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CHAPTER II: Masonic Principles Challenged

In the second half of the nineteenth century, with growing European economic and educational penetration, masonic lodges were set up in Ottoman Syrian cities and towns mostly affected by this development. As occurred during the European Enlightenment, masons soon found themselves attacked by diverse parties.[1] According to Thierry Zarcone, early criticism of freemasonry had been threefold: from the Roman Catholic Church, the Free and Armenian Orthodox Churches and from the Ottoman and Muslim authorities. Thus, freemasons were 'either seen as sorcerers, or Catholic crusaders, or conspirators against the Sultan. As sorcerers they are the enemies of all; as Catholic crusaders they are enemies of the non-Catholics, i.e. Greeks, Armenians and Muslims and - though astonishing - the allies of the Pope; then, as conspirators they are political adversaries of the Sultan'.[2] Jacob Landau cites the following about an Islamic opponent to freemasonry at the turn of the twentieth century: 'The freemasons are faithless enemies of the nation, motherland, religion, family and army'.[3]

Not only were the lodges perceived as European imports, but, as Landau emphasises, they were also seen to be societies that attracted Christians and Jews 'as one of the few organisational frameworks in which these minorities could associate and socialise effectively with their counterparts within the Muslim majority'.[4]

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[1] Already more than 100 years earlier, opponents of freemasonry raised their voices against lodges established in Smyrna and Constantinople. Being alerted by the Roman Church, Greek, Armenian and Catholic Churches were united against the Masonic thread; consequently, the lodge of Smyrna disappeared. Also the lodge in Constantinople had to be closed when accused of converting Ottomans to Catholic Christianity.

[2] Thierry Zarcone, 'Anti-Masonry among the Ottomans and in contemporary Turkey', a paper delivered at the Canonbury Conference on Anti-Masonry, (London: 30.10.2010).

[3] Landau, *History* [citing Cevat Rifat Atilhan, Masonluk Nedir (Akin Basimevi, Istanbul: 1937) p. 35]: p. 10.

[4] Landau: p. 5.

Consequently, this raised suspicion among the rest of the population, as the following letter from 1827 illustrates:

> 'They think the farmason is bad; that is, one who don't worship the saints, and who eat meat in the fast. When I entered, I did not workship the saints, nor put one candle before the saints. Another said, 'This is not worthy to enter in the church; this is heretic'. I asked him, 'Why?' He said, 'You eat meat in the fast, and in Wednesday and in Friday'. I told him, 'This is not sin, you talk lie'. Then they said, 'Let him go from our church'. One from my friends said, 'Why? He is Christian'. They said, 'No, if he is Christian, let him bow now before the saints'. I said 'This is not the sign of a Christian'. One said, 'Let no one talk with him, he is foolish a little'; and he who said so was priest'.[5]

On the one hand, the modern attitude adopted by freemasons towards individual rights, political freedoms and internationalism aroused the distrust of nationalist leaders loyal to the regime. On the other hand, the idea of lodges where men of various religions associated in an exclusive bond and swore upon a sacred book was seen as purely idealistic and as a form of religious toleration. It was one of the main masonic virtues criticised by Muslim religious figures; and even more so when Muslims started to enter lodges during the nineteenth century.[6] This tolerance towards other confessions was interpreted as neglect and lack of respect for one's own religion.

According to Landau, 'the libertarian – democratic – egalitarian views of freemasonry [which were] sometimes influenced by a revolutionary spirit' caused qualms among conservative circles. The expressed cosmopolitanism of the fraternity was supposedly contrary to emerging nationalisms and its secular attitude. Again, as Landau notes, it 'was perceived by some orthodox Muslim circles as unacceptable even dangerous – paralleling the aversion of certain Catholic spokesmen to freemasonry'.[7] Masonic symbols that drew on a Judaeo-Christian heritage alienated

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[5] Letter to the American Presbyterians from Asaad Jacob, member of the Greek Church who obviously converted to Protestantism, 1827, *in: The Missionary Herald, Reports from Ottoman Syria, 1819 – 1870*, p. 448.

[6] Landau, *History*: p. 7; Zarcone, 'Anti-Masonry'.

[7] Landau, *History*: p. 19.

some Muslims, while its religious-like ideology antagonised secular intellectuals.[8] In addition, the fact, that lodges were engaged in charitable acts and gave financial support to members and non-members alike, was, as Landau states, 'based on standards other than those of the state or Islamic law'. This did not sit well with some Muslims. Finally, their secrecy and what Landau calls their 'elitist makeup' made the lodges an ideal target for all the excluded individuals who felt disadvantaged and deprived.[9] The disputes among masons in European countries regarding how and to what extent masonic principles and ideologies contradicted nationalism, religiosity and open-mindedness never took place with the same intensity or also academic interest in Arab countries, where discussions on freemasonry are still taboo.

It is therefore worthwhile to look at the varying debates and responses in the European context during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, in order to explain theoretical approaches and to illustrate how the implementation of masonic principles depended on social and political circumstances. Knowing the actual state of European lodges, in the period when their members first established freemasonry in the Middle East, is a significant component in understanding the reasons why Syrians participated in the fraternity. It also helps to understand the reciprocal relationship between them and the development of the original European concept in a new and foreign context.[10]

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[8] Ibid.: p. 20.
[9] Ibid.: p. 20.
[10] However, defining freemasonry as an originally European concept does not entail that no prior para-masonic orders developed in the Middle East. In his thorough studies on the parallels between freemasonry and Sufi brotherhoods, Thierry Zarcone convincingly shows the similarities between the two concepts. Both Sufis and freemasons borrowed ideas and rituals from each other. See: 'The Transformation of the Sufi Orders in the Turkish Republic and the Question of Crypto-Sufism', in: *Cultural Horizons: a Festschrift in Honor of Talat S. Halman*, edited by J. L. Warner, (Syracuse University/Yapi Kredi Yayinlari, New York/Istanbul: 2001); *Mystiques, Philosophes et Francs-maçons en Islam: Riza Tevkik, penseur ottoman (1868-1949), du soufisme à la confrérie*, (Bibliothèque de l'institut français d'études anatoliennes d'Istanbul, Paris: 1993); 'Rudolf von Sebottendorf und der Mythos der 'Alten Tuerkischen Freimaurerei'', *Gnostika*, vol. 33, (AAGW, Sinzheim: July 2006), p. 37 - 54; 'Seyh Mehmed Ataullah Dede (1842-1910) and The Mevlevihane of Galata: An Intellectual and Spiritual Bridge between the East and the West', in: *The Dervishes of Sovereignty, The Sovereignty of the Dervishes, The Mevlevi Order in Istanbul*, edited by Ekrem Isin, (Pera Museum, Istanbul: 2007), p. 58-74.

Religion and Reform

During the Enlightenment the power of the church as an institution, with influence on worldly affairs, was questioned by the elite and it lost positions of governmental power in most European countries. A split occurred between the religious and the secular domain: the church's authority was not taken for granted by everyone anymore. While freemasons used lodges as vehicles for enlightened ideologies and ethical secular principles, there existed relatively few freemasons without religious affiliations.[11] As early as 1723 Anderson had outlined that a mason should 'never be a stupid atheist, nor an irreligious libertine', but that the subject of religion should be excluded from lodges, with freemasons 'leaving their particular Opinions to themselves'.[12]

Instead, Anderson argued that freemasonry should support and extend education, in order to recognise the pure humanity of all men.[13] Religion was set as a precondition for humanity in general.[14] Anderson had written his charges with Christianity in mind, as it was 'that religion in which all Men agree'.[15] The same held true for the welcoming of new masons in regard to geographical borders. Masons in the eighteenth century mainly limited their horizons to Europe. Their project for achieving ideal harmony was first and foremost tailored to fellow Christians inside European borders.[16] Freemasons in France, for example, restricted entrance to their lodges as '[t]he order only admits Christians; outside the Christian Church it cannot,

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[11] R. William Weisberger, *Speculative Freemasonry and the Enlightenment*, (Columbia University Press, New York: 1993), p. 2, p. 158.
[12] James Anderson: p.2.
[13] August Wolfstieg, *Christenthum, Humanität und Freimaurerei*, (Georg Stilke, Berlin: 1900), p. 5,6.
[14] Wolfstieg: p. 11.
[15] James Anderson: p. 2.
[16] Beaurepaire: p. 21.

and must not accept any freemason. Therefore Jews, Muslims and Pagans are excluded like infidels'.[17]

On the other hand, masons did distance themselves from the dogmatism of the Christian Church and insisted on their own regulations, which supposedly did not contradict Christianity, as long as they followed the path revealed in the Bible.[18] Against much anti-scientific engagement of the Church, masons - sneering at the conservative attitude of the Catholic Church – supported, questioned and challenged conventions and authorities that were commonly taken for granted: 'Sciences as far as they don't bow to the Church must be named atheistic in order to keep the Catholic sheep away so they won't be informed about the interior hollowness of the Roman system'.[19]

Freemasons walked a tightrope between their feeling of belonging to a superior religion, Christianity, and adherence to the masonic ideal of respect and tolerance towards all religions. They were never able to fulfil their utopian expectations and welcome candidates irrespective of their religious affiliation in the whole of Europe.[20]

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[17] [*L'Ordre n'admet que des Chretiens; a Hors de l'Eglise Chretienne il ne peut, ni ne doit être recu aucun Franc-Macon. Voila pourquoi les juifs, les Mahometans, et le Paiens, en sont ordinairement exclus comme infideles*.], Ibid.: p. 64-65.

