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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 VI: Freemasonry in Tripoli and El Mina

When Tripoli was founded around 900 BC, it merely consisted of a port and a few houses. Today this area constitutes the port district of El Mina district, while the main part of the city is further inland. The name *Tripoli* reputedly stands for the three original parts of the Phoenician confederation, which comprised the city in antiquity.¹



Figure 15: View of Tripoli/El Mina (by Giovanni Zuallardo, *Il Devotissimo Viaggio di Gierusalemme*, Rome: 1595, p. 285)

Over the course of many centuries Tripoli has seen various occupiers – Fatimids, Crusaders, Mamluks and Ottomans – and through the ages it has been given various names. Sometimes Tripoli is still called *Al Fayha'a*, which derives from the

¹ Doubts already surfaced some fifty years ago regarding this theory, as it seems unlikely that a Phoenician city built around 900 BC would have been known by a Greek name. An alternative explanatory theory was advanced by Kurt Galling, [Kurt Galling, 'Zur Deutung des Ortsnamens טרפול = Tripolis in Syrien, in: *Vetus Testamentum*, vol. 4, Fasc. 4, (Brill: Oct. 1954), p. 418 – 422].

Arabic verb *faha* and indicates ‘the spread of a certain smell’, referring to the odour of Tripoli’s orange trees.²

Tripoli’s history also attests to the influence of deep-rooted religious affiliations. The Maronite community in the city, for example, named the river that flows nearby the city as Qadisha or Kadisha, which means ‘holy’ in Aramaic. According to John Gulick, the river received this name in honour of the Maronites, who ‘first took refuge high in the mountains near its source’. As the river reaches the city it is more commonly called by its Arabic name – Abu or Abou ‘Ali, meaning Ali’s father – which has a definite Muslim connotation.³

Like Damascus and Aleppo under the Ottomans, in 1834 Tripoli became the provincial capital of the Tripoli *vilayet*, which included the coastal area ‘from Jbeil to Tartus and the inland Syrian towns of Homs and Hama’.⁴ At this time, El Mina had a population of about 5,000 inhabitants, who were predominantly Greek Orthodox.



Figure 16: Tripoli and El Mina (Karl Baedeker, *Palestine et Syrie*, Leipzig: 1906).

² Interview with Abdulsalam Tadmori, Tripoli, (13.07.2008).

³ John Gulick, *Tripoli, A Modern Arab City*, (Harvard University Press, Cambridge/Massachusetts: 1967), p. 10.

⁴ Gulick: p. 18.

Shahin Makarius had no favourable words for the Christians living in Tripoli or El Mina, who, according to him, were not ‘proficient in Arabic’ and among whom only ‘a few were gifted in writing and arithmetic, and served in government offices’.⁵ Tensions between Muslims and Christians had grown as a result of reforms that many considered to favour Christians during and after the Egyptian occupation (1831 – 1840).

The Egyptians had initially been welcomed, as it was thought that they would bring stability after a long period of chaos. However, the occupiers soon incurred the wrath of Tripoli’s Muslim inhabitants. The newly-introduced national army service curtailed the traditional influence of local families, whilst the rural population also lost important manpower. But the change in the status of the Christians, which had been encouraged by the Ottoman Government with the Rescript of the Rose Chamber in 1839 (and further enforced in the second reform edict in 1856), arguably had the biggest impact. ‘The edict noted the universal applicability of the new laws. This not only revealed the wish to establish a single legal system for all subjects; it indicated a change in the official ideology of the state.’ Mahmud II had already mentioned his intentions: ‘From now on I do not wish to recognise Muslims outside the mosque, Christians outside the church, or Jews outside the synagogue’.⁶

⁵ Diab, Wahlin: p. 121. Shahin Makarius, however, as mentioned in Chapter IV, remains an ambiguous individual with his own agenda. Charles Kesrouani, a specialist and the founder of *the Centre de Recherche et de Documentation Maçonnique*, CRDM, Ghazir/Beirut, suspects that Makarius used his masonic membership to move from one lodge to another in order to gain more knowledge about lodges working under different systems. As he was once also grandmaster he profited from insider views and the connections that this post brought with it. In general, his thoughts, especially regarding religion, are almost contradictory to those expressed by the GOdF, which was probably the reason for his realignment to the GLoS; Interview with Kesrouani, (19.07.2008). Hence, it may well be that he partly was biased towards people affiliated to differing grand bodies.

⁶ Hanioglu, *A Brief History*, p. 73-74.

The population of the city contributed significantly to the uprising against Egyptian rule in 1833, which was nevertheless quickly suppressed. Indeed, twenty-five members of the *ulama* from Tripoli were arrested and subsequently executed.⁷

A continuing growth of Muslim scepticism towards the Christian population, along with Tripoli's final relegation to the second rank of regional ports (behind Beirut), contributed in significant measure to the worsening situation in the aftermath of the Egyptian occupation.⁸

In the 1870s Tripoli had to elect a governor (*qa'immaqam*) for the provincial council. The city chose the Christian Nicula Lutfallah Naufal, whose preferred language was Turkish. The fact that a Christian rather than a Muslim received the post – the first time this had happened since the beginning of the *tanzimat* period in 1839 – shows the dynamic and also pragmatic relations between the religious communities.⁹ Naufal had already served for the Ottoman state and was well connected through his work for various European consuls and businessmen.

Even after the constitution had been suspended, loyalty to the Ottoman government and the absence of free speech were characteristic in Tripoli, where the majority of the population had strong ties to the Empire at the end of the nineteenth century. In combination with strict censorship, this loyalty silenced opposition voices.

Tripoli's only newspaper, *Jaridat Tarabulus al-Sham (Newspaper of Tripoli)* repeatedly asked its readers to support Ottoman products when facing Western penetration of the domestic market and increasing deficits in competition with foreign products.

⁷ Johannes Ebert, *Religion und Reform in der arabischen Provinz – Husayn al-Gisr at-Tarabulusi (1845-1909) – Ein islamischer Gelehrter zwischen Tradition und Reform*, (Peter Lang, Frankfurt: 1991), p. 23-25.

⁸ *Ibid.*: p. 25.

⁹ Butrus Abu-Manneh, 'The Genesis of Midhat Pasha's Governership in Syria', 1878-1880, in: *The Syrian Land, Processes of Integration and Fragmentation*, p. 262

Its chief-editor and publisher, the Islamic scholar Hussein al-Jisr al-Tarabulusi, urged Tripoli's population (especially the affluent) to buy local products.¹⁰ Indeed, the wealthy were called on to take the initiative by fostering the construction of educational institutions and social infrastructure in the city. Only then, according to Al-Jisr, would Ottoman subjects be able to compete with Western technology and knowledge.¹¹ At the same time, Al-Jisr advocated religious unity as he argued that the tolerance would strengthen everyone's position against foreigners. For Al-Jisr, the most significant issue that people believed in God irrespective of sectarian divisions. Atheism was considered to be a dangerous threat to society and citizens were told to fight egotism through the power of religion.¹²

The Baedeker travel guide emphasised Tripoli's increased importance in its French edition of 1912, mentioning the new lighthouse 's'élève un phare', the convenience of its port and its international telegraph.¹³ However, in comparison to Beirut, Tripoli's status gradually declined while the provincial capital saw high population growth and developed into a cultural attraction pole during the nineteenth century. As Gulick states, Tripoli was 'demoted in the Ottoman administrative structure' and was downgraded to being the chief town of a sub-district of the *vilayet* of Beirut.¹⁴ Foreign institutions established in Tripoli during this period were less prestigious than those built in Beirut. In effect, Tripoli, with its traditional communities, had simply become part of Beirut's hinterland. American missionaries opened a school for girls, but it closed its doors three years later.¹⁵ When the

¹⁰ The newspaper was first published in 1893 and ran until 1920. No numbers of its circulation are known and the literacy rate among Muslim men in 1912 was only at about 25%, but the only newspaper published in Tripoli certainly had some influence on the intellectual stratum. (Ebert)

¹¹ Ebert: p. 114 – 115.

¹² Ibid.: p. 128, p. 150.

¹³ Baedeker, 1912: p. 332.

¹⁴ Gulick: p. 27.

¹⁵ Diab, Wahlin: p. 121.

missionaries returned in 1865, Franciscan monks had already erected another, smaller, school, where they taught French and Italian. The next attempt of the American missionaries consisted in the establishment of a school for boys. This second endeavour was more successful and in the following years they opened other educational institutions and a hospital.¹⁶ The Kennedy Memorial Hospital in El Mina was the first modern-style hospital in Tripoli.¹⁷



Figure 17: Different Views of the Kennedy Memorial Hospital in the early twentieth century ('Al-Askale in White and Black' (*Al-Askilah fil-abyaḍ wal-aswad*), p. 37).

Consequently, the native Greek Orthodox and Maronite populations in Tripoli instigated their own educational efforts. In short, by the end of the nineteenth century there were foreign, Greek Orthodox, Maronite, Lazarist, Roman Catholic and

¹⁶ Ibid.: 121.

¹⁷ Gulick: p. 23.

Ottoman state schools in Tripoli, with El Mina having its own institutions run separately by the Greek Orthodox Church (one mixed school with one teacher and about 40 pupils; one girls' school with one teacher and 30 pupils), Muslim institutions (two teachers and 76 pupils) and Roman Catholics (two schools: one with one teacher and 15 boys and one for girls with one teacher and 20 girls).¹⁸

Makarius seems to have been very familiar with the educational situation in Greater Syria and was disappointed by what he saw, though it must be added that his examination of cities – with the exception of Beirut – was very superficial. According to him, the areas surrounding Tripoli lacked educational facilities overseen by members of the local community: 'were it not for some foreign schools in some of their villages, the state of its population would have been very miserable. The Americans have great merit [...], for they have scattered their schools in their plains and mountains.'¹⁹

The two state schools in Tripoli, founded by Muslims, were built in reaction to the proliferation of missionary schools in the area. Both school establishments had been prompted by a visit from Midhat Pasha, but their teaching standards were low. Hence their graduates only played an insignificant role in the city's development.²⁰ Tripoli did experience modernisation towards the end of the nineteenth century, but it nevertheless remained more conservative and sceptical of innovation and novelties than Beirut.

The reform movement and the first signs of Arab nationalism did not take hold in Tripoli, with the education of the Muslim population continuously being provided by the traditional school system. Consequently, the majority of Tripolitans defended

¹⁸ Ibid.: 121.

¹⁹ Diab, Wahlin: p. 121.

²⁰ Ebert: p. 67 – 68.

the Ottoman Empire and, not backing most of the reforms, called for the corrective exertion of Islamic principles.²¹

Tripoli was composed of a mixture of Christians and Muslims, which – if one includes El Mina - was more balanced than in most other provincial cities in Greater Syria. According to Gulick, ‘the Christian aristocrats were primarily merchants, while the wealth of the Muslim ones was based primarily on income from estates in the hinterland and from the orchards surrounding the city’.²² While the consuls resided in Beirut, representatives were sent to Tripoli. As Henry Harris Jessup writes, ‘France and England were represented by foreigners, but Russia, Austria, Italy, the United States, Belgium, Denmark and Switzerland [were represented] by Oriental Greeks and Catholics’. He continues stating that in the mundane life of those old days ‘to be vice-consul was greater than to be a king. [...] The ordinary Muslims looked on with bitter disdain, but they were careful to keep silent lest they draw the wrath of czar, emperor or king’.²³ These representatives and ancillary consuls were mostly members of minorities, who started to form an influential intermediary social stratum between the local population and the Europeans.²⁴

Native translators also held almost the same level of prestige. As dragomans they enjoyed a proximity to foreign delegates and companies, who owed a great deal to their knowledge of European languages and their familiarity with the way businesses worked. During the course of the nineteenth century the consulships were mainly assumed by local Christians, with the Catseflis family standing out as holding something of a diplomatic dynasty. The Yanni family was also closely connected with the diplomatic field and was related with the Catseflis through various

²¹ Ibid.: p. 71.

²² Gulick: p. 25 – 26.

²³ Henry Harris Jessup, *Fifty-Three Years in Syria*, (Fleming H. Revell Company, New York: 1910), p. 128 – 129.

²⁴ Ebert: p. 41.

intermarriages.²⁵ One should also stress the masonic ties that bound the two families together, which will be illustrated further below.

Almost all Muslims in Tripoli belonged to a Sufi Order: the Shadhiliyya Order was mainly composed of the Kawuji and Al-Umari families; the Halwatiyya sheikhs were predominantly composed of members of the Rafi'i, Maykati and the Jisr families. These Sufi Orders worshipped holy men who allegedly possessed magic powers that they had obtained from god. The Umari family, above all, had an outstanding reputation for working wonders.²⁶ Members of the family were found among the early members of *Kadisha* Lodge. Even today some members of the family enjoy a reputation as important religious leaders. Dervishes had their own quarters in Tripoli. Indeed, a travel guide from 1910 mentions a monastery of Dervishes that was located at the mouth of the Kadisha River.²⁷

Between 1880 and 1914, Tripoli expanded and its population grew. This demographic trend was not dependent upon direct foreign influence. 'Tripoli is usually decried as unhygienic, although fevers only appear in the autumn and are rarely dangerous'.²⁸ Tripoli's infrastructure improved considerably in 1909, when a new road was constructed between the city and Beirut. Furthermore, in 1911 the railway connecting Tripoli with Aleppo was completed.²⁹ In the city itself one could find a carriageway, cobbled streets and pavements.

