Unveiling the Copiale-manuscript: layers of fraternalism, ritual and politics in eighteenth century Germany  
Andreas Önnerfors, University of Gothenburg

Introduction

In 2011 data-linguists from Sweden and the US decoded a manuscript written in cipher, the content of which has been unknown for at least the last two centuries. This so-called Copiale-manuscript and the story of its code being broken with methods of new information technology received trans-national media coverage, but its content remains still to be explored thoroughly. The manuscript can roughly be divided into three main parts: one part is devoted to the fraternal order of ‘Oculists’, the aim of which is to disclose the secrets of freemasonry and to undermine its spread and recruitment. A second part reveals rituals of craft lodges as practiced in Germany at the time and the third part the Scottish Master’s degree, one of the first higher degrees of freemasonry with both a chivalric and sacerdotal element. Furthermore intriguing is a continuation of the Scottish Master’s degree that clearly demonstrates awareness of civil and political rights and the need to recover freedom from tyranny by means of violent rebellion. Last but not least alchemical workings are also addressed. What are the sources of the manuscript? Does it describe German early eighteenth century freemasonry accurately? Why do we find an anti-masonic edge? How can we interpret the religious and political motifs of the higher degrees exposed? All in all, by addressing these questions it appears as if the Copiale-manuscript is like a Russian doll and plays with secrecy and transparency. It reveals significant insights into the state of fraternalism, ritual and politics in German territories of the late 1740s that beg further investigation.

Keywords  anti-masonic fraternalism, rituals, cipher, political ideas in freemasonry, Scottish Master degree, early high degrees

From email to international media story

In August 2011, colleagues from Uppsala University, Sweden, Beata Megyesi and Christiane Schäfer contacted me and wondered if I wanted to have a look on a deciphered text from the eighteenth century outlining rituals of a secret fraternity. Naturally, I agreed and spent a day to look through the so-called ‘Copiale’-manuscript. It didn’t take me long to find out that the manuscript is a fascinating account of German fraternal life of the 1740s (my arguments for dating are explained below) and potentially adding a few important pieces to the jigsaw related to the spread of freemasonry in German territories before 1750. In particular this assessment relates to the treatment of the ‘Scottish masters’ degree that occupies nearly a third of the content of the manuscript. This degree, its origin, history, dissemination and ideology is a blank spot in the academic study of freemasonry, to the largest extent a terra incognita, so every piece of information that adds to a more elaborated understanding of it is more than welcome. I was even more enthusiastic to find a sort of continuation of the Scottish masters degree that has a very strong political message directed against tyranny; making the case for natural freedom, to be restored. Finally the manuscript mentions alchemical workings in the context of freemasonry and if my dating proofs to be correct, ‘Copiale’ will challenge and complement established historiographies of
freemasonry in German territories and Europe. It also didn’t take much time to agree with the colleagues from Uppsala and their American partner Kevin Knight from the University of Southern California (USC) that we should meet. Their expertise in linguistics and data linguistics will be significant in the work of historians who struggle to decode the abundant amount of sources in what up to now mostly has been seen as impenetrable cipher that we frequently encounter in European masonic or public collections. On the other hand my modest idea was that Beata Megyesi and her team would be provided with some explanations regarding the content that they actually had deciphered. We met in the middle of September 2011 at the University Library of Lund where I currently was working on a research project on provenance related to rare books and we exchanged thoughts and – ciphers. My impression from that meeting and subsequent collaboration was and is that we are close to a methodological breakthrough. If this cooperation between data linguists and researchers into freemasonry (or in fact any other historians working with enciphered manuscripts) will be allowed to continue, then we will have a second wave of new source material that awaits interpretation and that will provide us with more detailed information about the early history of freemasonry (the ‘first wave’ being the archives that have become accessible after 1990).

So far so good. What we however could not anticipate was that the USC media team in October 2011 did such a good job that the story about how Kevin “and colleagues crack the encrypted rules for the rites of a mysterious secret society” not only reached the New York Times (24.10.2011), but also since then started to disseminate around the globe.¹ A google-search on the term ‘copiale cipher’ generates meanwhile (per March 2015) around fifteen thousand unique hits in mainstream media as much as on conspiracist websites; a wikipedia-page has been dedicated to the project that runs its own website at the University of Uppsala, Sweden, with all necessary information.² However, most of the newspapers, journals and electronic media reporting on ‘Copiale’ are predominantly fascinated by the way how the code was cracked (which of course is the main methodological breakthrough), more than what the manuscript actually tells us. So the intention with this paper is to provide with a first analysis of this remarkable manuscript, an analysis that hopefully soon will be carried out more fundamentally. And my sincere hope is that linguistic code breaking and new historiographies of freemasonry will walk hand in hand in the future.