[18] Wolfstieg: p. 13.

[19] [*Die Wissenschaft, soweit sie sich ihr nicht unbedingt beugt, muss als atheistisch gebrandmarkt werden, damit die katholischen Schäflein sich von ihr fern halten und nicht über die innere Hohlheit des römischen Systems aufgeklärt warden*.], Otto Henne, *Aus Loge und Welt, Freimaurerische und kulturgeschichtliche Aufsätze*, (Franz Wunder, Berlin/Leipzig: 1905), p. 65.

[20] Jewish Masonic candidates, for example, faced problems in nineteenth-century Germany. The more they 'adopted universalist values, the more these could be re-inscribed with particularist notions and turned against them in the claim that the Jews had no culture of their own' and could never be 'loyal citizens'. But the more Jews emphasised their religious particularity, for example in explicitly 'Jewish' lodges, the more they were accused of lacking any feeling for universal human values, in short of not belonging to the *Weltbürgertum*, Stefan-Ludwig Hoffmann, 'Brothers or Strangers', Jews and Freemasons in Nineteenth-Century Germany', *German History*, vol. 18/2, (2000), p. 160. In Italy freemasons before the Renaissance and the Risorgimento were strongly influenced by radical anti-clericalism and 'the desire to reduce the influence of the Catholic Church and to laicize Italian life as quickly as possible'. See: S. William Halperin, 'Italian Anticlericalism', 1871 – 1914, *The Journal of Modern History*, vol. 19/1, (March 1947), p. 18. It is a remarkable fact that the fight against the Catholic Church lodges busied most of the masons in theoretical terms and also affected most of their actions, so that questioning the membership of men belonging to other creeds assumed a less important

Admission terms for people of a non-Christian orientation differed from time to time and from lodge to lodge. In general terms one can note a more inclusive attitude during the eighteenth century, which later developed into a more nationalistic and restrictive approach.

Regarding the position of Muslims in France, Beaurepaire stated that they were 'in general equally pushed back from the Christian shores, whereas they regularly visited ateliers in Paris, in northern France or in the Austrian Netherlands'. On the other hand, the participation of a Muslim in a lodge meeting could also be used to 'represent the advantage of exotism and hence qualify the lodge that welcomes him'.[21] Additionally, the presence of Muslim masons was sometimes seen as proof of the lodge's beneficent influence on otherwise 'barbarian' people. Masons often gloated about the fact that 'masonic solidarity was stronger than barbarism'.[22] More contradictions arose concerning Jewish or non-white aspirants. Jewish lodge members could provoke silence or a breaking of ties between lodges, and non-white masons were treated according to their general social standing in society, which during these years was considerably lower than that of the majority white population.[23]

Margaret Jacob stated that lodges served as 'schools for government', in which the 'impulse of lodges everywhere was to identify with government while in the same breath defining freemasons as enlightened', striving for a secular order.[24]

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role. '[F]reethinkers, Protestants, and Jews met and exchanged ideas in an unorthodox way, and this caused more revolutionaries and radicals to join the Freemasons'. Although the lodges did not serve as agitating groups, they functioned 'as a type of front organisation.', Albert Boime, *The Art of the Maccia and the Risorgimento: Representing Culture and Nationalism in Nineteenth-Century Italy*, (University of Chicago Press, Chicago/London: 1993), p. 25.

[21] Pierre-Yves Beaurepaire, 'Sociabilité des Lumières et exclusion dans les ports méditerranéens au XVIIIe siècle: l'exemple de la Franc-maconnerie', *Cahiers de la Méditerranée,* vol. 69, (2004), p. 5.

[22] Ibid.: p. 71.

[23] Beaurepaire, *Franc-maçonnerie et Cosmopolitanisme au Siècle des Lumières*, p. 61-89.

[24] Margaret C. Jacob, *The Origins of Freemasonry. Facts and Fictions*, (University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia: 2006), p. 48.

During the Enlightenment their secular aspirations were firmly embedded in the general mood dominant in Europe, where voluntary associations loosened former strong religious relations. According to Jacob, 'they could set men to thinking about their capabilities'.[25] Secularisation and the domestication of religion was said to be one of the significant attributes of modern Europe. Consequently, the state of development of non-European cultures was judged according to the degree of their secularisation.[26] Having said that, these new unions could initiate and exercise governance quite effectively on the whole, thereby encouraging loyalty to the central authority. Yet in doing so they could also foster independence and self-reliance among the beneficiaries of the state's expanded role.

One has to keep in mind that the lodges were indeed exclusive and elitist spaces with their own structural constraints. Yet, the participants themselves also had to deal and comply with general political regulations, unwritten social codes of conduct and conventions of appropriate behaviour. Masonry's predicament was centred on the fact that the functioning of masonic principles could only be guaranteed in selected circles, which at the same time limited the outcome and potential impact on a wider circle.

According to Jacob, masons tried to overcome the antagonism between reformism and loyalty without abandoning their 'masonic sense of uniqueness', which crystallised during the eighteenth century.[27] As she states, British lodges for example were 'remarkably supportive of established institutions of church and state. Yet they could also house divisive, or oppositional, political perspectives'.[28]

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[25] Ibid.: p. 52.
[26] Höfert, 'Europa und der Nahe Osten', p. 568.
[27] Jacob, *Living the Enlightenment*: p. 34.
[28] Ibid.: p. 50.

With regard to intervention or active participation in politics, lodges differed in their attitudes in both time and place. For instance, masons in Vienna and Paris were proponents of state reforms, but in most of the cases they were not politically involved. Lodges were 'also places where deep social tensions were expressed and adjudicated. More than the English, Dutch, or Belgian lodges, the French lodges were places where violent quarrels erupted'.[29] Masons in London were mainly linked to the Whig party and used the meetings for party politics and lobbying.[30] According to Jacob, the lodges were an important vehicle for inculcating loyalism to king and government. As she writes, 'subordination to "legitimate" authority was vigorously pursued by the Grand Lodge of London and was demanded of all lodges affiliated with it'. Though, irrespective of affiliation, Jacob argued that 'once overtly political in their purpose, the lodges might turn in all sorts of directions'.[31]

The situation in the Ottoman Empire was different in regard to the fact that its population was made up of various religions and the general standing of its followers in the eyes of the law. They did not have the same rights. When it entered the Ottoman Empire, freemasonry was a complete product of an enlightened Europe, which seemed to profit from civil rights, secular education and modern ways of social communication. Religion still played a role but in urban and academic circles it had been relegated to the fringes in questions regarding culture and ethical codes. At the same time other groups gained grounds. Guilds, professional associations and various function-based societies managed to increase their influence and decision-making powers. Freemasonry fitted into the European *zeitgeist*. In the Ottoman Empire, in contrast, it was a novelty and acted as a vanguard for organised interest groups that sought to bridge religious gaps. Beirut developed into a large port-city, while

[29] Ibid.: p. 68.
[30] Weisberger: p. 59.
[31] Jacob, *Living the Enlightenment*: p. 71, 46, 158.

becoming at the same time a multi-ethnic and multi-religious environment 'characterized by an expanded public sphere and a variety of global connections'. A new middle class evolved and 'consolidated the distinct character of the Ottoman coast'. And it was these 'influential domestic actors who successfully transformed a region in their own vision'.[32]

While Christians in Greater Syria generally had fewer problems in adapting to Western ideas, learning Western languages or travelling through Europe, they were not alone in propagating reforms – as illustrated by the examples of Al-Afghani and Abduh. Among the Muslim advocates for profound change was Hussein al-Jisr from Tripoli. Al-Jisr was a religious and erudite man who taught at various institutions and was responsible for Tripoli's first published newspaper, the *Jaridat Tarabulus al-Sham*, which was first printed in 1893.[33] Belonging to a non-conservative circle of Muslim academics, Al-Jisr is considered as the author of one of the first serious Islamic responses to Darwinism.[34] He was not averse to new and foreign ideas. In his works, for example, he attempts to define what should be the correct content of an Islamic book on natural sciences.[35] Al-Jisr used religious and scientific arguments against materialistic Darwinism. Without contradicting the existence of God, he accepted parts of Darwin's theory of evolution as long as they were consistent with his own faith and rationality. However, he refuted all scientific findings that seemed to him to be pure speculation or incompatible with the Koran.[36]

Darwinian ideas probably first entered Greater Syria by way of the seminar rooms of the Syrian Protestant College in Beirut, where Edwin Lewis, one of the

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[32] Emrence: p. 52.
[33] Johannes Ebert, *Religion und Reform in der arabischen Provinz, Husayn al-Gisr at-Tarabulusi (1845-1909). Ein islamischer Gelehrter zwischen Tradition und Reform,* (Heidelberger Orientalische Studien Band 18, Peter Lang GmbH, Frankfurt a. M.: 1991), p. 167-168.
[34] Ibid.: p. 131 pp.
[35] Ar-Risala al-Hamidiyya, 1888 (Ebert).
[36] Ebert: p. 141-148.

