

Historical Data of the pre- Memphis-Misraim Masonic Rites

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The “children” of Cagliostro

Our G.H. Brother A.V.I.A.F. has given some elements of the theurgic grades of the Misraim and Memphis Rites in a previous publication of *Splendor Solis*. On our official site some documents of the old Masonic groups are presented. Some of which are dealt with here. I will outline the generalities of each one of them, mainly concerning the contribution of each group during the era of occult and Masonic eruption.

This article deals with the Masonic Rites which were pre-existent or co-existent and influential to the genesis of the Rite of Memphis and Rite of Misraim. The workings of the Arcana Arcanorum of these rites, is in the lines of the Sodalitas Solis Alati. Historical data of the Rites after the mid-1800s can be found at the sites I refer to in the bibliography. My data come from both published and unpublished historical material concerning the Rites, being a member of two modern descendants of the Rites in Greece.

The Rites that influenced the present Masonic Rites of Memphis and Misraim were significant and very interesting from an esoteric perspective. However, historical data, about them is limited. It's mainly Masonic groups that sealed the era of Masonic enlightenment (mainly 18 century).

Before the 19th century Egypt was charming and seductive in the eyes of Europeans, who were trying to comprehend the hieroglyphics before the discovery of the Rosetta Stone. Hieroglyphics were considered “supernatural” for them.

Renaissance

In 1450 we have the foundation of the Platonic Academy in Florence, under the influence of the Greek/Byzantine Neoplatonist Georgios Pletho. Patron of the school was Cosimo de Medici who appoints Marcilio Ficino (1433-1499) to realize the project. Ficino translates into Italian the entire *Corpus Hermeticum*. The *Corpus Hermeticum* was the opus allegedly written by the hand of the notorious Hermes Trismegistus of Egypt. Till the mid 1600s the Opus was considered divine. It was erroneously believed to precede many Books from the Holy Bible. The authority of Hermes was close to Moses' books since for the Renaissance man books of “ancient” times were attached to validity, authority and charm. Ficino considers hieroglyphics to be symbols of divine nature comprehended by initiates alone. He studied Plutarch's “*De Iside et Osiride*” and Iamblichus' “*De Mysteriis*”, the only extant works of antiquity dealing with Egyptian myths and theurgy.

This mentality continued well into the next centuries. If someone visits the notorious Villa Borghese in Rome one will see the Egyptian Hall where some ancient Egyptian findings are exhibited next to imitation Egyptian paintings and “hieroglyphics”. These “hieroglyphs are without any meaning of course but show a deep appreciation and homage to the authority of ancient Egypt. We see, therefore, that despite their ignorance on

the matter, Europeans had included “ancient Egypt” in the general perspective of “knowledge” and certainly aesthetics. The entire continent during and after the Renaissance was obsessed with Egyptomania and adjacent to Kabbala everyone tried to explore the mysteries of Egypt.

Guillaume Postel (1510-1581) or, latinized, Postelus, studied the origin of languages. He spoke Greek, Hebrew, Arabic, Syriac and proclaimed friendship between Muslims and Christians since – he believed – they have a common origin. His works were *De originibus seu de hebraicae lingua*, (1538) and an edition of the *Sepher Yetzirah – Abrahami Patriarchae Liber Jezirah*, 1552 among others.

Giordano Bruno (1548-1600) believed in an infinite living world and during his lifetime tried to reintegrate the wisdom of ancient Egyptians and institute a “religion” of Nature.

One of the first inspired comments on the significance of Egypt on the initiatory affairs of Europe was made by the Rosicrucian Michael Maier in his work “*Silentium Post Clamores*” where he is saying that: “The R+C are the hair to the Hindu Brahmins, the Egyptian priests, the Eumolpidae of Eleusinian Mysteries, of the Cabirian Mysteries of Samothrace, the Magi of Persia, the Gymnosophists of Ethiopia, the Pythagoreans and the Arabs”.

Abbot Athanasius Kircher (1652-1654) is studying the hieroglyphics in his renowned opus “*Oedipus Aegyptiacus*”. Despite his erroneous efforts to translate the Egyptian hieroglyphs he was the one that saw and acknowledged the link between Coptic and Ancient Egyptian language which was of course correct. He is considered therefore, the father of modern Egyptology.