**General outline of the manuscript**

The so-called Copiale-cipher has 105 manuscript pages that principally can be divided into two major parts: Pages 1-27 describe the initiation and degree ceremonies of the “Highly Illuminated Order of Oculists” (“Hocherleucht[e]te] Oculisten Orden”). Since the “most secret intention” (p. 25) of the Oculists is to expose Freemasonry, pages 27-105 are devoted to a thorough description of various masonic degrees: ‘mainstream’ freemasonry (apprentice, fellow and master’s degree) on pages 27-68, the Scottish master degree on pages 68-99, the so-called “Key lodge” (apparently a deviant continuation or variety of the Scottish masters degree) on pages 100-104 and a so-called “Consolation lodge”) practicing alchemical workings on page 105. There is no room for a full commentary on the content of these

² [http://stp.lingfil.uu.se/~bea/copiale/](http://stp.lingfil.uu.se/~bea/copiale/) [accessed on 3.3.2015].
different parts of the manuscript and I would like to see that such a commentary together with a more readable transcription and translation will be elaborated in the future. However, the following picture emerges after a thorough reading of the German transcription provided on the website of the project.

**The rituals of the ‘Oculists’**

It is obvious that the Order of Oculists (which is a gender-mixed fraternity) is designed according to a well-established pattern that it shares with many other fraternal orders and organizations of the period.\(^3\) The initiation ceremony has many similarities to freemasonry, with the candidate being introduced to the lodge room by officers with designated tasks. A master of the Oculist lodge questions the candidate who subsequently has to take an oath. The significant element of the initiation ritual is a symbolic eye operation, where optical instruments are displayed. A second oath is taken from which it emerges that there is a context of other fraternal orders, the candidate potentially could be a member of. It is striking that the ‘Order of Mopses’ is mentioned here, since it was a mixed-gender hoax fraternity the rituals of which were exposed in a seminal 1745 publication, *L’Ordre des Franc-Maçons trahi et le Secret des Mopses revelé*, spread across Europe. The Oculist-manuscript makes reference to this particular publication later (p. 61). After initiation follows instruction and education related to the degree: signs and tokens and behavioural rules and modes of reciprocal recognition outside the lodge are explained thoroughly. In the fellow degree the obligation is reiterated; if the candidate meanwhile has joined another secret order, he is immediately expelled. Again, signs, grips and tokens are explained and reference is made (as in freemasonry) to sciences and arts. Also the master degree begins with a renewal of obligation and threat of expulsion. The masterpiece is to be able to read and write the cipher of the order. During the instruction, the master is informed about the origin and secret constitutions of the order as well as instructed in the use of the cipher. He is also presented with a Grand lodge certificate (stipulating that the Order of Oculists consisted of superior and subordinate bodies).

The origin of the Oculists, as told the new master, lies in England. Once upon a time a few friends decided to test the curiosity of the human race by establishing a brotherhood in order to find out how many out of pure inquisitiveness would join a society, the purpose of which was concealed to them, by pretending that there was a big secret. To that end they decided to meet and agree upon randomly chosen signs. And indeed the guild of freemasons was established. Unfortunately the manuscript is not exactly clear on this point as the sign in the cipher is a big X, a pictogram that either can refer to ‘Freemasonry’ or ‘Order’, my reading emerges from the German grammar and context. However, one of the friends did miss out to meet the others and found later that “these masons” (direct quote) weren’t able to recognize him although he had been a founding member. Moreover “he was particularly displeased by the fact that the female sex had been entirely excluded” (p.20: “[…] da es ihm insbesonderheit nicht gefiel dass man das weibliche geschlecht ganz und gar ausgeschlossen hatte […]”) and that the selection of brethren had been so lax. Therefore he decided to establish the Order of Oculists and to entrust the design of freemasonry to this order. The goal was an exposure of masonic secrecy without exposing the Order of Oculists, to disperse the masonic secret and preserve the own.

master was also instructed in the careful selection of new members and as already stated before, in the art of reading and writing the Oculist cipher. Towards apprentices and fellow members of the Order the master was not allowed to mention the secret attention directed towards freemasonry.