senior lecturers, was a keen champion of his countryman's ideas. At the end of the nineteenth century, Darwinism was debated in an article by Louis Büchner, entitled *Bestätigung der Unsterblichkeit der Materie durch die Darwinsche Theorie*,[37] which was translated into Arabic.[38] Contrary to Darwin, Büchner considered Darwinism to be applicable to animals, including human beings. Thus, he concluded that there was no difference between body and soul. The majority of religiously-minded Muslims and Christians reacted strongly against Darwinism. Again another group of thinkers tried to harmonise religion and science, while a third defended Büchner's perspective. The biggest obstacle for constructive debates consisted in the mind-sets of those involved in the topic. After all, the theory had been developed by empirical natural scientists, but was discussed and attacked by men without a background in science and academia. Critics included theologians, linguists and literary studies experts, who all displayed different traditions of thinking.[39]

The level of discussion was comparable in Greater Syria and in Europe. Early Syrian newspapers showed great interest in this issue and *Al Muqtataf* gave its readers the opportunity to join in the debate in the form of published letters to the editors. Indeed, Al-Jisr used this forum to learn more about Darwinism.[40] Those who wrote letters were more often than not involved in freemasonry and/or other societies and

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[37] *The Confirmation of the Immortality of Matter by means of Darwin's Theory.*
[38] Ibid.: p. 131.
[39] Ibid.: p. 135-137, On July 2, 1866, Alfred Russel Wallace, the joint proponent of natural selection, wrote to Charles Darwin to lament how he had been 'so repeatedly struck by the utter inability of numbers of intelligent persons to see clearly or at all, the self acting & necessary effects of *Nat Selection*, that I am led to conclude that the term itself & your mode of illustrating it, however clear & beautiful to many of us are yet not the best adapted to impress it on the general *naturalist public*', Michael Shermer, 'A Skeptic's Take on the Public Misunderstanding of Darwin', *Scientific American*, February 2009, online version www.sciam.com/article.cfm?id=darwin-misunderstood, (10.10.09).
[40] Dagmar Glaß, *Der Muqtataf und seine Öffentlichkeit,* (2. Band, Streitgespräche), (Ergon, Würzburg: 2004), p. 428.

therefore familiar with the possibility of the coexistence of faith and science, an idea propagated throughout the lodges.[41]

Mohammad Abduh translated Spencer's *Education: Intellectual, Moral and Physical*, whilst another freemason and co-founder of *Al Muqtataf*, Yacub Sarruf, was responsible for the Arabic version of Samuel Smiles's *Self-Help* in 1879.[42] According to Reid, 'the heyday of unrestrained private enterprise was already beginning to draw to a close in Britain and America by the time the Syrian Christians discovered its attraction as an ideology'.[43] As Peter W. Sinnema writes, *Self-Help* was after all 'one of the most popular works of nonfiction published in England in the second half of the nineteenth century'. The book 'celebrates individuality, autonomy, and civility, virtues central to the projects of other nineteenth-century institutions that actively encouraged cultivation of the intellectual and moral working-class self: the mechanics' institutes, public libraries, people's colleges, and lyceums'.[44] For us, it may seem like a loose collection and list of successful men, but for Yacub Sarruf and Jurji Zaidan the book exactly expressed their thoughts. As Reid writes, 'they were eager to point out to others the road they had taken to fame and fortune'.[45] Both freemasons were successful journalists, and together with Faris Nimr among those who went to Cairo at the end of the century because of 'the lack of intellectual freedom at the Syrian Protestant College' as well as to avoid the strict censorship in place in Beirut.[46] In Cairo the freemasons Nimr and Sarruf soon became acquainted

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[41] When checking the names of the writers in Masonic registers in Glaß's two volumes, it was possible to discern the high number of masons contributing to the paper, *D.S.*.
[42] Al-Azmeh: p. 48, Donald M. Reid, 'Syrian Christians, the Rags-to-Riches Story, and Free Enterprise', *IJMES*, No 1, (1970), p. 362.
[43] Reid: p. 359.
[44] Samuel Smiles, *Self-Help*, (Oxford University Press: 2002), Introduction by Peter W. Sinnema, p. VII; original version published by Smiles himself in 1859.
[45] Reid: p. 360.
[46] Donald J. Cioeta, 'Ottoman Censorship in Lebanon and Syria, 1876-1908', *IJMES*, vol.10/2, (May, 1979), p. 179. According to Cioeta in most of the cases when journalists left Beirut there were other reasons as well besides the censorship under Abdulhamid, *D.S.*.

with Lord Cromer, the British controller-general and a freemason who later became consul-general of Egypt.[47]

Significant parallels existed between their professional lives and their participation in lodges. As Reid notes, Sarruf was primarily interested 'in popularizing Western science in the Middle East', while Zaidan's focus was on society, history, and literature. Sarruf and Nimr agitated against socialism – fearing this would provide the government with an opportunity to subordinate Christians to the Islamic majority and strongly advocated individual empowerment via self-help. However, Zaidan's newspaper, *Al Hilal*, did not object to socialism in general.[48] Zaidan's history of freemasonry makes it abundantly clear that he considered the brotherhood to be a noble society, with its activities and principles worthy of glory. He perceived its secrecy as a potential image problem that would disappear as soon as people became sufficiently educated and qualified to appreciate an open masonic fraternity. At this time he believed that one day the veil of masonic secrecy would be removed.[49]

When joining Egyptian lodges, Sarruf and Nimr selected a more political approach to daily challenges. In Cairo, as in Constantinople, lodges were more radical and politicised. They did not always adhere to the masonic stipulation that prohibited discussion of politics and religion. Consequently many freemasons were involved in political movements.[50]

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[47] Ibid.: p. 361.
[48] Ibid.: p. 364. 365.
[49] Jurji Zaidan, *Taʾrīkh al-māsūniyya al-ʿāmm (General History of Freemasonry)*, (Cairo: 1889), Preface.
[50] For further information on Young Turks and reformers in Egypt, see: Albert Hourani, *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age, 1798-1939*, (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge: 1983). Names can then be compared to the lodge listings kept at the archives of the grand lodges in London, Edinburgh and Paris. Sarruf's father-in-law, Shahin Makarius, was responsible for a printing press, and also wrote different books on freemasonry, such as *The Virtues of Freemasonry*, as well as translating the masonic constitutions for a publication entitled *The General Masonic Constitution, Rite of Jerusalem*. For Makarius, educational and charitable efforts were the main characteristics of the brotherhood, as can be

Zaidan's first contact with freemasonry came in his home country, but he did not continue to go to lodge meetings when in Egypt. This could be considered another indicator of the differences between lodges in Lebanon and Egypt. He did not belong to the pro-revolutionary wing of freemasonry in Egypt, which included Abduh and Al-Afghani. What is more, the first lodges in Beirut were less prone to mix charitable efforts with actual political engagement. This attitude was mirrored in Zaidan's choice of topics for his newspaper, as opposed to Al-Afghani's political writings. In general, though, many freemasons in Greater Syria went through a process of radicalisation. As Khuri notes, 'they concluded that reform by dialogue and peaceful settlement may be unattainable, and therefore a revolution was an absolute necessity in certain cases'.[51] Taking a stand against socialism, Sarruf and Nimr used Smiles as a guide, stating that only if the individual were allowed to gain liberty would he enjoy the fruits of his own work. In their view, prosperity was the result of an individual's efforts, economic actions, frugality and restraint. In contrast, they argued, poverty was a result of laziness and thoughtlessness. What they abhorred most was the negation of the individual through collectivism.[52]

They shared a new emphasis on individual empowerment. In Syria, as in Europe some decades before, this newly discovered individualism was a natural outcome of the changing social situation. The growing involvement of the Ottoman Empire in global business and capitalism weakened other traditional networks and shifted the balance from the community to the individual. Smiles's book, first read in Victorian England, showed how men could succeed if only they possessed sufficient

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observed in his article on the pedagogical situation in Greater Syria. In this article, he not only mentions schools and similar institutions, but also the state of freemasonry and the number of lodges established in the region, Henry Diab, Lars Wahlin, 'The Geography of Education in Syria in 1882 with a Translation of "Education in Syria" by Shahin Makarius, 1883', *Geografiska Annaler*, 65B, (1983).

[51] Khuri: p. 38.

[52] Glaß: p. 561.

will, perseverance and energy. *In Self-Help* one not only finds the British as examples, as it uses successful biographical stories from all over Western Europe. The descriptions range from ancestors of Smiles to contemporaries. Hence, at the time the work was inspiring and attractive to a lot of men. It is doubtful whether Smiles ever thought of writing a bestseller that would be translated into non-European languages. If so, he probably would have included more exotic examples and concealed or excluded his belief in the superiority of Europeans. Describing Missionary labour and achievements in colonial India, Smiles stressed that thanks to them 'a magnificent college was erected at Serampore; sixteen flourishing stations were established; the Bible was translated into sixteen languages, and the seeds were sown of a beneficent moral revolution in British India'.[53] Furthermore, thanks to India, Britain had found 'a great field for the display of British energy'.[54] For non-Europeans the book provided perfect proof of the fact that each individual was responsible for his own life. Although the situation of the Ottoman Empire looked bleak at the time, the book suggested that there was no need for despair, since the cure against this sickness was to be found in freemasonry – the brotherhood that fostered individual improvement and reliability.