A Turkish telegraph was built in Tripoli, whilst an international telegraph had been constructed in El Mina at the end of the nineteenth century.³⁰ Yet, Tripoli's proximity to Mount Lebanon proved to be a disadvantage to the city, as the Ottoman

²⁵ Ibid.: p. 44.

²⁶ Ibid.: p. 58 – 59.

²⁷ Baedeker, (1910): p. 19.

²⁸ [*Tripoli ist als ungesund in Verruf; indes zeigen sich Fieber erst gegen den Herbst und sind selten gefährlich*], in: Karl Baedeker, *Palästina und Syrien*, (Leipzig: 1904), 6th Edition, p. 293.

²⁹ Gulick: p. 27.

³⁰ Ibid.: p. 293.

government doubted the loyalty of its Christian subjects in the mountain. Consequently, it blockaded the principal road, thereby depriving the mountain population of its lifeline during the war. As Gulick notes, ‘the new railroad was torn up, and until it was repaired after the war, the hoped-for increase in trade with interior Syria did not occur’. What is more, the city’s trade had started to suffer with the opening of the new railway between Rayak and Aleppo, since business was increasingly transferred to Beirut.³¹

At the turn of the century Tripoli had begun to modernise, without having fully internalised the principles of reform. Intellectuals and Ottoman employees criticised the lack of preparation and the poor educational standards in the city, which were deemed necessary for restructuring and a sustained and stable future.³² It would seem that the majority of Tripoli’s inhabitants were not yet prepared to freely support and express reformist ideas or to articulate modern approaches to municipal planning and government.

As in Beirut, communities started to fill the gaps left by the lack of a proper social system and began to establish charitable organisations. The first such organisations were introduced by the Greek Orthodox community at the end of the nineteenth century. In 1892, it founded a general charitable society, followed four years later by institutions that supported the families of deceased relatives and orphans. The different associations were formed by religious followers in order to serve ‘explicitly for the benefit of their own sect members’.³³ Around 1906 Tripoli possessed fourteen mosques of varying size, plus fourteen churches belonging to different Christian denominations. Unlike in Beirut, the few literary and scientific societies in Tripoli were short-lived affairs and never reached the same significance

³¹ Baedeker, *Palästina und Syrien*, (Leipzig: 1910), p. 309 – 310.

³² Ebert: p. 40.

³³ Archive of the Greek-Orthodox in Beirut, St George’s school; Gulick: p. 66.

and outreach as the ones in the regional capital. While Beirut emerged as the intellectual centre of Greater Syria, education and cultural activity aroused only limited interest in Tripoli.³⁴ The city was much more conservative than its larger neighbour. Indeed, its population rarely questioned the authority of the Sultan and traditional roles were commonplace.³⁵

In 1877 El Mina was granted its own municipal status. According to Ahmed Mumtaz Kabbara, the port's electricity problems preceded the onset of this new municipal status. The establishment of the political body was supposed to give the port a larger scope of action when confronting similar problems in the future.³⁶

Relations between Muslims and the Greek Orthodox community on the whole stabilised, or became at least sufficiently balanced to keep Tripoli calm in the midst of the wider religious conflicts in the area at the close of the nineteenth century. As Baria Daher Kheir notes, 'the existent harmony is visible in the relations between the Muslim judge and the religious Christian leaders, which is reflected in meetings and direct or indirect contacts'.³⁷ Commercial transactions were numerous and Christians did not shy away from defending their cases in front of Muslim courts, as was the case before 1856. As elsewhere in the Empire at that time, Christians in the Tripoli area were officially still classed as *Dhimmi* – non-Muslims.³⁸

³⁴ Ebert: p. 47.

³⁵ Ibid.: p. 57.

³⁶ Ahmed Mumtaz Kabbara, *al-Mīnā' – Ta'rikh wa-turāth (El Mina: History and Culture)*, (Dar El-Chamal Press, Beirut: 2006). Kabbara had been head of Tripoli in the 1960s, D.S..

³⁷ [*La bonne entente est visible dans les relations entre le qadi et les chefs religieux chrétiens, qui se traduisaient par des rencontres et des contacts directs ou indirects*], Baria Daher Kheir, 'Constances et Diversités dans les relations entre Musulmans et Chrétiens Ottomans de Tripoli entre le XVIIIe et le XIXe siècle', in: *Les Relations entre Musulmans et Chrétiens dans le Bilad al-Cham*, (Actes du Colloque, Balamand University, Tripoli : 2004), p. 60.

³⁸ Christians and Jews were defined as 'The People of the Book' - *dhimmi*. They 'received God's revelation before Muhammad and therefore obtained only an incomplete message. Thus, *dhimmi* have religion, civilization, and God's words. But since they received only part of the message, they are inherently different from and inferior to Muslims', Quataert, *The Ottoman Empire*, p. 177. After different new reform laws, the Ottoman Law of Nationality of 1869 showed the overall idea behind the changes: *Dhimmi* was replaced by 'non-Muslim Ottoman' – and though this step was contested until

The reform edict changed the relations between Muslims and non-Muslims and put both at least theoretically on an equal level in the eyes of the law. In addition, Jessup wrote on his arrival in the city in 1856 that the Tripolitan population had a ‘reputation for the aristocratic pride of its people, both Moslems and Greek Christians’.³⁹ Jessup was part of the American mission and the co-founder of the SPC in Beirut. His impression differed somewhat from the one of Rashid Rida, who visited the Tripoli area and criticised its inhabitants – particularly the Muslims - and their perceived unwillingness to embrace reform. In his opinion, among the manifold reasons for this tendency was the general lack of motivation and ambition of the inhabitants, as well as their ignorance of innovations or contact with reformers. He argued that poor infrastructure also meant that the local population was deprived of an adequate supply of daily newspapers.

Until the beginning of the twentieth century, Al-Jisr’s *Jaridat Tarabulus al-Sham* newspaper remained the only regular publication in the city. Only in 1908 was the press able to make some headway in Tripoli. Consequently, eight new newspapers were established by 1913.⁴⁰ However, unlike in Beirut where controversial points of view received a platform in the form of letters to the editors, newspaper contributions or articles in journals and magazines, Tripoli’s press conformed to the regime’s strict position of censorship.⁴¹ Additionally, in Rida’s eyes, the corruption of the police in Tripoli was endemic.⁴²

the end of the Ottoman era, it did show ‘a general inclination toward a more secular conception of the state’, Hanioglu, *A Brief History*, p. 74.

³⁹ Henry Harris Jessup, *Fifty-Three Years in Syria*, p. 112.

⁴⁰ Ebert: p. 70.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*: p. 93.

⁴² Ebert, p. 38. The corruption of the police in Tripoli cannot be proven, but Rida’s statement casts the thank-you- letters received by Ahmed Ashi from his masonic brothers (Chapter IV) in a dubious light, *D.S.*.

Up until 1904 the American missionary station held school classes for girls, whilst the French nuns ran an orphanage and an institution for girls and the Frères des écoles chrétiennes ran a monastery and a school.⁴³ The foreign schools were mainly used by Tripoli's Greek Orthodox population and until World War One only one Muslim – Arif al-Rifai – is known to have been educated at a Christian school.⁴⁴

During World War One Tripoli suffered more than cities in the south of the region. As mentioned, the Ottoman government destroyed the recently completed railway, as it did not trust the Christian minority in the mountains. Their loyalty in times of crisis seemed doubtful and consequently the government wanted to avoid the possibility of a revolt. Cutting off the supplies of the mountain inhabitants was deemed to be the best way of achieving this objective. However, this decision proved detrimental for the economic prosperity of Tripoli and its population, who suffered starvation and epidemics during the war.

The foundation dates of the city's first three lodges clearly illustrate that freemasonry was also affected: the *Kadisha* Lodge, No. 1002, was established in 1906, *El Mizhab* Lodge, No. 1130, followed in 1914 and *Mina al-Amin* Lodge opened in 1918.⁴⁵ During the four years of war, the meetings of *El Mizhab* were suspended. Freemasonry in the Empire generally suffered a setback during the war years and was not able to continue to expand. In fact, during this period only lodges in Egypt were established, such as *St Andrew* Lodge in Aboukir in 1917, which was under the patronage of the Grand Lodge of England.⁴⁶

⁴³ In: Karl Baedeker, *Palästina und Syrien*, (Leipzig: 1904), 6th Edition, p. 293.

⁴⁴ Ebert: p. 48. This statement seems to be exaggerated as the author found at least one more Muslim belonging to the Abdulwahab family who attended an American school, *D.S.*

⁴⁵ Unlike in Ottoman times, *El Mizhab* is now recognised by the government and holds legal status as a non-governmental organisation, *D.S.*

⁴⁶ See also Appendix I for further foundation dates.

Masonic Lodges in Tripoli and El Mina

Kadisha and *El Mizhab* lodges worked under the jurisdiction of the Grand Lodge of Scotland, whereas *Mina al-Amin* Lodge belonged to the Grand National Lodge of Egypt.⁴⁷ The minutes of *Kadisha*'s meetings have not been preserved, but it is likely that they were interrupted during World War One and only resumed in 1918.⁴⁸

Kadisha Lodge was the first of its kind in El Mina and Tripoli. Although the exact location is not known, most of the first individuals initiated came from the port area. Since the later *El Mizhab* Lodge, which was related to *Kadisha* Lodge through mutual members, was established at the port, it is reasonable to argue that *Kadisha* members also gathered in one of the houses near the sea, where a large part of the Greek Orthodox community had settled. This would be consistent with information provided by the Grand Lodge of Scotland. With so many *Kadisha* Lodge members regularly visiting *El Mizhab* Lodge, it is even likely that at one point both lodges used the same building and facilities. The building currently used by *El Mizhab* Lodge was bought by the fraternity in 1947. The rooms on the second floor were originally planned to function as a hospital or medical practice. From the port to the lodge building takes less than ten minutes on foot.

⁴⁷ This piece of information and the photographs are mainly courtesy of the members of *El Mizhab* Lodge, particularly the current assistant secretary and librarian, a past lodge master and the present worshipful master. The information also derives from the archive of the Grand Lodge of Scotland where the petitions of *Kadisha* and *El Mizhab* lodges are preserved.

⁴⁸ I cannot give any evidence regarding the fate of *Mina al-Amin* Lodge. But my conclusion drawn from the analysis of the attendance notes of *El Mizhab* Lodge is that although men were originally initiated in *Mina al-Amin* Lodge, they actually went on to join either *El Mizhab* Lodge or *Kadisha* Lodge, D.S..

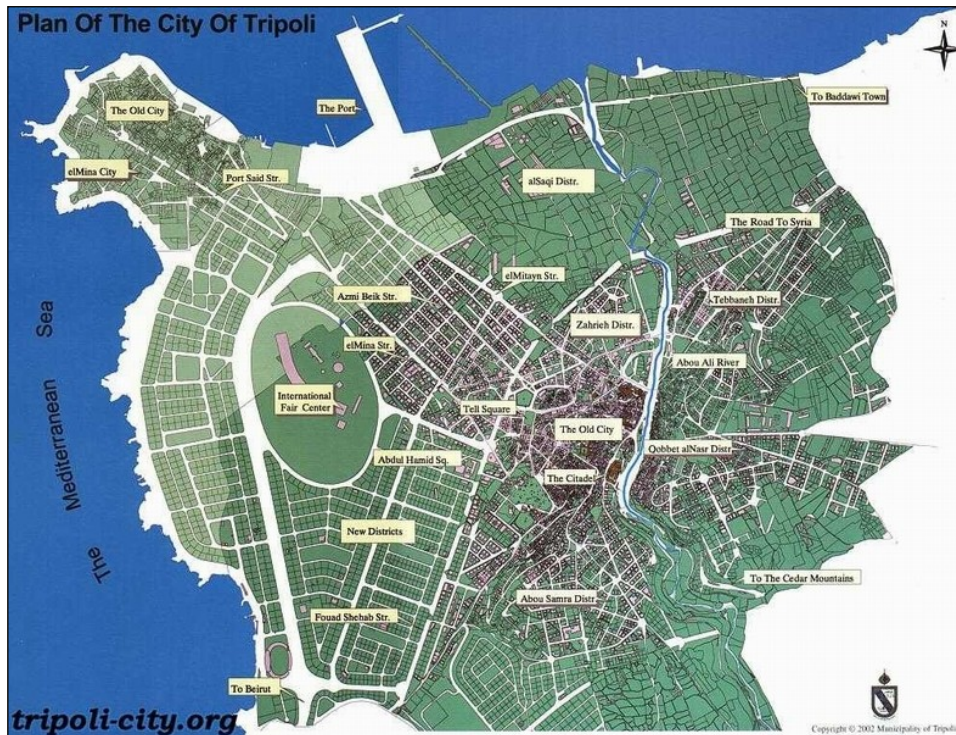


Figure 18: Modern Tripoli (courtesy of the Municipality of El Mina: 2008)

On the other hand, the book of attendance from the *El Mizhab* Lodge, in which masons attending as visitors had to write down their names, lodge affiliation and the location of their meeting places, indicates a different reality. In the period between 1914 and 1920, visitors to *Kadisha* Lodge either left this space empty or wrote down *baladiyyeh*, which means *of the city* and not the harbour. That is, they hailed from Tripoli and not El Mina.

