



## REVOLUTIONARY THOUGHTS -LEBANESE FREEMASONRY BEFORE THE YOUNG TURK REVOLUTION-

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### Introduction

This article is a summary of my master thesis which I wrote last year in November. Investigating the meaning of freemasonry in Ottoman Syria particularly in Lebanon – as it is known today - from its beginning after the Civil War in 1860 to the rise of Arab nationalism before the Young Turk Revolution in 1908, it is concerned with the connection between freemasonry and nationalism, Masonic participation and motivation concerning the Arabic *nahda* (Renaissance of the Arab/Arabic culture). The goal was to illustrate how freemasons were involved in the reform movement, showing the supporting but not initiating force masonry played. I expound the theory according to which freemasonry must always be examined in its historical, social and national context. In the case of Lebanon, freemasonry at least concerning the lodges belonging to the Grand Lodge of Scotland, was a revolutionary but not rebelling society limited to certain sectors of the population and therefore also restricted regarding its impact.

If one considers history not just as a series of actions but instead as happenings with causes and consequences, then there existed an Arab nationalism already before the First World War. While the Arab Ottomans, indeed, had different motives for aspiring to Arab nationality in comparison to an Ottoman one, people of the same mind found each other and developed long before the First World War, and even before the Young Turk Revolution, strategies and plans to liberate themselves from the Ottoman regime. The desire for their own national identity started to spread with the penetration of European thoughts and the increasing alienation from the Empire. Religion didn't seem to everyone as the only answer to all problems, and so the newly promoted Pan-Islamism by Abdülhamid was to some Muslims more deterring than attracting; not to mention the non-Muslim minorities.

The Arabic word for awakening is *nahda*; it is used in relation to the revival or renaissance, that the Arab population experienced at the end of the Ottoman Empire. Here, as in Europe, a new cultural awareness served as fertile ground for subsequent political actions. Arab nationalism, the conscious possession of a distinct Arab identity connected to language, culture, history and territory first became popular, like in Europe, in selected circles. Masonic lodges were among the places where reformists came together to plan their future. But there's not one single fraternity that identified for its political involvement. Although freemasonry is an international

phenomenon with ties unlimited by borders, one has to separate the local societies according to the *milieu* in which they existed and still exist. The question arises therefore, in how far 'freemasonry' itself can be seen as responsible for masons participating in the *nahda*.

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I deal with masonry in the Lebanese context. What link exists between the Lebanese reformists and Lebanese freemasons? Where does the cultural common interest start, where is political conspiracy?

### I. Freemasonry in Lebanon

The emergence of freemasonry in Lebanon is intimately connected with the various "*mouvements d'émancipation de l'homme*"; and many intellectuals of all professions, who demanded autonomy or independence for Lebanon, came from the fraternities. They played an important role in the creation of diverse nationalisms – Arab, Pan-Islamic and Lebanese – and in the 'literary and social awakening known by the name *nahda*'<sup>1</sup>.

The first lodge in Lebanon was a Scottish one named 'Lodge Palestine # 415'; it was formed in 1861 or 1862 in Beirut and worked in French. Dormant for twenty years between 1868 and 1888, it was finally dissolved in 1895. The second Grand Lodge active in Lebanon was the Grand Orient of France formed in 1869 the 'Lodge East Lebanon', which worked in Arabic. Thereafter came the 'Lodge Zahrat al-Adab' in 1873 and the 'Lodge Phoenicia', also under French patronage. Both seem to have disappeared before or during World War I<sup>2</sup>. Another new lodge in the pre-Great War era was the 'Lodge Furn el-Shubak' under the Ottoman Grand Lodge, later the Grand Lodge of Turkey, and 'The Lodge of the Black Cave' under the National Grand Lodge of Egypt. "By the end of World War Two lodges, were either extinct, merged, or hived off into spurious 'Masonica' bodies<sup>3</sup>."