For Middle Eastern intellectuals, *Self-Help* illustrated clearly the reasons for Europe's superiority. Smiles admitted that no individual could be strong if isolated, but clearly limited the power of governments to provide passive help. A citizen's duty was to be active, while the government served merely to protect 'life, liberty, and property'. Reforms could only be successful 'by means of individual action, economy, and self-denial',[55] since 'national progress is the sum of individual industry, energy,

[53] Smiles: p. 94.
[54] Ibid.: p. 197.
[55] Ibid.: p. 17.

and brightness, as national decay is of individual idleness, selfishness, and vice'.[56] This individual duty was not restricted to a certain field, specific occupation or class. Self-improvement was possible throughout society: 'in the school of labour is taught the best practical wisdom; nor is a life of manual employment […] incompatible with high mental culture'.[57] According to him, this stress on personal responsibility was the basis from which future developments would spring forth. Likewise freemasonry stresses the individual responsibility for self-improvement. Only then with this continuing process of self-scrutiny is it possible to have an impact on the outside world at all.

Some Ottomans, such as Ussama Makdisi, tended to think in terms of what can be called 'Ottoman Orientalism'.[58] Makdisi claims that 'from the outset of the nineteenth-century, Ottomans recognised and responded to the power of Western orientalism by embracing the latter's underlying logic of time and progress, while resisting its political and colonialist implications'.[59] Ottoman orientalism responded to Western military and economic might. To some extent it was an adverse-effects reflex to European penetration. Hence, Ottoman reformers compared Western modernity with their own slow pace of development. Modernisation was sought to lead to a 'free and progressive America of the East'.[60] This would lift the Empire into the modern age. Like Christians in Greater Syria, who pointed to a flourishing period of culture and science in the pre-Islamic period, Muslims stressed the contemporary era in order to prove, as Fuad Pasha states, that the Empire 'had always been tolerant, and therefore like any other European state, in fact more than any other European state,

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[56] Ibid.: p. 18.
[57] Ibid.: p. 38.
[58] Ussama Makdisi, 'Ottoman Orientalism', *The American Historical Review*, vol. 107/3, (June 2002), p. 768-796.
[59] Ibid.: p. 769.
[60] Ibid.: p. 770.

could rightfully claim to be a modern and civilized power'.[61] As Makdisi writes, 'like Japan, which was an important example for Ottoman officials especially after its defeat of Russia in 1905, the late Ottoman state perceived itself as part of the East, but superior to the rest of the Eastern peoples'.[62]

Makdisi analysed Butrus al-Bustani and Fuad Pasha as two representatives of Ottoman orientalism and further examples to support his theory. According to him, both men agreed upon the fact that the Middle East's backwardness was clearly displayed during the struggles of the 1860s. However, while Fuad Pasha advocated reforms in order to strengthen Ottoman authority and its government, Bustani spoke out in strong terms against corrupt, unqualified and hypocritical politicians. He despised ignorance and supported a better educational system. According to him, civil and religious matters should be separated into public space and the private sphere. At the same time, for Bustani, modernisation of Ottoman society entailed the rediscovery of old traditions based on mutual tolerance and co-existence.[63] In contradistinction to this view, Fuad Pasha considered that reforms had to emanate from the top, due to the archaic power structures of the Syrian elites. He also supported modernisation, when necessary, in the form of enforced obedience, which sought to reconsolidate the principle of a separation between rulers and the ruled.[64] Likewise Bustani asked for a strong and enlightened government in order to guide the flock on the evolutionary path, but he realised that only citizens, not subjects would be able to lead the Empire through a process of modernisation.[65] In his eyes, modernity included values of

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[61] Ibid.: p. 781. Allegedly Fuad Pasha himself was a freemason, initiated in an Italian lodge in Constantinople, *D.S.*; also: Letter from *Le Liban* to the GOdF, (21.07.1903), carton no. 1, Archive of the GOdF.
[62] Ibid.: p. 787.
[63] Ussama Makdisi, 'After 1860: Debating Religion, Reform, and Nationalism in the Ottoman Empire', *IJMES*, vol. 34/4, (2002), p. 601 – 617.
[64] Ibid.: p. 606.
[65] Butrus Abu-Manneh, 'The Christians between Ottomanism and Syrian Nationalism: The Ideas of Butrus al-Bustani', *IJMES*, vol. 11/3, (1980), p. 299.

brotherhood, tolerance, equality, rights and liberty.[66] Bustani defined the aim of learning and education in order 'to strengthen the ties of love and concord among all sections of society, and to ward off the causes of fanaticism and discord. The experience of one's own ancestors should be made the basis of knowledge'.[67]

Unlike freemasonry in Western states, the fraternity in the Ottoman Empire did not focus its energies on one main religious persuasion (as will be demonstrated in the following chapters). While Christianity was the religion of the European majority, with only small insignificant minorities alongside, Ottoman Syria was made up of many more religious communities. Here, the fraternity proved to be more geared towards inclusion than exclusion, which also had an impact on its main characteristics. Freemasonry developed in an atmosphere permeated by the European *zeitgeist* and the cultural developments in Europe. There was no such counterpart in the Ottoman Empire. Without doubt, individual improvement was the main reason to join freemasonry in Syria, but it seems lodges were built mainly to realise the hopes of members to reach out to the "profane" world. The debates in Europe were different, in so far as the topics concerned the citizens as a whole and topics of a philosophical nature could be easily discussed. However, in the Ottoman Empire the main topic engaging most of the men's minds concerned what the next day would bring and how they would be able to survive in a society in which rifts were becoming continuously more pronounced.

When analysing lodges established between the 1860s and the Young Turk Revolution in 1908, one can note that a dominant impetus behind masonic expansion centred on the feeling of the need to strengthen society as a whole, including all its various sects. Unity was supposed to produce strength and no difference was made

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[66] Makdisi, 'After 1860': p. 608-609.
[67] Butrus Abu-Manneh: p. 290.

regarding religious belonging, as men of various persuasions were invited. The Bible was as welcome as was the Qur'an. Ottomans who decided to join freemasonry clearly wanted to see change. For now, they had secured their place in an institution that brought together many of the important men of the city or village. This could be an advantage in terms of their own socio-cultural standing, as well as when conducting business. The expansion of lodges meant that they were able to join other lodges, in other places, thereby building up masonic and business networks. If lodges were able to progressively increase their membership, then soon everyone would recognise that it was not worth fighting each other over questions of religious affiliation. Rather, they could only survive if they practiced what Bustani preached and freemasonry taught: mutual tolerance and coexistence.

Inclusion or Exclusion

The Old Charges envisaged that 'preferment among Masons is grounded upon real Worth and personal Merit only', but this principle was at the same time invalidated by other determining factors concerning membership in general. The Charges state that a mason had to be of 'a perfect Youth, having no Maim or Defect in his Body, that may render him incapable to learning the Art'. In addition, he 'should be descended of honest Parents'. Moreover, the last and highest masonic degree could only be reached by a man who was 'nobly born, or a Gentleman of the best Fashion, or some eminent Scholar, or some curious Architect, or other Artist, descended of honest Parents, and who is of singular great Merit in the Opinion of the Lodges'.[68] Thus, Anderson's Charges had already paved the way for the later emergence of the

[68] Anderson: p. 3.

inconsistencies between a concept of equality before masonic law and elitism in practice.

As Jacob noted, lodges required literacy and 'perhaps most important, relative affluence which was necessary to pay the dues'.[69] However, it would be wrong to view the lodges in a purely negative light, which revolved around an elitist lifestyle. A mason's individual wealth served at the same time as a precondition for a wide philanthropic system. Once again, Jacob states 'the associations also provided a refuge, an escape from censorship' for masons, 'or in case of the lodges, a place for assistance and charity where the state or the churches could not, or would not, provide'.[70] Honest and concerted efforts to improve general education were characteristic of masonic lodges. Masons typically rallied against Catholic theology and advocated the inherent moral quality of human nature, which should be strengthened and advanced by education and the exercise of reason.[71] Beneficence towards non-masons was not only perceived as a means of providing immediate relief for the needy, but also as a masonic duty to work for the improvement of a mason's surroundings as a step towards the goal of universal human prosperity. This masonic philanthropic attitude unintentionally highlighted the differences between masons and non-masons, as well as between the affluent elite and the poor, by exposing those who gave and those who received.

The lodges created a new social sphere that formed a microcosm of society, where one needed a masonic passport to enter.[72] This necessary accessory was not restricted to European institutions, but was valid for lodges worldwide. The document

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[69] Jacob, *Living the Enlightenment*: p. 47.
[70] Jacob, *Origins*: p. 55.
[71] Philip Nord, 'Republicanism and Utopian Vision: French Freemasonry in the 1860s and 1870s', *Journal of Modern History*, vol. 63, (June 1991), p. 221.
[72] Pierre-Yves Beaurepaire, 'Sociabilité des Lumières et exclusion dans les ports méditerranéens au XVIIIe siècle: l'exemple de la Franc-maconnerie', *Cahiers de la Méditerranée*, vol. 69, (2004), p. 2.

stated the name of the mason, the affiliated lodge and the lawfulness and recognition of the concerned member. The certificate was authenticated by the signatures of the lodge's head and its secretary. The added ID picture enabled others to check the validity of the document, while varying symbols were supposed to emphasise the masonic significance. The masonic passport shown below (see fig. 4) belonged to an Arab freemason from *Le Liban* lodge and was supposed to enable him to enter lodges that recognised daughter lodges of the Grand Orient of France.