However, according to the Grand Lodge of New York, a third option is possible: in a letter received in 2004, *Kadisha* Lodge was named and located together with *Palestine* and *Peace* lodges in the Peace Building in Beirut – at least until the house was destroyed in one of the many wars modern Lebanon has suffered. In addition, in 1913 George Dimitri Sursock, who was then Worshipful Master of *Le Liban* Lodge under the Grand Orient of France, sent a letter to his superiors in Paris, in which he mentioned that *Kadisha* Lodge was located in Beirut. This would provide a different reason for explaining why *Kadisha* Lodge masons visited *El Mizhab* Lodge

so often after its foundation in El Mina in 1914. The opportunity to meet closer to their homes proved attractive.

Respect for masonic traditions is common among masons. Additionally, it seems likely that the violent history of the Greater Syrian region over the course of the past century and a half has engendered a particularly high esteem among contemporary brethren towards their masonic predecessors. Thus, the few masonic items that survived the wars and that may attest to the lodges' past are venerated. The reception room of *El Mizhab* Lodge, which also functions as a lounge, is decorated with pictures of past masters, typical masonic regalia and a photograph of an old lodge in Homs. While wearing quite modern dresses, the men in the photograph are also wearing the fez on their heads, with only three being adorned in turbans.⁴⁹

This single picture somehow captures the condition of most of the Ottomans, caught in-between two worlds, trying to re-position themselves in order to make some sense of their troubling and confusing living conditions.

⁴⁹ While the fez originally came from Fez in Morocco, it was Sultan Mahmud II who introduced a law specifying the fez as headgear to be worn by the varying ranks of civil and religious officials. Replacing the traditional turban, the fez helped to eliminate clothing distinctions, which made all officials equal before the Sultan but also equal among themselves. The fez soon became popular among all Ottomans regardless of their religious affiliations or positions and continued to be a symbol for loyalty to the Ottoman government. Mahmud II with this homogenizing status maker had managed to place 'the state at the center of Ottoman life as the sole remaining arbiter of identity', Donald Quataert, 'Clothing Laws, State and Society in the Ottoman Empire, 1720-1829', *IJMES*, vol. 29/3, (Aug. 1997), p. 403.



Figure 19: The Old Lodge of Homs at the end of the nineteenth century (photograph seen at *El Mizhab* Lodge Building: 2008, D.S.)

In the lodge room itself hangs a dark-brown wooden board inscribed with the names of the lodge's former masters as well as a framed charter. Even the charter of *Mina al-Amin* Lodge is still in the possession of *El Mizhab* Lodge. The sense of pride evident in the attentive care of these objects creates a solemn atmosphere that defies the cheap furniture and shabby interior.

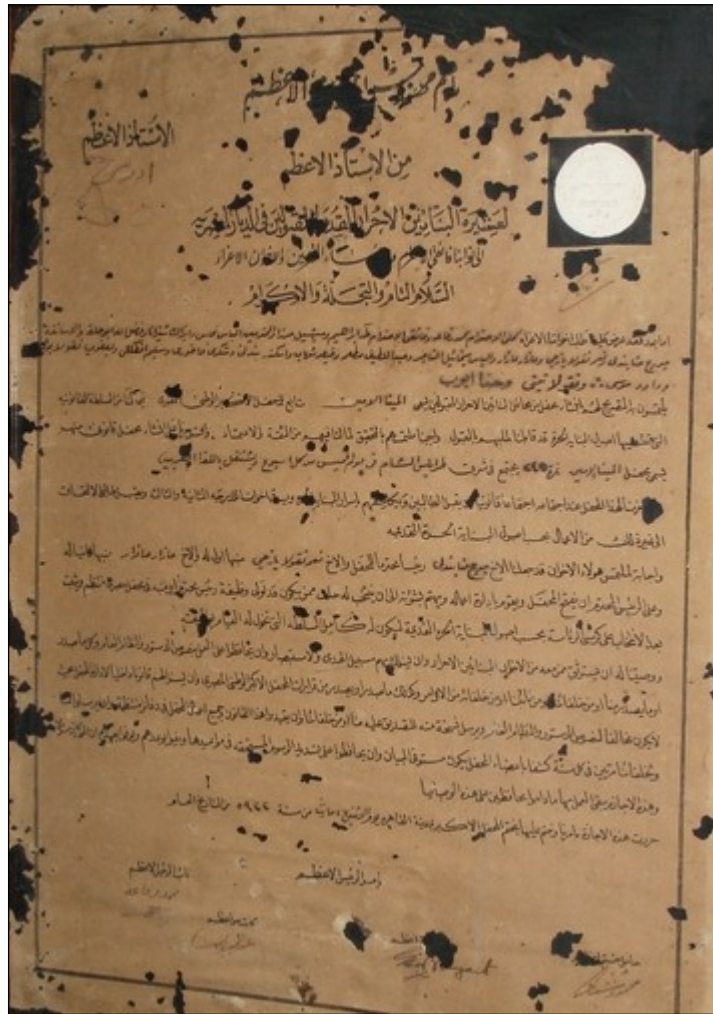


Figure 20: Charter of *Mina al-Amin* Lodge from 1918 (*El Mizhab* Lodge: 2008, D.S.)

Kadisha received its charter from the Grand Lodge of Scotland on February 1st 1906. It chose sky blue as the lodge’s official colour, which it kept until its official closure on October 17th 1930. For the first few years the lodge’s sessions were conducted in French.⁵⁰

The petition of *Kadisha* Lodge was supported, once again, by Alexander Barroudi, who had already been very active in helping to establish masonic lodges throughout Greater Syria (see chapters IV and V). His name was associated with laudable principles and honest endeavours.

⁵⁰ Archive of GLoS, *Kadisha’s* Petition.

Among the founders of *Kadisha* Lodge was George Dimitri Sursock, who was also a member of *Le Liban* Lodge and who had earlier joined *Chapter Fidelido* Lodge. Other founding members had previously been initiated in *Peace* Lodge and included Salame Ghoraiab, Rashid Yaziji, Habib Zabliet, Moussa Nahhas, Michel Rahmé, Antonious Fadel, Elias Zehiel,⁵¹ Habib Attieh and Habib Malek. One founding member of *Kadisha* Lodge – Sami Nahhas – came from *Phoenicia* Lodge.

By 1913 *Kadisha* Lodge had attracted more than 120 members.⁵² Throughout its existence, most of the lodge's members resided in either Tripoli or El Mina. If that was not the case the family had at least business or political connections with the region.

Until the outbreak of World War One the lodge was mainly composed of merchants and traders, who accounted for almost half of its members. The next biggest group was formed by government employees – clerks as well as men serving in the Ottoman army. Landowners made up the third largest group, with seventeen members. In addition, the lodge also included teachers, physicians, pharmacists, two lawyers, two hoteliers, a tailor and a printing press manager. Completing this mosaic of professions were two religious men: an imam by the name of al-Umari and a priest. While most of *Kadisha's* founders were Greek Orthodox Christians, the lodge itself represented a mix of religions, with over thirty Muslims and a few Greek Catholics and Maronites. Its early members had varied backgrounds, but often shared the same

⁵¹ It was only in the summer of 2009 that I found out more about the Zehiel family. This was thanks to Robert Alexandre Zehil, who was born in 1945 and lives in Monaco. The family originally came from Zouk Mikhaïl, a small village close to Jounieh. However, over the years some members moved from Beirut to Tripoli, or left the country entirely for Turkey or further afield. The fact that family members had joined different lodges was no secret to Robert Alexandre Zehil, but unfortunately he did not know any further biographical details. He confirmed that the family name continues to exist in various forms of spelling, *D.S.*

⁵² Registration books at the GLoS, 1913, *Kadisha*.

masonic past and *Kadisha* brought together former members of *Le Liban*, *Sunneen* and *Peace* lodges and yet again a lodge in Brazil.⁵³

Not much is known about the activities of *Kadisha* Lodge, in terms of charitable deeds, inner-lodge quarrels, its interpretation of the rituals or of its book of constitutions, the attendance of members, or the regularity of its meetings. Preserved in Edinburgh, however, are the names of members registered until *Kadisha* was forced to close by the Grand Lodge of Scotland in October 1930. It is also known that the majority of these members were involved in non-masonic charities. Furthermore, we know that they regularly visited the neighbouring lodge of *El Mizhab*. Membership of these two lodges overlapped and they also collectively founded *Mina al-Amin* Lodge in 1918 under the jurisdiction of the Grand National Lodge of Egypt. In addition, many signatures in support of the foundation of other lodges in the Tripoli area can be found in Scottish records.⁵⁴

The first petition sent by *Kadisha* Lodge to Edinburgh in 1906 was accompanied by a fee of ten pounds and ten shillings for a charter.⁵⁵ Lodges working under the Grand Lodge of Scotland differed from those belonging to the Grand Orient of France with regard to the amount of money initiates or masons had to pay in order to climb the ladder of degrees. While the Scottish lodges demanded a larger entrance fee than their French counterparts, the lodges of the Grand Orient demanded higher degree fees. One effect of this regulation has been previously described: *Le Liban* Lodge had been admitting many members within a short space of time during its first years, irrespective of varying social affiliation with the exception of the poor. Although all new initiates belonged exclusively to the middle and upper classes, because of their interest in masonry in general they were consequently not as elitist as

⁵³ Registration books at the GLoS, 1913, *Kadisha*.

⁵⁴ Petitions at the GLoS.

⁵⁵ *Ibid*.

the Scottish lodges. The high initial entrance fee for lodges under the patronage of the Grand Lodge of Scotland, on the other hand, acted as a kind of filter – though, as seen in regard to *Sunneen* Lodge, it did not always work out as planned.

The oldest book of constitutions used by *El Mizhab* Lodge was published in Scotland in 1904 and given to the lodge ten years later. It is most likely that *Kadisha* Lodge also began by using this version.⁵⁶ It was only in 1923 that the rituals were translated for the first time into Arabic by Shukri Fakhouri and sent as a gift to the Grand Lodge of Scotland. The Grand Lodge had no objections regarding the book cover on which Fakhouri had added the name *Mina al-Amin*, which apparently relied on and worked according to the same rituals.⁵⁷ *Mina al-Amin* Lodge, however, was not directly affiliated to Scotland, as it was under the jurisdiction of Grand National Lodge of Egypt.

Kadisha Lodge initially worked in French, but eight years after its foundation it changed to Arabic. Evidently this seemed more appropriate during a time when the Ottoman middle class found its own sense of direction. This decision came in the wake of a period when the local community refocused on its own culture and strengths, prompted by the influence of reformist ideas and an intellectual, cultural reawakening. It can be assumed that *Mina al-Amin* Lodge in 1918 chose the same language, as its letters sent to other lodges were written in Arabic.⁵⁸ Unlike Beirut, Tripoli and El Mina did not offer its inhabitants much entertainment or cultural activities. Besides an old sports club, lodge meetings provided the only way for middle and upper class men to socialise irrespective of religious borders.

⁵⁶ Information on *El Mizhab* Lodge comes by courtesy of a past worshipful master of the lodge and the present assistant secretary and lodge librarian; Interview, (16.07.08). *El Mizhab* Lodge only saved its records from the 1950s onwards, whereas the membership records of *Kadisha* Lodge date back to the 1930s.

⁵⁷ At that time *El Mizhab* Lodge was still known as *Fam el-Mizhab* – named after a mountain in Lebanon.

⁵⁸ Library in El Mina, Letter from *Mina al-Amin* Lodge to Ahmed Effendi al-Ashi, (1928).

The activities of *Kadisha* Lodge must have been comparable to those of other lodges, in terms of its charitable deeds, scientific and literary lectures and sociable meetings. Yet, naturally it was marked by the inclusion of fewer scholars than the lodges in Beirut, as the provincial capital generally attracted more savants. Thus, one can only speculate with regard to the cultural entertainment that took place in and around lodge meetings and draw a comparison to the records of *El Mizhab* Lodge. The records of this lodge demonstrate the financial and social support given to bereaved families. One can also point to the similarities of *Kadisha* and *El Mizhab* lodges in terms of their almost identical composition of recruits.

However, while no documents regarding the activities of *Kadisha* Lodge are extant, the Annual Proceedings of the Grand Lodge of Scotland record lodge foundations and extraordinary events, such as when a lodge disobeyed masonic rules or when it was closed down. This was the case when the Grand Lodge received a letter from *Kadisha*'s worshipful master in the 1920s,

‘In regard of troubles in the lodge caused by the brethren who apparently desire to bring Freemasonry into disrepute. This Master has been re-elected and installed, and Office-bearers whom he trusts have been chosen. The Committee suggest that a letter be written to the Right Worshipful Master, warning the brethren against introduction of alien matters into Freemasonry, approving of his efforts to promote harmony, and trusting that his re-election may ensure prosperity’.⁵⁹

Nothing further was mentioned, but as Syrian lodges were particularly eager to attract new members and had often been reprimanded by the Grand Lodge of Scotland for not adhering to the laws, it is quite likely that *Kadisha* Lodge faced the same or similar conflicts.⁶⁰ Additionally, ‘alien matters’ could refer to political or religious matters dealt with during lodge meetings. The state of Greater Lebanon, under the

⁵⁹ *Proceedings*, GLoS, (1921-1922).

⁶⁰ In most of the cases when the Grand Lodge had to reprimand Syrian lodges it was done because of violations of Law 157 of the Constitutions of the Grand Lodge of Scotland. This law states that it is prohibited to recognise unauthorised bodies, such as irregular lodges. Some years later, in 1929, *El Mizhab* Lodge was reprimanded for the same reason and the Grand Lodge seriously considered taking away the lodge's charter.

