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Author: Sommer, Dorothe

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Introduction

This research examines the socio-cultural structures of masonic lodges and their manifold interconnections in parts of Ottoman Syria at a pivotal period: the end of the nineteenth and start of the twentieth centuries. The existence of the Empire seemed threatened, as it faced increasing threats to its territorial integrity from Western powers and as a consequence of nationalist movements, alongside a challenging economic situation. Internal disturbances on Mount Lebanon and in Damascus, with Maronites fighting Druzes and Christians fighting Muslims, soon infected the whole area. This left Syria's population longing for a new way to create a sense of common identity and solidarity. For many men, Freemasonry, in the form of a widespread network of various lodges throughout the area, was perceived as a means of facilitating this bond. Thus, the phrase 'Unity is strength' perfectly describes the efforts of Syrian freemasons.¹

Although Ottoman Syria, or *Bilad al-Sham* as it was previously known, de facto included a wider territory than contemporary Syria and Lebanon, I decided to concentrate on the case study of lodges in Tripoli and its surrounding area. This corresponds to the approach of Syrian freemasons themselves, as they predominantly cooperated within what is now Syrian and Lebanese territory. Only one further lodge was established in Palestine in 1911, by the same network of men. A coherent pattern regarding the locations of newly established lodges existed in contemporary Syria and Lebanon with only a few links stretching out to other places in the same area. Jacob Landau found records of early lodges in Palestine, but was not able to find any links to the ones in other parts of Greater Syria.² In his dictionary on freemasonry, Daniel

¹ Letter from *Le Liban* Lodge to the GOdF, (13.06.1876), carton no 1, Archive of the GOdF.

² Jacob M. Landau, 'Prolegomena to a study of Secret Societies in Modern Egypt', *Middle Eastern Studies*, vol. 1/2 (Jan. 1965).

Ligou mentions that a certain freemason from Connecticut named Maurice Robert allegedly opened the *Lodge Réclamation* in Palestine in 1868, while another lodge, *Le Port du Temple de Salomon*, was established by French construction workers in 1891 (renamed *L'Aurore* in 1906 and *Barkai* in 1911).³ Except for one freemason, who was member of a lodge in Beirut before moving to Jaffa and joining a lodge there, I could not find any connections between lodges in Palestine and those in other parts of Greater Syria before the Young Turk Revolution.⁴

Lodges made up solely of Armenians, which were mainly connected to the Italian grand lodge, will be mentioned in chapter four but here the same scenario is valid: they were not linked to other Syrian lodges and had no overlapping members. All the lodges were probably closed in the last period of the Empire due to the genocide of the Armenian people.⁵

The aim of this study is therefore mainly restricted to case studies of Tripoli and its surrounding area, as well as Beirut and Mount Lebanon, in order to demonstrate the significance of the local fraternity in terms of the development of new aspects of socio-cultural life. It shows the function of the fraternity as a social institution, born out of the need to find a common bond and a shared perspective for the future; with freemasonry, Ottomans wanted to spread 'the ideas of tolerance, solidarity and fraternity'.⁶

Identities and social structures were formed as a result of an on-going development in a process which cannot be understood as sudden shifts. Rather they have to be characterised as perpetual assumptions of more defined and refined forms.

³ Daniel Ligou, *Dictionnaire de la franc-maçonnerie*, (Presses Universitaires de France, Paris : 1987), p. 629 – 630.

⁴ More information on Alexander Howard in Chapter IV; links between lodges in Greater Syria and *Carmel Lodge*, established in Haifa in 1911 will be taken into account; *D.S.*

⁵ The participation of Armenians in masonic lodges was not restricted to Armenian-only lodges, *D.S.*

⁶ [*les idées de tolérance, de solidarité et de fraternité*], Letter from *Le Liban* to the GOdF, (12.05.1912), carton no 1, Archive of the GOdF.

This dynamic evolution is also displayed with regard to the establishment of the various lodges in Greater Syria. However, whilst foreigners did participate in the foundation of early lodges in Beirut, most lodges were almost exclusively composed of inhabitants of Ottoman Syria.

The Ottomans had to change their lifestyles in a way that was compatible with the growing influence of Europe, while at the same time preserving traditional rules and values. To do so, they adapted freemasonry from its original Western and Christian context and set it amidst a multi-religious and multi-ethnic Middle Eastern melting pot. Ottoman society was traditionally based on affiliations determined by kinship and religious affiliation. However, freemasons managed to use the brotherhood to bridge the gap between the various disparate groupings. Their declared aim – the ‘welfare of mankind’ – could only be achieved by the strength gained from unity.⁷

‘But why Tripoli? Or even more, why El Mina?’ Not only Beirutis asked these questions, but non-Lebanese also wondered. Most perplexed of all were probably the Tripolitans and Minawis themselves. During my field research I realised that they felt that the local port of El Mina (Figure 1) was not worthy of inclusion in any research.

⁷ [*l’amour de l’humanité [...] l’union fait la force*], Letter from *Le Liban* Lodge to the GOdF, (13.06.1876), carton no 1, Archive of the GOdF.



Figure 1: El Mina in the Late Ottoman Period (courtesy of the Municipality of El Mina: 2008).

Indeed, my research on freemasonry in Ottoman-era Tripoli and El Mina constitutes a new approach in the field, as it is a topic that has hitherto not been examined. Moreover, no prior study has focussed on individuals in order to understand the functions of freemasonry in parts of the Ottoman Empire. The choice of lodges in El Mina and Tripoli as the focus of research does not of course explain the complexity and internal struggles of freemasonry in Europe. Instead, this study argues that Ottoman freemasons possessed agency and showed self-reliance at a critical period in the region's history. Despite a lack of scholarly attention, the subject matter of freemasonry in the Ottoman Empire during the period in question has implications beyond the fraternity.

Consequently, it is argued in this thesis that historians of the Middle East should broaden their approach towards the late Ottoman period. I argue that an analysis of Ottoman society and culture can profit from the inclusion of research into social networks such as freemasonry. This thesis is merely one more step in the same direction as historians who began to rethink methods of research and to look at local actors and individuals instead of the well-known intelligentsia, powerbrokers or regime elites.

It corresponds with a trend in the last ten years in which a great deal of research has been undertaken looking from the bottom up.⁸ Among recent studies one can note the work of Ryan Gingeras, who has focussed on four distinct groups in the Ottoman Empire between 1912 and 1923. He deals with Muslim Albanians and North Caucasians, as well as Christian Armenians and Greeks living on the southern coastal corridor of the Marmara Sea. Gingeras explicitly states that his research demonstrates ‘the way in which a series of provincial communities were both the objects and the engines of radical social and political change’. He does elucidate the state’s position or the elite’s mobilising power, but rather traces ‘the provincial origins and violent results of the alliances formed by both collaborationist and resistance elements that struggled over the South Marmara during the war years’.⁹

Similarly, Cem Emrence has studied the late Ottoman Empire using trajectory analysis. According to him ‘it was local politics, economy and contention that shaped the Ottoman Middle East during the nineteenth century [...] they were key sites to accumulate power, wealth and status in late Ottoman Society’, which possessed an ‘interactive character [...] shaped local hierarchies, defined the specific bargains between “peripheries” and the Ottoman state, and determined the nature of interactions between imperial agents and global society’. In his own words, his studies are supposed ‘to revise the Western impact and give more authorship to the Ottoman state and the local actors in the making of the region.’ He strongly emphasises that ‘the Ottoman paths were also the making of regional actors that utilized global

⁸ Another example is Esther Möller’s thesis on the Mission Civilisatrice in Lebanon, still waiting for publication, University of Mainz 2011, *D.S.*

⁹ Ryan Gingeras, *Sorrowful Shores: Violence, Ethnicity, and the End of the Ottoman Empire, 1912-1923*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), pp. 2, 5.

capitalism, state transformation, and geopolitical competition to build competing imperial experiences.’¹⁰

In Thomas Philipp’s words, ‘[t]he role of the Freemasons in the global exchange of ideas’¹¹ requires further investigation, especially when it comes to an analysis of shared masonic backgrounds or collective biographies of members. More research must also be carried out on the propagation of ideas and on examining migration patterns in regard to links with overseas masonic bodies, which can thereby enrich transcultural studies. Research into colonial history, the impact of the Enlightenment and the notion of the West meeting the East should also include freemasonry as a phenomenon that affected all sides alike. A broader examination may contribute to a better understanding of unexplained links and networks, which will attenuate even further the traditional dichotomy seen between Western and ‘Oriental’ culture. Excluding an analysis of freemasonry and its members entails omitting a valuable source that can add to a deeper understanding and provide further insights for historians.