Today five Scottish lodges are still working: 'Lodge Peace # 908', founded 1908 at Beirut; 'Lodge Kadisha # 1002', founded 1906 at Beirut; 'Lodge Zahle # 1047', established 1908 at Zahle; 'Lodge El Mazab # 1130', formed 1914 in Tripoli and 'Lodge Mount Lebanon # 1312' which was founded 1923 at Beirut. This information, given by the Grand Lodge of New York, does not match the one provided by the Registration Books in Edinburgh for the years 1860 until 1908. Registration of names belonging to the 'Palestine' Lodge started in the year 1864, not in 1861 or 1862, and ceased only in 1902, not in 1895. Further, a Lodge named 'Sunneen Shweir, Mount Lebanon' already existed in the books from 1904, not from 1923 onwards. These inconsistencies can be explained by the way lodges tended to register. In many cases, masons met before being recognised officially. So it's indeed possible that a lodge 'Palestine' existed before the Scottish Grand Lodge knew about it; the assumption that it ceased to exist in 1895 is simply wrong; inauguration dates prove that masons joined the lodge until 1902. As for the 'Mount Lebanon' lodge, it can be said that sometimes lodges take the same names with different numbers; either the first lodge of the same name is a different one that

does not exist anymore, or it is the same lodge that stopped functioning for a while and then restarted functioning again after a certain time.

Not all Grand Lodges active in Lebanon are recognised as regular ones by other Grand Lodges like for example the ones of the Grand Orient of France or some Canadian ones. It is said that until 1999 fifteen “spurious bodies” were operating in Lebanon; some formed prior to 1982, others more recently<sup>4</sup>. By ‘spurious bodies’, it implies that same lodges or associations use the reputation and often even the whole framework of masonry either for purposes different to the general Masonic ideology or for some other reason working in the shadow of regular Grand Lodges. Apart from this, there was never *one* freemasonry; under the supervision of the different Grand Lodges various ideological aspects were stressed, others ignored- depending on the Western mediators and their audience. “*Il est clair qu’une franc-maçonnerie, la française surtout, et l’italienne dans une moins grande mesure, allait servir d’interface entre un Orient en train de faire l’expérience du libéralisme et de ses problèmes*”<sup>5</sup>. On the other hand, it was in 1877 when the Grand Orient of France decided to open its doors to non-believers; a step that more likely scared off new potential Lebanese masons than it attracted. What the majority of Lebanese were looking for was not a complete rejection of religion but a new place for it within life. “*On peut se demander si cette interprétation avait été aussi celles des réformistes musulmans qui étaient, à cette époque, encore fortement attachés aux valeurs religieuses*”<sup>6</sup>.

While initially the Egyptian influence and the Turkish aspirations contributed enormously to Lebanese freemasonry, the Western foreigners in the country took over the main role through the dissemination of their ideas concerning liberty, equality and fraternity – principles translated from the French Revolution. As a result of its troubled past and the explosive mixture of all kind of sects, Lebanese freemasonry stood out for its comprehensive ideology demanding Lebanese freedom from Ottoman domination, religious neutrality of the state and education for everyone. It defended values like tolerance, solidarity and fraternity; with scholarly education it tried to spread its ideals of liberty and concord<sup>7</sup>. Though, as seen before, the first Ottomans who called themselves Lebanese or Syrian citizens defined their identity first and foremost from a cultural perspective. Political awakening only started to grow with the increased danger to the continued existence of the Empire and the despotism of its ruler Abdülhamid.

At the time, a larger number of politicians could be found participating in the Masonic meetings. As did Midhat Pasha and the British consuls Eldrige in Beirut and Meshaka in Damascus. Freemasonry influenced the literary societies, the press and other cultural spheres. Masonic representatives of the *nahÅa* were publishers and authors like Nassib Daoud and Farah Antoun, Gibrane Tuéni and Youssef El Hajj as well as Béchara Abd Allah Al- Khoury and Ya’qub Sarruf. Famous Masonic intellectuals included Makaryos and Jirji Zaidan for their scientific work, poets like Khalil Gibran and politicians like the Amir Adel Arslan. Some members of the ‘Syrian

Scientific Society’ were also freemasons such as Muhammad Arslan, Ibrahim al-Yaziji and Butrus al-Bustani<sup>8</sup>.

This said, while masonry was not directly involved in political or military agitation, it proved to be a potential platform for the development of other movements and associations. It also was a revolutionary society if not one that revolted.

To understand the impact of freemasonry on a member’s life, it is necessary to single out some well-known outstanding followers.

