

Cover Page



Universiteit Leiden



The handle <http://hdl.handle.net/1887/20382> holds various files of this Leiden University dissertation.

Author: Sommer, Dorothe

Title: Unity is strength : Masonic lodges in Ottoman Syria with special focus on Tripoli and El Mina (1860-1908)

Issue Date: 2013-01-08

Chapter IV: Freemasonry in Beirut

Beirut in the second half of the nineteenth century served as a melting pot for Syrians and a broad spectrum of Europeans, who ranged from missionaries, businessmen and politicians to pioneers and adventurers. Describing Ottoman port cities in general, Emrence mentioned that they attracted ‘with their dynamism and diversity [...] Europeans with an opportunistic agenda and appealed to immigrants with social ties in the city. Merchants from Europe, missionaries from the West, social relatives from hinterlands, and seasonal labourers from less prosperous regions’ then ‘constituted the multi-ethnic and multi-religious character’ of the city.¹

Consequently, difficulties arose from such a diverse population, especially when trying to find a common denominator for a shared social space. People from Mount Lebanon had come here largely out of fear of further disturbances or with hopes for better businesses in the city. In 1860 civil unrest, in the form of a war between Christians and Druzes on Mount Lebanon, led to French intervention which will be further explained in Chapter V.

In Beirut, tensions were mounting. Europeans claimed the government was behind religious aggression and the Ottoman regime accused Europeans of provocation. Indeed, foreign consuls in the city had assumed *de facto* power over the city: through philanthropic activities, commercial businesses and by exploiting capitulations, while enjoying ‘the same extraterritorial privileges as ambassadors’.² Fawaz explains capitulations as ‘treaties arranged by capita or headings that recognised and codified their special status in the East’.³ Capitulations were ‘based on the idea that each state possessed its own laws to exalted for others to enjoy’. Hence,

¹ Emrence, *Remapping the Ottoman Middle East*, p. 44.

² [Les consuls possèdent en Orient les privilèges d’extraterritorialité dont jouissent chez nous les ambassadeurs.], Karl Baedeker, *Palestine et Syrie*, (Leipzig:1912), p. XXIII.

³ Leila Fawaz, ‘Foreign Presence and Perception of Ottoman Rule in Beirut’, in: *The Empire in the City. Arab Provincial Capitals in the Late Ottoman Empire*, p. 71 – 74.

they actually thought Ottomans benefitted from this principle, as they ‘meant that all subjects of a foreign monarch and citizens of republics [...] remained under the laws of their own king or republic once the capitulatory favour had been granted’. Moreover, ‘[p]ersons with capitulatory status also enjoyed full exemption from Ottoman taxes and customs duties’. As such and with growing popularity ‘they [capitulations] came to dangerously undermine’ the sovereignty of the Empire. Naturally Ottomans used this opportunity when working with Europeans. It was only during World War I that the capitulations were unilaterally abolished by the Ottomans, after years of twisting them ‘into something they had never been intended to be’.⁴

According to Ralph Bodenstein, ‘until the 1830s, Beirut had only been a minor harbour, ranking behind Tripoli, Saida and Acre’, but Ibrahim Pasha made it the administrative centre of the region during his governorship.⁵ In the 1830s he introduced social policies that emphasised the rights of non-Muslims. Additionally, as Zachs writes, ‘the period of Ottoman restoration and the implementation of the *tanzimat* that followed also saw the growing economic penetration of the region by the West’.⁶ Under Ottoman rule, Beirut first became capital of the *vilayet* of Saida and then in 1888 it became the capital of its own *vilayet*, with jurisdiction over Tripoli and Lattakia in the north and Acre, Haifa, and Nablus in the south. The sub-provinces were separated from Beirut by the coastal strip of Mount Lebanon.⁷ Its port evolved to become the main centre for imports and exports from Mount Lebanon and its Syrian

⁴ Donald Quataert, *The Ottoman Empire. 1700-1922*, (Cambridge University Press, 2nd edition: 2000/2005), p. 78-79.

⁵ Ralph Bodenstein, ‘Housing the Foreign. A European’s Exotic Home in late Nineteenth-Century Beirut’, in: *The Empire in the City. Arab Provincial Capitals in the Late Ottoman Empire*, p. 106.

⁶ Fruma Zachs, ‘Toward a Proto-Nationalist Concept of Syria? Revisiting the American Presbyterian Missionaries in the Nineteenth-Century Levant’, *Die Welt des Islams*, New Series, vol. 41/2, (Brill: Jul. 2001), p. 149-150.

⁷ Jens Hanssen, *Fin de Siècle Beirut. The Making of an Ottoman Provincial Capital*, (Clarendon Press, Oxford: 2005), p. 56.

hinterland. The city's growing importance was reflected in the size of its population: in the 1840s Beirut only numbered 10,000 inhabitants, but by 1900 it had grown to 120,000.⁸ As a whole the province numbered 533,000 individuals in 1895.⁹

Beirut's merchants profited from the territorial division, but other communities, such as the inhabitants of Nablus, felt aggrieved by the new administrative structure. Instead of having to visit Damascus in order to settle legal matters, they now had to venture further to Beirut.¹⁰ Beirut managed to defend its dominant position against Tripoli and Haifa, the two other port cities, due to what Hanssen describes as 'the acute sense of political geography of its intermediary bourgeoisie and foreign residents and their intimate contacts in Istanbul'.¹¹

After European interference during the events of 1860, it became clear that there was actually no way for the government to regain dominance, let alone hegemony as European forces grew steadily stronger and the Empire seemed definitely inferior: either it played according to the rules of the foreigners, or it supported its Muslim population – both options were inherently problematic. As Leila Fawaz notes, 'the foreign presence and particularly the growing role of entrepreneurs in the economy and society had already made it impossible for the Ottomans to take control of the city without European interference'.¹² Moreover, as Hanssen writes, European financial injections 'raised the economic stakes of European imperialism'. Notwithstanding the actual condition of Syria or the Ottoman Empire as a whole, Europeans pressed for adoption of a legal system suitable to a form of capitalism that was trying 'to monopolise a share of the colonial market through military conquest,

⁸ Bodenstein: p. 106-109.

⁹ Hanssen: p. 58.

¹⁰ Ibid.: p. 60.

¹¹ Ibid.: p. 86.

¹² Leila Fawaz, 'Foreign Presence and Perception of Ottoman Rule in Beirut', in: *The Empire in the City. Arab Provincial Capitals in the Late Ottoman Empire*, p. 93.

trade tariffs, and economic dependency'.¹³ Consequently the Christian subjects of the Ottoman Empire suspected of collaboration felt increasingly isolated and antagonised. Muslims, on the other hand, felt betrayed when Fuad Pasha, who had been sent to enforce Ottoman law, reacted to the unrests in 1860 by prescribing severe punishment against Muslims. Whilst Fuad contributed in positive terms by overseeing the construction of the Beirut municipality, the 'deterrence executions' he sanctioned in Damascus left a bitter taste for some Muslims and, as Hanssen notes, 'the restoration of Ottoman order [...] had come at a huge fiscal price in form of special taxes from the province of Damascus and the port of Beirut'.¹⁴

According to Fawaz, the authorities in Damascus represented 'an old and prestigious Muslim and Ottoman centre'. In contrast, after the flow of immigrants from the Mount, the Muslims in Beirut became a minority compared with the Christian majority.¹⁵ The city changed into a port used for the employees of administrative services and the imperial bureaucracy, with bureaucrats forming 'a conspicuous social group in Beirut distinguishable by their Ottoman civil service uniform'. They dressed differently, were addressed as *effendis*¹⁶ and became associated with modernity and authority. Some Ottoman officials intermingled with the rich and traditional Beirut families through marriage, thereby securing a place in local networks. At the same time, the fathers of the brides used links to the Ottoman government.¹⁷ The upper echelons of Beirut's society, so Hanssen argues, 'managed to twist capitalist penetration to enhance [its] own vision for the city'.¹⁸ Self-interest led merchants to cooperate regardless of religious differences. Such actions were not

¹³ Hanssen: p. 84.

¹⁴ Ibid.: p. 141 - 142.

¹⁵ Fawaz, '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. 493-494.

¹⁶ Originally meaning 'mister', a title then used for officials and religious scholars.

¹⁷ Hanssen: p. 62.

¹⁸ Ibid.: p. 86.

only undertaken to save the city from European exploitation, but also in order to use European consumerism for their own individual profit. Hence, on the one hand influential families tried to limit European penetration, whilst on the other hand they did not hesitate to sell concessions to European bidders, thereby earning high profit margins.

A positive consequence for all Beirutis was the continuous improvement of the city's infrastructure, alongside the establishment of a number of foreign and Ottoman educational institutions and the wide proliferation of newspapers. A significant contribution came from Beirut's citizens themselves. In competition with Tripoli, Damascus and Haifa, they were eager to provide the best conditions for modern industry and trade. A fitting infrastructure was a significant factor and therefore actively supported by the elite. In short, competition between the Ottoman government and Europeans and among the Ottoman citizens themselves was in some way the most important factor contributing to the growth of a liberal atmosphere in the regional capital.¹⁹

Parallel to this, the European powers were contending with each other for influence, with both the British and the French striving for political and economic dominance.²⁰ However, the Public Debt Administration, which was set up to monitor Ottoman fiscal policy and to directly dispose of tax revenues, was composed of seven European nations, rendering it impossible for a single power to dominate. Furthermore, as a result of European initiatives to integrate Beirut into the global field of financial capitalism, other cities were subsequently degraded to peripheral locations.²¹

¹⁹ Fawaz, 'Foreign Presence': p. 93.

²⁰ Hanssen: p. 66-67.

²¹ Ibid.: p. 85.

Influence fluctuated and prejudices were amplified due to the varying rivalries and loyalties. As Fawaz writes, ‘European biases about the Ottomans were passed on to local clients and partners and local prejudices about Ottomans were passed on to the Europeans’.²² Ottoman Christians profited most from this unstable situation by developing relations to European consulates and traders as well as informal networks. A newly-built harbour opened at the end of the nineteenth century, financed almost entirely by the French. This facilitated a steady increase in imports and exports until World War One. With advancements in the region’s infrastructure, perception of time and space had radically altered.

While the population as a whole benefited from the economic and commercial flow of traffic, it was nevertheless the European merchants who were able to use the expansion to the greatest advantage. European investment in Beirut was one of the developments, as Fawaz notes, accompanying ‘a world economy under Western hegemony in the age of imperialism and industrial revolution’. The concessions of the Sublime Porte, in the form of capitulations, were the most significant factor for the European powers. First granted to French subjects, they soon applied to many more Europeans and equipped them with commercial and judicial privileges. In form of *berats* – documents that granted the holder protection and exemption from taxes and from the jurisdiction from local courts – they were handed to Ottomans who served as intermediaries for European traders and diplomats.²³

Over the years, the interpretation of these privileges experienced dramatic change, as the Ottoman government increasingly lost out against growing European

²² Fawaz, ‘Foreign Presence’: p. 102.

²³ Walter P. Zenner, ‘Middleman Minorities in the Syrian Mosaic: Trade, Conflict and Image Management’, *Sociological Perspectives*, vol.30/4, (Oct. 1987); Nejdet Gök, ‘Introduction of the Berat in the Ottoman Diplomats’, *Bulgarian Historical Review*, vol. 3, (2001), p. 141-150.

influence.²⁴ Having been the first to sign capitulations, the French were able to dominate trade, much to the detriment of local traders and merchants. Moreover, in cases when economic advantages were not forthcoming they bought concessions, which under Abdulhamid II were preferably sold to Ottoman subjects and resold for higher prices. Hence both parties gained from the deal.

Another agreement the Empire committed itself to was the 1838 Anglo-Turkish Commercial Convention. ‘The Original treaty was signed in Balta Liman in August 1838 and came into effect in March 1839’. Though scholars are still arguing about its impact, the treaty certainly ‘severely reduced the ability of the Ottoman government to raise tariffs later in the century, making it impossible to protect domestic industry from the full force of foreign competition when the free trade damage became clearer’. The treaty eliminated local monopolies and exempted foreign merchants from internal customs.²⁵

Additionally, foreigners could also ask their consuls to act on their behalf. French influence was felt in economic areas and in the socio-cultural sphere. The country’s commitment in Beirut served Christian groups well in general, with Maronites benefitting most. Both Britain and France established educational and missionary activities in the Beirut area. The French focussed on Maronites and Greek Catholics, who made up a larger number than the local Greek Orthodox population. The latter group constituted potential clients for British missionary efforts. At the end of the nineteenth century Beirut was home to two prestigious foreign universities: Saint Joseph’s University, established by the French, and the Syrian Protestant College (SPC), built by American Presbyterians. As Fawaz notes, ‘by 1861 the British colony in Beirut, though not numerous, included employees in the consulate-general,

²⁴ Fawaz, ‘Merchants and Migrants’: p. 71-74.

²⁵ Şevket Pamuk, Jeffrey G. Williamson, ‘Ottoman De-Industrialization 1800-1913: Assessing the Shock, Its Impact and the Response’, *JEL*, No. F1, N7, O2, (February 2009 draft), p. 5, 24.

other diplomats on mission, army staff, doctors, engineers, clerks, scribes, teachers and governesses, as well as merchants'. Merchants were also involved in educational matters, including the board of the college. Moreover, they often served as representatives of British interests.²⁶ But the French retained a majority in terms of Europeans resident in Beirut, although the total number was low and increased only slightly over the course of the nineteenth century. Accurate statistics are scarce, but it is recorded that in 1863 Beirut was home to approximately a hundred Greeks, whilst in 1891 it is recorded that 132 Britons and merchants were resident in the city. According to Fawaz, 'in Beirut, foreign entrepreneurs played a smaller role than they did in Alexandria or in North Africa. Instead, local entrepreneurs were many times the 'agents of change', though in an age of Western domination they often 'filled that role by first of all securing Western consular protection'.²⁷

Greek Orthodox merchants benefited from Greek, Russian, British and French protection, while Maronites pinned their hopes on the latter. Greek Catholics turned to either France or the Austro-Hungarian Empire. For European business, the mediatory services of the Christian community in the Beirut area were crucial in successfully acquiring land and in establishing efficient management. In turn, the Muslim community was in most cases excluded from such dealings. This led to resentment and the Christians' visible power and networking resulted in growing antagonism between the different communities. Thus, established Muslim families relied on other means to preserve their economic position and control over internal trade, particularly looking for influence among officials of the Ottoman government.²⁸

However, as Fawaz writes, only 'Muslim merchants who managed to involve themselves with Western trade were in a position to become really rich; they alone

²⁶ Ibid.: p. 78.

²⁷ Ibid.: p. 82-85.

²⁸ Ibid.: p. 95.

could cheaply acquire the Western manufactured goods that the hinterland craved'.²⁹ In general, it was more important for Beirutis involved in trade and entrepreneurship to know how to deal with all kinds of people and to create stable and reliable networks, than conducting business according to communal affiliations. 'Among the wealthy the gulf was narrower, since they were less apt to let communal affiliation stand in the way of economic cooperation and social and political action'. If tensions arose, they first became visible among the poorer part of the population, while, according to Fawaz, 'merchants still had more in common with one another than they had with their European counterparts'.³⁰

The provincial council served notable Beirutis as the most powerful linchpin for their administrative hinterland. As Hanssen writes, 'the Ottoman Provincial Law had turned provincial capitals into powerful political centres where decision-making and lobbying converged'. Member records of the provincial council show that the body was largely composed of Beirut's prominent families and that 'their administrative positions allowed them to be inside the provincial decision-making apparatus and wield extensive powers in the process of Beirut's "financial capitalization"'.³¹ One of their main tasks consisted in maintaining Beirut's reputation as a global economic city. With the expansion of the railways and better transport possibilities, Beirut had to compete against other ports and against its hinterland. The members of Beirut's middle class bought concessions for all kinds of businesses and were lobbying to receive financial help for different development projects. Simultaneously they increased the status of their own positions, became world players on global markets and showed solidarity with members of Beirut's lower class, who were fighting against exploitation by the colonial powers. Although physical

²⁹ Ibid.: p. 96.

³⁰ Fawaz, 'Merchants and Migrants': p. 124.

³¹ Hanssen: p. 71-73.

resistance was only carried out by the labourers themselves, local cooperation between them and the merchants was also silently supported by Abdulhamid II.³² Emrence defines the late nineteenth century as a period when one can observe the beginning of ‘new forms of collective actions’ with ‘collective claim-making’ being ‘a novel democratic tradition in the port-cities of the eastern Mediterranean’.³³

Beirut’s administrative system did not simply imitate the West, as it was modelled on Istanbul’s civil structures. A strict system had already become necessary during the period following the struggles of the 1860s, when refugees had flooded into the area and Europe’s criticism of the lack of discipline and order must be seen in relation to the Western fear of losing former privileges and the curtailment of consular influence. Foreigners were less able to intervene when faced with the fact that the local council and political organisation were making improvements.³⁴

However, for urban planning and social reforms, the efficient functioning of a local and central administration was a necessity. In a period when cholera raged, it was especially important to adopt modern and powerful methods of minimising or halting its effects without depending too much on foreign aid.³⁵ While the first steps to establish suitable institutions were of a private nature, the Ottoman government soon recognised that the only way to keep foreign penetration at bay was to secure the backing of the local population.