In her recent work, *Builders of Empire*, Jessica Harland-Jacobs convincingly makes the case that some English, Irish and Scottish lodges functioned as extensions of the British Empire.¹² Within these lodges Harland-Jacobs portrays the brothers as foremen for the Empire. Even though Harland-Jacobs mentions that a lodge could serve as a bulwark against colonial endeavours, she does not delve further into this interpretation. Instead, she perceives lodges as structures predominantly developed by foreign powers, and hence artificial features detached from the local environment. My

¹⁰ Cem Emrence, *Remapping the Ottoman Middle East*, (I.B. Tauris, London: 2012), p. 4, 11.

¹¹ Quoted here is Thomas Philipp in his review of Ilham Khuri-Makdisi’s *The Eastern Mediterranean and the Making of Global Radicalism, 1860 – 1914*, (University of California Press, Berkeley: 2010) in which he criticises the author’s lack of elaboration regarding the fraternity’s importance during and for the *nahda*; <http://hsozkult.geschichte.hu-berlin.de/rezensionen/2010-4-084>, (03.11.2010).

¹² Jessica Harland-Jacobs, *Builders of Empire: Freemasonry and British Imperialism, 1717 – 1927* (University of North Carolina Press: 2007).

study reveals the opposite phenomenon. In accord with James W. Daniel, who claims that Harland-Jacobs ‘overestimated the role and importance of Freemasonry’ when emphasising its significance in consolidating and perpetuating the British Empire, I argue that the fraternity helped to forge an awareness of a new identity that was independent of religious affiliation or proximity to the colonial power. Rather, this identity was based on a common mind-set that incorporated the masonic principles of fraternity and philanthropy, as well as the belief in individual responsibility and religious tolerance.¹³ A dominant characteristic of the lodges therefore was the attempt to create a stronger local sense of community by adapting the ideological framework of freemasonry to the immediate surroundings. This incorporation of a Western idea was a typical feature of the *nahda*, a cultural reform movement led by Arab intellectuals during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, which derived its main impetus from a concern to render the Empire compatible with the goals of modernisation. While Muslims preferred to concentrate on reform related to Islam, Christian intellectuals tended to follow secular ideologies.

It also corresponds to a statement by Philipp, according to which changes in terms of identity during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries ‘implied not only changes in a territorial identity, but [...] also a shift in cultural identity’.¹⁴ While the lodges spread throughout Greater Syria, with spheres of influence focussed first and foremost on their own vicinities, masons were fully aware of their status as part of an international organisation that propagated human knowledge, masonic values and shared behavioural patterns.¹⁵

¹³ James W Daniel, *Masonic Networks & Connections*, (Library and Museum of Freemasonry, London: 2007), p. 180.

¹⁴ Philipp: p. 9.

¹⁵ Also see, Kristiane Hasselmann, *Die Rituale der Freimaurer*, (Transcript, Bielefeld: 2009).

Even if Harland-Jacobs may be right in regarding the original intentions of British freemasons who created lodges in the Empire as builders of colonial-like power structures, the institution itself did not function in a top-down manner. Instead, masonic lodges acted through a broad and flat hierarchy and in a multiple dynamic and with local variation. Europeans were not able to control masonic lodges in a centralised way. In fact, unlike lodges in Egypt working under the United Grand Lodge of England, foreigners (with the exception of members of the first lodges in Beirut) were almost completely unrepresented in lodges within the Ottoman area studied in this work. Masons continued to establish their lodges under the jurisdiction of European masonic grand bodies mainly in order to be recognised by other freemasons throughout the world. It remains common for non-European lodges to seek masonic recognition from these Western institutions. For Ottoman freemasons this status was additionally useful in the event of migration or travel outside the Empire. One could interpret the continued dependence on Western masonic bodies as a sign of on-going Western hegemony. Yet, a more persuasive argument would be that it was (and still is) easy to adopt the general framework of freemasonry, thereby benefiting from already formulated rules, regulations and traditions. Another aspect especially valid for the Ottoman Empire is the development of concessions, in the form of capitulations towards Western powers. A Western institution automatically had more rights and international backing when confronting Ottoman law.¹⁶ Remaining under Western masonic patronage left Syrian freemasons with the choice of appealing to the appropriate grand bodies for help when needed. Moreover, freemasonry was indeed introduced by Westerners and they naturally brought with them a system they were familiar with. Hence, the first kind of fraternal society

¹⁶ More details on capitulations and how they worked in the specific context will follow further below, *D.S.*

known to Syrians was Western-made and was rendered compatible with their own values and traditions.

As Benjamin Fortna notes, there remains a lack of scholarly attention regarding the study of individual lives in the Ottoman Empire.¹⁷ By concentrating on a number of individual masons as local actors it is possible to show how the structures and functioning of lodges varied according to membership, location and the period of time. It is also possible to refer to the various overlapping network of lodges, charitable societies and educational institutions. An analysis of masons in Tripoli and its port, in terms of their varying social circumstances and environments, enables us to reconstruct the differences between the lodges vis-à-vis their social composition. It also enables us to identify the similarities they shared. My research will demonstrate that freemasonry, as a social network in a part of Ottoman Syria, tended towards one main goal: to produce inter-religious sociability and stability in order to generate ‘social and moral evolution’.¹⁸ This aim seems to have been far more significant than simply fostering an active involvement in politics or other non-political associations. At this point, loyalty still lay with the Ottoman Sultan and the question was revolved around the reform from within: ‘A national movement [...] began when a number of people belonging to an ethnic group mainly from the educated elite, decided to diffuse a sense of national consciousness’.¹⁹ This was not yet the case. The fact that those active in freemasonry, and other social groups at a later stage, were also to be found amongst those who promoted the Syrian nation is not surprising, as freemasons generally belonged to the middle and upper classes. Hence, they formed the vanguard

¹⁷ Benjamin Fortna, ‘Education and Autobiography at the End of the Ottoman Empire’, *Die Welt des Islams*, 41/1, (March 2001), p. 3.

¹⁸ [l’*évolution morale et sociale*], Letter from *Sunneen* Lodge to *Le Liban* Lodge, (02.01.1906), *Le Liban*, carton no 2, Archive of the GOdF.

¹⁹ Miroslav Hroch, *Das Europa der Nationen. Die moderne Nationsbildung im europäischen Vergleich*, (Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, Göttingen: 2005), p. 46.

in political movements. However, the focus here is on the period preceding the Young Turks Revolution in 1908. Nationalist freemasonry certainly deserves its own study.

In his study on three distinct Ottoman regions (the coast, the interior and the frontier), Cem Emrence writes about a new type of middle class that started to evolve in the port cities of the Empire from the 1860s:

‘The port-city intellectual possessed a distinct social habitus in late Ottoman society. He was cosmopolitan but local, and pro-reform but neither anti-state nor against community. Ottoman middle classes viewed modernization from a locally-embedded perspective and searched for the “right balance” between the local and the global’.²⁰

The middle class individual that Emrence describes is exactly the same type of man who can be found among the early freemasons in Beirut, and a few years later in the increasingly widespread network of lodges all over Ottoman Syria: ‘The middle classes of the coast refer to domestic merchants and professional groups who were connected to global flows and operated as vanguards of modernization in the eastern Mediterranean world.’²¹ Even more significantly, they were at the same time the vanguard for freemasonry and the very first members that helped to establish lodges throughout the Empire.