Figure 4: Masonic Passport from the 1930s (an example of an Arabic masonic passport photographed in 2008 at the Centre de Recherche et de Documentation Maconnique, Charles Kesrouani, Ghazir/Lebanon, *D.S.*)

While a potential member had to prove his virtue nobleness, a travelling mason had to provide this document from his own lodge in order to be recognised.

As Hoffmann argues, 'associations represented the most important medium for developing and strengthening new identities in the nineteenth century'. But the proliferation of associations did not necessarily entail the strengthening of civil society's values; 'those new identities in turn set their own, occasionally anti-liberal,

agendas'.[73] The system of black balling, which entailed noting one's objection to a candidate's admission by means of a black bowl during the voting process, had the potential to foster social discrimination. In various cases, an elitist corps filtered out non-conformist masons.

In addition, the secrecy of masonic rituals enhanced the need to pay attention to new members. One reason for keeping the public in the dark about ceremonies within the lodge was in order to strengthen the members' feeling of being part of something special. Masons learned to be cautious in their choice of words and their deportment. As Anderson stated in 1723, 'the most penetrating Stranger shall not be able to discover or find out what is not proper to be intimated' and sometimes, when necessary, a mason had to 'divert a Discourse'.[74] A masonic lodge had to constantly endeavour to reconcile its inherent paradoxes: '[l]eft in the night of secret societies while being united as sons of the light'.[75] It is true of all secret societies, as Simmel claims, that 'the strongly accentuated exclusion of all not within the circle of secrecy results in a correspondingly accentuated feeling of personal possession'. Its existence alone has a value and, as Simmel stated, it gives 'the person enshrouded by it an exceptional position', in which 'everything secret is something essential and significant'.[76] The more essential and important the secret seems to be, the stronger the bond among the inaugurated. To quote Simmel once again, while secrecy 'works toward isolation and individualisation, socialisation is a counteractive factor'.[77]

According to Hoffmann, the masonic fraternity's 'secrecy and the emotional cult of brotherhood' created a space separated from everyday life. It was 'a male

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[73] Stefan-Ludwig Hoffmann, 'Democracy and Associations in the Long Nineteenth Century: Toward a Transnational Perspective', *The Journal of Modern History*, vol 75/2, (June 2003), p. 294.
[74] Anderson: p. 5.
[75] Pierre-Yves Beaurepaire, 'Sociabilité des Lumières et exclusion dans les ports méditerranéens au XVIIIe siècle: l'exemple de la Franc-maconnerie', *Cahiers de la Méditerranée*, vol. 69, (2004), p. 2.
[76] Simmel: p. 464, 465.
[77] Ibid.: p. 477.

world of love and ritual' and a 'flight from domesticity'.[78] This was illustrated by means of the dramatic admission ceremony, as described by Noel Gist, who stated that it involved 'leading the novice from the "profane" world into the realm of mystery'.[79] The quasi-religious ceremonial oath underlined this significant step away from the profane world and towards enlightenment.[80]

Nationalism and Cosmopolitanism

Between 1776 and 1778 Gotthold Ephraim Lessing wrote a fictional discussion about freemasonry. His protagonists – Ernst and Falk – attempt to reveal its deeper truths by entering into a Socratic dialogue. Falk adopts the role of Socrates, thereby steering Ernst with suggestive questions in the desired direction. In their second conversation, they deal directly with the on-going and seemingly insoluble paradox inherent in freemasonry. How is it possible to be a cosmopolitan striving for one universal brotherhood without becoming an anti-nationalist, an atheist or an anarchist?[81]

> 'Falk: Hence, we imagine the best kind of state; we imagine that all human beings live in this state: would therefore all men of the world constitute a single state?
> Ernst: Hardly so. Such a monstrous state could not be administrated.
> Falk: That means: all men would still be German and French, Dutch and Spain, Russian and Swedish; or whatever they would be anyway.
> Ernst: Sure enough.
> Falk: Hence, we received already something. Is it not true that all of these little states would have their own interests? And every member of them would act for the interest of his state'.[82]

[78] Stefan-Ludwig Hoffmann, 'Civility, Male Friendship, and Masonic Sociability in Nineteenth-Century Germany', *Gender & History*, vol. 13/2, (August 2001), p. 225.
[79] Noel P. Gist, 'Culture Patterning in Secret Society Ceremonials', *Social Forces*, vol. 14/4, (May 1936), p. 499.
[80] Ibid.: p. 503. Women were part of the profane world and although some lodges did introduce them, they never were fully accepted. Indeed, mixed lodges until today are not recognised as regular masonic lodges by most grand bodies, hence, their members of both sexes cannot profit from their status as masons when travelling, *D.S.*.
[81] Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, *Ernst und Falk, Gespräche für Freymäurer*, written between 1776 and 1778 (Online source: pdf created by pdfbooks.co.za, (13.01.2008).
[82] [*FALK. Wir nehmen also die beste Staatsverfassung für erfunden an; wir nehmen an, daß alle Menschen in der Welt in dieser besten Staatsverfassung leben: würden deswegen alle Menschen in der Welt, nur einen Staat ausmachen?*

Lessing, who was initiated into the fraternity at a lodge in Hamburg in 1771, categorised the masonic raison d'étre as a serious attempt to improve and stabilise mankind and human relations, in order to overcome inevitable evils. The state was a tool and an intermediate stage in this process towards enlightenment. Unlike Gottfried Leibniz, Lessing did not believe that humans lived in the best possible world. However, the state provided for and protected the well being of its citizens by way of its social order and legal administration. Accordingly, universal equality was possible if the world was divided into states. His two protagonists do not claim that the existence of states had to be overcome, but rather that there must be something else as well: a concept that could obliterate the existing distinctions between different religions, ethnicities, and civil societies, without affecting political systems. Hence, freemasonry's most challenging duty, in Lessing's opinion, was to function as this ideal concept.[83]

In contrast to this rather utopian idea, freemasonry's fate was always connected to its social and political surroundings; it worked within existing societies and was therefore to a certain extent restricted. At the same time, masons also belonged to other networks and had to conform to additional structural frameworks. In the eighteenth century, as Anthony J. La Vopa writes, 'the "public" first assumed a recognisably modern shape and became a powerful ideological construct'.[84]

ERNST. Wohl schwerlich. Ein so ungeheurer Staat würde keiner Verwaltung fähig sein. Er müßte sich also in mehrere kleine Staaten verteilen, die alle nach den nämlichen Gesetzen verwaltet würden.
FALK. Das ist: die Menschen würden auch dann noch Deutsche und Franzosen, Holländer und Spanier, Russen und Schweden sein; oder wie sie sonst heißen würden.
ERNST. Ganz gewiß!
FALK. Nun da haben wir ja schon Eines. Denn nicht wahr, jeder dieser kleinern Staaten hätte sein eignes Interesse? und jedes Glied derselben hätte das Interesse seines Staats.], Lessing: zweites Gespräch.

[83] Lessing, *Ernst und Falk.*

[84] Anthony J. La Vopa, 'Conceiving a Public: Ideas and Society in Eighteenth-Century Europe', *Journal of Modern History*, vol. 64, (March 1992), p. 79.

Freemasonry, like academic or literary societies, was a concomitant phenomenon of the European Enlightenment. As part of a vanguard for an evolving civil society and harbinger for political parties, freemasons wanted to affect their communities, by aiming to advance the commonwealth according to agreed upon tenets.[85] One of the main characteristics was freemasonry's claim to espouse cosmopolitanism.

The literal meaning of the Greek word *kosmopolis* derives from *kosmos* (world order, universe) and *polis* (city, community of citizens). The word was conceived during the Enlightenment and evolved into various forms and deviations. However, the perception of a *Weltbürger* or *citoyen de l'univers*, whilst popular among intellectuals, never became established in broader circles or among the lower classes.

According to Sami Zubaida, a person 'who is multilingual, multicultural, at home in different milieus and who has wide interests across cultural and national boundaries' can be defined as cosmopolitan, but can still advocate nationalism.[86] Particularism and universalism, as Zubaida argues, are not necessarily perceived 'as in succession' or 'as mutually exclusive'.[87] Moreover, as Stefan-Ludwig Hoffmann notes, the concept of "nation" indeed 'promises universal human equality' and grants the individual some privileges, but these rights can only become manifest in an existing, structured and statutory framework, which constitutes 'universality in the particular, distinguishing itself from other particularities'.[88] The weakening of traditional boundaries and the development of new institutions were precursors for

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[85] Johannes Rogalla von Bieberstein, ‚Geheime Gesellschaften als Vorläufer politischer Parteien', in: *Geheime Gesellschaften, Wolfenbütteler Studien zur Aufklärung*, Band V/1, edited by Peter Christian Ludz, (Lambert Schneider, Heidelberg: 1979), p. 430.
[86] Sami Zubaida, 'Cosmopolitanism and the Middle East', in: *Cosmopolitanism, Identity and Authenticity in the Middle East*, edited by Roel Meijer, (Curzon Press, Surrey: 1999), p. 15.
[87] Stefan-Ludwig Hoffmann, 'Nationalism and the Quest for Moral Universalism', in: *The Mechanics of Internationalism – Culture, Society, and Politics from the 1840s to the First World War*, edited by Martin H.Geyer and Johannes Paulmann, (Oxford University Press, Oxford: 2001), p. 259.
[88] Ibid.: p. 260.

individualisation and liberty, which as Zubaida notes 'allow and may facilitate the de-racinisation from caste, community and religion'.[89] Whereas this is also a condition for cosmopolitanism, the emergence of capitalism and modern states generated other criteria for identification and classification. Hence, cosmopolitanism was not an automatic outcome of globalisation.[90] Moreover, when confronted with extreme realities, periods of war, starvation and poverty, ideals tend to collapse – as happened to the concept of cosmopolitanism in Europe during the nineteenth century.

