Freemasonry and Fraternalism

in the Middle East

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Andreas Önnerfors
Dorothe Sommer (eds.)

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Acknowledgements

Many thanks are due to Professor David Shepherd, who twice introduced speakers at our lecture series. He will be leaving his post as Director of the Humanities Research Institute (HRI) here at The University of Sheffield at the end of March 2009, and therefore it is timely to express our thanks to him for all the other generous support he has given to The Centre for Research into Freemasonry and Fraternalism, which is in the same building and facilities. The CRFF wishes him all the very best in his new position at The University of Keele and most of all: Вперёд!

"The Rising Sun", run by the amiable couple Rob and Julia Nicholls, serves an impressive variety of local ales and food and was the salubrious venue of intense post-lecture discussions. This little piece of Sheffield life provided our foreign guests with congenial impressions of British culture.

In spite of his lack of technical expertise Rob Collis successfully managed to record a number of lectures. We are also grateful for his language polish that clearly demonstrates the difference between being English and knowing English.
Tack så mycket!

Introduction • *Andreas Önnerfors*

During the autumn of 2008 The Centre for Research into Freemasonry and Fraternalism (CRFF) invited a number of speakers to Sheffield for a lecture series on Freemasonry and Fraternalism in the Middle East. This volume presents five of the papers delivered during the series, which all unite research competence in the field of freemasonry and fraternal organisations with general expertise on different aspects of Middle Eastern history. The book marks the first edition in the *Sheffield Lectures on the History of Freemasonry and Fraternalism*, which it is envisaged will be a bi-annual publication. In the same vein as the *CRFF Working Paper Series* (available online), they reflect work in progress.

Unfortunately, we were not able to convince one of the speakers to submit his paper for publication. This would have enriched the volume, especially as his lecture sparked an interesting correspondence that illustrated how freemasonry remains a highly controversial topic in the Middle East. I will return to this particular episode in the *postlude* to this volume. The first edition of the *Sheffield Lectures* represents the first scholarly publication devoted to the topic of freemasonry and fraternalism and the Middle East and it is our hope that it will stimulate fruitful reactions from both the research community and the non-academic audience.

Academic study of freemasonry has mainly focussed on various aspects of predominantly male sociability in a "Western" context. As fascinating as this research is, it is important to recognise the need to broaden our perspectives. It would be easy to brand freemasonry and related forms of organised sociability as "Western" cultural products, that in a different context can only be viewed as imported bodies forced upon non-Western societies. However, some of the findings of this volume suggest that such a view is questionable. Educated

elites in the Middle East were able to distinguish between different forms of freemasonry and found ways to adapt them to the pre-existing conditions of their own cultures. Thus, the trans-cultural circulation of ritual performance, moral codes, ideology and organisational practice forms an absorbing field for future research.

Significantly, Arab, Turkish and Persian elites of various religious affiliations were able to independently relate to freemasonry which served different purposes depending on the occasion. This runs counter to various un-reflective conspiracy theories that survive in the Middle East, especially that of a Judaeo-masonic plot against the Muslim world that draws on the spurious "Protocols of the Elderly of Zion", which first came to light in Russia at the end of the nineteenth century and subsequently were exploited by the Nazi propaganda machinery. Most intriguing is the relationship between processes of modernisation/national self-identification and freemasonry, in which masonic sociability seems to have served as a unifying basis among groups that promoted fundamental changes in their respective societies, whether it be within the *Al-Nahda* of Arab intellectuals, the Iranian Constitutional Revolution or education in Egypt. The term النهضةis used to characterise the period of national, cultural, literary awakening or spiritual *Renaissance* in the Arab world. This link can be observed in a number of global nationalisation processes, from Bulgaria to Brazil or from Italy to Cuba. However, it remains a *desideratum* to carry out a comparative study between these shifting contexts in order to find a convincing answer to the paradoxical questions of how and why a universal ideology of brotherhood fostered political, cultural or social (and sometimes mutually exclusive) particularisation.

Thierry Zarcone's paper, “French Pre-Masonic Fraternities, Freemasonry and Dervish Orders in the Muslim World” proves how valuable it can be to shift from a strict treatment of freemasonry towards an approach that includes the study of related fraternal organisations. Zarcone examines the identification of pre-masonic and masonic fraternities with Sufi orders (*tarikat*). In the eyes of many Muslims, the masonic superstructure, with its hierarchy and rituals, is regarded as being similar to the Sufi orders in the Islamic world (which could be one reason why Sufism is not recognised as part of Islam by a majority of Muslims).

Dorothe Sommer's paper outlines “Early Freemasonry in Late Ottoman Syria from the Nineteenth Century Onwards – The First Masonic Lodges in the Beirut Area”. Presenting results from her ongoing PhD-project, she looks into how these lodges attracted intelligent and reform-minded men, who used freemasonry in order to maintain harmony in their own society. Sommer argues that the spread of freemasonry in the Ottoman Empire was not instigated by European grand bodies; rather Lebanese masons pragmatically exploited a European concept and used competition between the European powers to suit their own aims.

The paper delivered by *Isaac Lubelsky*, entitled “The Star in the East: Occultist Perceptions of the Mystical Orient”, deals with the image of the mystical Orient (whether it be the Near, Middle, or Far East). Since the Enlightenment the Orient has been a source of attraction and inspiration for a vast number of European prophets and occultists. The mystical image derives, first and foremost, from the identification of the East as the sacred region that gave birth to the great monotheistic religions – Judaism, Christianity and Islam. Lubelsky examines the Theosophical Society, the Rosicrucians and Cagliostro as case studies for the exploitation of the ”East” in various fraternal organisations.

In her paper titled "Freemasonry and the Constitutional Revolution in Iran: 1905-1911" *Mangol Bayat* assesses the influence of freemasonry in the radical political changes that occurred in Iran in the early years of the twentieth century. As far as possible, given the paucity of reliable evidence, she analyses its contribution to the Constitutional Revolution and addresses the relevant issue of the attractiveness of masonry to the intelligentsia. She reaches the conclusion that Iranian freemasons by no means acted in unison, and that the craft served as one important element in the idealised Westernisation and modernisation of Iranian society.

Finally, *Paul Dumont*, in his paper entitled "Ottoman Freemasonry and Laicity", investigates the non-confessionality of the state as a concept within Ottoman freemasonry, mainly focussing on the establishments of the Grand Orient de France. The French term "Laïcité" has no proper English equivalent and can only partially be covered by "secularism". However, the disconnection between state and religion was embraced by Ottoman freemasonry. Colonial freemasonry, although disrupted after the foundation of the Republic of Turkey, efficiently contributed to the dissemination of ideas imported from the West.

As already mentioned above we were unable to receive a written version of *Ungor Ugor's* lecture "When Armenians built Auschwitz: Notes on Late Ottoman Freemasonry and Genocide" but we strongly hope that he will find time to submit it at a later date to our online series. The lecture was recorded and can be downloaded from the following link:

podcast.ulcc.ac.uk/accounts/UniversityofSheffield/crf_sheffield/R09_0001.mp3

As a whole the publication of this series of lectures provides the reader with a fascinating insight into the complex and

sometimes controversial topic of freemasonry in the Middle East, and clearly demonstrates the need for further research.

Our volume is but a first step on the road towards this challenge.

List of Contributors

Thierry Zarcone is a senior research fellow (Directeur de recherches) at the Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique, in the Groupe Société Religions Laïcité research team, which is based at the Ecole Pratique des Hautes Etudes (Paris), and a former visiting professor at Kyoto University. He is an expert on the intellectual history of Islam in the Turko-Persian area (Turkey, Central Asia, Chinese Turkestan), particularly with regard to Sufi brotherhoods and secret societies, including Freemasonry.

Dorothe Sommer has been the Research Support Co-ordinator at the Centre for Research into Freemasonry at The University of Sheffield since March 2008, while simultaneously studying for her PhD at the university. She is currently focusing on European lodges in Lebanon, particularly in Tripoli, Mount Lebanon and Beirut, concentrating on national and transnational interdependence (social, political and economic).

Isaac Lubelsky teaches new-age thought and Indian history at, Tel Aviv University, and at Haifa University. He is a research-fellow at the Stephen Roth Institute for the Study of Contemporary Anti-Semitism and Racism, which is part of Tel Aviv University, where he has co-ordinated the Marianne and Ernest Pieper Research Seminar on Worldwide Racism since 2006.

Mangol Bayat received her PhD in History from U.C.L.A. and is an independent scholar. She has taught at Harvard University, MIT, The University of Bonn, The University of

Iowa and at Shiraz University. She has published many books, articles and essays and her forthcoming work will be entitled *Iran's First Revolution: The Second Majles, 1909-1911*.

Paul Dumont is Professor of Turkish Language, Literature and History, and Chair of the Department of Turkish Studies at Marc Bloch University in Strasbourg. Professor Dumont's field of expertise centres on the intellectual and social history of modern Turkey. He has also written on various other themes, such as minorities, travel literature and freemasonry. He is currently engaged in a study of Islamic trends in present-day Turkey.

French Pre-Masonic Fraternities, Freemasonry and Dervish Orders in the Muslim World

Thierry Zarcone

In this article I want to focus on a major anthropological topic which has imprinted itself on the historical study of both the introduction and development of Freemasonry in the Muslim world, and that is the identification of pre-Masonic and Masonic fraternities with Sufi orders (*tarikat*); for in the eyes of a great many Muslims, the Masonic superstructure, with its hierarchy and rituals, is regarded as being similar to the Sufi orders in the Islamic world. This study is divided into four sections. The first section examines how and why a French pre-Masonic fraternity known as the 'Order of the Grape', which was based in Arles (Provence) and established itself at Constantinople in the beginning of the eighteenth century, was given the privileges of a *tarikat* by the Ottoman authorities and why its members were seen as 'dervishes', two decades before the introduction of Freemasonry in the Empire. The second section examines why western Freemasons considered the Sufi orders as a kind of "Oriental Freemasonry", and the third shows, quite similarly, how Freemasonry was identified with a *tarikat* in the Middle East and Turko-Persian world. While the fourth and last section will highlight a heated debate that took place in Republican Turkey in the middle of the twentieth century, as to whether or not the Freemasonry is a *tarikat*.

A French Pre-Masonic Bacchanalian Fraternity at Constantinople in 1703

The idea that Freemasonry is the equivalent of any one of several Muslim fraternities, i.e. the Sufi lineages or brotherhoods (*tarikat*), is an old one and was first suggested at the beginning of the eighteenth century. Surprisingly, two

decades before the introduction of Freemasonry in the Ottoman Empire, and approximately a century-and-a-half before the first Muslim was made a Freemason, a French society called the Order of the Grape (*l'Ordre de la Grappe*), depicted by scholars as pre-Masonic, was established in Istanbul and quickly seen as a kind of Sufi brotherhood by the locals.

The Order of the Grape was established in the Provencal city of Arles in 1693. Like other organisations in Provence (the Orders of the Boisson and the Méduse), the Order of the Grape presented itself as a kind of Bacchic or drinking chivalry (*chevalerie bachique*), its members were called *dipnosophistes* or "Drinking philosophers".[1] The Order of the Grape was open to both men and women, held meetings, or more precisely, dinners, and used conventional language which referred to fraternity, food, wine and drinking. It also had a Grand Master (*Grand Maître*), officers (*officiers*) and a Council of the Order (*Conseil de l'Ordre*), and its members were divided between the "Brothers of the red table" (*Frères de la table rouge*) and the "Brothers of the white table" (*Frères de la table blanche*). The new brothers and sisters were given a certificate at their reception (*diplôme* or *patente de reception*), and this bore a seal (*cachet*) which comprised a coat of arms with grapes, glasses, a

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I would like to thank Matthew Scanlan for reading through a draft of this paper and making many suggestions.

[1] On this order, see Chevalier Apicius a Vindemiis, *Etudes et recherches scientifiques et archéologiques sur le culte de Bacchus en Provence au XVIIIe siècle* (Toulon: Imprimerie d'E. Aurel, 1860), pp. 16-19, one exemplary of this quite rare book is conservated in the Library of Inguimbertine, Carpentras, France, Ms 2055; L. de Crozet, "Notes pour servir à l'histoire des sociétés de buveurs en Provence au XVIIIe siècle," *Bulletin de la Société des sciences, belles-lettres et arts du département du Var*, Toulon 28e et 29e année (1860-1861): pp. 15-18; Arthur Dinaux, *Les Sociétés badines, bachiques, chantantes et litéraires* (Paris: Librairie Bachelin de Florenne, 1868), vol. 1, p. 392

caduceus (the winged-staff of Hermes / Mercury), and two dolphins (Figure 1).[2]

Figure 1

The order's meeting places were known as convents (*couvents*), lodges (*loges*) and chapters (*chapitres*), and they

[2] See the Patente de réception dans l'ordre de la Grappe, in Apicius a Vindemiis, *Etudes et recherches,* pp. 63-65.

were situated in Paris, Lyon, Marseille, Metz, Toulouse, Strasbourg, Anvers, Cologne, Berne, Milan, Rome and Cadiz.

Hyacinthe Chobaut, a former librarian at the Library of Avignon, views the Order of the Grape and the two other Provencal Bacchic knighthoods, as “pre-masonic societies”, as they shared many practices in common with Freemasonry (which emerged in Western Provence in 1737 and Arles in 1751) and because many of its members, particularly those in the Avignonian Order of the Boisson, subsequently entered Masonic lodges looking for new and kindred societies dedicated to fraternity and pleasure.[3]

Several official publications of the Order survive, but these include only a handful of issues of the *Nouvelles de la Grappe* and it successor publication the *Journal des dipnosophistes de la Grappe*, both of which were printed in the early years of the eighteenth century.[4] From these journals we know that the Order of the Grape was established at Constantinople in the Galata district (the old Genovese and Venetian quarter) in 1702. In this epoch, many French merchants, particularly from Marseille, lived and worked in the Galata district where they established many companies under the protection of the powerful Chamber of Commerce of Marseille. And by the middle of the eighteenth century, a lodge warranted by the Mother Scottish Lodge of Marseille (Mère Loge Ecossaise de

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[3] “C'était des réunions de gens d'esprit des meilleures classes, joyeux vivants, aimant la bonne chère, fort heureux de s'assembler pour deviser gaiement et sans contraintes; on usait à table d'un langage conventuel: au fond, de vrais cercles d'intimes (...) leurs adhérents appartenaient aux mêmes milieux sociaux où nous verrons plus tard se recruter la franc-maçonnerie, et la disposition d'esprit des premiers francs-maçons ne différait peut-être guère de celle des optimistes convives de la Méduse, de la Grappe ou de la Boisson,” H. Chobaut, “Les Débuts de la Franc-maçonnerie à Avignon (1737-1751),” *Mémoires de l'Académie de Vaucluse* (1924): p. 150-151.

[4] All conservated in the Library of Arles.

Marseille) was founded in this city with the majority of its members being Marseillaise. It is therefore not surprising that there were members of the Order of the Grape and of the Boisson[5] among the Marseillaise established in Constantinople.[6] Nevertheless the members of the Chapter of the Grape at Constantinople were not exclusively Marseillaise; indeed, others emanated from the Ottoman Greek (Rum) community, mostly being interpreters (*drogmans*) employed by the various European embassies then present in the city, and many others were Turks and therefore Muslims.

In September 1702, the Marseille section of the Order called "loge de Marseille" received a report concerning an event which occurred in the Constantinople section. A Dutch merchant criticized the order and officially asked the Sultan to forbid this organisation, which was nothing more, he claimed, than a gathering of "drunkards and corrupters" (*société d'yvrognes et de séducteurs*). The representative of the Order of the Grape at Constantinople, Brother Lamorabaquin, who held the rank of "Great Prior of Galata" (*Gr. Prieur de Galata*), ensured the order's safety by convincing Muslim judges and the Sultan that there was no contradistinction between the principles and practices of the Order, and the religion of Mohammad, despite its use of wine. Indeed, the author of the report which was sent to the lodge of Marseille, wrote that

> "the Order was well reputed at Constantinople because a *seheik* [shaykh, i.e. a Sufi master] had decided three months earlier to settle in the Galata quarter as he wanted to regularly attend the meetings of the Chapter of the

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[5] There are some documents about the coming to Istanbul around 1703 of a certain Brother Jean des Vignes who was a member of the Order of the Boisson.

[6] Pierre-Yves Beaurepaire, "Saint-Jean d'Ecosse de Marseille, une puissance maçonnique méditerranéennes aux ambitions européennes" *Cahiers de la Méditerranée* 72 (juin 2006): pp. 61-95.

> Order. This *seheik* was so impressed by the working of the Order that he was preaching in the major mosques of Constantinople that the brothers of the Grape, established a short time ago in the Galata district (a place founded by the Gauls), were the genuine druids (*Druydes*) from whence came the dervishes (*Dervichs*) of Turkey, and that we must consider them as people beyond reproach…"[7]

This passage is especially significant in that it shows that in the eyes of this Sufi shaykh, there was no difference between the Order of the Grape and the dervishes - a synonym for the Sufis. This report, written by the interpreter (*drogman*) of the Order, a man supposed to have mastered the Turkish language, is far from superficial and incidental. And the word "dervish" appears also for a second time in this report, when the Muslim lawyers delivered their official judgement on the complaint of the Dutch merchant. In this "argument" (*ogget*, i.e. *hüccet*), the Ottoman administration decided to "forbid any body to make troubles for the Order of the Grape and, according to the defence [of the Order] made by Brother Lamorabaquin, authorized Muslims to enter this order as dervish, and to drink wine…"[8]

Unfortunately, this event is not documented in the Turkish sources and consequently we must wonder to what extant this quite extraordinary story is actually true. However, there are a

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[7] "Notre ordre s'est mis dans une grande réputation par le zele d'un *seheik* qui s'est logé depuis trois mois dans notre voisinage pour assister plus frequemment à nos chapitres, où il a été touché si vivement, qu'il prêche aujourd'huy dans les principales mosquées de Constantinople que les Frères de la Grappe, établis depuis peu à Galata (ville fondée par les anciens Gaulois), sont les véritables Druydes d'où les derviches de Turquie sont émanez, et qu'on doit les regarder comme des gens sans reproches"; *Le Journal. Nouvelles de la Grappe* (January 11 1703): p. 1-2.

[8] "…a permis et permet aux musulmans d'entrer dans ledit Ordre en qualité de Dervichs et d'y boire du vin…"; *Le Journal. Nouvelles de la Grappe* (January 11 1703): p. 4.

lot of details in this report which lead us to consider that the story might at least be partially true; details such as Ottoman words, aspects of day to day life in Turkey, and information on the juridical system of the Ottomans, etc… But if this story is in fact imaginary, it, at the very least, betrays the idea that the dervishes or Sufi brotherhoods were regarded by westerners as an Eastern equivalent of the Order of the Grape. In all likelihood, the reason why the Dervishes were regarded as having their roots in the Order of the Grape, were similar to those for which, as will be demonstrated later, the Sufi brotherhoods were considered similar to Freemasonry: these organisations were autonomous and not connected with official state or and religious administrations. They were also closed societies, sometimes secret, had a hierarchy, a ceremonial, used technical language, and took an oath (*serment*).[9] These aspects are certainly common to both pre-Masonic societies like the Southern Bacchanalian Chivalry, Freemasonry, and the Sufi fraternities. Finally, it is also of interest to note that many members of the Order of the Grappe had a strong interest in alchemy, which also influenced masonic symbolism. Indeed, the *Journal des dipnosophistes de la Grappe* mentioned the Philosopher's Stone, the round table of King Arthur, and the names of Michel Nostradamus and the famous alchemist Nicolas Flamel.[10]

[9] The interpreter was invited in the company of Lamorobaquin to a secret meeting of a Turkish section of the Order of the Grape directed by the kadiasker of Rumelia, a high administrator of the Empire; *Le Journal. Nouvelles de la Grappe* (January 11 1703): p. 2.

[10] *Journal des Dipnosophistes de la Grappe* (Theline [Arles]: 1705, pp. 4

The western view of Sufi Brotherhoods: an "Oriental Freemasonry"

From the early eighteenth century several Europeans were convinced that the Sufi brotherhoods were an Eastern equivalent of the Masonic fraternities, although, a century before, the Brethren of the mysterious Order of the Rosy Cross had been compared to a particular order of Anatolian dervishes, but that is another story.[11] These Europeans were travellers and orientalists, generally masons, with an excellent knowledge of the East. Two of them, Ignatius Muradgea d'Ohsson and John P. Brown, both wrote pioneering analyses of Islam and the dervish orders of eighteenth and nineteenth-century Turkey. A third traveller, Richard Burton, a prolific writer on Muslim lands, gained an inside knowledge of Sufism as he had become a Sufi while he was in India.

The first of these writers, Ignatius Muradgea d'Ohsson (1740-1807), was actually between West and East. He was a Catholic Armenian of the Ottoman Empire, an interpreter at the Swedish consulate and a counsellor of the Swedish legation.[12] D'Ohsson was also a fascinating writer who has published in French a general presentation of the Ottoman Empire in 3 vols. in folio (Paris, 1787–1820), also published as 7 vols. in octavo (Paris, 1788–1824), under the title of *Tableau général de*

[11] I have a chapter on this topic in a book in progress.

[12] On him see Carter V. Findley, "Presenting the Ottomans to Europe: Mouradgea d'Ohsson and His *Tableau général de l'empire othoman,*" Lecture in Memory of Gunnar Jarring (Stockholm: Swedish Research Institute in Istanbul, 2003), pp. 1-68; revised version of the same article published in *The Torch of the Empire, Ignatius Mouradgea d'Ohsson and the Tableau Général of the Ottoman Empire in the Eighteenth Century; Imparatorluğun Meşalesi, XVIII. Yüzyılda Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nun Genel Görünümü ve Ignatius Mouradgea d'Ohsson* (Istanbul: Yapı ve Kredi Yayınları, 2002). See also Andreas Önnerfors forthcoming article "Schweden und das Osmanische Reich im 18. Jahrhundert" in *Europa und die Türkei* (Ed. Barbara Schmidt-Haberkamp) Bonn 2010.

l'Empire othoman, divisé en deux parties, dont l'une comprend la législation mahométane, l'autre, l'histoire de l'Empire othoman. A partial English translation was published in Philadelphia in 1788 under the title: *Oriental Antiquities, and General View of the Othoman Customs, Laws, and Ceremonies: Exhibiting Many Curious Pieces of the Eastem Hemisphere, relative to the Christian and Jewish Dispensations; with various Rites and Mysteries of the Oriental Freemasons* (Philadelphia: Grand Lodge of Enquiry, 1788). On the opposite page of the title, we see a fascinating plate decorated with Masonic symbols and in the centre a picture of the temple of Solomon and of the killing of Master Hiram with many writings all around the picture. The title of the plate is "Foundation of the Royal order of the free-Masons in Palestine A.M. 4037." In a second copy of the same work, another plate is included that displays complex masonic iconography.[13]

[13] Copy held by the American Antiquarian Society available on the database NewsBank infoweb.newsbank.com "Early American Imprints" (accessed March 18 2009).

ORIENTAL ANTIQUITIES,

AND

GENERAL VIEW

OF THE

OTHOMAN

CUSTOMS, LAWS, and CEREMONIES:

EXHIBITING MANY CURIOUS PIECES OF THE EASTERN HEMISPHERE, RELATIVE TO THE CHRISTIAN AND JEWISH DISPENSATIONS; WITH VARIOUS RITES AND MYSTERIES OF THE ORIENTAL FREEMASONS.

DEDICATED TO THE KING OF SWEDEN.

TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH OF

M. DE M---- D'OHSSON,

KNIGHT OF THE ROYAL AND MASONIC ORDERS OF VASA—TEMPLARS—MALTA—PHILIPPINE—ROSA CRUCIAN, &c.—SECRETARY TO THE KING OF SWEDEN; FORMERLY HIS INTERPRETER AND CHARGE D'AFFAIRES AT THE COURT OF CONSTANTINOPLE.

PHILADELPHIA:

Printed for the Select Committee and Grand Lodge of Enquiry.

M,DCC,LXXXVIII.

Figure 2

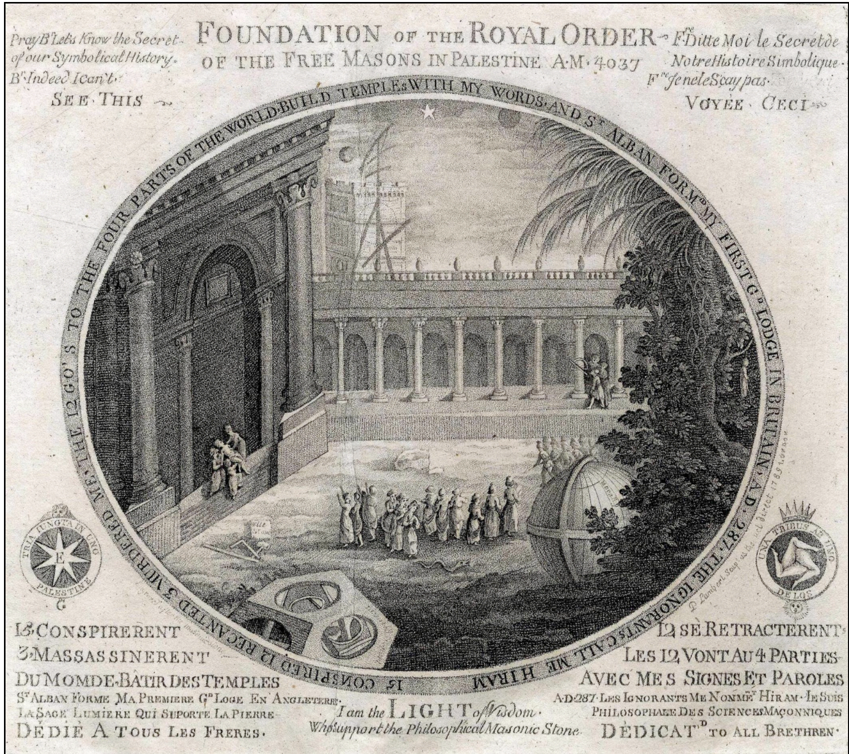

Figure 3

In the French version of d'Ohsson's books, there is a very detailed chapter (ed. 1788–1824, vol. 4) on the Sufi fraternities whose ceremonies d'Ohsson had frequently attended.[14] This section is absent in the English translation and we can speculate that the editor planned to publish another volume with the section on the dervishes. According to Carter V. Findley who wrote on d'Ohsson and his *Tableau general*, "the long title altered to indicate that the work described the "Rites

[14] *Tableau général de l'Empire othoman, divisé en deux parties, dont l'une comprend la législation mahométane, l'autre, l'histoire de l'Empire othoman* (Paris : Imprimerie de Monsieur, 1788), vol. 4, p. 676.

and Mysteries of the Oriental Freemasons," who are the dervishes.[15] But d'Ohsson never explains why he saw the dervishes as 'Oriental Freemasons'. We notice, however, that in his presentation of the Sufi brotherhoods, he used the French Masonic term 'initiation," for the Sufi reception; this is a sign, I believe, that in his eyes, both reception ceremonies were similar (the word initiation was rarely used by other travellers who wrote on the Sufi orders).[16] The question therefore arises: was d'Ohsson a freemason? From the indication given in the cover page of the English translation of his *Tableau general*, we understand that he was a member of the fraternity and of several Masonic knighthoods: "Knight of the Royal and Masonic Orders of Vasa, Templars, Malta, Philippine," and even, "Rosa Crucian", although the Swedish Order of Vasa is not masonic and we do not know what is referred to by "Rosa Crucian." Moreover, his book was printed by the Masonic press of the Grand Lodge of Enquiry in Philadelphia. In the dedication to the King of Sweden attributed to d'Ohsson, he calls himself a "Servant, Subject and Brother", which also might confirm his Masonic membership, as the Swedish monarch Gustav III was a prominent freemason.

Therefore, in view of this, it is perhaps reasonable to suppose that either d'Ohsson was made a mason under the Swedish jurisdiction or else he was initiated in another grand lodge, in either Turkey or in France (where he stayed for years) before he was integrated into Swedish masonry. His name appears, actually, in the list of the Swedish Freemasons in 1775 when he joined the lodge *L'Union* at Stockholm. He is depicted as a count (*Grefve*) and an Ambassador of France.[17] But the

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[15] C.V. Findley, "Presenting the Ottomans to Europe: Mouradgea d'Ohsson and His *Tableau général de l'empire othoman,*" p. 19.

[16] *Tableau général de l'Empire othoman,* vol. 4, pp. 633, 635.

[17] This list of the Swedish masons was published by Jonas Andersson et Andreas Önnerfors, "Förteckning över svenska 1700- talsfrimureriet," in

most interesting thing for us is, not whether d'Ohsson was a mason or not, but the fact that American freemasons have paid for the printing of his book which talk about "Oriental freemasons," i.e. the Sufi fraternities**.**

John P. Brown (1812-1872), who in 1868 authorised a major book on the Sufi fraternities in Turkey, *The Darvishes or Oriental Spiritualism*,[18] wrote that some particular dervish orders can only be identified with the Freemasons and consequently called "Mussulman Freemasons." An American diplomat (consul general at Istanbul from 1854 to 1859), Brown was made a mason in the United States in 1850. And being a diplomat in Turkey, he was elected master of two British lodges (Oriental and Bulwer lodges) and became the grand master of the District Grand Lodge of Turkey from 1868 until his death in 1872.[19]

Andreas Önnerfors, ed., *Mystiskt brödraskap – mäktigt nätverk. Studier i det svenska 1700-talsfrimureriet* (Lunds : Lunds Universitet, 2006), p. 182. I would like to thank A. Önnerfors for having helped me to find the name of d'Ohsson in this list and for showing me a copy of the original of this document.

[18] 1868; reprint, London: F. Cass, 1968 (496 pp.).

[19] On him see Th. Zarcone, *Mystiques, Philosophes et Francs-maçons en Islam* (Paris: Jean Maisonneuve, 1993), pp. 224-225 ; id., "Şeyh Mehmed Ataullah Dede (1842-1910) and the mevlevîhâne of Galata: an Intellectual and Spiritual Bridge between the East and the West." In Ekrem Işın, ed. *The Dervishes of Sovereignty - the Sovereignty of Dervishes. The Mevlevî Order in Istanbul*. Istanbul: Istanbul Araştırma Enstitüsü, 2007, pp. 64-65.