John George Gibson, who was a past master of a lodge in Northumberland and an honorary member of a research lodge in Bombay, wrongly claimed that ‘where the dominant Masonic authority is of another type from that of the dominant nationality or political constitution, the government of the home Grand Lodge is regarded as, in effect, a kind of Masonic ultramontanism’.²² Borrowing from religious vocabulary, he claimed that grand bodies were honoured as secular versions of the papacy, with the appropriate level of respect and humbleness. This opinion expressed his own wishful thinking, rather than a proven fact. The Ottomans studied in this work joined the

²⁰ Emrence, *Remapping*, p. 42.

²¹ *Ibid.*: p. 8.

²² John George Gibson, ‘The Policy of Colonial Freemasonry’, *The Freemason*, (London: 25.07.1908), p. 56.

fraternity and enlarged its membership in order to pursue their own interests: to unite their countrymen in a way otherwise not possible. As Emrence shows with regard to the middle class and its own utilisation of the globalising market, the same can be said about freemasonry: the Ottomans were actors in their own right.

It is no coincidence that freemasonry in this area of Greater Syria spread after 1860. In France, freemasonry was flourishing during the Third Republic partly because of a decrease in state oppression, but also due to a de-radicalisation within freemasonry. The number of lodges affiliated with the Grand Orient of France shot up from 244 in 1857 to 392 in 1870.²³

With strengthening commercial ties between the Levant and France, ‘most notably with the implantation of Lyonese silk manufactures and traders in Lebanon’, the latter also tried to catch up with Great Britain as it saw its political fortunes declining. Additionally, private French organisations came to regard the Levant as fertile ground for proselytising.²⁴ Similarly, British freemasonry was constantly expanding, as it set up daughter lodges in its colonies in order to consolidate British interests. Another factor worthy of attention is the Crimean War. ‘British and French soldiers that came to fight in the East seem to have largely contributed to the introduction of masonic lodges in this part of the world’.²⁵ With growing financial and political involvement, the Ottoman Empire seems to have been an ideal target for the enlargement of their masonic patronage.

²³ Philip Nord, ‘Republicanism and Utopian Vision: French Freemasonry in the 1860s and 1870s’, *Journal of Modern History*, vol. 63, (June 1991), p. 213.

²⁴ Mathew Burrows, ‘“Mission Civilisatrice”: French Cultural Policy in the Middle East, 1860 – 1914’, *The Historical Journal*, vol. 29/1, (March 1986), pp. 112 – 114.

²⁵ Paul Dumont, ‘Freemasonry in Turkey: a by-product of Western penetration’, <http://turcologie.u-strasbg.fr/dets/images/travaux/freemasonry%20in%20turkey.pdf>, (17.11.2010), p. 2.

On the other hand, proliferation of freemasonry was not only the result of the weakness of the Empire, vis-à-vis the European powers, as it was more accurately caused by tremors within Syrian society. After struggles between communities with different religious affiliations, the Ottomans were in need of a basis upon which they could rebuild trust within their population.²⁶ The freemasons' interreligious efforts were supposed to result in 'peace, progress and welfare'.²⁷ It was the Ottomans themselves who actively sought to promote and expand the network of lodges without much assistance from Europe. Rather, an analysis of the early lodges set up in the Syria lands will show that the fraternity developed in an unforeseen manner that perturbed Western masons.

European masons started serious activities in Greater Syria in the 1860s, after lodges had already been established in Alexandria, Cairo and Constantinople.²⁸ It has been alleged that masonic lodges were also founded in Homs, Aleppo and Smyrna approximately a hundred years earlier, but it was only in the nineteenth century that the brotherhood gained a firm foothold in Syria.²⁹ In his general history of freemasonry, Jurji Zaidan, who was a Syrian freemason in the late nineteenth century, describes some of the early lodges in the region that were founded in the middle of the eighteenth century. According to him, the first lodges were established in Aleppo and

²⁶ Further explanations regarding the history of the Ottoman Empire will be given in the following chapters.

²⁷ [*la paix, le progress et le bonheur*], Letter from *Sunneen* Lodge to *Le Liban*, (02.01.1906), *Le Liban*, carton no 2, Archive of the GOF.

²⁸ Thierry Zarcone, *Mystiques, Philosophes et Francs-maçons en Islam* (Jean Maisonneuve, Paris: 1993). The United Grand Lodge of England was active in these cities from the 1850s onwards, (Registration books UGLoE, 1850).

²⁹ References: Rosario F. Esposito, "I primi massoni in medio Oriente", *Rivista Massonica* LXX-XIV (July 1979), pp. 231-6; Robert Freke Gould, *The History of Freemasonry throughout the World*, vol. 4, (Charles Scribner's Sons, New York: 1936), p. 311; Pierre-Yves Beurepaire, *Franc-Maçonnerie et Cosmopolitisme au Siècle des Lumières*, (Editions Maçonniques de France, Paris: 1998), p. 72-73. Beurepaire relies, among others, on Daniel Ligou's *Dictionnaire de la franc-maçonnerie* in its edition from 1974. I checked the 1987 edition (Presses Universitaires de France, Paris: 1987) and indeed Ligou mentions early lodges (keywords Syrie and Turquie) but a closer look at the different dates of lodge foundations reveals that he is sometimes mistaken. Hence caution is advised when using his information.

in northern Syria and it was only afterwards that freemasonry spread to Egypt and Palestine. Zaidan stated that in 1751 Alexander Drummond, who was a former head of a masonic lodge in Scotland and then living in Alexandretta, founded a lodge under the patronage of the Grand Lodge of Scotland. Apparently all the members were foreigners with some of them working for the British Government.³⁰

Apart from this account, the first officially documented masonic lodges in Ottoman Syria were situated in Beirut, a city that at the end of the nineteenth century boasted a mix of high-level politicians, religious officials, artists, scholars and Europeans.³¹ At this time, the Empire's subjects discovered what it was to live in a globalising, ever changing world, whilst Western foreigners increasingly regarded the Middle East region as a strategically important. Thus, freemasonry also served as a means of increasing Western influence. Yet, if the lodges were indeed supposed to serve as a colonial vanguard, then the following analysis of the fraternities in this region will show that this aim was not realised.

The first lodges in Beirut, such as the *Palestine* Lodge that was founded in 1861 under the patronage of the Grand Lodge of Scotland, serve as good examples of a European concept realised in a non-European environment. *Palestine's* founding members were constantly in the position of being observers who were examining their own society. Apart from their meetings, they organised and participated in other organisations focussed on charity, philosophical questions, political ideas and academic debates on the state of society, history and science.³²

³⁰ Jurji Zaidan, *Ta'rikkh al-māsūniyya al-‘āmm (General History of Freemasonry)*, (Cairo: 1889), p. 120.

³¹ A petition sent by *Le Liban* to the GOdF in 1876 suggests a connection to the grand lodges in the United States and England, although no sources have been found to confirm this. 'En case de difficultés pour envoyer les métaux directement les R. L. pourront expédier métaux ou billets de banque par l'entremise de la Grand Loge d'Angleterre à Londres, par la G. Loge de France à Paris, et par la G. Loge d'Amérique à Newyork', (1876), carton no 1, Archive of the GOdF.

³² Appendix IV.

If this kind of detachment is a trait of intellectuals as often described throughout history, then only the city of Beirut in Greater Syria had a predominance of such individuals.³³ Since the term *intellectual* can be very imprecise and ambiguous, I prefer to distinguish different types of so-called intellectuals according to the popularity of their creative output then and now.

Although most of the individuals involved in Ottoman freemasonry at some point received the attribute of having been an intellectual during their lifetimes, their activities as ‘men of letters’ varied.³⁴ In Greater Syria, ‘full-time’ intellectuals – men who made their living by publishing their ideas or being active in academies – gathered almost exclusively in Beirut. Consequently, many freemasons were connected to academia and involved in socio-cultural activities. This, of course, says less about the character of freemasonry than it reflects the composition of society in Beirut. Freemasonry was certainly not a purely intellectual movement, as the formation of lodges outside Beirut clearly shows.

At this time individuals had to constantly adapt to their living conditions. It was easier for men in Beirut to make a living as a professor, a translator or as a journalist simply because of the greater number of jobs available in these sectors. This fact is mirrored in the socio-cultural composition of masonic lodges, where one can find many more academics and journalists in Beirut’s lodges than in other cities. Beirut’s cultural scene, academic life and forms of scientific sociability were emphasized more than anywhere else in Greater Syria.