Born in Beirut in 1861 into a relatively poor family, the Greek-Orthodox Jirji Zaidan had managed to climb the social ladder after his studies of medicine in the Syrian Protestant College and to become “a well-established member of the bourgeoisie<sup>9</sup>.” Like others among his circle of friends, people like Ya’qub Sarruf, Faris Nimr and Shahin Makaryos, he had joined Masonic lodges, although, it is not known for certain whether he had already been a freemason before he moved to Cairo in 1883, or whether he joined the society only when coming to Egypt. Although at the time Sarruf and Nimr were Protestants, they had to resign from the college for after having supported Darwinism, they were considered “believers of questionable faithfulness”<sup>10</sup>. Claiming a right to speech with this regard, Zaidan also left the college. “The same belief in science and rationality that led the Arab secular intelligentsia to adopt Darwinism with such enthusiasm caused a great number of them to join the organisations of the Freemasons”, which represented the belief in an enlightened universal rationality”<sup>11</sup>. The students’ banishment from the Syrian Protestant College must have made an irrational power of religion even more obvious to Zaidan. While religion itself was not able to answer scientific questions, it nevertheless prevented people from obtaining further knowledge. “To be a Freemason was to show one’s dislike of one’s traditional religion, the power it gave to the ecclesiastics [...] and division it promoted and perpetuated in society”<sup>12</sup>. For Christians, masonry had an added importance since it offered participation in a circle in which they didn’t form the minority anymore.

Refusing the College’s conditions for the re-entry of striking students, Zaidan went to Egypt in 1883 to continue his studies in a medical school there<sup>13</sup>. He was made secretary of one of the Lodges in 1888. Zaidan “felt so strongly committed to the cause of Freemasonry” that he wrote an “apologetic book” about the movement’s history. His Darwinian approach made of him a natural enemy of Louis Cheikho (see p. 34 in this issue). But the Jesuit scholar from Beirut was perhaps even more “antagonised by the secularism displayed by the Freemasons” who mainly recruited themselves from their fellow Protestants and members of the Syrian Protestant College<sup>14</sup>.

In the course of time, Zaidan’s ties to Faris Nimr, Ya’qub Sarruf and Makaryos loosened, as did his attachment to freemasonry. In his later

books he even stopped mentioning it and his membership in a lodge seems to have played a subordinate role if at all <sup>15</sup>. What caused the disinterest in masonry in Egypt, one can only guess.

Comparing Egyptian and Lebanese Masonic activities of that time, <sup>70</sup> they certainly differed in their relation to politics. While many Egyptians joined lodges for clear political purposes, Lebanese masons mainly tried to get cultural and scientific rethinking and thereby reforms to start. Freemasonry for Zaidan in that context had the same meaning as the scientific associations and societies in which he also participated; it was a platform for discussions and debates about social change and improvement. The Masonic principle not to discuss political issues must have suited him. Although he became an enthusiastic supporter of the Young Turks, he didn't want to run as a candidate in the elections for the new Ottoman parliament and in general avoided direct political involvement <sup>16</sup>. One reason for Zaidan's lack of further Masonic participation might have been the political approach of some of the Egyptian masons.

He saw the centre of his life as educating and teaching people. As a writer of historical novels he tried to familiarise the common people with their own past "in an easily comprehensible and entertaining manner". However, Zaidan's circle of acquaintances and readership was automatically limited, since at this time only every tenth Egyptian man and every one in two hundred women were literate <sup>17</sup>. Consequently Zaidan's stage was the stage of the secular Westernised bourgeoisie. To influence the mindset and culture of these people, Zaidan "realised the need for modernisation and change in the language if it was to be used as a tool for modern education <sup>18</sup>". Like Butrus al-Bustani, he was looking for a way to express thoughts and ideas in new terms with the help of an Arabic open to essential changes and flexibility. "National identity and the existence of a living language became almost synonymous" for him. When Zaidan would travel in 1913 to Palestine and attend a school lesson taught in Hebrew, he would come to the conclusion that Zionism indeed was a genuine national movement <sup>19</sup>.

The desire of the Arab revivalists to promote a new and deeper cultural awareness by means of the Arabic language that separated them from other nations with a different cultural and social heritage was convenient for Protestant missionaries. They asked Butrus al-Bustani to translate 'Robinson Crusoe', a work that carried "the message of the liberation of the individual's spirit from clerical authority" and rigid dogmatism against which Bustani and others were rebelling anyway. Apart from that, it also had the advantage of illustrating "the individual's struggle for salvation, and his ability to attain it without any mediator but sculpture", an important part of Protestant teaching <sup>20</sup>.

Bustani wanted to make more of nationalism than just a nostalgic desire for the past. "He was inspired by the faith of the European humanists, especially the French Encyclopaedists of the eighteenth century, in science and

education, and in freedom of thought as the necessary condition of their growth. Like them, too, he believed that science cannot be divorced from morality <sup>21</sup>."