French Mandate, was proclaimed a year before and it is possible that lodge members differed in their political views as most of the Muslims were against the new state. Indeed, they boycotted its general census in 1922 and the majority ‘continued to seek immediate annexation to Syria’.⁶¹

During the same period, the lodge also struggled with masonic regulations when the Grand Secretary of the Grand Lodge of Scotland reported breaches of varying laws. Apparently *Kadisha* had disregarded laws 152, 176, 179, 180 and 188.⁶² These laws refer to the prohibition of meetings held on Sundays, voting procedures, the correct amount for initiation, fees of initiation and their provision. *Kadisha* Lodge apparently had been initiating new members free of charge without limiting the number of candidates that could be initiated at one meeting.⁶³ These problems were common among daughter lodges.

Although one of its worshipful masters, Jurji Yanni, had an excellent reputation in masonic circles, as well as among the middle and upper classes of the city and beyond, *Kadisha* Lodge fell out of favour with the Grand Lodge of Scotland. As had occurred some ten years earlier in the 1920s, with *Sunneen* Lodge, *Kadisha* was charged with ‘irregularities which occurred [...] on 17th October 1930’. And again, researchers are left in the dark about any reasons or details of these disorders, except for a note that was subsequently approved in the proceedings stating the following:

‘On consideration thereof, the Committee resolved to recommend Grand Committee to move Grand Lodge to discontinue all meetings of Lodge Kadisha, Tripoli, Syria, No 1002, for a period of one year from 5th February 1931, and that the Charter, books, papers, jewels, clothing, paraphernalia and funds (including Benevolent Fund) of the Lodge be delivered to Brother John Lawrence, Superintendent of Egypt, Palestine and Syria, forthwith, for safe custody. Further, that Brother Yasser Adhamy, a member of said Lodge, be suspended from all

⁶¹ Meir Zamir, *The Formation of Modern Lebanon*, (Taylor & Francis: 1985), p. 151.

⁶² *Proceedings*, GLoS, (1926-1927).

⁶³ *The Constitution and Laws of the Grand Lodge of Ancient Free and Accepted Masons of Scotland*, published by authority of Grand Lodge, by Grand Secretary, (Edinburgh: 1923), p. 61, 72 - 78.

Masonic privileges until such time as the Lodge resumes meetings and is able to cite him to attend, to show cause why he should not be expelled from all Masonic privileges'.⁶⁴

No further documents are apparently extant, which would help to explain the reasons for this ruling and that would provide more information about Adhamy, let alone the composition of the afore-mentioned committee. However, no misbehaviour or neglect of the regulations mentioned above can have given sufficient reason to cause the closure of the lodge. Hence, it is more likely that another reason existed for closing down the lodge.

If one turns to other cases, one notes that some lodges were able to survive underground after the withdrawal of their charter by their respective grand bodies. Indeed, some even profited from the fact that their profile had been lowered in times when the public equated freemasonry with perfidiousness. This was not the case with *Kadisha*, which seems to have been inactive for a long time. However, various attempts were undertaken to restore the lodge at different times.

In late December 1966 we find the name *Kadisha* reappearing for the first time in an unsigned letter to Dr. G.L. Colenso-Jones, the 'Superintendent of the District of the Eastern Mediterranean'. In the letter, it is stated that there were plans to resuscitate dormant lodges and to name them *Mount Lebanon* and *Kadisha*, as it was 'absolutely essential [...] to take the necessary and immediate steps and procedure to strengthen Scottish Freemasonry in Lebanon, preserve it in its leading position, and protect the principles and ideals it upholds and stands for'. The writer concludes that it would be a positive step to re-establish as many Scottish lodges as possible. Attached to the letter was a petition for *Mount Lebanon*, No. 1312, lodge, which used to work in Shweifaf, but was then located in Beirut.⁶⁵ None of the petitioners for the

⁶⁴ *Proceedings*, GLoS, (1930-1931).

⁶⁵ Letter found in the folder of the *Mount Lebanon* petition from 1923 at the archive of the GLoS.

re-establishment of *Mount Lebanon Lodge* had any direct connection with *Kadisha Lodge* during its first years of activity, with only Bahij Fakhouri being a member of *El Mizhab Lodge*. Consequently, the connection between these two lodges is unclear.⁶⁶



Figure 21: Bahij Shukri Fakhouri (*El Mizhab Lodge*: 2008, *D.S.*)

However, three months later *Kadisha* was the subject of another letter sent to the same superintendent and forwarded to Edinburgh. A similar scenario was played out in this letter: individuals wished to re-establish the former lodge. It stated that the originator and his colleagues were ‘desirous of working for the prosperity of the order and anxious to assist in expanding the right and true principles of our Science, and for other good reasons’. Their wish was to re-open the lodge this time in Beirut and to work again under the Grand Lodge of Scotland with meetings being held in French.⁶⁷

All the petitioners were from *Peace Lodge*, except Victor Dichy, a member of an American lodge, Nouredine Mikati, who was a former master of *Kadisha* and Bahij Fakhouri from *El Mizhab Lodge*. The petition was supported by Boutros

⁶⁶ A petition attached to the letter. Fakhouri was the son of Shukri Fakhouri, who was also responsible for having sent the translated rituals to the Grand Lodge, *Proceedings*, (1931-1932).

⁶⁷ Found in the file of petitions relating to *Kadisha Lodge* in the Archive of the GLoS. The author of this letter contributes to the discussion about the lodge’s location in Ottoman years as he states that back then *Kadisha* had been working in Tripoli.

Khoury from *Peace* Lodge, Adib Andraos from *Zahle* Lodge and Mahomoud Zouhair from *El Mizhab* Lodge.⁶⁸ No new members of *Kadisha* Lodge were mentioned in the registration books for that time and no official reconvention occurred. The existence of these letters reaffirms the belief of the existence of a long period of inactivity, or, at least, the diminished prestige of *Kadisha* if it had been working without European recognition following its official closure.

During its existence, *Kadisha* Lodge played an eminent role when inaugurating other lodges and its members actively supported new lodge formations. In 1910 *Kadisha's* Abdullatif Omari was awarded the office of Junior Warden for the new *Salah ed-Din* Lodge in Acre.⁶⁹ Furthermore, in 1911 *El Hakikat* Lodge, No. 1088, was founded, with most of the initial members originally coming from *Kadisha* Lodge. Among them were Samuel Yanni who was the younger brother of Jurji Yanni, Rashid Yaziji, Hannah Hakim, Sami Nahhas and Rashid Moussorany.⁷⁰ Since the lodge meetings took place in Lattakia, the members from Tripoli probably had some connection to the town as both places were linked through trade. It is unclear what language was principally used in this lodge or how often meetings took place. But a potential reason for the involvement of *Kadisha's* members could have been that they simply founded the lodges and took over the essential posts on a temporary basis, before handing them over to newly initiated masons after a period of apprenticeship, in order to spread freemasonry. This behaviour would substantiate my overall thesis: freemasonry was at its strongest when united and only in unity was it powerful enough to fight the prevailing religious conflicts.

Samuel Yanni was again active in founding *Emessa* Lodge in Homs. In the case of *El Hakikat* Lodge, even the petition is written on notepaper belonging to

⁶⁸ Also found in the folder from *Mount Lebanon* Lodge; (forwarded letter dated 13.02.1967).

⁶⁹ Petition of the Lodge, 1910, GLoS.

⁷⁰ Petition of *El Hakikat* Lodge, 1911, GLoS.

Kadisha Lodge. On this occasion Yanni took on the role of being a supporter for the petition. His co-supporter was a relative, Constantin Yanni, who was nominated as lodge secretary. Constantin Yanni worked in Homs for the *Dalil Hims* newspaper, which was affiliated to the Decentralisation Party, which had been established in 1912 in Cairo, with many branches throughout Syria. As Eliezer Tauber notes, the party ‘strived for granting administrative decentralisation to all the *vilayets* of the Ottoman Empire, but in reality it concentrated its efforts in Syria alone’.⁷¹

According to a story found in an anti-masonic book written by Hussein Hamade, Jurji Yanni had written a letter to George Sursock in which he described the events leading to the foundation of *El Mizhab* Lodge in 1914.⁷² He apparently encouraged some interested men to found a new lodge in El Mina and they went on to establish *Fam el-Mizhab* Lodge (later *El Mizhab*) with Antonios Bassili as its head. Hamade goes on to narrate about events related to freemasonry in Homs. First, *Kadisha* Lodge somehow helped a mason from Homs who had been taken to court. Some members of the same lodge, among whom was Constantin Yanni, then asked for advice from Tripoli regarding their lodge’s affiliation. They turned to *Kadisha* Lodge, since its fees were lower than those from lodges in Beirut, Damascus or Zahle. Apparently the lodge members from Homs wanted to discard their irregular status in order to receive accredited standing. According to Hamade, Jurji Yanni recommended to Constantin Yanni that he be initiated into *Kadisha* Lodge, which subsequently transpired.

The veracity of this story and whether freemasons had any influence on court decisions is unclear. However, Constantin and his friends were the individuals who

⁷¹ 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, (Brill: 1990), p. 165, 167.

⁷² Hussein Hamade, *Al masuniyyeh wa al masuniyyin fi’l watan al arabiyyeh*, (Dar Qatiba, Damascus: probably 1985); courtesy of Bassam Dagher.

petitioned to establish the *Emessa* Lodge in Homs. At this stage, Constantin Yanni signed as secretary of *Kadisha* Lodge and Samuel Yanni supported the lodge's foundation in his function as Deputy Master of *Kadisha* Lodge. Other members of *Kadisha* Lodge were Michel Salloum, who acted as senior deacon, Rashid Moussorany, who fulfilled the role of junior deacon, and Mahmud Monkara as tyler.⁷³ Hence, *Emessa* Lodge must have already been in existence. It was in effect the petitioners' old lodge and they were simply looking for permission to change affiliation away from an unrecognised grand lodge to the Grand Lodge of Scotland.

This un-dogmatic change from one grand body to another again affirms the main thesis of this work about lodge foundations in Greater Syria. It was not the grand bodies that controlled the lodges, but rather the other way around. In other words, the Syrian masons themselves were in charge of their own affairs and cooperation between the lodges was widespread. Deciding on the patronage of a European grand lodge eliminated potential conflicts when visiting the meetings of other lodges.

However, the behaviour regarding lodge affiliations and their recognitions varied. In 1913, for example, in the same year as *Emessa* was recognised by the Grand Lodge of Scotland, two other lodges in Beirut were recognised by the Ottoman Grand Orient.⁷⁴ At this point the Ottoman Grand Orient had been recognised by only a few masonic bodies. Syrian freemasons, like the European grand lodges, were uncertain as to how to deal with the newly erected Ottoman grand body and decided matters on a case-by-case basis.

With regard to *Emessa* Lodge, it was not the actual Scottish affiliation that was significant, but what it made possible. In brief, the creation of equal lodges, which worked according to the same rules and regulations, enabled their members to

⁷³ Petition of *Emessa* Lodge, 1913, Archive of GLoS.

⁷⁴ Appendix II.

move in a less restricted manner between meetings and locations. The dynamics of the lodges and the flexibility of their members – as seen when comparing overlapping membership – strengthened freemasonry throughout Greater Syria. On the one hand, this certainly helped to produce more stability in daily life. On the other hand, business relations could be cultivated on a different level.

In November 1920 another petition reached the Grand Lodge of Scotland for the establishment of *Taurus* Lodge, No. 1249, located in Iskenderun, to the west of Aleppo. Two members of *Kadisha* Lodge – Antonios Gellad and Mounir el-Malek – served as Deputy Master and Substitute Master respectively. The cover letter had been penned by the office bearers of *Kadisha* Lodge at that time: Gellad, who was Senior Warden, El-Malek, who had been serving as Second Warden, and Jurji Yanni, the Grand Master. As with *Kadisha* Lodge, *Taurus* Lodge chose sky blue as its official colour.⁷⁵

Involvement in these lodge foundations certainly shows an intention to expand the network of freemasonry and unite otherwise conflicting religious communities. However, one must also consider the fact that members of *Kadisha* Lodge were not disinterested observers of their surroundings. This was especially the case since most of them were traders and seamen. Hence, in business terms they were well connected to inland areas and consequently travelled and traded with other traders - potential masons - in nearby cities. Thus, self-serving motives helped the masons of Tripoli and El Mina to reach out to neighbouring areas and to spread ideas of tolerance and peaceful co-existence.

Before *Taurus* Lodge came into existence, members of *Kadisha* actively supported the erection of other lodges. In 1910, for example, Abdullatif Omari and a

⁷⁵ Petition of *Taurus* Lodge, 1920, Archive of GLoS.

fellow brother participated in the establishment of the *Salah ed-Din* Lodge in Acre. Though the economic importance of some of the cities in which lodges had been established had decreased by that time, the main reason behind the support of these foundations can be found in freemasonry itself. It served as a perfect network that was applicable to all areas, irrespective of religious affiliation. Trade relations may have been established over a long period of time and families knew each other. Therefore, the extension of lodge life to a city like Acre seems logical.

