

# L'Ordre Kabbalistique de la Rose Croix

*The forgotten brother of the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn*



As part of the Anglo-Saxon world, we have a natural inclination to consider its traditions and currents for, if not the most interesting, at least the most well known. Thus, if we mention that an important esoteric Order was founded in 1888, most of us will immediately think of when Westcott, Mathers and Woodman founded the *Order of the Golden Dawn*, based upon the mysterious Cipher Manuscripts (in the handwriting of the famous initiate Kenneth McKenzie). We may also be aware of its 111 year Rosicrucian cycle, connecting it with the general reformation of the German *Gold und Rosenkreutz Order* in 1777.

However, in the French-speaking world, the *Golden Dawn* is mostly either unheard of or considered to be uninteresting. (Remember that the Ahathoor Temple of Mathers never had a membership roll of more than 20 members.) The year of 1888 means instead when *L'Ordre Kabbalistique de la Rose Croix* (OKRC) – The Kabbalistic Order of the Rosy Cross – was founded in Paris, with Marquis Stanislas de Guaita as its first Grand Master.

This Order is, however, of great interest also to the Golden Dawn world, as we will see later on. Like the Golden Dawn, the OKRC sought to present hermetic teachings to a world that sought after its esoteric roots, and shortly both Orders had expanded and attracted a large set of followers. But before we look at the OKRC more closely, let us first consider its first Grand Master.

## Stanislas de Guaita

Marquis Stanislas de Guaita was called ‘the Prince of the Rosicrucians’ by his contemporaries, because of his learning, enthusiasm and many talents. He was born on the 6<sup>th</sup> of April, 1861, in the castle of Alteville and descended from a noble Italian family who had settled in France. Stanislas studied at the Liceo de Nancy where he developed a natural propensity toward the empirical sciences, most notably chemistry, reaching a level of true mastery for his times. Over a period of time he gravitated more toward satisfaction of the artistic and literary spirit that lead him into the occult, especially the study of Kabbalah.



Established in Paris while still quite young, he settled in a luxurious mezzanine at number 20 on the Avenue Trudaine, where his home soon became a meeting place for many writers and initiates of several Orders. His poems were very widely celebrated, and were in 1883 published as *The Dark Muse* and in 1885 as *The Mystic Rose*, both of which brought him acclaim and great popularity.

In 1884, de Guaita read a book by Joséphin Péladan, called *Le Vice suprême*. Joséphin Péladan was born in 1858, in Lyon. Both his father and brother were impassioned by



*Joséphin Péladan*

alchemy, magnetism, arts, sciences, literature and Christian mysticism. Joséphin's brother, Adrien (1815-1885), was one of the first French homeopaths, and had become a Rosicrucian of the Toulouse group of Firmin Boissin.

Stanislas was so intrigued and impressed with the mysticism of the book that he contacted Joséphin. They met and got to know each other, and de Guaita was also introduced to Adrian. The Péladan brothers in turn introduced de Guaita to Firmin Boissin and the Rosicrucian society to which they belonged. From the writings of de Guaita, Péladan and Boissin, we can conclude that the Toulouse group was not strictly organized, but assembled a few adepts that studied and worked with the Rosicrucian mysteries. In 1886, Stanislas received initiations and transmissions, although we do not know how elaborate they were. Also, most importantly, he received the rights to form a new Order.

Thus, with his remarkable learning, an old Rosicrucian lineage, and great preparation Stanislas was able, together with Joséphin, to found *L'Ordre Kabbalistique de la Rose Croix*, which in turn brought together the most famous esoteric thinkers of France and later all of Europe. Among them were Dr. Gerard Encausse (Papus), the famous Rosicrucian and President of the First Grand Council of the Martinist Order, Paul Adam, Jollivet-Castelot, August Reichel, Abbée Alta (Melingé), Francois Barlet, Marc Haven (Dr. Lalande), Edouard Blitz, August Strindberg, Gabron et Thoron, Victor Blanchard (Sar Yesir), Spencer Lewis, Lucien Mauchel, Paul Sédir (Yvon Le Loup), Pierre Augustin Chaboseau, and several other well-known figures.

In his house, de Guaita brought together the biggest private library of writings on

metaphysical subjects, magic, and hidden sciences in general that could be found in France during that century. After he had formed the Order, he wrote several books about occultism, but passed away on the 19<sup>th</sup> of December 1897 at the young age of 37.

### The Rosicrucian succession

Many questions have been raised regarding the succession that *l'Ordre Kabbalistique de la Rose Croix* was based upon.

There was first the Toulouse group of Firmin Boissin. Firmin Boissin (1835-1893) was entitled as Commander of the Rosicrucian Temple of Toulouse - Prieur of Toulouse, and senior of the Council of Fourteen. Another member of the Toulouse Command had been Viscount Louis-Charles-Edouard de Lapasse (1792-1867), an alchemist and pupil of prince Balbiani of Palermo, who had been a pupil of none other than the famous Cagliostro. De Lapasse had founded *Ordre de la Rose-Croix du Temple et du Graal* in 1850, of which the Toulouse group was a continuation. This Order had in turn been one of the many Rosicrucian revivals during the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

Then there is the connection with Lévi, which from a Golden Dawn perspective is perhaps even more interesting. Robert Ambelain received information from Augustin Chaboseau, the co-founder of the *Ordre Martiniste*, that later was confirmed by documents in Victor-Emile Michelet's archive, that when Eliphas Lévi went to London, in 1873, he met with English aristocrats who were members of an ancient occult fraternity.