Education proved to be the most effective tool in this endeavour, as it helped to guide young minds towards a sense of loyalty, morality and pride in their motherland, which, it was anticipated, would bolster support behind the Ottoman regime. At first, private institutions were simply taken over, but at the end of the

³² Ibid.: p. 109 – 111.

³³ Emrence: p. 52-53.

³⁴ Hanssen: p. 139 – 141.

³⁵ Ibid.: p. 116–127, 141-144.

nineteenth century secondary state schools were built and in 1895 an Ottoman college opened its doors to Beirut's intelligentsia.³⁶ As Hanssen states, 'entitlement, masculinity, pride and independence of mind were the attributes which the school administration aspired to impart to its students. [...] But Beirut's Ottoman school also planted the seeds of Arab nationalist sentiment for an entire generation of Muslim youths'.³⁷ While secular-minded Beirutis tried to overcome religious differences, foreign institutions like, St. Joseph's University and the SPC, aimed, in a sense, at the exact opposite: they were missionary institutions seeking to prove the superiority of their religion. They sought to emphasise the dissimilarities between confessional communities. This conservative and dogmatic mind-set was the main reason for students and professors turning their backs on the SPC and embracing more liberal institutions.³⁸ From the perspective of the missionaries, those trying to avoid the blessing words from the West simply displayed their ignorance.

'I verily believe a form of religion without the power is worse than no religion at all. And this, it seems to me, is the difficulty we have to contend with all over Palestine. There is no lack of outward profession of religion, but each man thinks that the religion of his father is good enough for him, and that if he performs the ceremonial part correctly and regularly he is quite safe. Of personal spiritual religion there is very little'.

Yet, the same man described Jerusalem as 'a city of the dead', which was 'surrounded by cemeteries, which contain the dust of ages' and was 'full of dead churches and dying creeds. "The Holy" is its common name, but it is full of unholiness', an opinion he certainly shared with some of his missionary brethren lodged in Beirut.³⁹

³⁶ Ibid.: p. 181.

³⁷ Ibid.: p. 163.

³⁸ Ibid.: p. 185.

³⁹ Rev. R. Elliott in his annual letter from Gaza, 29.12.1891, in: *Extracts from Annual Letters* of the Church Missionary Society (Gilbert & Rivington, London), p. 411-12.

At the same time, identification with the city itself led to an increased desire on the part of the newly-growing elite to influence its fate through their own abilities and actions. The new middle class cared for Beirut as its own survival depended on the city's performance and reputation.

During the reign of Abdulhamid II, the provincial council functioned like a collective pool of men, who perceived themselves to be the new vanguard fighting for Beirut's modernisation. These men came from different backgrounds: economics, journalism, the educational sector and from the local merchant class. Together they were eager to prepare Beirut for a new and modern world, full of unknown possibilities and risks. Their goal was to equip the city with the necessary tools in order to compete with the Europeans and their own neighbouring states.

Unsurprisingly, the traditional Sunni *Ulama*, Muslim religious scholars and Christian dignitaries, took no active part in this endeavour; neither in the form of participation in the council, nor as members of any of the newly founded benevolent and scientific societies.⁴⁰ Only wealthy men were able to enter most of the societies and the provincial council itself. Candidates for the council had to be older than thirty and had to have lived in Beirut for at least ten years, while at the same time also being wealthy enough to pay for their councillorships. Moreover, they were barred from working for foreign institutions. These rules resulted in only a small percentage of Beirut's inhabitants being eligible for the council. Hence, individuals joined the council and affiliated societies not for financial profit, but rather to improve, or consolidate, their socio-cultural standing and reputation.⁴¹ Besides enhancing their own civic standing, some of these individuals also wanted to revive the fortunes of Beirut as a city with modern and open-minded inhabitants. In the light of the events of

⁴⁰ Ibid.: p. 149-171.

⁴¹ Ibid.: p. 150.

1860, Beirut's leading personalities were optimistic of brightening the city's future by means of knowledge transfer and educational support. The political, social and cultural efforts stemmed from a desire to build a new foundation and to reconstruct the city's urban social space, alongside a burgeoning sense of national consciousness.⁴²

At the same time, Beirut's elite was keen to prove how far Beirutis had progressed since the supposedly backward and ignorant times of the 1860s. As Hanssen writes, 'the police system was under intense scrutiny by the foreign community, which regarded occurrences of criminal activity, whether assault, theft, or smuggling as irrefutable signs of state weakness and moral laxness, in particular when they led to sectarian violence'. Natives themselves, still remembering the events of the 1860s, perceived the urban order as fragile and under threat. The individual was seen as naturally dangerous and in need of social and legal controls.⁴³ Immigrants from the mountain region appeared even more suspicious. A long period of mutual distrust was predominant, especially among the common people who were alienated from provincial politics. While the denizens of the city attempted to pass Beirut off as a civilised and developed urban space, its rural surroundings were considered to be inhabited by savage, ignorant and undisciplined people who insisted on preserving unsustainable and out of date traditions.

When Beirut was included in the arena of global politics and capitalism, its traditional social relationships were undermined or destroyed. In response, people tried to adapt the fabric of their lives to these new realities, to establish new alliances and to strengthen relations to other groups. Thus at various times, depending on the situation, the city's denizens chose to stand firm behind the Ottoman government, but

⁴² Ibid.: p. 164.

⁴³ Ibid.: p. 193-194.

then sided with the Europeans against laws introduced by the regime. This shows again the pragmatic thinking mentioned by Emrence, in regard to the newly developing middle class ‘under the influence of global flows on one side and domestic realities on the other’.⁴⁴ On other occasions they defended religious groups and confronted their own “heretical” neighbours. This complex layering of loyalties enabled them to shift in a flexible manner according to each case. However, everyday dynamics added to the uncertainty of their status in an increasingly complicated era.

Masonic Lodges in Beirut

‘Medieval, Renaissance and Enlightenment influences had blended together to create an institution that seemed to reflect the progressive spirit of the age, with ideals of brotherhood, equality, toleration and reason. Yet even as freemasonry emerged and spread as a world-wide movement, it diversified in the most bewildering way. [...] It is as if the lodge system, combined with secrecy, ideals of loyalty and secret modes of recognition, had created an ideal organisational framework, into which members could put their own values and which they could adapt for their own uses’.⁴⁵

Members of Beirut’s middle and upper classes started to show interest in the establishment of masonic lodges – affiliated with the Grand Orient de France in Paris - from 1860, but they had to wait another eight years until they received a warrant from France.⁴⁶ It is likely that the civil disturbances after the incidents in Damascus and Mount Lebanon delayed the response from Paris. In the meantime the *Palestine* Lodge, No. 415, was founded in 1861. Though working in French, it was under the jurisdiction of the Grand Lodge of Scotland. One can speculate about the reasons for

⁴⁴ Emrence, *Remapping*: p. 41.

⁴⁵ David Stevenson, *The Origins of Freemasonry. Scotland’s Century 1590 – 1710*, (Cambridge University Press: 1988), p. 6 – 7.

⁴⁶ I found a significant overlap in memberships of the municipal council and masonic lodges by comparing masonic lists with those of Beirut’s municipal members’ lists, *D.S.*. Also, see: Jens Hanssen, ‘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 Institute, Beirut: 2004), pp. 27. Or, further, taking also into consideration socially and politically active Greek-Orthodox Beirutis who simultaneously were also members of various lodges: May Davie, *La Millat Grecque-Orthodoxe de Beyrouth, 1800 – 1949*, (University de Paris-Sorbonne: 1993).

choosing French and ask if the official working language corresponded with the actual language spoken during lodge meetings, but it seems that some Syrian masons were proud of their identification with France. However, this did not automatically go hand in hand with approval of France's foreign policy. Lebanese lodges founded as late as August 2010 preferred French to Arabic for their meetings, conceding the use of English or Arabic if necessary. Though, Christians did not automatically demonstrate a full commitment to their French education as the lodges were and are composed of Muslims as well.⁴⁷ Rather, the choice of language corresponds to the main assumption made in this thesis that Syrians embraced European freemasonry and made it their own. They adopted it as they also adopted European languages when suitable. The decisions were not directed and controlled by Western powers; the Syrians themselves were the ones who were in charge, using the fraternity's universal principles and languages that were historically linked to it for their own needs. This behavioural pattern perfectly corresponds with Stevenson's quote above, whereby freemasonry provided the 'ideal organisational framework into which members could put their own values and which they could adapt for their own uses'.⁴⁸

Additionally, in the early years of freemasonry, rules, titles and rituals were not yet translated into Arabic. It is likely that the usage of European languages was supposed to demonstrate respect for and loyalty to the original virtues and traditions by lodges founded outside the familiar masonic spheres (i.e. the West).

The *Palestine* Lodge received its charter in an unusually prompt manner and the Grand Committee of the Grand Lodge in Edinburgh mentioned 'that this should

⁴⁷ For example, *Kadisha* Lodge was reactivated and re-consecrated in Beirut in August 2010 under the Grand Lodge of Scotland and again, it decided to work in French. Religious affiliations of the lodge's founders are equally split, (Letters between *Kadisha*'s secretary and the GLoS, October/November 2010, received from the secretary W. Tatar, D.S.).

⁴⁸ David Stevenson, *The Origins of Freemasonry. Scotland's Century 1590 – 1710*, (Cambridge University Press: 1988), p. 6 – 7.

form no precedent for the future'. Disappointingly, it is not known who these 'most anxious' founders *in spe* were, but they had handed their application form to Lieutenant-Colonel Burnaby, the 'Commissioner of the British Government to the French Army of Occupation', who subsequently travelled to Scotland for a short period of time.⁴⁹

Blue was chosen as the colour of *Palestine* Lodge's regalia, which also became the preferred colour of subsequent lodges in the region.⁵⁰ The choice of this colour seems to have been partly the result of a misunderstanding. The first Grand Lodge established in England had taken blue as its colour, as did the Grand Orient of France. However, in Scotland the colour of the apron changed according to the grade, and lodges generally were free to choose their own particular colour. It seems likely that Lebanese lodges associated the colour blue with regular lodges. Hence, it was only in the twentieth century that lodges in Ottoman Syria came to understand that different colours were permissible under the jurisdiction of the Scottish Grand Lodge. The *Sunneen* Lodge, No. 969, which was established in Shweir in 1904, initially adopted the colour blue and then changed to black. Furthermore, the *Zahle* Lodge, No. 1047, which was founded in 1908, adopted green, whereas *Emessa* Lodge, No. 1125, in Homs, changed from blue to green in 1923, some ten years after its establishment.⁵¹ Possibly, this change of colour reflected displeasure at the commencement of the French Mandate in the same year and a strengthened affiliation with Islam as green generally is seen as the colour of Islam.

⁴⁹ *Proceedings*, GLoS, 1859 – 1861.

⁵⁰ In 1906 the *Kadisha* Lodge adopted sky blue as its official colour, as did the *Taurus* Lodge in Alexandretta in 1920. The *King Hiram* Lodge in Haifa took royal blue as its official colour when it was established in 1926.

⁵¹ The Constitution and Laws of the Grand Lodge of Scotland, (Geo. Steward and Co. Ltd., Edinburgh: 1923).

Names given to lodges were accompanied by associations and tended to express a certain political position. While *Palestine* was a proper name for a lodge situated in Beirut, whose *vilayet* included the north part of Palestine, *Le Liban* already displays a patriotic connotation. What may be true as well is that *Peace* Lodge was named according to the main concern of its members.

Names like *Sunneen* and *Kadisha*, which identify a mountain and a river respectively, illustrate the masons' desire to create links to their natural surroundings. The same is true for *Carmel* Lodge, No. 1085, which was founded in Haifa in 1911 or *El Mizhab* Lodge, No. 1130, which was founded in Tripoli in 1914. Both were named after mountainous areas.⁵² One can also find a name like *Noor al-Dimashq* Lodge, No. 1058, which was founded under the Grand Lodge of Scotland in 1909, meaning *Light of Damascus*. In the Qu'ran, *noor* is sometimes also translated as guidance for believers. While masonry was not seen as a religion, it certainly did have a para-religious meaning for its followers. Moreover, lodges in Damascus were set amidst traditional surroundings. Thus, people were less likely to forego religion, but rather tried to enrich their ritual and charitable lives - something freemasonry was supposed to do.⁵³ The practice of the fraternity regarding humanism and philanthropy, although originating in Christianity, was not foreign to religious Muslims. What is more, freemasons cited exactly this principle in order to demonstrate the compatibility of freemasonry with Islam, as the Provincial Grand Master of Turkey stated in 1866: 'Nothing can be worse founded, and nothing more unjust than the prejudices of ignorant Mussulmans, because as the more learned and more pious knew there is a

⁵² Archive of the Grand Lodge of Scotland: Registration books, 1914, *El Mizhab*; Petition for *Carmel*.

⁵³ Also, unlike in Istanbul, Alexandria, or Jerusalem, the municipality of Damascus was not controlled directly or indirectly by foreign interests or non-Ottomans. Apparently no foreigner sat on the city's council between the years 1871 and 1900, Weber: p. 15.

very intimate association in principle, and a close resemblance in practice between Masons and the more spiritualistic and devout Mussulmans'.⁵⁴

Before *Noor al-Dimashq*, Damascus was the main playground for *Siria* Lodge, which was established under the jurisdiction of the Italian Grand Orient in 1880. The lodge survived for eleven years and attracted only a few members of the influential Damascene families during this period. According to Quilty, the Azm family, who were former rulers of Damascus under the Ottoman government, for example, were able 'to engineer a political recovery at the end of the century with the aid of their commercial enterprise'.⁵⁵ The family's fate was tied to the future of the city: it accumulated its wealth through commercial activities and intermarriages with other significant and powerful families. Sari Nusseibeh aptly depicts these trends in reference to his grandfather, who apparently had various useful ways of securing the family's future, which included 'investing his inheritance in new business ventures, or spreading it freely as acts of charity, or social climbing, which, judging by his nuptial preferences, was a skill he certainly mastered'.⁵⁶ Having found some members of the Azm family in different lodges clearly indicates the function of lodges as social networks that could attract men for various reasons, including business.

As Quilty notes, Ahmed, the founder of one branch of the Azm family, 'married ten women from notable families in Damascus, Hama, Aleppo, Egypt, and Beirut; the seventeen ensuing children were born into an imposing network of socio-economic and political relations'.⁵⁷ One of Abd al-Qadir's sons was a lodge member, together with some members of the Christian Qudsi family. Two of the Qudsis -

⁵⁴ Anonymous, 'Turkey', *Freemasons' Magazine and Masonic Mirror*, (06.01.1866), p. 16. Though the article's author is unknown, as mentioned before regarding the Provincial Grand Lodge of Turkey it probably was Lord Bulwer who claimed a similarity between Islam and Freemasonry.

⁵⁵ M. James Quilty, *Bridging the dichotomy: Economic Change and Class Consolidation in Ottoman Beirut and Damascus*, (National Library of Canada, Microfilm: 1992), p. 78.

⁵⁶ Sari Nusseibeh, *Once upon a country – a Palestinian Life*, (Picador, New York: 2007), p. 24.

⁵⁷ Quilty: p. 78 – 79.

Abduh and Khalil - worked as dragomans for European consulates, but at the same time the family also had strong connections to the Ottoman administration. Working already for European institutions may have also inclined them to join a European fraternity.

Salim Mishaqa was another dragoman, and the head of the protestant community, who joined the lodge.⁵⁸ One can only speculate about his motives for joining, but it becomes clear that over time religiously active men lost their constraints and joined freemasonry in order to intermingle with men belonging to other congregations.

However, in general, *Siria* Lodge does not seem to have met the expectations of its members. Indeed, many members soon joined other lodges. Again, this was probably due to Italy's steadily deteriorating image in the region, accompanied by the growing importance of Britain and France.

In *Noor al-Dimashq* Lodge only the founders had prior masonic experience. By 1912 the lodge numbered around 110 members.⁵⁹ One can also mention *Al Ittihad* Lodge, meaning unity or union – a term also adopted by *L'Unione* Lodge. The name *Hilal* (crescent) was chosen for two lodges - one under the jurisdiction of the National Grand Lodge of Egypt, and the other under the jurisdiction of the Ottoman Grand Orient. The crescent was a favourite Ottoman symbol, which already in the Byzantium period gained popularity when it was connected to Artemis, the goddess of hunting.

At the same time it was used by the *Al Qahtaniyya Society*, founded in Istanbul in 1909. The name *Al Qahtaniyya* means 'named after Qahtan, a legendary ancestor of the Arabs, and the society was organised after *The Society of the Young*

⁵⁸ Ibid.: p. 94 – 96.

⁵⁹ Registration Books of the GLoS in Edinburgh, 1912, *Light of Damascus*.

