

Deeper Roots of the Golden Dawn

"... and for the merely curious who wish to see what pictures appear on the pieces still missing from the Golden Dawn puzzle, there is much that remains to be told."

R.A. Gilbert, The Golden Dawn. Twilight of the Magicians, p.11

When the meticulous documentary history of the Golden Dawn by Ellic Howe /1/ was first published in 1972 it seemed that everything about the origin and early history of that most influential secret magical order was finally uncovered for the general public and especially that the fraud on which the whole structure was based was definitely proved. Eleven years later, however, the Falcon Press edition of Israel Regardie's What you should know about the Golden Dawn /2/ brought an article by Gerald Suster /3/ being a very violent polemic with Howe's conclusions and actually disproving most of them, though his evidence is hardly tangible.

One of the most interesting arguments put forward by Suster is a quotation from Gershom Scholem's book From Berlin to Jerusalem in which the great Jewish scholar mentions "a so-called Frankfurt Jewish Masonic Lodge named Chabrath Zereh Boqer Aour /translated into English as the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn/" /4/. I have not been able to check the original source of the quotation but there does not seem to be any reason for doubting its correctness. The name of the order given in the Cypher MS /5/ is ChBRTh ZRCh AVR BQD, while the form given by Westcott in his "Historical Lecture" /6/ is Chabrath Zerek Aour Bokhr, translated as the Society of the Shining Light of the Dawn. The similarity is so close that it cannot be explained by a sheer coincidence and therefore it is really strange that neither Suster nor any other historian of the order followed this clue any further.

The following information is the result of checking only a few basic German sources and attempts to indicate a possible new line of research concerning the origin of the Golden Dawn. The Frankfurt Jewish Masonic Lodge mentioned by Scholem really existed and was quite well known "from the days of Napoleon"/7/. It was founded in 1807 under the auspices of the Grand Orient

of France and named "Aurore naissante" /translated into German as "Zur aufgehenden Morgenröte"/. Among the founders were well known Jewish Freemasons Ludwig Börne, Gabriel Riesser and Berthold Auerbach, who were also connected with the rite of Strict Observance of Baron von Hund. Frankfurt was also the site of the Eclectic Union, a federation of various rites, originated by Baron von Ditfurth, a prominent member of Strict Observance, and Baron von Knigge, a leader of Bavarian Illuminati, in 1779 /8/. The connection with Strict Observance is interesting because of the Secret Chiefs, playing such an important role in both the rite of von Hund and the Golden Dawn, as well as the interest shown in magic and alchemy in both of these orders.

The founders of the G.D. stated that the order had a lodge in London around 1810, the leader of which was Johann F. Falk /9/. Again the historians are quite uninterested in the person of that supposed early chief: Howe and Gilbert just quote the communication from Notes and Queries /which was most probably given by Westcott himself/, while King /10/ and Colquhoun /11/ do not even mention him. And here again the person is certainly real, though obscure. In fact Rabbi de Falk or Cain Chenuel Falk was a cabalist, thaumaturgist and magician living in London at the turn of the 18th and 19th centuries. Mackenzie in his Royal Masonic Cyclopedia mentions his son, Johann Friedrich Falk born in Hamburg, who was the head of the "Cabalistic college" in London and died around 1824, but Gordon P.G. Hills, a masonic historian, supposes it was one and the same person./12/.

The question is therefore whether the Frankfurt Jewish Lodge had any connections in London. Surprisingly enough in 1817 a Jewish Lodge "Aurore naissante" was founded in London under the auspices of the Duke of Sussex, the Grand Master of the Grand Lodge of England, who gave it a constitution without asking the Frankfurt "mother lodge". /13/. The London representative of the Frankfurt Lodge was a merchant named Anton Wolf. In 1822, however, the London lodge was closed down by the superiors from Frankfurt /14/, though it may have continued to exist on its own.

From all this it appears that whoever made up the known story of the Golden Dawn origin knew something about the Frankfurt Jewish Lodge but his information was considerably distorted. The impression is therefore that Westcott's information in "Historical Lecture" was not from first hand but was rather derived from some distant informant, passing through several others in between, or alternatively a long time must have passed between his receipt of the information and writing it down. This possibility