The Oculist’s anti-masonic character has striking resemblances to the ‘Antimasonianske Societet’ (abbreviated AMS), a mixed gender fraternity that was established in the same period in Germany and Denmark in Pietistic circles. Already in 1739 this society was established in Hessen, Germany and later on a branch in the Danish monarchy, existing probably for two or so decades. Without going into details, the AMS was formed according to a masonic pattern, but was in its essence intended to combat the spread of freemasonry. In his examination of this fraternity, Bartholdy places the establishment of the AMS within a Pietist context, reinforced by early anti-masonry, something that probably also applies to the Oculists. A further example of such a fraternity is the so-called ‘Order of Abilites’, Abeliter-orden, revealing its existence in Swedish-Pomerania in 1746. With obvious similarities to freemasonry, the Abilites simultaneously condemned it. Several prominent arguments against freemasonry that already were prevalent in Britain during the late 1720s, such as the exclusion of women, the attraction or rather distraction by pretended secrets or taking “unnecessary oaths” are mentioned by the Oculists.

‘Traditional’ freemasonry

The largest part of the manuscript (p. 27-68) is a straightforward exposure of masonic ritual in the degrees of apprentice, fellow and master. German freemasonry (having in mind that in the times before 1871 it is very difficult to make a clear cut definition of what ‘Germany’ is or ‘German’ refers to) started at the latest in the second half of the 1730s by an English establishment in Hamburg. But at the same time, German territories also were exposed to French influence. It would certainly be possible to compare and place the manuscript exposure within a certain family of degrees and future research is definitely needed to carry out this task diligently. Apart from the ‘traditional’ elements of masonic degrees, there are some distinctive markers that could help to identify the exposure properly. In the introduction to the ritual it is for instance mentioned that masonic fraternities already were in existence during the reign of Elisabeth I and Charles II (p. 27). Furthermore it is claimed that a tract was published in 1710 that treats these societies. The exposure is said to describe freemasonry after 1723. In the following the Oculist master is informed about the interior design of a lodge room, description of the lodge of officers and their jewels and finally the initiation ceremony of an apprentice. From the relatively extensive description of the tracing board (p. 36-37) it would also be possible to place the ritual within a

5 Ernst Paul Kretschmer, ”Die Antimassonische Sozietät und die Logen Heinrichs XII. Reuß-Schließ zugleich ein Beitrag zur Geschichte des Pietismus”. In: Quellen zur Geschichte der Freimaurerei, Leipzig: Zechel 1918/19, Bd. 2. S. 71-212.
7 Henry Carr, The Early French Exposures, QC London 1971, p. 35 has a translation from the French 1738 exposure “La Reception Mysterieuse” with a similar account. A careful reading of Carr’s collected exposures will certainly reveal more potential sources for the Oculist-manuscript.
8 The division of a lodge with four separate rooms for different purposes is also to be found in the 1746/7 exposure ”Le Franc-Maçons Ecrases”, see Carr 1971, p. 295f. The German translation Die zerschmetterten Freymäurer was published in Frankfurt and Leipzig in 1746 and treats ‘Scottish’ freemasons on p. 280-302.
distinctive developmental line. None of the early tracing boards I have examined so far do resemble the one described here, apart from the fact that by method of exclusion it is possible to say that later German tracing boards (for instance of the ‘Strict Observance’ or ‘Swedish’ rite for that part) not are similar to this. A peculiarity is the existence of a winding staircase with seven steps and that the four corners of the world are marked with English abbreviations (E S W N). These both factors speak for an English master copy, at least for this part of the exposure. The ritual of initiation has no obvious or self-evident peculiarities (however a specialist of eighteenth century rituals would possibly come to another conclusion), apart from the fact that the oath is spelled “as in Masonry dissected” (p. 42: “wie sie in dem zergliederten freymäurer wort zu wort vorsagt”), which requires a short explanation.

