

## An Overview of the alchemical and magical system of The Gold- und Rosenkreuz Order

Most people interested in the western hermetic tradition today know that the 18th century *Gold und Rosenkreuz Order* was a high degree Masonic Order with a strong emphasis on laboratory alchemy. What is not generally known, however, is how this work was considered as a preparation for the magical and theurgical work which they taught in their higher degrees, where the final aim of their system was to become a prophet in the same style as the ones we read about in the Old and New Testament. The intention of this article is to spread some light on these aspects, while at the same time give an overview of how the Order was structured by presenting its system as it was being presented for its members. The source material is from the old Swedish lodge of the *Gold und Rosenkreuz Order*, which contains a wealth of material hitherto unpublished, and now in the custody of the *Sodalitas Rosae+Crucis & Solis Alati*.

### Samuel Richter's Order

The first mention of the *Gold und Rosenkreuz Order* is from the beginning of the 18th cen-

tury, when the nomen mysticum Sincerus Renatus (Samuel Richter) published *The True and Complete Preparation of the Philosopher's Stone of the Brotherhood from the Order of the Golden and Rosy Cross*.<sup>1</sup> There is still debate whether the Order only existed in his imagination or if there actually was an organized group, but regardless of that, it had a strong impact on what would happen half a century later.<sup>2</sup> The anti-papal tone of the Rosicrucian manifestos had gradually ceased during the 17th century, and the role of laboratory alchemy had increased, till the point where it was now portrayed as the Royal path, and thus added *Gold* to the *Rosy Cross*. (The manifestos quite harshly dismissed laboratory alchemy.)

The initiation from this period was very simple, and took place at night in a church. The candidate had been prepared for three months by his sponsor, and met his initiator for the first time at the church altar. The initiation consisted of three parts; a) ceremonial activities (like the cutting of hair, which was kept by the Superior of the Order, and blood-letting), b)

the oath, and c) a prayer. Afterwards, the new member received, under strict regulations, a portion of the Philosopher's Stone. In summary, it was very far from the later Masonic styled rituals and elaborate Order structure, but its statutes set a new standard for the time to come. However, any claim that there existed a link between this Order and the one established some 50 years later, apart from the published book, is presently very unlikely, although certainly there were Rosicrucian activities going on around Europe.<sup>3</sup>

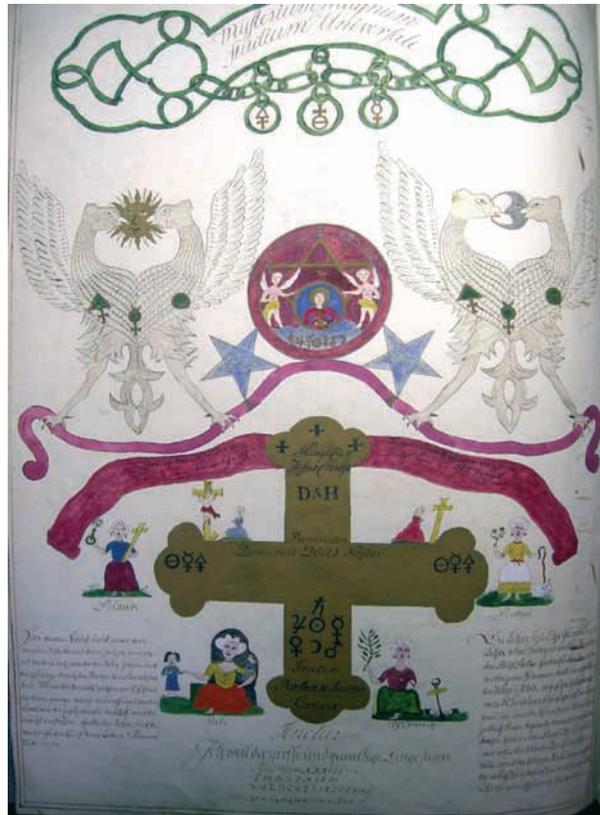
### **The Most Praiseworthy Order of the Golden Rosy Cross**

Having been manifested (or, according to some, revived) in southern Germany probably around 1756-58, it swiftly spread across Germany, and eventually reached countries like Poland, Sweden and Russia. During this first period, members were neither required to be masons nor Christians, and the Order emphasized their connection with the old Templar Knights. In 1767, a general reformation took place, where the grade structure grew from 7 to 9 degrees with a more biblically oriented focus, and the organization was highly developed. It was then it became a high degree Masonic system, and in even greater terms promised secret teachings to an elite, and so to speak became a religious substitute. It has quite aptly been described as theosophical masonry. Ten years later, in 1777, another general reformation occurred, and most existing material today is from that period.