Till the mid-1700 (colophon of Egyptomania)

Abbe Terrason writes on the “Sethos”, a fictitious novel that is considered to have “discovered” from the monuments of ancient Egypt. We have the initiation of Sethos in the Great Pyramid!! Although fictitious, this novel influenced many Masonic circles (always liable to fiction) of its time and was printed in many editions leveraging the interest of initiating “Egyptian” Rites.

Antoine Court de Gebelin (1719-1784) publishes his “*Le Monde Primitif*” in 9 volumes (from 1773 till 1784) where he “discloses” the origin of religions, of symbols, of calendars, of playing-cards (Tarot), of languages and scriptures... He gives special attention to Egyptian cults and he is obsessed by Egypt-Kabbalist(omania). For example he translates the word Paris as Bar-Isis!!...

In 1791 we have Mozart's “*Magic Flute*” where initiation is detected in the Egyptian mysteries.

Even Karl von Eckartshausen will write a little known story the “*Costi's Journey*” where hindu prince Costi will have an initiatory journey to Egypt to be admitted to the great pyramid of Memphis...

By that time we have an eruption and disperse of Masonic rites. Let us make an arbitrary distinction between the main rites of continental Europe.

Egyptian Rite

(Near-East – Eastern Mediterranean)

Scottish Rite

(France – “Scotland”,
Western Europe)

Investigating the secret history of Masonic rites we see that behind the construction of some Egyptian rites we have some mysterious persons of Greek origin. They are traders, army officers, teachers and they remain anonymous with the exception of few.

E.g. Count Melissinos, a Greek officer of the Czar creates in 1760 within the Lodge “Silence” of St Petersburg a mystical system of 4 grades: 1. Dark Vault; 2. Master and Scottish Knight; 3. Philosopher; and 4. Templar Priest.

Egyptian Rites before the French Revolution

Cagliostro (1743-1795) was a significant and controversial personality. He created the High Egyptian Rite (Rite of Cagliostro), a rite that both men and women were admitted. It was consisted of 3 grades: Entered Apprentice Egyptian, Fellow Egyptian, and Master Egyptian.

Students and heirs of Cagliostro, in a way, were Balbiani and Lapasse, both belonging to the mother lodge “La Sageuse Triomphant”. They influenced later the R+C of Toulouse.

To Cagliostro is attributed the seminal phrase “Every Light from the East, every Initiation from Egypt”.

Cagliostro is considered by many a spiritual entity incarnated periodically. E.g. there was another Joseph Balsamo active in Toulouse on 1638 bearing similar “qualities” and legendary “activities”. He was appointed to officially cure an epidemic that was decimating the town Castre. Later, the “Maitre Philippe de Lyon” was considered by many an incarnation of Cagliostro.

Unofficial history: Cagliostro was exalted to a Master Mason at the Lodge “Jean d’Ecosse du Secret et d’Harmonie”. On 1766 or, 1767 went to the island of Malta where he worked alchemical experiments accompanying the “Grand Maitre des Chevaliers de St Jean de Malte et Rhodes” Manuel Pinto de Fonseca or, simply Magister Pinto.

On 1775 he takes a second trip to Malta where he meets his friend Cavalliere Luigi d’Aquino, Grand Master of the Naples masonry. He then, visits Naples where he stays several months.

At the same period 1767 – 1775 knight Luigi d’Aquino introduces into the Naples masonry a series of three high grades influenced by the Greco-Egyptian hermeticism – the famous Arcana Arcanorum.

Question: who taught who the “Mystery Grades” Cagliostro taught to d’Aquino or, d’Aquino to Cagliostro? Or, they discovered something working together? Unanswered.

Official History: Cagliostro was initiated in London on 1777 at the lodge “Hope” of the Strict Templar Observance Rite. He received however, the whole series of grades at once!!! Why? Has he been admitted as a high initiate? (Maybe the unofficial

history gives some clues)

Concerning his political involvement, Cagliostro on 1786 in his “Letter to the French people” he declares “the demolition of Bastille, the summoning of the General Classes, the cancelation of the royal sentences of civil banning and imprisonment and the coming of a revolution that however, will take place peacefully, with patience and wisdom”. (the last wasn’t realized as he hoped...)