The second lodge established in Tripoli was *El Mizhab*, No. 1130, in 1914. The foundation of this lodge once again proved the spirited nature of *Kadisha's* members. Indeed, only one of the founding fathers came from *Sunneen* Lodge, while all the other members knew each other from *Kadisha*. However, *Kadisha* was not the first masonic lodge for some, as a number of individuals had initially been initiated in *Peace* Lodge. It is unclear how *Kadisha* Lodge was able to survive after *El Mizhab* Lodge started to work, as the names of *Kadisha* members can be found in the latter's attendance book and the men involved must have been quite busy visiting all the various lodge meetings. However, the fact that these men not only supported the foundation of other lodges, but also sent a letter of thanks to Ahmed Effendi al-Ashi, who belonged to another lodge, illustrates that they succeeded in their efforts to establish a pan-regional network of lodges. Depending on location and the composition of men, lodges probably also had varying priorities and standards. Though one can indeed state that the Syrians were striving for masonic unity, every single member had his own understanding of freemasonry and had a range of choices with regard to which lodge he chose to join. That is, the main principles of freemasonry were valid for everyone and religious tolerance was certainly one of the dominant tenets, but masons were not restricted in terms of location.

Who were these people? What made them join freemasonry and seek to bring it to areas previously beyond the fraternity's reach? Under what conditions did these men live? Which communities did they belong to? These were the questions I asked during my field trip to Tripoli. Some of them were answered; others remain open. However, to grasp the nature of freemasonry in Tripoli, one has to start somewhere. Thus, in the next section a sample of the builders of these lodges will be examined. Unfortunately, some of the families involved left Lebanon entirely and their ancestors' lives are no longer traceable.

Builders of Lodges

Kadisha's petition for a charter was written and signed by 'Dr Alex. N. Baroody; Editor of *At-Tabeeb*' in January 1906, with an attachment from the 'W.M. [Worshipful Master, *D.S.*] of Lodge Peace'. The Grand Lodge of Scotland received the petition ten days later.⁷⁶

In its first years *Kadisha* Lodge attracted local men from the middle class, who lived and worked in El Mina and Tripoli.⁷⁷ Tripoli lacked prestigious educational institutions like those in Beirut or organisations charities and social groups in general. Those already existing in Tripoli were all structured along sectarian lines, in order to alleviate the distress of their respective communities. What was missing was an all-inclusive ideology, or in other words, something that men could identify with in order to establish a bond between them and secure their most basic need: to live in peace together.

⁷⁶ Alexander Baroody sometimes signs himself as Barroudi. I use the latter spelling, *D.S.*.

⁷⁷ A situation that changed in the 1920s when the lodge attracted Syrians from other areas and Europeans as well.

The first masonic lodge was at the same time the first society for a long time in Tripoli that transcended religious and class boundaries. Its most important tenet was to provide a common forum for those with a shared interest in the life of the local and regional people.

At the same time, its members continued to be active in other organisations, thereby playing a significant role in the socio-cultural life of Tripoli and El Mina. Most of *Kadisha's* early members were from the Greek Orthodox community, but Muslims and Maronites also joined. However, in correspondence with the population's composition, no members of the Druze community were found among the initial members of the lodge. A noticeable feature of the original composition of the lodge is the fact that many of their ancestors actually migrated to El Mina and Tripoli. This increases the chance that they had experienced freemasonry in other areas. While the foundation of the lodge was a way to weld together the citizens of Tripoli and El Mina, at the same time it may have provided a means for outsiders to feel included in the community.

Abdelkader Arnaout belonged to a family of migrants from Albania, with most of the male members being employed as teachers or merchants. Wadi Assmani's family came from the Hasroun region in the north of Lebanon, which is situated in the Valley of Kadisha. Nassib Bisbany's family had come to settle in Tripoli from Deir el-Qamar. Nassib had first joined *Le Liban* Lodge before being initiated into *Kadisha*. Having belonged to *Hermon* Lodge, which worked under the Grand National Lodge of Egypt, Yasper Yaziji and his son joined *Kadisha* when they moved from Safita to Tripoli. Safita was among the cities in which Abdallah Ghoraib, another *Kadisha* member, served as governor.

George Dimitri Sursock

The Sursock family enjoyed the reputation of being the wealthiest Christian family in Beirut, and even today they still embody Lebanese notions of noblesse and tradition. The only surviving member of this family is a practicing Catholic and chose not to support my research. When I visited the lady in question in 2007 she lived in the Sursock Quarter, next to the Sursock Museum in the Sursock Palace. Reference to the discovery of some members of the Sursock family in the registration books at the archive of the Grand Lodge of Scotland did not persuade her to talk about the family's masonic past.⁷⁸

Strictly speaking, the Sursock family was largely based in Beirut, but George Dimitri was among the founders of *Kadisha* Lodge during his time as Grandmaster of *Le Liban* Lodge.⁷⁹

The Greek Orthodox family was closely connected with exporting silk and wheat to London and Cyprus, with some members also being linked to the banking sector. Most members of the family were working for different European consulates as vice consuls and dragomans.⁸⁰ George Dimitri was employed as a dragoman at the German Consulate. His masonic interest may have originated in his father's membership of the fraternity. Dimitri Sursock Senior was originally initiated into *Palestine* Lodge, but then supported the foundation of *Le Liban* Lodge, which his brother Ilya later joined. Dimitri Senior was an independent merchant, but was also employed as a dragoman at the American Consulate. Ilya was the acting consul for

⁷⁸ When visiting her twice in the winter of 2007 she ordered her maid to show me around and I was allowed to have a look at some old family portraits, but she chose not to divulge further information, *D.S.*

⁷⁹ The non-masonic activities of the Sursock family are widely described in various sources on the history of Lebanon, such as May Davie, *Atlas Historique des Orthodoxes de Beyrouth et du Mont Liban 1800 - 1940*, (Balmand University Tripoli: 1999); Fruma Zachs, *The Making of a Syrian Identity, Intellectuals and Merchants in Nineteenth Century Beirut*, (Brill, Leiden/Boston: 2005).

⁸⁰Zachs: p. 238 – 240.

Persia. From the eleven Sursock family members involved in freemasonry until about 1910, eight were members of *Le Liban*; George A., joined *Peace* Lodge and Alexandre and Jean had been initiated into *La Chaine d'Orient* Lodge. Over time, George Dimitri had different masonic positions, which included being the grandmaster of *Le Liban* Lodge at one point, as well as being a co-founder of *Kadisha* Lodge.

Khaireddeen Abdulwahab

The Abdulwahab family stands out in many ways: Khaireddeen Abdulwahab was one of the few Muslims who joined freemasonry in Greater Syria from its very inception in the region. Subsequently, some other family members followed in his footsteps and became masons. Khaireddeen's brothers, Adel and Toufik, joined lodges.

When members of the American University in Beirut were asked in 1962 to name the most prominent Muslim and Christian families in the city, the Muslim Abdulwahabs were mentioned by all those who were questioned. Christians in Greater Syria thought of them as belonging to the elite of Muslim society, while Muslims categorised the family as an eminently respectable Christian family.⁸¹ The confusion or insecurity regarding the family's affiliation and its high standing among both Christians and Muslims attests to its pragmatic approach towards religion..

One of Khaireddeen's grandsons is also one of the few members of the Abdulwahab family who remembers anecdotes and details about his grandfather's generation.⁸² In 2008 we met in his commodious flat in El Mina. He was comfortable speaking English and German and some younger family members then lived in

⁸¹ Gulick: p. 178-179.

⁸² Information about the Abdulwahabs, if not stated otherwise, comes courtesy of a grandson of Khaireddeen Abdulwahab, (12.07.08).

Germany. For a period the grandson had belonged to the Rotary Club, which was not uncommon for members of his generation that had ancestral links to freemasonry. Indeed, according to my observations, many men whose fathers had joined masonic lodges turned towards service societies like the Rotary Club, the Lions or Kiwanis. While the traditions, rituals and histories of the Rotary Club and freemasonry differ, their guiding principles bear similarities, in that both organisations seek social improvement on a large scale unhampered by religious barriers.

Khaireddeen Abdulwahab was born in El Mina in 1877 and died in the hospital of the American University in Beirut in January 1944. This was the same year as his grandson had enrolled in a boarding school run by Jesuits.⁸³ The grandson I interviewed had studied in Germany and in the USA, but always treasured his childhood in El Mina and consequently returned there to start his own family. Even then, years later, when he came back to his home, people would remember his grandfather.⁸⁴ This was also reasoned by the fact that Khaireddeen had served as mayor of El Mina for twenty years until his death.⁸⁵ As the oldest of five brothers, Khaireddeen was the first to be sent to school. Hence, his carte d'identité issued during the French Mandate reads not only that he was 'commerçant' but also 'lettré'.

⁸³ A recent article on Abdulwahab has been added to wikipedia, briefly outlining his life and career, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kheireddine_Abdul_Wahab, (14.01.2011).

⁸⁴ It remains extremely difficult to move within Lebanon if one is interested in politics: Voting is – with very few exceptions - only allowed at a person's birth place because of the prevalent system of confessional voting, *D.S.*.

⁸⁵ Habib Abdulwahab al-Hindi followed suit twelve years later.



Figure 22: Shukri Fakhouri, Khaireddeen Abdulwahab, Jerry Harris with a further servant (from left) (courtesy of Khaireddeen's grandson: Summer 2008, D.S.)

When Khaireddeen's younger brothers enrolled in school, different options regarding selection were already available. Some of the boys were sent to the new American Missionary School, with one going on to complete his medical studies at the American University of Beirut. However, having been involved in the Lewis Affair he was either expelled from university or left by choice. Khaireddeen survived a following trip to Cairo but was consequently sent as a prisoner to the Island of Arwad, as he illegally wanted to leave the Empire. At that time, the French navy had occupied Arwad, and Khaireddeen formed a friendship with Sarlout, who had trained to be a priest and later became the head of the prestigious St. Joseph's School in Antoura.

His brother Adel, who had attended the American Missionary School for Boys in Tripoli, at one time went to Argentina. On his return to Greater Syria he became a partner in Khaireddeen's business. The two brothers continued their father's transport

enterprise. Italians used El Mina to export citrus fruits from the Tripoli region. Due to the dimensions of their boats they could not moor in the port and thus depended on smaller boats for carrying the cargo to and from the shore. Members of the Abdulwahab family invented tank boats with a much higher speed than boats without motors and thereby changed the whole transport system in the region. They were also the first people to make transport boxes out of wood by means of a newly invented machine.

Besides, Khaireddeen cultivated his relationship to Jerry Harris, the American Consul, who came to El Mina in 1883 and who opened the Kennedy American Hospital. Together with Shukri Fakhouri, Khaireddeen served as his mediator. All three were also connected in different ways - either as members or as visitors - to *El Mizhab* Lodge after 1914. Judging from the photograph of the men above (see Figure 22), Khaireddeen acted as an agent between the Ottomans and the West. He also chose to show his affiliation when dealing with foreigners in the way he dressed. Unlike the other two Ottomans in the photograph, he is not wearing any headgear and is sporting a simple frock coat, which matches the appearance of Jerry Harris. This differs from Shukri Fakhouri and the second servant, who are both dressed in the style decreed appropriate in 1829 by Sultan Mahmud II for civil and religious officials. This included the wearing of a fez and pantaloons.⁸⁶

Khaireddeen received an open and liberal education, unlike his son, Abdulghani, who was taught in a very strict manner by Lazarists during the period of the French Mandate and who took over the business after his father's death. Khaireddeen was born into a Sunni Muslim family, but he was not particularly religious. Nevertheless, he continued the religious traditions of the family regarding

⁸⁶ Donald Quataert, 'Clothing Laws, State and Society in the Ottoman Empire, 1720-1829', *IJMES*, vol. 29/3, (Aug. 1997).

marriage: an Abdulwahab always married a woman from the religious Abduljalil family. Sheikh Abduljalil brought up his clan in a religiously conservative way, hence the religiosity of Mariam, Khaireddeen's wife. They lived together in a primarily Greek Orthodox neighbourhood, where Khaireddeen showed respect towards his wife's religious faith and even agreed to send her to Mecca in order to take part in the Hajj pilgrimage. The Abdulwahab family sought to counterbalance their reputation as adventurous smugglers and pirates by marrying with the Abduljalils, who were held in high repute in both civil and religious terms.⁸⁷

My interviewee supposes that his grandfather also profited from the positive attitudes of the Greek Orthodox community towards European concepts and innovations. Western ideas and concepts, including freemasonry, were embraced more willingly in such an open environment in the region. Khaireddeen was one of the first Muslims who supported the fraternity and helped it to expand in his hometown. Having first been initiated into *Sunneen* Lodge,⁸⁸ he then became a member of *Kadisha* Lodge, and later co-founded *El Mizhab* Lodge.⁸⁹ When asked about education, the interviewed man smiled and commented: 'We're illiterate, we don't read and we don't calculate'. Though this was certainly an exaggeration, it would seem that no intellectual connection to Beirut's early freemasons existed.

It was the flourishing business of the Abdulwahab family that provided them with enough money to build the first villa outside the port area. Together with Assad Bort and George Batashe, Khaireddeen belonged to the most active section of the Minawi population in regard to industry and commerce.

⁸⁷ This was at least the probably exaggerated and jocular explanation of the family member I interviewed, *D.S.*

⁸⁸ Registration books of the GLoS, 1904, *Sunneen*; Khaireddeen was not the only one with a masonic background from *Sunneen* Lodge. Among others were Mahmud Monkara and Zaki Klat.

⁸⁹ Together with Shukri Fakhouri, Antonius Bassily, Salim Antakly, Nicula Nini, Assad Bort, George Bandali, George Ma'arbes, George Batash; (foundation document of *El Mizhab* Lodge, 1914).