The purpose of the Order was to regenerate man back to his original dignity (a reborn in the Biblical sense), restore the image of God

on this side of the abyss, and with the aid of Jesus Christ fight against the devil and darkness while building the Kingdom of Light, so that everything finally will be able to reintegrate back to its original condition. The means to do so was to teach the members in the arts of alchemy, magic and prophecy, through an elaborate degree

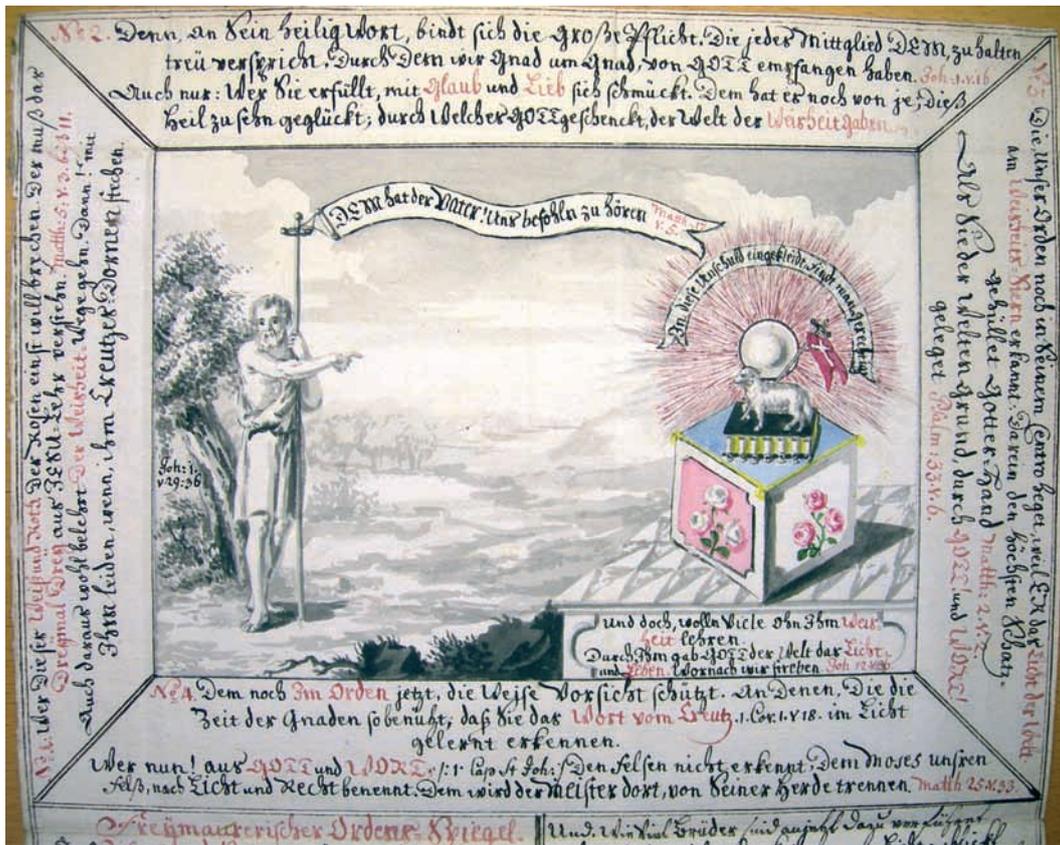
system. What is important to understand here is that the Order was very influenced by theosophy, and believed that diseases and death were a natural result of original Sin and Man's resulting Fall. Alchemy was thus a way of removing sin by healing diseases and prolonging life, and accomplished perfection of body, soul and spirit. Only then could the real magic and theurgy be worked, which will be exemplified later on.