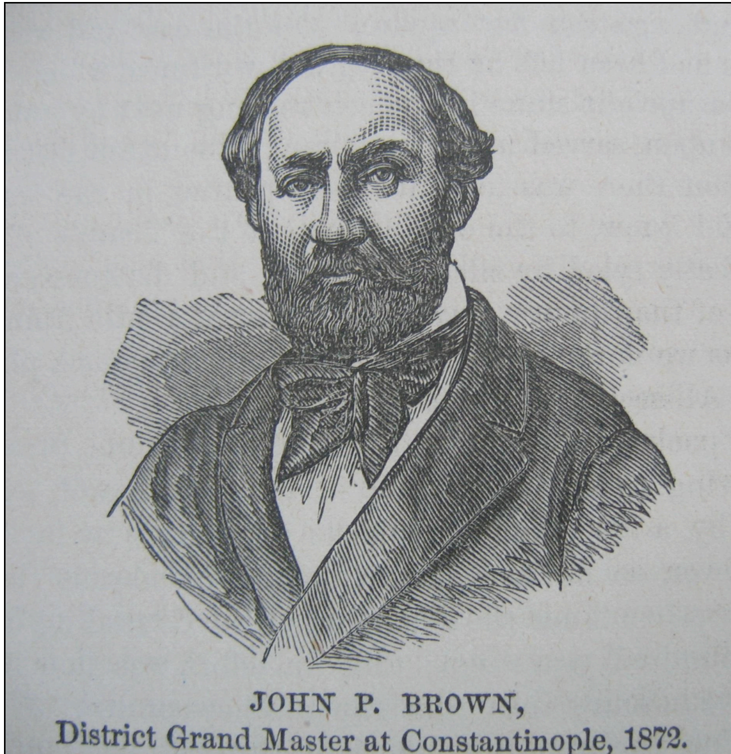

Figure 4

In his aforementioned book, Brown wrote

> "The title by which, it is said, Mussulman Freemasons are known is Malâmîyun (…) The Darvishes of the Baqtâshî order consider themselves quite the same as the freemasons, and are disposed to fraternise with them".[20]

Actually, here Brown speaks on behalf of the dervishes who claim to act similarly to the masons. And, as a freemason himself, he later analyses this claim in his book:

[20] *The Darvishes or Oriental Spiritualism*, p. 64.

> "Hamzâwîs, by which name the Malâmîyuns are now known in Constantinople. Like the order of the Baqtâshîs, that of the Hamzâwîs is almost under prohibition at Constantinople, though from widely different causes. The latter, it is said, hold their meetings in secret, in houses in nowise resembling *takias* [Sufi lodge], and for this reason it is thought by some persons that they are Mussulman Freemasons…"[21]

We know that both the Hanzâvîs or Melâmî, as well as the Bektashis, advocate secrecy and hold closed meetings; this is one of the reasons why they were associated to the Freemasons. Moreover, the Bektashis have a ceremonial which strangely resembles that of the masons (see the next section below).[22]

An explorer and a scholar who specialised in India and Arabia, Sir Richard Burton (1821-1890), published many books on the subject and served as a diplomat in several countries. He was initiated into Freemasonry at Karachi which was then in India (Hope Lodge). A free thinker open to all religions, he converted to the Qâdirî Sufi lineage in Sindh and in 1853 performed the *hajj* or pilgrimage to Mecca. Although he was authorised as a Muslim to perform the pilgrimage, Burton preferred for many reasons, mostly political, to travel in the disguise of a dervish. For he said that

> "No character in the Moslem world is so proper for disguise as that of the Darwaysh. It is assumed by all ranks, ages, and creeds; by the nobleman who has been

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[21] Id., p. 229.

[22] On the Hamzavî and Melâmî movement in 19th and 20th century, see Hamid Algar, "The Hamzeviye: a Deviant Movement in Bosnian Sufism," *Islamic Studies* 36:2-3 (1997): pp. 243-261; Th. Zarcone, "Mehmet Alî Aynî et les cercles *melâmî* d'Istanbul au début du XXe siècle, » in Nathalie Clayer ; Alexandre Popovic ; and Th. Zarcone, eds., *Melamî et Bayramî. Etudes sur trois mouvements mystiques musulmans* (Istanbul, Isis Press, 1998), pp. 227-248.

> disgraced at court, and by the peasant who is too idle to till the ground…"[23]

The dervish was, in his eyes, a Muslim of total subjective license, bound by no orthodoxies or regulations, and often criticized for this behaviour. In a sense, this religious liberty brought the dervish closer to the mason. Burton made two references to the Freemasonry in his travelogue and claims that the dervishes are an Eastern equivalent of the former and a kind of "Oriental Freemasonry": "Is the Darwaysh anything but an Oriental Freemason, and are Freemasons less Christians because they pray with Moslems and profess their belief in simple Unitarianism?"[24] Elsewhere in his travelogue, he described how he was made a Sufi: "A reverend man, whose name I do not care to quote, some time ago initiated me into his order, the Kadiriyah, under the high-sounding name of Bismillah-Shah: and, after a due period of probation, he graciously elevated me to the proud position of a Murshid, or Master in the mystic craft. I was therefore sufficiently well acquainted with the tenets and practices of these Oriental Freemasons."[25] Surprisingly, the Sufi term *murshîd* (literally 'the man who guides to the right road', i.e. a spiritual guide) is translated by the amazing expression 'Master in the mystic craft', although there is no craft background or symbolism in Sufism. This expression here is an equivalent to the 'Oriental Freemasons' (Figure 5).

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[23] Richard F. Burton, *Personal Narrative of a Pilgrimage to al-Madinah and Meccah*, [1855-56] (Reprinted, New York: Dover Publications), vol. 1, p. 14.

[24] Id., vol. 1, p. xxiii.

[25] Id., vol. 1, p. 14.

Figure 5

Another interesting man, who compared the Sufi lineages with Freemasonry at the beginning of the twentieth century, was the German, Rudolf von Sebottendorf.[26] An esotericist and an alchemist, Sebottendorf arrived in Turkey in search of spiritual and magical secrets; he became convinced that some Gnostic

[26] On Sebottendorf in Turkey, see Nicolas Goodrick-Clarke, *The Occult Roots of Nazism. The Ariosophist of Austria and Germany, 1890-1935* (Wellingborough, Northamptonshire: Aquarius Press, 1985); Th. Zarcone, "Rudolf von Sebottendorf et le mythe de l''ancienne franc-maçonnerie turque', un exemple de croisement entre l'ésotérisme occidental et la mystique musulmane," *Renaissance traditionnelle* (Paris) 143-144 (2005): pp. 296-306.

and Sufi teachings were secretly cultivated by the Bektashis, whom he refers to as 'Oriental Freemasons' (*orientalische Freimaurerei*). In his opinion these masons were "still respectful of the ancient philosophies, modern Freemasonry has forgotten."[27] Sebottendorf also coined the expression 'the old Turkish Freemasonry' (*der alten türkischen Freimaurerei*), meaning that this Freemasonry had ascetic practices, contrary to modern Freemasonry which is purely intellectual.

The reason for which Freemasonry and Sufi fraternities were equated appears clearly in Brown and Burton's writings. D'Ohsson intimated only the identification. Few Muslims belonged to the craft in eighteenth century and it was only by the middle of the nineteenth century that many became masons, especially in Istanbul. Up until this time, freemasonry remained quite mysterious for Muslims, as is perfectly illustrated by a story told by a British traveller, Captain James Abbot, who travelled to Central Asia in December 1839. Once in Kara Tuppah, in the north of Afghanistan, he was told by a Turkoman ruler, Peer Muhammad Khaun, that he had heard of a house in England that opened once a year for the reception of letters, and those who were fortunate to gain admittance were bound by the most solemn oaths not to reveal anything which they should see or hear. He stated that the knowledge revealed to them in a single hour, surpassed the combined knowledge and experience that would normally be acquired by fifty sages in the course of a long life." Whereupon Abbot noticed that "this is evidently Freemason's Hall". From the above, it would appear that Freemasonry was perceived as an elite society,

[27] Rudolf Freiherr von Sebottendorf, *Die Praxis der alten türkischen Freimaurerei. Der Schlüssel zum Verständnis der Alchimie. Eine Darstellung des Rituel, der Lehre, der Erkennungszeichen orientalischer Freimaurer* (Leipzig: Theosophisches Verlagshaus, 1924); Rudolf von Sebottendorf, *Der Talisman des Rosenkreuzers* (Pfullingen in Württemberg: Johannes Baum Verlag, 1925), p. 75.

which emphasized both secrets and oaths, and also delivered a magical wisdom to its members.[28]

Burton, as a Freemason, testified that he felt at home when living among the dervishes during his pilgrimage to Mecca, and that he found in Sufism a similar freedom towards Islam that he had found with Masonry in respect of the various Christian churches. More precisely, Brown points to two orders, the Hamzâvîs / Melâmî and the Bektashis, which presented themselves as "Mussulman Freemasons." This is well documented in many Ottoman sources at the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth centuries, and it is therefore not surprising to discover that several Bektashis were initiated into Freemasonry.[29]

Freemasonry viewed as a Sufi fraternity (*tarikat*) in the East

While Europeans regarded the Sufi and dervish fraternities as an Eastern equivalent of Freemasonry, the Muslims, at the same time, classified the craft as a *tarikat*; i.e. a Sufi brotherhood. For a clear comprehension of this question, we have to focus on two specific points: first, the interpretation of Freemasonry as a *tarikat* in general by Ottoman Freemasons initiated in European masonic bodies based in Turkey and by their opponents; second, the relationship between Freemasonry and Bektashism, the very *tarikat* which has incarnated an Oriental masonry (*Shark masonlugu*) *par excellence*.

In 1925, a Danish spiritualist interested in Sufism met a famous Naqshbandî shaykh, Mehmed Esat, in Istanbul, only a few months before the Sufi brotherhoods were prohibited in

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[28] Capt James Abbot, *Narrative of a Journey from Heraut to Khiva, Moscow and St Petersburg, during the late Russian invasion of Khiva* (London: 1843), vol. 1, p. 12.

[29] See Th. Zarcone, *Mystiques, Philosophes et Francs-maçons en Islam*, pp. 301-326.

Turkey. This shaykh, although he represented a quite orthodox Sufi order, asked the dervish if he knew anything about the Freemasons in Europe, because he had heard that they had a sort of *tarikat*, a way of initiation …" This remark by a Sufi shaykh shows how the identification of the *tarikat* with freemasonry was strong.[30] Unfortunately we don't know which Turkish term Mehmed Esat employed for "way of initiation." A similar situation occurred in Iran when the by-laws of the Grand Orient de France were translated into Persian by the Tehran lodge, "Réveil de l'Iran," in 1908, as we know that Freemasonry was also considered as a *tarikat* in Iran.[31] Indeed, the word was widespread in the Masonic circles, especially in the official Masonic documents. For example, in the "General Regulation" of the lodges of the Grand Orient of Turkey, as well as among its opponents, the word was used in such a way that it became an accepted synonym for Freemasonry.[32] And after the masonic rituals were translated in Turkish, the term "rite" as in the "Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite", was replaced by "*tarikat*" (*İskoçya Tarikat-i Kadime ve Makbule*). From this we must understand that, in the minds of Muslim Masons, the "rite" was equivalent to the "*tarikat*", the Sufi / Mystic Path: therefore the "Ancient and Accepted Scottish

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[30] Carl Vett, *Seltsame Erlebnisse in einem Derwischkloster*, (Strassburg: Heitz et Cs., 1931); *Dervish Diary*, translated in English by Elbridge W. Hathaway (Los Angeles: Knud K. Mogensen, 1953), p. 101.

[31] "Qânûn-i asâsî Granduriyân," in I. Râ'în, *Farâmûshkhâna wa Frâmâsûnrî dar Irân* (House of the Oblivion and Freemasonry in Iran) (Tehran: Amîr Kabîr, 1968), vol. 2, pp. 495-635.

[32] *Türkiye Maş[rik] A[zam]n'in Alelûmum meha[fil]. Hakkında Cari Nizamname-yi umumiyesi* (Current General Regulation of the whole of the lodges of the Grand Orient of Turkey), 2nd ed., (Dersaadet [Istanbul - Galata]: Murkides Matbaası, 1920-21).

Rite" must be translated as "Ancient and Accepted Scottish Sufi Path."[33]

Freemasonry and Bektashism were associated in a quite surprising way at the Ali Koch Lodge at Belgrade in the middle of the nineteenth century. Unfortunately, information on this lodge is scanty and several points remain obscure for me. Some writers in nineteenth century were convinced that this lodge was actually a Bektashî convent.[34] However, there are some documents which show that members of this lodge regularly exchanged letters and also visited other lodges of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, especially one in Leipzig.[35] Whether the Ali Koch Lodge was a Bektashi convent or a genuine Masonic lodge is not easy to discern.[36] However, the lodge was composed of both Christian and Muslim members, among whom there were also several Bektashî (or alevî). We also know that in 1847 the worshipful master of the lodge, Ismail Mehmed Sa'îd, a Turk, wrote a letter to his German friend, brother Gretschel, who was also the worshipful master of Lodge Baldwin at Leipzig, in which he expressed his belief that "your and our fraternity are one and the same, and that all

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[33] From a Certificate of Rosicrucian delivered to the brother Bedri Ziya by the Chapter La Concorde of Constantinople, on January 19th 1923, Supreme Council for Turkey and its dependencies (Archives of the Grand Lodge of Turkey, document 201.02/1323); see also Haydar Rifat, *Farmasonluk* (Istanbul: Tefeyyüz Kitaphanesi, 1934), pp. 225-226, 233)

[34] "Freemasonry in Turkey," *Freemasons' Monthly Magazine* 16:3 (January 1857): pp. 89-61.

[35] Zoran D. Nenezić, *Masoni u Jugoslaviji 1764-1980. Pregled istorije slobodnog zidarstva u Jugoslaviji. Prilozi i građa* (Belgrad: Zodne 1984), pp. 171-186.

[36] Bektashî convents at Belgrade in 19th century got different names and there wasn't any Ali Koç Tekke; see Džemal Ćehajić, *Derviški Redovi u jugoslovenskim Zemljama* (Dervishes Orders in Yugoslavian Territory) (Sarajevo: Orientalni Institut u Sarajevu, 1986), pp. 169-170.

Freemasons (Bektaschias) in the world are related…"[37] That meant that, in his view, the two organisations were almost the same. Gretschel, who had offered Ismail Mehmed Sa'îd the jewel of the Baldwin Lodge, was then offered in return the jewel of the Ali Koch lodge. This jewel is a "white marble stone with blood-red sports, which are there to remind the wearer of the founder of Masonry in Turkey, Ali, who suffered the punishment of death for the introduction; it is worn by a white cord round the neck, together with as also a small brown collar with figures on it". According to another visitor this stone has the shape of a dodecagon.[38] The jewel is also mentioned in a police report about the lodge.[39]Actually, this dodecagon, called *teslim tash* – the stone of surrender – is one of the major symbols of the Bektashîs (Figure 6, 7, 8).[40]

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[37] "Freemasonry in Turkey, Persia, and Japan. 2" *The Freemasons' Quaterly Review*, Second Series (30 September 1849): pp. 249-251.

[38] More details is given in *Cassell's Illustrated Family Papers*, 9 July 1855: "The Turkish freemasons wear, as a distinctive mark, a small brown shawl, ornamented with different figures, and a dode-cahedron of white marble, about two inches in diameter, highly polished and having red spots, which signify spots of blood, and are a remembrance of Ali, who introduced freemasonry into Turkey, and was punished with death for so doing."

[39] Zoran D. Nenezić, *Masoni u Jugoslaviji 1764-1980*, p. 173.

[40] On this stone see: John Kingsley Birge, *The Bektashi Order of Dervishes* (1937; reprinted, London: Luzac, 1965), pp. 232-233. Some of these sacred objects are found in the Museum of Freemasonry linked to the Masonic lodge of Bayreuth; it is a sign of the close links existing between some German masons and the Bektashis, or at least it reveals the deep interest of the masons for the Bektashis; see Klaus Kreiser, "Bektâşî-Miszellen," *Turcica* XXI-XXIII (1991): pp. 120-122, 130.

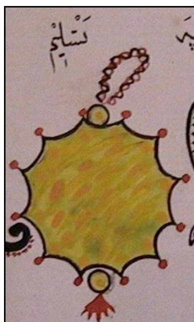
Figure 6

Figure 7

Figure 8

Ali, the Shi'i Imam and son-in-law of the Prophet, is very venerated by the Bektashis and is obviously not the introducer of Freemasonry among the Turks.

From the same letter, we learn that a regular German visitor to the Ali Koch lodge was considered, eight years after his first coming to this assembly,

> "worthy of being received into Our Order. We have during the last two months already considered him a member, and it requires only the ceremony to be enabled to designate him a brother".

We may deduce from this that the Masonic and Bektashî traditions were associated in quite an amazing way in this lodge. However, the meetings of the Ali Koch Lodge are neither Masonic nor Bektashî, though its frameworks sound Masonic. Besides, a Bektashî convent in general and contrary to the other Sufi assemblies, is closed to non Bektashi; but the Ali Koch Lodge was open to Freemasons… Here is the first contradistinction. The second is that although the freemasons were received by the lodge on behalf of the fraternity, they needed to go through another ceremony in order to become "full brothers". More precisely, the members of the Ali Koch Lodge endeavoured to develop a kind of protocol or agreement which permitted the Masons and the Bektashis to hold common meetings and to become full members in their respective orders. For at the same time, in 1856, a foreign Mason then living in Istanbul, visited the shaykh of the famous Bektashî convent of Rumeli Hisarı. "On learning that I was a Freemason, he said, he [the shaykh of this convent] seemed disposed to fraternize with me, and remarked that I was like those of the convent or "Tekkieh" of Ali Kotch of Belgrade."[41]

Thanks to John P. Brown, we learn more about this Ali Koch lodge in 1863. Brown who was intrigued by what he read about this lodge in the Masonic magazines, asked a foreign resident at Belgrade to ascertain the correctness of this assertion. The resident told him that instead of a lodge the Ali Koch society was a Bektashi Tekke. Few time later, approximately around 1860, Brown met the shaykh of the Ali

[41] "Freemasonry in Turkey." *The Ashlar*. 2:4 (December 1856): pp. 156-159 ; "Freemasonry in Turkey." *Freemasons' Monthly Magazine*. 16:3 (January 1857): pp. 89-61.

Koch lodge, Ismail Mehmed Sa'îd, who visited Istanbul and, after talking with him, he wrote the following:

> "I had an interesting conversation with him, and ascertained that the information received from Belgrade, regarding the Order of the Tekkeh, and his own name, was entirely correct. he had, some years previously, visited Vienna and Berlin, and, at one of these cities, been initiated as an Apprentice Mason; in evidence of which he showed me his diploma, and gave me the G. and S. of that degree. He evinced a strong desire to fraternise with me as a mason, and thought there were many points of resemblance between Freemasonry and the Order of bektash; but when I asked him whether I could become a member of his Order, and how, he replied that I must be a believer in Hazretti Aali (the 4th direct Caliph), or, in other words, become a Mussulman of the Sheea, or, as called here, the "heterodox" rite."[42]

This report by Brown confirms that a Freemason, although considered very close to the Bektashism and accepted to enter a Tekke, a place usually closed to non members, must however become a Shi'i Muslim if he wants to go deeper in the order. This should be the explanation of the complementary ceremony through which the Masons visiting a Bektashi Tekke should undergo to become full members, i.e. Bektachis. The tolerance has found its limits…

Another astonishing encounter between Freemasonry and Bektashism occurred at the end of the Ottoman Empire when a new secret society, the Virtuous Order (Tarikat-i Salahiye), was established in Istanbul in 1920. This para-masonic movement, composed of prominent Turkish freemasons and Bektashi shaykhs, reveals a deep blurring and borrowing

[42] John P. Brown, "The Mystical principles of Islamism; or, a Lecture on the dervishes" *Freemasons Magazine and Masonic Mirror* 218 (August 29, 1863): pp. 173-174.

between French Masonry and Bektashism. Its chiefs were divided into three classes: the "Three", the "Seven" and the "Forty," all numbers inspired from Bektashi theology. The order met in places named *zaviye, dergah,* or *asitane* (all synonyms for the dervish lodge, according to their importance). The Turkish names for the officers were copied from the names of officers in lodges of the French Grand Orient (different from those in an English lodge). But we find the Turkish word *mürşit*, a synonym of shaykh or "spiritual master, guide," for the Worshipful Master. The members of the Virtuous Order used grips and passwords like the Freemasons, and similar to Masonry and Bektashism, the secret, called "secret of the *tarikat*" (*sırr-ı tarikat*), was strictly preserved. Before the end of the meeting, *avrâd* (litanies) are read and *dhikr* (invocation, recollection) is practised, as in a Sufi assembly. The reception in the Virtuous Order is an imitation of various ceremonial acts from masonic ritual with many Muslim and Sufi elements. There is no need here to dilate on the workings of the ceremony or its deeper meanings, it will simply suffice to draw attention to the fact that the members of this fraternity presented themselves as a "Muslim and political Freemasonry" (*siyasi bir Islam farmasonluğu*) and thus pretended to be "genuine freemasons."[43]

To conclude, an important difference between the Ali Koch Lodge and the Tarikat-i Salahiye, is that masonic and *tarikat* frameworks are harmonized and coordinated in the former, but deeply mingled in the latter.

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[43] For more details on this society: Th. Zarcone, *Secret et Sociétés secrètes en Islam* (Paris: Archè, 2002), pp. 131-155; Hülya Küçük, *The Role of the Bektâshîs in Turkey's National Struggle* (Leiden: Brill, 2002), pp. 195-212; Th. Zarcone, "Gnostic/Sufi symbols and ideas in Turkish and Persian Freemasonry and Para-masonic organisations," in Robert Gilbert, ed., *Knowledge of the Heart: Gnostic Movements and Secret Traditions* (London: Canonbury Masonic Research Centre / The Canonbury Papers, volume 5, 2008).

The debate on the term *tarikat* ("brotherhood") and on the identity of Freemasonry in Turkey in the middle of the twentieth century

The idea that Freemasonry and Bektashism are very close was still being claimed in the first decades of the Turkish Republic founded in 1923, and it has continued to be advocated even after 1925 when the Sufi fraternities were abolished. In 1931, the newspaper *Yeni Gün* published a series on Bektashism with an article entitled, "Bektashism resembles Masonry" (*Bektaşilik Masonluğa Benzer*) (Figure 9)[44].

8 Şubat 1931 — Yeni Gün

BEKTAŞİLİK

Muharriri: ... Ziya

— Her Hakkı Mahfuzdur — Tefrika Numarası: 14

Bektaşilik Masonluğa Benzer

Bir Seyit ve çocukları

Baş tara fının hulâsası

Bir Türk sofuluğu tesis eden Ahmet Yesevî muhtelif mıntakalara halifelerini gönderiyor. Bu meyanda Hacı Bektaşi Velî de Anadolu'ya gelerek Kırşehir civarında şimdi Hacı Bektaş denilen kasabada yerleşiyor. Az zamanda etrafında müritler kalabalıklaşıyor. Yeniçeri unvanını vazeden Hacı Bektaş'tır. Yeniçeriler, daima pirlerini yadetmişlerdir.

Bu suretle Bektaşiliğin merkezi halini alan Hacı Bektaş kasabasında Pir evi denilen en büyük dergâh da bu-

mensup olabilmek için (Mücerret) lik ikrarı vermek lâzımdı. Bu sınıfı tesis eden zat, (Pri sani, Balım sultan) idi. Buna binaen Mücerret babalar sınıfına dahil olmak için, hiç teehhül etmemiş olan bir baba, Balım sultanın kapısının eşiği üzerine yatırılır ve merasimi mahsusa ile kulağı delinerek altın veya gümüşten bir halka takılırdı. Pir evinde bulunan babaların kâffesi bu sınıfa mensuptu. Ayni zamanda bu sınıfın bir de kadın kısmı vardı.

Bazı bektaşi aileleri muhtelif sebeplerle kızlarını dergâha nezrederlerdi.

Bu suretle nezredilen kızlar ve yahut, başka bir sebeple hayatını dergâhın hizmetine vakfeden kadınlar, (Mücerret) lik ikrarı verirlerse (Bacı Sultan) tesmiye olunarak ebediyen tekkede kalırlar.

Bütün âyin ve merasimlerde bulunarak fevkalâde hürmete mazhar olurlardı.

Babalıktan sonra gelen dereceler, sırasile şunlardı:

(Derviş), (Muhip), (Talip), (Âşık)...

Bektaşi rumuzları, işaretleri

Bu teşkilât, bir taraftan, (Batınî - İsmailî), diğer taraftan da (Mason) teşkilâtının tarzına çok benzer.

Dünyanın neresinde olursa olsun, bir bektaşi diğerini derhal tanır. Bektaşilerin rumuzları ve işaretleri de az çok (Mason) lara müşabihtir. Bir

Figure 9

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[44] *Yeni Gün*, 8 February 1931.

Then in 1934 a book published by a Turkish Freemason included a chapter on Masonry and Bektashism, which highlighted the common aspects of these two respective organisations. In this work, the writer pointed out that both orders had secrets as well as many enemies, both referred to their members as 'brothers', and both recognised each other by using secret tokens and signs, etc...[45] It is therefore not entirely surprising that Bernard E. Jones' description of the Masonic ritual: "a ritual of words combined with a particular order of ceremonial acts"[46], also aptly describes Bektashism. And in 1940, there is another series on Bektashism published in the newspaper *Ikdam*, in which the fraternity was referred to as an "Oriental Freemasonry" (*Şark masonluğu*).[47]

But the co-identification of Freemasonry and Sufi fraternities has its limits. Clearly, the exaggerated use of the word *tarikat* has led many Muslims to wonder about the precise meaning and content of this term, particularly after being better informed about Freemasonry (regular and irregular bodies). In fact, the Ottomans considered all kinds of societies with rituals, hierarchies, and ceremonies as *tarikat*, even if they derive from a non-Muslim culture. In the beginning, the Masonic lodges were regarded as religious or at least respectful of some aspects of religion and spirituality, and masons considered crusaders (though they were also reputed to be atheist and irreligious persons).[48] After French Freemasonry changed its behaviour at the end of the nineteenth century, opened the doors of its temples to atheists and launched a fight

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[45] H. Rifat, *Farmasonluk*, pp. 244-257. On Bektashis see J.K. Birge, *The Bektashi Order of Dervishes*.

[46] Bernard E. Jones, *Freemasons' Guide and Compendium* (London: G.G. Harrap, 1963), p. 257.

[47] Rahmi Yagız, "Bektaşiliğin İçyüzü Dede Baba," *Ikdam*, March 1940.

[48] Neverthess, some Muslim writers didn't ignore that there was a major difference between Anglo-Saxon Masonry and the French and Italian Masonic bodies regarding the belief in God.

against the Church, Freemasonry was reputed to be an irreligious society more sharply than in the past, although it was always considered to be a *tarikat* by religious people. The explanation for this lies in the fact that the order continues to be a fraternity regardless of its ideology. However, in order to avoid any confusion between these two *tarikat*, especially between Sufi *tarikat*, particularly the more orthodox ones, some religious writers have pointed to the fact that Masonry was openly atheist or religiously deviant. Consequently, the term *tarikat* ceased to refer exclusively to a "Sufi brotherhood," and qualified henceforth as a "brotherhood" only.

Between 1949 and 1951, the debate concerning the identity of Freemasonry became heated. In 1948, The Grand Orient of Turkey, which had been prohibited by the Republican government of 1935, was authorized to re-open its lodges, while Sufi fraternities were still officially banned since 1925. It should also be noted that, after 1925, the Grand Orient of Turkey rejected the term "*tarikat*" which it had previously used to define itself in its own Regulation.[49] And in order to fit in with the new law on association and to escape the ban on the *tarikat*, the Grand Orient changed its juridical statute and the order was registered in 1926 as an association (*cemiyet*); an "Association for helping the orphans" (Yetimlere Yardim Cemiyeti), with its title changing three times in the following years: "Association for the development of the ideas" (Tekâmül-ü Fikrî Cemiyeti), in 1927, "Türk Yükseltme Cemiyeti" (Association for the elevation of the Turks) in 1929, to which was added the expression "Grand Orient of Turkey"

[49] *Türkiye Maş[rik] A[zam]n'in Alelûmum meha[fil] hakkında Cari Nizamname-yi umumiyesi*.

(Türkiye Büyük Maşrıkı) in 1932.[50] In spite of these changes, the new association was closed in 1935. It re-opened ten years later as an association (*cemiyet*, then *dernek*), but was strongly criticized by the religiously minded, who interpreted this decision as the masons manipulating politics. Hence, Sufis and sympathisers of Sufism complained, drawing a new parallel between them and the masons, and they asked the government why only the "monasteries" of the Freemasons' were permitted (here the Turkish words *tekke*, *dergah*, i.e. Sufi lodge / monastery, are used for masonic lodge) and why the law of prohibition of the *tarikat* only applied to the Sufi orders. Consequently, several books and articles in the radical journal, *Sebilürreşad,* outlined distinctive differences between the two *tarikat* and fiercely criticised Freemasonry.[51]

During this debate, a more precise definition of Freemasonry as a *tarikat* did emerge. Especially the Tarikat-i Masuniye" (Tarikat of the Masons), as it was sometimes depicted, was clearly distinguished from the genuine *tarikat*, i.e. the Sufi brotherhoods. Other terms were coined to qualify Freemasonry as a case a part among the *tarikat*: "Ateist Tarikat," "Esrarlı Tarikatı" (Secret Tarikat) or "Hiram Usta Tarikatı" (the Tarikat of Master Hiram).[52] However, all these definitions remain vague. Yet, it is possible to understand why,

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[50] Kemalettin Apak, *Türkiye'de Masonluk Tarihi* (Istanbul: Türkiye Mason Derneği, 1958), pp. 153-154; Orhan Koloğlu, *Cumhuriyet Döneminde Masonlar* (Istanbul: Eylül Y., 2003), p. 45.

[51] On the campaigns against Freemasonry in these years, see: Jacob M. Landau, "Muslim Opposition to Freemasonry," *Die Welt des Islams* 36:2 (July 1996): p. 193; O. Koloğlu, *Cumhuriyet Döneminde Masonlar*, pp. 113-129; Th. Zarcone, "La Nation turque face à l'internationnalisme maçonnique au XXe siècle," in J. Boulad-Ayoub, and G.M. Cazzaniga, ed., *Traces de l'Autre. Mythes de l'Antiquité et Peuples du Livre dans la construction des nations méditerranéennes* (Paris-Pise: Jean Vrin, 2004), pp. 197-202.

[52] M. Raif Ogan, *Türkiye'deki Masonluk. İç Yüzü ve Sırları* (Istanbul: Ergin Kitab Evi, 1950), pp. 17, 31.

in the eyes of opponents mostly of a religious persuasion, Freemasonry cannot be merely an association, but must be classified with the *tarikat*: the reason is because Freemasonry is religious, it has temples (*mabed*), ceremonies (*ayin*), masters (*ustat*) and disciples (*mürid*). In a word, Freemasonry is considered *sacred*.