Samuel Prichards exposure Masonry Dissected was originally published in 1730 and contained a brief prologue and extensive descriptions of masonic degrees in the form of catechisms for each. Masonry Dissected appeared for the first time in a German translation, “Die zergliederte Freymaurerei” in 1741, as an appendix to the German translation of the second edition of Andersons Constitutions (1738), Neues Constitutionenbuch der Frey-Maurer, Frankfurt 1741, p. 323 – 346. The German translation was reprinted three years later in a work titled Der sich selbst vertheidigende Freymäurer (“A self-defence of a freemason”), Frankfurt and Leipzig 1744, p 52-73. A reference to “Die zergliederte Freymaurerei” (which reoccurs a couple of times, for instance also on p. 55) suggests that the rituals of the Oculists were written close to the publication date of the German translations. Another element that speaks for an English master copy is that the Oculist-manuscript makes references to that the Order of Freemasons is older than the Order of the Garter and the imperial Order of the Golden Fleece and that a toast is raised to the English Grandmaster. Furthermore, the third degree speaks of Hiram as the architect of Solomon’s temple, whereas French ritual families stick to ‘Adoniram’. Furthermore the wardens of the lodge are called (p. 39) “jüngerer” (junior) and “älterer” (senior), which is similar to the English expressions. However the French term “surveillants” also occurs in the Oculist-manuscript. On page 61, reference is made to L’Ordre, a prominent exposure that, as already mentioned, was disseminated in original and translation and that was reviewed in the press across Europe. L’Ordre was also used as the inspiration for the first visual exposure of freemasonry, a collection of engravings originating in France and reprinted in Germany in 1745. In the Oculist-manuscript a song is quoted that we find in its original in L’Ordre (p. 68). While developing the need for additional passwords, the Oculist-manuscript mentions that masonic lodges are in existence in Berlin, Frankfurt and Marburg (p. 62), cities that all appear on Dotzauer’s map of early German masonic lodges established previous to 1750. As I already pointed out, experts on masonic eighteenth-century ritual will certainly be able to trace the origins of the exposure in detail. My impression is that Masonry dissected is a main source and that inspiration also is drawn from L’Ordre since also some French expressions (such as “tres venerable”) occur. Certainly the

9 Some similarities has the “Drawing for the Apprentice-Fellow’s Lodge” as reproduced in Carr 1971, p. 441.
10 A digital reproduction is available on http://digital.bibliothek.uni-halle.de/hd/content/titleinfo/522430 [accessed 3.3.2015].
12 [Johann Martin Bernigeroth (Ed.)], Le Cotumes des Francs-Maçons dans leurs assemblees principalement pour la reception des apperetifs et des maîtres, tout nouvellement et sincerement decouvertes (Leipzig 1745).
person who compiled the exposure must have had personal experience from freemasonry, either directly or indirectly. Hence it appears as if the description of masonic degrees is authentic and provides with a still of the kind of ritual worked in German lodges of the period. That German freemasonry at the time reflected both English and French influences is nothing strange at all.

The Scottish Master

Far more surprising, if not spectacular is the content of pages 68-99, since it in detail describes different rituals and practices of the “maitre écossais”, the “Scottish master […] a completely new innovation […]” (p. 69: “der grad eines Schottischen Meisters ist eine gantz neue Erfindung […]”). Without touching upon the extremely complex developmental history of masonic higher degrees in Europe (a history that unfortunately not has been worked upon yet in an academically satisfying manner), new source material has surfaced after 1990 that provides with evidence that masonic lodges working in the so-called ‘Scottish Masters Degree’ were in existence in Germany since 1742. Only few, short and inaccurate printed exposures from the early period of this degree are preserved and any exposures in manuscript such as the one in Copiale are extremely rare. This degree is an independent continuation of the third degree and has more religious, outspoken Christian and chivalric references. During the later development of masonic degree systems (documentary evidence suggests at the latest in 1748, if not earlier), another combined (Scottish) apprentice-fellow degree was inserted in between the third and the fourth (later on sixth) degree. But in the Oculist-manuscript only the Scottish master’s degree is described, which speaks for that the exposure was produced indeed shortly after its first appearance. A fourth degree of freemasonry was/is known in English freemasonry as the ‘Royal Arch’, from the beginning of the 1740s and onwards.