Arab Nation (Jam'iyyat al-umma al-'arabiyya al-Fatat), which was a secret organisation established in Paris during the Young Turk period. In contrast, *Al Qahtaniyya Society* was composed of politicians and army officers, who, as Eliezer Tauber notes 'sought to raise the cultural, social, and economic level of the Arabs, and to demand equal rights for them within the framework of the Ottoman Empire'. The society adopted *Hilal* as a code word among members.⁶⁰ Since only a few scarce sources of the different secret societies are available, no thorough study comparing overlapping membership - taking into account even freemasonry - has to date been carried out. However, as with the various scientific and benevolent associations, these societies naturally attracted like-minded men, who were mainly from a middle class who were looking for reform and crucial changes.⁶¹

Although *Palestine Lodge* was only short lived, it attracted approximately 150 members before it closed in 1889. All members belonged to the elite, with at least a third being foreigners - Europeans as well as non-Syrian Arabs – initiated during the early years.⁶² The lodge was of strategic significance, as is made clear by an article that appeared in *Freemasons' Magazine and Masonic Mirror* in August 1865: '[The lodge is] situated, as it were, at the gate through which European institutions and European civilisation find an ingress into Asia'. It apparently acquired 'considerable importance for the diffusion of the light of Masonry amongst the Mahometan

⁶⁰ Eliezer Tauber, 'Secrecy in Early Arab Nationalist Organisations', *Middle Eastern Studies*, vol. 33/1, (Jan. 1997), p. 120 – 122.

⁶¹ For further information on secret societies, see Albert Hourani, *Arabic Thought in The Liberal Age, 1798 – 1939*; George Antonius, 'The Arab Awakening', (Hamish Hamilton, London: 1938); Zeine N. Zeine, *The Emergence of Arab Nationalism, with a Background Study of Arab-Turkish Relations in the Near East*, (Delmar, New York: 3rd edition, 1973); Fritz Steppat, *Eine Bewegung unter den Notablen Syriens*, 1877 – 78, (XVII. Deutscher Orientalistentag, Vorträge 2, edited by Wolfgang Voigt, Wiesbaden: 1969). There were some Bustanis, Shidyafs, al -Yazijis and Arslans among the members, as well as participating in lodges. The same holds true for Faris Nimr and Yacub Sarruf. However, after more comprehensive studies on the lodge compositions, I am convinced that it would be wrong to simplify the character of Syrian freemasonry by categorising it as another secret society. While these societies were all established with the aim of achieving purely political ideals, this was not the case for freemasonry, D.S..

⁶² All information on masonic memberships derives from the Registration books of the Grand Lodge of Scotland in Edinburgh.

inhabitants of the West of Asia. [...] Freemasonry should be, and means to be, a truly humane confederation, and a link of fraternity between men of all creeds and of all countries'.⁶³ Inherent in this statement is the clear proposition that Western, i.e. Christian, civilisation is superior to anything else and therefore worthy of expansion. It seems not too far-fetched to take this statement as being characteristic of the dominant mind-set of European freemasons at that time. As biased as it sounds, this opinion was nevertheless probably shared by many Syrians. Among the initial motivations in joining freemasonry was a desire to form an entity that was able to overcome their assumed backwardness.⁶⁴ There certainly was something to be learned from the West and joining a Western institution was a start.

In *Palestine* Lodge tradesmen constituted the largest group, followed by intellectuals (professors, teachers, students and doctors), with employees of the Ottoman government constituting the third group. However, it is important to stress that these categories are problematic and almost artificial since they do not encompass the diversity of jobs held by the masons at this time. While a large part of the higher middle class was composed of businessmen, these same men also worked as dragomans or held different representative positions for the European powers. Moreover, they were also authors, poets, journalists and amateur translators. What can be noted, at least initially, is the distinctive European flavour of the lodge and the small number of landowners it attracted – a typical feature of lodges in a capital city. Among the members of the lodge were Muhyiuddin, the second son of Abd al-Qadir al-Jaza'iri, Nassif Mishaqa and Dimitri Sursock. According to Zachs, the Mishaqa family, from which I already mentioned Mikha'il and Salim, who were Greek Catholics, 'became rich from the commerce brought by the region's growing ties with

⁶³ *Freemasons' Magazine and Masonic Mirror*, (London: 05.08.1865), p. 102.

⁶⁴ Ussama Makdisi, 'Ottoman Orientalism', *The American Historical Review*, vol. 107/3, (June 2002), pp. 768 – 796.

the West’ and ‘lost most of their earlier gains as a result of the oppression of Ahmad Pasha al-Jazzar, [...], and then recovered their initial success – if not becoming even more affluent – under the patronage of Amir Bashir’. The family was originally from Corfu, where their surname was Batraki. However, after moving to Greater Syria the head of the family decided to change their name to Mishaqa, as a consequence of their hemp and flax trade in shipyards, as the word ‘derived from the process of filtering fibres of silk, linen, hemp and cotton. [...] the word *mushaqa* refers to the waste that remains after the process of filtering’ which is the floss.⁶⁵ Early family members were mainly merchants, who established international contacts through business ties with the American consulate, American missionaries and other Western representatives. At least one member of the family, Mikha’il, converted to Protestantism.⁶⁶ Others, like Khalil, who was chief dragoman at the American consulate-general in Beirut, and Nasif, who was dragoman for the Americans in Damascus,⁶⁷ both joined the *Palestine* Lodge. A pattern can be established whereby men who were in daily contact with Europeans were also attracted to Western organisations.

The Sursock family were members of the Greek Orthodox Church and by the second half of the nineteenth century they had become the wealthiest family in the Ashrafiyyeh neighbourhood in Beirut. The family traded in all manner of goods, such as silk and grain, whilst at the same time also serving the needs of Europeans. Dimitri Sursock, according to masonic registration books beginning in 1818, joined the lodge between 1866 and 1867. He was an independent merchant who had become, like

⁶⁵ Fruma Zachs, *The Making of a Syrian Identity, Intellectuals and Merchants in Nineteenth Century Beirut*, (Brill, Leiden/Boston: 2005), p. 230; Mikha’il Mishaqa, *Murder, Mayhem, Pillage and Plunder: the History of Lebanon in the 18th and 19th Century*, translated from the Arabic by Wheeler McIntosh Thackston, (Suny Press, New York: 1988), p. 9. Also: Thomas Philipp, ‘Class, Community and Arab Historiography in the Early Nineteenth Century – The Dawn of a New Era’, *IJMES*, vol. 16/2, (May, 1984), pp. 161 – 175.

⁶⁶ See also Chapter III.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*: p. 232.

many other intellectuals, a dragoman for the American consulate.⁶⁸ Another member of the *Palestine* Lodge was Cesar Catafago who worked for the Prussian Consulate and who also joined the Syrian Society of Arts and Sciences, which was established in 1847.⁶⁹

This early Syrian society, which according to Edward Salisbury was dedicated to ‘the acquisition of the sciences and arts [...] the collecting of books, and papers’ and ‘the awakening of a general desire for the acquisition of the sciences and arts’, was composed mainly of European representatives who belonged to the SPC. The likes of Eli Smith, Cornelius van Dyck and Yuhanna Wortabet were all members. As another member of the society, Colonel Henry Churchill showed the same kind of open mindedness and interest in science and educational associations.⁷⁰ Additionally, he was among the foreigners initiated into the *Palestine* Lodge. Other members of the society derived from Beirut’s Christian upper middle class and included Selim Naufal, Butrus al-Bustani, Mikha’il Mishaqa and Nasif al-Yaziji.⁷¹

‘[M]odelled on European academic organisations bearing the modern name of the country’, the society was established in 1847.⁷² While it attracted exclusively Christian members, ‘its successor the Syrian Scientific Society, founded in 1857 [...] had no less than 50 Muslim members’.⁷³

Members of this kind of institutions, which were dedicated to science and education, who at the same time belonged to masonic lodges were not only to be

⁶⁸ Ibid.: pp. 238 – 239.

⁶⁹ It is not entirely clear if it was Cesar or a relative, Joseph, who joined this society, as both worked for Western representatives and the forename is not mentioned in the list; Edward E. Salisbury, ‘The Syrian Society of Arts and Sciences’, *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, vol. 3, (American Oriental Society: 1853), p.478.

⁷⁰ Jens Hanssen, ‘From Social Status to Intellectual Activity: Some prosopographical observations on the municipal council in Beirut, (1868 – 1908)’, p. 65.

⁷¹ Salisbury: p. 478.

⁷² Youssef M. Choueiri, ‘Two Histories of Syria and the Demise of Syrian Patriotism’, *Middle Eastern Studies*, vol.23/4, (Oct. 1987), p. 496.

⁷³ Choueiri: p. 502.

found among Christians. Hassan Bayhum was one of the Muslims among the masons of the *Palestine* Lodge with other Bayhums active in the Syrian Scientific Society. Additionally, Hassan was listed as member of Beirut's municipality council in 1898. As Zachs notes, the Bayhum family in general was one of the Muslim families 'that succeeded in penetrating the export business in the Syrian region'. They were the co-founders of the Muslim Benevolent Society (*al-Maqāṣid al-khayriyya*) and served in various positions for the Ottoman government. With the exception of only nine years, the family was represented in the municipality council between 1868 and 1908.⁷⁴

Another lodge member connected to the SPC was Elias Habelin, a Maronite. Originally from Mount Lebanon, Habelin was editor-in-chief of the *Lubnan* journal and held a post at the French consulate in Beirut. At the college and other 'well known schools' he taught French and Arabic.⁷⁵ Socio-cultural developments, such as the Lewis Affair in 1882, concerned foreigners and Syrians alike. After defending Darwinism, Professor Edwin Lewis and some of his students were suspended from the SPC, whilst some students voluntarily resigned and consequently strikes were held. Among those who left in protest and went to Egypt were masons and authors like Faris Nimr, Yacub Sarruf and Jurji Zaidan.⁷⁶

Ensuring a place in the lodge for the leading Druze family of Mount Lebanon was Hasib Bey, one of the few landowners who joined *Palestine*. Julius Løjtved was another extraordinary mason of the same lodge. In a travel guide published in 1904 he is mentioned as one of the recommended German doctors – although he was from Denmark⁷⁷ – together with Dr. Brigstock, who was also initiated into the lodge.⁷⁸ Not

⁷⁴ Zachs: p. 221.

⁷⁵ Zachs: p. 226.

⁷⁶ For more on this, see Thomas Philipp, *Ǧurgi Zaidan, His Life and Thought*, (Beirut, Franz Steiner in commission, Wiesbaden: 1979); Shafik Jeha, *Darwin and the Crisis 1882 in the Medical Department*, (AUB Press, Beirut: 2004).

⁷⁷ Karl Baedeker, *Palästina und Syrien*, (Leipzig: 1904), 6th Edition, p. 242, 276.

only did he produce an extraordinarily precise map of Beirut and its foreign institutions for Abdulhamid II in 1876 (see fig. 6), he was also Honorary Vice Consul in Beirut and served later as Consul between 1886 and 1898.⁷⁹



Figure 6: Map made by Julius Løjtvæd in 1876 (University of Birmingham, Special Collections, CMS mo12-29E)

According to information from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Denmark, Løjtvæd was made a Knight of the Danish Order of Dannebrog in 1884. He was also an Officier d'Académie in France, a Knight of the Swedish Order of the Polar Star and was decorated with the third class of the Turkish Order of Medschidie. The *Palestine* Lodge seems to have lured him with yet another title. Meetings of the *Palestine* Lodge must have resembled the Babylonian confusion of tongues at times, as is illustrated by the *Freemasons' Magazine and Masonic Mirror* of 1865: '[The] W.M. being a Greek (Bro. Aleais), the S.W. an Englishman (Bro. Eldrige), and the

⁷⁸ GLoS, Registration books, 1866 – 1867, *Palestine*.

⁷⁹ I received this information thanks to the contact with Otto Christian Schepelern, the *Chefkonsulent* in Denmark in 2008. He additionally mentioned that Løjtvæd had been employed as agent dealing with the acquisition of Greek-Roman antiquities in the Roman Empire. (E-Mail, 26.06.2008), *D.S.*.

J.W. a Frenchman (Bro. du Chene), the German Nationalities being represented by three Germans and Swiss (one of whom, Bro. Eduard Koller, of Zurich, acts as Treasurer), while the Secretary of the lodge is an Italian, Bro. Vergi'.⁸⁰

Though initially formed to fulfil European expectations and a desire to 'enlighten' the East, *Palestine* developed into a multi-religious body that soon took on a form specifically aimed at Syrian society. Far from the European masons' one-sided mission, the lodge helped to bridge internal gaps and was at the same time sufficiently attractive to draw in Beirut's higher middle class.

As Hanssen states, a 'high degree of genealogical continuity [...] on the municipal council is matched with an equally high degree of councillors' membership in the highly influential political lobby groups and literary organisations'.⁸¹ Taking into account the prestige of its members, it is very likely that the *Palestine* Lodge also served similar purposes. One can say without doubt that freemasonry had entered Ottoman society at a high level, taking in first men from prestigious families belonging to the new middle class, which 'operated in modern institutional settings to make their case for political reform, social peace and renewal'.

The council and the lodges likewise would allow them 'to experiment with reformist projects and test the practical limits of their social ideas' though 'local politics was also about power'.⁸² In an informal way, the lodge presumably functioned as a meeting point for a circle interested in international affairs and enabled the creation of political and business networks while affirming the local socio-cultural position of the individuals. Hence participation was as much directed to internal affairs as it was useful for Syrians concerned about external matters. Characteristic of

⁸⁰ *Freemasons' Magazine and Masonic Mirror*, (London: 05.08. 1865), p. 102. [W.M. = worshipful master; S.W. = senior warden; J.W. = junior warden].

⁸¹ Hanssen: p. 65.

⁸² Emrence, *Remapping*: p. 43.

these diverse memberships was the numerous overlapping of masonic lodges, the municipality and new cultural associations.⁸³ All these societies and institutions, established during the second half of the nineteenth century, promoted scientific and educational issues, or served as charities and benevolent societies. A ‘keen interest in science and technology, the idea of an Ottoman public, and catching up with the civilized world were the major aspects of middle-class thought’.⁸⁴ Additionally, the men involved in these activities ‘were genuine reformists on the political front’ and ‘campaigning for representative political institutions and formulated the idea of an imperial fatherland’. They were not against the Sublime Porte as all of their ideas ‘were compatible with the ideals of the Tanzimat and did not promote political nationalism’.⁸⁵

Categorising these features as part of the Empire’s public sphere, historians during the past decade have started to pay attention ‘to new themes to be considered as public-sphere activities, such as festivals, parades, rituals, and other forms of public performance’.⁸⁶ Masons were among the men who founded the Hamidie Society in Beirut in January 1893; one year after the Ottoman Company in Istanbul was

⁸³ While Christian societies in Greater Syria took the lead, often attracting Europeans, it also resulted in the foundation of the *Muslim Benevolent Society*. Most of the early societies especially outside Beirut worked along sectarian lines. The *Jerusalem Literary Society*, the *Syrian Society for the Acquisition of Arts and Sciences*, the *Oriental Society* and the *Muslim Benevolent Society* all served philanthropic and educational purposes, connecting the intelligentsia with the wealthy. It is no coincidence that their numbers grew at the end of the nineteenth century. At the same time, rumours about secret societies were spreading, which stimulated prejudices against freemasonry. For further reading on members of the municipality and their socio-cultural engagements, as well as on different societies founded at the end of the nineteenth century, see: Jens Hanssen, ‘From Social Status to Intellectual Activity: Some proposographical observations on the municipal council in Beirut, (1868 – 1908)’; A.L. Tibawi, *A Modern History of Syria including Lebanon and Palestine*, (MacMillan St. Martin’s Press, London: 1969); Albert Hourani, *Arabic Thought in The Liberal Age, 1798-1939*; Robert Morris, *Freemasonry in the Holy Land or Remarks of Hiram’s Builders*, (12th ed., Chicago: 1877); Philipp S. Khoury, *Urban Notables and Arab Nationalism*, (Cambridge University Press: 1983); Fruma Zachs, *The Making of a Syrian Identity, Intellectuals and Merchants in Nineteenth-Century Beirut*, (Brill, Leiden: 2005); Shimon Shamir, ‘Midhat Pasha and the Anti-Turkish Agitation in Syria’, in *Middle Eastern Studies*, vol. 10/2, (May 1974), p. 115 – 141.

⁸⁴ Emrence, *Remapping*: p. 43.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*: p. 42.