Naturally rural settings required more human power; hence more men were employed in agricultural jobs. At the same time, some also translated books, learned

³³ The author refers here to the perception of intellectuals developed by Karl Mannheim, elucidated further below. See also, Charles Gattone, 'The Role of the Intellectual in Public Affairs: Changing Perspectives in the Modern Era', *Theory and Science*, Issue 1, (Fall 2000).

³⁴ A general overview regarding intellectuals: *Liberal Thought in the Eastern Mediterranean*, edited by Christoph Schumann, (Brill, Leiden: 2008).

European languages and were involved in literary disputes, although these activities were not their priorities.

Thus, in the first place, I would argue that one has to be careful when using terms like “thinker”, “man of letters” and “intellectual” Hence, in the context of Ottoman-era Syria, it is debatable if all the men characterised as “intellectuals” conform to the meaning of the term as it is commonly understood today.³⁵ Second, I would suggest that one should not automatically link the term “intellectual” with freemasonry. Instead, I study the many freemasons who lived outside Beirut and its academic elite, in order to fully grasp the attraction of the fraternity. Freemasonry was not predominantly an intellectual society, but a socio-cultural movement.

Kadisha Lodge was founded in 1906, either in El Mina (Askale), or in Tripoli itself.³⁶ Until 1911, the lodge had about 90 members, who mainly belonged to the Greek Orthodox community, but also included a significant number of Muslims, some Maronites and a number of Greek Catholics. In contrast to the cosmopolitan mix of Beirut’s first lodge, *Palestine*, *Kadisha* was only composed of men from inside the Ottoman Empire. European missionary efforts were mainly concentrated in Beirut, with educational institutions established in the city, such as the Syrian Protestant College (SPC) and St. Joseph’s University. These institutions produced most of the city’s famous representatives of different schools of thoughts – a trend that continues to this day.³⁷ Although there were also European missionary schools and colleges in Tripoli, they never achieved the same level of acclaim as those in Beirut, nor did the missionaries generally deem their efforts as being successful outside Beirut.

³⁵ For example, in Samih al-Zeine’s book, *History of Tripoli; then and now*, (Dar al-Andalus, Beirut: 1969) it seems that there existed only intellectuals in Tripoli. However, using the term without differentiations renders it useless, *D.S.*

³⁶ Further explanations regarding the exact location of *Kadisha* will be delivered in Chapter VI, *D.S.*

³⁷ As a valuable source underlining this statement served the directory of the American University in Beirut (AUB), *D.S.*

In 1861, an American missionary in Tripoli made the following remark: ‘Would that we could report such progress of gospel truth among the people of Tripoli as would be commensurate with the greatness of God’s mercies to them. But alas! They seem to be wedded to their idols, dead in trespasses and sins’. He goes on to state that the Christians ‘are as tenacious as ever in clinging to their profitless ceremonies and empty forms of worship, and as indifferent as ever to all that is vital and spiritual in true Christianity’.³⁸

What is more, in Tripoli locals acted as representatives for European ambassadors and consuls, taking on the roles of vice-consuls or working as translators and negotiators, whilst the actual consuls resided in Beirut. This can be seen in Figure 2, which also shows the missionary and educational efforts that concentrated on Beirut. Thanks to its strategic geographical importance – in political as well as economic terms - the provincial capital increasingly functioned as a magnet for Ottoman and European businesses and political institutions, which consequently had a huge impact on the composition of lodges.

³⁸ Henry Jessup in his Station Report, 1861, in, *The Missionary Herald: Reports from Ottoman Syria, 1819-1870*, edited by Kamal S. Salibi, Yusuf K. Khoury (Royal Institute for Inter-faith Studies, Amman: 1995), p. 20.



Figure 2: Map showing Missionary Activities in Beirut and Tripoli (produced in 1873 by the missionary Henry H. Jessup, from the American Presbyterian Church. The red dots denote the stations and schools of the church; the yellow dots indicate established British Syrian Schools; green dots mark the Lebanon or Saleebey Schools of the Free Church of Scotland; while the crosses show Greek or Catholic monasteries).³⁹

In contrast to the first lodges in Beirut, *Kadisha* developed as the embodiment of a foreign concept without the involvement of foreigners. Indeed, it appears that the lodge's initial reason for coming into existence was to find some stability in a period

³⁹ Map of Syria by Henry H. Jessup made for the American Presbyterian Mission by (1873), C.M.S. Archives, C.M.S. Gr. 3, Vol. 6, CM/012/29D, The University of Birmingham, Birmingham.

when social and cultural foundations in the Ottoman Empire were being rocked and the future of the individual seemed to change from day to day. This will become evident in the following chapters when analysing the individual members and the motives behind their participation. The general feeling of losing the traditional community safety net became dominant. Questions of belonging and affiliation steadily grew in importance. These insecurities stemmed mainly from the increasing loss of Ottoman territory in the nineteenth century. This was coupled with the growing influence of foreign powers in the economic, socio-political and cultural spheres of the Ottoman Empire, but also from the rise of nationalism and other ideologies confronting the socio-political structure of the Porte. The establishment of lodges with an emphasis on the participation of local Ottomans seems to have been a reaction to this atmosphere of incertitude. The intention to unite Ottomans also becomes clear in regard to the freemasons' activities. One major concern from the early days of the lodges centred on their efforts to establish a united form of freemasonry, irrespective of religious affiliation and instead of having to respect all the varying recognitions of lodges; an idea that was also suggested to the Grand Orient of France.⁴⁰

The first charitable organisations in Tripoli were founded along sectarian lines in the second half of the nineteenth century by the Greek Orthodox community and the Maronites. The traditional *Awqaf* religious endowments used by Muslims had already long been in existence, but were mainly 'related to the material base of family life, in general and the transmission of property to [family members] in particular'.⁴¹

⁴⁰ [*nous devons agir pour unifier les maçons des différents rites réguliers ou irréguliers*], Letter from *Le Liban* sent to the GOdF, (17.10.1893), carton no 1, Archive of the GOdF.

⁴¹ Beshara Doumani, 'Endowing Family: *Waqf*, Property Devolution, and Gender in Greater Syria, 1800 – 1860', *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, vol. 40, (Cambridge: 1998), p. 11.

However, *Kadisha* was the only association in which all members were able to assemble in a non-sectarian setting, and, what is more, business was not the principal motive for the gatherings. The composition of the lodge members was too diverse to serve purely professional or political concerns. According to the Masonic Charges outlined by James Anderson in 1723, no quarrels about religion or politics were to be tolerated in lodges: ‘we are also of all *Nations, Tongues, Kindreds, and Languages*, and are resolv’d against all *Politicks*, as what never yet conduc’d to the Welfare of the *Lodge*, nor ever will’.⁴² However, sufficient examples exist of masonic lodges that were involved in political affairs and that clearly acted against Anderson’s code of behaviour.⁴³ Lodges in the Ottoman Empire were not an exception (as will be discussed in the general historiography and in Chapter III) but *Kadisha* in its early composition does not appear to have been particularly political.

In his work on freemasonry in the Middle East, the French scholar Eric Anduze has attempted to show the connections between colonial endeavours and the spread of freemasonry in the Maghreb and the Mashriq. I would argue, however, that he overlooks the clear cooperation of lodges that belonged to different grand bodies without any connection to colonial policies.⁴⁴ His source material is restricted to lodges belonging to the Grand Orient of France. Hence, he is unable to present a rounded picture of freemasonry as a dynamic phenomenon. It can be proven that lodges were systematically set up in Ottoman Syria in order to foster a masonic environment that was as diversified as possible. In this regard, local masons wished to

⁴² James Anderson, *The constitution of the free-masons. Containing the history, charges, regulations &c. of that most ancient and right worshipful fraternity*, (William Hunter, London: 1723), p. 54.

⁴³ Further information on this subject with regard to European and American lodges: *Freemasonry on both sides of the Atlantic*, ed. William Weisberger, Wallace McLeod, S.Brent Morris, (Columbia University Press, New York: 2002).