The Oculist-manuscript goes on to outline two main varieties of rituals, “In the French lodge” (p. 73-75), in the “Lodges common in Germany” (p. 75-86) and more specifically “The Scottish lodges in Braunschweig and Berlin” (p. 86-99). It is striking that, whereas the description of the three first degrees is full of references to contemporary exposures, the content of the Scottish degrees appears to be entirely related by first-hand or second-hand experience/accounts; which of course begs the question of who possibly could have provided such inside knowledge. The ‘French’ lodge might be L’Union, established 30 November 1742 in Berlin, recruiting a huge number of prominent members and active in constituting new lodges, for instance in Copenhagen. The ritual working language of L’Union was most certainly French, the preserved minute book is also written in French. But back to the manuscript. The tracing board of the French lodge is described as follows:


16 Carr 1971, p. 157-200 treats the 1744 exposure “Le parfait maçon” which to the best of my knowledge contains the first printed exposure of the Scottish master’s degree as a fourth degree of freemasonry on p. 197-199; another is the 1746/7 exposure “Le Franc-Maçons Ecreses”, see Carr 1971, p. 307-314, both with few similarities to the Oculist-manuscript.


18 Mollier 2005, p. 78.
In the centre a glittering star with an ‘I’ is displayed, sun and moon, a skull and a coffin, the Sanctum Sanctorum, Noah’s Ark, Ark of Covenant, Acacia twig, Brazen Sea, Babylonian Tower and the like. The lodge is opened with 3 times 27, the initiate is told to walk in to the Sanctum Sanctorum to be purified like a Levite (a priest). The apron has yellow, red, blue and white elements and a red sash with a golden triangle (compare with Exodus 39 where the priest’s garment are described). The password of the degree is Gabanon or Iaquinet, the master’s word Jehovah. In the catechism, the candidate is supposed to say that he was admitted in the Sanctum Sanctorum beneath the Acacia. He was purified as a Levite. The sign of the master represents the epiphany of God in a cloud. “Why is the glittering star so highly adored in the Order? Because it was through its glaze venerable master Hiram was recovered, when the freshly dug earth was located.” This appears to be an important piece of information, since according to Snoek the first mentioning of this peculiar light occurred in the Scottish Rectified Rite after 1782. It is obvious that the new dignity of the master brings with it to be admitted to the Sanctum Sanctorum and that Hiram is likened to a (high) priest. “Why to you in particular revere the Acacia? Since Hiram’s grave, the venerable priests’, was marked with an Acacia.”

The general description of the ‘German’ Scottish lodges is far more comprehensive (p. 75-99). Scottish lodges in Germany are said to have fixed membership numbers (between twelve to sixteen), which certainly not is the case for the later development, particularly after 1760. It is also possible to read in a membership rule of ‘past-rank’, in the ideal case Scottish masons have a long-standing experience, preferably as officers in a lodge. The later development in the Swedish rite would make the Scottish master’s degree a prerequisite for becoming W. M. of a blue lodge and would embrace elements of a Installed Master’s ritual (however significantly different from Emulation, but still placed in the immediate continuation of the three craft degrees). The Oculists learned that there were strict rules of admission in place and how the interior of a lodge was designed. In the East a square altar with a green cloth was placed on top of which four candles, a vase with oil and herbs, a bible and a ‘battle sword’ (the German has ‘Schlachtschwert’). The square tracing board contains characteristic features: the setting is the destroyed temple of Jerusalem, “four circles and four squares alternately drawn around each other and on top of which are drawn four broken columns, in the form of an St Andrew’s Cross”. We find also the Ark of the Covenant, and Noah’s Ark, mount Sinai and the Brazen Sea. The candidate carries a cord around his neck and is (as in the French ritual) purified by water. An oath is taken on the Book of Genesis. The token of the Scottish master has striking similarities with the one used later in the Swedish rite, displaying the crucified St. Andrew, who also is the patron saint of the order and accordingly celebrated on the 30 November (p. 97). The motto of the Scottish master is given as “Dulcia post amara” (“Sweet after the Bitter”) and the passwords as “Adonai” and “Jehova”. A remarkable ceremony is that of masonic knighthood, described on pages 83, 88 and 93. The Scottish master is also referred to as a Knight of St. Andrew. In the catechism it is asked: “Q: Are you a Scottish Master? A: No one prevents me from walking into the Sanctum Sanctorum whenever I wish to. Q: Where were you admitted? A: In the Sanctum Sanctorum beneath the Acacia.”