⁸⁶ Nadir Özbek, ‘Philanthropic Activity, Ottoman Patriotism, and the Hamidian Regime, 1876 – 1909’, *IJMES*, vol. 37/1, (Feb., 2005), p. 63.

established. Initiated by Suleiman Bustani, the Ottoman Company ‘had the sole rights in organising the Ottoman pavilion at the World exposition’ in Chicago. Suleiman’s cousin Nassib was appointed the company’s representative in Beirut.⁸⁷ Nassib Bustani was one of the early members of *Kadisha* Lodge in Tripoli, later joining *Le Liban* Lodge. The general manager of the Hamidie Society, which was responsible for representing the Ottoman Empire at the World Fair exposition in Chicago in 1893, was Khalil Sarkis. He was assisted by Raji Saikali and Najib Sursock, together with Nakhle Bustros as treasurer. All the families were well connected to various lodges during this time. The Society even received a financial guarantee from Allan Ramsay, a co-founder of *La Turquie* Lodge in Constantinople in 1908, who worked for the Ottoman Bank.⁸⁸

Abdulhamid participated in the exhibition mainly in order to improve the Ottoman Empire’s image beyond the Arab world.⁸⁹ Attractions of the Empire’s contribution included belly dancers, show fighting and Arab horses. Although some doubted that all the horses were thoroughbreds, the import and sale of Arab mares to the USA during the World Fair marked the beginning of prosperous business ventures. The Farrah family, who were Christian traders from Baalbeck, and who went on to have close links to *Sunneen* Lodge, were the original owners of *Nejme (star)*, a prized thoroughbred. As Joe Achcar notes: ‘In March 23/03/1893 in front of the diplomatic corps, the Turkish officials and thousands of Beirut’s inhabitants, the Hamidie’s 247 officials, riders, and lads together with 40 horses, 12 camels, 7

⁸⁷ Joe Achcar, ‘Khalil Sarkis and The Hamidie Society’, <http://daughterofthewind.org/khalil-sarkis-and-the-hamidie-society/>, (11.02.2009).

⁸⁸ GLoS Archive, Petition of *La Turquie* Lodge, Registration books 1908, *La Turquie*.

⁸⁹ For other examples of efforts by different Ottoman rulers directed at domestic and foreign policies: Selim Deringil, ‘The Invention of Tradition as a Public Image in the Late Ottoman Empire, 1808 – 1908’, *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, vol. 35, No 1, (Jan., 1993), p. 3 – 29.

donkeys, 3 sheep, 6 *Sloughi* dogs, embarked on the *Cynthiana*, a large steamer that transported them to the New World.⁹⁰

Although the show itself was a financial disaster - the Sursocks, the Bustanis and other rich Syrian family businesses involved lost substantial sums of money - it nevertheless had a long-lasting impact on visitors to the World Fair and the press were impressed by 'the romance and color of the Orient'. The public were also attracted to the music, dances, the mosque on display at the exhibition (which was converted to a synagogue during Yom Kippur), its show and the animals.⁹¹ Moreover, Syrian and Egyptian masons were among the luckier ones who travelled to the exhibition, as at least they could rely on help from their American masonic brothers.⁹²

Freemasonry was an internationally valid password; a tool that facilitated fraternisation, irrespective of national origins. This was one of the reasons why lodges affiliated with the Grand Lodge of Scotland prospered, as they were able to avoid the potential obstacles for masons belonging to the Grand Orient of France.⁹³ Naturally, the same was true the other way around: foreign masons entering Ottoman territory could count on masonic hospitality.

Between 1894 and 1895, General John Corson Smith, a freemason from Chicago, travelled around the world with his daughter Ruth Augusta.⁹⁴ In Egypt and Greater Syria, they were warmly received by fellow masons. As Smith notes, 'W. Bro. Y. Sarrouf, Ph.D., followed and delivered a few but choice words with reference to the great amount of good Freemasonry has ever done in the world, and alluded to

⁹⁰ Joe Achcar, 'Khalil Sarkis and The Hamidie Society'; GLoS Archive, Registration books, 1905, *Sunneen* Lodge.

⁹¹ www.ambararabians.com/articles/WhiteCity1.shtml, (01.10.2008).

⁹² Gen. John C. Smith, *Around the World*, (Knight, Leonard & Co., Chicago: 1895), p. 27.

⁹³ As explained earlier, the decision of the G.O.F. to omit an oath to the Supreme Being, which was taken in 1877, was the reason why many Grand Lodges came to regard this grand body and its daughter lodges as irregular.

⁹⁴ Information on Smith's masonic career: William R. Denslow, Harry S. Truman, *10,000 Famous Freemasons from K to Z*, vol. 3, (Kessinger Publishing, Whitefish/Mt: 1959, Reprint: 2004), p. 155.

the warm hospitality and fraternal assistance received through the hands of M.W. Bro. General J.C. Smith toward the brethren that called in Chicago during the world's great fair'.⁹⁵ It is more than likely that Smith had some contact with Syrian emigrants and visitors at the World Fair. During his visit, Smith was showered with all kind of gifts from fellow masons, such as Shahin Makarius, Colonel Mousally Bey, Dr D.M. Altaf and Ragab Noursrat Bey. They were Syrians who had settled in Egypt because of what they considered the Christian fanaticism of their former colleagues from the SPC or after censorship in Greater Syria had hindered them from publishing.⁹⁶ Smith received flowers, embroideries and items made of glass, bronze articles inlaid with gold and a cup for his eldest son, who, according to Makarius, 'was so kind to our Egyptian brothers where as W.M. he welcomed them to *Garden City Lodge*, No. 41, when in Chicago at the Great Fair'.⁹⁷

In Beirut, Smith met masons whom he knew from the World Fair, including Kalil Rayess, Joseph R. Kanawati and J.F. Aftimus, who was 'the architect of the Turkish, Egyptian, and Syrian buildings' and it proved extremely beneficial to take advantage of his masonic links in what must have seemed a strange and exotic realm to him and his daughter.⁹⁸

In his descriptions Smith mentions a certain R.E. Erny, referring to him as 'Worshipful Master of the *Palestine Lodge*'.⁹⁹ However, according to Scottish records the lodge had ceased functioning five years prior to Smith's visit to Beirut. It is likely that former lodge members either ignored the ruling of their former Grand Lodge or considered themselves to be lifelong masons – irrespective of whether the lodge

⁹⁵ Smith: p. 27.

⁹⁶ Marwa Elshakry, 'The Gospel of Science and American Evangelism in Late Ottoman Beirut', *Past & Present*, no. 196, (August 2007), p. 212.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*: p. 32.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*: p. 35.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*:p. 37.

actually convened. Scottish records indicate that the *Palestine* Lodge was marked as ‘dormant’ from 1881. Yet, it continued to exist until at least 1889, as up to this year it paid for newly initiated members. However, it appears to have subsequently vanished into thin air. The political situation may have played a role. As the Proceedings of the Grand Lodge of Scotland indicate, ‘a letter was read from the Lodge *Palestine*, No. 415, asking counsel in the circumstances of difficulty in which Freemasons have been placed through recent political changes in Syria. Remitted to Grand Secretary’.¹⁰⁰ What had happened in this period?

In 1876 Abdulhamid II came to power, and quickly dissolved parliament, overruled the constitution and began advocating oppressive and pervasive methods to eliminate lodges throughout the Empire; this was partly reasoned by ‘the suspicions of the Hamidian regime which kept a careful eye on all Masonic activities and took harsh measures to curb them’.¹⁰¹ According to reports sent by freemasons, all lodges were forced to close down on more than one occasion. A short time into Abdulhamid’s reign, Romania, Serbia and Montenegro became independent and Bulgaria became autonomous following the Congress of Berlin in 1878. Furthermore, in 1881 France took control of Tunisia and the following year Britain occupied Egypt.

In addition, the Ottoman government, which was deeply in debt, had to accept European control over its finances. Consequently, Abdulhamid’s already excessive paranoia increased. He must have perceived masonic lodges as secret vehicles of the West that promoted separatist goals among his people, which - as has been illustrated - was not completely unjustified. ‘The freemasons became a special target of repression when Abdulhamid II got wind of their efforts in Europe on behalf of Murad V’, his older brother who briefly reigned as sultan before being declared

¹⁰⁰ *Proceedings*, GLoS, (1881 – 1883).

¹⁰¹ M. Şükrü Hanioglu, ‘Notes on the Young Turks and the Freemasons, 1875 – 1908’, *Middle Eastern Studies*, vol. 25/2, (April 1989), p. 188.

mentally ill.¹⁰² Additionally, conservative Muslim and Christian circles disliked and distrusted this growing European intervention and penetration. We can only speculate as to the reasons for the problems faced by the *Palestine* Lodge. No further documents are extant, except for the registered members and an application for the erection of the District Grand Lodge for Syria, which were sent to Edinburgh in the lodge's last active years, apparently without answer.¹⁰³ However, the *Palestine* Lodge turned out to be at the vanguard of further masonic proliferation. Why else would its members have risked to be branded 'as "a habitual source of sedition"', being repressed and spied on?¹⁰⁴

In general Abdulhamid had no problem with voluntary initiatives of all sorts, which he even supported in order to be seen as the main motivating power behind charitable and other worthy causes. Yet, freemasonry developed outside his area of control over imperial philanthropy. Consequently, while being part of the civic sphere, the fraternity played no role as a key element of 'the Hamidian regime's legitimation strategies'.¹⁰⁵ Rather, freemasonry was considered as a risk factor, constituting a gateway for Western culture, which in turn would be able to exploit the regime's socio-political weakness. Hence, Abdulhamid was not only wary of the fraternity as an unchecked institution possibly holding separatist movements in

¹⁰² Ibid.

¹⁰³ *Proceedings*, GLoS; 1889- 91, *Palestine* Lodge was supported by *Taurus* Lodge no 765 from Mersina (not to be confused with *Taurus* Lodge, No. 1249, from Alexandretta, which was only built in 1920). I could not find the petition of the older *Taurus* Lodge. However, between 1886 and 1889 it only initiated nine new members, four of whom worked for the railway, three of whom were merchants, one was a doctor and the last was Vice Consul of Italy, Avidio Rossi. Together with the *Palestine* Lodge and the *Ehden* Lodge, it was the only lodge under the Grand Lodge of Scotland that was in existence in 1889, *D.S.*.

¹⁰⁴ Hanioglu: p. 188.

¹⁰⁵ Nadir Özbek, 'Philanthropic Activity, Ottoman Patriotism, and the Hamidian Regime, 1876 – 1909', *IJMES*, vol. 37/1 (Feb., 2005), p. 63.

disguise but also of the consequences of growing Western influence in general to be able to break ‘the paternal bond between the sultan and his subjects’.¹⁰⁶

Lodges, notwithstanding, constantly reformed, reopened and resumed their activities. Not only did former *Palestine* Lodge masons find new homes in other existing lodges, but they also succeeded in setting up new lodges that were only suspended as a result of World War One. Migration from one lodge to another was partly a sign of the socially unstable situation and the result of changing economic conditions.¹⁰⁷ Yet, it was also the result of purely utilitarian thoughts: a high profile among as many freemasons as possible secured – as emphasised already before – a better socio-political standing. For traders, it enabled them to make contact with other traders, improve their common situations on the market, to be in contact with potential clients and to widen their business network in general.

Palestine seemed finally to have surrendered to the persecution inflicted on its members by the Ottoman government and the clergy. But, according to the masons themselves, although the authorities tried to silence what is referred to as ‘universal masonry and philanthropy’, the masons withstood this pressure and ‘their zeal, so far from diminishing under such adverse circumstances, has, on the contrary, developed, and some of the brothers have united to form a lodge under the name of the Lebanon Lodge which was opened in 1868 in Beyrouth under the constitution of the Grand Orient de France’.¹⁰⁸

This lodge, called *Le Liban*, proved to be more successful in many ways. Working under the patronage of the Grand Orient of France, it was the child of skilled

¹⁰⁶ Özbek: p. 71.

¹⁰⁷ During World War One no lodges could be established in the Greater Syrian region. *El Mizhab* Lodge only continued working - like most of the other lodges - in 1919. In Egypt some new lodges came into existence, such as *St Andre* Lodge, No. 1161, in Aboukir.

¹⁰⁸ Letter from *Le Liban* Lodge to the GOdF, (28.04.1876), *Le Liban*, carton no. 1, Archive of the GOdF.

freemasons. A formal request to establish a lodge whereby all the petitioners have to prove their masonic background is necessary by masonic law and the founders of *Le Liban* Lodge displayed their partly shared, prior experiences. Alphonse Lambert, a French engineer, had been initiated into a lodge in Lyon; Loutfallah Haggi's previous lodge was in Constantinople and Louis Gaston Ferriere had been a member of an African lodge. Constantin Dombrowsky was a former member of a lodge called *Réunion Bienfaisante*, while Emile Gallais left a Scottish lodge in Alexandria. The other members, with the exception of the Persian consul A. Corseiri, were former *Palestine* Lodge members: Anton Nahhas, Jules Kulph, Joseph Fayad, Joseph Gedai, Dimitri Sursock, Assad Fayad, Michel Fiani, Joseph Gelegh, Habib Gelegh and Selim Achou.¹⁰⁹

With the recruitment of some of *Palestine* Lodge's most prestigious members, *Le Liban* Lodge grew rapidly and by 1869 some of its members were already complaining about its size. Consequently, this dissenting faction established *La Chaîne d'Orient* Lodge, and included Kulph, Dombrowsky, Louis Monasterski, Jean and Alexandre Sursock, Loutfallah Rizcalla and Moyssiades Telemagen. The reasons for the establishment of this lodge were outlined to the Grand Orient of France by Monasterski, the chief of the dragomans. He cited the size of *Le Liban* Lodge, which had accepted nearly all membership applications, together with the inordinate amount of time required to produce French-Arabic translations of the procedures. According to him, *Le Liban* Lodge had become a sedate and cumbersome institution. Additionally, Monasterski described how they wanted to support the government against the clergy and that the more lodges that were established and that were

¹⁰⁹ Letter from G.D. Sursock to the GOdF to mark the 45th birthday of the lodge in March 1913, the Centre de Recherche et de Documentation Maçonique, Charles Kesrouani, Ghazir/Lebanon; correspondence between *Le Liban* Lodge and the GOdF, *Le Liban*, carton no. 2, Archive of the GOdF.

actively working towards unification and tolerance, the better.¹¹⁰ One has to take into consideration that mentioning the government in a positive way was no obligation when corresponding with the French. Rather, it seems that Monasterski noted it down because this was his original thought. Freemasons, at least until the Young Turk Revolution, did not try to overthrow the Empire. On the contrary, they sought ways to strengthen it.

La Chaine d'Orient Lodge did not survive for long. It is possible that one of the reasons it closed in 1896 was because it only attracted a limited number of foreigners. Indeed, only a year after its inception the lodge adopted Arabic as its principal working language. It is also possible that persecution by the Ottoman authorities curtailed opportunities to meet, as was allegedly the case with the *Palestine* Lodge. Additionally, lodges like *Le Liban* were affected by an outbreak of cholera in October 1875. A year later it closed temporarily, according to its own statement, because of tyranny, despotism and due to intimidation from Muslim fanatics.¹¹¹ Letters of *Le Liban* Lodge mention aggression from Jesuits, which also forced another unnamed lodge to close in 1889, although this claim is questionable as Thierry Zarcone notes in his research. It is more likely that lodges tended to exaggerate the difficult working conditions in order to secure attention and good will from European masonic grand bodies.¹¹²

By 1913, the prestigious *Le Liban* Lodge had initiated over 560 members. Among them were 219 tradesmen, 138 employees of the Ottoman government, 60 physicians, 13 pharmacists, 44 landowners and 42 'men who performed remarkable services for their country like Mohammed Abdou, Mufti d'Egypt, Ibrahim Yaziji, the

¹¹⁰Letter from Monasterski to the GOdF, (22.12.1869), *Le Liban*, carton no. 1, Archive of the GOdF.

¹¹¹ Correspondence between *Le Liban* and the GOdF, (1875-1877), *Le Liban*, carton no. 1, Archive of the GOdF.

¹¹² 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).

grand man of letters for Arabic, Dr. Sarruf, Dr. Nimr, Makarius, Dr. Zalzal Hourani etc.’, eighteen lawyers, sixteen engineers and eighteen members of the Ottoman army.¹¹³ Apart from these members, the lodge also included Bishara Zalzal and Ibrahim al-Yaziji the co-editors of the *Al Tabib* periodical, which was owned by the American Dr. George Post, a professor of surgery and botany at the SPC.¹¹⁴

In his letter to the Grand Orient of France, after providing a proud and appreciative summary of the number of masons initiated at the lodge, George Dimitri Sursock mentions its charitable activities. Hence it is described how the lodge lent support to the building of a national hospital, two charitable organisations, an educational institution and a sanatorium. It cooperated with other lodges in order to help both freemasons and needy persons in general. Thus, *Le Liban* Lodge’s success in its endeavours to improve living conditions for the population of Beirut was real. According to an anonymous article, published in an edition of *The Freemason* in 1914, it was ‘always in [the] forefront of all humanitarian movements’ and helped to establish new ones, such as the International First Aid Society of Cairo, which ‘owed its initiation to Bro. Vittorio Bucciatti and its promotion to the *Ramses II* Lodge, no 63’.¹¹⁵ This is acknowledged by W.S. Nelson, non-mason and former missionary to Syria, who described masonry as having ‘supplied to Syria a unifying principle, an organisation in which all creeds and sects, Christian and Mohammedan alike, can find common ground and meet together as men and brothers whatever their religious differences’.¹¹⁶ And again, this dense web of local masonic meeting points, which just

¹¹³ Letter from G.D. Sursock, (1913).