The same can be said about Zaidan since "[f]or him the key to <sup>71</sup> progress and emancipation was education of the individual and knowledge of the sciences, not the political activism to attain collective rights". Before being able to cause change by political means, one had to work as individual citizen for a common goal of the whole nation, for a condition in which general education and knowledge was on an adequate level. Every single citizen would then feel the same belonging to one unit, and could participate in further reforms with the necessary knowledge and understanding based on a common national identity.

Political action always had to be based on scientific and educational foundations <sup>22</sup>. Consequently, Zaidan preferred a *status quo ante* to impulsive and ill-considered actions. "Possible pressure that might develop by a total submission to the present political situation, could find an outlet in the expectation for the future <sup>23</sup>".

The second reason for his disappearing interest in masonry might be found in his attitude towards religion and its place in life. Zaidan definitely opposed Al-Afghani's proposition of a political Pan-Islam adapted to modern civilisation since this ideology would have fixed automatically Zaidan's status as a minority <sup>24</sup>. He had succeeded in reaching a respected place in society through his own efforts; however, to be at the same level with others would be impossible forever, if Pan-Islam was to be the governing principle for the Middle East. Zaidan's secularism was not only based on the fear of Muslim domination, "it was also an attempt to emancipate [himself] from the social and intellectual narrowness of the life in [his] own Christian minorit[y] <sup>25</sup>".

Another split between Zaidan and his Masonic past occurred when Egyptian nationalism developed into a decisive force. Syrian immigrants, mainly Syrian Christians, often preferred British occupation to the continuance of the Ottoman Empire. Egyptian nationalist freemasons such as Mustafa Kamil therefore coined for them the derogative term *duhala*, intruders <sup>26</sup>; since the lodges were among the places where nationalism could secretly spread, one can imagine that Syrian freemasons were not everywhere welcomed guests.

Although Jirji Zaidan does not represent all Lebanese freemasons, different motives of Lebanese freemasonry become clearer by observing his social and philosophical approach to life.

For Christians or other non-Muslims, a Masonic lodge was a space outside daily life in a minority. They were united with men of other confessions in their faith of a common national identity. Muslims saw in the emphasis on secularism a possible solution to inter-confessional strifes, of which they

had already experienced enough in 1860 and before. Also, they had to work together to bring about political changes and an improvement of their weakened state in the face of Ottoman arbitrary use of power.

For intellectuals stressing education and culture was to imitate<sup>72</sup> Western values, values that were part of the seemingly superior Western civilisation. Lodges as a testing ground for a functioning constitution with equal rights for everyone, created a distance to their despotic regime on the one hand; on the other hand a closeness to a more developed world from where they had taken their philosophical theories and ideologies, linked by a taste of the *Zeitgeist* of the enlightenment. This appeared to intellectuals as a way to overcome the crises of their time.

Less theoretical, the lodges offered merchants an ideal opportunity to spin a network of business relations and increasing one's socio-cultural prestige in scientific circles; that could be important concerning political aspirations. Consequently, politicians also had an interest in joining; it made them more accessible to their subjects as well as the other way round; it also enabled them to arrange things and find solutions unmolested and unobserved by the Ottoman government.

For the nationalists, masonry helped to find other like-minded men who felt a commitment to their fatherland instead of mingling with co-religionists. Being worried about their future in an ever-weaker Empire, the territorial unity was a crucial factor.

Freemasonry with its universalistic ethical ideology was able to unite all these different levels of society. By stressing enlightenment and the responsibility of every individual it was indeed revolutionary, but in its superior search for harmony and concord it might have worked in the Lebanese context more as a brake than an instigator to an Egyptian-like attempted coup. Although a generalisation is almost impossible, since there was not one but many types of freemasonry, it can be said, that most of the known and famous masons were also reformists who desired a strong Lebanon, a kind of autonomy with or without Syria. The actual aim was not so much to completely break away from the Empire but more to form an administrative unit with a new self-confidence and pride in its cultural and national identity.

## II. THE SCOTTISH LODGES IN LEBANON

### II.1. Taken Together

The principal purpose of this chapter is to find out how the lodges in Lebanon were structured with regard to social and confessional aspects during the period between 1864 and 1908. It examines the members of the *Scottish* lodges from the earliest date possible, since they were the first ones to be present and functioning in the Lebanese environment. Although all the members' names were available in the archives of the Grand Lodge in Edinburgh, it has to be taken into account that informa-

tion might be incomplete, inaccurate and lost. During the different wars Lebanon went through, a lot of valuable information regarding freemasonry was destroyed. Further, in the Edinburgh Registration Books Arabic names are written down by hand in English or French spelling; not always can it be said for sure which name is hidden since some family<sup>73</sup> names exist in varying spelling versions, are difficult to read or mentioned twice. The following text will mention the names as they were noted in the books, if the name of the person is not known otherwise.