Cagliostro was active in a variety of Masonic rites and he propagated Masonry almost everywhere. Researchers have found evidence that he gave initiations of the Rite of the Gold und Rosencreutz in Copenhagen and Stockholm.

Primitive Rite of Narbonne, or, Rite of the Philadelphians.

Officially instituted in the 18th century in the Lodge “The Philadelphians”.

“... Very little is known on this Rite but, allegedly an old one (concerning its theories). Its elder brothers had visited the main Orients of Europe, Syria and Indies and had seen “Le Grand Copte” (Cagliostro) clad in his long black mantle”.

The rite – according to M.M. resources – existed in Narbonne before 1721 and originated in some members of the Gold und Rozencreutz or, the EASIE (Eques A Sancti Iohannis Evangelistae). It was manifested fully, however, mainly after 1780.

More specifically: From 1640 already, in French town of Avignon there was a Masonic “Rite” using Egyptian symbols and other elements! That Rite maybe influenced the forthcoming hermetists Illuminati of Avignon? It sounds very probable, since the Rite of the Illuminati was a creation of Antoine-Joseph (Dom) Pernety alchemist and apothecary of Frederic the Great of Prussia and the Polish Count Tadeusz Grabianka in the same town (officially in 1760).

The rite of Narbonne “disappeared” for many years and was reactivated in 1779 from Marquis Chef de Bien. Chef de Bien used the Rite of the Phelaletheans as a canvas for the new creation and he joined the two rites and gives the name Rite of the Philadelphians or, Primitive Rite of Narbonne (in some sources this happened on 1784.)

27/4/1779 installation.

23/3/1780 fully functional lodge with Charter.

Memphis connection: On 1798 some Napoleonic officers and initiates of the Rite come into contact with some Druze and Sufi adepts in initiatory colleges of Lebanon. There they decide to create a new rite and suspend any kind of contact with the Grand Lodge of England. There we have the first foundations of the Rite of Memphis.

On 1780 we have their permanent installation from Knight Pen, parent of the famous creator of the Pennsylvanian constitution William Pen who gave also the rituals of the grades.

Their charter is signed by the Knight of the Golden Spear and the Knight of the Golden Cuirass Superieures Inconnues.

Their theories are “loans” from Martinez Pasqually’s theories.

“...the adept is obliged to desire to be renamed anew “Son of God” purified, and perfect and be unequivocally integrated into the ineffable origins from where he was emanated...”

It contains 3 classes, containing 10 degrees in all.

1st class: 1st Degree, Entered Apprentice.

2nd Degree, Fellowcraft.

3rd Master.

2nd class: 4th Perfect Master, Elected Architect.

5th Sublime Scot.

6th Knight of the Sword, Knight of the East, Prince of Jerusalem.

3rd class: 7th -1st R+C Chapter contains knowledge of Masonic workings and ritual, but also the worship of the G.A.T.O.U.

8th -2nd R+C Chapter, in which curious historical documents were presented.

9th -3rd R+C Chapter, a sum of Masonic knowledge the outcome of them may influence happiness. Philosophical and moral gnosis.

10th -4th R+C Chapter of the Great Rosary. Studies of ontology, psychology, and spiritology. Study of the occult sciences having as a task the reintegration and restoration of man's primal dignity (Martinist influence).

The Rite joined the Grand Orient of France at 1788 with short lived outcome.

Rite of African Architects

Berlin, circa 1767. Friedrich von Koppen, a Prussian officer and Teutonic knight, joined by other knights, creates that Rite.

He is the writer of the famous “Crata Repoa”, that it was believed to reproduce the ancient Egyptian Initiations of the Priests in the Great Pyramid.

The word of the 1st grade was Amoun: (insert – in the Old Masonic Charges the architect of the Temple was not Hiram but Amon or Aymon, son of Hiram king of Tyre, alluding to the Grand Architect of the Universe).

This Rite was involved in scientific and historical research. Frederick II of Prussia endorses the Rite. He donates the Grand Chapter a building including, library, chemical laboratory, and a sector of natural history. Thus the mistake to consider Frederick as originator of the African Architects.