19 Johannes Rudbeck: Kanslirådet Karl Friedrich Eckleff – det svenska frimuraresystemets fader, Stockholm 1930, p. 156 has a Swedish jewel from around 1760 in this design. For early Scottish degrees, see Mollier 2005, p. 81 and Mollier 2015 with stunning visuals.
In comparison to the ‘French’ lodge there are significant overlaps, such as the mentioning of the Levite purification and that mastery provides with admittance into the Sanctum Sanctorum, with other words, that it brings a sacerdotal privilege. Both accolade and anointment are practiced which begs the question whether the degree is to be seen as a double degree with a sacerdotal and a chivalric component.

In the subsequent section, the manuscript speaks explicitly of customs practiced in the Scottish lodges in Berlin and Braunschweig, which fits with the spread of the early Scottish degrees in Germany in so far that the first Scottish lodge was established in Berlin in 1742. A lodge was founded in Braunschweig in 1744 and it is probable that some freemasons went further to work in Scottish degrees thereafter. As in the French ritual the Scottish masters degree continues the Hiramic legend, the replacement of the master-word after the death of the architect and the rediscovery of the lost word (p. 99), “we have found what since centuries has been lost”, “[...] wir haben wiederfunden was seit so vielen iahrhunderten verloren gewesen [...]”. Furthermore it is described that the freemasons united themselves with the Order of St. John during the time of the crusades and that they together were cleaning up the site of the temple of Jerusalem ahead of its reconstruction. During this work the adytum (Sanctum Sanctorum) was rediscovered and in its centre four cubic and four circular stones (p. 96): “The chevaliers maçons were amazed to find the word ‘Jehovah’ on the last of the stones” (“[...] die chevaliers macons erstauneten für verwunderung als sie auf dem letzten dieser steine das wort jehova gewahr worden [...]”.

This expression of ‘freemasons-knights’ is remarkable as it forms the backdrop to the momentous knightly complex of motifs within freemasonry, flourishing particularly during the period 1760-1782. Whoever compiled this part of the Copiale-manuscript must have possessed direct insight into the structure and workings of Scottish master degree lodges in Germany and France at the time. Since no printed exposures are known and even handwritten copies of the ritual for the early period are extremely rare, it is very likely that this account was produced from one or several oral sources or from personal experience, limiting the circle of those who were able to communicate this information.

There are substantial overlaps in content between the description in Copiale and the manuscript “Ecossais de Prusse ou Le Chevalier de St. André”, dating around 1750 and supposedly originating from L’Union in Berlin. A brother Dall or Dahle from Copenhagen in 1747 obtained the right to establish a lodge in Copenhagen and his sketch of a tracing board resembles the design as outlined here. Yet another Scottish lodge was established in Denmark in 1748 and here the similarities of the tracing board are greater with the lodges in Berlin and Braunschweig. Jan Snoek has characterized this family of rituals as the third, ‘Harodim’-tradition to which he also counts the Royal Order of Scotland. It is obvious that the Copiale-manuscript provides yet another piece in the advanced jigsaw that we slowly are able to place concerning the evolution of the Scottish degrees in European freemasonry.

20 Kloss-Collection, The Hague, 192 A 62 KL. MS. XXV. 26. This manuscript is said to be identical to the one that is dated 1747 in the Berlin lodge L’Union. However far more research needs to be carried out to establish the exact relationship between these early rituals. See also Bettag/Snoek, 2012, p. 137-142.

21 Bettag/Snoek, 2012, p. 130 and 132 has these tracing boards. Beautiful illustrations also in Mollier 2015.

22 For the use of the term, see for instance Jan Snoek, “Le rite d’ Adoption, ses origins, l’ouverture aux femmes, ses rituals maçonniques”, in special issue “Les Femmes et la Franc-Maçonnerie” La Pensée et les Hommes 55 2011, 82-83, p. 141-154. See also the rituals of “Le Parfait Maçon” in Carr 1971, p. 157-200 that have many similarities to the symbols described in the Oculist-manuscript. See also Bettag/Snoek 2012 for further references to the issue.
The Key Lodge

My assessment is that the rituals, symbols and ideology of the “so-called Key lodge” (“die so genannte Schlüssel loge”) described on pages 100-104 are absolutely unique. I have so far not seen any other example of outright condemnation of tyranny and promotion of ideas related to natural liberty anywhere else within the context of eighteenth century freemasonry in general and for this early period in particular and I am happy if anyone proves me wrong. Masonic rituals and normative texts like orations or charges rarely touch upon any political issues or political ideology for that matter. However, the themes addressed in the Key-lodge, peace, rebellion, natural freedom, the necessity to form a corps, a three-headed monster that represents violent government, tyranny and the like place the workings of the lodge in a pretty direct political context. There is no room to produce a lengthy translation of the five pages here, but there is need for one that substantiates what I claim in the following.