However, at least until World War One, Khaireddeen remained very careful about embracing new ideas and concepts: he did not like the theatre with its European plays and he found it problematic to take on all Western manners and innovations without changing or adapting to the different conditions prevalent in Greater Syria.⁹⁰ On the other hand, he did realise the benefits of a Western education when sending his girls to school: his daughter Fatwa was the first girl at the AUB.

According to my interviewee, his grandfather never took freemasonry seriously, nor did he really believe in its traditions and rituals: ‘Everything good in the West, coming to the East, goes to the dogs.’ One is tempted to disagree: Khaireddeen’s constant activity in favour of freemasonry and his general support of new lodges reveals a different mind-set. He was among the first men initiated into *Sunneen* Lodge in Shweir, which was established in 1904. Moreover, between 1900 and 1902 Khaireddeen was a co-founder of *Al Marfa al-Amin* [Worthy Port, D.S.] Lodge and he also became a regular member of *Kadisha* Lodge in 1906.⁹¹ After World War One, Khaireddeen and Toufik Abdulwahab regularly attended meetings of *Mina al-Amin* Lodge, which some of his friends had helped to establish.

Khairdedeen’s participation in the fraternity and his closeness to various lodges once again illustrates the typical features of Ottoman freemasonry. Abdulwahab’s grandson may have thought that Khaireddeen did not take freemasonry too seriously, but his grandfather’s actual behaviour and masonic agility prove him wrong. He belonged to the circle of men that tried to reach out to others when

⁹⁰ Khaireddeen shared the need to adapt and adjust when taking over western ideas with reformers known for their affinity to the *nahda* movement.

⁹¹ The co-founders were Antonius Bassily, Shukri Fakhouri, Salim Antakly, Nicula Nini, As’ad Bort, George Bandali and George Batache. According to Maha Kayyal, in *Tahawwulat al-zaman al-akhir* (*shifts/transformations of another time*), (Mukhtarat, Beirut: 2001), Khaireddeen initiated the foundation of the lodge between 1900 and 1902. Having first thought that it was actually *Mina al-Amin* Lodge that was co-founded by Khaireddeen and that information had been mixed up, I examined the foundation document of *Mina al-Amin* but could not find his name mentioned, D.S.

propagating and expanding freemasonry in order to unify all masons - with the whole of Ottoman society in mind. Khaireddeen's social and political efforts were concentrated first and foremost on El Mina. However, the principles he stood for – religious tolerance and moral emancipation – were universally valid.

Shukri Fakhouri



Figure 23: Shukri Fakhouri (*El Mizhab* Lodge: 2008, D.S.)

Khaireddeen Abdulwahab's friend, Shukri Fakhouri, originally came from Saida. He studied at the SPC and received a bachelor's degree in science. Figure 23 shows a man who is seemingly conforming to the official standards of Ottoman fashion: the suit with the checked tie is combined with the fez. Yet, Fakhouri's eyes suggest a defensive, challenging attitude.

At one point in his life Fakhouri had intended to visit some family members in Sudan, but after being approached by Harris he decided to take up a position as an assistant physician at the American Missionary Hospital. In addition to his work at the hospital, Fakhouri was a priest at the Protestant church in El Mina between 1890,

when he arrived in Tripoli, until his death in 1923. He was shot dead, together with his son, by a stranger during a Sunday Mass in his church.

Having been among the early members of *Kadisha* Lodge, Fakhouri was also one of the founders of *El Mizhab* Lodge in 1914 and of *Mina al-Amin* Lodge four years later.⁹² Fakhouri served as grandmaster of *El Mizhab* from 1919 until 1922. A year later his translation of the book of rituals from English into Arabic was approved by the Grand Lodge of Scotland.

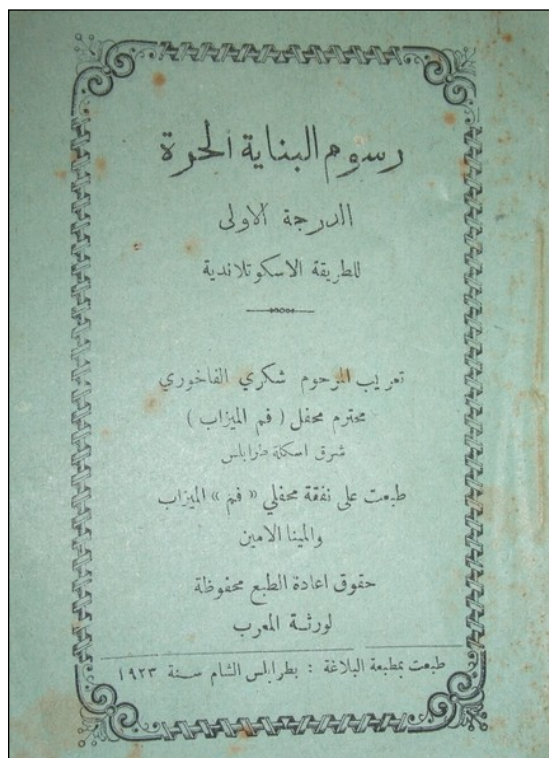


Figure 24: Rituals (*El Mizhab* Lodge: 2008, D.S.)

The main connecting points with other freemasons were their common work for Harris and the care for the people of El Mina. An outstanding feature is the fact that Fakhouri was a priest and therefore a representative of a minor faction in all the

⁹² Registration books, GLoS, Petition of *El Mizhab* Lodge, 1914, GLoS, Charter of *Mina al-Amin* Lodge, 1918.

Ottoman lodges observed, although the Protestant church probably had the least problems regarding masonic membership.⁹³

Assad Bort

Assad Bort was another friend of Khaireddeen Abdulwahab. In El Mina I met with one of Bort's relatives, from whom I rely heavily for his biographical information.⁹⁴ According to the relative, Assad was not able to read or write. He described how Assad was 'a self-made man', whose mother died when he was nine years old and whose father, a fisherman, was not wealthy enough to pay tuition fees for his son's education. At an early age, Bort had to leave his parents' house for financial reasons. The interviewee proudly cited his grandfather's achievements: Assad founded *Assad Bort & Son*, which delivered all kinds of construction materials from central regions to the Ottoman periphery. Having begun his working life as a street peddler, Bort soon became a representative for the Sachs Company, which traded in iron in the Middle East.

⁹³ Pastor Dr. Habib Badr confirmed my impression during one of our meetings, telling me about his own surprise when a Protestant's priest funeral was more or less organised by the freemasons with many of the church members revealing their own masonic memberships; Interview with Habib Badr and Kamal Salibi, Beirut, (14.07.2008), *D.S.*

⁹⁴ Interview with J. Bort, El Mina, (11.07.2008).



Figure 25: Assad Bort (*El Mizhab* Lodge: 2008, D.S.)

Bort was born in 1851 and lived in El Mina until his death at the age of 96. He married a woman from the Kanawati family, and was a representative of the Greek Orthodox Church, with diverse honorary distinctions. Contrary to his prominence and activity in church and social matters, he never wanted to be involved in politics, as he preferred to make deals by informal networking. The portrait shown in Figure 25, which hangs together with the others on the walls of *El Mizhab* Lodge, displays a rigorous and feisty man. He is seen wearing a fez with a suit, like some of his fellow masons. Around his shoulders he proudly wears a masonic sash and his facial expression suggests a strong will without much tolerance for disagreement.

Bort regularly donated to charitable organisations and helped to nationalise the water system. Thereafter the local population only had to pay what they could afford for water. He was enlisted into the Ottoman army at the outbreak of World War One, and subsequently many of his assets were stolen. The interviewee described his grandfather, who died when he was only six years old, as a man of short stature though handsome and elegant. According to him, Bort never drank or smoked but

loved honey. He was also a tough guy who used to work non-stop and would beat his grandson when he stole his walking stick.

Assad Bort joined *Kadisha* Lodge in its early years and his name can be found among the founders and the early presidents of *El Mizhab* Lodge.⁹⁵ Like his friend, Khairedeen Abdulwahab, he distinguished himself through his humanity and was one of the most generous donors to Greek Orthodox charitable organisations, which accords with his grandson's statement: 'Ours may not be a famous family but it is a correct one'. Another side comes across with regard to business and the way Bort seemed to have preferred to deal with people. What else was better suited for networking than freemasonry, with its widespread lodges throughout Ottoman Syria?

One did not necessarily have to be a pure do-gooder to join the fraternity. In the case of Bort, he benefitted from masonic membership in the form of useful links for future trade. One family who did not share the same respect for Bort as his grandson was the Oweida family. Both the Bort and Oweida families traded in construction materials and hence were natural competitors, but yet Assad Bort and Mustafa Oweida were still brothers in the same lodge.

Mustafa Oweida

Mustafa Oweida was the first dentist in Tripoli. As was common for doctors and dentists at the time, Mustafa had studied in Istanbul. He sent his children to a French missionary school, defying his Muslim religious affiliation in favour of providing his children with a good education. According to the ancestor I interviewed, Mustafa was the masonic chairman for the north of Lebanon. Subsequently this position was assumed by his son, Hanni. Unfortunately all documents that could

⁹⁵ Registration books, Lodge Petitions; Archive of the GLoS.

corroborate these statements have been lost and no such position has been mentioned in any of the grand lodges visited, though Mustafa is registered in the books in Edinburgh as having been initiated in *Kadisha* Lodge in 1906 at the age of 50. Oweida, like Abdulwahab, did cross religious borders and was interested in a coherent society in El Mina and in the whole of Syria. Like Bort he probably joined freemasonry because of a mixture of financial and civic aspirations.⁹⁶

Abdallah and Alexandre Ghoraib

In the summer of 2008, I had the chance to meet A. Ghoraib in his luxurious flat in Tripoli. Together with his wife, he tried to come up with some memories of his grandfather and uncles. Incredibly, the family preserved certificates, a sabre, a belt and even a uniform from their ancestors that dated back to 1792.⁹⁷ Figure 26 shows the uniform's belt, which is treasured by Ghoraib's relatives.



Figure 26: Ottoman Belt (Ghoraib/Tripoli: 2008, *D.S.*)

However, the only masonic item in A. Ghoraib's possession is a tobacco box handed over to the family by the brotherhood.

⁹⁶ While the family in general, unlike some more conservative Muslim families, has no problem with its involvement in freemasonry, grandson Ismat Kazem Ouaida seemed less pleased. One shelf in his flat in the centre of Tripoli is dedicated to anti-Jewish, anti-masonic, conspiratorial 'literature', *D.S.*; Interview, El Mina, (24.07.2008).

⁹⁷ Interview with A. Ghoraib, El Mina, (15.07.2008); Information on the Ghoraib family if not mentioned otherwise by courtesy of A. Ghoraib.

The two Ghoraib brothers who were freemasons were both born in Tripoli in the 1870s. Under the Ottoman government their father was responsible for the financial affairs for the area between Tripoli and Lattakia. One of the brothers, Abdallah, went to university in Istanbul in order to study law. After graduating he was appointed by the Ottoman government and then the French governor for different districts, and worked throughout the Greater Syrian region. According to his grandson, he was a very strict but honest person, who owned seven houses and one garden. Abdallah believed in the principle of learning: ‘to tell the truth and the truth will show you the beauty of life’. The male members of the family predominantly worked for the state and were politically active. According to other citizens from El Mina, the Ghoraib family belongs to one of the oldest and best-known family clans in the region. In 2008, the weekly *Tamaddun* journal wrote in its *From the Past* section that eighty years earlier Abdallah had taken the place of Michel Muawwad as governor in Metn, when the latter had left for Ehden.⁹⁸

Alexandre was a colonel in the Ottoman army and afterwards became a medical officer. Like his brother, he knew Turkish, but he had studied at the American University in Beirut. This fact was of importance to him as he chose a university building as the background for a photograph of him (Figure 27). Sitting on a horse and wearing an Ottoman uniform he looks comfortable and self-confident. His face is adorned by a large moustache, bestowing seriousness and will power to his appearance.

⁹⁸ *Tamaddun*, (03.07.2008).

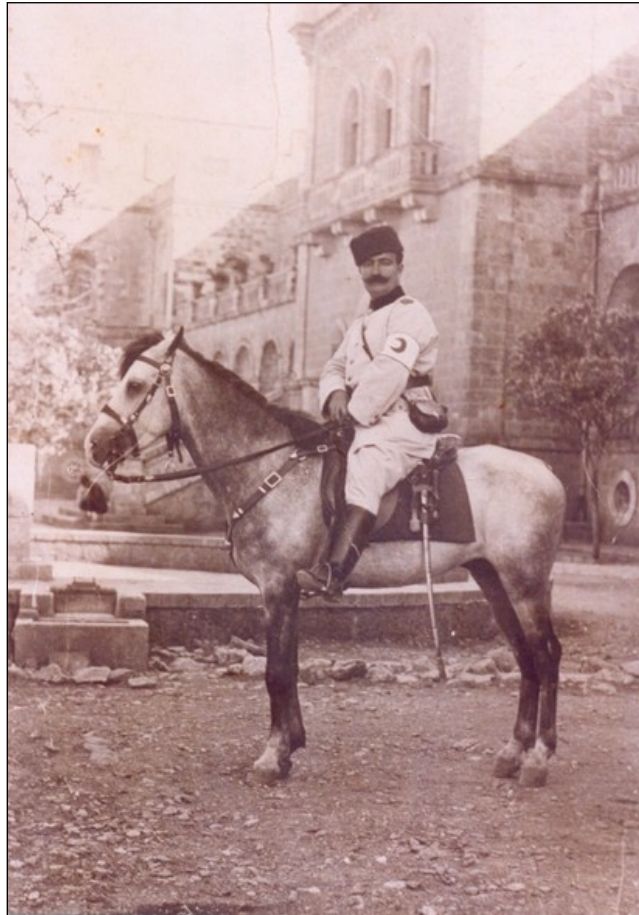


Figure 27: Alexandre Ghoraib in front of the AUB (courtesy of Toufik Klat: 2008)

Both brothers were initiated into *Kadisha* Lodge. Alexandre joined *L'Unione* Lodge at a later stage, which initially belonged to the Grand Orient of Italy but then became independent. However, their cousin Salame was the first member of the wider Ghoraib family to join freemasonry. Indeed, Salame was one of the founders of *Kadisha* in 1906, when he was already a member of Peace Lodge. No further details of him are known, except for the fact that he later became a member of *El Mizhab* Lodge. The Ghoraibs became connected to the Klats through intermarriage.