¹¹⁴ Salim Mujais, *Antoun Saadeh. A Biography. Volume 1. The Youth Years*, (Kutub, Lebanon: 2004), p. 69. When Post died, the New York Times ran an obituary notice, emphasising the tribute paid to his work in form of ‘decoration Othmanieh of Turkey, of the Ducal House of Saxony, and of the Red Eagle and Knights of Jerusalem of Germany’; NYT, (1.10.1909), <http://query.nytimes.com/mem/archive-free/pdf?res=FA0E11F7345512738DDDA80894D8415B898CF1D3>, (01.12.2010).

¹¹⁵ Anonymous, ‘Masonry in Egypt’, *The Freemason*, (London: 27.06.1914), p. 852.

¹¹⁶ Cited by Anonymous, ‘Freemasonry in Syria’, *The Freemason*, (London: 16.10.1920), p. 198.

started with *Le Liban* and *Palestine*, was only initially woven by European masons, but it was the freemasons of Greater Syria who utilised freemasonry. They established something completely new, something that Europeans could not govern.

Remarkably, all the men named as members of *Le Liban* were also connected to other lodges, thereby creating a masonic network. These men knew what to expect and wanted to expand their masonic horizons and networks. Many of the members of *Le Liban* Lodge, including Abdu, Yaziji, Sarruf and Nimr, had lived and worked in Egypt. Regarding Shahin Makarius, it seems that he was a collector of titles and memberships, travelling from one lodge to the other and taking in all his impressions. Subsequently, he published numerous masonic articles, a journal and books.¹¹⁷ Emin Arslan, a former governor of Dhour-el-Shweir, a village on Mount Lebanon, even wrote a letter to the Comité Turco-Syrien des Reformes in Paris, in order to express his support for Makarius's publishing ambitions.¹¹⁸ Arslan himself once had led this committee before it merged with the Committee of Union and Progress (CUP).¹¹⁹ Makarius was probably the most knowledgeable man in his field in regard to the foundation of lodges in the Ottoman Empire. Nevertheless, his statements are sometimes sketchy, as when he described various cities and their masonic activities. He simplified the matter, for example, when he wrote that the *Palestine* Lodge simply changed its name to *Le Liban*.¹²⁰ It not only changed its name, but also swapped affiliations. Indeed, though *Palestine* members were the initiators of *Le Liban*, there

¹¹⁷ Shahin Makarius, *Kitab al-ādāb al-māsūniyya*, (Cairo: 1895); *Kitab al-asrār al-khafīyya fil-jam'iyya al-māsūniyya*, (Cairo: 1900).

¹¹⁸ Letter from Emin Arslan to the Committee dated 02.06.1896; *Centre de Recherche et de Documentation Maconnique*, Charles Kesrouani, Ghazir/Lebanon. More information on the Committee: M. Şükru Hanioglu, 'Notes on the Young Turks and the Freemasons, 1875 – 1908', *Middle Eastern Studies*, vol. 25/2, (April 1989).

¹¹⁹ Hasan Kayali, *Arabs and Young Turks: Ottomanism, Arabism, and Islamism in the Ottoman Empire, 1908 – 1919*, (University of California Press: 1998); (<http://ark.cdlib.org/ark:/13030/ft7n39p1dn>, 29.11.2010).

¹²⁰ 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*, vol. 65b, (Sweden: 1983), p. 118 – 119.

must have been a point when both lodges co-existed. This is suggested by a letter written in 1876 from Nicolas Haggi, grandmaster of *Le Liban*, to the Grand Orient of France, in which he mentions cooperation between members of both lodges.¹²¹

Sursock's letter names two masonic publications: the twice-weekly *Taqaddum* journal, which was edited by Assad Isak, and the scientifically-oriented *Muqtataf* periodical that was edited by Yacoub Sarruf, Faris Nimr and Shahin Makarius.¹²² Having said this, though the publications may have expressed masonic ideas with some of the articles displaying corresponding mind-sets, it was only Sursock who refers to *Taqaddum* and *Muqtataf* as masonic. This was probably reasoned by the fact that most of the journalists and writers were indeed members of masonic lodges.¹²³

Sarruf and Nimr were also the co-owners and worked for Makarius's newspaper, entitled *Muqattam*. Indeed, they were responsible for the publication of an article on the visit of the American mason Smith in March 1895.¹²⁴ These writers are well known for their intellectual output, dealing with the future of Syria and of the Arab nation during the *nahda*, with their writings being partly regarded by fellow masons as a defence against the accusations made by the Jesuits in their journal *Le*

¹²¹ Letter from *Le Liban* Lodge to the Grand Orient, (13.06.1876), *Le Liban*, carton no 1, Archive of the GOdF.

¹²² Letter from *Le Liban* Lodge to the Grand Orient, (20.04.1881), *Le Liban*, carton no 1, Archive of the GOdF.

¹²³ Appendix IV; as the exchange of ideas is not subject of this thesis, this claim may be substantiated with the forthcoming thesis written by Stephan Schmid (AUB) who deals extensively with the connection of Beirut's intellectuals and their masonic backgrounds, *D.S.*

¹²⁴ The article was written by Salim Khoury, the secretary of *Lata'if* Lodge, and describes the civil reception afforded to Smith by Egyptian masons in Makarius's house. The meeting was attended by Idris Bey Ragheb, the Grand Master of the National Grand Egyptian Lodge, and many other masons from different lodges. With a lot of ceremony, Smith was given the jewel of the Grand Master of the Grand Lodge of Egypt and the title Honorary Grand Master of Egyptian Lodges. Smith then delivered an oration, which Faris Nimr translated simultaneously into Arabic. Sarruf gave a speech about masonic charitable deeds and Idris Bey Ragheb closed the meeting by reiterating expressions of thanks for Smith's generous behaviour during the World Fair in Chicago. Khoury goes on to describe the meeting of *Lata'if* Lodge, where Smith and Sir H.H. Kitchener had been present. Again, speeches were given, honouring and thanking everyone. (Smith: p. 26 – 28).

Bashir.¹²⁵ Herein, the Jesuits accused freemasons of working under French protection against the Ottoman government and also being responsible for the spread of revolutionary placards in Beirut and Damascus – an accusation *Le Liban* Lodge vehemently denied in more than one letter.¹²⁶

It is not surprising to note that *Le Liban* Lodge, which belonged to a French grand body, also appealed to students and graduates of the SPC. This rather strengthens the thesis that affiliations to European grand bodies did not predetermine the characteristics of lodges. Medical students were particularly attracted to becoming initiates of *Le Liban* Lodge, which again correlates with the Lewis Affair and the mainly pro-Darwinian outlook of freemasonry.¹²⁷ Darwinism was prominent among freemasons who supported scientific research in general and theories answering questions about human existence and evolution in particular. Hence, some of the students who had to leave the College at the same time because of their pro-Darwinian attitudes also belonged to different masonic lodges.

Many young men from Damascus studied medicine in Beirut and became members of *Le Liban* Lodge, such as Ibrahim and Joseph Arbili, who were born in 1872 and 1876 respectively, as well as Joseph Elias Qudsi.¹²⁸ The short biographies of the former students/masons provided in the directory of the American University of Beirut, *the AUB – Directory of Alumni 1870 -1952*, indicates their various honorary

¹²⁵ For more reading see: *Intellectual Life in the Arab East, 1890 – 1939*, edited by Marwan Buheiry, (Syracuse University Press: 1982); Eliezer Tauber, ‘The Press and the Journalist as a Vehicle in Spreading National Ideas in Syria in the Late Ottoman Period’, *Die Welt des Islams*, New Series, Bd. 30, No 1/4, (1990), pp. 163 – 177; Ami Ayalon, *The Press in the Arab Middle East: A History*, (Oxford University Press: 1995).

¹²⁶ For further analysis regarding potential authors behind anti-Ottoman and anti-Turkish agitation: Shimon Shamir, ‘Midhat Pasha and the Anti-Turkish Agitation in Syria’, *Middle Eastern Studies*, vol. 10/2, (May 1974), pp. 115 – 141.

¹²⁷ More information on the Lewis/Darwin Affair and the involvement of SPC students: Nadia Farag, ‘The Lewis Affair and the Fortunes of al-Muqtataf’, *Middle Eastern Studies*, vol. 8/1 (Jan. 1972). See also: Donald Leavitt, ‘Darwinism in the Arab World and the Lewis Affair at the Syrian Protestant College’, *Muslim World*, vol. 71, (1981); Shafiq Juha, *Darwin wa azmat, 1882*, (Beirut, 1991).

¹²⁸ *The AUB – Directory of Alumni 1870 – 1952*, Alumni Association Beirut, (Catholic Press, Beirut: 1953), p. 5, 70.

titles and distinguished occupations. Najib Barbour, for example, worked as an intern in Brooklyn before returning to Beirut to become a physician at St. George Hospital. He was awarded various honours, including being made an honorary member of the Société Académique de Paris and a Chevalier de la Légion d'Honneur. He also contributed to local Arabic medical publications, as well as being a past master of the Damascus Lodge in New York, the President of the alumni association in the city and a member of the American Medical Association.¹²⁹ Another member of *Le Liban* Lodge was Bishara Zalzal, who, together with Ibrahim Yaziji, published the bi-weekly literary journal *Al Bayyan*.¹³⁰ Zalzal was born in Bikfayya, but lived in Beirut, Cairo, Tanta and Alexandria.¹³¹

One can also mention Shukri Boutagi, who was an absolvent of the SPC and a physician. At one point, as mentioned in the *Directory*, he left for Jaffa, where he worked in an English hospital.¹³² What is more, Najib Dibs, from Zahle, worked as a medical officer in different Syrian cities before finally returning to Zahle. The list of persons linking *Le Liban* Lodge with the SPC also includes Bakhus Hakim and Ibrahim Kafrouni. The latter had a position working for the Ottoman government, while his final jobs were as a translator for the Department of Public Instruction and Ordinance in Cairo and as an instructor of mathematics.¹³³

What these young men have in common, besides constant mobility, is their membership in masonic lodges combined with a scientific mind-set. One is probably not mistaken when characterising freemasonry in these cases as a tool to adapt more easily to unfamiliar surroundings by finding like-minded men in lodge meetings.

¹²⁹ Ibid.: p. 2, 6, 18.

¹³⁰ Ami Ayalon, *Language and Change in the Arab Middle East: the Evolution of Modern Political Discourse*, (Oxford University Press US: 1987); correspondence between *Le Liban* Lodge and the GOdF, (1869 – 1880), *Le Liban*, carton no. 1, Archive of the GOdF, National Library, Paris.

¹³¹ *The AUB – Directory* : p. 2.

¹³² Ibid. p. 11.

¹³³ Ibid.: p. 13, 4.

Wadi Shibli was also initiated into *Le Liban* Lodge. He hailed from a completely different background, but is also an example of a member of a middle class family. His family was among the first custodians of al-Manara's lighthouse at Beirut's port.¹³⁴ The Shibli family were originally from Bikfayya on Mount Lebanon, but had taken over servicing the lighthouse from the Rajji family at the end of the nineteenth century and 'have done so from Ottoman times until the present day, Lighthouse keeping is in their blood. At one time the family looked after lighthouses in Haifa and further up the Syrian coast, as well as the one in Al-Manara'.¹³⁵ Wadi Shibli was probably the first member of his family to go to university, where he studied medicine.¹³⁶

As a final example, the Trad family should be mentioned here. Six of its members joined *Le Liban* Lodge between the late 1860s and 1900, with Michel Trad also being initiated into the *Peace* Lodge in the early twentieth century. The Trad family came to the Greater Syrian region during the tenth century from Yemen. Some members of the family settled in Egypt or Morocco, where they converted to Islam, while those who settled in Syria joined the Greek Orthodox Church. One branch was mainly active in banking – even today there is the Trad Bank – while another branch established the Trad Hospital. Alexandre and Selim Trad were both members of *Le Liban* Lodge and active in the diplomatic and consular sphere, where they worked as translators attached to the Russian Embassy. It seems that only one of the Trad did not pursue a career. This was Benjamin Trad, who lived in Constantinople and was known as Don Juan. He was the only Christian in the 1860s who was allowed to enter the harem of the Sublime Porte. The veracity of these stories is uncertain, but he did

¹³⁴ All information on the Shibli family: *The Daily Star*, (02.08.1997).

¹³⁵ *The Daily Star*.

¹³⁶ *Le Liban*, carton no. 2, Archive of the GOdF, *Le Liban*.

hold the post of chamberlain to the sultan. When he died, ‘all women from Istanbul swarmed out to grieve for him’.¹³⁷

In contrast, Elias Trad was ‘a grand intellectual and man of letters who had published many literary and juridical books’ and who in addition was employed at different tribunals.¹³⁸ The Trad family was close to the Sursock family and they frequently intermarried.¹³⁹ They are also known to have become disillusioned with European (and particularly French) politics. As the general consul of France, Fouques Duparc wrote:

‘In the year 1907 Faris Mishriq and Nagib Trad criticised France’s policy in Lebanon (...) as they explained, the French influence decreased from day to day; the population’s continuous turning away from us aggravated in an alarming way and the French general consulate took side with the Maronite clergy against the people and the freemasons who, because of that hostility, turned to the Scottish lodges’.¹⁴⁰

Indeed, Duparc was right with his views on masonic mobility and also with his suspicions against Najib Trad and Faris Mishriq. Although the Ministry of Foreign Affairs decided not to take the two men too seriously, it did carry out investigations on both of them. While Najib Trad had been seemingly unknown throughout the country, ‘regarding Faris Mishriq, [...] of narrow education, originally from America, he is in his district of very small political importance, hence, the name is only known thanks to his contribution into a foundation of a masonic lodge for Shweir, a village, which is mainly orthodox’.¹⁴¹ This might have been true in the eyes of the French

¹³⁷ [Toutes les femmes d’Istanbul sortirent pour le pleurer], *Chronique*.

¹³⁸ [Un grand intellectuel et home de letters, qui a publié plusieurs ouvrages littéraires et juridiques], Carla Yardemian, ‘Enquete- Les Trad, famille Beyrouthine’, *Masculin Magazine*, Lebanon, (July 1998), p. 10.

¹³⁹ Fruma Zachs; *Making of a Syrian Identity*, p. 240.

¹⁴⁰ [En 1907, Farès Meshreq et Négib Trad critiquent la politique de la France au Liban’; and the general consul of France, Fouques Duparc, even wrote, that ‘l’influence française, ont-ils déclaré en premier lieu, décroît ici de jour en jour; le mouvement de désaffection de la population à notre égard s’accroît de manière inquiétante et le consulat général de France a lié partie avec le clergé maronite contre le peuple et les francs-maçons qui, devant cette hostilité, ont dû recourir aux loges écossaises], Dr. Jean Charaf, ‘Les familles présidentielles – La famille Trad’, *Masculin Magazine*, p. 106 – 107.

¹⁴¹ [quant à Farès Meshreq, ... de culture fort restreinte, ancien émigré en Amérique, il jouit, dans son district, d’une très petite influence personnelle, et dont le nom n’est connu que grâce à la fondation à

diplomats, but for Lebanese masons Mishriq played a significant role as head of a lodge in Shweir in 1910. He also as a witness for petitions made to work under the Grand Lodge of Scotland by the *Salah ed-Din* Lodge, No. 1071, in Acre and the *Carmel* Lodge, No. 1085, in Haifa.¹⁴² Another member of the Trad family, Petro, was a member of the reform movement in Beirut and was accused of conspiring against the government. He featured in newspaper headlines in 1913 when he was exiled to Paris.¹⁴³

Not all members of *Le Liban* Lodge attended regularly. Indeed, by 1913 a total of 292 members had already died, whilst 160 were at that time out of the country and 53 did not attend the meetings. Nonetheless, *Le Liban* Lodge had a sizeable 56 active members. It is significant that the lodge was founded under the jurisdiction of the Grand Orient of France, and not the Grand Lodge of Scotland, as was the case with *Palestine* Lodge. This may have been reasoned by the fact that France was deeply involved in political events and had interests at stake in Syria. Though not succumbing to Western colonial ambitions, masons probably wanted to keep a door open in case they indeed needed support from their masonic grand bodies. *Le Liban* thereby put up with restrictions in its work due to the split that had occurred in freemasonry in 1877, which rendered the Grand Orient irregular in the eyes of the Grand Lodge of Scotland and the Grand Lodge of England. Most of its members decided not to change obedience after this split, maybe in the hope of forging a

Shoueir, village en majorité orthodoxe, du'une loge maçonnique à laquelle il a contribué], Charaf: p. 107.

¹⁴² GLoS, Registration books, 1910; Petition of *Carmel* and *Salah-ed-din*.