can be supported by the quotation from Westcott given by Howe /15/ In 1916, i.e. after Mather's death and when he was no longer connected with any of the G.D. offshoots, Westcott wrote: "In 1850 the very old Rosicrucian Lodge at Frankfurt am Main fell into abeyance; in this Lodge the first Lord Lytton was received into the Adeptship and became imbued with the ideas he displayed in his novel Zanoni". Ellic Howe was unable to identify any "Rosicrucian Lodge at Frankfurt" but the evidence given above indicates that it must have been the Jewish Masonic Lodge called Chabrath Zeher Boqer Acur! As Lord Lytton died in 1873, the Cypher MSS. may well have been produced by him as notes from the teachings and rituals he witnessed in Frankfurt, so that it would have rightly be considered "ancient" by 1887 when it fell into the hands of Westcott. It is also worth noting in this context that there is virtually nothing "Rosicrucian" about the Cypher MSS., the term is not even mentioned anywhere in the text and it is only the Rosy Cross symbol that forms a very slight connection, which seems to suggest that the "Rosicrucian" character of the G.D. were for the most part invented by Mathers and, especially, Westcott, whose preoccupation with that subject and whose prominent position in the Soc. Ros. in Anglia are well known. After Lord Lytton's death /or maybe even earlier/ his notes may have passed on to Frederick Hockley, who was on friendly terms with him and even "knew the original of "Glyndon" in Zanoni", as certified by W.A. Ayton /16/. It is obviously difficult to say who converted the notes into cypher but it is possible that it was Hockley, who may have added the Enochian material to it, as he was interested in that /17/. The Tarot material, on the other hand, was probably included by Lytton himself inspired by Eliphas Levi, who visited him twice in London - in 1854 and 1861. After the death of Hockley in 1885 his papers were inherited by Woodford who found the MS. and gave it to Westcott.

And finally, how does our friend Freulein Sprengel fit into the scheme? My conjecture /a very far-fetched one, I admit/ is that Westcott had access to some documents of the Frankfurt Lodge, perhaps left by Lytton, which were written in German. There is a German masonic term "Sprengelrecht", the equivalent of which in English is "Territorial Jurisdiction" /18/. This term may have been used in documents closing down the London sister lodge of the Frankfurt "Golden Dawn" and Westcott, being ignorant of the German language, may have mistaken it for a name, especially as nouns in German ~~xxx~~ always begin with a capital letter and

the term may have been used in short simply as "Sprengel".

Summing up, it appears that the Frankfurt ~~KKX~~ Jewish Masonic Lodge called Chabrath Zeher Boger Aour or Aurore naissante was the Continental Rosicrucian body to which the Golden Dawn "Historical Lecture" refers. Its sister lodge was founded in London in 1817 and among its leaders were Anton Wolf and Rabbi de Falk. It was closed down in 1822 but continued to work on its own. Edward Bulwer-Lytton probably contacted it and then visited Frankfurt, where he was initiated and made notes of the rituals and teachings for later use. In England he gave the notes to Hockley who added the Enochian material and wrote the whole thing down in cypher thus giving the Cypher MS. its final form. And finally Westcott attached the last leaf of the MSS. with the Freulein Sprengel information.

The above seems to be a plausible working hypothesis which is worth further research and possible verification.

Notes:

- 1/ Howe, E., The magicians of the Golden Dawn. A documentary history of a magical order 1887-1923, London 1972.
- 2/ Regardie, I., What you should know about the Golden Dawn, Phoenix 1983.
- 3/ Suster, G., "Modern scholarship and the origins of the Golden Dawn", /in/ Regardie, op.cit., pp. 159-178.
- 4/ ibid., p. 167
- 5/ The CIPHER MSS of the Golden Dawn, London 1982, p.16
- 6/ Cf. e.g. Gilbert, R.A., The Golden Dawn. Twilight of the magicians, Wellingborough 1983, p.102.
- 7/ Suster, op.cit., p.167
- 8/ Lennhoff, E., Posner, O., Internationales Freimaurerlexikon, Wien 1932; Mackey, A.G., Encyclopedia of freemasonry, Richmond 1966.
- 9/ Gilbert, op.cit., p.25; Howe, op.cit., p.46
- 10/ King, F., Ritual magic in England 1887 to the present day, London 1970.
- 11/ Colquhoun, I., Sword of wisdom. MacGregor Mathers and ~~the~~ "The Golden Dawn", London 1975.
- 12/ Mackey, op.cit., vol.I, p.350

13/ Lennhoff and Posner, op.cit.

14/ ibid.

15/ Howe, op.cit., p.31-32

16/ ibid., p.33

17/ Gilbert, op.cit., p.21. It should be noted, however, that English origin of the Enochian material in the Cypher MSS. is not so obvious, as the system was studied on the Continent, too. The copy of Casaubon's True and faithful relation... in the University Library in Poznań, Poland, has ~~many~~ most of the Enochian words in the "calls" section underlined in ink, while another copy in the National Library in Warsaw contains many marginal notes.

18/ Lennhoff and Posner, op.cit.