⁴⁴ Eric Anduze’s PhD is entitled *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*, (Université des Sciences Humaines de Strasbourg: 1996). It was published in two parts, the first being *La Franc-maçonnerie au Moyen – Orient et au Maghreb, fin XIXe – début XXe siècle*, (L’Harmattan, Paris, 2005).

attract suitable potential candidates and to spread the ideas of liberty, equality and fraternity in many different languages and social surroundings.

The same critique is valid with regard to Paul Dumont's research on freemasonry in the Ottoman Empire. While he excels when using sources that are available on Turkish/Ottoman and French lodges, he overlooks further connections to other European grand bodies. In his article on freemasonry in Turkey as a by-product of Western penetration, for example, Dumont mentions Hyde Clarke, 'a prominent representative of the masonic high ranks, who in the 1860s was the Worshipful Master of the Great Provincial Lodge of Turkey'.⁴⁵ Yet, he fails to mention the fact that a lodge established in 1865 in Alexandria was named after Clarke, with the man himself a founding member. Moreover, Clarke, who was also a prolific author and member of the British Association for the Advancement of Science,⁴⁶ signed the petition for the *Bulwer* Lodge in Constantinople in 1861, as well as the *Virtue* Lodge in the same city in 1864. In 1869 Clarke again was a petitioner for the *St. John & St. Paul* Lodge in Alexandria, after the closure in 1867 of the lodge named in his honour.⁴⁷ All of these lodges had been established under the patronage of the United Grand Lodge of England, which Dumont ignored in his research. In other words, Clarke was far from the only mason who joined different lodges. Members tended to move freely from one lodge to another – also exploiting masonic privileges according to their own requirements – in order to increase the number of existing lodges. Masons in Alexandria, Cairo and Constantinople often switched affiliations – a

⁴⁵ Paul Dumont, 'Freemasonry in Turkey: a by-product of Western penetration', <http://turcologie.u-strasbg.fr/dets/images/travaux/freemasonry%20in%20turkey.pdf>, (10.10.2009), p. 5.

⁴⁶ Hyde Clarke, *Sovereign and Quasi-Sovereign States: Their Debts to Foreign Countries*, 2nd edition, (E. Wilson, London: 1879). Clarke lists the various debts of foreign countries or British colonies while at the same time complaining about French corruption and English indifference, *D.S.*

⁴⁷ Registration books, *St. John & St. Paul*, 1869, Archive of the UGLoE. He was not the only mason to change lodges. Muhammad Abduh, for example, changed lodges as well as the Italian Verde brothers; while in 1865 the banker Gustave Oppenheim joined two lodges at once: *Bulwer* Lodge in Cairo and *St. John's* Lodge in Alexandria, *D.S.*

practice later adopted by Syrian freemasons.⁴⁸ Hence, while Europeans indeed proved successful in establishing a high number of lodges in Egypt and Constantinople, it was the Syrians themselves in Greater Syria who spread masonic ideas. They established lodges under various patronage systems and did not shy away from “lodge-hopping” in order to support other local lodges working under different grand bodies. Dumont not only omits part of the European side of the story, but completely disregards the fact that Ottomans also practiced this kind of “flexible multiple-choice”.

Research on freemasonry, which has mainly concentrated on Europe and America, has previously shown that there has never been a single form of freemasonry. Instead, the fraternity’s permanent and outstanding characteristics in history have been its flexibility and adaptability. In addition, one must be cautious not to create too harsh a dichotomy between European masonic culture and the cultural sphere in the Middle East. Brotherhoods with similar rituals and values existed before, but it was nevertheless freemasonry that was used by Syrians to establish a non-religious community of men throughout the area.⁴⁹

⁴⁸ I use the term ‘lodge-hopping’ in order to describe the practices of many European and Arab masons in the Ottoman Empire: they moved constantly from one lodge to another or were members of different lodges at the same time. They formed varying groups to found new lodges and thereby helped the fraternity to spread while also strengthening the early lodges, *D.S.*.

⁴⁹ Research on this has been carried out by Thierry Zarcone, *Secret et Sociétés secrètes en islam. Turquie, Iran et Asie Centrale, XIX^e-XX^e siècles*, (Archè, Milan-Paris: 2002) ; *La Turquie moderne et l’islam*, (Flammarion, Paris: 2004) ; *La Turquie. De l’Empire ottoman à la République d’Atatürk*, (Gallimard, Paris: 2005) ; *Prières des musulmans chinois*, (Koutoubia, Paris: 2009) ; *Le soufisme*, (Gallimard, Paris: 2009). As Almut Höfert has stated, Eurocentric concepts of individuality, which perceive modernity as a way into freedom for a subject, followed by western economic developments, create more harm more than good. [‘Anmerkungen zum Konzept einer “transkulturellen” Geschichte in der deutschsprachigen Forschung’, *Comparativ. Zeitschrift für Globalgeschichte und vergleichende Gesellschaftsforschung*, Bd. 18, ‘Transkulturelle Komparatistik. Beiträge zu einer Globalgeschichte der Vormoderne’, edited by Wolfgang Drews; Jenny Oesterle, (2008), p. 14-25]. Just by taking religion as an example, using definitions and meanings dominant in the Western world shows to what degree the so-called civilisation paradigm obscures possible insights. Ussama Makdisi calls this a ‘crisis’, which resulted in different forms of orientalism, and ‘both Western and non-Western Orientalisms presuppose a static and essential opposition between East and West: yet both are produced by – and are an attempt to overcome – a crisis in this static opposition created by the same dynamic colonial encounter’.

According to the self-perception of freemasons, the fraternity adheres to three main principles: brotherly love, philanthropy and truth. While freemasons are expected to excel in respect and tolerance towards other human beings, they at the same time have the unconditional duty to continually work towards the enhancement of their own moral standards in order to achieve a better way of living. By displaying this kind of attitude towards the *profane* world - a term used by freemasons for all non-masons – they aim to include the wider community in a shared journey towards a fulfilled, peaceful life. This goal is supposed to be furthered by fostering a masonic group identity, as well as promoting a self-confident masonic individual identity, which is built upon symbols, rituals and elaborate foundation myths. As Timothy Baycroft notes, the fraternity’s ‘regalia and the rituals associated with meetings [...] have all the symbolic relevance which can generate a sense of fellow-feeling and identity among those who observe or participate’.⁵⁰ For some it may have merely served as ‘a good way to meet other men, to socialize and dine (‘knife-and-fork’ masons) and for others its existence and form are derived more from an abstract set of values or norms, based upon universal reason, and it resembles a religion in this aspect more closely than it does a nation’.⁵¹ Its claim not to be a religion does not rule out its religious character. As Alexander Piatigorsky argues, every master mason is like ‘a priest’ and taken together they are ‘a kind of priestly caste’.⁵² Other scholars would not go as far as Piatigorsky, and indeed neither would most freemasons, but he is right in that freemasonry did indeed adapt religious principles in order to formulate a way of worshipping that suited the fraternity’s own purposes. But whatever form

[Ussama Makdisi, ‘Ottoman Orientalism’, *The American Historical Review*, vol. 107/3, (June 2002), p. 795-796].

⁵⁰ Timothy Baycroft, ‘Nationalism, National Identity and Freemasonry’, *Journal for Research into Freemasonry and Fraternalism*, vol. I, (2009), p. 15.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 17.

⁵² Alexander Piatigorsky, *Freemasonry*, (Harvill Press Editions, London: 1997), p. 361.

freemasonry takes, its members regard it as something separate from society as a whole. As Piatigorsky notes, for a freemason the fraternity is 'apart from not only their work or family life, but also from their social or political position, hobby, and even religion'.⁵³ As to religion, men try to adapt freemasonry in a way 'which would accommodate one's own personal philosophy without too much conflict of interest'.⁵⁴

Approach and Content

I will analyse the varying contexts and compositions of masonic lodges as social arenas. Comparisons between them enable a wider understanding of the masonic network established in the Syrian Land. My approach will include the interaction of masons belonging to different lodges, followed by a closer look at individual masons in the *Kadisha* Lodge. With the portrayal of the members, the function of the lodge can be reconstructed and its position, dependent on its socio-cultural surrounding, will become evident.