It is a mix of Hermeticism and Christianity.

Its highest grades are: Entered Apprentice of the Egyptians, Initiate of the Aegean Mysteries (Cabirian?), Cosmopolite, Christian Philosopher and Knight of Silence.

In France there is a lodge in Strasbourg and in Bordeaux that installed the lodge “The Flamboyant Star with the Three Lilies”. Its patron is connected to the Elu Coëns and the Philaethes.

Inities Parfait d' Egypte.

Established by Alliette or Etteilla (researcher of the Tarot and cartomancer), who conducted the rite as “Grand Mage” till 1791.

According to their data “it is a philosophical system of ancient Egyptian customs revealed by priests bearing the Masonic regalia...”

This Rite influences the Rite of Misraim and the Scottish Philosophical Rite. It is also in connected to the Masonry of Cagliostro.

High Egyptian Rite

Contrary to the expected, this genuine Cagliostro's creation, an order open to men and women, influenced little the Memphis and Misraim Rites. This Rite influenced, however, the creation of the Rites of Adoption for women from various M.M. rites, where women are admitted in feminine/Lunar/isian initiations adjusted to their nature.

The grades of the Adopted Lodges are:

1. Entered Apprentice Egyptian
2. Fellowcraft Egyptian
3. Master Egyptian.

Task of the women Rites is the creation of women Prophetesses and Sibyls (while the male Rite creates Prophets and Magi), according to ancient traditions.

Genuine Egyptian Rite (not Cagliostro)

It was created in 1770 by the aforementioned prominent freemason Friedrich von Koppen and by J.W.B. Hymmen who was working on the seven “Egyptian Grades” that are mentioned in Von Koppen's famous book “Crata Repoa”.

These grades are the following:

1. Pastophoros: It has to do with Science.
2. Neocoros: It has to do with Therapeutics.
3. Melanophoros: It has to do with the Symbolism of the Osirian Myth
4. Kystophoros: It has to do with the Ancient Egyptian Law and the Correct Judgement.
5. Balachates: It has to do with Chemistry.
6. Astronomer: It has to do with Astronomy.
7. Prophet: It has to do with Mathematics.

This Rite functioned for some time in Germany and France.

French Revolution, Napoleonic era

During this times, the Goddess Logic was worshipped as the Celestial Wisdom. “Theophilanthropy” was created as the new

religion of the Revolution.

Court de Gebelin's student, the archaeologist and politician Charles Fracois Dupuis, at the entry "The origin of all cults" of the Mythological Encyclopaedia, writes the following: "...All religions originate in one primitive and universal religion of Nature and the Stars, whose main cradle was Egypt..."

After the Naples-Pope Pius VII Concordat at 1801, "Theophilanthropy" was persecuted and the Roman Catholic Church was restored.

The Egyptian origin of Freemasonry was now predicated openly by Thomas Paine in "The Origin of Freemasonry" and by Alexandre Lenoir, preserver of the French monuments and member of the Rite Ecossais Philosophique (Scottish Egyptian Rite).

During the Egyptian expedition, the Great Monarch (Napoleon) is the warrior and peace maker who recreates the universal Empire. Once more, there is a meeting of the wise men of the East with the scientists of the West. The symbolism of the expedition indicates a re-incorporation within the primordial unity.

Ordre Sacre des Sophisiens

It was established in 1801 by some Napoleonic officers in Egypt and set under the aegis of Horus, the "Great Isiarich". Its grades were the following: Aspirant, Initiate and Member of the Great Mysteries.

Rite Orientale (not the Rite of Memphis)

It was an Asiatic Rite, considered to bear knowledge from old colleges. In 1807 it was directed by the Abbot D'Ales de Bermond d'Anduze who was a member of the Narbon Rite.

Les Amis du Desert (The Friends of the Desert) - Toulouse

Grades: Initiate of Memphis

Initiate of Thebaid

Perfect Initiate

Prince Initiate

Its members also joined the Lodge "Napoleomagne" that was established in 1805, from which orientated the Vieille Bru1, that is to say the Rite of the Faithful Scots or Rite of the Old Bride (!) in Toulouse, a base of the Jacobites. Those Jacobites were connected to Charles Edward Stewart (a claimant of the throne).