The Registration Books record the names of the new members, their initiation dates and their occupation at the time of registration. Normally, one can also make out the identity of the person responsible for establishing the lodge, but in the case of the Lebanese lodges it seems that no separation was made between initiator and follower; there exists no special mark, different inauguration date or any other hint.

#### MASONS, THEIR LODGES AND THEIR PROFESSION

Professions	Lodge Palestine (1864-1867) 33	Lodge Peace (1901-1906) 28	Lodge Sunneen Shweir/Mt. Lebanon	Lodge Kadisha	Total
Merchants	(1888-1902) 23	(1904-1908)			<b>(56)</b>

<sup>1</sup> Probably the lodge sent some names later and the dates were added so that now the dates overlap.

About 616 Men, the average between 20 and 60 years old, joined the four existing lodges between the years 1861 and 1908. However, it is possible that some who also joined in the last years of this period were written down at a later date and are not recorded in the time span being examined. The lodges were named 'Lodge Palestine', 'Lodge Peace', 'Lodge Sunneen Shweir, Mount Lebanon' and 'Lodge Kadisha'. Masons of 'Palestine' and 'Peace' met in Beirut, the ones from 'Lodge Sunneen Shweir, Mount Lebanon' probably in Shweir, a city situated between Beirut and the mountains, standing out for its Catholic, Greek-Orthodox and Protestant churches. Sunneen is the name of a big mountain to the east of the city.

In comparison to that, Tripoli, where the 'Kadisha' lodge met, is a typical Islamic city lying on the coast north of Beirut but belonging under the Ottoman authorities after 1861 to the Damascene *vilayet*. It is not clear why the 'Palestine' lodge was dissolved, since until 1902 its 145 masons probably made up the greatest number of all four lodges. The 'Peace' lodge admitted 190 freemasons in a period lasting until 1908, 'Sunneen' had until then 197 members in total.

It is also strange that none of the members of the then dissolved lodge joined the other lodges in or around Beirut. It rather seems that the lodge had not stopped working but that it changed its patronage and moved away from the Scottish Grand Lodge. No information exists from the Scottish side, but it would be interesting to know if this was the case, since, for example, al-Afghani changed his lodge's patrons to be free for political actions. This would explain why the masons' names disappeared completely after 1902. Another possibility could be that the lodge was indeed dissolved, but not voluntarily. Although most of the masons in the 'Palestine' lodge were merchants, in the second position we find men employed by the Ottoman government. In the other three lodges, lawyers, members of the court, doctors and pharmacists formed the second or third biggest group. But this is not true for the 'Palestine' lodge;

here they were in position six, together with the foreigners. Could it be that the Ottoman authorities were behind the disappearing of the lodge? On the other hand, the number of government employees admitted to the lodges, in general decreased along with the trust in and respect for them. And why should former 'Palestine' masons not attempt to<sup>75</sup> look for a different spiritual temple without letting the Ottoman authorities know about their new activity? The Grand Lodge of New York couldn't offer a satisfying answer. It was proposed that people were afraid of persecution and therefore went underground, an answer that seems highly improbable. First, freemasonry was already pretty secret; second, if they had continued meeting without the government employees, why should they keep the existence of their lodge also hidden from their Scottish patrons? The position of the Western Powers was not unambiguous towards the Ottoman authorities and the whole principle of the 'antient' Scottish freemasonry is based on a philosophy independent of politics and uninvolved in political affairs. Then it would have been easier, more honest and 'mason-like' to move directly to a different Grand Lodge.

## II.2. Distinguishing Marks

An interconnection between political and Masonic activities certainly already existed at the beginning of the first lodge in Lebanon. The 'Palestine' lodge already attracted popular men in 1864 when the British Colonel Charles Henry Churchill was initiated, two years later Muhyi'l-Din al-Qadir followed. Hassan Bayhum, who worked in 1898 for the Beirut municipality, had joined the lodge in 1866. "[T]he Bayhum family stood out for its near-permanent presence on the municipal council" and in the second half of the nineteenth century its members were "the leading notables in the Sunni community and beyond." It was also Hassan Bayhum, an executive member of an international investment company, who participated in the calls for a greater autonomy for the province of Beirut in the years after the Young Turk Revolution<sup>27</sup>.