For studying masonic lodges in Tripoli and El Mina it was necessary to rely heavily on oral sources, in the form of interviews with the relatives of the freemasons who were active during the period under scrutiny in this study. When visiting the relatives I soon found out that taking notes was the best method of documentation, as tape recording was not well received. My questions focussed on three areas: 1) the relative's memories of the masonic family member; 2) the extent to which this member was known as a mason and 3) the degree to which the men involved in freemasonry had known each other before joining the fraternity.

⁵³ Ibid., p. 13.

⁵⁴ Ibid., p. 21, freemasons generally meet once a week or every two weeks in order to celebrate their rituals, consider previous minutes of former meetings, initiate new members, review general and charitable funds and propose new members. For example *El Mizhab* lodge, founded 1914 in Tripoli, registered meetings once a week according to its book of attendance, *D.S.*

This *modus operandi* was required due to the lack of written sources. Unlike freemasons in Beirut, the members of the fraternity in Tripoli and El Mina were not so well known and have left little that is written down. However, thanks to my contacts to family members, I was given some glimpses of the relationships between different family clans; their intricate and convoluted alliances and their hostilities. Thus, I profited from the chance to acquire a better knowledge of the situation they found themselves in a century ago, via oral sources, which depended on social, cultural, political and economic circumstances and conditions.

The first three chapters of this thesis concentrate on the historic setting in the Ottoman Empire, the necessary base of knowledge of freemasonry and the different masonic grand bodies involved, while the following chapters are geographically structured in order to analyse the branches of freemasonry *in situ*.

For a thorough understanding of freemasonry in Greater Syria it is necessary to have a sound knowledge of the history of the Ottoman Empire, as well as a clear picture of the principles and functions of freemasonry. Therefore I will illustrate life in the Ottoman Empire at the end of the nineteenth century in the first chapter. This will examine the conditions in which people lived under the rule of Abdulhamid II, the political ideas that were dispersed and the impact of historical events.

I will clarify some definitions, basic concepts and explain the development of masonic principles in the second chapter, as well as comparing the differences and similarities between Europe and the Middle East regarding the initial situation of freemasonry and its suitability to unite the Syrian members.

This will be followed by a brief chapter that will elucidate the foundations of masonic grand bodies that played a role in the activities of the lodges in Tripoli and the surrounding area. The fourth chapter will examine late Ottoman Beirut, with a

particular focus on its masonic lodges. Discussion of Beirut in comparison to Tripoli will serve to emphasise the varying forms and composition of lodges and the dependence on location. The cosmopolitan ideal enabled lodges to think of the brotherhood as being genuinely universal. Freemasons, nevertheless, had to compromise in order to remove the tension that existed between the ideal and the formation of a particular identity. It is necessary therefore to examine how lodges differed from each other according to their socio-cultural structures. This chapter is the most comprehensive in my thesis as it includes a study of the origins of freemasonry in Greater Syria and the neighbouring area. It is worthwhile to mention that the lodges either shared characteristics, or, in contrast, stood out due to divergent features related to their composition.

The fifth chapter analyses lodges on Mount Lebanon, the members of which tended to be associated with the theatre and arts in general. Additionally, unlike in Beirut where masons were deeply involved in educational and/or academic endeavours and seemed able to separate their masonic lives from politics, the lodges in the mountainous area risked mixing masonic associations with local political issues. Also the links that existed between masons on the Mount and those in other cities, with membership of different lodges being in a constant state of flux, will be discussed.

Finally, the sixth chapter deals with lodges in Tripoli and El Mina. The socio-cultural backgrounds of individual masons and the way freemasonry served as a medium between the different religious communities, is brought into focus at this point. I will examine some founding members of *Kadisha* Lodge more thoroughly in order to highlight their personal, social and economic connections.

My system of geographical categorisation does not correspond to the administrative borders of the time, but in my opinion it is useful to separate these three regions according to the different social and religious communities and their locations, as this had an impact on the lodges and their structures.

Primary Sources

One reason why scholars have not previously looked more closely at most of the early lodges in Greater Syria may be because only a few primary sources remain extant. To the best of my knowledge and according to my information the bulk of primary source material was destroyed or stolen during the many wars Lebanon has endured. In order to compensate for this lack of information, one has to rely on sources at the archives of those European grand bodies that were connected to lodges in the Ottoman Empire. Nevertheless, I will argue that it is possible – in view of the lack of written evidence – to reconstruct significant aspects of the “founding spirit” of freemasonry in the region and thus re-write an important part of its history. Moreover, comparisons between lodges in Beirut, Mount Lebanon and in Tripoli, which either followed or preceded *Kadisha*, help to understand its importance as a single unit for Tripoli and El Mina and as part of a wider network in Greater Syria during the period in question.

The primary sources used in the present study partly consist of the register books of different grand bodies throughout Europe. In the case of the Grand Orient of France, correspondence between the grand body and its affiliated lodges was available while events of other lodges in Ottoman Syria were included in the annual proceedings preserved at the Grand Lodge of Scotland. The main archives I visited were the archive of the Grand Orient of France in the National Library of France in

Paris, the archive of the Grand Lodge of Scotland in Edinburgh and the library of the United Grand Lodge of England in London.

Furthermore, I consulted the library of The University of Birmingham and Lambeth Palace Library in London in order to examine records left by early missionaries from England, where I also found the maps used in this thesis.

In Lebanon itself I undertook research in Ghazir, where the *Centre de Recherche et de Documentation Maçonnique* of Charles Kesrouani is located. Here I found letters written by members of lodges belonging to the Grand Orient of France and I had the chance to interview Kesrouani, who is a former archivist of the Grand Orient.

Although no minutes exist from the meetings during the early years of the working of *El Mizhab* Lodge in El Mina, which was the successor to *Kadisha*, the lodge did preserve its own book of attendance in which the many visits from members of *Kadisha* are noted.

Only a short investigation was necessary to locate some freemasons in Beirut. However in regard to Tripoli, it was a huge stroke of luck on my part to discover that an active lodge was situated within a stone's throw of where I was staying. The lodge building is situated in the city's port district and from the outside it is unremarkable: it is incomplete and bare looking with almost no windows on the ground floor. Inside, the lodge's dining room was furnished with plastic desks, which were arranged to create a more informal space for interactions after the lodge meetings.



Figure 3: Wooden Sign on the Door of the *El Mizhab* Lodge Library (photographed in 2008, D.S.)

A number of wooden shelves are inscribed with the masonic sign and a writing stating that they belong to the library of the lodge *El Mizhab*, No. 1130 (Figure 3). In addition, the lodge had a small library that contained various books of interest to freemasons. The walls of the lodge were adorned with photographs that illustrated its long history. These pictures included portraits of former lodge masters during the last years of the Ottoman Empire and whose biographies will be taken into consideration in this thesis.

Essentially, I endeavoured to seek out relatives of *Kadisha's* founding fathers and early members. In most cases I was able to capture a clearer picture of *Kadisha's* initial members. My efforts were helped by the fact that all the members came from the middle class, and most relatives were aware and proud of their masonic ancestors. Indeed they were happy to share photos, anecdotes and stories with me. In its early stages, oral history was often described as a tool to enable historians to write history

from below or to provide ‘a voice for those who otherwise [would] be hidden from history’.⁵⁵ And indeed, oral sources played this vital role in my research.

The interviews were not recorded because of personal concerns on the part of the interviewees. However, everyone interviewed gave permission to use the material. Furthermore, the statements used are corroborated, since their contents were repeated by different family members of varying families and apparent contradictions were illuminated from different angles.⁵⁶ The collected memories of ancestors of freemasons in the city enable new perspectives for understanding the past. Moreover, together with the preserved photographs, maps and postcards, they made it possible for me to obtain a sense of the *zeitgeist* in Tripoli and El Mina during the period covered in my research.