Rebecka Lettevall defines cosmopolitanism, regardless of its multiple facets, more as an ideal than a doctrine.[91] According to her, its advocates strive for a better world in the future and most of them know quite well how this ideal world should be brought closer, but are never able to reach this cosmopolitan utopia in the real world. Pauline Kleingeld distinguishes between at least six forms of cosmopolitanism, which all have different implications and are themselves influenced by surroundings.[92] However, what all of these forms share is an emphasis on *one* common humanity and respect for other cultures, human rights and moral equality. Without challenging specifically Western criteria, norms were applied for all existing communities, showing an inherently prejudiced elitist character.[93] The aspect of Europe's superiority regarding other cultures is not something claimed solely by cosmopolitans. Arguably, the plural term "cultures" came into use in the nineteenth century, when Europe was still considered as the paradigm for evolution.[94]

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[89] Zubaida: p. 19.
[90] Stéphane Yerasimos, 'Cosmopolitanism: Assumed Alienation', in: *Cosmopolitanism, Identity and Authenticity in the Middle East*, edited by Roel Meijer, (Curzon Press, Surrey: 1999), p. 38.
[91] Rebecka Lettevall, 'The Idea of *Kosmopolis*: Two Kinds of Cosmopolitanism', in: *The Idea of Kosmopolis*, edited by Rebecka Lettevall, My Klockar Linder, (Södertörns Högskola, Huddinge: 2008), p. 14.
[92] Pauline Kleingeld, 'Six Varieties of Cosmopolitanism in Late Eighteenth-Century Germany', *Journal of the History of Ideas*, vol. 60/3, (July 1999), pp. 505-524.
[93] Ibid.: p. 517 – 518.
[94] Almut Höfert, 'Europa und der Nahe Osten: Der transkulturelle Vergleich in der Vormoderne und die Meistererzählungen über den Islam', *Historische Zeitschrift*, vol. 287/3, (December 2008), p. 567.

Freemasonry did not develop in a vacuum. In the early days of speculative freemasonry, lodge members mainly belonged to the elite of society who helped the fraternity to spread around the globe. It encapsulated enlightened ideas of brotherhood, such as universal solidarity. According to Andreas Önnerfors, 'cosmopolitan ideas were formulated and practiced very early on, but these ideas were a part of joint European sociability that remained closed for those who were not initiated into it'.[95]As Pierre-Yves Beaurepaire makes clear, 'for freemasons, two worlds existed: the masonic Cosmopolitanism permitted the brothers to open up and discover themselves in two fitting universes, the one in which they were born and where they asserted themselves, and the one they had chosen, constructed, in which they wanted to be exemplary citizens – though without "sovereignty" to use the expression by Daniel Gordon'.[96] Moreover, the question arose as to how far members of a secret society could possibly claim to be cosmopolitans when they included some but excluded others.

The first European lodges were used as a kind of formative playground for the emerging concept of civil society. It was in this semiotic arena, as Margaret Jacob stated, that 'men also became legislators and constitution makers', in addition to the already existing debating clubs and literary societies.[97] Within the lodge masons proclaimed a universalistic ethic, while at the same time insisting on the strict separation between their fellow brethren and the so-called profane. But it was exactly in these restricted circles that the general love of mankind as a whole was preached.

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[95] Andreas Önnerfors, 'Cosmopolitanism and what is 'Secret': Two Sides of Enlightened Ideas concerning World Citizenship', in: *The Idea of Kosmopolis,* edited by Rebecka Lettevall, My Klockar Linder, (Södertörns Högskola, Huddinge: 2008), p. 65, 66.

[96][*Il (le Cosmopolitanisme maçonnique) permet aux frères de s'épanouir et de se découvrir dans deux univers emboîtés, celui qui les a vu naître, et dont ils s'affirment sujets modèles, et celui qu'ils ont choisi, construit, dont ils se veulent des citoyens exemplaires – bien que « sans souveraineté » pour reprendre l'expression de Daniel Gordon*], Pierre-Yves Beaurepaire, *Franc-maçonnerie et Cosmopolitanisme au Siècle des Lumières* : p. 12.

[97] Ibid.: p. 13.

Citing the Scottish freemason Andrew Michael Ramsay (1686-1743), Önnerfors argues that freemasons indeed considered themselves to be part of a universal collective. The fraternity purported a commitment to a vision of mankind in which 'all nations can borrow sound knowledge' and can 'live without discord and cherish one another without renouncing one's homeland'.[98] Lodges were perceived as the antithesis of the Babylonian confusion of tongues. Masonic homes should bridge and harmonise all distinctions, iron out misconceptions and strengthen ecumenism.[99] On the strength of the uniformity of lodges, universalism was thought to be possible. Freemasons, although initially concentrating in Europe, created lodges as similarly structured associations, following the same rules and respecting the same principles throughout the world. During the second half of the eighteenth century masonry was so successful in Europe that it was identified as a dominant European institution besides the Church.[100] Lodge members used the improved and expanding infrastructure of international masonry in order to bolster an increase in the frequency of communication and travel. These strengthening links served as a channel for information, the affirmation of mutual sympathy or simply as a better means of control, thanks to the possibility of closer observation.[101]

Unfortunately, laudable principles and resolutions did not fare well in the nineteenth century when tested in martial reality. The opinion that civilised nations must absorb and reform the uncivilised in the name of humanity as separate "national projects" became widespread, for example, in German masonic circles.[102] The moral language of freemasonry seemed increasingly contradictory, in terms of social and

[98] Önnerfors: p. 69.
[99] Beaurepaire: p. 16.
[100] Ibid.: p. 24.
[101] Ibid.: p. 30-32.
[102] Hoffmann, 'Nationalism': p. 261.

cultural visions and realities.[103] Not only did secrecy create boundaries between insiders and the so-called profane, but as has been mentioned already, the common requirements for participation in the lodges also only included educated, wealthy men. Moreover, as Hoffmann notes, 'national societies moved closer together', as the antagonism between masonic ideal principles and the actual ceremonies and rituals inside lodges became even more pronounced.[104] Hence, while masons remained trapped in their cages of politically correct language, other organisations, such as the labour and peace movements, started to build international networks. According to Zubaida, Europe opened ways 'for social mobility which assimilated individuals into different social and cultural milieus'. The new means of the mobility of people *and* ideas, facilitated through printing, created a 'new intellectual' model and ended the system of a 'unitary *Weltanschauung*'.[105]

In the meantime, each masonic national grand lodge displayed reservations against its foreign brothers. Indeed national masonic bodies championed their own superiority and the role of their own countries 'to develop the idea of human progress' and 'to love, to serve, and to die for humanity'.[106] Allegedly, every lodge possessed the ultimate key to universalism and cosmopolitanism. Although 'German Romantic nationalism was explicitly anti-cosmopolitan', as Zubaida stated, this nationalism was understood by some freemasons as 'part of a universalist commitment'.[107]

In the case of the Grand Orient of France, , it had already begun to behave by the end of the eighteenth century, as Pierre-Yves Beaurepaire argues, 'as a national obedience and refused every foreign intrusion – especially a British one – on French grounds, claiming the monopoly over foreign correspondence'. Harsher rejections

[103] Ibid.: p. 263.
[104] Ibid.: p. 273.
[105] Zubaida: p. 18.
[106] Hoffmann, 'Nationalism': p. 275, 276.
[107] Zubaida: p. 16.

were still to come as ‘the emergence of nationalism radicalised positions at the end of the century’.[108]

The masonic lodges formed in British colonies once again highlight the discrepancy between masonic cosmopolitan ideology and reality. Freemasonry did facilitate and advance intra-cultural exchanges, but interactions took place, as Harland-Jacobs observes, in ‘the context of unequal power relations’. She goes on to argue that they played a ‘critical role in building, consolidating, and perpetuating the empire’.[109] Empires functioned like global players, while at the same time they were keen to preserve their national characteristics. British freemasonry spread in parallel to the presence of the British army, missionaries and travellers. Hence, the British model of the fraternity became global without becoming totally universal or cosmopolitan. As Margaret Jacob notes, ‘for international travellers or military men, the national character of the lodges permitted an appeal that could compensate for the failure of states to reward or care for their citizens or servants’.[110] Only to a ‘very limited extent’, according to Harland-Jacobs, did the supposed principle of tolerance and cosmopolitan ideology form masonic networks ‘that included men from various cultures’.[111] Its primary purpose in foreign countries was to connect British people and thereby establish an imperialistic social and economic network.

