals. Research grants are financed solely through private donations, while funds received through academic and cultural subsidies go towards heritage projects, publications and public events. Students, scholars and others interested in the history of freemasonry, as well as organizations, companies or lodges who wish to support the activities of the OVN, can make a valuable contribution by pledging a donation. Donors pledge a (yearly) contribution of € 25,- or more, and are entitled to discounts on registration fees for OVN-conferences and orders of OVN- publications.

In order to register as a new donor, please send us an e-mail with your full contact details for our administration. Donations can be transferred to bank account number: IBAN NL90FVLB0228176832 / BIC FVLBNL22 (F. van Lanschot Bankers in Den Bosch, the Netherlands) on behalf of 'OVN' in The Hague, the Netherlands. Please clearly state 'donation 2014' as reference. Payments by credit card are not (yet) accepted.

More information

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

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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*
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- *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*
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- *Prof.dr. Andrew Prescott*
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- *Prof.dr. J.A.F. Benimell*
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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;
- *board member vacancy.*

OVN

Foundation for
academic research
Into the history of freemasonry
& related currents in the Netherlands

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



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