In Aras, France, they used to confer 7 of the 28 greater grades of the Sovereign, Primordial and Metropolitan Peristyle of the R+C that was established by Stewart himself.

One of these grades was the grade of the Menatzchim or Great Inspector Inquisitor Brigadier, that is to say the 5th grade of the Ancient Functional English Freemasonry.

The Menatzchim were the workmen that served during the

construction of the Temple of Jerusalem. The Menatzchim were congregated in tribunals under the controlling magistracy of the Academy of Wisdom (that is to say a philosophical-juridical tradition of the Near East).

They included 3 grades, constituting the Freemasonry of the Crusades: Architect, Brigadier of the East and Knight of Nazareth or R+C.

"Conclusions" - speculations

We saw that the 18th century was an era of flourishing for Freemasonry. This happens when something new is created, and Freemasonry was a new phenomenon for the society of the time. Although it pre-existed, it was confined to Functional Masons and later to Accepted ones, who nevertheless did not have the numbers and maybe the great socio-cultural influence of those of the 18th century. The impetus of the Freemasonry helped humanity to move on. As regards our specific interest, initiation and initiatory education was progressed, modernized and renovated.

The most impressive thing was the knowledge available at the time, since the "building" of a new Masonic Rite (and we only saw the ones related to the Memphis-Misraim) requires knowledge of the principles of the Ceremonial, knowledge of the essence of the Rite (that is to say what is to be installed into the candidate), as well as profound education.

It seems therefore that the brethren of the time, instead of censoring and slashing the rituals, were trying to understand them and "build" upon them. When one contemplates this romantic age, it is not only the wealth of the Rites that impresses him, but also what they had to say to the candidate. Freemasonry was an honour and it was a vital part of the life of the brethren.

It is maybe an important factor that the society was not so atheistic and materialistic as it is today. Although the rationalist and empiricist philosophers had already questioned the entire old status of ideas, nobility, honesty and chivalry remained however in the hearts of educated people, and those qualities were honoured at the time. Or it is the frenzied tempo of our times that does not allow the Craft to flourish.

Spiritual and initiatory currents that influenced the teaching of those Rites, as well as the subsequent Rites of Memphis and Misraim, are:

a) Rosicrucianism. We saw that Michael Maier maintains that the Rosicrucians are the inheritors of the Egyptian Mysteries. Many grades of Memphis and Misraim include Rosicrucian teachings, both in the grade of Rosicrucian Knight and in higher peristyles.

b) Martinism (established at this era as well). Many of its teachings that refer to the Rite of Narbon and to the Rite of the African Architects are taken from Louis Claude de Saint-Martin and Martinez Pasqually.

c) Templarism and Teutonicism. We saw that many of the Freemasons that established orders at the time, either belonged to the Order of St Mary of the Germans (that is to say they were Teutonic Knights) or they had connections to Baron von Hund's Order of Strict Templar Observance. During the same era, Jean-Baptiste Willermoz receives the Martinist initiatory

line and philosophy, and engrafts it into Freemasonry, creating the Revised Scottish Rite. This was like creating a Martinist Freemasonry but with Templarist elements also, since it was engrafted by the entire spiritual teaching of von Hund's Order.

d) Alchemy. Many grades contain an intense alchemical "aroma". Of course, the homeland of Alchemy is Egypt, since it first occurred during the Hellenistic and Roman eras in Alexandria.

e) Theosophy. The influence of the Theosophists Jacob Boehme, John Pordage, Johannes Gichtel and George von Welling touched Freemasonry indirectly via the Martinists, but also directly, from people who, while being Freemasons, were inspired by the Theosophists.

Another characteristic of these old, inactive masonic Rites -as well as of the Memphis Misraim- that must not be forgotten, is the requirement of the Traditional mentality. By this term we mean the devotion and the adaptation of the initiate to the

spirit of the rituals, as well as their observance. This way, the initiation will have the maximum effect to the emotions and spirit of each candidate in all eras and maybe more in our era that is one of disruption. This mentality is very distant from the contemporary Masonic mentality of secularization and de-spiritualization that many sovereign Grand Lodges in the world today desire to enforce.

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