In this way freemasonry played a counterproductive role, that is, it impeded the development of a cosmopolitan culture in the colonies. As Harland-Jacobs argues, it encouraged ‘an imperialist identity among its members’, serving as a ‘discrete

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[108] [*Comme une obédience ‘nationale’ et refuse toute intrusion étrangère – notamment britannique – dans l’espace français, prétend au monopole de la correspondance étrangère […] l’émergence du nationalisme devait encoure radicaliser les positions au tournant du siècle*.], Beaurepaire: p. 37, 38.
[109] Jessica Harland-Jacobs, ‘Hands across the sea’: The masonic Network, British Imperialism, and the North Atlantic World’, *The Geographical Review*, vol. 89/2, (April 1999), p. 239. Though, as will be argued further onwards, British lodges did not succeed everywhere in respect of power consolidation and continuing perpetuation, *D.S.*.
[110] Jacob, ‘Origins’, p. 66.
[111] Harland-Jacobs: p. 251.

institutional force that consolidated British imperialism'.[112] On the other hand, one could also claim that masons of the British Empire still perfectly embodied the principles of the masonic charges expounded by James Anderson in 1723.[113] Herein Anderson states that 'a Mason is a peaceable Subject to the Civil Powers, wherever he resides or works, and is never to be concern'd in Plots an Conspiracies against the Peace and Welfare of the Nation'.[114]

The lodges belonging to the Grand Orient of Italy that were established in foreign countries offered their members first of all 'a place to meet and sociability, thus, different forms of help and protection' and were characterised as an ' instrument to preserve the tie to their homeland and to cultivate the feeling to belong to a distant national community'.[115] In contrast to the British, French or German branches of freemasonry, Italian lodges opened up much more to locals and were used as a means to build and cement economic, social and political relations between their members, irrespective of nationality. 'Cette ouverture vers l'extérieur' was typical mainly of Italian lodges in the Mediterranean area, where they also played an important role for Sephardic Jews, who joined the craft in large numbers.[116] Their emphasis on *laïcité*, which often bordered on anti-clericalism, enabled all men regardless of religion to participate. Being monotheistic in belief was a precondition, but this was compatible with an aversion to religious dogmatism, as well as to the power and influence of the church and to political conservatism. Modernisation and democratisation were

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[112] Ibid.: p. 250.

[113] In 1738 Anderson published the second edition of his *Charges* and made some debatable changes, which will be discussed in the next chapter.

[114] James Anderson, *The Old Charges of Free and Accepted Masons*, first published in London 1723, www.freimaurerloge-erlangen.de/download/old%20charges.pdf, (14.10.2006), p. 1.

[115] [*Lieu de rencontre et de sociabilité, et donc différentes formes d'aide et de protection […]a pour conserver un lien ideal avec la mère patrie et pour cultiver un sentiment d'appartenance à la lointaine communauté nationale.*], Fulvio Conti, 'Entre Orient et Occident, Les loges maçonniques du Grand Orient d'Italie en Méditerranée entre le XIXème et le XXème siècles' A lecture given in Nice at an international conference entitled *La franc-maçonnerie en Méditerranée (XVIIIe-XXe siècles) : modèles, circulations, transferts*, (October 2005).

[116] Ibid.

channelled, propagated and advanced in significant measure by the members of these lodges.[117]

One has to keep in mind that masonic rhetoric and its theoretical framework of rules did not have to be consistent with what was actually implemented. It is appropriate to state that the particular emphasis on masonic maxims shifted and was responsive to the dynamism of socio-cultural surroundings and the lodges' status in their homelands, as well as in colonial settings. Whereas the French and German lodges worked in a European context, where masonry already existed and identities were created partly by means of national distinctions, the British and Italian lodges were established when colonialism was on the rise. They entered countries with no prior experience of masonry, where power relations were unequal and where the need to preserve the existing status quo, in order to ease trade, was probably more pressing than the desire to spread national wisdom.

After the First World War, German masons shifted their attention to the preservation of lodges and to the support of individual members. Additionally, they warned against the mixing of cultures and the loss of purity of German spiritual might.[118] Lodges were seen as spiritual homesteads, in which it was possible to meet and express one's personal troubles.[119] This perception of masonic challenges after the devastating war resembled the experiences made by British freemasons when entering the "virgin soil" of their colonies.

It should be stressed that not all freemasons displayed nationalistic or patriotic feelings towards their *Heimat*. However, the general mood of the fraternity, as Hoffmann describes, made sure that 'the pacifist, internationally orientated wing of

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[117] Ibid.
[118] August Horneffer, *Die Bedeutung deutscher Auslandslogen*, (Verein deutscher Freimaurer, Leipzig: 1920), p.3.
[119] Ibid.: p. 7.

European Freemasonry had little influence on political decision-making in France or Germany or, indeed, inside the lodges of both countries'.[120] The tension and ambivalence between cosmopolitanism and nationalism outlived the nineteenth century: 'we are far away from a fraternity based on virtue, sciences and humanity. A community welded together against the one it rejects and, positively, for the cultivation of common values'.[121] With the outbreak of the First World War, the reciprocal influence of ideologies had become even more pronounced.

Did Ottoman freemasons advocate a certain ideology that was either compatible with or hostile to masonic principles, as it has been experienced in Europe? Preserved written material from Western lodges convincingly shows that on-going discussions took place inside the lodges, but no such sources exist concerning lodges in the Middle East in the nineteenth century. It may be true that lodges in Egypt and contemporary Turkey turned towards nationalism and displayed a more radical antipathy against Western meddling. However, although nationalising efforts for a certain period in some areas succeeded, lodges in Greater Syria never strictly cut their relations to Western lodges.[122]

Comparisons of masonic tenets in general with the output of Syrian intellectuals, who were also freemasons, may be one way to get closer to the role the fraternity played in their daily lives. Yet, researchers can only refer to documents of

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[120] Hoffmann, 'Nationalism': p. 278.

[121] [*On est loin de la fraternité universelle fondée sur la vertu, les sciences, l'humanité. Une communauté se soude autant négativement, en s'opposant à l'autre, en le rejetant, que positivement par le fait de cultivar des valeurs communes*.], Beaurepaire: p. 63.

[122] A common feature for the lodge members studied in this thesis was that they displayed a tendency to 'lodge-hopping', which in its character proves that lodges in Cairo, Alexandria and Constantinople were less attractive for Syrian masons who rarely joined them. The Registration books for English lodges clearly show that this kind of shifting behaviour happened almost completely within Egypt or between Egypt and lodges in Constantinople. For example, the *Bulwer* Lodge had two incarnations within the space of four years: in Constantinople in 1861 and in Cairo in 1865. In the late 1860s and early 1870s, many masons moved from the Cairo lodge to the one in Constantinople. Among these masons was Prince Halim Pasha who at one point worked heavily against the Ottoman Regime. (Registration books, 1861, 1865, *Bulwer* Lodge, Archive of the GLoE); Muhammad 'Abduh moved from the *Star in the East* Lodge, where he had been initiated, to *La Concordia* Lodge; both were located in Cairo, *D.S.*.

individual masons and their ideas or perception of the situation and it seems to be wrong to classify these sources as strictly masonic in spirit. In most cases these Arab thinkers had revealed their thoughts prior to initiation in a lodge. For them, freemasonry provided an institutional framework, or a tool, as an anonymous letter to masonic magazine emphasised: 'Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity. We do sincerely believe, and have spoken of it already to others, that the final unification of the divergent interests and conflicting ambitions and rivalry among nations, communities, and individuals will be accomplished by the efforts of true religion coupled with the praiseworthy efforts of Freemasonry'.[123] The author of the letter expressed his hope and confidence that the time would come 'when the West and the East shall clasp each other's hands, when the Orient and the Occident shall embrace each other and go forward'. However, motives for writing this letter are unknown and since it was published in 1908, when the Young Turks took power, the writer may well have been driven by fear of the revolution's implications for his future. This thought is substantiated when he reminds the Western brothers that 'every civilised government knows that it cannot commit any glaring wrongs against her weak neighbours for there are many of its subjects who will not countenance such a cruel, unjust policy'.[124]

When European freemasons during the nineteenth century displayed growing pride in their nationality and their fatherland, brothers from the Middle East perceived their own homelands as becoming increasingly chaotic and nationalism was an idea yet to come to full force. Ideas from the Enlightenment were borrowed and different approaches supported in order to improve the Empire's condition, which was perceived as sickly. Many reformers pictured the Empire as a body that had caught a disease and was now in need of a doctor to find the right cure. Jamal al-Din al-

[123] Anonymous, 'A Letter from Syria', *The Freemason*, (London: 15.08.1908), p. 101.
[124] Ibid.