The peculiarity of Freemasonry is displayed in another definition, quite accurate, which gives Freemasonry a clear place among the *tarikat* while pointing to its ideological link with Bektashism: Freemasonry is a "*batinî tarikat*," and is also marked by a strong Jewish symbolism. Batiniye is a well known trend in Muslim heresiography.[53] According to the definition given by one of these opponents, it is a deviant Muslim movement which advocates that every thing has an inner side (*batın*) and that there is a science of the interpretation (*tevil*) of the hidden meaning of the verses of the Quran.[54]

> "According to the Masons, their society is not opposed to religion and presents itself as a protector of morality (*ahlak*), virtue (*fazilet*), and fraternity (*kardeşlik*). At first glance, we don't see any threat against religion, but nevertheless it is impossible to consider Masonry being

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[53] See M.G.S. Hodgson, "Bâtiniyya" *Encyclopaedia of Islam* (Leiden: Brill, 1975).

[54] "Batıniyye: her zâhırin bir bâtını (içyüzü) ve her münzel ayetin bir tevili bulunduğuna hükmeden sapık bir fırkadır"; Raif Oğan, "Türkiye'de Geriliğin, Batıl Tarikatçilik'in Müdafaası Ahmet Eminemi Kaldı?" () *Sebilürreşad* 2:28 (1949): p. 56. The fact that a short study on Bektashism and Bâtıniye was written by a Turkish mason in the years 1950-1560 and published by one lodge at Istanbul, shows that some masons were interested in these Mystical trends; Veli Behçet Kurdoğlu, *Bektaşîlik ve Bâtınîlik* (Istanbul: Nebioğlu Matbaası - Türkiye Mason Derneği - Hürriyet Kolu Neşriyatından, n.d.)

> close to the religion due to its wrong Batinî beliefs and ceremonies and because of its secretive character."[55]

The same writer quotes the minister, Şemseddin Günaltay (1883-1961), a Muslim moderate, who wrote in one of his books that "there are many elements in Western Freemasonry which resemble the Eastern Batınî movement."[56] Hence, both fraternities are regarded as heretic trends.[57]

It is not surprising that the Order of the Grape and Freemasonry were regarded almost immediately as an equivalent of the Sufi brotherhoods (*tarikat*). The same phenomenon occurred not only in Turkey, but also in Egypt and in Iran, though not as much as in Turkey.[58] This first encounter was in fact the discovering by the Turks of a fraternity working a ritual. It should have been the same with a Chinese triad. At the same time, the first Europeans who met dervishes made similar observations. But in the course of time,

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[55] Raif Ogan, "Mason Tarıkatının Türkiye'de Cemiyet Kurması Türk Kanunlarına Aykırıdır" *Sebilürreşad* 2:30 (1949): pp. 75-76; M.R. Ogan, *Türkiye'deki Masonluk. İç Yüzü ve Sırları*, p. 5.

[56] Raif Ogan, "Masonluğun İç Yüzü," *Sebilürreşad* 3:60 (1949): p. 147.

[57] These informations come from the following articles published in the Islamist journal *Sebilürreşad*: R. Ogan, "Masonların Gizli Kitablarına Göre Masonluğun Bazı Sırları," *Sebilürreşad* 2:32 (1949): pp. 107-109; Cevat Rifat, "Açılan Mason Tekkeleri. Velveleli Âyinlerle işe Başliyan bir tarikat," *Sebilürreşad* 3:33 (1950): pp. 122-125; R. Ogan, "Masonluk Hakkında Takrır," *Sebilürreşad* 2:37 (1950): p. 184; Eşref Edib, "Masonluk İçinden Çıkılmaz bir Bataklıktır" *Sebilürreşad* 2:37 (1950): pp. 189-192; R. Ogan, "Masonluk Tarikatı ve Ahmet Emin Yalman," *Sebilürreşad* 2:38 (1950): p. 199; R. Ogan, "Tarikalar İlga olundu fakat Mason Tekyeleri İşliyor," *Sebilürreşad* 4:80 (1950): pp. 78-80.

[58] On Sufism and Freemasonry in Iran see: Matthijs van Den Bos, *Mystic Regimes. Sufism and the State in Iran, from the Late Qajar Era to the Islamic Republic* (Leiden: Brill, 2002), pp. 97-109; id., "Notes on Freemasonry and Sufism in Iran, 1900-1997," *Journal of the History of Sufism* (Paris) 4 (2003-2004): pp. 241-253; Th. Zarcone, *Secret et Sociétés secrètes en Islam*, pp. 94-99, 114-131, 155-162.

as it has been demonstrated in this conference, the reasons for such a connection were investigated par the people concerned, the Freemasons, the Sufis, and their opponents. Meanwhile, in the nineteenth century, Masonry experienced new developments – especially in the French Grand Orient – and rejected some of its traditional tenets, becoming either deist or atheist or half-and-half, and therefore it was not easily definable for the non-initiates. Nevertheless, the sympathy shown by the Bektashi order towards Freemasonry, whether Deist or not, gradually grew and led to at least two astonishing encounters between the fraternities and their respective ceremonials. To conclude, the definition of Freemasonry as a Bâtinî movement by the religious, both radical and moderate, was a response to the masons who claimed they believed in God. In sum, like the Bektashis in Islam, they were also classified among the heretics of Christianity. However mention should also be made of the Bâtinî movement which is considered as an esoteric movement in Islam, one that shares with Freemasonry the heritage of Hermes or Idris for the Muslims.[59]

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[59] David Stevenson, *The Origin of Freemasonry. Scotland's Century 1590-1710* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), section on Hermetism and the cult of Egypt, pp. 82-87; Francis E. Peters, "Hermes and Harran: the Roots of Arabic-Islamic Occultism," in Emilie Savage-Smith, *Magic and Divination in Early Islam* (London: Ashgate Variorum, 2004), p. 60, 72.

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FIGURES

Figure 1. The coat of arm of the Order of the Grape (Chevalier Apicius a Vindemiis, *Etudes et recherches scientifiques et archéologiques sur le culte de Bacchus en Provence au XVIIIe siècle*. Toulon: Imprimerie d'E. Aurel, 1860).
Figure 2. Title page of Ignatius Muradgea d'Ohsson, *Oriental Antiquities, and General View of the Othoman Customs, Laws, and Ceremonies: Exhibiting Many Curious Pieces of the Eastem Hemisphere, relative to the*

Christian and Jewish Dispensations; with various Rites and Mysteries of the Oriental Freemasons (Philadelphia: Grand Lodge of Enquiry, 1788).
Figure 3. Masonic plate, opposite of the title page of Ignatius Muradgea d'Ohsson, *Oriental Antiquities.*
Figure 4. John P. Brown in 1872 (in Robert Morris, *Freemasonry in the Holy Land or, Handmarks of Hiram's Builders* (New York: Masonic Publishing Company, 1875).
Figure 5. Richard Burton as Mirza Abdullah (Richard F. Burton, *Personal Narrative of a Pilgrimage to al-Madinah and Meccah*, [1855-56], vol. 1.
Figure 6. Drawing of a *teslim tash* / stone of surrender (in the centre).
Figure 7. *Teslim tash* (end of nineteenth century, Private Collection Th. Zarcone)
Figure 8. A Bektashi shaykh, Nuri Baba, from Istanbul (postcard beginning of twentieth-century).
Figure 9. Article entitled "Bektashism resembles Masonry" (*Bektaşilik Masonluğa Benzer*) in the newspaper *Yeni Gün*, Istanbul, 8 February 1931.

Early Freemasonry in Late Ottoman Syria from the 19th Century onwards – The First Masonic Lodges in the Beirut Area

Dorothe Sommer

This paper will concentrate on the first Masonic lodges founded in Beirut and in general in Greater Syria.[1] It is my intention to outline how these lodges attracted intelligent and reform-minded men, who used Freemasonry in order to keep society at peace. Thus, I will argue in this paper that it was not the European Grand bodies that spread freemasonry in the Ottoman Empire; rather, it was Lebanese masons who pragmatically exploited a European concept and used competition between the European powers for their own aims.[2]

As has been illustrated by many other researchers, freemasonry in general and especially in a colonial context was useful for natives and foreigners alike.[3] However, the manner

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[1] The following paper is based on a lecture given at the Centre for Research into Freemasonry and Fraternalism in Sheffield on October 16th 2008.

[2] In her latest book on freemasonry *Builders of Empire: Freemasonry and British Imperialism*, 1717-1927, (University of North Carolina Press: 2007), Jessica Harland-Jacobs makes an argument for British Freemasonry functioning as a vanguard for the British Empire, thereby supporting the Empire's colonial activities. Although admitting that Freemasonry could be used to the contrary, Harland-Jacobs does not elaborate the subject. My research aims to fill this gap, at least regarding a number of geographical areas in the Ottoman Empire.

[3] Paul Dumont, "La Turquie dans les Archives du Grand Orient de France. Les Loges Maçonniques d'Obédience Francaise a Istanbul du Milieu du XIXe siècle a la veille de la Première Guerre Mondiale", in: *Economie et Sociétés dans l'Empire* Ottoman, (Paris/Presses du CNRS : 1983)83) ; "La Franc-Maçonnerie Ottoman et les Idées Françaises à l'Epoque des Tanzimat", in : *REMMM*, 52/53, 2/3, 1989; Thierry Zarcone, *Mystiques, Philosophes et Francs-Maçons en Islam: Riza Tevfik, Penseur Ottoman (1868-1949), du Soufisme a la Confrérie* (Paris/Librairie d'Amérique et

in which the fraternity, or more correctly the fraternities, functioned in Greater Syria remains unstudied.

Lodges established before the Young Turk Revolution of 1908 were under the patronage of different grand bodies: the Grand Lodge of Scotland (GLoS), the Grand Orient of France and the Grand Orient of Italy. After 1908, the Young Turks tried to nationalise Freemasonry in order to win more control over the brotherhood, founding, in the process, many Ottoman and Turkish Grand bodies. Most were not recognized by either the British Grand lodges or by the various Grand Orients, and did not survive the collapse of the Ottoman Empire. With the establishment of the Turkish state a corresponding Grand Lodge of Turkey was established.

It is likely that the purpose of the first lodges in Greater Syria did not radically differ from those established in colonial settings: a European concept should enable foreigners to get closer to the native population, while at the same time offering a space shared by like-minded men. For Syrian masons in Beirut, meetings in this distinguished atmosphere entailed being part of an enlightened elite, who intermingled with Western intellectuals, businessmen and politicians. Networking in lodges proved to be extremely useful for brethren as it enabled them to meet individuals involved in politics, and who frequented scientific societies and supported charitable institutions. The majority of Freemasons belonged to the *Bildungsbürgertum* and the *Wirtschaftsbürgertum*, that is,

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d'Orient Jean Maisonneuve : 1993) ; Jessica Harland-Jacobs, "Hands Across the Sea: The Masonic Network, British Imperialism, and the North Atlantic World", in: *Geographical Review* (April 1999); Margaret Jacobs, *Living the Enlightenment. Freemasonry and Politics in Eighteenth-Century Europe*, (Oxford University Press: 1991) Eric Anduze, *La Franc-Maçonnerie Coloniale au Maghreb et au Moyen Orient (1876-1924): Un Partenaire Colonial et un Facteur d'Éducation Politique dans la Genèse des Mouvements Nationalistes et Révolutionnaires*, (Universités des Sciences Humanes de Strasbourg : 1996).

wealthy and prestigious groups known for their socio-cultural interests, political commitment and educational enthusiasm. The membership of lodges in Greater Syria varied. In Beirut, for example, the lodges accommodated more men of letters and individuals employed at educational institutions, due to the educational and economic significance of the city.[4] Beirut's lodges were characterised by their cosmopolitan mix of Syrian and foreign intellectuals, politicians and journalists – mirroring the city's population. The biggest difference between these Masonic fraternities and other associations were the masons' secrecy and the disregard of sectarianism dominant outside the lodges.

Also in Beirut tradesmen constituted the biggest part of the lodge, followed by so called 'intellectuals'[5] - meaning professors, teachers, students and doctors, with employees for the Ottoman government in third place. However, categories like these are problematic and seem artificial as they never comprise the diversity of double and triple professions men exercised in these years. While most of them indeed were businessmen, at the same time they worked as dragomans, represented the European powers in different positions or were authors, poets and journalists, translating books in their free time. What can be seen, though, is the distinctive European flair of the capital's first lodge and the small number of landowners – a typical feature for lodges in a big city where administrative and political threads were woven, religious influence played out and most of the educational efforts were undertaken. Among the members one can find the second son

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[4] Jens Hanssen, *Fin de Siecle Beirut. The Making of an Ottoman Provincial Capital*, (Oxford University Press: 2005).

[5] 'Intellectual' is understood as someone who is predominantly characterized by using his intellect and known for his intellectual output. This definition includes the academics, authors, journalists, etc. from Beirut, but excludes businessmen, traders, etc.

of Abd al-Qadir al-Jaza'iri, Muhyiuddin next to Nassif Mishaqa and Dimitri Sursock. The Mishaqa family "became rich from the commerce brought by the region's growing ties with the West, lost most of their earlier gains as a result of the oppression of Ahmad Pasha al-Jazzar, […], and then recovered their initial success – if not becoming more affluent – under the patronage of Amir Bashir." Originally the Greek-Orthodox family came from Corfu and its name was Batraki but since its head was dealing in the silk trade, the family assumed the name Mishaqa "derived from the process of filtering fibres of silk, linen, hemp and cotton".[6]

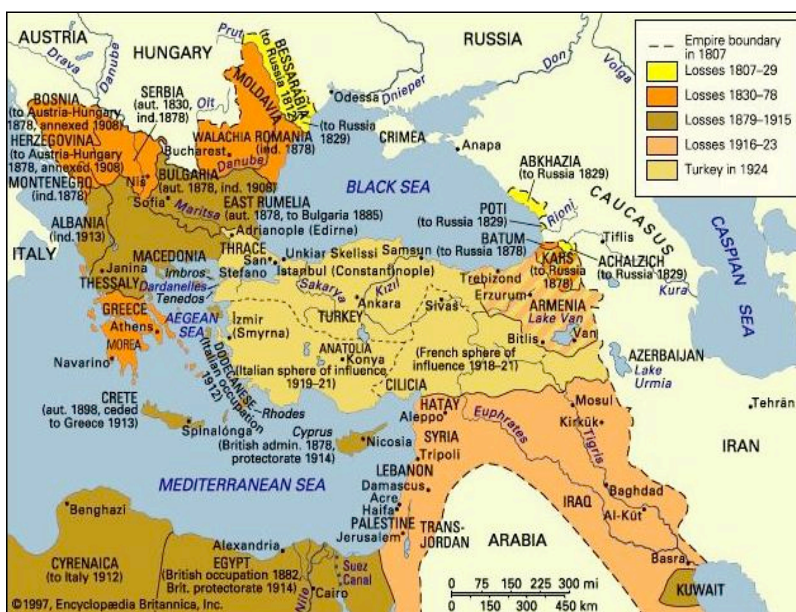

Figure 1
(reproduced with courtesy from the Encyclopædia Britannica)

[6] Fruma Zachs, *The Making of a Syrian Identity, Intellectuals and Merchants in Nineteenth Century Beirut*, (Brill/Leiden, Boston: 2005), p. 230.

The Ottoman Empire was called ‘the sick man of Europe’ the Ottoman Empire in the nineteenth century because it lost control of all the countries seen on the map above (see Fig.1). In addition, Tripoli in Libya was to be occupied by the Italians in 1912. Territorial deprivations, the Empire’s precarious financial situation - a consequence also of its military expenses and growing capitulation rights for France and Britain - was aggravated by its dependency on foreign loans.[7] Improved infrastructure encouraged internal and external trade. All railway organisations and generally most of the technical novelties, such as the telegraph, were owned or controlled by foreigners, mainly the French. Another source of interference was the steadily growing activities of missionaries.

[7] Capitulations were concessions towards the Europeans, giving them advantages in trade and served as protection rights for Ottomans working for Europeans, which consequently further weakened the Empire.

Figure 1: Henry H. Jessup, 1873, the squares indicate all Western missions (the American Presbyterian Church; other evangelical missions; the American Presbyterian mission (Stations, Schools); the Free Church of Scotland (Schools); the British Syrian female schools); crosses mark Greek and Roman monasteries; estimated population by Jessup: about 2 Mio (1 Mio Muslims with the rest being mainly Christians, about 100 000 Druzes and 30 000 Jews)

Already at the beginning of the nineteenth century Missionaries had arrived, but concentrated efforts to proselytize the natives mainly began towards the end of the century. Although they first targeted Muslims and non-Christians, they mainly succeeded in converting Christians of the area; the others were too cautious to be interested. In missionary eyes native Christians weren't 'real' Christians either, so focussing on them was not a problem.

As can be assumed when analyzing conversion movements, the change of one's religious affiliation was often done not out of conviction but more out of expectations for a better life. The registration book of the National Evangelical Church in Beirut that was established in 1848 by American Presbyterians lists for the years until 1930 not only whole families who joined, but also numerous cases where men changed their religious affiliations on the day they died. In so doing, many people hoped for better education of their children, better health care and also better - and more thorough - support of the mourning family when the patriarch had died. Consequently, decisions were made rather according to expectations of benefit than out of religious convictions. Also, a member's conversion did not automatically inspire loyalty or faithfulness to the new affiliation from the complete family. One illustrious example is told by the Lebanese author Amin Ma'alouf: his grandfather Botros studied at a Protestant school, and then went on to teach at a Greek Catholic school – "he studied wherever he could study, taught wherever he was offered a position, and believed this was both his right and his duty. As for the ministers and priests, they were free to pursue their own objectives, in their parishes or as missionaries."[8] One of the sons or grandsons, I talked to, during my time in Tripoli, remembered his

[8] Amin Ma'alouf, *Origins: A Memoir*, (Farrar, Straus and Giroux/NY; 1st edition: 2008)

grandfather saying that religion had to serve men, not the other way around.[9]

In 1873 the Syrian Protestant College opened its doors, having been established by American Presbyterians.

Figure 3: Postcard of the Syrian Protestant College, late 19th century, (Wolf-Dieter Lemke's Archive, Berlin, 2008)

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9 Amin Abdulwahab about his grandfather Khaireddeen Abdulwahab, Interview in Summer 2008, Tripoli/Lebanon

Figure 4: American missionaries together with their Syrian supporters, (Henry Jarris Jessup, *Fifty Three Years in Syria*, vol. 1, New York: 1910 reprinted Garnet/Reading: 2002)

Later, in 1920, the college was renamed the American University of Beirut. Other religions were also active: Jesuits had built a small school in Beirut in 1839 and opened another one in Ghazir (between Beirut and Tripoli) in 1855. This latter school moved to Beirut in 1875, where it received the title of 'university'. This university, St Joseph's, subsequently founded faculties for medicine and pharmacy, oriental studies and French law.

In the 1860s, many cities and villages in Greater Syria were afflicted with violent conflicts – triggered by land and privilege issues, not religion. Christians used the capitulation rights to

their advantage and tried to confront the law, their businesses or conscription to the army by protesting that they were foreign citizens or that they were at least under the protection of some foreign power. At the same time their status as *dhimmis* (a dhimma was a pact of protection for most of the non-Muslims living in the Empire) excluded them from taking up some professions, proscribed certain clothes and stipulated that they had to live in certain areas of their towns. Moreover, an extra tax was imposed on them, the *jiziya*, which in this sense functioned as a kind of levy to compensate the authorities for their non-participation in the army. Non-Muslims were excluded from service in the army until the end of the Empire when, lacking other manpower, Jews were recruited. Most of the struggles that broke out in the 1860s were mainly as a consequence of this unequal relationship. Conflicts between Druzes and Maronites erupted in the mountains over land.

Education was seen as one way to avoid further violence, but was also thought to hinder further European involvement. France's interest, in particular, had grown over time with its increasing involvement in the silk trade.

Immediate and long term consequences were soon felt by the majority of society: due to exhaustion after the inner struggles and fear of future conflict, a large migration and emigration took place; the population had lost territory from its periphery as well as faith in its leaders, who seemed to be becoming weaker and weaker. This trend accumulated with attempts to modernize the system and reforms regarding the social structure of society, which demolished the traditional hierarchy, having the religious class as well as big old families losing out against new professions which were more flexible and able to adapt to new living conditions. Technological inventions also influenced daily life: communication was enriched thanks to the telegraph, the rapid expansion of the printing press and an improved railway network.

The First Lodge

A sense of insecurity about the future, together with the events of the 1860s, played the role of midwife for the first Masonic lodges in Beirut. There had previously been lodges in modern-day Turkey and Egypt and even some hundred years ago in Syria, but I did not find any primary sources about them. In 1861 the vanguard was Palestine Lodge No. 415, which worked under the obedience of the Grand Lodge of Scotland. It received its Charter in an unusual way.[10] The Grand Committee of the Grand Lodge in Edinburgh mentioned "that this should form no precedent for the future." We do not know who the "most anxious" founders *in spe* were, except that they had handed their application form to Lieutenant–Colonel Burnaby, "Commissioner of the British Government to the French Army of Occupation", who happened to be in Scotland for a short period of time, in order to receive authorisation and who then immediately returned to Beirut.[11]

The *Palestine* lodge took blue as its colour for its regalia – as most of the other lodges did afterwards.[12] The choice of the colour seems to have been partly a result of a misunderstanding. The first Grand Lodge established in England adopted blue as its colour and so did the Grand Orient de France – to show its roots and affiliation to the former; but the colour of the apron changes depending on a mason's grade according to the *Ancient and Accepted Rites*. It is likely that Lebanese Lodges associated the colour blue with England and therefore considered it as a sign for regular lodges.

[10] Normally a petition has to be signed by a certain number of freemasons and supported by other masons. This is to be sent to the Grand Lodge which then decides about the approval.

[11] Proceedings of the Grand Lodge, 1859 – 1861.

[12] Kadisha in 1906 adopted sky blue as well as Taurus in Alexandrette, when it was founded in 1920; the King Hiram Lodge in Haifa took royal blue as its colour when it was established in 1926.

Figure 2: Blue Apron seen at the *el-Mizhab Lodge* in Tripoli, Summer 2008. The apron originates probably from the 1930s.

Later, lodges seem to have understood that a chosen colour can be a characteristic for every lodge and not merely part of an affiliation to a certain Grand Lodge. *Sunneen* in Shweir initially chose blue before later changing to black – a unique choice of colour among daughter lodges of the GLoS at least 1929.

What kind of people joined the *Palestine* lodge, *mahfal falastine*?

The *Palestine* Lodge was only short lived, but until 1889 it had attracted about 150 members – all belonging to prestigious families of the urban elite, with at least a third being foreigners, that is, Europeans and Arabs from beyond Syria.

Tradesmen constituted the biggest part, followed by so-called 'intellectuals' - professors, teachers, students and doctors- with employees for the Ottoman government coming third. But categories like these are problematic and seem artificial, because they never encapsulate the diversity of tasks men undertook for a living at that time. While most of them indeed were businessmen, they also worked as dragomans or represented European powers in different positions. Nevertheless, one significant distinction between lodges in Beirut and other cities or towns was the high number of full-time translators, professors and teachers, authors, poets and most strikingly, considering the novelty of the medium's existence, journalists.

In addition, the *Palestine* Lodge had a distinctive European flavour – manifest in the presence of the foreign masons - and the small number of landowners – which is also a typical feature for lodges in a capital.

Some Examples of the Membership of Lodges in Beirut

Among *Palestine's* members was Muhyiuddin, the second son of Abd al-Qadir al-Jaza'iri, as well as Nassif Mishaqa and Dimitri Sursock. The Mishaqa family "became rich from the commerce brought by the region's growing ties with the West, lost most of their earlier gains as a result of the oppression of Ahmad Pasha al-Jazzar, […], and then recovered their initial success – if not becoming more affluent – under the patronage of Amir Bashir." Originally the Greek-Orthodox family had come from Corfu and its name was Batraki. The head of the family dealt in the silk trade and the family adopted the name Mishaqa, which was "derived from the process of filtering fibres of silk, linen, hemp and cotton".[13] Early family members

[13] Fruma Zachs, *The Making of a Syrian Identity, Intellectuals and Merchants in Nineteenth Century Beirut*, (Brill/Leiden, Boston: 2005), p. 230.

were mainly merchants, with international contacts, but they also had connections to the American consulate, American missionaries and other Western representatives; at least one member of the family, Mikha'il, converted from Catholicism to Protestantism. Both, Khalil, the chief dragoman at the American Consulate-General in Beirut and Nasif, the dragoman for the Americans in Damascus, joined the *Palestine* Lodge. [14] The Sursock family, who were Greek-Orthodox, had become the wealthiest family in the Ashrafiyyeh neighbourhood of Beirut during the nineteenth century.

Figure 6: the Sursock Museum, post card from the end of the 19th century, Wolf-Dieter Lemke's archive, Berlin, 2008

The landowners were at the same time traders of all kinds of goods, such as silk and grain, and some Sursocks worked over the years in the service of Europeans. Dimitri Sursock, born in 1818, joined the lodge between 1866 and 1867. An independent merchant, Dimitri had become, like many others

[14] Zachs: p. 232.

of the social elite, dragoman for the American Consulate[15] According to the Baedeker travel-guide, one of the earliest travel guides, the German Baedeker, "les consuls possèdent en Orient les privilèges d'exterritorialité dont jouissent chez nous les ambassadeurs."[16] The *Palestine* member Catafago worked for the Prussian Consulate and had probably also joined the *Syrian Society of Arts and Sciences*, which had been established in 1847.[17] This early Syrian association, dedicated to "the acquisition of the sciences and arts", "the collecting of books, and papers", and "the awakening of a general desire for the acquisition of the sciences and arts", was composed of Europeans or their proxies; most of them affiliated with the Syrian Protestant College - like Eli Smith, Cornelius van Dyck and Yohanna Wortabet - and Beirut's Christian upper society - like Selim Naufal, Butrus al-Bustani, Mikhail Mishaqa and Nasif el-Yaziji[18]: these individuals were Lebanese who either were masons or were linked to lodges through other family members.

One of the few Muslims among the *Palestine* masons was Hassan Bayhum, who worked for Beirut's municipality in 1898. The Bayhum family in general was known as one of the rare Muslim families "that succeeded in penetrating the export business in the Syrian region", and who co-founded *al-Maqāsid al-Khayriyya* (the Muslim Benevolent Society) and served in different positions for the Ottoman government. Between 1868 and 1908 the family provided a member in the municipality for ever year bar nine. Even a market in Beirut was then known as *Sūq Bayhum*.[19] The Muslim Benevolent

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[15] Zachs: p. 238 – 239.

[16] Karl Baedeker, *Palästina und Syrien*, (Leipzig:1912), p. XXIII.

[17] Edward E. Salisbury, "The Syrian Society of Arts and Sciences", in: *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, Vol. 3 (American Oriental Society: 1853), p.478.

[18] Salisbury: p. 478.

[19] Zachs: p. 221.

Society had come into existence as a reaction to the well-honed Christian charitable networks.

Another member of the lodge, connected to missionary activities and institutions, such as the Syrian Protestant College, was Elias Habelin, a Maronite, originally from Mount Lebanon, who later converted to Protestantism. Habelin taught French and Arabic at the College and other "well known schools", and was editor-in-chief of the journal *Lubnān* and held a post at the French Consulate in Beirut.[20]

The leading Druze family from Mount Lebanon, the Jumblatts, placed one of their members in the lodge: Hasib Bey was one of the few landowners who joined the *Palestine* lodge. Among the foreigners was Colonel Henry Churchill, who also joined the *Syrian Scientific Society*, like the Bayhums,[21] and many others. Apart from the Europeans, an analogy to Beirut's political and socio-cultural active men is clearly visible; a "high degree of genealogical continuity […] on the municipal council is matched by an equally high degree of councillors' membership in the highly influential political lobby groups and literary organisations".[22]

These connected activities, the output of press articles and appearances in public, mirrored the type of foreigners initiated into the lodge: the "celebrated" Churchill belonged to the *Society for Arts and Sciences*, like Eli Smith, Cornelius van Dyck and other Americans related to the missionaries and the Syrian Protestant College. And, considering the Lewis affair in

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[20] Zachs: p. 226-227 (Interestingly, most of the journals or newspapers are named in analogy to lodges' names: Le Liban/Lubnan, al Arz, Haqiqa, Lata'if).

[21] Jens Hanssen, "From Social Status to Intellectual Acivity: Some proposographical observations on the municipal council in Beirut, (1868 – 1908)", in: *Bilad al-Sham: Processes of Identities and Ideologies from the 18th century to the End of the Mandatory Period*, edited by Tomas Philipp, Christoph Schumann (Beirut: 2004), p. 65.

[22] Hanssen, p.65.

1882, they also shared similar fates based on their activities or in some connected to their overly secular teachings.[23] A natural outcome of this was that there was an overlapping and striking parallel between masons in Beirut's lodges, members of the municipality and participants of the rapidly spreading new cultural associations.[24] All of these societies and associations

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[23] Edwin Lewis, missionary and teacher at the College, was accused of having supported Darwin's theory in one of his speeches and had to resign. Some of his loyal colleagues, as well as liberal students, were either thrown out or resigned in protest. For more on the affair see: A.L. Tibawi, "The Genesis and Early History of the Syrian Protestant College", in: *Middle East Journal*, Vol. 21, No. 2 (Spring, 1967), pp. 199-212; Nadia Farag, "The Lewis Affair and the Fortunes of *al-Muqtataf"*, in: *Middle Eastern Studies,* Vol. 8, No. 1 (Jan., 1972), pp. 73-83.

[24] While the Christians took the lead, often gathering amongst their members European representatives, the foundation of the *Muslim Benevolent Society* was the reaction. Most of them, if not all, worked along sectarian lines; if not explicit, so in the real outcome. From the *Jerusalem Literary Society*, over *the Syrian Society for the Acquisition of Arts and Sciences* and the *Oriental Society* to the *Muslim Benevolent Society* – all of these groupings served philanthropic and educational purposes, merging the brains with the purse. Not by chance did their number accumulate at the end of the nineteenth century, marking another feature of the peak, the *Nahda* had reached. At the same time, rumours about secret societies were spreading, stimulating further already existing prejudices against freemasonry. For further reading on members of the municipality and its socio-cultural engagement as well as for the different societies founded at the end of the nineteenth century see: Jens Hanssen, "From Social Status to Intellectual Acivity: Some prosopographical observations on the municipal council in Beirut, (1868 – 1908)", in: *Bilad al-Sham: Processes of Identities and Ideologies from the 18th century to the End of the Mandatory Period*, edited by Tomas Philipp, Christoph Schumann (Beirut: 2004); A.L. Tibawi, *A Modern History of Syria including Lebanon and Palestine*, (MacMillan St. Martin's Press, Londres: 1969); Albert Hourani, *Arabic Thought in The Liberal Age, 1798-1939*, (Oxford: 1970); Robert Morris, *Freemasonry in the Holy Land or Remarks of Hiram's Builders*, (12th ed., Chicago: 1877); Philipp S. Khoury, *Urban Notables and Arab Nationalism*, (Cambridge: 1983); Fruma Zachs, *The Making of a Syrian Identity, Intellectuals and Merchants in Nineteenth-Century Beirut*, (Brill, Leiden: 2005).

established at the end of the nineteenth century, promoted both scientific and educational issues, or served as charities and benevolent societies. The remarkable difference between the lodges and these associations was the fact that masonry was neither organized, nor practically experienced along sectarian lines. The lodges in Beirut were composed differently than the ones in the surrounding area. In the capital Masons not only belonged to famous families but were also prominent individuals.