Another family frequently present in the municipality was the Greek-Orthodox Sursuq family, merchants who had become rich during the Crimean War; while three Sursuqs worked for the city, Georg and Dimitrius Sursuq preferred the Masonic circles; the first belonged to the 'Peace' lodge, the other to the 'Palestine'. The family possessed the same international trading networks as the Trad family, which with four family members was represented in the municipality<sup>28</sup>. A fifth member, Michel Trad joined the 'Peace' lodge after 1904. The same can be said about the Fayyad clan; two were members of the municipality but three others belonged to 'Peace' and 'Palestine' lodges.

While this family prominence in the city council was characteristic for Sunnis and the Greek-Orthodox, the Maronites were largely prominent individuals with some exceptions. These were Bishara and Yusuf al-Hani as well as Yusuf and Philippe Thabit<sup>29</sup>. Bishara al-Hani came, together with two other family members, to the 'Sunneen' lodge after his period of office at the municipality. Yusuf Thabit did the same, while two other rel-

atives had already earlier been initiated to the 'Palestine' lodge.

"Abd al-Ghani Efendi, the father of 'Utmar Ramdan [...] reportedly had ten notable sons, most of them in the Ottoman civil service<sup>30</sup>." "Umar was a municipal member in 1898 and joined the 'Peace' lodge with five<sup>76</sup> other relatives. His family was the best represented in the lodges beside the Khoury family. The Ramadan family had not only a "background in the military estate", 'Umar's father "signed the 1865 petition for the creation of the province of Beirut as *sayyid*, designating a family with an authoritative - if not necessarily traceable- lineage to the prophet Muhammad<sup>31</sup>." In none of the four lodges did religion seem to have played a role. Naturally, there were more non-Muslims in the 'Sunneen' lodge than in the 'Kadisha', corresponding to the population in Shweir and Tripoli. But men did not necessarily always join the lodges closest to their hometowns. When the 'Palestine' lodge was the first to be established, it contained members from other cities like Damascus. It was in 1968 that a "first Masonic meeting in Damascus was held"<sup>32</sup>. Men like Nasif Meshaka, Saleh Isdahir al-'Azm and the two sons of al-Qadir had joined the 'Palestine' lodge in Beirut but came together also in Damascus, which was more convenient. The 'Azm-family was a large land-owning family from Ma'arra in the south of Aleppo, with branches in Damascus and Hama. "Usually a family member could be found in the imperial capital in some high administrative post and sons, sent there for higher education, returned to the most important posts in the province." Between the years 1724 and 1908 the nine members of the 'Azm family held the post as vali of Syria or Damascus<sup>33</sup>. Vast landholdings, valuable urban real estate and a series of high administrative posts made the 'Azms one of the most socially prestigious families and one of the three most politically influential families in Damascus<sup>34</sup>.

The first Lebanese lodges attracted many merchant masons, a phenomenon already observed in the municipal councils of Beirut where social and political status played a major role. Not by coincidence, a lot of the municipal members were also members of the lodges. The elite proved to be active in politics as well as in Masonic life. To belong to the upper class, apart from occupation, social life and literary or scientific interest was a crucial factor. Wealthy merchants like the Sursuqs and Trads mentioned were active in masonry as well as the Shoucairs and the Shweiry's. For every period and every lodge observed, merchants formed the biggest group active in masonry.

Intellectuals like teachers, journalists, professors and students formed the fifth biggest group until 1908. The French teacher of the Syrian Protestant College, Elias Habbalin, participated in the 'Palestine' lodge, likewise a director of a Jewish School, Moise Cohen, or professor Khalil Salegh. In the lodges established after the 'Palestine', students also took part; as did a Student of Medicine, Joseph Rosenfeld or Kamil Abbas Hamiel, a law student; both belonged to the 'Peace' lodge. Another teacher of the 'Peace' lodge was Antonios Saad. Saad had met Louisa Procter, an Irish woman working with the village woman, and founded with her a school for girls in the village of Choueifat in 1886. Nine years later, Saad even travelled

to England "to visit schools and take a closer look at development in the educational world." The international network of Sabis schools exists until today with branches on four continents<sup>35</sup>. The share of the 'typical intellectuals' grew over time; the number of judges, lawyers and doctors doubled regarding membership in the 'Palestine' lodge and the later<sup>77</sup> established 'Peace' lodge; as did the number of journalists, publishers, professors, teachers, students and booksellers. This might have been part of the reaction 'to go underground' because of Ottoman censorship, which took more drastic measures during Abdülhamid's reign. In the lodge's early days only few students joined the 'Palestine' lodge, a fact that can be explained by increasing educational standards, which only started after 'Palestine' was established. There simply weren't that many students who could have been interested in masonry at that time. With the growing number of students Masonic participation increased.