Afghani and Mohammad Abduh, who were both freemasons, were two of the best known advocates of reform in order to strengthen Islam and thereby society itself. Both used Darwinian terminology, as Aziz al-Azmeh states, to proclaim that a society was healthy if it had various 'functionally interdependent' components and that it would only be "consummate" when it had proven to be capable of subjugating others'.[125]

In Afghani's eyes, the Ottoman Empire was hindered by westernisation, new sects and by military defeats. His cure served also as the battle cry for many other reformers championing a campaign that stressed the need to return to the Empire's authentic roots.[126] Herder's thoughts were recognisable in the reform proposals of these men. His notion of vital romanticism and his emphasis on pedagogy found its equivalent in Afghani's support of moral Islamic education. As Al-Azmeh notes, Herder's ideas effectively represented a simple 'paradigm for Romantic nationalism throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries'.[127]

Hussein al-Jisr (1845-1909) again provides an example of a man, though not a mason, who was antithetical to the West; for him Europeans were racists who deliberately destabilised the Ottoman Empire for their own ends. He considered the British occupation of Egypt as just another example of Western hypocrisy: on the one hand, Europeans talked about reforms and modernisation, whilst on the other hand, they used force against Egyptian students at the Al-Azhar University who had sought to express their freedom of opinion.[128]

In the public press, ideologies were discussed relating to displays of nationalist attitudes connected with language issues and religion. As in Europe, only elite circles

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[125] Aziz al-Azmeh, 'Islamist Revivalism and Western Ideologies', *History Workshop*, No 32/1, (Oxford University Press: Autumn 1991), p. 48.
[126] Ibid.: p. 50, 51.
[127] Ibid.: p. 49.
[128] Ebert: p. 117.

were involved in debates concerning various different ideologies. The number of people reading newspapers and journals was even smaller and mainly consisted of graduates from schools in Greater Syria and Egypt. These students were predominantly male, relatively young and lived in an urban environment.[129] Examining the role of newspapers and journals as a tool for communication and dialogue shows that between 1876 and 1926 *Al Muqtataf* published 3,500 letters from readers. Most of the disputes, though, took place after the editors had left Beirut for Cairo in 1876.[130]

Before the Young Turk Revolution, loyalty to the Ottoman Empire was discussed only rarely in the press - partly due to censorship but mainly because anything else was out of the question.[131] Up until the end of the nineteenth century, articles in the press concentrated on questions related to the standard of Arabic. *Al Muqtataf* effectively began this trend in 1881, with an article defending the use of foreign words in order to keep pace with modern inventions. Yacub Sarruf and Faris Nimr, both freemasons, were amongst the advocates for a controlled Arabication of foreign words. Their main argument was also supposed to please conservative antagonists. They highlighted the fact that Arabic was such a rich and well structured language, that it easily could adapt and integrate foreign vocabulary.[132] As both Sarruf and Nimr were journalists, language was an everyday tool for them and was supposed to be as practical as possible. Ultimately they were victorious in their linguistic battle, as it was seemingly unavoidable to include Western expressions in Arabic.[133] There were even proposals to Latinise Arabic in order to make it more accessible, but these

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[129] Dagmar Glaß, *Der Muqtataf und seine Öffentlichkeit*, 2nd vol., (Ergon, Würzburg: 2004), p. 631.
[130] Ibid.: p. 635.
[131] Ibid.: p. 497.
[132] Ibid.: p. 453.
[133] Ibid.: p. 473.

were rebuffed by more conservative scholars with the hint that such an initiative would be damaging to traditional Arabic literature and its cultural heritage.[134]

Events in Europe during the nineteenth century served as models, which were sometimes deemed worthwhile to imitate or to adapt. However, cosmopolitanism was not among the concepts widely discussed in the Middle East in this period. Values regarding mankind in general were laid out, but attention was first and foremost directed at domestic grievances.[135] Freemasons were suspected of being behind the French Revolution, although they were not held responsible for its negative processes. Admiration for this seemingly successful revolution was among the reasons for the famous scholar Al-Afghani to join the brotherhood in the first place, though he soon became frustrated with his lodge when it refused to address political issues.[136]

Most Syrian freemasons were probably romantic cosmopolitans to an extent, who believed in a commonly agreed understanding of morality and the potential unity of all human beings. At the same time, the majority of freemasons considered themselves – at least in Beirut – to be cultural nationalists. According to Yasir Suleiman, 'cultural nationalism is a reactive movement, or defensive response, on the part of the educated elites, against externally generated challenges to the existing order of the community and its traditional belief systems'.[137] This also explains the fact why so many freemasons in Beirut in their positions as journalists, scholars, educators and artists read 'modernity into tradition at the same time as treating tradition as an expression of modernity'.[138]

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[134] Ibid.: p. 485.
[135] On different ideologies, their translations and interpretations in the Ottoman Empire: Ra'if Khuri, *Modern Arab Thought: Channels of the French Revolution to the Arab East*, (Kingston Press, Inc., Princeton/New Jersey: 1983).
[136] Khuri: p. 29, 30.
[137] Yasir Suleiman, *The Arabic Language and National Identity*, (Georgetown University Press, Washington D.C.: 2003), p. 25.
[138] Ibid.: p. 26.

A focus on the regional environment can clearly be seen in Mikha'il Mishaqa's history of Syria. Mishaqa belonged to a family that was deeply involved in freemasonry and wrote his history of Greater Syria in the 1870s, when he actively promoted the idea of brotherhood.[139] As Zachs notes, 'he calls for unity among the minorities, and urges the people not to emphasise their religious differences but to judge the different *millets* according to their behaviour'.[140] Ilyas Matar, who was a member of *Sunneen* Lodge on Mount Lebanon at the end of the nineteenth century, also wrote a history of Syria.[141] His *al-ʿUqūd al-durriyya fi taʾrīkh al-mamlaka al-Sūriyya*[142] was published in Beirut in 1874 and, according to Youssef M. Choueiri, indicated 'both a growing Syrian consciousness of a distinct national history, and an Ottoman proclivity to encourage a limited cultural non-political autonomy', which until then was subject to strict censorship. Choueiri notes that it lacks patriotic overtones, but that 'it makes up [for this] in its concentration on a well-defined territorial unit, endowed with all the essential characteristics of a nation.'[143] Syrian writers had to walk 'a tightrope, trying to perform a balancing act between […] loyalty to the Ottoman state and a […] burgeoning Syrian consciousness'.[144]

Another writer, confronted with this problem, was Jurji Yanni, who was a member of *Le Liban* Lodge in Beirut and later *Kadisha* Lodge in Tripoli. In his book *Taʾrīkh Sūriya*[145], Yanni not only defined the different stages pre-Ottoman and

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[139] According to Fruma Zachs, a translated version of the original Jawab 'ala Iqtirah al- Ahbab is: Mikha'il Mishaqa, *Murder, Mayhem, Pillage, and Plunder – The History of the Lebanon in the 18th and 19th Centuries*, translated by W.M. Thackston Jr, (State University of New York Press, Albany: 1988), in: Fruma Zachs, 'Mikha'il Mishaqa – The First Historian of Modern Syria', *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, vol. 28/1, (May 2001).
[140] Zachs: p. 77.
[141] He also belonged to the small circle of men involved in scientific discussions in the form of letters to *Al Muqtataf*. (Glaß: p. 390).
[142] *A Compendium on the History of Syrian Territories*, (Beirut: 1874).
[143] Youssef M. Choueiri, 'Two Histories of Syria and the Demise of Syrian Patriotism', *Middle Eastern Studies*, vol. 23/4, (Oct. 1987), p. 499.
[144] Ibid.: p. 500.
[145] *The History of Syria*.

Ottoman territory went through, but also exposed what he saw as the reasons for the backward status of Syria when compared to modern Europe. Characteristic for most of the Christian writers was their emphasis on pre-Islamic periods, through which they claimed back their rightful Syrian identity, irrespective of religious affiliation. At this stage, however, they did not ask for autonomy.

The patriotism displayed by Yanni and others at the same time served as a fundament for nationalism. Taking Hroch's analysis into account, the Ottoman freemasons were in phase A on the way to nationalism. This stage features an enlightened academic elite, which is led by emotional engagement in its object of research.[146] Jurji Yanni and Butrus al-Bustanti spring to mind in this regard, as they displayed this emotional diligence regarding the history of the Ottoman people. Accordingly, these patriots were interested in findings about their own past and their language.[147] Yacoub Sarruf and Faris Nimr, both freemasons, published debates about the purification of the Arab language in their newspaper *Al Muqtataf*. Consequently, the following questions arose: Who are we? What defines us? What defines the others?[148] Freemasonry helped to fill the space of no belonging. Though, the response to these questions did not automatically lead to nationalism, as Hroch convincingly shows. Nationalism is only one of the potential outcomes. Freemasonry, similarly, had always been a ductile tool, something that developed according to the interpretations of its members.

The published documents regarding freemasonry in the Ottoman Empire indicate the general direction of contemporary Syrian discourse: it was not explicitly against cosmopolitan thought in general, although it was first deemed necessary to

[146] Hroch: p. 46.
[147] Hroch: p. 107.
[148] Hroch: p. 239.

foster respect for one's own country, equal to other civilised nations. National tendencies that had long been present in European lodges seem to have found their counterpart in the Ottoman Empire at the beginning of the twentieth century. Were Syrian freemasons nationalists? Some of them certainly were. Was Syrian freemasonry nationalistic? No evidence has been found. They did show a common concern for the state of Greater Syria, a fear of religious fanaticism and consequently another period of civil unrest. Lodges did not act as nationalist entities, nor has any proof been found for endeavours to do so. If anything, as has been explained, freemasons were patriots (although even this statement has to be restricted to Beirut and its academic clientele). Also patriotism is based on defined principles and a certain mind-set, which was not present among the majority of Ottoman freemasons.

When freemasons spoke about emancipation, they did not consider a political separation from the Ottoman Empire; rather an emancipation of thought and liberation from religious confinement that had made it impossible to create a feeling of belonging among Syrians. They were looking for a way to stabilise the weakened Ottoman Empire. They thought of unity, not of further separatism. Consequently there was no talk about an uprising against the government. Instead, some freemasons even considered the fight against the clergy as a way to support the survival of the political apparatus.[149]

[149] Letter from *La Chaine d'Union* to the GOdF, (22.12.1869), *Le Liban*, carton no. 1, Archive of the GOdF.