At the time most of the newspapers and journals were produced by masons. It seems exaggerated to call them Masonic, as Sursock does in his letter, but one can detect a similar mindset.[25] In Beirut the whole intellectual written output accumulated until censorship became stricter and most of the activities temporarily shifted to Egypt.

Another foreigner that has to be mentioned, and may it only be because of the beautiful map he created, is Julius Løjtved.

[25] Letter of G.D. Sursock to the Grand Orient of France, 1913.

Figure 7: map made by Julius Løjtved, Rare Collections of the Archive University of Birmingham, 2008

Julius Løjtved is one of the many masons who made it their job to collect and cluster as many titles as possible. In a travel guide from the year 1904 he is mentioned as one of the recommended doctors with German nationality – although he was from Denmark – together with Dr Brigstock, another initiated into *Palestine*.[26] He had also served as Danish Vice Consul in Beirut and later on as consul between 1903 and 1911. According to information from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Denmark, Løjtved was made *Knight of the Danish Order of Dannebrog* in 1884, *Officier d'Académie* in France,

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[26] The Sarrafian Bros., members of Peace Lodge are suggested for photography and articles connected to this field, Karl Baedeker, *Palästina und Syrien*, (Leipzig:1904), 6th Edition, p. 242, 276. GLoS, Registrationbooks, Palestine, 1866 – 1867.

Knight of the Swedish Order of The Polar Star and decorated with 3rd class of the *Turkish Order of Medschidie*. The *Palestine* Lodge apparently lured him with another membership or title worth to collect.

Lodge meetings at times must have resembled the Babylonian confusion of tongues with the "W.M. being a Greek (Bro. Aleais), S.W. an Englishman (Bro. Eldrige), and the J.W. a Frenchman (Bro. du Chene), the German Nationalities being represented by three Germans and Swiss (one of whom, Bro. Eduard Koller, of Zurich, acts as Treasurer), while the Secretary of the lodge is an Italian, Bro. Vergi."[27]

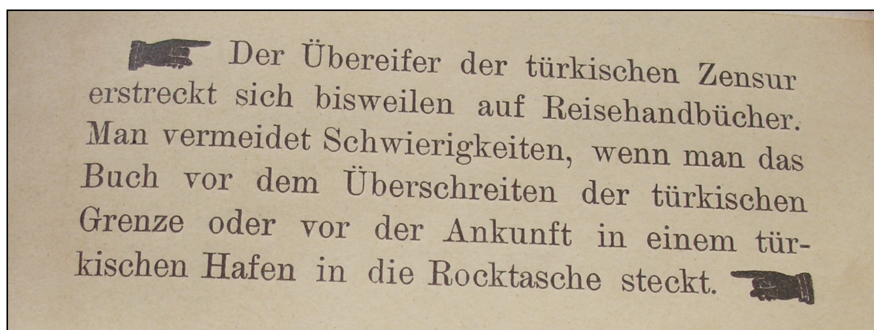
If the aim of Lebanese freemasonry was to protect its participants against further social collapse and European encroachment, the *Palestine* lodge was surely not able to provide this security. Its impact was limited due to the high amount of Western foreigners and other non-Lebanese members. Moreover, almost no Muslims were recruited. On the other hand, the lodge must have had some relevance, as it attracted the outstanding personalities of Beirut's upper class.

The lodge's *raison d'être* was to serve as a meeting point for an international audience, making it possible to establish business and political networks, whilst at the same time strengthening the socio-cultural position of the individual members. The *Palestine* lodge was registered as being dormant in the Scottish records from 1881, but existed at least until 1889. It is mentioned in the Year Proceedings of the Scottish Grand Lodge until 1889, for example, even paying for a new initiation - but vanished afterwards into thin air. The political situation must have played a role. In 1882 "a letter was read from the Lodge, asking counsel in the circumstances of difficulty in which Freemasons have been placed through

[27] *Freemasons Magazine and Masonic Mirror*, (London: Aug. 5, 1865), p. 102.

recent political changes in Syria. Remitted to Grand Secretary."[28] What had happened in 1882 or before?

In 1876 Abdulhamid II came to power, abrogated the parliament together with the constitution, and unleashed oppressive and pervasive methods to eliminate lodges throughout the Empire. During his reign, all existing lodges had to repeatedly close down, in order to escape the threatening and real danger. Although the black and white image of Abdulhamid has been revised in recent years, censorship did indeed increase during his reign, prompting some intellectuals to emigrate.



Der Übereifer der türkischen Zensur erstreckt sich bisweilen auf Reisehandbücher. Man vermeidet Schwierigkeiten, wenn man das Buch vor dem Überschreiten der türkischen Grenze oder vor der Ankunft in einem türkischen Hafen in die Rocktasche steckt.

Figure 8: "Over-eagerness of the Turkish censors may include even travel-guides. To avoid complications, put your book into your coat-pocket before crossing the border or arrival at a Turkish port", (Baedeker Reisefuehrer, 1905)

When people did leave their Lebanon they looked for a new home in Europe or America. It was obviously easier for Christians to adapt and be accepted by Europeans or Americans because of their former knowledge of the languages Consequently, Muslims changed their names to Christian versions when emigrating in order to aid their integration into their new society. In turn, the incentives Muslims received to

[28] Proceedings of the GLoS 1881 - 1883, p. 13.

convert to Christianity, prompted Christians to pretend to be Muslims. Hence, there is a slight problem with immigration and emigration statistics.

Those remaining in Beirut benefited from an improved infrastructure in the city and its inclusion in the global market created an opportunity for more territorial flexibility and travel. However, a Brazilian visitor to Beirut and Zahle in 1925 heard Portuguese being spoken in many places , along with the singing of the Brazilian national anthem. In the mid-1930s some seventy percent of the inhabitants of Zahle spoke Portuguese and the name of the city's main thoroughfare- 'Rua Brazil'- was painted in enormous letters on the pavement itself. Events like the World Fair in Chicago in 1893, attracted men – most of them masons – who could afford to travel and be active in the Hamidie Society, an association responsible for the promotion of Abdulhamid's Empire. At the same time they benefited from Masonic privileges during their stays in foreign countries. In the years after the fair, American masons visited the Middle East, expecting the same advantages. One of them was General John Corson Smith, from Chicago, who came to Lebanon, where he met with freemasons. Smith was given an honorary title, a variety of gifts and two newspapers articles were dedicated to his visit.

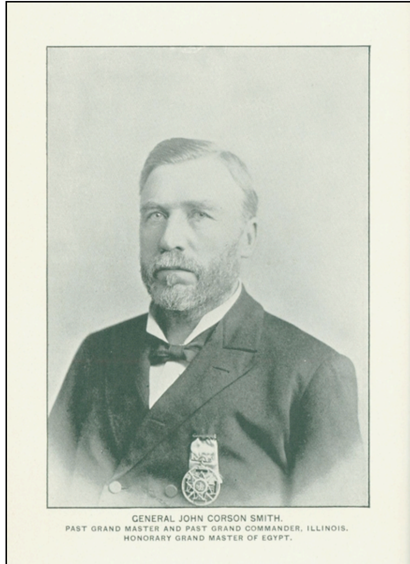


Figure 9: John Corson Smith,

(Gen. John C. Smith, Around the World with Gen. John C. Smith, 1894 – 1895, Night, Ledonard & Co. Printers/Chicago: 1895)

Figure 10: Corson in Lebanon, enjoying picknick

Not completely surrendering to the repressive measures taken by the Ottoman government, the masons founded new homes and started to build new lodges in new locations. The setting up of new lodges became a steady feature that was only interrupted by World War I. Up until the outbreak of war it as common to move from one lodge to another, which was, symptomatic of the degree of social instability prevalent at the time and a result of the changing economic conditions; it also illustrates the close relationship between the single lodges, notwithstanding their affiliations to different Grand Bodies.

The *Palestine Lodge* capitulated when confronted with persecution and terror from elements of the Ottoman government and the clergy. Yet, in 1869, that is during the lifetime of *the Palestine* lodge*, Le Liban* lodge was founded under the Grand Orient de France.

Its members had already started to meet and to recruit new initiates in 1861, but had had to wait for recognition. They were former Palestine members and other masons. This happened before the split of most of the Grand Lodges with the Grand Orient in 1877, when the Orient abandoned the oath on the Grand Architect, opening the doors for atheists and anti-clerics and thereby answering the dominant trend during this period in France. Maybe the Syrian masons would have chosen a different grand body, had they known this in advance; now they simply tried to somehow muddle through. It was unproblematic for every single lodge to maintain an individual positive stance towards the Supreme Being, despite working under the Grand Orient. However, it was more difficult to maintain all the Masonic privileges when travelling abroad. Since most of the grand lodges, especially the British ones, did not recognise the Grand Orient as a regular Masonic body, their daughter lodges were advised to refuse admittance to their meetings in the event of requests from visiting masons. While this may not have been important in regard to neighbour lodges

in the Empire, it did play a role when travelling further away; probably even more for daughter lodges than for the grand bodies themselves, who interpreted the restriction quite generously, if certain contacts conformed with other political endeavours.[29] Additionally, when the Suez Canal was opened in 1869, Britain's role in the Middle East grew and it seemed strategically opportune to keep open all possible ways of support from this influential Western power.
On the other side, France was still important as a protector of the Christians. With only about twenty Muslim masons, from a total of about 300 masons up until 1903, the lodge had no hesitation in sending petitions and complaints to its French mother lodge.[30]

Le Liban was another typical plant of a metropolis: the gap between affluent and poor in Beirut at this period was widening; the physical closeness and adoption of European lifestyle is visible in the correspondence between the lodge and the Grand Orient: Maronites were called "Petits Français"[31] and Syrians talked about the Masonic congress in Paris, planned for the same day as the birthday of the French Revolution - simultaneously to World Fair; the lodge perceived Syria as being in a state of "décadence physique et morale"[32], and also had no problems in speaking out against Muslims in general: "la communauté musulmane qui a été toujours hostile à nos principes philantrophiques"[33] even in a letter expressing happiness about newly gained Muslim members. *Le Liban* chose the French principles of *laïcité, liberté, égalité and*

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[29] Examples can be found in the Annual Proceedings of the Grand Lodge of Scotland, when the Grand Lodge entrusted freemasons belonging to other grand bodies with the examination of different matters.
[30] Correspondence between Le Liban and the Grand Orient de France, Archive of the Grand Orient de France, National Library in Paris.
[31] Letter from Le Liban to the Grand Orient, Le Liban, March 1905.
[32] Letter from Le Liban to the GOdF, Le Liban, May 1878.
[33] Letter from Le Liban to the GOdF, Le Liban, December 1880.

fraternité, whilst trying at the same time not to be degraded to merely French footmen, in order to stick to the golden mean between being subject to French policies and harming the relationship by undertaking overly audacious and independent actions. During Abdulhamid's reign they probably would have preferred stronger intervention from the French government; but the Grand Orient did not speak out on their behalf, nor in general wanted to get mixed up with its government's policy in Greater Syria. Most of the lodge's political petitions – especially during the reign of Abdulhamid II –went unanswered.

Former hardcore members of the *Palestine* Lodge had left the lodge to co-found *Le Liban*. The effect must have been a financial washout with a tremendous brain drain-like effect. *Le Liban* grew rapidly and already after one year of meetings some of its members, complaining about its size, established a further lodge: *La Chaine d'Orient*. Monasterski, formely of *Le Liban* and chef of the dragomans, who soon afterwards moved to Constantinople, participating in the *Union d'Orient* lodge, explained their reasons in a letter to the Grand Orient. The size of *Le Liban*, which accepted nearly all membership applications, in combination with the excessive amount of time needed to translate the tedious French-Arabic procedures, had transformed *Le Liban* into a sedate and cumbersome organisation. Additionally, so Monasterski, they wanted to support the government against the clergy and the more lodges that were established that aspired unification and tolerance, the better.[34] France at that time was still associated with the powerful and positive fruits of the French Revolution promising liberal thinking and free actions. When this image faded and news of the Revolution's harmful implications and despotic repercussions became known, the Grand Orient's

[34] Archive of the GOdF, Le Liban, Letter from Monasterski to the GOdF, 22.12.1869.

reputation and prestige started to fade.[35] *La Chaine d'Orient* did not survive for long. Some possible reasons may have been that it attracted only a limited number of foreigners – therefore its members reverted back to Arabic as a working language only a year after the lodge's foundation. In October 1875 *Le Liban* reported to the Grand Orient that it had had to suspend its work due to the surveillance and punishment of masons by the Ottoman government, aggressive actions by the Jesuits, and also because of hygienic problems resulting from an outbreak of cholera.

Le Liban had over 560 members until 1913. Among them were 219 tradesmen, 138 employees of the Ottoman government, 60 medical doctors, 13 pharmacists, 44 landowners and 42 intellectuals. Sursock called them "servants qui ont rendu des services memorables a leur pays comme Mohammed Abdou, Mufti d'Egypt, Ibrahim Yaziji, le grand litterateur arab, Dr Sarruf, Dr Nimr, Makarius, Dr Zalzal Hourani, Bishara Zalzal etc etc .", 18 lawyers, 16 engineers and 18 members of the Ottoman army.[36]

Sursock also mentions the charitable activities of the lodge. Steadily fighting religious fanaticism, it lent support to the building of a national hospital, two charitable organisations and an educational institution. Moreover a sanatorium was about to be open as a direct result of the activities of the lodge. From its inception, the lodge cooperated with other lodges in order to help freemasons and needy persons. Although its members' goals were even higher - they were speaking of Masonic education and Masonic schools - its success in its endeavours to improve living conditions for the population of Beirut is unquestionable.

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[35] This can be seen when comparing the lodges founded under the obedience of the GLoS and the ones under the GOdF.

[36] Letter of G.D. Sursock, 1913.

Sursock's birthday letter amazes due to the fact that all of the named individuals were also connected to other lodges, spinning thereby a net of lodges: all somehow related to each other, irrespective of their affiliations, provided it was a European one or one recognized by the Europeans. While some made further experiences in Egyptian lodges, others stayed in the country, stirring from one lodge to the other. *Le Liban* appealed to students or employees of the Syrian Protestant College (SPC), which were more pro-British than. Francophile. Not as many students as expected joined freemasonry. The ones who did join, were mainly initiated into *Le Liban* and not only had they a common past together at the SPC, but many of them also studied the same subject- medicine – which leads the discussion back to the Lewis Affair and the whole discussion about Darwinism.[37] However, some students from the SPC later joined the *Peace* Lodge.

Of the approximately 560 members of *Liban*, calculated by Sursock, not all regularly visited the meetings; indeed some were already dead at the time the letter was written. Sursock counted the complete amount of all initiated masons up until 1913. By this date, 292 had died, 160 were out of the country and 53 did not attend at all. Still, with 56 active members, *Le Liban* was a large lodge.

Significantly, *Le Liban* was founded under the obedience of the Grand Orient of France and not the Grand Lodge of Scotland, as with the *Palestine* lodge. It probably had hoped for more active protection and support against its enemies, who included the clergy and parts of the government. France was deeply involved in political events and had high interests at

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[37] More information on the Lewis/Darwin Affair and the involvement of SPC students: Nadia Farag, "The Lewis Affair and the Fortunes of al-Muqtataf", in: *Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. VIII, (1972). See also Donald Leavitt, *Darwinism in the Arab World and the Lewis Affair at the Syrian Protestant College*, in: *Muslim World*, vol. 71 (1981); *Shafiq Juha, darwin wa azmat,* 1882 [Darwin and the Crisis of 1882] (Beirut, 1991).

stake in the matter. Nevertheless, the Grand Orient would never have been willing to conspire against the French government and its policy, which was at that time to support Abdulhamid. France, as well as Britain, did not want to see separatist movements or Russia succeed in their endeavours to grab pieces of the Ottoman lands. Experiencing this French passivity towards Syrian suffering, the masons gave Britain another chance. Another reason for opting for Scotland as a grand body was that the prices of Scottish lodges were lower than those of the United Grand Lodge of England or the Grand Orient.[38] Additionally, the more grand bodies involved in Syrian matters, the more likely they could expect a helping hand from at least one of them. What is more, France being the official protector of Lebanese Maronites did not cast a positive light everywhere.

With the *Palestine* lodge not existing any longer, the next lodge founded was the *Peace* lodge No. 908 in 1900. Until 1908 the lodge had almost 200 members, with even some clergymen among its ranks. The animosity against freemasonry expressed by the majority of the clergy seemed to have weakened, as testified by the initiation of a Christian priest and a Muslim into the lodge.[39]

Masonry in the Ottoman Empire changed after the Young Turk Revolution in 1908: lodges were nationalized, belonging either to the Grand Orient of Egypt, the National Grand Lodge of Egypt, the Grand Ottoman Orient or the Grand Lodge of Turkey. Almost none were recognized by the British grand lodges at the time, and over time the few that were recognised

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[38] Information by Robert Cooper, Curator of the Grand Lodge of Scotland, 13/08/2008, although the enrolment fee for each new mason payable to the Grand Lodge of £ 6 (today about £ 600) was certainly not a small burden for daughter lodges (Dues payable to the Grand Lodge, in: Constitution and Laws of the Grand Lodge of Scotland, (Miller and Co./Edinburgh: 1881), p. 78.

[39] Grand Lodge of Scotland Registration books.

were disowned due to the use of another rite, political involvement or, more accurately, political involvement in actions against European interests. Nevertheless, the European grand bodies enjoyed a high reputation, especially in Syria, benefiting from the widespread mistrust towards Turkish policies. Lodges under European grand bodies also continued their work after the Revolution, such as the *Nur al-Dimashq* lodge.

If men did not find a suitable lodge, they founded one, as occurred with the Carmel lodge, which was established in Haifa in 1911. The founders of this lodge were former members of *Sunneen*, *Le Liban*, *Peace* and other lodges.

This is only a cursory examination of the situation of Freemasonry in Greater Syria between - I have not touched upon the subject of lodges in Palestine, while I have included the *el-Mizhab* and *Mina el-Amin* lodges, which were founded in 1914 and 1918 respectively.

That the *Palestine*, *Peace* and *Le Liban* lodges were all interlinked has become clear by now. Yet, if one examines the lodges in Tripoli, to the north of Beirut, a similar picture emerges. The *Kadisha*, *el-Mizhab* and *Mina el-Amin* lodges – two Scottish and one Egyptian lodge respectively- serve as other examples.

What I wanted to demonstrate in this article is the way in which the concept of freemasonry was systematically used as tool to encourage non-confessional cooperation and sociability within the lodges. The elite of Lebanese society considered it to be their responsibility to re-pacify their fellow human beings, especially after the events of 1860.

Why was freemasonry important? Other societies – scientific as well as charitable – conformed to confessional affiliations and were mostly restricted in their local outreach. However, freemasonry was the only organisation that crossed these sectarian lines and included all confessions. For this

reason I think it was the most significant association during that period. Lebanese masons tend to emphasise the role of intellectual freemasons during the *Nahda* (the literal Arab awakening), but I think the real significance of the lodges lies in the way they made sociability possible and helped to restore, or in some cases even build, mutual trust. Lebanese masons recognised their own ideal in Masonic principles, which emphasized the same rules for everyone, the support of better education and human moral standards. Ideas of the enlightenment were as popular during the Arab *Nahda*, but the main concern of these early Syrian lodges was to peacefully live together in everyday Syrian life, where every religious sect lived and cared for each other separately.

The Star in the East: the Theosophical Perception of the Mystical Orient

Isaac Lubelsky

The image of the mystical Orient (whether the Near, Middle, or Far East), has been a source of attraction and inspiration for a vast number of European prophets and occultists in recent centuries.[1] Naturally, this image derives first and foremost from the identification of the East as the sacred region that gave birth to the great monotheistic religions – Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. Nonetheless, a considerable part of the mystical prestige of the East may be related to another philosophical and religious tradition, which identifies the East as the geographical source of ancient magic and the occult.

From the Middle Ages, the tendency among European alchemists and occultists was to regard Egypt as the birthplace of the occult arts. This tendency became even more prominent with the birth of the European Hermetic tradition in the Renaissance.[2] A major change

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[1] This article is based on a paper presented by Dr. Isaac Lubelsky at the Centre for Research into Freemasonry and Fraternalism Research Seminar, University of Sheffield, 30.10.2008, that was devoted to the theme "Freemasonry and Fraternities in the Middle East".

[2] For some general literature on the Hermetic tradition, see: Frances A. Yates, *Giordano Bruno and the Hermetic Tradition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1964); D.P. Walker, *Spiritual and Demonic Magic from Ficino to Campanella* (London: Warburg Institute, University of London, 1958); *Secrets of Nature, Astrology and Alchemy in Early Modern Europe*, ed. William R. Newman and Anthony Grafton (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT press, 2001); *Art, Science, and History in the Renaissance*, ed. Charles S. Singleton

in that pattern was evidenced in European thought towards the end of the nineteenth century, in a slow but steady process that ultimately placed India, instead of Egypt, as the presumed Oriental birthplace of magic. This change in orientation became significant mainly thanks to the views which were published and propagated since 1877 by the leaders of the Theosophical Society.[3] Tibet joined the scene more or less at the same time, again thanks to the Theosophist Madame Helena Petrovna Blavatsky (1831-1891), together with such imaginary Oriental locales as Shangri-La and the like. Blavatsky played an important part in branding another modern concept regarding the roots of magic and occultism, by claiming that the original birthplace of these ancient arts was none other than the lost continent of Atlantis.[4]

One way or the other, the image of the mystical Orient seems to be an essential part of many early-modern and modern European occultist doctrines. Moreover, it is vividly present in some of the founding

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(Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1968); *Hermeticism and the Renaissance: Intellectual History and the Occult in Early Modern Europe*, ed. Ingrid Merkel and Allen G. Debus (Washington: Folger Shakespeare Library, 1988); *Occult and Scientific Mentalities in the Renaissance*, ed. Brian Vickers (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986).

[3] H.P. Blavatsky, *Isis Unveiled: A Master-Key to the Mysteries of Ancient and Modern Science and Theology*, I (Pasadena: Theosophical university Press, 1998), 4, 90, 92, 583-588: first pub. 1877.

[4] See, for example: H. P. Blavatsky, *The Secret Doctrine: The Synthesis of Science, Religion, and Philosophy*, II (Pasadena: Theosophical University Press, 1999), 221-224, 445-446: first pub. 1888.

myths of several major occultist movements, either in a plain geographical form or in a more spiritual sense.[5] It seems that almost any major occultist with serious magical pretensions had to prove a certain connection with the East. Thus the East became something greater than a mere geographical designation, more than the site of the ever-reborn sun – it became a concept, crucially needed in order to gain authority and legitimacy. In other words, since the Renaissance, no magic has been real unless it was deeply rooted in the Orient.

This European comprehension of the East may also be found in non-occultist fields. Consider, for example, the two main cases of Oriental *Others* in European history – the Jews and the Gypsies. Both originate in the Orient- the Jews in Judea, and the Gypsies in India (although the term "Gypsy" implies an Egyptian origin). Both migrated to the Occident and were regarded as possessing magical or occult powers (the Jewish Kabbala, for example, or Gypsy palm-reading). Moreover, both were regarded as being somewhat effeminate compared to the self-perceived masculine Europeans, and thus perhaps with better access to magic. This was contrary to the Europeans, who emphasized their rationalism, and hence perhaps their incompetence with regard to genuine magic.[6]

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[5] For further chronological discussion, see: David S. Katz, *The Occult Tradition: from the Renaissance to the Present Day* (London: J. Cape, 2005); Jocelyn Godwin, *The Theosophical Enlightenment* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1994).

[6] For further discussion on the similarity of Jews and Gypsies in European perspective, and particularly in modernity, see: Shulamit Shahar, "Religious Minorities, Vagabonds and Gypsies in Early Modern Europe", in *The Roma: A Minority in Europe – Historical,*

This article follows the evolution of the Oriental myth that was nurtured by Blavatsky, the founder of the Theosophical Society, who claimed to have been initiated in Tibet. I examine the role of the mystical East in that myth, and note some of the common Oriental motifs that are widely used by many other influential occultist and esoteric orders, such as the fraternity of the German Christian Rosenkreutz, the legendary founder of the Order of Rosicrucians, who was supposedly initiated in Fez, Morocco, and the Masonic order of Alessandro Cagliostro, the eighteenth century magus.

The Theosophical Society

In 1875, a rather odd group of people gathered at the New York residence of Colonel Henry Steel Olcott (1832-1907), and the already-famous spiritualist, Helena Petrovna Blavatsky.[7] This gathering marked the foundation of the Theosophical Society, which later grew to much greater dimensions, and is considered today by many as the progenitor of the contemporary New Age movement.[8] The two "Chums", as they called each other,

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Political, and Social Perspectives, ed. Roni Stauber and Raphael Vago (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2006), 1-18; Roni Stauber and Raphael Vago, "The Politics of Memory: Jews and Roma Commemorate Their persecution", *Ibid*., 117-134; Benno Muller-Hill, *Murderous Science: Elimination by Scientific Selection of Jews, Gypsies, and Others, Germany 1933-1945* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988).

[7] Henry Steel Olcott, *Old Diary Leaves*, I (Adyar: The Theosophical Publishing House, 1941), 114-118: first published 1895.

[8] For further discussion on Theosophy's role in the formation of the New Age movement, see: Wouter J. Hanegraaff, *New Age Religion*

had met several months before. At their first encounter Olcott was struck by Blavatsky's piercing gaze, and noticed that she was a compulsive eater and smoker. In his journal he described their first encounter: "I said: 'Permettez moi, Madame,' and gave her a light for her cigarette; our acquaintance began in smoke, but it stirred up a great and permanent fire."[9]

Blavatsky was born in 1831. Her father, Baron von Hahn, was an army officer of German-Russian origin and a member of the minor aristocracy, which filled the upper echelons of the Tsar's officer class. Blavatsky's mother came from the higher aristocracy, the Dolgorouky family. She died in 1842, when Blavatsky was 11 years old. The young Helena spent her adolescence between the house of her maternal grandparents and army bases in various part of the Tsarist empire where her father was stationed.

Blavatsky's widowed father, Baron von Hahn, was presumably anxious to find her a suitable match. In 1848 he married her off to the 40-year-old Nikifor Blavatsky, the deputy military governor of Erevan in Armenia. The age gap between them might explain why after only three months Blavatsky ran away from her husband to Constantinople, and began a new phase in her life.[10]

Thereafter, according to her account, she wandered for years before arriving in America. Her travel tales,

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and Western Culture: Esotericism in the Mirror of Secular Thought (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1998); Olav Hammer, *Claiming Knowledge, Strategies of Epistemology from Theosophy to the New Age* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 2001).

[9] Olcott, *Old Diary Leaves*, I, 1-3.

[10] Sylvia Cranston, *HPB, The Extraordinary Life and Influence of Helena Blavatsky, Founder of the Modern Theosophical Movement* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1993), 36.

covering several continents, cannot all be verified. She claimed that she was guided by her longing for ancient esoteric lore, which had been preserved in countries with a rich magical tradition. Egypt, which existing esoteric tradition viewed as the oldest source of arcane knowledge, was her first major stop. But her most significant sojourn was in Tibet, where she claimed to have spent more than seven years, during which time she was instructed by spiritual teachers, whom she called Mahatmas or Masters. They taught her their esoteric secrets and brought her to the highest level of initiation accessible to mortal beings.

Information from other sources conflicts with some of Blavatsky's stories. For example, Olcott stated that after her death he was told that prior to coming to America, Blavatsky had been a professional pianist and travelled in Russia and Italy under the name Madame Laura. Other testimonies suggest that during the period when she claimed she was in Tibet she was seen in other places.[11] These contradictions are not important in themselves, though they undermine Blavatsky's credibility. However, her own writings contained material much more dubious than the questionable veracity of her various travel stories.

According to Blavatsky, the Masters who mentored her in Tibet, and kept in touch with her throughout her life, were human beings who had succeeded in evolving to a higher level of existence than that of ordinary mortals. They were members of a body called The Great

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[11] Olcott, *Old Diary Leaves*, I, 458; *World Religions, Eastern Traditions*, ed. Willard G. Oxtoby (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 79.

Brotherhood, consisting of a succession of spiritual teachers who had influenced human history. The members of The Great Brotherhood were always engaged in a struggle against the forces of darkness (she called them the Brothers of the Shadow), who sought to hold back humanity's development. From time to time these Masters approached evolved individuals who aspired to be their apprentices during their spiritual development. Such a disciple was called a Chela. As the Chela advanced, he became an Adept, able to apply his acquired magical knowledge to himself and to his surroundings. Next came the highest stage of development, when the Adept became an Initiate. Such a person was freed from the constraints of time and his consciousness contained the past, present and future.[12]

Blavatsky especially venerated two particular members of the Tibetan Great Brotherhood – the Masters Koot-Hoomi (who in one of his renowned incarnations was known as Pythagoras)[13] and Morya. These two Masters tutored and initiated Blavatsky in Tibet, instructed her to found the Theosophical Society and would remain in contact with her successors after her death. Communication with them took two forms: first by means of visions, which were rare and accessible only to sufficiently advanced Theosophists; the second and more

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[12] *Lucifer, a Theosophical Magazine* (London: George Redway, October 1888); *The Mahatma Letters to A.P. Sinnett*, from the Mahatmas M. & K.H., transcribed and compiled by A.T. Barker, Letter no. 9 (K.H. to Sinnett), July 8th, 1881 (Adyar: The Theosophical Publishing house, 1972), 40: first pub. 1923.

[13] C.W. Leadbeater, *How Theosophy Came to Me* (Adyar: Theosophical Publishing House, 1986), 3: first pub. 1930.

common method entailed more earthly means – messages from the Masters arrived in the form of written and sealed letters, which miraculously dropped from the ceiling or appeared out of nowhere. Many members of the Society were granted such marvellous missives. Actual visions were granted to very few, other than Blavatsky.[14]

According to Blavatsky, it was the duty of the members of The Great Brotherhood to watch over the human race and guide its spiritual development. She claimed that they intensified their efforts in the final quarter of every century, when one of them would appear to communicate esoteric lore to humanity. This idea was developed further by Blavatsky's successor, Annie Besant (1847-1933), who called this Master a World Teacher, identified him with the Hindu term Bodhisattva, and maintained that her young Hindu protégé - Jiddu Krishnamurti (1895-1986) – was the World Teacher of our time. She named the order she founded for him the Order of the Star in the East (the OSE), in keeping with the tradition that is the focus of the present article.