*Reproduced image is from a handwritten and handcoloured edition of the Gebeime Figuren der Rosenkreuzer, aus dem 16ten und 17ten Jahrhundert from 1785, showing the Mysterium Magnum Studium Universali. (From the archive of Sodalitas Rosae+Crucis & Solis Alati.)*

### **Lodge rituals**

The initiation rituals were influenced by the Masonic blue degree rituals, and very often sought to explain alchemical meanings and symbolism hidden therein. In addition, they each had what we can call a purifying aspect. Each degree had a special lodge room with several sections (coloured according to alchemical stages), and during an initiation, a brother might have to visit several rooms in order to receive certain objects or instructions, which were then brought to the room of the grade he was being received into, all done in ceremonial manner with questions, passwords and signs. The following description of the rooms and their contents is from the initiation ritual of the Philosophus grade.



Reproduced image is from the secret instructions of the Gold und Rosenkreuz Order, which explains how the Royal path of Alchemy opens up the seven seals. (From the archive of Sodalitas Rosae+Crucis & Solis Alati.)

The first room has a green table and three green chairs. On the table lays a bare sword, a red string, a cup with wine, and some bread. In the middle is a candle. The chamber is guarded by merely one Junior.

The second room has a table covered with several colours and four chairs coloured in the same way. On the table are 2 candles, 2 strings, one white and one red, 2 bare swords, one cast pot containing rose water, one hand-basin and one serviette. The room is guarded by two Theoretici.

The third room has five chairs and a table covered in grey, on which are three candles, three cords, one red, one white and one black, and three swords. It is guarded by three Practici brothers.

The fourth room has a table covered in black, on which must be four candles, four swords, the Book of Constitutions, a globe, an incense burner, a box with incense, prepared of storax, frankincense, gum tree and myrrh, a salt-cellar in either gold, silver or glass. Six chairs covered in black are placed around the table. Twelve candles shine on the walls. The brothers are dressed in black, carrying their Order regalia, aprons and swords.

The Director of the Lodge ruled by the power of the Staff of Aaron, a green and red

ash wand inscribed with a golden Alpha and Omega on each end. With this, he also touched the candidates on certain parts during the initiations.

Apart from initiations and instruction ceremonies, where discourses on Freemasonry, alchemy, theosophy and Christian Kabbalah were delivered, they had a strong incline for table meal lodges, where the most important object was the salt-cellar in the middle of the table, surrounded by three candles. The catechism of the grade was always recited during such meetings, where no more than three dishes were allowed to be served.<sup>4</sup>

To be received into the Order, the candidate had to be 30 years old, a true master of the Light and the lost Word (i.e. Master Mason), and possessing the visible signs thereof, viz. honour, common sense, peacefulness, and desire and appreciation for knowledge. On his entrance into the Order, his name was “kabbalized” by the Director or the Master. This could either be a kabbalistic modification of his mundane name, or a few words motto.

## Grade Structure

### 1 – Juniorus

This was a strictly theoretical degree, where one learnt about the origin of the Fraternity (which was founded by no other than the biblical Adam), and that the three degrees of Freemasonry were established as a preliminary school for the higher sciences. Alchemical interpretations of the three Masonic degrees were given, as well as a general doctrine concerning the four elements. The four alchemical stages of nigredo, albedo, citrinitas, and rubedo, found on the tracing board, were described as:

- First, the Black Colour, in Putrefactio or Decay
- Second, the White, in Albatio or Purification
- Third, the Yellow, in Gradatio, or Elevation
- Fourth, the Red, in the perfection of the Supreme Secret

The Juniorus had to learn several pages of alchemical symbols and their meanings, since each sign had a specific kabbalistic meaning which would be put to use in the fourth grade, as well as the mandatory cipher. (Each grade had its specific cipher).

### 2 – Theoretici

Also a strictly theoretical degree, which carried the motto of “through observing nature, we come to know God and ourselves”. An alchemical interpretation of Genesis was given, as well as a general doctrine of creation and all of its inhabitants, and the relation between the macro- and microcosm. The following excerpt is from that doctrine, which briefly explains man’s threefold nature and composition.