As the general level of education rose and opened up to Western influences the willingness of religious persons to recognise masonry as a possible association not related to their confession and belief also increased. While none of the religious dignitaries was registered during the first years of 'Palestine', of the seven clergymen, five were initiated into the 'Peace' lodge: the priests Lomas Abdoulla Abe Hayad and Elias Latief, the two pastors Jusuf Jarjar Jidaun and Jacub Hagguri, and a 'clergyman' named Joseph David. Furthermore four of the founding fathers of the National Evangelical Church in Beirut were masons of the 'Peace' lodge: Nami Nukho, Paulus Khawly, Fu'ad Assad Kheirallah and Abraham Sarrafian. Sarrafian, born in Diarbekir in 1873, had come to Beirut after learning photography from the Protestant missionaries in his native town. Together with his brothers Boghos, another mason of the 'Peace' lodge, and Samuel he founded the firm of Sarrafian Bros. "In thirty years, this firm published more than a quarter of the postcards published in the Lebanon and covered countries as far as Libya, Yemen and Turkey<sup>36</sup>."

Others of the church like Ayub Thabit or reverend Assad al-Rassi had relatives belonging to different lodges. Congregational and Presbyterian missionaries from America established the Beirut church, the "oldest indigenous Arabic-speaking Protestant congregation in the Middle East", in 1848. In 1869 it was the first evangelical church that housed Arabic and English-speaking congregations<sup>37</sup>.

Another priest, Raphael Nimer was mason of the 'Sunneen' lodge while the only participating imam, Omar Omary, was member of 'Kadisha'. However, the religious dignitaries constituted the smallest group in all the lodges for the complete period observed. Scepticism about freemasonry, which was sometimes still considered by anti-masons as a substitute to their own religion, seems to have perpetuated.

Foreigners formed another group only weakly represented. Over the years only about 16 foreigners were admitted to the lodges. This small number should not be deceptive; it says nothing about the real number of foreigners participating in the Masonic meetings but only about the ones who

were initiated into Lebanese lodges. "Among the foreign consuls throughout the Holy Land, much the larger number are Freemasons" <sup>38</sup> having been admitted to masonry in their own countries at home and using the opportunity to hold Masonic meetings abroad. Other non-Lebanese were not marked as such since they were by then integrated in Lebanese <sup>78</sup> life and not planning to leave soon; such as James Nixow who is registered as 'Steam Agent' or Joseph Roussy, the 'Goods Fareman'. Keeping this in mind, sixteen seems a large number for foreigners to have officially joined the Lebanese lodges. The larger number of them were already initiated into the 'Palestine'. Among them were employees of foreign governments like the Belgian Julius Duchon and travellers like Luis Brunshwig. The only foreigner directly listed as 'missionary' was Daniel Oliver who came to the 'Peace' lodge between 1904 and 1906.

Remarkable is the high number of landowners and men involved in real estate business in the 'Sunneen' lodge, constituting the third largest group. The reason for this lies in the local application of the land reform in 1861 that "allowed the development of a property market outside the city center which for centuries had been too dangerous as a place of permanent settlement <sup>39</sup>." The application of the new law formalised and accelerated the process of extra-mural urbanisation and thereby the exodus of affluent families <sup>40</sup>. The 'Kadisha' of Shweir was ideally situated to attract members of wealthy families then residing outside of Beirut.

There are striking parallels between the social structure of the municipality and the social status of masons admitted into Lebanese lodges. In both cases, merchants who belonged to the elite constantly becoming wealthier formed the biggest group. "Local merchants with foreign-language abilities served as intermediaries between European wholesalers and the local retailers, in part also because of their growing money-lending capabilities at the expense of traditional landowning elites" in the context of an ever-increasing volume of Mediterranean trade <sup>41</sup>. Masonic lodges were suitable to strengthen additionally the intellectual and social prestige, the same principle seen already valid for the different cultural societies.