Blavatsky located her Masters in the mountains of Tibet, probably chosen for two reasons. One, that mountains are often thought of as sacred, or as the home of the gods; two, Tibet's geographic and cultural isolation at that time made it a suitable venue for stories of the

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[14] For some typical first-hand descriptions of such communications, see: *Lucifer* (June, 1891); Leadbeater, *How Theosophy Came to Me*, 126-133; Alcyone, "At the Feet of the Master", in *Inspirations from Ancient Wisdom* (Wheaton, Il: Quest Books, 1999), 5: first pub. 1910; Olcott, *Old Diary Leaves,* Vol. 3 (Adyar: Theosophical Publishing House, 1929), 36-37: first pub. 1904.

mystical sort. For these reasons, Tibet and her version of Buddhism have been favourites of the Western imagination for the past 200 years. Although during the nineteenth century a good number of Western adventurers, military men and mystics attempted to reach Tibet, few actually succeeded. Regular contact with Tibet only began in 1904, when a British military mission arrived in Lhasa. It was led by the explorer and mystic Francis Younghusband (1863-1942), who was born in India, and who compelled the Dalai Lama to approve a trade agreement with Britain.[15]

The Tibetan mystique grew in the West to an exceptional degree as the country became more accessible. Today this mystique seems to be at its height, with widespread Western support for the Tibetan national struggle and the popularity of Tibetan Buddhism, demonstrated in a number of films and the spread of religious material. It seems that Blavatsky contributed to the glorification of Tibet's image in the world, by locating her Masters on the roof of the world and linking her spiritual movement to the Himalayas.[16] She claimed that it was the Masters who instructed her to go to America and meet Olcott, "whose Karma linked him to her as the co-agent to set this social wave in motion."[17]

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[15] Sir Francis Younghusband, *Wonders of the Himalaya* (London: J. Murray, 1924), 210; Peter Fleming, *Bayonets to Lhasa: The First Full Account of the British Invasion of Tibet in 1904* (London: Readers Union, 1962), 15-31, 276-284; Anthony Verrier, *Francis Younghusband and the Great Game* (London: J. Cape, 1991), 191-208.

[16] Peter R. Bishop, *Dreams of Power, Tibetan Buddhism and the western Imagination* (London: Athlone Press, 1993), 13.

[17] Olcott, *Old Diary Leaves*, I, 20-22.

The name of the new society was decided at the third meeting of the small membership on 18 September 1875. Various suggestions were rejected, among them the Hermetic Society, the Rosicrucian Society, and the Egyptological Society.[18] Having agreed on a name, the Theosophical Society declared its aims as follows: 1. The study of occult science. 2. The formation of a nucleus of universal brotherhood. 3. The revival of Oriental literature and philosophy.

After several frustrating years, the Theosophical Society began to expand. The significant factor contributing to the relative success of the Society in its early days was Blavatsky's impressive writing ability. Though self-taught, she was evidently familiar with the academic publications of the relatively new science of Comparative Religion. This familiarity, as well as her long interest in the occult, led her to conclude that Theosophy, like any new religion, needed a broad theological basis to allow for future interpretation and to give it long-term vitality.

From this insight was born *Isis Unveiled,* published in 1877 – a massive, 1200-page work in two volumes, which took Blavatsky six months' labour to produce. She claimed that large parts of it had been supernaturally dictated to her by the Masters, making her the transmitter of the revealed knowledge, rather than its author. Her primary motive in writing the book was to answer questions which had preoccupied her when she travelled in the East – who and what was the Deity, where did He dwell, and was there any evidence of the immortality of the human soul? The book surveyed the histories of

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[18] Ibid., 114-118, 132-133, 146.

various religions in antiquity, and attempted to trace the roots of the magical arts in biblical, Vedic and Hermetic literature. The survey, which concluded that India was the cradle of arcane lore, purported to use the methodology of comparative research. The various subjects were approached through questions concerning mysterious phenomena in our world, though without offering substantial answers. Blavatsky contented herself with describing the phenomena, and left their solutions to her readers' imagination.

Strangely, the operation of the Theosophical Society declined for some time soon after the publication of *Isis Unveiled*. Few people joined during this period, the most prominent of them being Thomas Alva Edison (1847-1931), who sent Olcott his membership forms on 4 April 1878.[19] Blavatsky and Olcott were dissatisfied with the Society's slow progress. Most esoteric movements devoted to the search for gnosis are selective and elitist, but not the Theosophists, who definitely hankered after the widest possible publicity. The slowness of the process seemed to the movement's leaders to reflect the materialistic degeneration of American society. Blavatsky maintained that a vast struggle between spirituality and materialism was taking place in her lifetime, and suggested that the success of the materialistic approach resulted from the French Revolution and the decline of the Church. American materialism was impeding the reception of the Theosophist message, and led Blavatsky and Olcott to the conclusion that they ought to propagate the tenets of their

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[19] *Thomas A. Edison Papers*, Document 8912 (Apr. 4th, 1878) and Document 7802 (Apr. 30th, 1878): http://edison.rutgers.edu/

new faith in a different geographical setting, one less tainted with materialism. And since the ideological transition Blavatsky underwent at that time led her, as we have seen, to conclude that India was the cradle of esoteric wisdom, she naturally looked to India as the lodestone of her dreams and plans.[20] However, in the 1870's a journey to India entailed considerable financial and physical effort. Moreover, it was an unknown land for Blavatsky and Olcott, neither of whom was young. Nevertheless, they made the necessary preparations and eventually in 1879 sailed to India, where their Society was to play a crucial role in the story of the then-awakening Indian nationalist movement.[21]

The second half of 1878 looked more promising than the first, when Blavatsky and Olcott were heartened by news from London, where on 27 June the British Theosophical Society was formally founded, as the first branch of the Society outside the United States. The birth of the British Society was due to Olcott's initiative in sending to London the treasurer of the New York

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[20] Blavatsky, *Isis Unveiled*, I, xliv-xlv, II, 1-2.

[21] For further discussion on the Theosophical Movement's role in the history of Indian nationalism, see: Sir William Wedderburn, *Allan Octavian Hume, "Father of the Indian National Congress", 1829-1912, A Biography*, ed. Edward C. Moulton (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2002): first pub. 1913; Edward C. Moulton, “The Beginnings of the Theosophical Movement in India, 1879-1885: Conversion and Non-Conversion Experiences”, in *Religious Conversion Movements in South Asia: Continuities and Change, 1800-1900*, ed. Geoffrey A. Oddie (Richmond, Surrey: Curzon, 1997), 109-172 ; Mark Bevir, “Theosophy as a Political Movement”, in *Gurus and their Followers: New Religious Reform Movements in Colonial India*, ed. Antony Copley (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2000), 159-179.

Society, John Storer Cobb. Cobb gathered a number of British individuals who were excited by theosophical ideas. They elected as their first president Charles Carlton Massey (1838-1905).[22] Later, in 1884, under the presidency of Anna Kingsford (1846-1888), the British branch changed its title to the London Lodge of the Theosophical Society, and so it remains to this day.

Blavatsky and Olcott visited the London Lodge in 1879, on their way to India, and were much impressed by the enthusiasm of their local English followers.[23] In India the two founders of the Theosophical Society eventually settled down in Adyar, a poor suburb of the southern city of Madras (today Chennai), where the world headquarters of the Theosophical Society still operates today. They traveled all over India, speaking to large crowds, propagating their belief in the superiority of ancient Hindu culture over the declining culture of the West, and calling for a revival of that ancient culture, and for a renaissance that would re-awaken India and bring it back to its proper position, alongside the leading nations of the world. Their call for a spiritual Indian renaissance was motivated by their belief in a radical global spiritual revolution that would take place as its immediate result. Ten months after their arrival, they launched the monthly publication of the Theosophical Society, "The Theosophist". The journal soon became profitable and acquired hundreds of subscribers in a matter of months.

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[22] Olcott, *Old Diary Leaves*, I, 121, 473-475; Janet Oppenhiem, *The Other World, Spiritualism and Psychical Research in England, 1850-1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 31.

[23] C.C. Massey, "Madame Blavatsky and Col. Olcott in England", *The Spiritualist* (London, January 24th, 1879), 41-42.

"The Theosophist" was a platform for discussing diverse subjects, from supernatural phenomena to India's national question. It promoted the aims of the Society and reflected the range of subject matter that preoccupied its founders. The sub-heading of the first issue, published in October 1879, spelled this out: "A Monthly Journal Devoted to Oriental Philosophy, Art, Literature and Occultism: Embracing Mesmerism, Spiritualism, and Other Secret Sciences".[24] The journal was distributed throughout India, as well as in England and the United States, and was the principal instrument in spreading the Theosophical message.

With the Theosophists' original interest in Hermetic philosophy, Kabbalah and Western occult sciences, they saw the Hindu texts as cryptic and laden with hidden significance, to be viewed in a Gnostic light and interpreted by means of Gnostic terms. Such was their interpretation of various Hindu scriptures, which they perceived as belonging to the same corpus of writings that included the Corpus Hermeticum, for example, or Giordano Bruno's writings. In other words, the Theosophists were certain that the same esoteric doctrine underlay the Hindu, the Egyptian and Western esoteric traditions.[25]

This notion had its roots in academic research into Orientalism that took place during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, which was then dominated by what is nowadays called the Aryan Myth – the belief in the

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[24] *The Theosophist* (Bombay, October, 1879).

[25] Eric J. Sharpe, *The Universal Gita, Western Images of the Bhagavad Gita, a Bicentenary Survey* (La Salle: Open Court Pub. Co., 1985), 89-92.

common origin of Hindus and Europeans. This idea was first born in the mind of Sir William Jones (1746-1794), who had studied Sanskrit in Calcutta in the 1780s, and was the first to note the affinity between Sanskrit and Greek and Latin. It led him to form a hypothesis that the ancestors of the Hindus and the modern Europeans were related to one Aryan nation, which in pre-history inhabited the territory of modern Iran. Some of its people had migrated west and settled in Europe, while others headed east and conquered India. According to Jones, the Eastern and Western Aryans preserved their shared history by means of language. Language thus became the principal research tool for anyone who wished to reconstruct their migrations and the only viable evidence of their common origin.[26]

During the nineteenth century, several major European philologists embraced Jones' Aryan hypothesis and extended it to such a degree that it became common knowledge, and was taught in the European academia as a fact. The most prominent of those scholars was the Anglo-German philologist Friedrich Max Müller (1923-1900), who seemed to have won Blavatsky's respect and admiration, and thus influenced her in following Jones' hypothesis.[27] Accordingly, Blavatsky claimed that it was

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[26] Sir William Jones, "The Third Anniversary Discourse, On the Hindus", in *The Collected Works of Sir William Jones*, III, ed. Garland Cannon, III (New York: New York University Press, 1993), 32, 34-35, 37, 45-46: first pub. 1807.

[27] For some representative "Aryan" works by Müller, see: Max Müller, “Comparative Mythology”, in *Chips from a German Workshop*, II, (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1893), 1-141: first pub. 1856; F. Max Müller, *Theosophy or Psychological Religion* (London: Longmans Green, and Co., 1893); F. Max Müller, *India:*

the same Aryan esoteric wisdom that was to be studied in India and Europe alike.

Olcott and Blavatsky were not only drawn to Hinduism. In 1880 they first went to Ceylon (today Sri Lanka) and stayed there for two months, while Olcott was captivated by the local Sinhalese Buddhism. It was on this visit that Olcott and Blavatsky publicly converted to Buddhism, probably the first Westerners to do so, long before Richard Gere and others like him.[28]

In 1885 Blavatsky and Olcott's reputation received a blow struck by the publishing of the critical Hodgson Report. Richard Hodgson (1855-1905) was a young scholar, who in 1884 was appointed by the Society for Psychical Research (SPR) to go to Adyar, India, and inspect Blavatsky's presumed miracles and magical pretensions. He spent a few months there and eventually concluded that Blavatsky's supernatural phenomena could be summed up as a sophisticated fraud.[29] Olcott could not bear the disgrace, and in late 1885 made Blavatsky leave for Europe. She finally came to London in 1889, where she attracted a considerable wave of interest. In London she wrote several books, including *The Secret Doctrine*. In addition, she published a periodical, entitled *Lucifer*; she died in 1891. The story of her successors is no less fascinating, and is widely

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What Can It Teach Us? (Escondido, Ca.: The Book Tree, 1999), 195-196: first pub. 1883.

[28] Steven Prothero, *The White Buddhist: The Asian Odyssey of Henry Steel Olcott* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996), 85-116.

[29] "Report of the Committee Appointed to Investigate Phenomena Connected with the Theosophical Society", *Proceedings of the Society for Psychical Research*, 3 (London, December, 1885), 201-400.

available in various scholarly works.

The Rosicrucian Fraternity

There is no doubt that Blavatsky was influenced by the Freemasons, if only by their terminology – for example, the terms "Master" or "Lodge". Moreover, the Masons were the first to operate an international network of Lodges, all loyal to the parent movement –a model which the Theosophists emulated. Another interesting point is the exclusion of women (which still exists) in some of the orders of the Freemasons. Blavatsky was displeased by this patriarchal attitude, and her successor, Annie Besant, fought against it when in 1902 she joined Co-Masonry, an alternative order of Freemasons, not recognised by the official body because it accepted women members.[30]

However, it seems that another order – the Rosicrucians – influenced Blavatsky no less than Freemasonry. The myth of the Rosicrucian Fraternity flourished in Europe throughout the seventeenth century. Its origins went back to the medieval myth of the Templars, revived by three pamphlets published in the German city of Kassel between 1614 and 1616, which became known as the Rosicrucian Manifestos. Their protagonist was the priest Christian Rosenkreutz, who announced the founding of an order, or fraternity, and invited new members to join. The first two pamphlets aroused interest, which intensified in 1616 with the publication of the third, entitled "The Chemical Wedding of Christian Rosenkreutz". It is quite obvious that at least

[30] Blavatsky, *Isis Unveiled*, II, 349, 377.

the third pamphlet was a hoax perpetrated by Johann Valentine Andreae (1586-1654). The pamphlets, which were distributed all over Europe, created turmoil when many people were suspected as being members of the Rosicrucian Fraternity, which ironically probably never existed.[31]

The tenets of the order, which described itself as a secret fraternity of enlightened scholars, influenced nineteenth century writers, among them Blavatsky. For example, the first pamphlet, entitled "Fama Fraternitatis", contained biographical information about the founder C.R. (Christian Rosenkreutz). Born to a noble but poor family, he was educated in a monastery, where he learned Greek and Latin. Later he travelled in the Orient, spent two years in Fez in Morocco, where he was taught by local sages, and later founded the fraternity.

The tenets of the fraternity were as follows: 1. The members had to practice charity and heal the sick; 2. The members had to keep secret their affiliation with the fraternity, and observe the local customs where they lived; 3. The fraternity would hold annual meetings in specified places; 4. Each member would choose a successor to follow him after his death; 5. The initials C. R. were the seal and symbol of the fraternity; 6. The fraternity would remain secret for 100 years.[32]

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[31] Antoine Faivre, *Theosophy, Imagination, Tradition: Studies in Western Esotericism* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2000), 171-190: first pub. in French, 1996; Frances A. Yates, *The Rosicrucian Enlightenment* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1972); Susanna Akerman, *Rose Cross Over the Baltic: The Spread of Rosicrucianism in Northern Europe* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1998).
[32] Yates, *The Rosicrucian Enlightenment*, 238-251.

The main idea in this and the other pamphlets was that the mission of the fraternity was to do good by studying wisdom and keeping the secret. This idea, of a kind of shadow government operating in various countries and subject to a central body, is quite similar to Blavatsky's Great Brotherhood.

It seems that Blavatsky did not know the pamphlets at first hand – otherwise she would probably have quoted them in her writings, as she did with a vast body of occultist literature she was acquainted with. But the impact of the pamphlets lingered in Europe long after their publication. The story of the Rosicrucian Fraternity inspired later writers, such as Edward Bulwer-Lytton (1803-1873), whose novel *Zanoni* (1842) told the story of an immortal Chaldean named Zanoni, who at the start of the novel has just returned from India. Bulwer-Lytton's novel dealt to some extent with the Rosicrucian fraternity, highlighting their reputation and the interest they attracted in England at that time.[33] Blavatsky admired Bulwer-Lytton's work, and was familiar with his books on the occult. Indeed, Bulwer-Lytton may well have been the source for a certain Rosicrucian influence found in some major Theosophical doctrinal elements, as well as in Blavatsky's own life story.[34]

Certainly, reading the "Fama" evokes some marked similarities with Blavatsky's story, its real and the imaginary elements alike. She, too, like Rosenkreutz, was of aristocratic background, claimed to know Latin and Greek, and studied occult lore in an exotic location.

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[33] Edward Bulwer Lytton, *Zanoni* (London: Saunders and Otley, 1842).

[34] Blavatsky, *Isis Unveiled*, I, 1, 17, 64, 285-286.

Whereas Rosenkreutz was content with Morocco (regarded by sixteenth and seventeenth century Europeans as sufficiently remote), Blavatsky had to go to the Far East and study in distant Tibet. Both created their fraternities after their studies, and dedicated themselves to good works. Moreover, a practice adopted by the Theosophists, that of using initials instead of whole names, was already found in the pamphlets of the Rosicrucian Fraternity. Likewise, the use of the term fraternity stands out, both with regard to the Great Brotherhood and to the second aim of the Theosophical Society, which was, as we have seen, "the formation of a nucleus of universal brotherhood."

From the seventeenth century on, the myth of the Rosicrucian Fraternity inspired many esoteric movements. Among them was a theosophical order, The Temple of the Rosy Cross, founded in London in 1912. Its founder, James Ingall Wedgwood (1883-1951), a young scion of the well-known china manufacturing family, was a devoted theosophist, who served as secretary of the English Theosophical Society in 1911-1913. He was also prominently active in Co-Masonry, which functioned under the aegis of the Theosophical Society.

Wedgwood claimed to have mastered some means of communication with occult powers, from which he had learned about the original rites that were presumably performed by the disciples of Christian Rosenkreutz in the seventeenth century. Lady Emily Lutyens (1874-1964), the wife of the famous architect Sir Edwin Lutyens (1869-1944), was also one of the first leading Theosophists to join Wedgwood's Temple of the Rosy

Cross. In her memoirs she described the Order's ceremonies and ridiculous costumes. According to Lutyens, the motto of the Theosophical Rosicrucian Order was "Lux veritatis". Lutyens reported sarcastically that George Arundale (1878-1945) (who in 1933 became Annie Besant's successor as president of the Theosophical Society) "translated" that motto into English as "looks very silly".[35]

However, the Temple of the Rosy Cross was strictly theosophical in its doctrines, and as such remained loyal to Blavatsky's Masters, who kindly used its rites for communicating messages to the Temple's disciples. Yet while the members of the Rosicrucian Fraternity were committed to total secrecy, this was not necessarily part of the Theosophical agenda, except perhaps for its Esoteric Section, a secretive elite group formed in London by Blavatsky in 1889, shortly before her death, and led for many years by her successor, Annie Besant. The Esoteric Section, however, was no different than other theosophical bodies in its attraction to the Orient. This became even clearer in 1928, when Annie Besant dismissed the Esoteric Section and transferred all responsibility for the teaching of occult lore to Krishnamurti, her Hindu protégé.[36]

The Oriental orientation of the Esoteric Section can be easily traced to an earlier period- the great theosophical crisis of 1912, that culminated in the resignation of Rudolf Steiner (1861-1925) from his post

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[35] Emily Lutyens, *Candles in the Sun* (London: Rupert Hart-Davies, 1957), 39.
[36] Arthur Nethercot, *The Last Four Lives of Annie Besant* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1963), 410.

as secretary of the German Section of the Theosophical Society. It involved some bitter accusations on his behalf, claiming that the Esoteric Section embraced what he defined as "Indian Exercises", by which he probably meant the practice of yoga and meditation.[37] Steiner, who later founded the Anthroposophical Society, could not stand the Oriental attraction, which reached its peak with the Theosophical belief in Krishnamurti as World Teacher and the avatar of both Krishna and Jesus Christ.[38] The Orient thus once more played an important part in defining the Theosophical doctrine, contributing to the 1912 split that ended with the resignation of most of the German and Austrian Theosophists, who soon after embraced Anthroposophy, with doctrines that were far more Western than the Oriental tendencies of Theosophy.

The Case of Cagliostro

The attraction to the East can be found in other influential occultists, such as with Alessandro Cagliostro (1743-1795), who won a reputation as a healer and alchemist in the 1770s and 1780s, after his return to Europe from travelling in the Middle East. His biography, similar to the story of Christian Rosenkreutz, involved a long period in Arab countries, where he claimed to have acquired his knowledge of the occult. He treated many people of all walks of life and gained a following that came to be the basis for the formation of a

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[37] Rudolf Steiner, *The Course of My Life* (New York: Anthroposophic Press, 1951), 99-100, 299-325: first pub. 1925.
[38] Maria Carlson, *"No Religion Higher than Truth": A History of the Theosophical Movement in Russia, 1875-1922* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), 33-34.

new Masonic movement, led by him, which he named the Egyptian Rite of Freemasonry. Unlike most contemporary Freemasonry orders, it accepted women and Jews. Cagliostro set up lodges of his order all over Europe, but while he was popular among seekers of the occult, political circles viewed him with suspicion.

In reality there was nothing Egyptian in the rites of his order, which mainly claimed to communicate with the seven angels of the Apocalypse, whom Cagliostro used to contact through a mediator, usually a boy or a girl who went into a trance and answered his questions on behalf of the angels. Towards the end of his life he attracted the attention of the Catholic Church and was accused of heresy, consequently winning the dubious reputation as the last person to be burnt at the stake by the Roman Inquisition.[39]

Cagliostro is remembered as a charlatan and mountebank, but his story is a good example of the mysterious *magus*, commanding occult powers; a cosmopolitan figure hobnobbing with the highest society in various countries. The charm of this image kindled the imagination of many nineteenth century Europeans, and definitely inspired Blavatsky, whose own image contained similar elements.[40]

Conclusions

Many other persons and movements may be numbered with the above-mentioned individuals, who also claimed

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[39] Godwin, *The Theosophical Enlightenment*, 99-106.

[40] H.P. Blavatsky, "Was Cagliostro a ‘Charlatan’?", *Lucifer* (January, 1890); Blavatsky, *Isis Unveiled*, I, 100; Blavatsky, *The Secret Doctrine*, II, 156.

that their inspiration or authority derived from the Orient, or at least contained Oriental characteristics. Perhaps the popularity of the imaginary Oriental motif in pre-twentieth century occultism paved the way for the expansion of the real Oriental spiritual practices and ideologies in our time. Without outright cynicism, we may pose the following question: Would practices such as shiatsu and acupuncture, alongside Japanese and Chinese martial arts, accompanied by Indian Yoga and Ayurveda, have been as popular if they had originated in Belgium or Ireland? I seriously doubt that. The power the Orient still has over our imagination is plain to see. The Occultists described in this short article, as well as many other spiritual seekers, who have sought for the occult in past centuries, have had an important role in making the concept of the East so powerful to us. The image of the mystical Orient is still a strong source of inspiration for many Westerners, and will probably continue to attract them, as long as the West keeps defining the East as its reflecting mirror.

Freemasonry and the Constitutional Revolution in Iran: 1905-1911

Mangol Bayat

Modern nation building in Iran was the self- appointed mission of its intelligentsia in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.[1] Though they never formed a cohesive group, ideologically or class-wise, they collectively challenged the traditional political-religious power structure and its socio-cultural institutions. Some had discovered the European philosophy of the Enlightenment, in which they found concepts that reinforced many of their own religious dissensions rooted in time-honoured theological-mystical trends.[2] Anti-clericalism defined most of their programmes and action, be they moderate reformers seeking the curtailing of dynastic power abuse, religious dissidents revolting against perceived religious obscurantism, or radicals inspired by the French Revolution or Russian Social-Democracy.[3] Like their contemporary intelligentsia in other parts of the world, they identified modernity with secularism, and they sought in French and British secular institutions the models to be emulated. European Freemasonry was one among many other vehicles for transmitting and propagating European ideas and ideals.

By the time the Constitutional Revolution erupted in late 1905, the moderates, religious dissidents and radicals had forged a convenient coalition of forces. Freemasons were to be

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[1] This paper is based on a chapter of a forthcoming book on the Constitutional Revolution in the period 1909-1911.

[2] See my *Mysticism and Dissent: Socio-religious Thought in Qajar Iran*. Syracuse, Syracuse University Press, 1982.

[3] See my *Iran's First Revolution: Shi'ism and the Constitutional Revolution, 1905-1911*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1991.

found among all these ideologically disparate groups. Reactionary royalists, lay or clerical, or just those who feared a social explosion with fatal consequences for the traditional order, denounced them all, hurling at them defamatory epithets, often interchangeably: heretics, revolutionaries, Freemasons. Indeed, up to the present, some Iranian historians have reached the conclusion that the Constitutional Revolution, in part or in its entirety, resulted from the direct involvement of European Freemasonry through its Iranian "brothers" plotting the whole affair to destroy the country's culture and sovereignty. To evaluate the validity of this conspiracy theory it is necessary to: 1) assess inasmuch as it is possible, given the paucity of reliable evidence, its contribution to the revolution; 2) to address the relevant issue of Freemasonic attractiveness to the intelligentsia.

The history of Freemasonry, its origins, hierarchy, beliefs and rituals, does not concern the present study; nor does its centuries-long tradition of controversies, myths and occult power, or its impact on local social mores. The multiplicity of orders with their respective chapters in different places, their differences and similarities, are also set aside. It is the fundamental principles of modern Freemasonry, emerging fully defined and structured with the second edition of the so-called Anderson constitutions (after the name of its main author), and its political activities, overt or covert, in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, that have immediate relevance to this analysis. Moreover, special emphasis is given to French orders, and the Grand Orient de France in particular, given the fact that it was the first to establish a lodge in Iran at the time of the revolution.

The 1738 constitution emphasizes the concept of universalism based on a shared faith in One God, referred to as the Grand Architect of the Universe. "In Freemasonry," wrote Pierre Chevallier, a non-Mason historian of the French orders,

"Mecca and Geneva, Rome and Jerusalem are identical. There are no Jews, no Mohammedans, no Papists, and no Protestants; there are only brothers who have sworn to God, the Father common to all, to remain brothers for ever."[4] Morality was linked to religious conscience, and belief in the immortality of the soul was enforced. In theory, though certainly not in practice, all religions were deemed equal. In the initiation rites, each new adherent's personal creed was taken into full consideration, and he took an oath holding his own holy book in hand. Humanist values, however, transcended religious particularism, imposing an ecumenical framework resting on the basic principles of tolerance, pluralism and freedom of worship. Honour, loyalty, practicing good and shunning evil, brotherhood, the strong belief in humanity as one and indivisible, sharing common goals and aspirations, were lofty ideals uniting all in a common bond. Highly intellectual, eighteenth century Freemasonry fully absorbed the philosophy of the Enlightenment, its faith in human reason, human perfectibility and progress and, above all, liberty. Voltairian, and, as such, fiercely anti-clerical, it promoted the principle of the separation of state and religion. In 1877 the Supreme Council of the Order of the Grand Orient went so far as to revoke the articles of the constitution regarding the existence of God and the immortality of the soul, replacing them with the affirmation of morality independent from religion. The deed provoked a severe, damaging rapture within the broad ranks of Masonic organisations, the majority of which declared it anathema to their principles. By the end of the century, it increasingly identified liberty with patriotism, freedom with national independence and national sovereignty. It forged networks in Europe and the Americas, carrying the banner of humanism and universal brotherhood across national frontiers.

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[4] Pierre Chevallier, *Histoire de la Franc-Maconnerie Francaise*. Paris: Fayard, 1974, vol.2, p.149.

French Freemasons saw their ideal realised with the 1789 Revolution, which mobilised the masses with the concepts of liberty and patriotism. In the nineteenth century, viewing themselves as the missionaries serving the cause of liberalism, they appropriated the revolutionary slogans of liberty, equality and fraternity, as their own creation.[5] There were even some Freemasons who together with clerical groups engaged in "*missions evangelisatrices*."[6] French freemasons, however, were above all committed to "*missions civilisatrices*" in the non-European world, using their vast networks to establish cultural and social ties with the ruling elite of targeted countries. Here, too, they shared common goals with the French government, which, partly as a result of its colonial policies in competition with other European Powers, promoted French cultural influence throughout the world. Modern, secular, even republican, values were to be exported to distant foreign lands, though presented as universal values that were by no means incompatible with local, national or religious values. One can recall Bonaparte's message to the olama of Cairo following his swift conquest of Egypt in 1798 to find a case in point.

To a large extent, one can say that French lodges popularised and attempted to universalise the ideals and slogans of the French Revolution abroad, as they expanded their ateliers, or auxiliary branches, in the Middle East and North Africa. Several lodges were established in the Ottoman Empire, in its Balkan and Arab provinces and in Istanbul. However, their bulletins and archival documents rarely provide concrete information on the ateliers' work and divulge no clues as to their members' extracurricular activities. The strict rule of secrecy binding all initiated members is, itself, no secret, and some members paid dearly for their failure to abide by it.

[5] Ibid.p.299.
[6] Ibid.p.329.

However, as recent scholars of Masonic activities in the Ottoman Empire have demonstrated, one can read through the lines of the available material and derive significant, though discreet, information on their covert agendas. In contrast to the lodge active in Iran, which was scarcely documented, the Ottoman ateliers were numerous and offer voluminous archival files for the inquisitive historian. A brief look at such research findings could serve as a preliminary illustration and guideline for the Masons' role in Iran in the same period. Paul Dumont cites a document explaining the goals of the French Istanbul lodge Etoile du Bosphore. The goals formulated explicitly were general, expressing the desire to create a common alignment for men of good will, living in a multi-national, multi-sectarian and diverse country, and offering their services. But it also provided institutional protection and cover to Frenchmen devoted to the glory of their fatherland and the independence of Europe.[7] This dual function of the ateliers characterised all the Masonic activities in the region. As we shall see, this by no means determined, and even less guaranteed, protection and ultimate success for the local national cause. When conflict of interests arose, and there were many, French and generally European priorities eclipsed concerns of solidarity with their Middle Eastern "brothers," to the point of betrayal of those very cherished ideals of freemasonry. By the same token, again as we shall see in the case of Iran, Middle Eastern "brothers" were not always as obedient in carrying on their Masonic instructions. Contrary to some prevailing, grandiose conspiracy theories, Iranian constitutionalists were no docile agents of

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[7] Paul Dumont, "La Turquie dans les archives du Grand Orient de France: les loges maconniques d'obedience francaise a Istanbul du milieu du 19iemme siecle a la veille de la premiere guerre mondiale." *Colloques Internationaux du CNRS*, no.601, l983. *Economie et Societe dans l"Empire Ottoman*, p.173.