¹⁴³ *Chronique*: p. 3.

channel to the French government through the Grand Orient connection.¹⁴⁴ With only about 20 Muslim masons among a total of approximately 300 up until 1903, the lodge did not hesitate in sending petitions and complaints to its French mother lodge and thereby playing the Christian card or even a general anti-clerical card.¹⁴⁵ It described Syria as being in a state of ‘physical decadence’,¹⁴⁶ and also had no qualms in speaking out against Muslims in general, mentioning ‘the Muslim community, which has always been hostile to our philanthropic principles’.¹⁴⁷ Paradoxically, the same letter expresses an equal degree of happiness about new Muslim members. On the one hand, this seems to be a bit like saying: all Muslims are bad but our brothers are the exceptions. On the other hand, and more probably, the writer of the letter only wanted to confirm what he thought was the stereotype preferred by French masons in order to establish a closer bond.

In contrast to *Kadisha* Lodge, No. 1002, *Le Liban* was quintessentially urban in its composition: its upper middle class members were not used to the daily life of the average person and the gap between the affluent and the poor in Beirut during this period widened. The correspondence of lodge members with the Grand Orient also reveals the feeling of physical proximity in the city and the adoption of European lifestyles. Indeed, Maronites were called *Petits Français* and the masonic congress was planned on the same day as the anniversary of the French Revolution - together with the World Fair - in Paris.¹⁴⁸ *Le Liban* Lodge did adopt French principles, such as *laïcité*, *liberté*, *égalité* and *fraternité*, but tried at the same time not to be completely

¹⁴⁴ For a qualified overview of the relationship between France and Greater Syria, see: *France – Levant, de la Fin du XVIIe Siècle à la Première Guerre Mondiale*, Actes du colloque de Lyon, (Geuthner, Paris: 2005).

¹⁴⁵ Correspondence between *Le Liban* Lodge and the GOdF, *Le Liban*, carton no. 1, Archive of the GOdF, National Library, Paris.

¹⁴⁶ [*décadence physique et morale*], Letter from *Le Liban* to the GOdF, (10.05. 1878), *Le Liban*, carton no. 1, Archive of the GOdF.

¹⁴⁷ [*La communauté musulmane qui a été toujours hostile à nos principes philanthropiques*], Letter from *Le Liban* to the GOdF, (December 1880), *Le Liban*, carton no. 1, Archive of the GOdF.

¹⁴⁸ A Letter from *Le Liban* to the GOdF, (March 1905), carton no. 1, *Le Liban*, Archive of the GOdF.

imitative of the French, avoiding subjection to French policies on the one hand and harm to the relationship on the basis of audacious and independent actions on the other hand.

As mentioned before, members of *Le Liban*, who were fully aware of masonic privileges, experienced problems when travelling. This was particularly evident after 1877, when they encountered problems of recognition everywhere outside the Ottoman Empire and turned to their Grand Orient for help. However, as with their political petitions, the lodge members were left unsupported.

When the *Peace* Lodge, No. 908, first gained a charter on 1st May 1900, its founders asked the Grand Lodge of Scotland for recognition. Their decision may have been financially motivated, as the fees of the Grand Lodge of Scotland were lower than equivalent fees demanded by the United Grand Lodge of England or the Grand Orient.¹⁴⁹

Until 1908 the *Peace* Lodge had almost 200 members, with some clergymen amongst them. As in *Le Liban* Lodge, tradesmen formed the largest group, followed by professors, doctors and students.¹⁵⁰ The proliferation of educational institutions at the turn of the twentieth century led to an increase in the number of scholars joining various associations. However, by 1908 only about 50 masons (out of a total of over 1000) had attended the SPC.¹⁵¹ Nassib and Amin Abcarius were two of the graduates from the SPC, who embodied the new growing middle and upper classes in Greater

¹⁴⁹ This information was supplied by Robert Cooper, Curator of the Grand Lodge of Scotland, (13.08.2008), although the enrolment fee of 6 pounds for each new mason, which was payable to the Grand Lodge, was certainly a large amount for daughter lodges [Dues payable to the Grand Lodge, in: Constitution and Laws of the Grand Lodge of Scotland, (Miller and Co/Edinburgh: 1881), p. 78]. One reason, according to Cooper, for the Scottish lodges being so much cheaper, is the fact that the Scottish themselves did not have the same welfare or enjoyed the same degree of prosperity as, for example, the English lodges. Additionally, initiation into a lodge affiliated with the Grand Lodge of Scotland was five times cheaper than becoming a member of a lodge belonging to the French Grand Orient, [comparison between the fees mentioned in the correspondence between the Grand Orient and its daughter lodges with the fees noted in the Constitution and Laws of the Grand Lodge of Scotland].

¹⁵⁰ GLoS, Registration books, 1908, *Le Liban*.

¹⁵¹ The *AUB – Directory*.

Syria.¹⁵² The Abcarius family originally came from Akşehir, a town and district in Central Anatolia. They moved to Jerusalem when Hagop Abcarian was appointed Patriarch of Jerusalem in 1815. Afterwards he served as a bishop in Armenia, before leaving the clergy and settling in Beirut in 1825. In his lifetime he was not only English Consul of Saida, but also of Syria and Constantinople. His son Iskandar was a poet and well connected to the circle that convened around Butrus al-Bustani and Ibrahim Yaziji. He received the honorary title of Poet Laureate of Egypt and one of his works can still be found in the National Library of Paris.

Like his father, Iskandar worked in Beirut as a consul for America and Portugal. Both of his two sons first studied pharmacy. Amin moved to Egypt and became a merchant, whilst Nassib continued with law studies at the SPC. Nassib finally received his diploma in Paris and did not return to Syria. After working for the Egyptian Ministry of Justice he moved to Jerusalem, where he acted as a lawyer and advisor to the government during the British occupation. He also worked as a legal officer in Khartoum. During his lifetime he amassed badges of honour as well as money and received the honorary title of *Bey*. Both, Nassib and Amin, joined *Le Liban* Lodge in 1893.¹⁵³ Their family home in Jerusalem still stands; though unfortunately today it reveals nothing of its history (see Figure 7).

¹⁵² Information on the Abcarius family: courtesy of Ruth Abcarius and Gerda Topakian, Beirut 2007; *AUB-Directory*: p. 29.

¹⁵³ *AUB-Directory*, p. 29.



Figure 7: The Abcarius House in Jerusalem (photographed in 2008, D.S.)

Another student from the SPC, who joined *Peace Lodge* in Beirut, was Habib Khalil Malik, a physician born in the village of Btirram in Koura. Malik went to Egypt, where he served as director of a medical clinic, before returning to Greater Syria to be a captain in the Ottoman army and a municipal doctor in Adana. He also worked as chief physician of the military hospital for some time, while contributing articles to local Arabic publications.¹⁵⁴

The presence of photographers as early members of masonic lodges in Greater Syria can be observed from 1865, and three of the first photographers in Beirut were freemasons. Antonio Beato (1825-1906), who joined the *Bulwer Lodge*, No. 1068 in Cairo, being the first. Beato was also the co-petitioner for the foundation of the *Grecia Lodge*, No. 1105, in the Egyptian capital. He worked together with his business partners Felix and James Robertson.¹⁵⁵ The photographer Theophil Leeuw, originally from Manchester and who was initiated in *Alexandria Lodge*, became a member of *Le Liban* in 1869. Some forty years later the Sarrafian Brothers joined *Peace Lodge*. Abraham Sarrafian (Figure 8) had studied at the American High School

¹⁵⁴ Ibid. p. 34.

¹⁵⁵ UGLoE, Registration books, 1864, *Grecia Lodge*; www.getty.edu/vow/ULANFullDisplay?find=beato%2C+antonio&role=&nation=&prev_page=1&subjectid=500033257, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Antonio_Beato, (25.03.2009).

of Mardin. Alongside his brother, Boghos, he worked as a photographer in his native city of Dikranagerd, east of Diyarbakir.



Figure 8: Photographs of Abraham Sarrafian (courtesy of his grandson, Walid Buheiry, Beirut: 2008)

The Sarrafian brothers went together to Mosul in order to take photographs and to trade in antiquities. They left for Beirut shortly after their return to Dikranagerd in 1895, as a result of massacres against the Armenian population. In their newly adopted city they established a photography shop. Soon, the two brothers had branches all over the region. ‘Having become the grand editors of postcards, the Sarrafian brothers opened shortly afterwards a second studio in Jerusalem where they specialised in the sale of coloured postcards of holy places’.¹⁵⁶ In the space of thirty years their company published more than a quarter of the postcards available in the Ottoman Empire, spanning countries as far afield as Libya, Yemen and contemporary Turkey.¹⁵⁷ As Figure 8 suggests, the brothers were able to make good money with

¹⁵⁶ [*Devenus de grand éditeurs de cartes postales, les frères Sarrafian ouvrent un deuxième studio à Jerusalem spécialisé dans la vente de cartes postales coloriées des lieux saints*], Institut du Monde Arabe, ‘L’Orient des photographes arméniens’, Exposition, (21.02 – 01.04.2007), Paris, p. 12.

¹⁵⁷ www.libanpostcard.com/postcard_history.html, (27.10.07), p. 6.

their business. Abraham can be seen with a neat hairstyle and wearing a fashionable shirt, jacket and tie. On the reverse side of the photograph can be seen a depiction of a temple to Venus (see figure 9 below), which fits into the concept of non-Muslims stressing the importance of the area in terms of its classical heritage.



Figure 9: A postcard of the Venus Temple, early twentieth century (made by the Sarrafian Bros., Archive of The University of Birmingham, Special Collections)

Abraham was less known for his intellect than for his charitable deeds during the First World War. As Sisag Hagop Varjabedian notes: ‘Leaving aside all his work and family, [Abraham] started helping these poor people day and night without stopping. He became even of greater help to them when he was named chairman of the National Union. With his useful advice he also greatly helped the Near East Relief’.¹⁵⁸ Apparently Abraham was so busy with philanthropic deeds, that as a result he overestimated his own physical strength and died after a heart attack at the age of 53. As Varjabedian notes, ‘he used to help the Armenians, Arabs, Christians and even

¹⁵⁸ Sisag Hagop Varjabedian, *Armenians from prehistoric times to the present – a digest of the history, religion, language, literature, arts and culture in general*, (Imprint Chicago: 1977).

non-Christians and for that he was loved and honoured by all'.¹⁵⁹ The same is said about his brother Boghos, although his Armenian patriotism also comes to the surface. Indeed, Boghos was mainly concerned with helping and supporting local Armenians. Once again, as Varjabedian states, 'maybe few people know how much the Armenian Community of Beirut owes its safe and secure life to [his] exceptional ability'.¹⁶⁰ The Sarrafians were highly respected and enjoyed an extraordinary reputation among Armenians and others. Varjabedian emphasises that 'the Sarrafians were great patriotic personalities who were loved, honoured and highly respected by the Armenians, Arabs and foreigners alike'.¹⁶¹ Patriotic sentiment in this case can be best understood as a sense of loyalty and care in regard to fellow men.

A similar picture emerges about lodge member Armenag Kehyayan, who joined *Peace* Lodge around the same time. He was an Armenian, whose family was from Caesarea, and who belonged to the second generation of photographers.¹⁶² His family are said to have been pillars of social life for the Armenian poor. Armenag himself was educated at the St. Garabed Monastery in 1902 and afterwards at the SPC. He later travelled to Manchester, where he married and had four children.¹⁶³

Up to 1908 there were only about 50 Armenian masons in Ottoman Syria out of a total of over 1000 masons.¹⁶⁴ With the rise of Armenian nationalism and the feeling of belonging to one of the minorities in the Ottoman Empire, they could have perceived masonic lodges as providing a sanctuary from ethnic persecution.¹⁶⁵ However, it is questionable whether those still living in Greater Syria at that time

¹⁵⁹ Ibid.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid.

¹⁶¹ Ibid.

¹⁶² Registration books of the GLoS, 1904-1908, *Peace* Lodge; Correspondence between *Le Liban* and the GODF, *Le Liban*, carton no. 2, Archive of the GODF.

¹⁶³ Ibid.

¹⁶⁴ Comparison of all names collected from Edinburgh and Paris.

¹⁶⁵ Jeri Freedman, *The Armenian Genocide*, (The Rosen Publishing Group, New York: 2008), p.12.

trusted the social cohesion of the lodges, after having already experienced massacres. The so-called ideals of freemasonry - liberty, equality and fraternity - had been trampled underfoot in many areas of the Ottoman Empire. On the other hand, in some areas in which many Armenians had settled down, some lodges, like the one in Adana, did emerge with a sizeable Armenian contingent.

Luce Lodge was established in 1887, working under the obedience of the Grand Lodge of Italy. In 1913 it became independent; a decision taken in the wake of the Italian-Turkish War of 1911-1912.¹⁶⁶ Additionally, freemasonry in Italy had profited from association with the spirit of Risorgimento but in the Ottoman Empire it encountered growing difficulties due to the diminished reputation of the Italian language. As the Baedeker travel guide from 1904 notes: 'Italian having been together with Arabic the main language has been pushed away by French since many catholic Christians send their sons to the felicitous institutions of the Lazarists and Jesuits'.¹⁶⁷

The Treaty of Ouchy, signed in 1912, stipulated a continuation of some of the former ties between Italy and the Ottoman Empire;¹⁶⁸ the latter declared itself 'ready to reinstate [Italian subjects] in the positions which they had left' and even emphasised that it was able 'to use its good offices with the institutions with which it is connected (public debt, railroad companies, banks, etc.) to the end that they may act in the same manner toward the Italian subjects who were in their service and are in a similar situation'. Nevertheless Italy's reputation in the Ottoman Empire was damaged and in theory it even agreed to an abrogation of the capitulations, 'provided

¹⁶⁶ Letters from *Le Liban* to the GOdF, (1881), carton no. 1, *Le Liban*, Archive of the GOdF. Italian lodges were among the first that were closed by the Ottoman government when rumours about an imminent revolution spread, parallel to anti-Turkish posters that were put up in Beirut and Damascus. No supporters of Italian lodges were members of *Le Liban* and they denied any connection and instead accused the Jesuits of being behind a conspiracy.

¹⁶⁷ [*Das Italienische, das früher neben dem Arabischen die Hauptsprache war, ist durch das Französische verdrängt worden, da viele katholische Christen ihre Söhne in den trefflichen Anstalten der Lazaristen und Jesuiten erziehen lassen*], Karl Baedeker, *Palästina und Syrien*, (Leipzig: 1904), 6th Edition, p. 244.

¹⁶⁸ The first Treaty of Lausanne was signed in Ouchy, south of Lausanne.

agreements be negotiated by Turkey with the Powers enjoying the benefit of the capitulations'.¹⁶⁹ This would not only have been unfortunate for Italians working in the Empire but was also disadvantageous for Ottomans connected with Italy and thereby enjoying certain privileges and protection. The Ottoman government's concession of territory, especially areas inhabited by Arabs, once again illustrated its weak position.¹⁷⁰

Up until 1925, the *Luce* Lodge was composed of about 40 members, of whom only ten had joined when it was still under Italian patronage. However, this lodge lasted considerably longer than the *Henderson* Lodge, which was founded in Aintab in 1887 and was under the jurisdiction of the Grand Orient of Italy. It only lasted three years in its initial guise, with only five Armenian members: Krikor Borghossian, Eghia Derghazarian, Iskandar Hikimian, Deervelt Poladian and Philippe Sarkissian. In 1890, the same five founded *Ehden* Lodge, No. 773, in Aintab, with five fellow Armenians, and chose to be affiliated with the Grand Lodge of Scotland. The last correspondence from *Ehden* Lodge dates from May 20th 1896. At the end of the nineteenth century, massacres and persecution against Armenians increased and Aintab was not spared. According to the *Proceedings* of the Grand Lodge of Scotland between 1896 and 1897, 'hundreds have been killed and thousands have been robbed. More than four thousand people, reduced to utter destitution, have been saved from imminent death by the timely help of British and American Christians. [...] Anything that the Grand Lodge of Scotland will send will be taken charge of...' A latter report noted: 'It was resolved to recommend to Grand Lodge to grant One Hundred Pounds towards the relief of the distressed brethren in Aleppo and Aintab'. In the same year,

¹⁶⁹ 'Peace between Italy and Turkey', *The American Journal of International Law*, vol. 7/1, (American Society of International Law: January 1913), p. 156, 158.

¹⁷⁰ David G. Herrmann, 'The Paralysis of Italian Strategy in the Italian-Turkish War, 1911 – 1912', *The English Historical Review*, vol. 104/411, (Oxford University Press: April 1989), p. 343-345.

grants were given to *Ehden* Lodge and *Palestine* Lodge.¹⁷¹ Notwithstanding this support, *Ehden* Lodge apparently did not survive.