*Man, whose body is from the lower Elements, whose Soul is from the Middle Heaven, and whose Spirit originates from God, assumes in this way the higher, the lower and the middle, and is an interference from the Visible and Invisible World and its many forces; however, his natural institution and order is ruined since Sin and its subsequent curse, and all his three parts are subjected to many diseases.*

### Man and his body

*The body of man is not very different from matter and the more perfect animal bodies, just more beautiful in form and provided with tools, fitting for its secret condition.*

### The Soul

*Just like the animals, he owns a sensual Soul, to rule the body and to form images of the things comprehended through the Senses; this force of imagination, however, is stronger in Man than in the animals, since he is also capable of scattering the comprehended Images, and of this, combine and form new ones.*



*Reproduced image is from the reception formula of the fourth grade of the Gold und Rosenkreuz Order. (From the archive of Sodalitas Rosae+Cruis & Solis Alati.)*

### The Spirit

*But foremost, Man is given a living Spirit, blown into the nostrils, and a reasonable Spirit, free and pure from all matter and its Elements. This is a Mirror, in which the most remote things are being portrayed as being present, and where the past can be retrieved. But even this spiritual and simple being can not alone judge, assume and discard the concepts received by the senses, but also through its contemplation investigate Spiritual, and for the senses incomprehensible Things. Skill in this is Shrewdness. His will decides according to what is acknowledged by his intelligence, as good or evil. In addition, God has got the Conscience as an inner witness and judge, whereby man is conscious of that knowledge and actions. Woe unto him who does not listen to its voice.*

*The Creator’s intention with this composition is that the body shall be governed by the Soul, but this shall again be governed by the reasonable Spirit. If the Soul is captivated by sensuality, and the Spirit submits itself to that reign, then this order is converted*

and the living dead man loses all his power for higher knowledge. If, however, the Spirit unites itself with the most essential love of God through rebirth, then it can easily, through the aid of God, release itself from all earthly Images, and the thereby awakened cravings. It will then be elevated through the Merciful Sun Rays of Christ and made into the holy Spiritual Temple, which allows it to feel and taste the power of the coming World waiting therein.

*The Carnal Soul and its animal and lower forces grieve and become idle when the reasonable Spirit elevates itself to God and submits before his majestic Throne, to receive the Divine Light.*

The *Golden Chain of Homer* and the works of Arnaldus de Villa Nova were studied, and also present during the initiation.

### 3 – Practici

To be advanced into the third degree, the candidate had to correctly understand the Three Kingdoms of Nature with its Principals; the Concordant of the Philosophers, as well as their ways of Manipulations, Ovens and Vessels.

Here real laboratory alchemy began, where one had to learn about the conditions of a laboratory, the necessary preparations to Philosophical Work, and how to prepare the *Radical* and *Universal Menstrua* of each of the three Kingdoms. After one had prepared those, the instructions said:

*Here one has the 4 principal menstrual together, where each and one of those have in themselves their Three radical Principles opened, whence, by and through the Lapis Mineralis, Vegetabilis, Animalis and Universalis can be prepared in the Wet Way. And even though these four waters are externally very different, they are nevertheless internally monotonous, and every Brother shall know, that in each such ▽, the 4 Elements are in their Concordance, in which are ▽, △, ▴ and ▾, but as 3, Spiritus, Corpus and Anima: ☉, ☿ et ♃, also Alcalē, Aridum et Volatile, and these are also 2, as Man and Woman, Agens and Patiens, ☉ et ☽, which brings forth, nourishes, destroys and again brings forth everything.*

The alchemical receipts of “How to, in the Wet Way, prepare the Mineral, Vegetable, Animal and Universal Lapis” followed. However, also 7 operations in the Dry Way were given and worked with in this degree.<sup>5</sup> Welling’s masterpiece *Opus Mago-Cabbalisticum et Theosophicum* was mandatory reading from here on.

### 4 – Philosophi

This grade was a continuation of laboratory alchemy, where one learnt about the true image of the philosophical, animal, mineral and vegetable Kingdoms. The alchemical recipes included “Preparation of Radical Menstrua”, “Preparation of the Lapis Mineralis according to the Wet Way”, “Calcinatio and Putrefactio of Gold”, “Resolutio and Coagulatio of Gold” and “How to construct an ever burning candle” (!). Biblical references were made to show the importance of the numbers 4 and 40, which were considered to have had a great significance in the alchemical work, and which the operations in the higher degrees utilized.