I met T., the first offspring of this relationship, in 2008 at his gift boutique just outside Beirut.⁹⁹ The Klats were originally from Armenia, where Akhlat, their original name, was the financial centre of the area.

⁹⁹ Interview with T., Beirut, (10.07.2008). In other sources Klat is also spelt Khlat; I decided to adopt T.'s choice.



Figure 28: Eastern Anatolia and Lake Van (Akhlāt lies to the North West of Lake Van), (Map of the Ottoman Empire: 1845)¹⁰⁰

T. guessed that the family left Armenia during the invasion of the Mongols in the thirteenth century, when Armenians fled to Mount Lebanon. This experience may have contributed to their negative attitude towards the Ottoman regime and its approach towards minorities. In the time of the Empire the Klats abstained from political activities and only one family member ran for a seat in parliament between the 1960s and 1970s.

Both of his grandfathers, Alexandre Ghoraib and Lutfallah Klat were heads of the Greek Orthodox community. However, before the families were united, their relationship was hostile and competitive. According to T., Lutfallah was completely against freemasonry, which he regarded as irreconcilable to religion. He became known in Tripoli as an intellectual and poet, who published in different journals. However, he was exiled in World War One because of his nationalist writings. At one point he returned to his home country and continued publishing, but all his journals were burned and none of his contributions have been preserved. Lutfallah died in 1962.¹⁰¹ His brother, Toufik, was a member of *Kadisha* Lodge and later *El Mizhab* Lodge. Two other members of the Klats family were masons in *Kadisha* Lodge: Zaki

¹⁰⁰ www.euratlas.net/cartogra/ottoman_1845/ottoman_map_9_4.html, (01.10.2009).

¹⁰¹ Samih al-Zeine, *Ta'rikh Ṭarābulus, qadīman wa-ḥadīthan*, (Dar al-Andalus, Beirut: 1969), p. 483.

Klat, who first belonged to *Sunneen* Lodge and Constantin Klat. Esaad and Antoine Klat were active in *Le Liban* Lodge, but all of them settled in Tripoli.

T. also told me what he remembered about Alexandre Ghoraib.¹⁰² As a doctor, Alexandre had to examine Ottoman soldiers. When asked to look after soldiers from Tripoli and El Mina, he provided them with certificates to exempt them from what was an unpopular duty. Like the Abdulwahabs, the Ghoraib's were also associated with wealth and prominence. Unlike Khairedeen Abdulwahab they were not among the supporters of the Ottoman government. In a similar manner to Assad Bort, they were not interested in politics. At the same time they did care for the people of Tripoli and El Mina in general.

This once again demonstrates that the activities of *Kadisha* and other lodges were not about resistance to Abdulhamid's reign. Rather, they focussed on the idea of the possibility of a common denominator for all Syrians.

Constantin Doumani

Another memorable meeting during my time in Lebanon in 2008 took place with the Doumani brothers.¹⁰³ Although they were only one and three years old when their grandfather Constantin died in December 1924, at the age of forty-nine, they knew a few things about him. As a banker, Constantin was a respected figure. He had three brothers and two sisters. Some stayed in El Mina, whilst others moved to Egypt and Turkey. Among his friends was Towfik Mabro, another member of *Kadisha* Lodge,¹⁰⁴ who worked as a wood merchant in Egypt and whose sister married

¹⁰² Information about the Klats and the Ghoraibs if not stated otherwise is courtesy of T.

¹⁰³ Information on the Doumanis is courtesy of the Doumani brothers. Interview, Tripoli, (13.07.2008).

¹⁰⁴ Registration books, GLoS, *Kadisha* Lodge.

Constantin's brother.¹⁰⁵ Another was Alexandre Habib, who also had joined *Kadisha* in the lodge's first two years, when he was 24 years old. Like other families, the Habibs were less known for any political involvement than for their active support of charitable societies.

Constantin probably went to school in Alexandria, where he had lived occasionally. He travelled to the World Fair in Paris in 1889.¹⁰⁶ Constantin began to work for the German-Palestine Bank before the outbreak of World War One. After World War Two he became the director of the Banco di Roma.

The Doumani family was not only connected to the Antakly and Hakim families through intermarriage, but Constantin Doumani, George and Salim Antakly and Jean Hakim all joined *Kadisha* Lodge at the beginning of the twentieth century. For another time, the aspect of travelling has to be recalled. As a freemason it was much easier to find a 'home' in foreign countries and adequate support when needed. It is not too farfetched to speculate that Doumani also profited from this masonic perk when visiting Paris. This is especially the case when one remembers that he travelled during the time of the Fair, when ceremonies were held to celebrate the 100th anniversary of the storming of the Bastille. It is also significant that this trip also coincided with the first international masonic congress held in Paris.¹⁰⁷

Jean Hakim

¹⁰⁵ I was told that one member of the Mabro family, Hilda, was working for the consulate in Tripoli but have not been able to meet her. Hilda married into the Massad family, which had masonic connections. The word *mabro* comes from Greek and means black. Once a piece of land in El Mina was called the Land of Mabro; it included parts of the ruined old city wall, in the Deir-Ghrab district, D.S..

¹⁰⁶ Masons still praise their fraternity for the two famous artefacts made around this date: the Eiffel Tower and the Statue of Liberty, both designed by Gustave Eiffel and financially supported by many American and French masons. See 'Masonry and the Statue of Liberty', Robert C. Singer, www.masonicworld.com/education/files, (21.08.2009).

¹⁰⁷ Letter from *La Syrie* to the GOdF, (25.01.1891), *La Syrie*, carton no. 1, Archive of the GOdF.

The first striking feature of Jean Hakim was his flexibility with regard to his name. He adjusted his forename depending on the type of document he was to sign. For his regular visits to *El Mizhab* Lodge he used his Arabic forename, Hannah. He is registered as member of *Kadisha* Lodge as John, and, finally, under the French Mandate he signed himself as Jean. Hakim (see Figure 29) appears to have completely absorbed Western influences. Unlike others, Hakim does not seem too much interested in the camera as he avoids directly looking into it. Indeed, he gazes to the side with a sceptical, almost dismissive expression. His working life seems to have defined his lifestyle, that is, being diplomatic without much patience for nostalgia.

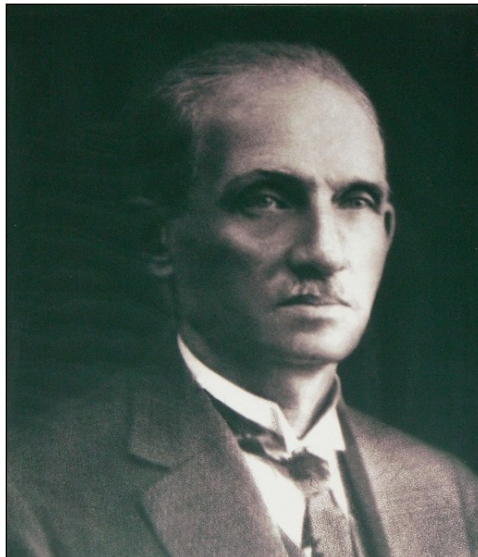


Figure 29: Jean Hakim (*El Mizhab* Lodge: 2008, D.S.)

I stayed in the orphanage in El Mina, which is headed by the wife of Hakim's relative.¹⁰⁸ Her husband M. not only answered my questions, but also showed me the building where the lodge had met in earlier times. His uncle Jean and his father Theodore had both been masons.

Jean had been a diplomat and the Ambassador of Syria in Bonn until his death. At one point during his life he also served as the president of the AUB, but it was

¹⁰⁸ Our interview took place over the course of two meetings, El Mina, (08.07.2008 & 11.07.2008).

probably during his time as a maritime agent that he met and became friends with Khaireddeen Abdulwahab. With him he shared a similar occupation as a mediator between European consulates and Ottoman Syria. Moreover, his participation in a prestigious educational institution shows a feature common with other freemasons, who supported improved conditions for learning and studying.

Jean's relative, M., introduced me to one of his cousins, Julia Labban, an offspring of the Antakly family.

George and Salim Antakly

George and Salim Antakly were members of *Kadisha* Lodge. Judging by their name, the family probably originated from Antioch (Antakya). While they were not founders of the lodge, Salim attained the position of lodge master and was twice master of *El Mizhab* Lodge in 1924 and from 1933 until 1937. This double membership indicates once again the proximity between *Kadisha* and *El Mizhab* Lodge. Moreover, cooperation may have been further facilitated when *Kadisha* Lodge switched to Arabic as its principal working language; a choice *El Mizhab* made from its establishment.

The fact that Syrians had to travel to make ends meet at times is also evident in the personal histories of George and Salim, who were first initiated into a masonic lodge in Brazil.¹⁰⁹ In the photograph of Salim (see Fig. 30 below), he appears as a sturdy man. Like Hakim, he is not wearing any Ottoman or masonic vestures or emblems.

¹⁰⁹ Registration books at the GLoS.



Figure 30: Salim Antakly (*El Mizhab Lodge*: 2008, D.S.)

Salim and George were traders, who travelled between Greater Syria and Egypt. The Antakly family belonged to the elite of society, without being politically active, and were connected to the Catseflis family through intermarriage.

Edouard and Rodolf Catseflis

The Christian Catseflis family originally came from the Greek island of Corfu and its members settled in Tripoli and Alexandria. According to Zachs, ‘they engaged in literature and culture alongside their other occupations, particularly at the consulates.’¹¹⁰ Members of the family are principally known as poets, although the family’s international character and proficiency in languages is also stated by Middle Eastern historians. It seems that it was the family’s interest in literature and culture that led some of them to join lodges in Beirut, where the cultural life was much more pronounced. Among these individuals was Rodolf, who became a member of *Le Liban* lodge. Edouard joined *Kadisha* and more of the Catseflis family appear several

¹¹⁰ Fruma Zachs, *The Making of a Syrian Identity – Intellectuals and Merchants in Nineteenth Century Beirut*, (Brill, Leiden/Boston: 2005), p. 226-227.

times on the member lists of the lodges, but only these two individuals can be clearly identified on an individual basis.

Unfortunately, the only direct descendant still living in Tripoli during my period of field research was not contactable. According to information received from some interviewees, the family suffered bankruptcy some time ago. In Alexandria they had been involved in the timber trade, together with Antonius and Assad Bassily. The latter was also a member of *Kadisha* lodge.¹¹¹ Antonius Bassily's photograph (see Fig. 31 below) is too shadowy to reveal much of the man's face. However, his suit and winter jacket give the impression of a resolute and urbane man.



Figure 31: Antonius Bassily (*El Mizhab* Lodge: 2008, D.S.)

The Catseflis family had links to the Yanni family through intermarriage. Jurji Yanni's sisters, Barbara and Tiyudura, were married to Qaysar and Tiyudur Catseflis. Both families also shared interests in literature and freemasonry.¹¹²

Jurji Yanni

¹¹¹ Assad originally worked as a journalist and wrote for *Al Ahram*, *Al Muqtataf* and *Al Hilal* and published a journal (*Al Jam'iya al-Usmaniyya*) together with his friend Anton Farrah in Alexandria. He changed his profession in order to earn more. Unlike his brother, Assad is not known to have been a freemason, (Samih al-Zeine: p. 490).

¹¹² Fruma Zachs, *The Making of a Syrian Identity – Intellectuals and Merchants in Nineteenth Century Beirut*, (Brill, Leiden/Boston: 2005), p. 242.

The Yanni family has played a significant role in the history of Syria and provides an excellent example of the overlapping networks of masons and men interested in their cultural surroundings. Mikhail is the first of the Yanni family about whom some biographical details are known. With his family roots in Greece, he travelled by boat from Mykonos to the Syrian coast to carry out some business, but his boat was shipwrecked near Tripoli and he was stranded at El Mina. According to the Lebanese historian Omer Abdulsalam Tadmori, Mikhail lost all his possessions at sea while he was saved by Jean Catseflis, a translator for the British consul in Tripoli, who then acted as Yanni's patron.¹¹³ Mikhail stayed in Tripoli, married and had children. One of his sons, Jurji, was the father of Antonius and the grandfather of Jurji and Samuel Yanni. Antonius served as consul for America and Belgium. He also wrote for *Al Jinan*, the newspaper published by the Bustani family. Mikhail worked as a foreign affairs journalist, and collaborated with Joseph Diab and Abdullah Naufal in Tripoli. All of them were members of the *al-Jam'iyya al-Sūriyya (the Syrian Society)*, an academic association established in 1847.