Zenop Bezjian Senior belonged to *Ehden* Lodge, but Moses Bezjian, a pharmacist born in Aintab, was a member of *Le Liban* Lodge. He was among the early graduates from the SPC and went on to work as a pharmacist at the American Mission Hospital in Aintab. Bezjian also received his degree at the SPC and carried on his medical career as a doctor in the Ottoman army and in the government in Ottoman Palestine. He was in charge of treating infectious diseases in a hospital in Aleppo, and then worked in the American Hospital in Aintab, followed by a position in Constantinople. He left this job in order to work as a physician and the chief doctor for Near East Relief in Lebanon during the 1920s, before becoming an orthopaedic surgeon in London and France. He returned to the SPC surgery in Beirut, but left again for Iraq and Palestine, where he worked for a further seventeen years before finally returning to Lebanon.¹⁷²

Only scarce sources are extant vis-à-vis Armenians living in Arab cities during this period if they were not involved in public activities like cultural societies. One surviving reference is the directory of the SPC, where some of the Armenian masons matriculated. One such Armenian graduate from the SPC was Mihran Bedrossian, who was originally from Adana and who was a municipal physician in Ajlun between 1900 and 1901 in the *sancak* (administrative unit) of Hauran. He later joined *Luce* Lodge in Adana. Another Armenian graduate of the SPC was Boghos Effendi Takvorian, who was the chief engineer in Adana and a member of *La Syrie* Lodge in Aleppo.¹⁷³

¹⁷¹ *Proceedings*, GLoS, (1896 – 1897).

¹⁷² *AUB Directory*, p. 46.

¹⁷³ *Ibid.*: p.69.

Animosity against freemasonry was expressed by most of the clergy in the region, although this apparently weakened at the turn of the twentieth century. This is indicated by the initiation of Joseph Jarjar Jidaun and Yacub Hagguri into *Peace Lodge*, who were both religious scholars.¹⁷⁴

One of the only Jewish masons in Peace Lodge was Moshe Bercoff, who was the director of the Jewish college. He later moved to Haifa, where in 1911 he co-founded the *Carmel Lodge* under the jurisdiction of the Grand Lodge of Scotland, with Michail G. and Towfik Majdalani, who were former colleagues from *Peace Lodge*. Other Syrian masons can be found in Egyptian lodges after they left Greater Syria. Salim Mishaqa and Antoine Diab, who were from Rishmayya in Mount Lebanon and Beirut respectively, joined the *Mansurah Lodge* between 1882 and 1885. Another Beiruti, Alexandre Tueni, was initiated in the Egyptian *La Régénération de la Grèce Lodge* at around the same time.¹⁷⁵

Besides, the excursion into short descriptions of other lodges, the freemasons mentioned above highlight the typical social structure of lodges in Beirut. They belonged predominantly to politically and commercially active families connected to educational institutions or associated with the introduction of new technologies. On the one hand, these early lodges in the provincial capital were oriented towards non-Syrians in the area: masons could profit from the diversity of lodges and affiliations because of the related privileges and the variety of protection given through European connections. On the other hand, lodge foundations expressed the serious concerns about Syria and a longing for a lasting peace. With the spread of lodges, due to ‘the idea to establish lodges under other obediences’, masons wanted to create and

¹⁷⁴ Grand Lodge of Scotland, Registration books, 1904 -1906, *Peace Lodge*.

¹⁷⁵ Mikha'il Mishaqa, *Murder, Mayhem, Pillage and Plunder: the History of Lebanon in the 18th and 19th Century*, translated from the Arabic by Wheeler McIntosh Thackston, (Sunny Press, New York: 1988), p. 1; carton no. 1, Archive of the GOdF, National Library in Paris, Egyptian lodges.

strengthen the unity of all its inhabitants. In other words, they wanted ‘one union and a real liberal government’.¹⁷⁶ For the members of *Le Liban Lodge* or *Peace Lodge*, freemasonry was the ideal instrument to achieve that goal. It offered a non-sectarian and geographically unlimited vision of fraternal association. Yet a filter was still inherent in freemasonry, as membership fees and other costs ensured that only members of the middle or upper class could afford to enlist. Hence, while Syrian freemasons could speak about their desire to unite the people of the Empire, they still paid tribute to the ideas of an elite functioning as a vanguard.

Freemasonry experienced its peak in the region around the time of the Young Turk Revolution. This trend was due to the behaviour of masons, who set about opening many new lodges. It was also a result of the social changes that transformed the Ottoman Empire. In Beirut, a general economic revival took place, which was not automatically accompanied by improved political conditions or social security. In many ways lodges acted as outlets and sanctuaries offering some respite from social ills.

Syrian freemasons wanted unity through diversity. However, especially after 1908, some of them were a bit too zealous in their desire to attract others to the fraternity. Consequently, they had to be reminded by the Grand Lodge of Scotland that it was against masonic constitutional law to take part ‘or be concerned with the working or promulgation in any manner of way of any Degree, Rite or Order, purporting to be Masonic, which is not authorised by Grand Lodge, or by one of the other Masonic Grand Bodies with whom the Grand Lodge is in amity’.¹⁷⁷

Syrian lodges belonging to European masonic bodies either willingly ignored or were not always aware of masonic rules regulating ways to deal with other

¹⁷⁶ [L’idée de créer en Syrie d’autres loges sous d’autres obédiences...l’union et un vrai gouvernement libéral], Sursock’s Letter, 1913.

¹⁷⁷ Grand Lodge of Scotland, Constitution and Laws, (copy of 1923), law 157, p. 63.

associations. Thus, they sent letters to Scotland and France, for example, requesting clarification as to how they should relate to members of the Rite of Memphis and the National Grand Lodge of Egypt.¹⁷⁸ The same holds true with regard to their general attitudes towards European grand bodies. If they felt mistreated by the European powers, the Ottoman government, the Jesuits or by Maronite patriarchs, they sent complaints to the grand body that seemed most willing and able to intervene.¹⁷⁹

Joining a certain lodge never automatically entailed agreeing with the politics of the grand body's home country. Even the grand lodges or orients did not always side with their own governments. Moreover, if a mason was not satisfied with the manner of his own lodge, he could easily move to another, as many Syrians did. Salame Ghureiggeh, a teacher in Beirut, joined *Le Liban* Lodge in December 1905, but moved only two months later to *Peace* Lodge. The same holds true for Georges Salhab, a merchant who was not only initiated in *Peace* Lodge, but in the same year entered *Sunneen* Lodge. Furthermore, one can cite the example of Hikmet Cherrif, the director of a Tripoli school who joined the *Kadisha* Lodge in 1914, but frequently visited the *El Mizhab* Lodge in El Mina.¹⁸⁰ Edouard Lair was also originally initiated in *Sunneen* Lodge in Shweir, but ended up in *Peace* Lodge.¹⁸¹

Changing from a lodge belonging to the Grand Lodge of Scotland to one affiliated with the Grand Orient of France was relatively easy. The French body recognised the Grand Lodge of Scotland. However, in theory, the Grand Lodge of Scotland did not recognise the Grand Orient of France. Yet, in practice, the matter was not so clear-cut. As George John Gibson notes, '[w]ith regard to the atheistic or agnostic Latin Orders of excommunicated and quasi-Masonic origin, we can never

¹⁷⁸ *Proceedings*, GLoS, (1906 - 1907); Letter from *Le Liban* to GOfF, (04.03.1892), *Le Liban*, carton no. 1, Archive of the GOfF.

¹⁷⁹ *Proceedings*, GLoS, (1908 - 1909).

¹⁸⁰ Attendance book *El Mizhab* Lodge, (1914).

¹⁸¹ Registration Book, Grand Lodge of Scotland, 1906, *Peace Lodge*.

contemplate any federation, any recognition of an official character, since T.G.A.O.T.U. (The Great Architect Of The Universe] is openly regarded as a myth by the official spokesmen of these Orders'.¹⁸²

In reality, the situation vis-à-vis different masonic bodies, was quite different. Anton Nahhas, a customs officer in Beirut, who was originally from Jaffa, and Joseph Fayad, a member of the criminal court, for example, switched from *Le Liban* Lodge to *Palestine* Lodge.¹⁸³ One could also simply remain within the sphere of one grand lodge and at the same time be initiated into different lodges. This was very convenient for men with commercial connections in various cities. In addition, relocating sometimes made it necessary to enter a lodge away from a mason's original association. Kedivan Saloom and Selim S. Shweiry, for example, were first initiated in a Brazilian lodge in April 1905, but after their return to Syria they joined *Sunneen* Lodge.¹⁸⁴

Another common feature of masons was to praise the European country to which the lodge was affiliated or with which networking seemed most profitable. Members of *Sunneen* Lodge, for example, even managed to laud France, whilst belonging to the Grand Lodge of Scotland: 'thanks to France we found us illuminated through the sun of truth'.¹⁸⁵ What is more, Alexander Barroudi complimented Great Britain, when consecrating a new lodge under the Grand Lodge of Scotland: 'Salah ed-Din the beloved name of the famous * great * just king of the Mouslims in the

¹⁸² John George Gibson, 'The Policy of Colonial Freemasonry', *The Freemason. A weekly Record of Progress in Freemasonry*, (John Denyer Hand/London: 25.07.1908), p. 56.

¹⁸³ Letters from *Le Liban* to the GOdF, (12.03.1867); (30.08.1867), carton no. 2, Archive of the GOdF.

¹⁸⁴ GLoS, Registration Book, 1904 – 1905, *Sunneen*.

¹⁸⁵ [Grâce la France, s'est trouvée illumine par ce Soleil de Vérité], Letter from *Sunneen* to *Le Liban*, (02.01.1906), *Le Liban*, carton no. 2, Archive of the GOdF.

time of the Crusaders who had much to do with the English King Richard I (Coeur de Lion)¹⁸⁶.

In theory the split between the Grand Orient of France and other masonic associations, should have curtailed lodge-hopping, or at least limited it to mutually recognised lodges. However, in practice, Syrian masons changed their affiliations in what seems like an opportunistic manner. Before the Young Turk Revolution and the Italian-Turkish War in 1911, the only precondition apparently in place was that a mason had to be affiliated with a European grand body. As Appendix III shows, a steady movement between lodges ensured that masons knew about the other lodges and the composition of members. In addition, the phenomenon of lodge-hopping enlivened lodge meetings. Pragmatic thoughts underpinned lodge changing, with flexibility and assimilation being key factors in relation to the dynamic surrounding environment.

Masons did not necessarily need to change lodges in order to ask for support from other masonic organisations. As already noted, lodges cooperated directly. Hence, *Sunneen* Lodge, which was founded in 1904 and was under the patronage of the Grand Lodge of Scotland, sent letters to its colleagues in *Le Liban* Lodge, in which they requested help from the Grand Orient of France.¹⁸⁷ *Sunneen* Lodge did not contact the Grand Orient directly, which could be a sign that the men were aware of the fact that they belonged to a different obedience. Thus, extending one's hand to help another brother was not restricted to one's own lodge, let alone to a particular masonic grand body.

¹⁸⁶ Archive of the Grand Lodge of Scotland, Petitions, (09.06.1910).

¹⁸⁷ Letter from *Sunneen* to *Le Liban*, (02.01.1906), *Le Liban*, carton no. 2, Archive of the GOdF.

The example of Ahmed Effendi Ashi (1867-1939) will illustrate this fact. Ashi was born in Beirut, but lived and worked as a policeman in El Mina, where he had settled with his whole family.¹⁸⁸



Figure 10: Photograph of Ahmed Ashi, Early Twentieth Century (courtesy of Nassiba Saati, El Mina: 2008)

Ashi was the son of Saad Edin Effendi Ashi and Kadisha Khanoum and was married twice during his life. In a certificate issued by the Ottoman Empire, he was described as literate, hardworking and was able to converse in Ottoman Turkish. The photograph of Ashi (see Fig. 10) projects the impression of a proud Ottoman official who is confidently wearing traditional headgear. Promotion to a higher rank and an improved salary serve as further proofs of his valued performance. Ashi reduced his

¹⁸⁸ All information on Ahmed Ashi and his photograph are used by kind courtesy of his granddaughter, Nassiba Saati, El Mina, (23.07.2008). Saati is also in possession of all the letters sent to Ashi and photographed by the author.

working hours in 1929 and retired ten years later. Apparently, he was not only a competent public servant, but also became a freemason of *Peace Lodge* in early 1904.



Figure 11: Masonic Certificate from 1905 (courtesy of Nassiba Saati, El Mina: 2008)

In 1905, he received the third degree (see Fig. 11), designating him a master mason. In 1910, he had reached the eighteenth degree of the Knights of the Rose-Croix, testified by a certificate (see Fig. 12 below) written in Italian by the Supreme Council of Egypt in Cairo. While the first document serves as a perfect example of the brotherhood’s claim for universalism – mixing languages in a way it saw fit – the second is completely penned in Italian and Latin, which may symbolise the Egyptian masons’ own self-perception, detached from any British superior authority.



Figure 12: Masonic Certificate from 1910 (courtesy of Nassiba Saati, El Mina: 2008, D.S.)

The speed of Ashi’s advancement in freemasonry is not as surprising as the way he managed to harmonise his professional and masonic careers when he was still a full-time employee of the Ottoman government. Ample evidence of this symbiosis exists in the form of letters of thanks sent from various lodges. In 1910, Ashi received a letter in Arabic from *Al Mohabba (Love)* Lodge in Alexandria, which worked under the jurisdiction of the National Grand Lodge of Egypt. In the letter, the secretary of the lodge, Michel Shakhtuf, sent him three masonic kisses and invited him to a conference organised by the lodge, in order to show his appreciation for the charitable activities of Ashi and his lodge. In the same year, Ashi received a letter from the Grand Master of the same Egyptian grand lodge. Again, masons thanked him for his good deeds. He must have excelled as an individual and the Egyptian *Niasi* Lodge

bestowed upon him a gold medal with his name engraved, which was intended for use at special events and masonic ceremonies.

In 1910 Ashi received a further letter of thanks from Faris Mishriq, the Worshipful Master of *Sunneen* Lodge. In 1930 he also received a letter from *Al-Hilal* Lodge, again an Egyptian lodge, which used the opportunity to invite him to its opening ceremony. In a note sent by the *Peace* Lodge, Ashi and his work were extolled, but he was also reminded of his duties as mason. Ashi must have had an argument with Sami Azar, a fellow mason. Consequently, George Abboud el-Ashkar, the secretary of *Peace* Lodge, asked him ‘to cooperate. You are a brother and we are all sons of the widow’.¹⁸⁹ No explanation was given in the letter as to the basis of the argument.

Another indicator of a masonic network and a spirit of mutual recognition can be found in a letter from *El Arz (the Cedars)* Lodge, working in Tripoli under the jurisdiction of the National Grand Lodge of Egypt. Ashi was described as an honourable and wise man who seemingly worked day and night. Members of *El Arz* Lodge wanted to thank him for his help and the support he had given to Brother Abdul Zataar Durneika – ‘blessed may he be for his charity and care for the poor’.¹⁹⁰ Confusingly, the letter was signed by the Worshipful Master of the lodge, George Bandali in 1929. Eleven years earlier Bandali had co-founded the *Mina al-Amin* Lodge, No. 245, under Egyptian jurisdiction in Tripoli and visited *El Mizhab* Lodge in 1919, which was related to *L’Unione* Lodge in the city that worked under the Grand Orient of Italy.¹⁹¹

¹⁸⁹ Letter dates from 17.02.1923.

¹⁹⁰ Letter dates from 1929.

¹⁹¹ Attendance book *El Mizhab* Lodge, (1919).



Figure 13: George Bandali (El Mizhab Lodge: 2008, *D.S.*)

Bandali appears to have been a member of different lodges at one-and-the-same time. This suspicion is strengthened when one looks at Figure 13, which shows a self-confident man in a suit, flaunting all his masonic medals.

The masonic life of Shukri Fakhouri, who wrote to Ashi in his position as lodge secretary, is also problematic. In the letter he praises Ashi for his work all over the world and for supporting Fakhouri's own lodge in particular. Fakhouri wrote the letter as the secretary of *Mina al-Amin* Lodge, but he was also the co-founder of *Kadisha* Lodge in 1906, as well as *El Mizhab* Lodge in 1914. On the one hand, this collection of memberships demonstrates how useful it could be to have more than one association with masonic lodges. On the other hand, it proves how freemasonry had developed in the region: it had transformed from a European-managed concept into an Ottoman enterprise with protective attitudes. Freemasons themselves call it patriotic love.¹⁹² In the early years of their existence, lodges were frequented by Europeans. Throughout the nineteenth century the fraternity continued to gain ground among the

¹⁹² [*l'amour patriotique*], Letter from *Le Liban* to the GOdF, (10.05.1878), *Le Liban*, carton no. 1, Archive of the GOdF.

Syrian population. This development can also be observed with regard to lodges in Beirut, whose Syrian members grew in number towards the end of the century, while the number of Westerners stagnated or dropped. However, the focus on recruiting new freemasons originating from Syria was not reflected in the choice of language officially used during lodge meetings. Freemasonry was not considered by its adherents to be a colonial institution, but rather as a tool that was universally useful. Its traditional roots in European history were respected and honoured and the use of European languages formed part of this attitude.

This behaviour was partly opportunistic, but was also pragmatic concerning matters of faith. The National Evangelical Church of Beirut was established in 1848 ‘as a result of the efforts of Congregational and Presbyterian missionaries from the United States. In 1869, the first evangelical church edifice was built to house the Arabic and English-speaking congregations’.¹⁹³ The archive of this church holds registration books with the names of all converts to Protestantism between 1848 and 1915.¹⁹⁴ Altogether 736 persons converted to Protestantism, with the majority not originating from Beirut. Notwithstanding this, they became affiliated with the Western institution in the city.