### 5 – Minores

Here one encountered Christian Kabbalah, which was, however, mostly studied in relation to alchemy.<sup>6</sup> The alchemical operations (10 in total) centered on the mysteries of the philosophical Sun and Earth, how to prepare Vitriol for the mineral work, and work with healing tinctures. From this grade and onwards, members no longer worked together with members of lower grades in alchemical operations, apart from when they instructed them. An important book for this grade was Knorr von Rosenroth’s *Kabbala Denudata*.

### 6 – Majores

The alchemical work focused on different preparations of philosophical Salt and how to coagulate the Stone from phlegm. Since one was taught how to use one’s own stomach as the Athanor, certain food restrictions etc. also came in this degree. The Dry Way was further elaborated upon, in which one had to construct the Mineral Stone. An important study was the *Schlüssel der Wahren Weisheit* and *Der Compass der Weisen*.

7 – *Adepti Exempti*

The alchemical work focused on the morning dew, how to prepare the *Red Lion* by working with one's own blood, as well as the making of the Stones for all four kingdoms and the much renowned *Philosopher's Stone*. In comparison with the earlier alchemical receipts, the preparation of the *Philosopher's Stone* did not require as much material, although the process took several months and had to be prepared alone. The operation was based on the *Splendor Solis* treatise, and summarized in a Swedish version of the *Arcana Arcanorum*. Thus the *Aureum Vellus* became an important study. Magic (*magia naturalis*) was here encountered and worked with for the first time.

8 – *Magistri*

The magical work was further elaborated, where one studied and worked with the *Opus Astrale Universalissimum* – in short, how the Universal Spirit influenced the Earth from the Sun, the Moon and the visible planets, and how this was reflected inside man in fluxes and refluxes. In summary, the work consisted of Solomonic styled magic. The alchemical work focused on the *Elixir of Life*.

9 – *Magi*

The Crown of the system was the *Urim & Thumin*, the *Schemhamphoras* system and to work theurgy in what they called *Magia Divina*. The true implication of the Stone of the Wise was given, as will be shown below.

Regarding the art of magic, the Order taught that:

*Our magic is not any ordinary magic. Our magic is not the natural, for that is understood by all philosophers. It is not any black art, for that is a work by the devil and no devil can stare into the eyes of one of our mages. It is not so-called white magic, which actions happens through so-called good spirit, who yet*

*are too impure to show themselves before God; but our magic is the true divine magic, a power, through which we, just as Moses and Elias, are in personal contact with God, and by which we can transmit our mutual messages through the spirits that have been purified by God and who live in God. We are in possession of the two main qualities of Jehovah, viz. to create and annihilate all things in nature. Just as Moses, we are able to transmute water into blood; just as Joshua, we can utilize sound to transform cities into dust.*

**Schemhamphoras**

The Schemhamphoras system the Order worked with is based on the book *Semiphoras and Schemhamphoras*, published in 1686. It is a treatise of Solomonic Magic, where one learns how to contact and communicate with the Divine and its agents in the same manner as Moses and Solomon did. Members were assigned a personal angel, with which they were to establish contact. Such operations required a specific magical circle traced on the floor, according to the nature of one's personal angel or the angel one wanted to question/give instructions to (the 10 different circles related to the 10 Sephiroth). Long series of purifications and prayers followed before

the actual conjuration could take place. The conjuration could be done in three different ways, namely 1st if the being was to appear in dreams, 2nd if the being was to appear when being awake in the night, and 3rd if the being was to immediately appear in physical form in front of the circle.

Overall, the work is quite similar to the operations of the French *Elus Cohen* system of Martinez de Pasqually, albeit a bit more easy to grasp.



*Reproduced image depicts a reception into the fifth degree of the Gold und Rosenkreuz Order. (Published by Beyer, from a copy in the archive of Sodalitas Rosae+Crucis & Solis Alati.)*

## Magia Divina

In the 9th degree, members were given a manuscript called *Magia Divina*, which is today widely known as the *Abramelin operation*.<sup>7</sup> This describes a 6 month long theurgical work which aims at reaching contact and conversation with ones Holy Guardian Angel. After this contact has been established, one evokes a legion of demonic spirits which all have to submit themselves to the will of the magician, who acts in the service of God the most high.