On the tracing board of the lodge seven symbols are displayed (p. 100): (1) an olive branch as the sign of peace, (2) a drum which calls for a general rebellion, (3) the goddess Fama (Fame) with her trumpet, “calling the freemasons (or the Order, depending how to dissolve the pictogram of the big X, here I choose the grammatically most likely reading) to regain their natural freedom” (“die ‘big X’ wieder zusammen ihre natürliche freyheit wieder zu erlangen”), (4) a three-headed monster (traditionally this is Cerberus, the dog guarding the entrance to the underworld) representing a government that “by force of violence and stratagems has bereaved man of his natural freedom, enjoyment of timely matters and what man depends upon” (“[…] welche durch gewalt und list den menschen um seine natürliche freyheit und den genuss der zeitlichen dinge und was wir menschen benötiget sind gebracht […]”), (5) an exalted mountain, “symbolizing tyranny with which we are suppressed in our current slavery” (“[…] tiranney womit wir in unserere jetzigen sclaverey gedrucket werden […]”), (6) three snakes symbolizing nature, justice and fortitude and (7) spears, pistols and banners “are the weapons of freemasons [or Order depending on how to read the pictogram] in order to recuperate their lost liberty (“[…] sind waffen der ‘big X’ ihre verlorne freyheit wieder zu recuperieren [...]”).

This strong rhetoric is repeated on a number of occasions throughout the text. According to the person who compiled the Oculist-manuscript the Key-lodge was invented by “unsettled idlers” and has “most certainly to the largest extent disappeared”. But in the context of masonry such a strong emphasis on the fight against usurpation and tyranny, natural freedom and free will is very unusual. Particularly striking is the call for a general rebellion and the question is of course, against whom? Considering the possible origin of the manuscript around the middle of the 1740s, there is an obvious answer, the Jacobite rebellion of 1745. I am not a friend of conspiracy theories within research into freemasonry, but is it possible that the Key-lodge, which obviously is a continuation of the Scottish masters degree (it has for instance the same passwords “Adonai” and “Jehova” and also always is admitted to the Sanctum Sanctorum) and either calls freemasonry or the Order of St. Andrew to the weapons, is a tool to gather support for the Jacobite cause? In more or less serious scholarship the (existing) links between

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23 Some of these symbols are in fact mentioned in the part of “Les Francs-Maçons Ecrasés” that treats the architects/Scottish masons (such as the drum and Fame), see Carr 1971, p. 307-314.
freemasonry and the Jacobites have been interpreted in different ways. However the programmatic message of the Key-lodge would speak for the reading I suggested and points forward to concepts of liberty and independence as transformed during the 1776 and 1789 revolutions.

Alchemy

In the very final paragraphs of the Copiale-manuscript (p. 104f.) a ‘Consolation-lodge’ is mentioned, “a society of alchemists” that have their own tracing board, ceremonies and symbols; “their work aims primarily at to fixate Mercury”. This lodge is said to be in existence in Halle. However the author of the manuscript tells us that “this new association” probably not will last long and hence not is qualified for a further investigation.