European imperialism acting in the guise of a Freemasonic brotherhood.

We know that throughout the period between 1876-l908 Ottoman Freemasons formed the most effective organisations of opposition to the traditional socio-political order. [8] The Union d'Orient lodge, founded in 1862 in Istanbul and affiliated to the Grand Orient de France, had began recruiting Christian and Jewish members but, by the late 1860s, it also admitted high ranking Muslim officials and military officers, and even some olama, eventually becoming a "Moslem Masonic lobby."[9] It included modernist politicians involved in the Tanzimat reforms and Young Ottoman intellectuals, such as Namik Kemal. The part played by Masonic lodges in the rise and triumph of the l908 Young Turk revolution is now uncontested. A great number of the Committee of Union and Progress (CUP) leaders were either members of Masonic lodges, for example, or were surrounded by close companions and supporters who were Masons. In early 1909, Mehmet Talaat, a Freemason and member of the new government that was anxious to distance itself from French influence, assumed the position of grand master in a newly founded Grand Orient Ottoman lodge, which was autonomous from the French order. Freemasonry thus came out into the open as a fashionable and respected organisation, with an increased membership.

In Istanbul some prominent nineteenth century Iranian politicians and social reformers joined lodges, with the Union d'Orient and Progress seemingly being their favourite choices. The Persian Ambassador, Mirza Mohsen Khan Moshir al-Dauleh, and his fellow-reform minded politician, Mirza Malkom Khan, belonged to the Union d'Orient. Both individuals were also members of the Sincere Amitie lodge of

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[8] M.Shukru Hanioglu, *The Young Turks in Opposition*. New York: Oxford University Press, l995, p.33-34.

[9] Dumont, "La Turquie dans les archives," p.180.

Paris, which was affiliated with the Grand Orient de France. Mohsen Khan was promoted to the rank of Master of the Sincere Amitie in 1860, and in 1874 was awarded the Rose-Croix, a highly prestigious honour, at the Union d'Orient in Istanbul.[10] Both men reportedly became directly engaged with the Ottoman reform movement during their stay in the Turkish capital. Closer contacts between Ottoman and Iranian reformers intensified in the summer and autumn of 1908, when the constitutionalists went into exile in Paris and Istanbul, and the success of the Young Turks offered a hopeful model to emulate.

As far as we know, European Freemasonry did not officially begin its activities in Iran until the early twentieth century. In 1907, the Grand Orient established an atelier in Tehran, called *Le Reveil de l'Iran* (Iran's Awakening), or *Bidari-ye Iran*;[11] and the Grand Lodge of England only recognised its presence after the outbreak of the First World War. Earlier discussions to set up lodges in Tehran and some provincial capitals remained seemingly fruitless, since there is no evidence of their official existence prior to 1907.[12] Mirza

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[10] Ibid.FM2 867.Correspondences: 1868-1874. See also Hanioglu, p.34, footnote # 5; Dumont," La Turquie dans les archives," p.190-91; Hamid Algar, Mirza Malkum Khan: A Study in the History of Iranian Modernism. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973.

[11] Grand Orient de France. Archives. 1871. Tehran: le Reveil de l'Iran. 1907-1910, 1911-1919.

[12] The most comprehensive study to date of Freemasonry in Iran is *Ismail Ra'in*, The book, though highly informative, must be read with caution. It is recklessly filled with factual errors, chronological confusion and a conspiratorial tendency to view all Masons, with very few exceptions, as agents of European imperialism who plotted the Constitutional Revolution to subjugate Iran to their power through Iranian Masons turned traitors to their fatherland. See also Mahmud Katirai, *Framasunri dar Iran*. Tehran, l968; Hamid Algar, "An Introduction to the History of Freemasonry in Iran." *Middle Eastern Studies* VI (l970): 276-296; Ann Lambton, "Secret

Malkom Khan's short- lived *Faramushkhaneh*, or House of Oblivion, is the organisation that mostly resembles a Masonic lodge; but it had no affiliation with any European order, and none recognised it as such. However, he and many other nineteenth century prominent politicians belonged to different French and English lodges in Europe. All without exception had joined them while traveling abroad on official, short or long term diplomatic missions, as students, or while in self-imposed exile. The majority were wellborn members of the ruling elite: Qajar Princes, court or government officials, military officers or tribal leaders. In all cases, the European Masonic institutions welcomed them and greatly facilitated their initiation, bypassing strict rules of procedure. The first to be officially acknowledged in a Masonic bulletin was Askar Khan Orumi Afshar, who was Fath Ali Shah's ambassador at Napoleon's court. He was admitted in a Paris chapter of the Grand Lodge of Scotland on 24 November 1808, and, within three weeks, was promoted to a higher grade of master.[13] Mirza Saleh Shirazi, one of the first students sent to London in 1815 on a government scholarship, joined a chapter of the Grand Lodge of England in 1817. Mirza Saleh brought back to Persia the first printing press, and edited the official government newspaper.[14] In 1857, the shah's envoy to the Anglo-Persian peace treaty in Paris, Farrokh Khan Ghaffari Amin al-Molk, and his entire diplomatic delegation, which included Malkom Khan, joined the Sincere Amitie lodge. According to the bulletin of the Grand Orient, the Conseil viewed this initiation of the Persian mission as a good diplomatic means of

Societies and the Persian Revolution of 1906-1906." St. *Antony's Papers*. Vol. 4,1957.

[13] Ra'in, vol. 1, p. 306-312.

[14] Mirza Saleh Shirazi, *Safarnameh.*

promoting French cultural and political influence in Persian.[15] It is upon his return from that trip to Europe in 1858 that Malkom Khan founded his *faramushkhaneh*, but, reportedly, without the permission of the Grand Orient.

Was the *faramushkhaneh* a Masonic lodge? Opinions vary. Officially, there exists no evidence of any link that it may have had with a European order. Some sources, however, regard it as one such lodge.[16] Regardless of its official status, Malkom's society was, indeed, modelled on the Masonic system of secret cells, strict rules and hierarchical structure. More importantly, its teachings and goals were almost identical to the Grand Orient's, with its positivist faith in science, progress and in humanity's ability to transcend divisive obstacles. The concepts of freedom, the rule of law, national representative government and human rights were eagerly presented to its members as the keys to national redemption. They were told to shun evil, to strive to do good, to fight oppression, to seek and spread learning. Words such as civilisation (in transliterated French), humanity, order, law, universalism and fraternity kept on recurring in his writings. In fact, he is credited for introducing the term *qanun* into Persian vocabulary as distinct from *shariat* or holy law.[17] Malkom Khan was successful in attracting many reform-minded officials and students of the *dar al-fonun*, the newly established school with a modern curriculum where he also taught, which aimed at educating the new elite generation who would assume important government posts, He was initially successful in gaining the support of

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[15] *Bulletin du Grand Orient de France: Supreme Conseil pour la France et les Possessions Francaises*. Vol.15, p. 396-397.

[16] Arthur de Gobineau, *Religions et Philosophies dans l'Asie Centrale*. Paris: Didier, 1865, p. Mehdi Malekzadeh, *Tarikh-e enqelab-e mashrutiyyat-e iran*. Tehran: Soqrat, 1948-49, vol.1, p.119; Ra'in, vol.1, p. 119-121 and sources cited there.

[17] E.G.Browne, *The Press and Poetry of Modern Persia*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1914, p.18.

royal princes and government ministers and even, reportedly, the shah's patronage. Established olama of the capital also figured in the membership list: Zain al-Abidin the Imam Jom'a of Tehran, the mojtahed Seyyed Sadeq Tabatabai, who was the father of Seyyed Mohammad Tabatabai, who was to play a leading role in the constitutional revolution. The list also included many known members of European lodges abroad, such as Mirza Mohsen Khan Moshir al-Dauleh and Mirza Hosain Khan Sepahsalar, two officials who served as ambassadors in Istanbul, and many others who were to join the Bidari lodge when it was established in 1907.[18] The royal prince Jalal al-din Mirza, a great fan of modern European knowledge, a friend of many liberal intellectuals of his time and a writer himself, offered Malkom Khan support and help in setting up the society, including his house where the meetings took place.

Both Jalal al-d-Din and Malkom were basically anti-religious, with their differences arising from a matter of emphasis and tactics; one was openly hostile and the other in a concealed way.[19] It is alleged that the prince hoped to use the network to ascend to the Qajar throne. But he was to die in 1872, even before Freemasons in Istanbul succeeded in helping an Ottoman Freemason- prince accede to power.[20] Zell al-Soltan, the Governor of Isfahan, was more cynical in his manipulation of the society and others that were to emerge in the political scene decades later. He assumed a liberal attitude to win their support in their attempt to ascend the royal throne. Other dignitaries associated themselves with Malkom Khan and his *faramushkhaneh* for the contacts they believed he had

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[18] See list in Ra'in, vol. l, p.513-514; see also Algar, *Malkum Khan*, p.49-50.

[19] Hamid Algar, *Mirza Malkum Khan: A Study in the History of Iranian Modernism*. Berkeley: University of California Press, l973, p.38.

[20] Ibid.p.508, and sources cited there.

with European lodges, seeking either admission in prestigious orders or promotion in ranks.[21]Within five years, however, Malkom Khan and his circle suffered severe reversals of fortune, as his numerous enemies and rivals, enjoying the support of some olamas, staged a cabal fight that led to his loss of favour with the shah. He was charged with sedition, republicanism, religious heresy and conspiracy to eradicate Islam. He was also accused of attempting to create unity between Muslims and non-Muslims: "They wish to establish peace among all religions, be they true or false."[22] In self-defence, Malkom insisted that his *faramushkhaneh* did not propagate ideas incompatible with Shia Islam, arguing that the fact that its ideas are not to be found in the holy texts constitute no proof of their unlawfulness. Moreover, he stated, "Great truths are neither planted in French soil nor manufactured in English factories. The sun of knowledge has no particular sphere; it rises everywhere. If we are clear-sighted enough, we would see that the truth of these secrets belong neither to Europe nor India; it has no specific time or place."[23] Like many of their contemporary counterparts in Europe, Shia religious leaders in Iran generally viewed such universalistic conceptions of religious truths and knowledge as heretical. Malkom Khan was forced into exile, while other officials were dismissed from posts and many were kept under house arrest. But before his banishment from Persia, he made one last attempt to create another secret organisation called *majma'-e adamiyat*, or League of Humanity, as a vehicle to propagate his ideas, though there is very little evidence of its existence. References to it only surfaced in the 1890s, when Malkom lost

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[21] See the letter of a royal prince to Malkom Khan requesting him to write on his behalf to lodges in Paris and Berlin, in Ra'in, Ibid.p.519-521.
[22] Ibid.p.560.
[23] "Ketabcheh-ye faramushkhaneh," printed in Ibid. p.546. See also Bayat, *Mysticism and Dissent*, p.150-152; and Algar, *Malkum Khan*, p.39-40.

his diplomatic post in London and began publishing the opposition paper Qanun.

In 1862 Malkom Khan arrived in Istanbul, ready to make use of his Masonic contacts, chief among whom was the Persian Ambassador, Mirza Hosain Khan Moshir al-Daula, (later known as the Sepahsalar). The latter wasted no time in obtaining a royal pardon for him. Thus cleared, Malkom settled comfortably in the Ottoman capital as a newly appointed special council to the Ambassador, continuing to enjoy protection against recurring troubles with the then Minister of Foreign Affairs in Tehran, and maintaining close ties with fellow Masons. Two Ottoman statesmen, Fuad Pasha and Ali Pasha, who occupied the posts of Foreign Affairs and Prime Minister alternately for the entire period Malkom resided in Istanbul, maintained close collaborative ties with both Malkom and Mirza Hosain Khan, and, reportedly, enlisted their help in formulating the far reaching administrative and legal reforms promulgated by the reigning sultan. Significantly, all four were active members of the Masonic lodges that were most overtly involved in Ottoman politics, including the Union de l'Orient and Progress.[24]

Other contemporary Persian diplomats and Masonic "brothers" collaborated with Malkom in writing essays and disseminating ideas of reform. Mirza Yusef Khan Mostashar al-Dauleh, the author of *Yek Kalameh*, was a member of the Clemente Amitie, another Paris lodge of the Grand Orient order, which recruited adepts from among the Muslim ruling elite. In 1869, Mostashar al-Dauleh received the prestigious Rose-Croix at an elaborate ceremony held at the headquarters of the obedience.[25] His famous essay, written while in Paris, which introduced social liberalism and constitutionalism to Persia, is considered one of the most important modernist

[24] Algar, *Malkum Khan*, p.71.
[25] Ra'in, vol.1, p.479.

works of the time. Like Malkom, Mostashar al-Dauleh cloaked his ideas in Islamic terms, identifying *mashrutiyyat* (constitutionalism) with *mashru'iyy*at (holy law), and, again like Malkom, he was a protégé of Mirza Hosain Khan. They both shared a common admiration for the Tanzimat reforms and a strong wish to accomplish parallel projects in Persia. While he was Consul-General in Tiflis, and later in Paris, Mostashar al-Dauleh continued to exchange ideas with his colleagues in Istanbul. All three included in their circle the Persian Minister in Vienna, Nariman Khan, who had been part of Farrokh Khan's delegation in Paris and had joined the collective initiation ceremony at the Sincere Amitie lodge, and Mirza Mohsen Khan who was then stationed in London. In 1871, Mirza Hosain Khan returned to Tehran to assume the post of Minister of Finance and, a few months later, Prime Minister, inviting Malkom Khan and Yusef Khan to work with him as special advisers. For the first time, all three were in a position to put into practice in Persia their cherished administrative reforms and lay the legal basis for economic development. Centralised government, the rule of law, justice, military and educational reforms, banking and trade regulations, were all part of their ambitious programme to modernise the country, emulating the Tanzimat experiments in the Ottoman Empire.

As elsewhere in Europe and the Middle East, Freemasonic connections allowed sordid profiteering, lofty ideals, the fraudulent, and authentic intentions to work hand in hand. Extensive international networking facilitated financial transactions that mostly benefited their initiators and middlemen, often to the detriment of national interests. The history of the second half of the nineteenth century in Persia is clouded by the shady deals of foreign concessionaires and their Persian representatives. Prominent Masons and genuine liberal reformers were heavily involved in negotiating such

concessions, receiving huge monetary compensation for their services. Baron Julius de Reuter, a wealthy British financier, succeeded in obtaining a concession from Naser al-Din Shah that ultimately would have given him an exclusive monopoly to all of Persia's economic resources. When signed in Tehran in 1872, and then completed in Scotland during the shah's first trip to Europe in 1873, it caused a loud outcry of protest from members of the British government, which viewed its terms as scandalous. Mirza Hosain Khan, the Persian Prime Minister of the time, and his two protégés, Mirza Mohsen Khan and Malkom Khan, were handsomely bribed to bring the treaty negotiations to a successful conclusion.[26] Its revocation a few months later caused the downfall of Hosain Khan, but Malkom Khan was spared.

Masonic activity among Persians abroad continued to have an aura of international prestige and glamour, duly encouraged by European governments, especially France and Britain. For visiting aristocrats and high-ranking officials, membership in a lodge was regarded as a token of diplomatic esteem and cordial esteem on the part of the host. More illustrious tokens were reserved to both Naser al-Din Shah and his successor Mozaffar al-Din Shah, who received portraits adorned with precious stones of the sovereigns hosting them, for example, and, the even more illustrious British Order of the Garter, a decoration usually restricted to Christian noblemen judged to be of the highest merit.[27] Sir Arthur Hardinge, the British Ambassador in Tehran from 1900 to 1905, who was himself a Freemason, recalled:

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[26] Algar, *Malkum Khan*, chapter 5, and sources cited there.

[27] See an account of the honours bestowed on Mozaffar al-Din shah in Sir Arthur Hardinge, *A Diplomatist in the East*. London: Jonathan Cape Limited, 1928, p.288-89.

> I have good private reasons for suspecting… that the Masonic brotherhood in Persia… does number among it certain persons who take advantage of their connection with it for purposes utterly alien to the principles of Freemasonry and seek to use it as a bond of union between the aristocratical miscontents of the Opposition and Court parties and Mahommedan fanatics and revolutionists whose views and objects are entirely different.[28]

Hardinge mistakenly believed that Mirza Mohsen Khan had established a lodge in Tehran. Apparently, the group he was writing about had solicited him to affiliate their "lodge" to the Grand Lodge of England. His eager compliance to the request, which he thought commendable, met with the London Grand Lodge's categorical refusal to cooperate.[29]At this stage, British Freemasonry did not consider it a worthwhile endeavour to have an official presence and representation in Persia. They had other means to exert their influence in the country, and Hardinge himself possessed the right diplomatic skills to use them effectively.[30]

Malkom had been appointed Ambassador in London in early 1873, a post he kept for sixteen years and that gave him plenty of opportunities to enrich himself while relentlessly campaigning for reforms and maintaining his Masonic contacts. Mirza Hosain Khan Sepahsalar died in 1881, in disgrace. Mirza Mohsen Khan Moshir al-Dauleh, however, prospered in his post as Ambassador in Istanbul from 1873 to 1891, an honoured and active member of several lodges, while closely collaborating with Malkom Khan and other reform-minded officials, such as Mirza Ali Khan Amin al-Dauleh. The latter was not a known member of any European lodge, but he

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[28] Cited in Algar, "An Introduction," p.287.
[29] Hardinge, *A Diplomatist*, p.77-78.
[30] See Bayat, *Iran's First Revolution*, p.25-31, and sources cited there.

belonged to Malkom's group of disciples. When Malkom's final political demise occurred in 1889, as a result of another murky affair involving concession mongering, his status and fame as a liberal reformer did not diminish. On the contrary, it permitted his emergence as an unequivocal opposition leader, living in exile in London and publishing the newspaper *Qanun*, which played a vital role in popularising liberal concepts. Moreover, Malkom's voluminous correspondence with Persian officials at home kept him in touch with events. Mozaffar al-Din Mirza, the Crown Prince, wrote to him regularly, requesting information on European affairs and seeking advice on reforms, and reading his writings with interest. "Í am extremely fond of you;" the Prince wrote, "know that I am completely in accord and agreement with you." But he also expressed his reservation: "You yourself must be aware that matters cannot be accomplished all at once; they must ripen gradually."[31]

It was with the *Qanun* newspaper, which was essentially a one-man enterprise, that Malkom fully expressed his Freemasonic inspired views, which he introduced in his columns as the ideology and program of the *majma'-e adamiyat*, or League of Humanity. There is no evidence that the organization actually existed, with a fully- fledged membership; nor is there any link that would tie it to a European Masonic order. Persian sources refer to it as Malkom's second *faramushkhaneh*. He may have tried to set it up before his exile in 1862, keeping the same members as the first body. Most probably it comprised a loose association of his friends, collaborators and disciples. In the 1890s, its primary function was the distribution of the newspaper in Persia and abroad. It is important to note, however, that the League's structure, as described in Qanun, followed a European lodge model, complete with a similar hierarchy and

[31] Algar, *Malkom Khan*, p.143.

strict rules and regulations; and the ideology it propagated was Masonic both in content and form. The first issue appeared on February 12 1890, and bore the slogan "union, justice, progress", which it retained until its last issue in 1898. The "principles of humanity" exposed a positivist outlook, with faith in reason and science, defining the essence of humanity as progress, and the "Religion of Humanity", in obvious emulation of Auguste Comte's conception, despite Malkom's repeated profession of belief in Islam. In fact, he attempted to combine Judeo-Christian and Muslim teachings into one creed, and proclaimed the right of people to worship freely, as long as it followed the "law of the world order," and as long as they were guided by reason. He hailed humans as the most perfect of all beings, capable of progress, with their ultimate goals in life consisting of: the avoidance of evil and the accomplishment of good, the need to abolish oppression and to maintain harmonious relationships with fellow human beings, and to seek knowledge and to promote the cause of humanity. "Humanity means serving the world," he wrote,[32] insisting that only with accord and unity could these goals be attained. Of even greater importance, inasmuch as it indirectly contributed to the development of constitutionalism in Persia, was Malkom's discussion of institutions and governmental power structures.

Qanun was the first newspaper to publicly call for a parliamentarian regime, with the establishment of a popularly elected *majles-e shaura-ye melli*, or national consultative assembly, more than a decade before the revolution.[33] Paradoxically, however, in a clear attempt to win over the olama to his cause, he proposed the formation of an olama composed *majles-e a'zam*, or supreme council, to set the limits of royal power on the basis of Islamic principles, and to enact

[32] Cited in Bayat, *Mysticism and Dissent*, p.152.
[33] *Qanun*, n.6, 17, 25.

laws to ensure the rights of subjects and the implementation of justice; all to be guaranteed by the shah and his ministers.[34] In 1907, both the royalists and the olama turned constitutionalists took these proposals into serious consideration. Malkom's lifelong confusion, inconsistency, contrariness, not to speak of falsehood and fraudulence, and his constant practice of dissimulation of his true belief, would not explain away this paradox. He may have been anti-clerical and even anti-religious; this did not prevent his adoption of a moderate programme of reforms that in no way sought to antagonise the political and religious elite he hoped to recruit for its execution. Privately, he had candidly confessed that he regarded religion as consisting of three distinct parts: beliefs, rituals, and morality, with the latter being the basic root and the others its mere branches. To successfully implement morality, he argued, one is in need of a Supreme Being, the Creator. Christians, Jews and Muslims living in Persia, the Ottoman Empire and the Caucasus must be respected since religion reigned in Asia. Hence, attacking their faith would attract their wrath and mistrust, and one's ends would not be reached.[35] Like many fellow-Masons in Europe, Malkom favoured working with the political establishment and bring about the necessary reforms from within, while also working with the opposition. He attacked the state of lawlessness and tyranny of the government, and demanded laws to ensure security for life and property, echoing the French revolutionary slogans; but he opposed violence as a means to overthrow the regime,[36] despite his relationship with more radical individuals active in the opposition movement.

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[34] Ibid. n. 9, 15, 29.

[35] Malkom's conversation with Akhundzadeh in H.Mohammadzadeh, ed., *Mirza Fathali Akhundov: alefba-ye jadid va maktubat*. Baku, 1963, p.292.

[36] See Qanun, no.8

In 1896 Shah Naser al-Din was assassinated by one such radical. Malkom adopted a more moderate tone; especially as Mozaffar al-Din Mirza ascended the Qajar throne. The new shah had had cordial relations with him, as already stated, and was reputed to have had a more liberal mind than his predecessor. Malkom wasted no time in instructing all his "brothers" in the League of Humanity to obey the new ruler: "Woe to those ignorant and misguided ones who shall commit the slightest treachery to this sinless monarch upon whom all the hopes of Persia depend."[37] In 1898 he ceased publication of his paper. The political climate in Persia proved, indeed, to be more favourable to his condition. He was soon rehabilitated and obtained a post as Ambassador in Rome, an insignificant station at the time, which he accepted rather than returning to Persia, and which he kept until his death in 1908. Although he no longer participated, directly or indirectly, in the politics of the time, the elderly statesman remained mildly satisfied with the social prestige he kept, especially as he maintained the status of patriarchal adviser to the major political players in Persia. In 1905, on the occasion of Shah Mozaffar al-Din's trip to Paris, he wrote another essay, *Neda-ye adalat* (the call for justice), in the form of a memorandum for reforms to be enacted to ensure national survival and the rule of law.[38] This moderate, loyalist, yet liberal treatise, together with many of Malkom's other works was reprinted and circulated in Tehran, as the Constitutional Revolution was gathering momentum, which involved the highly visible participation of the leading mojtaheds. Stripped of its more blatantly Freemasonic ideas, Malkom's message read like a blueprint for a vast reform project best undertaken by the ruling elite itself, albeit its selected, open minded lay and clerical members. Expediently,

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[37] Algar, *Malkum Khan*, p.240.

[38] Mohit Tabatabai ed., Majmu'eh-ye athar-e Mirza Malkom khan. Tehran, l948, p.194-216.

constitutionalism was not identified with revolution. This set the pattern for political behaviour in the early stages of what British officials persistently referred to as the Reform Movement.

Prior to the advent of the Constitutional Revolution, many members of the ruling elite in Persia used Freemasonry as a means for their own ends. The brotherhood acted as a network for social and political self-promotion and not necessarily as an ideological bond tying them to the order. As Hamid Alger pointed out, they appreciated “the unseen but powerful support foreign Masonic connections could secure,” and, perhaps, Masonry proved an attractive “ideology preaching secular progress.”[39]

Liberal politicians of the second half of the nineteenth century had failed in implementing their ideas through any lasting legislative reforms, and their tentative steps toward building new modern government institutions were obstructed by both Shah Naser al-Din’s reluctance to pursue the social changes he had initially espoused and by the ill health of his weak successor. The only institution that survived royal whims was the *Dar al-Fonun* school. Founded in 1851 by Amir Kabir, one of the first reform-minded ministers to have lasted in office long enough to attempt one accomplishment, the school emerged within half a century as the best institute of higher learning offering a modern, European style curriculum that educated children of the political elite and the wealthy. In the early 1900s Nasrollah Khan Moshir al-Dauleh, then Foreign Minister, and his son, Hasan Khan, founded a Political Science Faculty affiliated to the Dar al-Fonun. Its aim was reportedly to provide a solid modern education for the new generation of diplomats and political leaders of the country.[40] Its graduates were guaranteed important government posts and, at the turn of

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[39] Ibid, p.253.
[40] See list of its administrators and instructors in Ra’in, v.1, p.452-53.

the century, came to play a prominent role as the intellectual avant-garde, or in other words, the intelligentsia that rode the tide during the various phases of the Revolution.

From the start the Dar al-Fonun hired European instructors and added European languages in its regular curriculum. By the late 1880s, however, French instructors and the French language began to dominate, as close ties were formed with a newly established French cultural institute, the Alliance Francaise, a branch of the Paris based Alliance Francaise Universelle: Association Nationale Pour la Propagation de la Langue Francaise.[41] As the full title indicates, the Alliance, founded in 1883 by the government, aimed at spreading French global influence through its intensive cultural mission of teaching the French language and about French civilisation and, thus, facilitating France's foreign relations, while promoting French products in the world markets.[42] Branches were established in Germany, Russia, Belgium, Italy, Australia and the United States, as well as in Egypt and the Ottoman Empire. In each town, the Alliance set up a school, with its own administrative board, a library, and an advisory committee recruited from among its employees, the local European community and concerned local nationals. In 1889, Dr.Tholozan, the French physician of Shah Naser al-Din, after lengthy negotiations with the Central Committee in Paris and high- ranking Persian court officials, opened an Alliance school in Tehran and Shiraz. However, given the almost exclusive trade monopoly Britain and Russia enjoyed in Persia, which tolerated no competition, Paris reluctantly reduced the Tehran Alliance activities to teaching alone. Joseph Richard, a Frenchman who had spent decades in Persia and was a members of the Dar al-Fonun faculty, was appointed the first

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[41] Homa Nategh, *Karnameh-ye farhangi farangi dar iran*. Paris: Editions Khavaran, 1996, p.83-114.

[42] Bulletin de l'Alliance Francaise.

director of the school. The committee, headed by Dr.Feuvrier, another French doctor at the royal court, included highly influential Persian royalty, political and intellectual figures, including the director of Dar al Fonun. Paul Henri Morel, an instructor of French at the Faculty of Political Science, was the committee's first secretary. Morel, who had lived in Persia for twenty-five years before his death, was also the publisher of a French gazette called *Echo de Perse*, which had aroused the shah's hostility with its liberal views and was thus subsequently closed down. Alphonse Nicolas, the French orientalist expert on Persian language and culture; Julien Bottin, a French engineer, and Jean-Baptiste Lemaire, Dr.Tholozan's son-in-law and musical director at the shah's court and a future director of the Alliance in Tehran, also figured in the committee, together with many other European and Persian diplomats, businessmen, educators and other professionals.[43]

The Alliance school, nonetheless, attracted the suspicion of the shah. Rumours were spreading in Tehran that its agenda was identical to Freemasonry, with its "revolutionary" agenda threatening the monarchy and Islam. The Comte de Montfort, the Austrian officer hired in 1879 to run the city's police, was reported to be adamantly opposed to the Alliance and its activities.[44] The English Envoy, on the other hand, was no less hostile to the French institution, regarding its cultural activities as being a mere front for French political and economic penetration of Persia. Generally speaking, Shah Naser al-Din and his conservative entourage feared the undue impact of "dangerous ideas" taught at foreign schools. The French Envoy, who was the honorary chairman of the Alliance Committee, intervened to the shah, assuring him that the school

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[43] See list in Nategh, *Karnameh*, p.86-87.

[44] Ibid, p.88-89. See also secret report written for Amin al-Soltan about the Alliance activities in Ra'in, v.2, p.33-36.

was no enemy of either his religion or government.[45] The Alliance, he insisted, carried on no political or religious activities; its only concern was to teach the French language. In an effective manner, aimed at putting an end to the malicious rumour mongering, he offered the shah the title of honorary chairman of the Alliance. The shah, delighted and somewhat reassured, agreed. In a decree dated 18 April 1891, he proclaimed the Alliance to be under his royal patronage, and offered financial support. Classrooms at the Dar al-Fonun and the Faculty of Political Science were put under the disposal of the Alliance in order that it could teach its courses at the school. The new friendly environment helped the school gain increased student enrollment.

However, its full development only occurred when Dr. Justin Schneider took over the directorship of the institute. Schneider was a physician at the French military and was appointed by Kamran Mirza to join the circle of royal physicians in the capital in 1894. In 1899 he was appointed director of the Alliance. He quickly expanded his activities and came to control the *anjoman-e ma'aref*, an educational association privately run by liberal politicians involved in reforming the school system and establishing public libraries. In 1901 he became a member of an advisory board for the Ministry of Education, which declared French to be a compulsory subject for all students aiming to enter government service. He also established an exchange programme with the University of Lyons in France in order to admit Persian students on government scholarships. He succeeded in making the French Ministry of Education recognise the school's diploma as being equivalent to the French baccalaureat, despite the obvious evidence to the contrary, thus allowing his school's graduates admission to universities in France. In his

[45] Balloy to Kamran Mirza, 24 March l891, cited in Nategh, *Karnameh*, p.90.

correspondence with Lyons and Paris, Schneider claimed his efforts could potentially benefit France, since Persian graduates from French establishments would work to promote French interests.[46] He also ensured that better and more numerous instructors were hired from abroad. In 1900, Joseph Vizioz was brought from Istanbul to direct the school. Under his leadership, which was to last until the outbreak of World War One, the school dramatically raised its academic standard and its enrollment. From the initial five students admitted in 1889, numbers had risen to 125 full time students b 1907, a relatively high number for the time.[47] By then, the newly installed Shah Mozaffar al-Din was decidedly more lenient toward the reformers. The Alliance declared its wishes to cooperate with "men of good intentions," no matter what their beliefs or group affiliation, and with all those who love their fatherland and consider France as their second homeland.[48] Most of the Frenchmen involved with the Alliance- Bottin, Lemaire, Morel, Vizioz and Schneider- were acknowledged Freemasons who were affiliated with the Grand Orient, and were to play a vital role in establishing, organising and recruiting for the Bidari lodge, the first of its kind that was officially instituted with the French order's agreement.