Having been originally composed by a Jew named Abraham von Worms, the first chapter describes how he was taught the system by his



Reproduced image is from the secret instructions of the sixth grade of the Gold und Rosenkreuz Order. (From the archive of *Sodalitas Rosae+Crucis & Solis Alati*.)

master *Abramelin*, hence its name. In the *Gold und Rosenkreuz Order*, however, being a Christian Order, that chapter was removed, and the document thus only contained the two chapters with instructions and magical squares. Also, several of the moral implications that one finds in the published versions are completely absent from the instructions, especially

when it comes to Jewish morality and customs, which in some cases are rewritten in a more Christian tone. And, surprise or no surprise, all magical squares are different; they usually have the same headings and descriptions, but apart from a few occasions, bear no similarity to the published works. Added are also some very beautiful and detailed drawings of the sanctuary, its altar and the ritual dress to wear.

## Urim & Thumin

The most supreme secret was the most fabled *Urim & Thumin*<sup>8</sup>, which was described as “the knowledge of the triune supernatural Light, through which one could investigate the origin, past, present and future of all that is”. This work was in fact a combination of alchemy and magic, which produced a skrying stone, consecrated to the seven Great Watchers.

To construct the *Urim & Thumin*, one had to purify each of the seven metals on their specific day and hour, and mix them with certain ingredients. The following new moon, the seven metals were merged and cast into a special form, upon which were inscribed certain magical characters, again according to the planetary hours. Then, on the following Friday, two large and five smaller crystals were ground, and enclosed with gold. As the Sun next entered Leo, one placed the four Stones in the Fire and made the Stone of the Wise which ever glows. This was placed in the larger crystal;

*In the middle of the great Crystal, one places the four-fold Lapis Philosophorum; on each of the four sides, one places the four simple Stones, viz. the Animal, Vegetable, Mineral and Astral Stones. In the small oval above is the Sacred Fire of the Lord, with which the Children of Israel ignited the Sacrifice.*

To use it, one needed a clean and isolated chamber (where no one had eaten or drunk), in which seven chairs were placed around a central table. Each one of the chairs was to be marked with the characters of its planet. The *Urim* was then taken out from its case to be placed on the table, next to two burning candles. Meditations, incense, prayers and psalms followed, after which the seven oldest members sat down on the chairs. If more than seven mem-

bers were present, the remaining ones had to stand behind the chairs and just observe the ceremony. The seven elders then meditated in silence, and looked at the *Thumin*. They would then see, in great humility, what they desired to see, know or understand – whether it involved the macrocosm or microcosm, angels, living or dead people, situations in the past, present or future – which resulted in a glowing light between their faces and the *Thumin*. During and after the ceremony, they were only allowed to discuss the experience if it related to the Order and its members.<sup>9</sup> The ceremony ended with prayers, replacement of the *Urim* and *Thumin*, and extinguishing of the candles, after which everyone left the chamber.

In summary, the 9th degree was about becoming a true mage and prophet, which, however, required physical and moral regeneration, accomplished through alchemy and magic. Perhaps due to the advanced alchemical work required in the construction, another way also existed...

### A Rosicrucian church

In Sweden there existed a secret Rosicrucian church called the *Theosophia Apostolica Rosæ Crucæ*. This Rosicrucian theosophical system was opened to a few elect high degree members of the *Gold und Rosenkreuz Order*, and consisted of three ordinations – priest, bishop and patriarch – which also were called the “true initiation”. I have, as yet, not found any trace of this outside of Sweden, and there is a good possibility that the system only existed there and was created by people adherent to the ideas of the Swedish mystic Emanuel Swedenborg (1688-1772).

The purpose of the three ordinations was to bring the candidate into conscious and regular contact with his Holy Guardian Angel and align himself with the specific angel of the tradition, and thus to become a true prophet, seeing and knowing the ways of the Lord. For this reason, various magical seals were used which the candidate worked with on a daily basis for several years. The candidate was not, however, expected to perform masses for other people unless he already was an officially

ordained priest, wherefore it was more of an inner church.

The litany used in the ordinations comes from the Swedish (protestant) church handbook of 1693, but its profession of faith is unique and is probably inspired by the French *L'Église Constitutionnelle*. A western dialect of Aramaic is used in the ordinations, the same dialect which is also used in the Syrian Patriarchal Churches of Antioch. The various and beautifully engraved church implements (from chalice and paten to Bishop and Patriarch wands) were something that each member had to construct themselves.