Additionally, I happened to meet Nassiba Saati, the librarian of El Mina’s town library, whose great-grandfather was a member of *Peace* lodge. She had collected certificates and parts of masonic correspondence in a folder, which I was permitted to use. My perception of the social life in Tripoli and El Mina at the end of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was enriched by reference to booklets written by the first charitable Greek Orthodox organisations, which are kept in the Greek Orthodox archive in Beirut. In these booklets, one finds lists of the principal donors and charitable deeds, as well as the amount of money given for various purposes.

Due to the secretive nature of freemasonry and its problematic standing in the region, many documents related to the activities of the fraternity in the Middle East have been stolen, hidden or destroyed. But rarely, one is fortunate – as I consider myself to have been – to find small traces of evidence in unexpected places.

⁵⁵ www.history.ac.uk/makinghistory/resources/articles/oral_history_2.html, (17.12.09).

⁵⁶ All of the following interviews, meetings and photographs were carried out between the 8th and 24th July 2008.

General Historiography

During the last twenty years research into freemasonry and related fraternal organisations has developed into a large area of academic study. Historiography has moved away from internal perspectives or sweeping attacks and steadily more works are being devoted to the task of contextualising the social, cultural and political history of freemasonry pertinent to academic standards. French scholarship over the last four decades has led this development, but significant contributions have also been made by the Spanish scholar José Ferrer Benimeli. More than twenty volumes have been produced as an outcome of research into freemasonry in the Hispanic world.⁵⁷ Margaret C. Jacob in her pivotal work *Living the Enlightenment* has changed the understanding of freemasonry as a significant part of Enlightenment culture. Her work was carried on by many others and scholars of the eighteenth century are particularly strongly represented in this area of research. During the last decade research has been revitalised by a series of innovative PhD dissertations and studies by Stefan-Ludwig Hoffmann on freemasonry and German civil society, Kristiane Hasselmann on the rituals of freemasons and Jessica Harland-Jacobs on imperial freemasonry, to name just a few.

Freemasonry in most Arab countries is still a contentious issue. One has to search for primary sources in order to get closer to freemasonry and it remains much more difficult to find reliable information on the fraternity in Arab countries. To quote Jacob Landau, one of the few researchers on this subject: ‘a comprehensive history of freemasonry in Muslim lands has still to be written’.⁵⁸ Indeed, one will encounter a lot

⁵⁷ See also: José A. Ferrer Benimeli, *La masonería española*, (Istmo, Madrid: 1995); *La Masonería española en el siglo XVIII*, (Siglo XXI De España Editores, Madrid: 1986); *Freimaurerei und Faschismus*, (Studienverlag GmbH, Innsbruck: 2009).

⁵⁸ Jacob Landau, ‘Muslim Opposition to Freemasonry’, *Die Welt des Islams*, New Series, vol. 36/2, (Jul. 1996), p. 187. Reference should also be made to the work of Jens Hanssen and Leila Fawaz. See, Jens Hanssen: *Fin de siècle Beirut – the making of an Ottoman Capital*, (Clarendon Press, Oxford:

of obstacles in the area due to censorship in non-democratic and authoritarian regimes. Moreover, freemasonry is also condemned by extremist movements, such as Hamas, who even mention the fraternity in its charter. Part of its seventeenth article – on the role of the Muslim woman – reveals their enemies to be those who have realised that they can ‘guide and educate’ women ‘in a way that would distance them from Islam’. The article in the charter goes on to state that ‘you can see them making consistent efforts by way of publicity and movies, curricula of education and culture, using as their intermediaries their craftsmen who are part of various Zionist organisations which take on all sort of names and shapes such as: Freemasons, the Rotary Clubs, gangs of spies and the like. All of them are nests of saboteurs and sabotage’.⁵⁹ According to Hamas, these secret organisations caused the French Revolution and are spreading around the world in order to destroy societies and further Zionist interests.⁶⁰

These accusations are a direct continuation of those made in much older texts, like the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, in which Jews were said to be secretly planning to usurp world power. The fictional text, first published around the beginning of the twentieth century, still enjoys great popularity among extremist

2005); ‘From Social Status to Intellectual Activity: Some prosopographical observations on the municipal council in Beirut, (1868 – 1908)’, in: *From the Syrian Land to the States of Syria and Lebanon*, edited by Thomas Philipp, Christoph Schumann (Orient Institut, Beirut: 2004). Also see Leila Fawaz, *Merchants and Migrants in Nineteenth Century Beirut*, (Harvard University Press: 1983). Fawaz, ‘Foreign Presence and Perception of Ottoman Rule in Beirut’, in: *Arab Provincial Capitals in the Late Ottoman Empire*, edited by Jens Hanssen, Thomas Philipp, Stefan Weber, (Ergon, Würzburg in commission, Beirut: 2002), p. 97 – 142; ‘The City and the Mountain: Beirut’s Political Radius in the Nineteenth Century as revealed in the Crisis of 1860’, *IJMES*, vol. 16/4, (Nov. 1984), p. 489 – 495.

⁵⁹ Part of Article 17 of the Hamas Charter, translated and annotated by Raphael Israeli from the Harry Truman Institute, Hebrew University Jerusalem and available online:

www.fas.org/irp/world/para/docs/880818.htm, (23.01.2009).

⁶⁰ Part of Article 22 of the Hamas Charter/Covenant.

groups and it only takes a small step to add other groups, such as freemasons or Rotary Clubs, to render it useful for contemporary conspiracy theorists.⁶¹

When Freemasonry emerged in the Ottoman Empire, the first texts on its work, influence and historical meaning were either written by masons themselves or anti-masons. The narratives produced from the end of the nineteenth century until World War One merely offered a blurred and biased image of freemasonry. One of the earliest preserved documents locating freemasonry in the Middle East is a travel report written by the American freemason Robert Morris in 1838 after an expedition to what is today Israel, Syria and Lebanon. His descriptions of the land and people can be categorised as out-dated impressions of orientalism. Between 1909 and 1912, the Jesuit Louis Shaykhu, who taught Arabic literature at St. Joseph's University in Beirut, published various articles in the newspaper *Al Mashriq (the Levant)* and wrote a book in which he expressed his complete contempt towards freemasonry. In his eyes, the fraternity was nothing else but a destructive sect that tried to govern the world in order to attack religious morality and to implement anarchy.⁶² Shaykhu's views were not uncommon in the region at the time. Shaykhu's writings are useful as they express a part of the public's perception of masonry from a conservative and religious perspective. However, for a deeper understanding of the phenomenon it is

⁶¹ Significant research into the history of the Protocols and its processing has been done during recent years. Ao.: Hagemeister, Michael. 'The "Protocols of the Elders of Zion" and the Myth of a Jewish Conspiracy in Post Soviet Russia', in: *Nationalist Myths and Modern Media. Contested Identities in the Age of Globalization*, ed. by Jan Herman Brinks; Stella Rock; Edward Timms, (I.B. Tauris, London / New York: 2006), pp. 243–255; Hermann Goedsche, "'The Rabbi's Speech: the Promise of World Domination" (1872) / "Protocols of the Elders of Zion" (c. 1902)', in: *The Jew in the Modern World: a Documentary History*, ed. by Paul R. Mendes-Flohr; Jehuda Reinharz, (Oxford University Press: 1995), p. 360-367; Stefan-Ludwig Hoffmann, "'Brothers or Strangers": Jews and Freemasons in Nineteenth-Century Germany', *German History* 18, (2000), pp. 143-61.

⁶² Monica Corrado, 'An Annotated Translation of Luwis Shaykhu's Article on Freemasonry', *AHL – Archaeology & History in the Lebanon*, No 25 (Lebanese British Friends of the National Museum in London, LBFNM: Winter 2007); Louis Shaykhu, *al-Sirr al-maṣūn fī hay'at al-farmāsūn (The well-kept secret in the Freemason organisation)*, (Beirut: 1909-1911). For more sources see also: Jacob M. Landau, 'Prolegomena to a study of Secret Societies in Modern Egypt', *Middle Eastern Studies*, vol. 1/2 (Jan. 1965), p. 135-186; Shimon Shamir, 'Midhat Pasha and the Anti-Turkish Agitation in Syria', *Middle Eastern Studies*, vol. 10/2 (May 1973), p. 115-141.

preferable to consult other sources. We do not have unbiased descriptions or interpretations of masonry. From its origins masons considered themselves part of a discreet society, and consequently no official debate on its historical design and development occurred in the Middle East. Only in the twentieth century do we find secondary sources in which freemasonry is treated in its social and historical context. Research has come to identify the phenomenon of freemasonry as a political movement, defining its meaning according to its influence on the general public.