This fraternity, which was referred to as *The Fraternity*, strongly focused on the Kabbalah, Pneumatology and Magic. It was while staying with one of them that he undertook his famous

evocation of Apollonius of Tyana, reported in his book *Dogma & Ritual of High Magic*.

These occultists were, by uninterrupted lineage, the direct and regular successors of the English Rosicrucians of the 16<sup>th</sup>, 17<sup>th</sup>, and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries. There, Eliphas Lévi received this esoteric lineage in sacramental form. His initiator was most likely Edward George Earl Bulwer-Lytton (1803-73), who became a good and very close friend of Lévi.



Bulwer-Lytton was an author of many important esoteric novels, and among these is the most celebrated *Zanoni*. He was a member of the *Societas Rosicruciana in Anglia* (SRIA), and worked closely with Kenneth McKenzie.

The most interesting link regarding this is that Bulwer-Lytton, during his stay in Germany, was initiated into the *L'Aurore Naissante* in Frankfurt am Main. The *L'Aurore Naissante* is the *Goldene Morgenrothe* that 'Freulein Sprengel' was supposed to have belonged to. This Order was a Masonic order that many of the members of the *Asiatic Brethren* turned to when their Order was closed down.

In this way we may see the connection between “Sprengel”, McKenzie, SRIA and the founders of the Golden Dawn.

These lineages, of *L’Aurore Naissante* and *The Fraternity*, was received by Lévi and handed over to Abbé Lacuria, author of *Harmonies of Being*, after he returned to France. He passed it to Dr. Adrian Péladan, brother of the famous Joseph Péladan. Dr. Adrien Péladan gave it to his brother and to Guaita.

### **L’Ordre Kabbalistique de la Rose Croix**

In the magazine *L’Initiation* founded by Papus, an article appearing in 1889 said the following of the *Ordre Kabbalistique de la Rose Croix*:

“The Kabbalistic Order of the Rose-Cross honours Eliphas Lévi, Fabre d’Olivet, Hoene Wronsky, Jakob Böhme, Swedenborg, Martinès de Pasqually, Louis-Claude de Saint Martin. A synthesis was formed between science and faith thanks to esotericism.”

“The distinctive sign of the members of the Supreme Council of the Cabalistic Order of the Rosicrucians is the Hebrew letter Alef. Besides this Superior Degree there are two others that are reached through Initiation. Every new member of this society takes an oath of obedience to the directives of the Council declaring that, although they are free to leave the society at any time they please, they will abide by the promise of keeping secret the teachings received from the Order. They received training in the Cabala and mystical subjects.”

The Order had a council of 12 members, six of them being unknown “so that the order could be resurrected in case of decay”. Among these members were Stanislas de Guaita, Joséphin Péladan (who resigned in 1890 to found his own Order, as well as the famous



Rosicrucian Saloons from 1892 to 1897), Papus, A. Gabrol, Henry Thorion, F.-Ch. Barlet, Augustin Chaboseau, Victor-Émile Michelet, Sédir and Marc Haven.

OKRC was also one of the participators in the famous confederation *F.U.D.O.S.I.*, and was closely attached to both the Martinist Order and the Gnostic Church. (To be admitted into the Order, one had to be a S.I. martinist.)

The Order continued to operate independently after its dissolution, and has thus descended through time into the sanctuary of the S.S.A.

### **The degree system**

OKR+C conferred degrees as a sort of free university. The teachings of the order mainly consisted of working with the classical occult disciplines such as Kabbalah, Tarot, Astrology, Alchemy, Theurgy, Numerology, Divination and Rituals.

The initiations consisted of 3 degrees, and one secret fourth degree.

The first exam resulted in a Bachelor’s in Kabbalah and consisted of the study of the western tradition, particularly that of the Rose-Croix and the knowledge of the letters of the Hebrew alphabet, their form, their name and their symbolism.

The second degree conferred a Licentiate in Kabbalah focusing on the general history of

religious traditions throughout history and how they reflect a more universal Truth as well as the study of certain Hebrew words. This part of the exam was oral. A second written part of this degree consisted of a philosophical, moral or mystical question whose answer ought to have been made evident to the candidate by this point.

The third degree consisted of the defence of a thesis with discussions on all the points of the Tradition and conferred the degree of Doctorate of Kabbalah.

### **Modern day OKRC**

After the death of de Guaita, Francois Charles Barlet became Grand Master, who in turn was followed by Papus. Succeeding Papus was Charles Detre (Teder), after which a split occurred, due to a schism resulting from the controversy of Masonic requisition. By this time, the OKRC had ceased to be the important factor it used to be. When Georges

Lagrece installed Robert Ambelain as Grand Master, the latter took the decision to revise the OKRC quite completely, more or less just leaving the name and the Rosicrucian lineage. Today, there exists bodies of OKRC that work in accordance with the old statutes, and those who follow Ambelain's revisions.

Of quite some interest is that we have been informed that the kabbalistic body behind the OKRC still exist, and works advanced theurgical magic in a 4+4 degree system. They claim that de Guaita only received their first (interior) initiation, and got the rights to open up an outer vehicle, which he thus did together with Péladan. Although it is impossible for us to verify these claims, the sources are reliable. This does not make the story less interesting. Perhaps to be continued...

*In L.V.X.*

V.H. Frater C.M.O. 5°=6°

V.H. Frater S.I.A.A. 5°=6°

## **The Lineage of the Ordre Kabbalistique de la Rose Croix**