According to these books, in many cases a person joined the Protestant Church in Beirut on their deathbed, which may have been as a result of the Protestant cemetery being more desirable or that the church took better care of dependents. Foreign educational institutions were favoured by families that were not constrained by dogmatic considerations. This could sometimes be helpful in order to receive a desired education for a child who had the appropriate faith. Hence, by examining all the converts’ names, it comes as no surprise that they include many freemasons and

¹⁹³ www.nechurchbeirut.org/cms/?q=node/21, (07.09.08).

¹⁹⁴ Courtesy of Pastor Dr Habib Badr.

their relatives. Thus, lodge-hopping and religious conversions could both be based on pragmatic reasoning.¹⁹⁵ Securing the future of one's family was an imperative and more vital than showing loyalty in questions of faith when lives were at stake. Sovereignty, rather than religion, was the main issue. As Selim Deringil notes, 'the Greek claiming Austrian protection, the Georgians being claimed by the Russians, the Greek woman being claimed by the British consul at Preveze, the Jew converting to Protestantism and claiming British protection, even the dead body of a convert, have become grounds of contestation between rival claims of sovereignty'. Conversion served the interests of both parties. Thus, Syrians were able to get their desired protection, including privileges, while the Western side could be satisfied in what Deringil terms an international prestige war 'in which the Great Powers sought to impose their will on the last remaining non-Christian Great Power [in which conversion] seemed a re-affirmation of their superiority'.¹⁹⁶

After an impressive period of flourishing, the fraternity experienced another shift with the onset of the Young Turk Revolution in 1908. At this time, numerous lodges started to work under newly established Arab, Turkish and Ottoman grand bodies that assumed control from European domination; a trend that was only interrupted with French occupation.

A question arising during my research was why the Grand Lodge of England was not as active in Greater Syria as it was in Constantinople, Cairo and Alexandria? While it provided some of the provincial or district grand masters, it did not establish

¹⁹⁵ The names of converts on the list that were also connected to masonry include almost the entire male side of the Abcarius family, the Abbouds, the Trabulsis, the Aramans and most of the Bustani family. The list also includes Ibrahim Hourani, Paulus or Boulus Khouly, Ibrahim Kafrouni, Iskandar Ma'aluf, Khalil Mattar, Faris Nimr and Samuel George Sarrafian, the father of Jurji Yanni, Antonius Yanni.

¹⁹⁶ Selim Deringil, 'On Conversion and Apostasy in the Late Ottoman Empire', in: *Collection of papers submitted to the Workshop of New Approaches to the study of Ottoman and Arab Societies (18th to 20th centuries)*, vol. III, (Boagazici University, Istanbul: 05.1999), p. 15 – 16. One should not omit the missionaries with their own thoughts as they were not unaware of the 'real' reasons behind conversions.

any lodges under English patronage in this area. This lack of interest derives from many facts: more Englishmen were located in Egypt and Constantinople, where they established lodges as locations for social interactions with their countrymen. This is illustrated by the membership lists preserved in the library of the United Grand Lodge of England in London: almost all lodge members were European.¹⁹⁷ Moreover, in Constantinople most of the European lodges were erased or dormant from the late nineteenth century, testifying to the anti-masonic atmosphere under Abdulhamid and the nationalisation of Turkish lodges. From 1887, the lodges with Western affiliations that continued to exist in Cairo and Alexandria, as well as in Constantinople, were regarded as colonial outposts and were therefore probably less appealing to Syrian masons.¹⁹⁸

Another factor must have been the experiences of English politicians with freemasonry both before and after the Young Turk Revolution. Elie Kedourie is partly right when claiming that Ambassador Sir Gerard Lowther (1858 – 1916) suffered from paranoia when suspecting that a Masonic – Jewish conspiracy was behind the Young Turk movement, which was represented by the Committee for Union and Progress. This sense of paranoia later influenced British policy towards the Young Turks.¹⁹⁹ However, it would be too easy to entirely dismiss Lowther's fears. We know that freemasonry in the region around the time of the Young Turk Revolution, and even before, became politicised in Cairo as well as in Constantinople. Yet, it is extremely difficult to ascertain the extent to which freemasons were successful in their political aspirations. Claims made by freemasons themselves, who called for

¹⁹⁷ In Egypt (Cairo & Alexandria): *Ramleh Lodge, St. John's Lodge, Star in the East, La Concordia, Grecia Lodge, Bulwer Lodge, Zetland Lodge, St John and St Paul Lodge, Hyde Clarke Lodge* in Constantinople: *Deutscher Bund, Areta, Oriental Lodge* (Archive of the United Grand Lodge, London).

¹⁹⁸ Noted in the Registration books at the Archive of the UGLoE.

¹⁹⁹ Elie Kedourie, 'Young Turks, Freemasons and Jews', *Middle Eastern Studies*, vol. 7/1, (Jan. 1971).

recognition of their involvement in oppositional movements, cannot be accepted without documents and sources. Praising voices from freemasons themselves cannot be taken as being completely true, as has already been proven with the French Revolution and its masonic perception.

‘During the overthrow of the old Turkish system of despotism and the forming of the new constitutional Government, the greatest blessing Turkey has ever had, Masonry played the greatest part. That Turkish Revolution, which has amazed the whole world, the first revolution of its kind in the history of the world which has been free from the stain of blood, was accomplished through Masonry’.²⁰⁰

However, what can be seen is the transformation from mixed lodges, composed of men with different nationalities, to more homogenous lodges, consisting mainly of Egyptians or Turks under the jurisdiction of national grand lodges. Without a doubt Lowther was right in claiming that many of the leading members of the Committee for Union and Progress were freemasons.²⁰¹ While he speaks in respectful terms of the United Grand Lodge of England and the Grand Lodge of Scotland, he, as a representative of the British government, naturally disapproves of all other competing national bodies.

Since most of the English lodges in Egypt and Constantinople had already been closed at the time of his letter, Lowther lacked informed insights into masonic life in the region, or concrete facts about lodge membership. Thus, he had to rely solely on speculation and rumours, though he did witness the campaigns to ‘get all masons home’ by nationalising recently founded lodges.

The success of Yusuf Sakakini Bey, from the Belgian Supreme Council of Freemasonry, who was raised to the 33rd degree, and empowered to constitute the Grand Orient of Turkey, is questionable.²⁰² However, his intention to nationalise

²⁰⁰ I.E. Ul-Khouri, ‘Freemasonry in Turkey’, *The Freemason*, (London: 17.12.1910), p. 398.

²⁰¹ Lowther Papers, F.O. 800/193a, Sir G. Lowther to Sir C. Hardinge, Constantinople, (29.05.1910), Appendix of Kedourie’s article.

²⁰² Ibid.

lodges was real. In 1910, Sakakini, who was also Honorary Grand Master *ad Vitam* and a member of the Ottoman Supreme Council, wrote a letter that originally appeared in the *Egyptian Gazette*, which was published in Alexandria and reproduced in the English journal *The Freemason*.²⁰³ In his letter, Sakakini accused European masons of hypocrisy in wrongly claiming ‘that Ottoman Freemasonry had for its support the Grand Orient of Paris’. According to Sakakini, this was a falsehood,

‘[a falsehood produced in order] to spread the belief that Freemasonry in Turkey was irreligious, which is not true. [...] Ottoman Masons embrace every religion and race in the Empire, and they base their system on the ancient Scottish Rite. Masonry in Turkey has been recognised and has entered into relations with the Masonic Bodies of North, South, and Central America, Switzerland, Chile, Colon, Paraguay, Uruguay, Venezuela, Brazil, Mexico, Canada, Spain, Portugal, France, Italy, Rumania, Greece, Hungary, Egypt, etc. Ottoman Masonry has sent its circulars to the Grand Lodges of Ireland, Scotland, and London, and if these Lodges have not entered into friendly relations that does not prevent Ottoman Freemasonry from being regular and soundly authorised. In the name of the Grand Ottoman Orient I declare that every Lodge created in the Ottoman Empire after the 1st August, 1909, by Foreign Powers is irregular and should be considered as clandestine. [...]’.²⁰⁴

Lowther did not invent Syrian animosity to these Egyptian and Turkish nationalist movements, which mixed masonry with individual political aspirations. However, his fear of Jewish influence was completely exaggerated and his supposed knowledge about Zionist conspiracies remains unproven.

A further reason for the absence of English lodges in Greater Syria was that the English, at least before their relations with Abdulhamid worsened, wanted the Ottoman Empire to survive as a whole. They knew how dangerous a nationalist-minded masonic fraternity could be in nurturing separatist minds. When, during the Empire’s last years, this attitude changed, Scottish lodges had already been established.

²⁰³ The Supreme Council, composed of 33 honorary Masonic members, is a masonic body of the Antient and Accepted Scottish Rite. It serves as an advisory board for all its daughter lodges.

²⁰⁴ Joseph Sakakini Bey, ‘Freemasonry in Turkey’, *The Freemason. A Weekly Record of Progress in Freemasonry*, (John Denyer Hand, London: 22.10.1910), p. 264.

Did the Grand Lodge of Scotland act as a proxy for British political goals? It certainly would never have acted against British interests. Its policy of not recognising many of the established Ottoman, Egyptian or Syrian grand bodies supports this theory. The British grand lodges did not want to prematurely recognise the Ottoman Orient, without knowing what would happen in the wake of the Young Turks assuming power, when the Grand Ottoman Orient itself was too weak and too young to exert real influence on the lodges in the Ottoman Empire. Moreover, after Britain's colonisation of Egypt and the onset of the Young Turk Revolution, its active interest in Greater Syria was somewhat diminished. On the other hand, it had no control whatsoever over Syrian lodges under its jurisdiction, and while some Syrians may have been pro-British, the Grand Lodge had no means of strengthening this loyalty.

At this point of time the complete nationalisation of lodges in the Ottoman Empire, including Egypt and what is today Turkey did not occur. Instead, in the aftermath of Abdulhamid's fall from power, more grand lodges sprang up, thereby strengthening the impression that the Ottoman Orient was an obscure body without authority over the Empire's lodges. The Ottoman Orient struggled to improve its image in 1913, when Dimitry Surssock, secretary of *Le Liban* Lodge, sent a letter to the Grand Orient of France, in which he mentioned a number of different new lodges that had been established under the jurisdiction of various grand lodges without consultation with the Ottoman Orient. Similar to the Europeans, most Syrians did not yet know what to make of the Young Turks and their pro-Turkish attitudes. Consequently, lodges were still mainly founded under the jurisdiction of Egypt,

Scotland and France.²⁰⁵ Members of *Le Liban* Lodge tried to systematically address different individual preferences and thereby enlarge the number of initiated masons. Salim Khalil el-Rayess co-founded the *Hermon* Lodge under the jurisdiction of the National Grand Lodge of Egypt and Jurji Yanni supported the establishment of *Kadisha* Lodge. Alexander Barroudi, who originally came from the Mount Lebanon area and had joined *Le Liban* Lodge in the early 1880s, helped establish *Peace* Lodge, which like *Kadisha* Lodge was under the jurisdiction of the Grand Lodge of Scotland.²⁰⁶ He also served as one of the early presidents of the lodge. Ahmed Namy established *Hilal* Lodge under the jurisdiction of the Ottoman Grand Orient. This Orient also controlled *Ittihad* Lodge, which had been established by S. Sabbagh.²⁰⁷ In his letter, Sursock goes on to list lodges that had also been founded in Beirut, Zahle, Moallaka, Mughara, Merdjayoun, Damascus, Shweir, Haifa, Acco, Jaffa, Homs and Aleppo.²⁰⁸

This extraordinary document shows the predominant spirit in Syrian society after the Young Turk Revolution. People were aware of the unstable social conditions they were living in and many men felt a need for freemasonry as a substitute for a public and peaceful civic society. This was something that was not orchestrated by Abdulhamid himself. Moreover, they knew how to play their own game when faced with the interference of world powers in their country. For example, Sursock sent his letter in 1913, but already in 1900 Khalil el-Rayess had sent a letter to the Grand Lodge of Scotland, in which he bemoaned the closure of *Palestine* Lodge and pointed

²⁰⁵ After a period of shifting borders and the establishment of new national states, freemasonry has also evolved and developed as an institutional structure, which closely parallels the contemporary world map of nation-states; also: Timothy Baycroft, 'Nationalism, National Identity and Freemasonry', *Journal for Research into Freemasonry and Fraternalism*, vol. 1, (Equinox: 2010), p. 19.

²⁰⁶ Archive of the G.O.F., carton no 1.

²⁰⁷ Sursock's Letter, (1913). The names are almost illegible.

²⁰⁸ Interestingly, except for Shweir, Marjayoun and Muhgara, all the locations had either national or international telegraphs, D.S..

to ‘the young men having both a good character and a good social standing who are eager to embrace the membership of our holy order but are unfortunately unable to do so because they cannot find a lodge following your honoured regulations’.²⁰⁹ Not only did he praise the Grand Lodge over all others, but he also ran down the Grand Orient of France: ‘This order, as you no doubt know, omits the principle which is the foundation stone of the Masonic order’ - referring to the omission of the oath to the Supreme Being.²¹⁰ Indeed, most of the founders of *Peace* Lodge had transferred from *Le Liban* Lodge: these include El-Rayess himself, after having worked as one of the founders of *Hermon* Lodge, Esper Shoukair, Michel Bitar, Salim Kassab, Amin Kassab and Hamade Habale. Others had already been members of *Palestine* Lodge or an Egyptian lodge. Nicolas Haggi, for example, was a former *Palestine* Lodge mason, but was also among the founders of *Le Liban* Lodge.

The same holds true for Joseph Fayyad, Hamade Bey Hamade and Selim G. Rayess, who were past worshipful masters of *Le Liban* Lodge.²¹¹ Masons apparently tried to spur on the Grand Lodge of Scotland in its support of new lodges in the Greater Syria region. These efforts included references to the dangers of French masonry. At the same time, they used the Grand Orient masons – if they were not themselves still members of a French lodge – as witnesses in support of their masonic virtues. To lure French masons into broader involvement, they sought not to antagonise their Gallic brothers. Hence, they informed the French of the increasing numbers of lodges working under Scottish jurisdiction, but also stated that they were in principle all brothers and deserved support from the French.

Apparently, the masonic split that arose in 1877, as a result of the decision of the Grand Orient of France to forego the oath to the Supreme Architect, convinced

²⁰⁹ GLoS, Petitions, *Peace* Lodge, (1900).

²¹⁰ Ibid.

²¹¹ GLoS, Petition, *Peace* Lodge, (1900).

some of the Syrian masons to turn to the Grand Lodge of Scotland, which was widely respected. However, they never completely cut off contact with the Grand Orient. One can conclude that due to internal politics and trade, it was always useful to have France on one's side, while the British were suitable as well for foreign affairs and contacts beyond Europe.

But the Syrians were not the only ones who played freemasonry according to their own rules; the same is even true for the Scottish Grand Lodge's mode of dealing with its former sister grand body. As late as five years after the schism with the French, the secretary of the Grand Lodge of Scotland referred to 'some misconception [that] existed in the Scottish Craft as to Brethren hailing from lodges holding of the Grand Orient of France, and that he had advised correspondents on the point, that although fraternal relations between the Grand Lodge of Scotland and the Grand Orient had been severed, it was competent to Scotch Lodges in their discretion to receive as visitors or to affiliate Brethren under the French Constitution, upon avowal of their belief in God, the Great Architect of the Universe. Approved'.²¹² Hence, while stopping short of officially allowing lodge-hopping, the Grand Lodge interpreted its own laws in a pragmatic manner.

Positions changed at the outbreak of World War One, when the then active European lodges suffered and lost some of their attraction. In 1914 Germany seemed to be the ascendant power, while the former international players on Ottoman territory had had their privileges cut. In late 1914, the Ottoman government started to censor all telegraphic communications and abrogated the capitulations when the Empire went to war against Britain and France on the side of Germany. It closed all foreign postal services and in 1915 started to deport Allied nationals, with some even imprisoned.

²¹² *Proceedings*, GLoS, (1882 – 83).

Ottomans were drafted into the army with Christians serving in the unarmed labour battalions. Others, like the Armenians, were later expelled, imprisoned or eliminated and their estates were confiscated by the government.²¹³ Abdulhamid's fears of a corroding Empire had found a counterpart in the Young Turks' radicalism.

²¹³ More information on the fate of Christian Armenians and Greeks, Muslim Albanians and North Caucasians: Ryan Gingeras, *Sorrowful Shores*. However, Gingeras makes a point when emphasising that 'mass disenfranchisement and liquidation of home populations is a phenomenon that can be found the world over. State terror of this sort is a modern phenomenon, and is part and parcel of the logic of modern state building', [p. viii]. This is not to relativise violence during the last Ottoman period, rather, Gingeras wants to contextualise organised violence – also paramilitary – in order to get a better understanding of the Young Turks' mind-sets, *D.S.*.