

## Foreword

This new issue of *Ritual, Secrecy and Civil Society* opens with a major study by Antoine Faivre on J. Touzay Du Chenteau. Du Chenteau is best known as the author of an extraordinary “Philosophical Map,” which is an amazing compilation of esoteric and “Kabbalistic” drawings. He was also a very active occultist mason in the years 1770-1780 with relationships all over Europe.

It is also a way for us to pay tribute to the great scholar Antoine Faivre (1934-2021) who passed away recently. Originally a Germanist, it was he who first established the history of Western Esotericism as an academic field. In 1979, he was appointed “directeur d’études” at the prestigious “Ecole Pratique des Hautes Etudes” at the Sorbonne. He entitled his chair *History of esoteric and mystical currents in modern and contemporary Europe* and convinced his academic colleagues that there was a real subject for academic research. A polyglot with a great inclination for exchanges, he also played a major role in the recognition of Esotericism as a field of research in several countries, including the United States. Antoine Faivre has thus created an academic space for research on Freemasonry, which is a component of Western esotericism.

The reader will then discover a hypothesis that I put forward about the true identity of Louis Guillemain de Saint-Victor. He is the author of one of the best-selling Masonic exposures of the 18th century, the *Recueil précieux de la Maçonnerie adhonramite*. There is no Guillemain de Saint-Victor in the archives, so it is a pseudonym. We will see that behind this pseudonym hides an astonishing character, although the 18<sup>th</sup> century produced so many.

Finally, our magazine is also interested in the sources of Masonic symbolism. We know that a good part of it comes from the hermetic speculations of the Renaissance. This is why we found Zhenya Gershman’s nice study on the influence of esotericism on Dürer particularly stimulating.

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