In 1899, a French educated medical doctor and Freemason, Zain al-Abedin Loqman al-Mamalek, founded a bilingual school in Tabriz. Known as the *loqmaniyyeh*, it immediately received the full support of the Alliance Francaise central committee in Paris, in both material and financial terms. So did another school established by the constitutionalist and Freemason Mirza Hasan Roshdiyyeh, which came to be known by the name of its founder and served as a model for other

[46] Ibid. p.255.

[47] Nategh, *Karnameh*, p.95-96.

[48] Bulletin de l'Alliance Francaise, v.16, n.77,15 November 1899, cited in Ibid, p.94.

schools set up in Tehran in the early 1900s. Reportedly, the *loqmaniyyeh* was virtually run by the Alliance.[49] When, in 1902, the Alliance opened its school in Tabriz, the cooperation with the other two schools did not cease, as they continued to instruct students who were to take active parts in the events leading to the promulgation of the Constitution a few years later. In October 1906, the French Orientalist Alphonse Nicolas was named Consul in Tabriz and honorary chairman of the Alliance committee. A close collaboration was then forged between the Alliance, the consul and the *anjoman-e Azerbaijan*, which was to be the Tabriz political organisation that played a decisive role in the revolution. Nicolas regularly attended the anjoman's meetings, where he was often requested to lecture on the French Revolution.[50]

On the eve of the revolution, court officials once more voiced their distrust of the "dangerous ideas" taught at foreign schools, compelling the Alliance to publicly reiterate its cultural interests and to deny having any political objectives. The French Charge d'Affaires once again reiterated that it was the Alliance's sole aim to teach French to Persian students, whereas Vizioz's added comments were more ambiguous. He explained that "France is the land of ideas" and that the Alliance's aim was to "plant the seeds of its talents in the midst of people who were in the past overrun by floods."[51] The Alliance school also had its detractors from among the constitutionalists. Yahya Daulatabadi, for example, accused it of wanting to teach French to the exclusion of all other European languages, in order to make it an absolute requirement for any post in the government.[52] No doubt

[49] See Nateq, *Karnameh*, p.63-80.
[50] Ibid, p.106-107.
[51] Ibid, p.94; and Bulletin de l'Alliance Francaise, v.22, n.102, 15 October, 1905, p.286.
[52] *Hayat-e Yahya*, v.1, p.304.

Daulatabadi, rare among his peers in being able to realistically assess France's colonial history, remained sceptical as to its genuine intentions for Persian. One must admit, though, that Daulatabadi was a frequent visitor to the British Legation. More importantly, the Alliance school attracted a sense of resentment from Daulatabadi, and other educators involved in school projects, who viewed government financial and material support as constituting unfair competition. Moreover, Russian and British diplomats in Tehran and elsewhere were equally as disenchanted with French educational activities.

The Alliance, an instrument of the French Republic's "mission civilizatrice," emerged in the early 1900s, in Tehran and Tabriz, as an important centre where members of Iran's ruling elite, the intelligentsia, and the small but socially prominent international circle of diplomats and foreign residents mixed easily. Many were elected officers of its various committees in charge of administrative or fundraising tasks. Others contributed generously to its libraries. Its school graduates, many of whom were active constitutionalists, helped in translating French books on liberalism and revolutionary history into Persian; and, with the outbreak of the revolution, acted as instructors to massive crowds that had sought asylum in mosques and, later, on the grounds of the British Legation.

According to archival sources, on 29 November 1906, Lemaire invited several French and Persian masons to his house in order to discuss the need for a lodge in Tehran, where they could all meet regularly and resume Masonic activities.[53]

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[53] Archival materials for this lodge are scarce. At the Grand Orient de France library on Rue Cadet in Paris, there exists a rather thin file of correspondence. Teheran: Le Reveil de l'Iran. Archives 1871. The information gathered from these exchanges between the Supreme Conseil de l'Ordre and the Tehran lodge members do not reveal much about its activities or even its agenda. However, the list of its membership and the requests made by individual venerables and secretaries are quite illuminating. As noted by other researchers on freemasonry in the Middle

A total of ten individuals met that evening, including the host, Bottin and Morel. Also present were Ibrahim Khan Hakim al-Molk, a physician who had spent ten years in France between 1892-1902 studying medicine, and who joined the Mount Sinai lodge in the late 1890s, where he was promoted Master in 1900, and received the Rose-Croix in 1901; Mirza Fazlollah Lava al-Molk, a high ranking military officer; Mohammad Hasan Shaikh al-Molk Sirjani, a publicist and recent member of the Clemente Amitie; Hajj Sayyah Mahallati, a low-ranking mullah associated with Malkom Khan, who became a publicist and political orator, and was admitted to the Italia Risorta lodge and the Orient de Constantinople, both in Istanbul in 1872; Hajj Hosain Amin al-Zarb, a wealthy merchant who played an important role in the constitutional revolution, and who was the son of the equally influential Hajj Hasan Amin al-Zarb: both were members of Malkom's *faramushkhaneh*; Entezam al-Saltaneh, a government official who had joined a Spanish rite lodge, to which Bottin also belonged, and which, reportedly, used to meet in Tehran in 1898, though there exists no record of its official existence;[54] Ahmad Khan, a court

East, the archives keep their secret; but one can, nonetheless, read between the lines to have a more or less clear idea of some of its activities. Ra'in, v.2, offers more detailed information gathered from private interviews with Iranian masons and articles written by other masons in Persian journals. Again, Ra'in's analysis must be read with caution, so sweeping are his generalizations. Katirai, *Framasonri dar Iran*, is less informative on the lodge. Paul Sabatiennes, "Pour une histoire de la premiere loge maconnique en Iran." *Revue de l'Universite de Bruxelles*: 1977,p.415-442, is based on the Grand Orient's archives; however, he omits all the information available in the correspondence regarding the lodge's direct activities in the politics of the time.

[54] The Bulletin du Grand Orient for the years 1889-1990 mentions a lodge in Persia; in the archives of the order, Julien Bottin is listed as having been, together with Entezam al-Saltaneh, a member of the Orient de Tehran since 1898, a lodge of the Spanish rite. However, in a letter responding to Ra'in's

official and major player in the constitutional movement, known for his successive titles of Vazir Hozur, Qavam al-Dauleh and, lastly, Qavam al-Saltaneh: he was a member of the Clemente Amitie lodge; so was his brother, the equally active politician, Hasan Khan Vothuq al-Dauleh who, apparently, did not join the Bidari lodge until 1910. They all agreed on the need for an official lodge to organise the masons' activities in Tehran. Three days later, seventeen members, including the original ten, met at Hakim al-Molk's house, and unanimously decided to have their lodge affiliated with the Grand Orient de France. According to the list of the earliest members filed at the Grand Orient de France Archives, most were affiliated with the Clemente Amitie, or the Sincere Amitie, two Grand Orient branches favoured by non-European masons. As already stated, the Grand Orient, founded in 1773, ideologically followed a liberal and rationalist trend, identifying with the values of the Enlightenment and, by the late nineteenth century, with positivism and anti-clericalism. Its lodges were also the most active in recruiting members from among non-Christian populations, especially in the Middle East.

On 23 December, they all met in a new local lodge rented by Morel for that purpose, and chose the name Reveil de l'Iran, or *Bidari-ye Iran*, for the lodge, opting for the Scottish rite, which continued to enforce the belief in the Supreme Creator of the Universe and in the immortality of the soul. The choice was of the utmost importance, given the role religion played in Muslei societies and the Middle East in general. On 28 December 1906, the newly elected committee, headed by Lemaire, wrote to the Supreme Conseil in Paris requesting admission to the federation of the order. They promised loyalty and strict adherence to its constitution and general regulation, vowing to work for the development of freemasonry and the

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query, the Grand Orient categorically denies a lodge was ever founded in Tehran in the nineteenth century. Ra'in, v.2, p.16.

welfare of humanity. It took almost a year for Paris to grant its consent. Although the Bidari lodge was only officially incorporated into the Grand Orient in November 1907, the atelier acted as a fully-fledged chapter of the French order from the start. When Lemaire died in February 1907, Morel replaced him as the venerable member of the atelier. Indeed, by all accounts, it was Morel, the energetic torchbearer of Freemasonic values and goals, who shaped the organisation and determined its policies, committing it to the constitutionalists' cause. In March l907, in an eloquent letter to the Supreme Conseil, he appealed for speedier recognition as well as for help and guidance: "The current situation in Iran," he wrote, "puts us under the obligation to act… Though staying out of the political factions, the lodge can and must take benevolent action." And he explained that the majority of the Persian "brothers" were already admitted to some Grand Orient lodges; that they loved and appreciated France and its culture, and had good knowledge of its language.[55] In a letter written after Morel's death in 1910, his successor praised his tireless involvement in the atelier and his positive contribution to its mission. Morel's friendly contacts with the Persian intelligentsia and the ruling elite he had cultivated through his long residence in Tehran, enabled him to provide the atelier, at a time when Freemasonry was highly suspect and its adepts persecuted, with moral support and influence upon public opinion. His home was a safe house and a discreet meeting place for the "brothers."[56]

Indeed, in addition to the names already mentioned, the various lists of membership read like a who's who of

[55] Morel to the Supreme Conseil, March 1907, Reveil de l'Iran file.
[56] Charles Lattes to the Supreme Conseil, 19 October 1910, Ibid.

prominent constitutionalists of the time,[57] from the radicals to the moderates as well as to the conservatives and reactionary royalists who infiltrated the lodge. Seyyed Mohammad Tabatabai, the mojtahed of Tehran and a staunch supporter of the constitutionalists, and one of his sons Mohammad Sadeq, figure in all available lists as frequent participants in the meetings of the lodge.[58]

News of the formation of the Bidari lodge was received with jubilation in Paris. Thus, the Grand Maitre of the Clemente Amitie wrote to Adib al-Mamalek, the poet and one of the first members of Bidari:

> I have no doubt that, should our Masonic brothers in Tehran work together, they would be able to enlighten the most ignorant and most backward of its population… A Masonic centre in the East could, with the diffusion of its principles, revitalise the intelligent and knowledgeable members of the Persian parliament.

He strongly urged his "brothers" to strive to make their compatriots believe in the worthiness of their work, advising them to renounce personal and selfish interests and to promote the common interest of all.

> It is time to show to the modern world that Persia is worthy of [renewed] life, that it can develop its resources, liberate the thought of its people… Cry out loudly: we want to attain spiritual and material liberty, fraternity and equality of all before the law, in accordance to each individual's class, status and mental ability. Promote these

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[57] The lists of the Grand Orient archives mention a total of 168 members in the lodge's sixteen years of existence. Ra'in lists 120 members in v.2, p.446-453.

[58] Mohammad Sadeq admitted in interview with Ra'in that both he and his father were members of the Bidari lodge. Ibid, p.251.

three concepts amongst all those who desire progress for their fatherland.[59]

The membership was highly selective from the start. Most of the members were, with very few exceptions, Muslim, educated, upper class men, many of whom held government or court positions, or were rising in prominence owing to their active participation in the constitutional movement as majles deputies, journalists or public orators. Each individual initiation began with a standard procedure of personal investigation by the atelier committee, followed by a unanimous vote in a special meeting, and final approval from the Paris headquarters. Some unnamed persons' request for admission was denied when the investigation produced unfavourable reports. Paris was then notified to bar any attempt by the rejected individual to seek membership in Paris.[60] In a typical initiation certificate found in the lodge's files in Paris, the new adept signs an "obligation," and swears an oath by the Freemasonry constitution to fully accept its laws as inviolable; to keep everything secret he sees or hears concerning the order, unless explicitly authorised to do so in a manner specifically indicated. He promises to constantly and regularly work with zeal for the Masonic "*0euvre*." The atelier's *venerable*, always a Frenchman until 1912, when Zoka al-Molk was elected the first Persian to hold that post, was directly accountable to the general-secretary of the Grand Orient in Paris, to whom he sent regular reports on the budget and news of the members. The Supreme Conseil persistently refused permission for the translation of the constitution into Persian; and it ordered Tehran "brothers" to carry the rituals in French. Only in 1913

[59] Letter to Adib al-Mamalek, 24 March 1908, printed in Ra'in, v.2, p.61-63.

[60] See the letter of Morel to Supreme Conseil general-secretary, 22 November 1907. Reveil de l'Iran file.

did it give the green light for the Persianisation of the rituals. However, more often than not, the meetings were conducted in both Persian and French; and some preliminary translation of the constitution and the rules and regulation booklet was carried out prior to that date.[61]

The rules and regulations very specifically laid out the members' duties: solidarity, obedience, promotion of Masonic principles and concepts; regular attendance of meetings; absenteeism without valid excuses and the non-payment of membership fees was unacceptable and, upon receiving a third warning, was subject to expulsion, on a temporary or permanent basis, depending on each individual case. Disobedience, failure to execute responsibilities and betrayal of secrets were all harshly punished. All members were accountable to the lodge committee and the Supreme Conseil of the order in Paris. Members were also ordered to spread the mission as far as possible through personal instructions, lectures, publications, assembly meetings and the establishment of new schools and newspapers, in order to inform the public on the benefits of freemasonic principles and philosophy, that is, tolerance, liberty, freedom to pursue knowledge, humanism and universalism. They were urged to replace divisive personal conflicts with unity and accord, and to combat laziness, self-complacency and passive surrender to the status quo. "Awake from the slumber of ignorance" constituted the universal Masonic slogan.[62]

The structure of many secret societies politically active on the eve of the revolution, and in the subsequent constitutional periods, recalls that of a typical Masonic lodge. Here, a pertinent question needs to be addressed: was Nazem al-Islam

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[61] Ra'in states that the French texts were translated into Persian three times, two in a summary form in 1908, and the third in 1912 in full. See v.2, p.120-21.
[62] Ibid, p.123-138, 294-299, 628-635.

Kermani's secret anjoman envisaged as an auxiliary institution when it was founded under the auspices of the mojtahed Seyyed Mohammad Tabatabai and his son Mohammad Sadeq Tabatabai, both members of the Bidari lodge? Was the new school sponsored by the Tabatabai mojtahed able to fulfill the instructions of the Bidari lodge? To be sure, the anjoman's first meeting on 7 February 1905 predates that of the Bidari lodge by some ten months; but future members of the latter organisation already knew each other and were sufficiently well acquainted with Masonic goals and strategies in order to attain them. The repeated slogan, "Awake from the sleep of ignorance," recalls that used by the Masons. In fact, Nazem al-Islam's famous chronicle of the revolution is entitled *Tarikh-e Bidari-ye Iraniyan*, or History of the Awakening of the Iranians. Reveil, Bidari, Awakening, one identical key word of Grand Orient Masonry active in North Africa and the Ottoman Empire. The anjoman's programme also reflected Freemasonic principles and concepts. Of the greatest significance, given its novelty in the Islamic world, is the concept of unity of all members, regardless of their religious differences, who were to be admitted on equal terms provided they share Persia as a common fatherland. Like the Masons, the anjoman's members pledge to abide by its strict rules and regulations, which include an oath of secrecy, unity, solidarity and accord in order for them to devote themselves selflessly to the cause, for the general good. They are to uphold moral behaviour: no lying, no cheating, to work to promote the good and shun the bad, in deed and thought. Their prime objective is to awaken people from their slumber of ignorance, to combat tyranny and injustice, and to spread the concepts of tolerance, humanism and patriotism. In their initiation ceremony, each member pledges allegiance and takes the oath while holding a holy book in hand (be it Zoroastrian, Jewish, Christian or Muslim),[63]

[63] Nazem al-Islam Kermani, *Tarikh-e bidari-ye iraniyan*. Tehran: Bonyad-e

in a manner recalling the European Freemasons' traditional ritual. Political moderation and respect for religion and religious leaders were enforced, despite some occasional radical interventions. The anjoman's activities concentrated on forging alliances between groups and prominent individuals, spreading networks to gather information and divulge news, distributing pamphlets and newsletters throughout the country and across the border into the holy cities in the Caucasus and the Ottoman Empire. Its membership included low-ranking mullahs and civil servants, in contrast to the Bidari lodge, which contained European and Persian upper class men, courtiers and politicians.

At about the same time, another secret society was formed by the two most outstanding orators of the revolution, who were to join the Bidari lodge. It held identical views and objectives as those of Nazem al-Islam, with similar strategies but was more diverse in its membership. By 1907, it came to include many Bidari "brothers", who then formed a "secret committee", often meeting at Hakim al-Molk's house.[64] It was through this committee that the constitutionalists were able to coordinate their programme for legislative reforms in the majles, to mobilise the masses in their defence in the mosques and public squares, and publicise their views in newspapers and pamphlets. It was also this committee that organised the counterattack to the conservative mojtahed Fazlollah Nuri's relentless religious assault on the constitution and the majles deputies. It was also this society, together with Nazem al-Islam, that bore the brunt of the shah's wrath and the military assault of his Russian-officered Cossack troops on the majles and its besieged defendants in June 1908. In the massive wave of arrests that ensued, many lost their lives or were banished

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farhang-e Iran, 1967, v.2, p.46-48.

[64] Hakim al-Molk, "Dar Sahneh-ye enqelab-e mashrutiyyat-e Iran." *Etteleat-e Mahyaneh*, 1327/1948, cited in Ra'in, v.2, p.181-82.

into remote provinces, whilst hundreds were sent to prison, with only a small number of individuals being lucky enough to be able to escape to Europe with the help of the British and French Legations.

Here, again, Morel's role sheds light on the nature of the activity of the Bidari lodge. In addition to the correspondence attesting to his participation on the constitutionalists' side, there exist two letters in the file of the Reveil de l'Iran that he wrote to the general-secretary of the order, that yield a rare glimpse into these activities. He intervened on behalf of refugees, to organise their safe departure to Europe with the French Legation's help. They needed advice and instructions, as well as letters of recommendation, to "our brothers in London," he explained, requesting in the order to give them "all possible help and assistance while in exile."[65] As always Morel was cautious, as a few weeks later he asked the general-secretary to inform the Persian "brothers" Samad Khan Momtaz al-Saltaneh, the Persian Ambassador, and Dr.Jalil Khan, an Iranian physician resident in Paris, and a member of the Clemente Amitie lodge, of the exiles' arrival, and to have them prepared to personally identify all arrivals. Only then, he added, should the enclosed certificates of adherence to the Bidari lodge be handed over to the exiles.[66] Proper identification was needed, lest the badge of the lodge fall into the hands of imposters.

Soon after the bombardment of the majles, Morel declared the atelier to be "*mis en sommeil*," that is, temporarily closed. This did not mean that its committee ceased all activities. On the contrary, a few months before the restoration of the constitution, in July 1909, Morel sent an eloquent message to the Supreme Conseil of the Order in Paris, literally begging

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[65] Morel to the general-secretary of the order, 11 June 1907, Reveil de l'Iran file.

[66] Morel to the general secretary, July 17, 1907. Ibid.

them to use all their influence with the Foreign Ministry in order for it to select diplomatic envoys to Tehran from among men whose ideas would at least be favourable to the constitutionalists. The then charge d'affaires was about to return to France, and Persian Masons were giving considerable import to the nomination of his successor, and with justification. As Morel explained,: "A French charge in Tehran could in times of crisis effectively protect the life of our threatened brothers, without causing any diplomatic complication. Other Legations exercise daily that right to give protection."[67] Morel also insisted that the new envoy should not duly be "a clericalist, a resolute adversary of Freemasonry." In the file at Rue Cadet, there is a note attached to this letter, addressed to the "Masonic brother, President," conveying "the expressed wishes of our friends in Tehran to have a new envoy sympathetic to their movement."[68] The request was apparently received favourably by the French government, for, by January 1910, the new Consul, is referred to as a Mason who, as *ex officio* director of the school committee of the Alliance Francaise, closely collaborated with the atelier's committee.[69]

In an article published in Tehran in 1952, Ibrahim Khan Hakim al-Molk boasted of his role as the founder of Freemasonry in Persia. Freemasonry, he stated, was the best means to acquaint the people of Persia with European systems, and it has born a lot of benefits to the country: "Regardless of what the enemies of Iran are now saying, the progress of the past half-century is due to the devotion and cooperation of the pure-minded masons, who relentlessly worked hand in hand to

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[67] Morel to the general-secretary, 16 April 1909, Ibid.
[68] Unsigned, dated 24 May 1909. Ibid.
[69] See the letter of the new venerable Paul Combault to the general-secretary, February 1910., Ibid.

promote their own sacred and honourable objectives."[70] In his own extensive study of Freemasonry in Iran, Ismail Ra'in claims that the European Powers triggered the revolution for their own imperialist design. The Bidari lodge, he ascertained, was their instrument, and Morel held the strings, instructing and commanding every move. Ahmad Pojuh, the translator of Edward G. Browne's history of the revolution, states that the entire movement was led by well-meaning, patriotic Freemasons, who received their instructions from Europe.[71]

There is no doubt that the organisation, concepts and activities of the secret anjomans owed a great deal to, if not outright borrowed from, European Masonic lodges. They spoke of the need to adopt the "new learning" and teach European languages, science and technology, which must displace the study of mysticism and theological philosophy. Emphasizing the concepts of fatherland and patriotism, they reached out to non-Muslim compatriots, and insisted on the equality of all Iranians before the law. Above all, they were fiercely anti-olama, overtly or dissembling, though not necessarily anti-religious. They depicted tyranny as a two-headed monster, dynastic and religious, and called for the secularisation, or rather, laicisation, of the judicial and educational institutions. Young students formed in newly founded schools were told: "Your destiny, and that of your nation and your children, lies under the banner of science and nothing else… Only through knowledge can you raise your nation to the level of the live nations of this world."[72] The necessity to arouse national consciousness was a fundamental task they all assumed: the mullah, civil servant, courtier and statesman, of aristocratic,

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[70] Ibrahim Hakimi, Asiya-ye Javan, 24 Khordad 1331, cited in Ra'in, v.2, p.47.

[71] Persian translation, 2nd printing, p.41, 119; cited in Ra'in, v.2, p.313.

[72] M.Malekzadeh, *Zendegani-ye Malek al-Motakallemin*. Tehran: Matbu'at, n.d., p.116.

middle class or lower background, Muslim, Zoroastrian, Jewish or Christian, alike. They believed that the responsibility of guarding the fatherland was not exclusive to the olama; it fell to all learned individuals, be they Muslim or non-Muslim, provided they conceived of Iran as their *vatan* (fatherland).[73] Terms such as liberty, equality, fraternity, accord, unity, civilisation, progress, human rights, the rule of law and constitutionalism, frequently appeared in constitutionalist pamphlets. Nasrollah Toqva, a prominent activist and member of the Bidari lodge, and deputy of the first and second majles, wrote an essay for mass circulation, demonstrating the benefits of the constitution.[74] As already mentioned, Nasrollah Toqva also helped translate the constitution of the Order of the Grand Orient. Furthermore, in the various episodes leading to the promulgation of the constitution in 1906, would-be members of the Bidari lodge worked to mobilise students of Dar al-Fonun and its faculty of Political Science, and sent them to assemble crowds in public places, mosques and madrasehs, and to participate in organising the *bast* (asylum) on the grounds of the British Legation. All sources attest to the vital role of Dar al-Fonun students as instructors on the legitimacy of their cause and its objectives.

As this study shows, leading anjoman players shared identical values and goals with Freemasons. But these were essentially values and principles of the European Enlightenment, about which many had read independently from the lodges and their masters. Freemasonry alone could not claim paternity for the French or American Revolutions, or for the Young Turk Revolution, despite the more or less important role they played in each; the same applies for the Constitutional

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[73] Bayat, *Iran's First Revolution*, p.74-75, and sources cited there.

[74] Printed in the journal *Tarbiyyat*, no.421 to 424, 5 shawwal through 14 zay'l qa'da, 1324, reprinted in H.Mohit-Mafi, *Moqadamat-e mashrutiyyat*. Tehran: Ferdausi, 1984, p.149-161.

Revolution in Iran. More importantly, as I have discussed it in my last book, the various anjomans had overlapping membership, with an ideological composition ranging from West European liberalism, to Russian social-democracy, to Shia sectarian radicalism and religious dissidence, with the basic values of the Enlightenment forming an irresistibly attractive common ground. The constituency for Freemasonry was there, but only as fellow-travellers to a destination that ultimately did not, correspond to that of European Masons. Even more significantly, Persian Freemasons were by no means acting in unison, or aiming at identical goals. Ideological differences, class distinction and personal ambition created a severe rift among their ranks, making them vulnerable to manipulation by compatriots or foreigners.

The story of the majma'-e adamiyat, the third faramushkhaneh inspired by Malkom Khan's principles of humanity, confirm this observation. It was established with the approval of the latter in 1904 by Abbas Qoli Khan Qazvini, a minor civil servant attached to Malkom and fellow member of the reformist-masonic ministers' circle, who only emerged to prominence through his organisation. It had four branches in Tehran and many others in the provinces, all coordinated by a council of twelve trustees and directed by Abbas Qoli Khan. Its structure and rituals were copied on Malkom's previous secret societies; its membership recruited from among the ruling elite and Qajar princes, some of whom were genuine constitutionalists, others reactionaries, and many more opportunists. All contributed generously to its fund. By 1907, when Shah Mohammad Ali began his attack on the majles and its legislated reforms, Abbas Qoli Khan worked out his deliberate policy of reconciliation between the shah and the deputies, in opposition to both the radicals on the left and Fazlollah Nuri's camp on the right, and in support of "a union

of courtiers and politicians dedicated to moderate reforms."[75] Upon his return to Tehran, in the spring of that year, Amin al-Soltan joined the anjoman, where he was welcomed. The Bidari lodge's distrust of Abbas Qoli Khan and his society intensified, with Taqizadeh and fellow-radicals determined to obstruct Amin al-Soltan's come back to power. The fact that the Adamiyat pseudo-masonic lodge lacked legitimate European credentials won them the support of the Fremcj trustees of the Bidari lodge. Amin al-Soltan was assassinated a week after his initiation into the Adamiyat society. His assassin, who then committed suicide on the spot, reportedly belonged to the Transcaucasian Social-Democratic group secretly active in the revolution. Abbas Qoli Khan was briefly arrested on suspicion of complicity with the assassin, whose motive was given a different colouring than the underground radicals'.[76] However, once released, the popularity of his society increased dramatically among the courtiers, who rushed to join it, with the shah himself leading the way. It is important to note here that both the British and Russian envoys had by that time decided to jointly urge the shah to cooperate with his ministers and swear an oath to abide by the constitution in an official majles ceremony. In a personal letter to Malkom, then in Rome, the monarch conveyed his enthusiasm in adopting the principles of humanity and his gratitude for the expatriate's lasting effort to help in the country's progress, and pledging to abide by the rules and principles of the society. In fact, he wrote that he regarded himself as the "first guardian of Adamiyat rights."[77] Displaying their disbelief in the shah's new posturing as a champion of human rights, many defected from the society to form a separate anjoman called *Hoqua (rights).*

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[75] Adamiyat, *Fekr-e azadi*, p.254-255. See list of the council members in Ra'in, v.1, p.636, and the membership list, p.677-691.
[76] Bayat, Iran's First Revolution, p.192-195, and sources cited there.
[77] See the letter in Ra'in, v.1, p. 655-656.

A battle of the pen ensued between the defectors and the Adamiyat society,[78] fuelled by members of the Bidari lodge. Among the defectors were two Qajar brothers, Solaiman Mirza and Yahya Mirza, who would then join the ranks of the radicals in defence of the shah's renewed onslaught on the constitution within weeks of his initiation. A bomb explosion near the royal carriage convinced the shah of the futility of his efforts at reconciliation. Once more, Abbas Qoli Khan was arrested on charges of complicity; again, he was quickly released. But his organisation lost its effectiveness and was not to recover, with the June 1908 coup precipitating its demise. In 1909, following the restoration of the constitution, the Bidari lodge's first official act was to pronounce the illegitimacy of the Adamiyat pseudo-lodge. The French atelier remained indirectly active in the politics of the second majles: its prestige attracting the most prominent members of successive cabinets, majles deputies and politicians in and out of office. But some of its earliest adepts stopped attending its meetings.

The Bidari lodge did cooperate with their Iranian "brothers," providing them with necessary concepts, strategies, protection, and even ways and means to propagate their ideas. In the period of the second majles, it continued to appeal to the Supreme Conseil of its order in Paris to use its influence with the French government, and to have Masons selected to come to Tehran in different posts, such as diplomats, educators, financial experts and other advisers. Ideologically, the Bidari's impact proved invaluable, specifically in promoting constitutionalism and secularism. In this, they were no different from those British diplomats in Tehran who had genuinely sympathised with the constitutionalists and offered the help that proved to be vital in the course of events; or from the Transcaucasian Social-Democrats who lent them a no less resourceful hand in their ideological and political combats.

[78] See *Habl al-matin*, 24 zay'l qa'deh 1325.

Positive in a self-serving manner, or damning in a conspiratorial fashion, accounts of the role of Freemasonry in the revolution understate the authenticity of the movement for reform we now call modernisation. They also overlook the fact both the British and the French Masons, no matter how genuine their sympathy, were powerless in ultimately being able to prevent their respective governments from harming the cause they had espoused, resulting in a betrayal of those very universal values of human rights and liberty that they upheld. National interests and international power politics had priority over commitments to solidarity with their “brothers” in Persia. Thus, what we learn about the Freemasons’ involvement in the revolution is less important than how this fact is woven into its history, of which it constituted but one thread among many others.