Yanni's house was a meeting place for intellectuals and generally welcomed likeminded visitors from Europe and America. Among Antonius's assets was his reputation for tolerance and even-handedness towards varying religious denominations. He was close to Christian and Muslim religious leaders, which was put to the test during the inter-religious struggles during the 1860s. During this period the Algerian Emir Abd al-Qadir al-Jazairi distinguished himself as a mediator between the fighting groups.¹¹⁴ Yanni's list of displaced people and his descriptions of

¹¹³ If not mentioned otherwise, information about J. Yanni: Abdulsalam Tadmori, 'Al-Mu'arrikh Jūrjī Yanni', in: *Mu'arrikūn al-ʿāmm min Lubnān ('The historian Jurji Yanni', in: General Historians from Lebanon)*, edited by Massoud Daher, (1988), p. 109 – 138.

¹¹⁴ Until our days, Abd al-Qadir al-Jazairi stands out as a hero especially among Arab freemasons as he saved many Christians in his own house during the unrests in Damascus in 1860. In the wake of his

their misery were sent to America. In reply he received a letter of thanks from President James Buchanan. So close was he to evangelical Europeans that he converted to Protestantism. A missionary from the American Board called Antonius a ‘liberal and enlightened man’, who was ‘engrossed by business’ and ‘full of vivacity’.¹¹⁵

Jurji was born in 1854, in the midst of an atmosphere laden with political, literary and reformist discussions. He was educated in the evangelical school in Tripoli and in Butrus al-Bustani’s national school in Beirut, before returning to Tripoli. During these years Y. Choueiri notes that he ‘acquired knowledge of foreign languages such as Italian, French and English’ and wrote articles for Bustani’s *Al Jinan* journal.¹¹⁶ At the age of nineteen, he was entrusted with all of his father’s diplomatic and social functions. Jurji was less of a politician than his father and preferred activities linked to literature and science. As Zachs states, ‘in 1876, he helped establish a literary society headed by Iskander [Catseflis], in which he served as secretary.’¹¹⁷ Five years later he co-founded the Keftin School in the Khoura district close to Tripoli with some Greek Orthodox scientists. In the same year he published his history of Syria, in which he emphasised Greater Syria as a historic entity that was much older than Islam and recognised by the Phoenicians.¹¹⁸ In this opinion one can see reflected one of the major subjects discussed by the Syrian Society.¹¹⁹

deeds and as a mark of gratitude he who had joined already a lodge in Alexandria in the 1840s or 1850s was admitted to different masonic lodges, *D.S.*. See also: Jacob M. Landau, *Prolegomena*, p. 139.

¹¹⁵ Whiting, Visit to Tripoli, March 30, 1849, in: *The Missionary Herald: Reports from Ottoman Syria, 1819 – 1870*, p. 85.

¹¹⁶ Y. Choueiri, ‘Two Histories of Syria and the Demise of Syrian Patriotism’, *Middle Eastern Studies*, vol. 23/4, (Oct. 1987), p. 503.

¹¹⁷ Zachs: p. 242.

¹¹⁸ *Ta’rikh Sūriya*.

¹¹⁹ Fruma Zachs, ‘Towards 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, (Jul., 2001), p. 172.

Jurji Yanni also wrote on the history of the Franco-Prussian War and translated a book on maritime and commercial assets, which paralleled his thoughts in his translation of the *History of a New Civilisation*.¹²⁰ After his father died in 1882, he acted as consul for the USA and as a vice consul for Belgium. Another step bringing him closer to the people around him occurred when he gave up his Greek nationality and became an Ottoman subject.

His personal networks were reinforced by his marriage into the prestigious Jumblatt clan. Yanni also involved himself in diverse literary circles and publishing projects. Together with his brother, Samuel, he founded the *Mabahith (Researches)* journal, which was printed until 1927. He was a member of the Eastern Scientific Association of Beirut, the Eastern Society of Leiden, the Arab Scientific Society in *Damascus* and the Asian Scientific Association in Paris. Apart from that, he still found time to write articles and he contributed to the *Muqtataf* and *Al Mashriq* newspapers.¹²¹ Jurji Yanni died in 1941.

The masonic activities and overlapping membership of various lodges evident in Jurji Yanni's biography can serve as another example of a man who belonged to early lodges in Ottoman Syria. Yanni was exceptional in his close links to Beirut and its cultural reformers. No other freemason from Tripoli is known to have immersed himself so thoroughly in literature and the history of Syria. Hence, Yanni's profile more closely matches those commonly found in Beirut's lodges and it comes as no surprise to learn that the first lodge he was initiated into was *Le Liban* in Beirut before becoming active in *Kadisha*. Samuel Yanni also joined *Kadisha* Lodge. He first studied at the American school in Tripoli before subsequently changing to the AUB. Both brothers demonstrated a lively interest in the support of other lodges.

¹²⁰ Tadmori, p. 111.

¹²¹ Zachs: p. 243. One of his articles, published in *Muqtataf* in 1883, was entitled 'Al-Nahḍa al-adabiyya fī Ṭarābulus' (*the cultural awakening in Tripoli*), (Choueiri: p. 503).

Notably, one foreigner became a member of *Kadisha* Lodge. The person in question was Jerry Harris, who was a doctor from the USA who came to El Mina in 1883. Although initiated into *Kadisha* Lodge, Harris regularly visited *El Mizhab* Lodge until the outbreak of World War One. He worked at the American hospital, as well as being the president of a preaching association and gave his money to the poor during the famine prior to his death in 1915.¹²² Besides his contact with Shukri Fakhouri and Khairedeen Abdulwahab, Harris was also a friend of Ibrahim Khouly, another member of *Kadisha*. Khouly was a doctor himself and was respected as someone who would visit his patients everywhere. He published articles in *Al Muqtataf* on the treatment of various illnesses.¹²³

Another man who was highly esteemed in Tripoli at the time was *Kadisha* member Pious Douba. Born in Tripoli in 1858, Douba learned French and Italian and worked as a pharmacist at the only pharmacy in the city. When he came back from Constantinople, where he received his diploma, he initially worked for Michael Lutfi at a pharmacy on Mar Michael. At one point he also worked as a chemistry teacher; but none of the documents he published on this subject are extant.¹²⁴

For the last few examples of men involved in freemasonry, the fact that the fraternity fostered science and education was probably a key attraction. In addition, they all shared a general interest in the welfare of people from Tripoli and El Mina and considered participation in freemasonry as a useful way to work towards the better realisation of this concern. There were many more men involved in freemasonry in Greater Syria at the time, but I have restricted myself to these examples in order to show the variety of characters the lodge attracted.

¹²² Al-Zeine: p. 565.

¹²³ Ibid.: p. 484.

¹²⁴ Ibid.: p. 486.

When studying the book of attendance for *El Mizhab* Lodge the question of dual membership came up: why did all of *Kadisha's* early members visit or become members of *El Mizhab* Lodge? At the time *El Mizhab* was founded in 1914, as the archives in Edinburgh prove, *Kadisha* was still active. As proceedings within different years show, the lodge continued to accept new members and paid for documents sanctioned by the Grand Lodge of Scotland. Most of the men were members of both lodges at the same time, which was seemingly not a troubling matter to them in terms of membership fees.

The merging and overlapping nature of the two lodges points to the significance of freemasonry in Greater Syria at the time. Freemasonry was ideally suited to fill the gap that existed in terms of a sense of a lack of community spirit in Tripoli and El Mina. One major reason for this deficit originated in the fact that, as Gulick states, 'sentiments of social responsibility [were] largely confined to sect and family.' Additionally, Gulick argues that there were 'various attitudes toward the municipal government, none positive.'¹²⁵ If the men could not rely on their government, they had even more reason to cooperate and look towards protecting their own future. The perceived weakness of Abdulhamid and his officials certainly contributed to the popularity of masonic lodges, in which members learned sometimes for the first time in their lives about how to organise themselves into a united community.

Having said this Gulick notes that, 'Christian and Muslim families in Tripoli who have high social prestige have a number of interests and tastes in common and these may actually draw them together even though they would never intermarry.'

¹²⁵ Gulick: p. 67.

Differences in social prestige within a sect group, on the other hand, may considerably dilute that group's over-all solidarity'.¹²⁶

Likewise, freemasons belonged to the same class. The brotherhood was definitely not for the poor, who had to worry about food. Indeed, it is interesting to note that a list of prominent Muslim and Christian families dating from the 1960s in large parts complies with the names linked to freemasonry in the region in the nineteenth century. Among the Muslim families listed, with previous links to freemasonry in Tripoli and El Mina, were the following: Karami, Oweida, Muqaddim, Ghandour, Husayni, Monkara, Zreik, Mossarani, Kabbara, Al-Omari and Abdulwahab. There are even more Christian families with links to freemasonry, including Bort, Klat, Naufal, Nahhas Khoury, Dib, Sawaya, Boulus, Ghoraib, Nini, Yanni and Batashe. The author's opinion is striking, stating that 'while sectarian identities tend to keep people of different sects apart, similar positions in the socio-economic hierarchy give them something in common. Thus, there seems to be a certain amount of Muslim-Christian fraternization among upper class people, as evidenced in the Rotary and Lions clubs'.¹²⁷ I suggest that he would have come to the same conclusion had he included the masonic lodges existing in a much earlier period. Furthermore, his assumption directly corresponds with my argument regarding, among others, the Abdulwahab family. There apparently exists a certain attraction for service clubs, such as the Rotary Club, the Lions and Kiwanis, among the sons and grandsons of freemasons. Like freemasonry, these organisations were primarily intended to function on a local level and it was then envisaged that they would expand on a regional, national or even global scale. Unlike charities, which concentrated on the followers of their own religious denominations, freemasonry aimed at the people

¹²⁶ Ibid.: p. 66.

¹²⁷ Ibid.: p. 181.

in general. Unlike educational institutions, lodges were not so narrowly focussed. However, whilst freemasons were not disinclined towards educational and literary groups, their targets were less specified. First and foremost they wanted to change the reality of daily life. Therefore, the fraternity was also different from cultural societies, which were mainly attractive for academics and journalists. Finally, unlike with political activity, freemasonry as an entity did not require and usually even refrained from direct interference or engagement in political affairs. It was not supposed to bring together political strategists.

During my interviews in El Mina, almost everyone knew a story about the Muqaddims. The Muqaddim family is generally believed to be from Tripoli and demonstrated a constant commitment to politics, while at the same time also being associated with gun gangs. They were allegedly pro-French, unlike the Karame family, who were said to have supported the British. This resulted in a strained relationship between the two families, with the Muqaddims having been considered as anti-Karame. However, both families were represented in *Kadisha* Lodge. Hassan and Ismail Muqaddim on the one side, and Mohammed Rashid Karame, who was president of the city's administration at the time, from the other. It is highly unlikely that they would have met and socialised if the lodge had primarily been a political institution or think tank. Coming together with no shared political basis, they nevertheless tried to work for a common cause.

Gulick was probably right when he stated that a similar socio-economic position made cooperation easier. Indeed, I would emphasise that this status was even a precondition that enabled engagement in an institution like freemasonry at all. Moreover, only with sufficient power – socio-cultural and economic – was a movement able to produce change on a large scale.

While Beirut profited most from developments towards a cosmopolitan centre, Tripoli and El Mina had to rely on their own forms of power. On the one hand, there were Christians that benefitted from European contacts and trade relationships in general. On the other hand, exactly the same men had to rely on their Muslim neighbours in order to sell their products in the interior of the Empire. Muslims living in Tripoli also wanted their products to be traded overseas. Thus, networking with their Christian neighbours was a necessity in order to survive in a world where Westerners seemed increasingly superior in all areas. The realisation of this fact was probably the main reason for freemasonry being able to expand outside Beirut and its cosmopolitan atmosphere. Masonic principles of equality that emphasised common humanity, instead of varying political or religious inclinations, were extremely useful for a community in which no prior sense of cohesion had existed.

In the late 1960s, when John Gulick wrote his book on the history of Tripoli, he did not comprehend the meaning of freemasonry, nor did he even mention its existence. Does that make it less important? Is this a sign of the fraternity's failure? Was it not sufficiently relevant to Greater Syrian society?

If one compares lodges in Tripoli with others in European cities one can note a common feature: although not a secret society, freemasonry is almost invisible to the public eye. Its meetings are not widely advertised and its charitable deeds are not widely known. Nevertheless, the same largely holds true regarding the Rotary Club or the Lions – two societies that are not perceived as having secrets and that do not shy away from public attention. But there seem to be sufficient reasons for these groups to continue existing. Perhaps Gulick did not delve deeper and therefore did not mention masonic lodges simply because he was not aware of their existence? Perhaps he did know about them, but as an outsider he did not deem that it was possible to be

introduced to their histories and their contemporary significance? It is also possible that these lodges did not produce the results they were aspiring to and they were not able to bridge the gap between the religious communities on all levels.

However, their existence was, and most probably still is, significant for a great many members of Syrian society. Freemasonry certainly profited from the similar socio-economic standing of its members, though at the same time these were exactly the people most likely to produce an improvement for the entire populations of El Mina and Tripoli.

The overlaps, the minimal presence of foreigners, the connectedness through intermarriage and business – all these were signs that freemasonry was supposed to be a cohesive force to keep the city and its port together. Hence, this foreign concept could indeed work in Tripoli and El Mina. And if it worked on a small scale, people would use their power and prestige for an all-inclusive system of welfare, then why not establish more lodges? This they did.