In 1979, Eva H. Balázs wrote about the impossibility of discussing freemasonry when taken out of its historical and political context. She emphasised the profound political differences between freemasons in Hungary during the late eighteenth century, who were torn between admiration for the policy of Joseph II and enthusiasm for the French Revolution and following radical liberation movements.⁶³ With the opening of the European masonic archives in the last century, access to new material has been made possible and has facilitated fresh initiatives towards a more balanced understanding of the movement's different actors.

This progress is still absent in Arab countries, where both affiliations to lodges and academic research remain problematic. In an article published in 1971, Elie Kedourie ridiculed the political significance of freemasons, describing the exaggerated fear and even hysteria of some British politicians in Constantinople who perceived the Young Turk movement as a Jewish-Masonic conspiracy.⁶⁴ But while Kedourie convincingly rebutted the charges from the British side, he did not attempt to analyse the social and cultural role of freemasonry in the last days of the Ottoman Empire. On the one hand it is somewhat anachronistic that Najdat Fathi Safwat could

⁶³ Eva H. Balázs, 'Freimaurer, Reformpolitiker, Girondisten', in: *Beförderer der Aufklärung in Mittel- und Osteuropa*, (Ulrich Camen, Berlin:1979), s. 129 – 233.

⁶⁴ Elie Kedourie, 'Young Turks, Freemasons and Jews', *Middle Eastern Studies*, vol. 7/1, (Jan. 1971), p. 89 – 104.

write an article on freemasonry in the Arab world in 1980 without using archival sources that are now available.⁶⁵ On the other hand, his mixture of information and polemical discourse emulates the tradition expressed by Shaykhu.

Detailed research on French lodges in Istanbul and Salonica during the *tanzimat* (period of reforms, *D.S.*), beginning around 1839, has been carried out since the 1980s by Paul Dumont.⁶⁶ He used the masonic archives of the National Library in Paris to write on the political connections between masons and the reform movement.⁶⁷ Dumont argues that political aims served as the main driving force for joining the fraternity. He neither addresses the function of lodges as charitable institutions nor as social associations. However, he does mention their particular attractiveness for marginalised groups during the last decades of the Ottoman Empire. In this, he differs from another study undertaken in 1989 by Karim Wissa, who studied lodges in Egypt between 1798 and 1921 from a political and social perspective.⁶⁸ It shows that besides their role as political institutions, lodges could also act as a form of guild system or a social club for the elite.⁶⁹ He also undertook research at the National Library in Paris in order to acquire a more profound knowledge of the operations of the Grand Lodges of England and France and later on of the Grand Orient Lodge of Egypt, which was formed in 1901. A shift in historical research on freemasonry, which is prepared to examine the fraternity as a microcosm

⁶⁵ Nadjat Fathi Safwat, *Freemasonry in the Arab World* (Arab Research Centre Publications, London: 1980).

⁶⁶ 'This period featured the beginning of a centralized system of education, the creation of new criminal and commercial courts, and an ever-deepening commitment to the establishment of an effective and robust military. By 1876, the apparatus of the state took on the veneer of a more regularized, Western-style bureaucracy. The Ottoman constitution of 1876 was the invention of this new bureaucracy, which increasingly saw itself as the sole arbiter of modernism and reform of the empire', [Ryan Gingeras, *Sorrowful Shores*: p. 14].

⁶⁷ Paul Dumont, 'Les Loges Maçonnes Françaises à Istanbul', in: *économie et sociétés dans l'empire ottoman* (Editions du CNRS, Paris: 1983).

'La Franc-Maçonnerie d'obédience Française à Salonique au début du XXe siècle', *Turcica XVI*, (1984).

⁶⁸ Karim Wissa, 'Freemasonry in Egypt 1798 – 1921: A Study in Cultural and Political Encounters', *British Society for Middle Eastern Studies*, vol.16/2, (1989).

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 157 – 158.

with multiple manifestations, is clearly visible. This trend can be observed in diverse publications on European freemasonry, where one can note a focus on the connections of the fraternity to the Enlightenment and the emergence of civil society.⁷⁰

One can also study the phenomenon of freemasonry in the Ottoman Empire from the perspective of colonialism studies. Wissa mentioned it briefly, but was more interested in the Egyptian Grand Lodge, while Dumont did not focus on research into freemasonry in Arab cities. Eric Anduze's PhD thesis on freemasonry in the Maghreb and in the Middle East, dating from 1996, does attempt such a study, although it is a very poor and fragmentary work.⁷¹ Anduze does not compare Arab freemasons belonging to the Scottish and French systems, which could have helped him to define the French *mission civilisatrice*. Nor is he able to illuminate the social or intellectual reasons underpinning why locals joined different foreign systems. Thus, while illuminating French freemasonry, Anduze does not pay attention to Syrian and Lebanese freemasonry and thereby eliminates exactly what he was aiming to illustrate: the specific historical context. Having taken into account Anduze's deficits, I relied on my own research, parts of which have been published between 2004 and 2009.⁷²

⁷⁰ See also: Margaret C. Jacob, *Living the Enlightenment. Freemasonry and Politics in Eighteenth-Century Europe* (Oxford University Press, New York: 1991); Stefan-Ludwig Hoffmann: *Die Politik der Geselligkeit, Freimaurerlogen in der deutschen Bürgergesellschaft 1840 – 1918* (Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, Göttingen: 2000).

⁷¹ Eric Anduze, *La Franc-Maçonnerie coloniale au Maghreb et au Moyen Orient (1876 – 1924)*, (available at the library of the GOF, Paris: 1996).

⁷² 'Les Premières Loges Ecosaises en Grande Syrie', *Cahiers de la Méditerranée* (Centre de la Méditerranée Moderne et Contemporaine de l'Université de Nice-Sophia-Antipolis, CMMC), Nr. 72, (Juni 2006), p. 321 – 330; 'Revolutionary Thoughts – Lebanese Freemasonry before the Young Turk Revolution', *AHL – Archaeology & History in the Lebanon*, no. 25, (Winter 2007), p. 66 – 81; 'Early Freemasonry in Late Ottoman Syria from the Nineteenth Century onwards – The First Lodges in the Beirut Area', *Freemasonry and Fraternalism in the Middle East*, edited by Andreas Önnersfors & Dorothe Sommer, Sheffield Lectures on the History of Freemasonry and Fraternalism, (CRFF, Sheffield: 2008); p. 53 – 84. Publication of my MA thesis 'Revolutionary Thoughts', *Zeitschrift für Internationale Freimaurerforschung IF* (Peter Lang; Prof. Helmut Reinalter, Universität Innsbruck: 2007/08).

Probably the best insights are provided by Jacob Landau, who wrote an article on freemasonry for Brill's encyclopaedia of Islam, articles on secret societies in Egypt and Muslim opposition to freemasonry, in which he lists various valuable sources on Arabic freemasonry.⁷³

⁷³ Jacob M.Landau, 'Farmasuniyya', *Encyclopaedia of Islam, 2nd edition, vol. 2*, (Brill, Leiden: 1965), p. 296-297. *Exploring Ottoman and Turkish History*, (Hurst & Company, London: 2004); *The Politics of Pan-Islam*, (Clarendon Press, Oxford: 1990); 'Prolegomena to a study of secret societies in Modern Egypt', *Middle Eastern Studies*, vol. 1/2, (Jan. 1965), p. 135 – 186; 'Muslim Opposition to Freemasonry', *Die Welt des Islams*, New Series, vol. 36/2 (Jul. 1996), p. 186 – 203. Also: Shimon Shamir analysed anti-Turkish agitation and secret groups: Shimon Shamir, 'Midhat Pasha and the Anti-Turkish Agitation in Syria', *Middle Eastern Studies*, vol. 10/2, (May 1974), p. 115 – 141.