Dating of the manuscript and concluding remarks

Based upon several factors I have come to the conclusion that the most likely dating of the Copiale-manuscript, or at least its content, is the middle or end of the 1740s. First of all, the time for the establishment of the Oculist Order as such speaks for this interpretation. Henning claims that the order was founded in 1742 and in existence for two decades. A printed book of constitutions was published around 1745. In the period yet two other mixed-gender fraternities with a similar program as the Oculists were established in German territories and in a pietistic context, the “Anti-masonic Society” and the “Order of Abilites”. The manuscript refers to the mixed gender fraternity of Mopses, which was exposed in 1745 in L’Ordre, a work that not only is directly mentioned in the manuscript, but from which at least a song, if not other elements, is quoted. Furthermore another exposure, “Die zergliederte Freymäurererei” is referred to, a pamphlet that circulated in a German translation since 1741/1744. As I have suggested above, the potential master copy for the exposure is an English ritual, potentially supplemented with French sources. Masonic ceremonies described are quiet simple and not as elaborate as later ritual in German masonic lodges and definitely not of the degree systems in place between 1760 and 1782. When it comes to the exposure of the Scottish master’s degree, the ritual speaks of a “completely new innovation”, which makes sense if we take 1742 as the starting date of such degrees in German territories. Furthermore only one degree is described, at the latest for 1748 further preparatory Scottish degrees are known at least in France and the Austrian Netherlands. The degree in the Oculist-manuscript has parallels to another source that is dated to 1747 and 1748. Again, the Scottish master’s degree as practiced in German territories between 1760 and 1782 is far more elaborated, however some striking similarities do also exist. If the ‘Key-lodge’ indeed covertly seeks support for the Jacobite cause under the veil of a continuation of the Scottish master’s degree, then a dating around 1745 makes sense and after 1746 (Culloden) it makes sense that the manuscript claims it has disappeared. References to a

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24 For an overview over these theories, see the article “Stuarts, der Prätendent, Stuartische Freimaurerei” in Internationales Freimaurer Lexikon, Herbig München 2006, p. 814f.
lodge working with alchemical symbolism previous to 1760 are highly interesting. After 1760, alchemical imagination within freemasonry peaked. Considering that a 1738 exposure (or rather apology) of freemasonry claimed that alchemical knowledge existed in the lodges, the existence of such a society in Halle adds to our understanding of the prevalence of alchemy within an early masonic context. In fact, none of the arguments listed above speak for that the Oculist-manuscript was originally composed later than 1750, rather the contrary. My impression is that the author used all available sources around 1745, printed exposures as much as oral accounts or potentially personal experience. Last but not least I would like to repeat my call for a more thorough analysis of the Oculist-manuscript and hope that the rudimentary interpretation presented here will be substituted in the future with a far more detailed translation and investigation.

It is also important to stress the fact that the Oculist-manuscript proves that it does make little sense to research freemasonry without considering the wider frame of fraternal orders and associations. The Oculist-manuscript is like a Russian doll and plays with secrecy and transparency. Through the form of the secret society another secret society is exposed. Or were the Oculists simply a cover-up for the dissemination of freemasonry during times of suspicion and persecution?

Biography

Andreas Önnerfors, born 1971, was raised in Trier, Germany, leaving secondary school in 1990 with the diploma Abitur (special subjects English, History and Latin). After a period of travel and initial studies at the University of Trier, he conducted his military service in Sweden between 1993-1994. Immediately thereafter, he worked as German-Swedish translator at a Swedish information company. Having registered for undergraduate studies in the History of Sciences and Ideas at the University of Lund, Sweden, he began training at the School of Interpreters of the Swedish Armed Forces in Uppsala (language: Russian) between 1995-1996, receiving further training for international missions in 1998. During this time he was awarded his BA and MA degrees in the History of Sciences and Ideas, receiving the former in 1999. Subsequently, he was admitted to Lund University in order to begin PhD studies. He subsequently taught History of Sciences and Ideas as well as cultural studies between 1999 and 2007. Between 2000-2003, Andreas Önnerfors also received doctoral education at a German graduate school at the University of Greifswald and defended his dissertation successfully in June 2003. During his post-doctoral period at the University of Lund (2003-2007), Andreas Önnerfors conducted research into freemasonry and other fraternal organizations in Sweden during the enlightenment and specialized in trans-national press history. He also worked as coordinator at the Centre for European Studies between 2004-2006. After post-doctoral studies at the University of Freiburg (Germany) and the University of Nice Sophia-Antipolis (France), he was contracted to the University of Sheffield (UK), where between 2007 and 2010 he worked as Director of the Centre for Research into Freemasonry and Fraternalism and as a Senior Lecturer in The Department of History. Between 2010 and 2011 Andreas Önnerfors was employed as researcher in a project on provenance in the rare book collections of Lund university library. Between February 2011 and June 2014 he worked also as a senior lecturer in various subjects at the Department for Global Political Studies, University of Malmö. In 2012 he was awarded the title of ‘docent’, which corresponds to Reader or Associate Professor in the History of Sciences and Ideas. Since July 2014, he teaches History of Sciences and Ideas at the Universities of Gothenburg and Lund, Sweden. In 2014, he was elected member of the European Academy of Sciences and Arts, Salzburg, Austria.