Masonry was for the elite, for the ones who didn't have to take care of basic needs; for the ones who had other problems besides searching for enough food for the next day. The names of the masons in 'Sunneen' lodge, for example, read like the Who's Who of Lebanon. There are the three al-Hanis, Bechara, Ilias and Naghlan together with the Thabits and the Karams. Apart from Salim Karam, Kaissar Mashood and Boutrus Bechara were admitted to 'Sunneen'. Boutrus Bechara Karam was a teacher but between 1900 and 1918 he also participated in the third municipality council, in Zgharta – Ehden, in the mountains <sup>42</sup>, while Salim was a merchant and Kaissar Mashood was registered as a 'landowner'. Another teacher, Mikhail Youssef Soutou participated in the first municipal council of Zgharta <sup>43</sup>; he can be found in 'Peace' lodge together with teacher and publisher Nassib Daoud.

In 'Sunneen', the Shweiryys stood next to Tawfik Arslan, journalist Bechara

al-Khoury and the Zakhariyyas. Although in the other lodges titles of honour were not uncommon either, many prestigious men seem to have met in 'Sunneen'. The lodge was situated next to the mountains, the traditional area for the Maronites. Examining the names shows that a lot of the masons were Christians probably forming the majority in the lodge. <sup>79</sup> The meetings could have played an affirming role after the disasters that had widened the gap between different sects. In general, inter-confessional gatherings were the bases on which to mediate in conflicts of interest away from the limelight. In this sense, all lodges additionally served to the existing different literary and scientific societies supporting inter-confessional communication and understanding.

Mustafa Arslan, heir of his brother's Muhammad Amin's "good-sized library" <sup>44</sup>, was admitted to the 'Peace' lodge between 1901 and 1903/4. Muhammad had been the first president of the Syrian Scientific Society of which Fu'ad Pasha and Hassan Bayhum, also masons, were members, too. The same is valid for Colonel Churchill from the 'Palestine' lodge.

The combining and overlapping of social, political and intellectual interests worked for Lebanese freemasons, as was the case of the members of the municipalities. Regarding the individuals observed, the forces that effected masons most was an interest in educational and literary progress, a protection of the social status and the fear of losing it in competition with the Turks. In the lodges constructive as well as pro-reform thoughts could be expressed among like-minded people. The Scottish lodges were definitely not the places where violent disturbances and revolts were encouraged.

### III. CONCLUSION

Much has been invented connecting freemasonry to all kind of conspiracies, revolutions and subversive endeavours. Elie Kedourie speaks in this context about "fustian fantasies" and "fuddled fabulosity" <sup>45</sup>. But what is just imagined and what indeed real?

As was shown, freemasonry is a movement although of an a-political character, nevertheless, of political significance in certain circumstances. In Lebanon, masonry started as an attempt by Western foreigners to come into closer contact with the Lebanese people on the one hand, on the other hand, the society's philosophical character was supposed to bring Western ways of life and principles closer to them. This kind of giving and receiving was supported by an increasing interest of the Lebanese elite in Western culture and achievements; masonry was seen as the ideal unifying bond. In the context of growing Turkish despotism and Western territorial as well as economical penetration, literary and political groups started to think in Arab nationalist terms defining a new identity for themselves and their country. Thanks to its inter-confessional universalism, freemasonry served as an ideal platform for all dissatisfied, secular-minded men. Its ethical, scientific foundation attracted intellectuals looking for educational

progress; the procedure of meetings appealed to pragmatic men considering economic and political advantages. While it might be true that the missionaries planned to use masonry as a kind of Trojan horse for proselytizing, it becomes clear by the observation of the first Lebanese masons that they were not committed to *one* religious belief but<sup>80</sup> instead to *one* secular, ethical system. Their common denominator was their faith in a community of interest other than the belonging to a certain confession. Missionaries or other confessional groups did not stick out. While minorities attached importance to their membership in need of finding Muslim allies, Muslims had their own reasons to join the lodges.

Political and social prestige played a role as well as a personal reformist mindset. But there was never only one single concept for political change; freemasons neither in public nor secretly acted as one united force. However, Masonic membership enabled a closer acquaintance of like-minded people and thereby made it easier to find allies for common actions outside the lodges.

The examined Scottish lodges stand out for their political, intellectual and economically active clientele. In their composition they reflect the structure of the local municipalities and councils. Men participated with thoughts of reform or, at least, with the goal to extend one family's influence to an additional level and leave its mark there. Remarkable is their non-violent character in comparison to Egyptian and Turkish lodges observed of the same period. To describe a complete peacefulness of intent by Lebanese lodges, however, would only be possible after further examination of other lodges in Lebanon with different Grand Lodges. The next step therefore must be a study of other patronage forms playing a role in Lebanese masonry.

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