Despite the name of the system, it is generally speaking more in the flavour of Swedenborg than of the Rosicrucian tradition, albeit the theosophical aspect is the major influence.

### Cagliostro and the Arcana Arcanorm

As can be seen from the above, there exists a great similarity between the *Gold und Rosenkreuz* system and the *Arcana Arcanorum* of Cagliostro.<sup>10</sup> They both worked to achieve moral and physical regeneration through alchemy and magic, where the number 40 was of extreme importance. The operations concerned the esoteric concepts whereby one sought reintegration through 4 (Kingdoms and elements), 1 (Holy Guardian Angel), and 7 (planetary angels). And there is in fact a direct connection between the two, since, according to the historical scholar Karl Frick, Cagliostro is rumoured to have established a Rosenkreuz chapter with the same name as that of the Swedish chapter.<sup>11</sup> Rosicrucian scholar Susanna Åkerman has also been able to confirm that Cagliostro did visit Sweden<sup>12</sup>, and I have since then found letters from Cagliostro where he expounds upon certain alchemical operations, sent to members of the Swedish lodge.

### Summary

So with all this, we can see how the Order sought to promote laboratory alchemy as a preparation for the true divine magic, and with these two, members could become prophets. And for several years, this was a great success throughout Europe. However, nothing

lasts forever, and instead of the mandatory 10 year reformation (which should have happened in 1787), the Order slowly faded out, due to inner conflicts, alchemical experiments with fatal outcomes; Unknown Superiors that never came with even more secret teachings, and outer conflicts with the *Asiatic Brethren*, the *Illuminati* and the enlightenment scene as a whole. In the end of the 18th century, the term Rosicrucian became a substitute for charlatan, imposer or just general ignorance. However, its teachings and doctrine have continued to influence and inspire groups and individuals, whether these know about their source or not. Thus, Orders like the *Order of the Knights and Brethren of St. John the Evangelist from Asia in Europe* (Asiatic Brethren), the *Societas Rosicruciana in Anglia* (S.R.I.A.), the *Golden Dawn and Rosae Rubrae & Aureae Crucis* (G.D., R.R.&A.C.), and most recently *Sodalitas Rosae+Crucis & Solis Alati* (S.R.C.&S.S.A) all in different ways were established to continue and perpetuate the legacy of the old Gold und Rosenkreuz Order. And an impressive legacy that is – which hopefully has been shown by this article.

*(A much more in-depth study of the Order and its doctrines will be published by Ian Cowburn, Nick Farrell and Tommy Westlund.)*

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## Footnotes

1 Die wahrhafte und vollkommene Bereitung des philosophischen Steins der Brüderschaft aus dem Orden des Gulden und Rosen Kreutzes (1710).

2 Richter states in the foreword that he had been given the document from a Professor of the Art, and that only 9 Rosicrucians existed at that time.

3 A Rosicrucian circle was for example being operated in Sweden, which used the initiation ritual of Richter. According to their documents, the members had now increased to 12. Thus, they did either not consider the Gold und Rosenkreuz Order as legitimate Rosicrucians, or they were unaware of their presence.

4 As a German Order, they had regulations for more or less everything...

5 “Preparation of Argentum Vivum”, “Preparation of Regulus”, “Preparation of Aviculis”, “Animation of Argentum Vivum through Aviculis”, “Aaation”, “Imhibition and Multiplicatio”.

6 The Gold und Rosenkreuz wasn’t very much occupied with the study of Kabbalah, something which its offspring and later rival, the Asiatic Brethren, had as prime focus.

7 English translations have been published by Mathers, *The Book of the Sacred Magic of Abramelin the Mage* (2004) and most recently by Dehn, *The Book of Abramelin: A New Translation* (2006).

8 In the Old Testament, it is described how the High Priest carried a breast plate containing the two stones of Urim and Thumin, through which the Will of God was made known.

9 The instructions says that the chiefs of the Order used this method to control that the members lived a good and God-fearing life, and no reception into the higher grades could take place until the member in question had thus been approved of.

10 See for example Denis Laboure’s *De Cagliostro aux Arcana Arcanorum* (1995).

11 See Frick’s *Licht und Finsternis II* (1978).

12 Personal communication with the author (2003). Åkerman had found several letters in Swedish archives that showed that Cagliostro had been here, with his usual grandiose style.