Ottoman Freemasonry and Laicity

Paul Dumont

We owe to Niyazi Berkes a remarkable work on the emergence and development of the notion of secularism in Turkey during the nineteenth century. However, the history of the concept of laicity, or *nonconfessionality* of the state*,* in the last decades of the Ottoman Empire remains still to be written. For example, when we open some dictionaries dating from the end of the nineteenth century, such as the Ottoman-English dictionary of Sir James Redhouse, or one of the numerous editions of the Ottoman-French dictionary of Bianchi and Kiefer, we quickly discover that such terms as "laik" or "laiklik" are not to be found in these works. The Ottoman authors of the nineteenth century are familiar with the concept of "laicity", which they frequently encounter in French political literature, but they do not know how to translate the term into Turkish. In a text written in 1909, Ahmet Şuayb, an intellectual who brought economic and social sciences into Turkey, uses the Ottoman terms of "Hürriyet-i Mezhebiye" in order to convey the notion of "laicity" which call to mind the notion of "liberty of freedom" much more than the notion of the non-intervention of the state in religious affaires, or the disconnection of state and religion.[1] In the same years, Ziya Gökalp renders the French term "laicité" in Turkish as "la-dinî", a translation that is far from satisfactory. The term "la-dini" suggests the idea of "without religion" and also encapsulates the notion of "enemy

[1] See Aykut Kansu, « 20. Yüzyıl Başı Türk Düşünce Hayatında Liberalizm », in Mehmet Ö. Alkan (ed.), *Modern Türkiye'de Siyasi Düşünce. Cumhuriyet'e Devreden Düşünce Mirası. Tanzimat ve Meşrutiyet Birikimi,* Istanbul, Iletişim yay., 2001, pp. 277-295.

of religion".[2] One has to wait until the Kemalist revolution, in the 1920s and 1930s, to see the new term "laiklik" appear in Turkish vocabulary.

However, from the Tanzimat era onwards, that is, the period of reforms that the Ottoman state began to implement in the late 1830s, one observes a trend towards disconnecting the state from religion. Throughout the nineteenth century, the sultans and the Ottoman administration introduced a multitude of schemes and institutional novelties that led to a kind of de facto laicity, or non-confessionality, in Turkey. Thus, the Ottoman legal system was thoroughly transformed, with new judicial codes being imported from Europe Hence, some of the powers that had been attributed to religious judges were transferred to lay courts. Major changes also took place in the educational system; new schools were founded by the state that resembled French schools of the same period, which tended to minimise the role of religion in educational institutions. Although the sultan was supposed to be endowed with religious authority, the new trends emphasized the secularity of the state, with religion being mildly but persistently pushed aside.

In such a context of furtive laicisation of society (a laicisation that Ottomans did not know even how to name) what was the attitude adopted by ottoman Masonic lodges? What was their opinion on the question of disjointing State from religion? If one looks at things from the French point of view, the question is far from being pointless. Indeed, in the last years of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th, French freemasonry was fully obsessed over the problem of relations between State and religion. Did the French

[2] See Jean-Paul Burdy and Jean Marcou, « Laïcité/Laiklik : introduction », in *Cahiers d'études sur la Méditerranée orientale et le monde turco-iranien,* n°19, janvier-juin 1995 (internet version : http://www.ceri-sciencespo.com/publica/cemoti/textes19/intro19.pdf)

anticlerical mood cross the seas and infiltrate the Ottoman Masonic network? Such is the question I shall do my best to deal with in this presentation.

Given the archival material I have been able to examine, I cannot maintain that the image I shall be drawing is a complete one. Unfortunately, we shall have to be content with a very sketchy approach. For my part, I know nearly nothing about what was taking place in British or Italian Masonic lodges. Moreover, I know even less about Greek, Romanian, German, Spanish and Portuguese lodges. Although the bibliography concerning lodges in the Ottoman Empire is constantly expanding, much still remains to be uncovered.

The French Masonic Network

Before going further, it is necessary to present here in a few words the French Masonic network in the Ottoman Empire.[3] In the second half of the nineteenth century, the capital of the Ottoman Empire, Istanbul, was also the main Masonic centre of the country. Towards the end of the 1860s, it already comprised some 15 lodges, all of them connected to various European obediences. Four lodges were dependant on the Grand Orient de France. The most active and successful was the *Union d'Orient*, a lodge that had nearly 170 members by the end of the 1860s, many of whom belonged to the strata of civilian and military high officials in the Ottoman state. Another French lodge, named la *Renaissance*, was established in the same city in 1908 and went on to play an important role during the Young Turk Revolution.

[3] For more detailed information about this network, see P. Dumont « Une langue et des idées pour changer le monde : les franc-maçonneries d'obédience française dans l'Empire ottoman », in Patrick Cabanel (ed.), *Une France en Méditerranée. Ecoles, langue et culture françaises. XIXe-XXe siècles,* Paris, Creaphis, 2006, pp. 339-360.

Another important Masonic centre was the city of Smyrna. At the time of the French Revolution this important commercial city witnessed the creation of a lodge bearing the highly significant name of “Nations Réunies”. In the 1860s it acted as an umbrella lodge that sheltered at least six other lodges, one of which, the “Mélès”, which was founded in 1868, belonged to the Grand Orient de France. A second French lodge, named “Homère”, was to be created some years later.

A third important seat of Masonic activity was Egypt. The construction of the Suez Canal and other major economic projects had spurred several thousand Europeans to settle in the country. As a result, by the 1860s one can find at least six workshops of the Grande Loge de France in the cities of Alexandria, Ismailia, Port-Said and Cairo, without counting the large spectrum of lodges linked to other European obediences. One can also witness a new wave of Masonic fever in this part of the Ottoman Empire at the end of the 1880s, when Egypt came under British administration.

Finally, we must mention three centres of lesser importance: Cyprus, where several lodges were set up in the years that followed the British occupation of the island; the Syrian-Lebanese centre, especially Beirut, where the French backed the foundation of various Masonic workshops as from the middle of the 1860s; and the Macedonian centre, with its capital, Salonika. Here, it seems that a lodge called “l’Amitié” existed for some time in the years of Napoleonic expansion (before 1804); we also know that in 1864 the Italian *Grande Oriente* had managed to set up a workshop, entitled “Macedonia”, which was going to gave rise, many years later, to the “Macedonia Risorta”, famous for the role it played in the build up to the Young Turk Revolution. By the beginning of the twentieth century, Salonika, together with cities of lesser importance such as Cavalla and Janina, had a total of more than ten lodges representing a wide range of Masonic powers,

including the Italian *Grande Oriente*, the French *Grand Orient* and *Grande Loge*, the Greek *Meghali Anatoli*, the Spanish *Grande Oriente*, the Romanian *Loja Nationala* and the Droit Humain, an international order created by Maria Deraismes, which offered membership to both sexes.

It should be underlined that this geographical distribution of Ottoman Freemasonry is in no way surprising. Quite logically, lodges were established in the main political and economic centres of the Empire. These cities also had close links with Europe in the commercial domain but also on a cultural level. Finally, it is easy to observe the strong parallels between the Masonic geography of the Empire and that of European colonial expansion. It was not by mere chance that lodges were most numerous in regions most open to Western penetration (Syria, Lebanon, Egypt, Cyprus), or in places characterised by their political instability (Macedonia).

The Question of the "Great Architect of the Universe"

In principle, all the Masonic creeds represented in the 0ttoman Empire displayed an ostentatious consideration for religious beliefs. Masonic initiations had a strongly religious flavour and lodges insisted on the necessity of building a universal religion, permeable to all creeds. In his *Hab-nâme*, Edhem Pertev Pacha, who had been instructed into Freemasonry in a French lodge, describes an initiation ritual where the master of ceremonies is seen as a "priest". The author of the pamphlet insists on the religious aspect of the ceremony and presents Freemasonry as a sort of crypto-Christian organisation that sought to convert Muslims to Christianity.[4]

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[4] A summary in Turkish of the Habname is given by K. S. Sel, Türk Masonluk Tarihine Ait Üç Etüd, Istanbul, Mimar Sinan Yay., 1972, pp. 47-61. See also Thierry Zarcone, *Secret et Sociétés secrètes en islam. Turquie, Iran et Asie Centrale, XIXe-XXe siècles*, Milan-Paris, Archè, 2002.

Several Masonic texts produced in the Ottoman Empire during the same years insist on the importance of religious values for Freemasons. However, in France, the climate was somewhat different. Within the lodges of the Grand Orient de France, in particular, quite a number of brethren considered that belief in the immortality of the soul or the existence of god should not be a compulsory component of Masonic ideology. Some brethren even considered that total freedom of thought should be one the main virtues of Freemasonry and demanded the removal from the Masonic ritual of the pledge mentioning the Great Architect of the Universe.

The Grand Orient de France soon sought to export such ideas to the Ottoman Empire. As early as June 1866, when the belief in God and the immortality of the soul was still part of the Masonic credo in France, the Union d'Orient lodge in Istanbul accepted to confer a Masonic initiation on a Frenchman-Gustave Flourens- who refused to swear a Masonic oath to the Great Architect of the Universe. Flourens not only declined any kind of reference to the existence of God, but went as far as proclaiming himself an atheist. This episodeprovoked an enormous scandal in the Masonic circles of the Ottoman Empire, the more so because the Worshipful Master of the lodge who had initiated Flourens was Louis Amiable, a major figure in French masonry.[5] He had close links with the leading circles of the Obedience in Paris and was the author of several important Masonic works. What is more, Gustave Flourens was also a prominent individual, being the son of a professor who held a chair in the prestigious College de France. He himself had been appointed professor in the same institution at the age of 26, but had been forced to resign

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[5] For more details, see P. Dumont, « La Turquie dans les Archives du Grand Orient de France », in J.-L. Bacqué-Grammont and P. Dumont (ed.), *Economie et Sociétés dans l'Empire ottoman,*Paris : CNRS, 1983, pp. 181-182.

his chair because of his anti-religious views. In 1866 he participated in the Cretan insurrection against the Ottoman government and was appointed “Ambassador of Crete” by the insurgents to the Kingdom of Greece. Soon after, however, he was expelled from Greece and had spent some time in Istanbul. A few years later, the same Gustave Flourens was to be one of the leading members of the revolutionary commune in Paris. Due to his military skills, the insurgents put him at the head of one of their militia units. He was killed in 1871, at the age of 36, while defending Paris against the armed forces of the Versailles government.[6]

The initiation of Flourens in Istanbul created considerable turmoil. Several brethren had immediately decided to leave the “Union d’Orient” and other French lodges. Paradoxically, however, this period of disgrace was not to last long and the same French lodges of Istanbul reached the height of their prestige and power in the years which immediately followed the initiation of an atheist.

In 1877 the Grand Orient de France decided to remove mention of the Great Architect of the Universe from the rituals of the obedience. This decision might have convinced members of the Ottoman ruling class to opt for British lodges or other Masonic institutions that had remained faithful to the traditional rite rather. However, it is very striking to observe that from the beginning of the 1880s onwards, a sizable number of lodges of the Grand Orient de France were to be created in the Ottoman Empire, especially in Arab lands, such as Syria, Lebanon and Egypt.

The development of French Freemasonry in the 1880s should probably be considered as the result of a strategic choice of local notables who preferred to bet on French colonial expansion rather than on British interests. However, it

[6] On Gustave Flourens, see for instance the French *Encyclopaedia Universalis*.

might also have been the product of an ideological inclination. Indeed, on the whole, French lodges were much less conservative and conformist than lodges loyal to traditional Freemasonry. They contributed to the dissemination in the Ottoman Empire of the ideology of the French Enlightenment; they also offered a space for free debate on all manner of fashionable themes, such as socialism, reform of political institutions, positive sciences, the equality of genders and the distribution of wealth. Given the success obtained by French lodges, especially in places like Macedonia, Egypt and Syria, one is entitled to think that the Ottoman elite was in great need of such spaces of intellectual freedom.

Masonic Anti-Clericalism

In France, from the 1870s onwards, anti-religious feelings and anti-clericalism constantly gained ground in Masonic circles linked to the Grand Orient. But in the Ottoman Empire, the situation was somewhat different. During the last decades of the nineteenth century, several French lodges displayed an ostentatious deference for religious feelings and tended to forbid any kind of debate on religion and local politics within Masonic workshops. The reason for such a cautious attitude is self-evident. In a country like the Ottoman Empire, where so many religions and cultures intermingled, and where the sultan was also the head of the leading religion, discussions on such topics, even if they took place within the privacy of Masonic lodges, could lead to very hazardous situations.

As a matter of fact, several French lodges included several members of the imperial police in order to avoid suspicion and mistrust, Thus, in the 1860s the "Union d'Orient" included four or five officials from the ministry of Police.[7] Similarly, the Armenian lodge "Ser", which was also part of the Grand Orient

[7] See P. Dumont, « La Turquie dans les archives du Grand Orient de France », *op. cit.*, footnote 29, p. 180.

network, could count on the protection of a spy who worked for the imperial security services.[8] It is worth remarking that a number of workshops also counted among their members some Muslim men of religion. At times these clerics could also provide a protective role.

If French lodges of the Ottoman Empire were doing their best to avoid debates about religion, their attitude was somewhat different when the religious clergy was concerned. From the 1880s onwards, several workshops displayed a straightforward anti-clerical stance, largely directed at the catholic missionaries who were so numerous in the Ottoman Empire. It is worth remarking that such an aggressive attitude could only please the Ottoman administration. The Istanbul government and local Ottoman officials were also doing their best, during these years, to increase the number of administrative and general obstacles, In such an atmosphere of mistrust between the Ottoman regime and Western religious institutions, the Masonic lodges were in a position to confront Christian missionaries without exposing themselves to any rebuke from the local administration.

It was from Beirut, where catholic missions were particularly active, that the Parisian centre of the Grand Orient received the first letters that repeatedly denounced the intrigues of the Catholic clergy. In a petition dated April 28 1876, signed by all its members, the “le Liban” lodge pointed the finger at the calumnies proffered by the Catholic Church against Freemasonry.[9]

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[8] P. Dumont, *ibid.,* pp. 184-188.

[9] For this set of documents, see Eric Anduze, *La franc-maçonnerie coloniale au Maghreb et au Moyen-Orient (1876-1924), un partenaire colonial et un facteur d’éducation politique dans la genèse des mouvements nationalistes et révolutionnaires,* 2 vols., doctoral dissertation, université Marc Bloch-Strasbourg, 1996, vol. 2, pp. 489-495.

A few years later the charges against the Catholic missions became more specific. In a document dated January 17 1881, the members of the Company of Jesus, that is the Jesuits, are described as a most influential element in Lebanon, that know how to take advantage of their position to manipulate women. They are also presented as the harshest enemy of Freemasonry and any kind of philanthropic activity. According to this message, the Jesuits had spread the news that Freemasons were plotting against the Ottoman state.[10]

Accused of continuously making schemes of all sorts, the Jesuits were also to be held responsible, in 1885, for the loss of Masonic documents that had been entrusted to the post office in Beirut. In 1901, a member of the Sursock family, one of the most prestigious components of the local bourgeoisie, described in a letter to the Grand Orient a situation of permanent guerrilla conflict between the Jesuits and Lebanese Freemasons. He reported that according to the Jesuits, Freemasons could be divided into two categories: bandits and rascals. Members of the lodge, on their part, were busy translating anti-Jesuit pamphlets into Arabic, which they intended to distribute free of charge wherever they could- even in churches.

In other parts of the Eastern Mediterranean, the atmosphere was more or less the same. For instance, in Cairo, the worshipful master of the "le Nil" lodge sent a report to the Grand Orient, in January 1897, in which the Jesuits are once more cast in the guise of defendants. They are accused of bribing the Egyptian authorities in order to buy property at a good price, with the aim of covering the country with religious schools. The only way to counter such a scheme, adds the

[10] Letter of the « Le Liban » lodge dated january 17, 1881. See E. Anduze, *ibid.*, p. 497.

author, is to establish a non-confessional school with the support of the French Ministry of Public Instruction.[11]

In the Ottoman capital, the main standard-bearer of anti-clericalism was the “Etoile du Bosphore”, a workshop set up in 1858. At the end of the nineteenth century, this lodge was considered to be a most problematical institution (by whom? The Grand Orient de France). Brémond d’Ars, a French diplomat who had good connections with the headquarters of the Obedience in Paris, wrote that its members were “half spies and half scoundrels”.[12] However, they were very active in the field of anti-clerical propaganda. The files concerning this lodge in the archives of the Grand Orient de France are bursting with reports about the schemes of Papist groups in Istanbul. One of the officers of the lodge, an Armenian mason called Mihran Marachian, was especially productive in the field of anti-clerical pamphlets. Religious schools constitute his main target and he repetitively suggests the foundation of lay schools was under Masonic influence.[13]

Naturally, Jesuits and other Catholic congregations were not powerless in the face of such lively anti-clerical agitation. As a matter of fact, they managed to counteract Masonic propaganda with the utmost efficiency. They published anti-Masonic pamphlets and used the parochial bulletins to spread all sorts of negative views concerning their enemies. They were so efficient that most Levantine Catholics regarded Freemasonry as an institution serving the aims of the devil. What added to the efficiency of religious congregations was the fact that they could count on the support of French

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[11] See Karm Wissa, « Freemasonry in Egypt 1798-1921. A Study in Cultural and political Encounters », *Bulletin* (British Society for Middle Eastern Studies), vol. 16, n° 2, 1989, pp. 143-161.

[12] Archives of the Grand Orient de France, *Etoile du Bosphore*, note dated october 23, 1901.

[13] Ibid., letter dated december 4, 1901.

diplomatic and consular agents in the Orient. Indeed, around 1900, French authorities displayed an overemphasized antipathy in French territories for anything religious. In Oriental lands things were totally different. Here, consuls and ambassadors opted for realism, as they considered religious institutions to be an important asset worthy of full support.[14]

Mobilisation in Favour of Non-Confessional Schools

In Ottoman lands the main contribution made by Catholic congregations to local life came in the form of schools. Hundreds of schools were founded throughout the Eastern Mediterranean. According to the French writer Maurice Barrès, there were more than 300 such schools in the Ottoman Empire by 1905.[15] On the eve of the First World War, more than a hundred congregational schools were established on the territory of present-day Turkey.[16] In regions permeable to French influence (Istanbul, Smyrna, Western Anatolia, Macedonia, the Black Sea coastal region, Cilicia, Lebanon, Egypt), nearly all the cities possessed at least one congregational school. Thanks to railway lines, this network of schools also covered lands that were previously not accessible to missionary penetration. Thus, both the Jesuits and the French congregation of Assomptionnists had schools in almost

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[14] On the policy of French authorities in the Levant, see for instance Jean Riffier, *Les œuvres françaises en Syrie (1860-1923),* Paris, l'Harmattan, 2000.

[15] Maurice Barrès, *Faut-il autoriser les congrégations ?,* Paris, 1923, Plon-Nourrit, p. 533.

[16] Robert Mantran, « Les écoles françaises en Turquie (1925-1931) », in P. Dumont and J.-L. Bacqué-Grammont (eds.), *La Turquie et la France à l'époque d'Atatürk,* Paris, Association pour le développement des études turques, 1981, pp. 179-189.

all the places where there was a station of the Anatolian Railway Company: Izmit, Eskişehir, Konya and Kayseri.[17]

Naturally, those brethren of the Grand Orient de France who devoted themselves to the struggle against the Catholic Church did not fail to pay attention to the educational activities of congregations. One of the most explicit Masonic documents on this issue is a detailed report written in 1901 by a professor of the Imperial Lyceum of Galatasaray connected to the "Etoile du Bosphore" lodge.[18] In this report, we are presented with a complete panorama of the Catholic educational network in Istanbul. Written by a specialist of pedagogical questions, the document gives minute information on school programmes, manuals used in classrooms, the system of awards, school clubs, daily schedules of class work, etc. Obviously, the report does not aim at giving a positive image of congregational education. On the contrary, its objective is to demonstrate that religious schools tend to foster a sense of submission and deference in children rather than intelligence, and that they divert the energy of youngsters to the benefit of the Church.

In Lebanon and Egypt, the target was the same, in other words it is the educational activities of congregations that were viewed as the main danger. Egyptian and Lebanese masons considered congregations guilty of giving priority to the interests of the Catholic church; they were also responsible, in their eyes, for spreading a dogmatic form of knowledge, for supporting despotism and for being alienated from the real needs of the time. A report written by the worshipful master of

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[17] See Christiane Babot, *Les missions jésuites et assomptionnistes en Anatolie (Turquie) à la fin de l'Empoire ottoman et au début de la République turque,* doctoral dissertation, université Marc Bloch-Strasbourg, 2000

[18] Archives of the Grand Orient de France, *Etoile du Bosphore*, report titled « Les français et l'enseignement à Constantinople. L'influence française, ce qu'elle aurai pu et dû être, ce qu'elle est devenue, [Constantinople], 1901, 84 pages.

the Egyptian “Les Amis du Progrès” lodge in 1907 placed special stress on this aspect of congregational activities in the Near East, emphasizing the inadequacies of feminine education.[19]

What was to be done in order to hinder the expansion of congregational education? The Grand Orient de France tackled this question in its convent of 1869. It had asked all masons to participate, whenever they could, in actions aimed at the secularisation of schools. The new educational system it advocated was not only to be non-confessional but it was also to be free and compulsory for all children. In parallel to this mobilisation of masons, various institutions- especially the “Ligue de l’Enseignement” (“teaching league”) established in 1866- launched active campaigns to promote a lay Republican school network open to all.

It was during these same years that the Imperial Lyceum of Galatasaray was created in the Ottoman Empire. Established in 1868, this prestigious institution was a typical product of the new educational ideology, which had developed in France and that the French Ministry of Public Instruction had managed to export to Turkey. It constituted a first breach in the monopoly of congregational education in the Ottoman lands.

While the Lyceum of Galatasaray was being instituted in Istanbul, Lebanese Freemasons of the Grand Orient de France were also pursuing educational matters. According to a report sent by the “Le Liban” lodge, it had spent important sums of money since 1868 on the “schooling of the poor” and the “instruction of orphans”.[20] In 1876, the same lodge endeavoured to create its own network of schools, where “children of Freemasons and children belonging to the poorest

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[19] See E. Anduze, op. cit., vol 2, p. 455 (letter of the worshipful master of “les Amis du Progrès”, April 7, 1907).

[20] Archives of the Grand Orient de France, *Le Liban*, petition dated april 1876.

classes of society could be educated together, without any distinction of religions and sects".[21]

It seems that this project did not meet with success. There were so many congregational schools in Lebanon, many of them supported by French consular and diplomatic circles, that non-confessional schools had very little chance of success. However, for a short period at the very end of the nineteenth century, the Freemasons of Beirut supported a non-confessional school, directed by a Henry Olivier, a Freemason affiliated to the Grand Orient de France.[22] The school met with serious difficulties and had to put an end to its development schemes. But a few years later, the "Mission laïque française", a very active institution with strong Masonic ties, finally succeeded in establishing a lay school that still exists today.[23] It is interesting to remark that from the 1880s onwards the "Liban lodge" counted among its brethren several teachers.[24] Although these teachers worked for congregational schools, they were most active in advocating a scheme that would lead to the creation of non-confesionnal education in Lebanon.

The situation in Egypt was somewhat similar. Here French Freemasons did their best to obtain financial support from the French government in order to develop a network of non-confessional schools.

In the meantime, several members of the French obedience had managed to receive posts in the Egyptian educational system, thus gaining the means to enact their pedagogical

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[21] Archives of the Grand Orient de France*, loc. cit*. (see also E. Anduze, *op. cit*., vol. 2, p. 490).

[22] According to a letter sent to the Grand Orient de France by *Le Liban* lodge on the 29th of August 1902. This letter is also mentioned by E. Anduze, *op. cit.,* vol. 2, p. 506.

[23] See André Thévenin, *La mission laïque française à travers son histoire 1902-2002,* Paris, Mission laïque française, 2002, pp. 87-91.

[24] According to the « tableau de loge » dated 1883, reproduced by E. Anduze, *op. cit.,* vol. 1, pp. 166-167.

vision. One of these French masons was Peltier Bey, former inspector of French primary schools who had settled in Egypt. In 1885 he had been appointed director of the High School of Teachers in Cairo. While occupying this position he had published, together with some colleagues, a "Course of French language to be used in the schools of the Orient".[25] He had also recruited a large number of French teachers who had been sent to different schools throughout the country. These teachers formed part of a non-confessional educational system built up under the influence of the Grand Orient de France and educational institutions tied to the Masonic obedience.

In Istanbul, Masonic reaction to congregational schools is comparable to that of masons in Beirut and Cairo. At the beginning of the twentieth century brethren from the "Etoile du Bosphore" developed schemes to create a non-confessional school based on Masonic ideas. However, it was easier to conceive such projects than to realise them. Masons had the financial means to develop educational plans because most of them belonged to the upper layers of the Ottoman bourgeoisie. They also had easy access to the Ottoman administration. Members of the upper bureaucracy were numerous and eager to help in nearly all French lodges. This group included a large number of physicians, engineers, lawyers and journalists. However, in the educational field recruitment was far from satisfactory. As a matter of fact, teachers were too poor to be able to join an organisation whose members predominantly belonged to the Ottoman elite class. Besides, as we have already stressed, French diplomatic and consular circles supported the religious school network rather than the few non-confessional schools, which some pedagogues had managed to establish. One of the reasons for this strategy of supporting the Catholic congregations was that French diplomats had to find ways to oppose the Protestant missions, which, in the Ottoman

[25] *Cours de français à l'usage des écoles d'Orient*, Paris, Delagrave, 1898.

Empire, were as numerous as Catholic equivalents. In such a context, using religion against religion was probably the best thing to do. On the other hand, one should not forget that a large number of French diplomats came from a Catholic background. Although a few diplomats were themselves masons, consulates and embassies were usually not very hospitable to Masonic initiatives.

However, from the beginning of the twentieth century onwards the situation changed. In France, anti-clerical trends managed to impose their views. Among other things, they succeeded in obtaining the expulsion of congregations from the government, and, in 1905, the separation between religion and state.

One of the paradoxical consequences of this policy was a rapid grow of congregational activity in the Near East. But, at the same time, the French government started supporting the creation of non-confessional schools. It is in this context that in 1906 the *Mission laïque française*, which had strong ties with the Grand Orient, succeeded in founding the French Lyceum in Salonica, a school that still exists today. Other such institutions were established in Beirut, Cairo and Alexandria.[26] In the same cities, other schools also displayed Masonic influence. We learn from the correspondence of the Veritas lodge, for example, that in 1905 a Brother Thierry created a lay school in Salonica. The same year, a few other institutions were also established, which led to the establishment of the Lyceum of the *Mission laïque*.

However, the first decades of the twentieth century cannot be considered as a very successful period in the history of French colonial freemasonry. In 1901, for example, French lodges in Egypt had to accept the adoption by the Egyptian National Grand Orient of a new written constitution that represented one more step in the direction of the establishment

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[26] A. Thevenin, *op. cit.,* pp. 80-107.

of an autonomous national form of Egyptian Freemasonry.[27] Similarly, in the Ottoman Empire, a local Grand Orient was created in 1909. One of the goals of this institution was to obtain the "nationalisation" of all foreign lodges. As far as the French lodges were concerned, many of them had already disappeared by World War One.

The closing down of French and other European lodges in Turkey constitutes an important turning point in the history of Freemasonry in the Eastern Mediterranean. It is difficult, however, to consider that sixty years of colonial Freemasonry led to nothing but a fiasco. In Turkey, in particular, one is entitled to think that colonial Freemasonry efficiently contributed to the dissemination of ideas imported from the West. The concept of "laiklik", imported from France, is one of these key concepts that the Turkish Republic owes, at least partly, to the ideology of the Grand Orient de France.

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[27] See K. Wissa, *op. cit.*

Postlude

Andreas Önnerfors

Freemasonry and the Armenian Genocide

As already mentioned in the introduction, Ungor Ugor's manuscript has unfortunately not been included in this volume. However, his lecture "When Armenians built Auschwitz: Notes on late Ottoman Freemasonry and Genocide" was recorded and is downloadable from our website (freemasonry.dept.ac.uk). Its provocative title relates to a widespread conspiracy theory claiming that the Armenian genocide was caused by a Judaeo-Masonic plot of the new elites who worked for the establishment of the Turkish nation. This conspiracy theory postulates that the Nazis used Armenians to help them carry out the Holocaust, playing on their sense of revenge at the genocide they had suffered. Conspiracy theories are a complicated area of objective research. It is easy to be misquoted and misunderstood, and even mentioning the most absurd claims of such theories in a lecture or a publication might result in accusations of holding this view personally. Dr. Ugor's lecture made perfectly clear that he distanced himself from any form of anti-Armenian or anti-Turkish position, and that his research aims to gain a greater understanding of the tragic events that occurred during the final phase of the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire and the establishment of the Republic of Turkey. Ahead of his lecture, the Centre was engaged in a correspondence that illustrates that his topic of research remains highly contentious. That the historical truth of the Armenian genocide is still questioned and debated constitutes one reason for arousing negative reactions. The mention of freemasonry in connection with this genocide forms another controversial element. A strong reaction against Dr. Ugor's lecture only erupted shortly before the event, even though the titles of the lectures had been advertised well in

advance (in our newsletter, through the distribution of leaflets and on our website) and an abstract was available to read on-line. The situation was made worse by the insinuations of an English individual, who claimed to act as spokesperson for his Turkish counterparts, who suggested that the lecture could potentially lead to disastrous consequences if it were allowed to proceed.

A lengthy e-mail attachment from a Turkish individual contained complaints about the lecturer, information about Ottoman/Turkish history, as well as a request to cancel the lecture. The Centre replied to this letter immediately, making the point that the intention was not to offend the Republic of Turkey or Turkish freemasonry. Furthermore we expressed the hope that Turkish academics and freemasons would be willing to participate in an open debate related to the subject matter of the lecture. The sensitive nature of the lecture was highlighted by the fact that two days before it was due to be delivered the CRFF received a request from the above-mentioned English individual to produce a summary with the intention of reporting the contents back to Turkey. The same person contacted the CRFF again one day after the lecture, quoting correspondence with Turkey that the "Foreign Office has been notified" as well as representatives of Turkish Masonic bodies, who were preparing action. It was made clear that there was an expectation to immediately receive a thorough summary of the lecture. At the time the CRFF was in the process of preparing the lecture to be openly available as a podcast. However, the individual demanded that it should be "assessed" prior to being put on the website. As I was then on a trip to Norway, my assistant contacted me immediately and I decided to go ahead with making the podcast available.

On the same date the English individual once again wrote to the CRFF proposing a meeting to discuss the issue "before it blows up" and urged immediate action.

Naturally, the interest people have taken in this particular lecture is appreciated. Unfortunately, none of the correspondents actually came to the lecture. Given the fact that the topic of the lecture obviously had potential for debate, we were surprised that adverse reactions came to our attention far too late for us to arrange an appropriate platform to voice objections. If the intention of the people involved in the correspondence with us was to put forward positions based upon unprejudiced, well-balanced and objective research following academic standards, they would have been more than welcome to contact us well ahead of the event. This was entirely possible, as the date of the lecture (November 13th) was announced at the beginning of September 2008.

This episode demonstrates that the purpose of academic freedom is not entirely clear to everyone and that research into freemasonry and related fraternal organisations in the Middle East has to be developed further.