Celil Layiktez

Short History of Freemasonry in Turkey



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MASONLAR BÜYÜK LOCASI
TÜRKİYE 1909-2009
TÜMER ARGIN

FOREWORD TO THE SHORT HISTORY OF FREEMASONRY IN TURKEY

Freemasonry was introduced to Turkey in the first half of the 18th century. It had a tumultuous history, closed down three times, the archives were confiscated or lost in fires and wars. Freemasons initiated modernisation, and thus, oscillated between power and persecution, ruling the Ottoman Empire and later the Republic or were outlawed.

The archives of lodges in Turkey, prior to the foundation of the Grand Lodge in 1909, were in the hands of foreign obediences. We were able to reconstruct the history of Freemasonry in Turkey through a research in the archives of the Grand Orient de France, preserved from the Germans during the war years, in the Bibliothèque Nationale Française (1890 pages microfilmed), plus the archives of the Grand Lodges of England, Ireland and Scotland. The Greek and Italian Masonic archives had been partly destroyed during the German occupation, in spite of that some documents have been saved. We obtained copies of some documents which had been in the archives of the Phanar Patriarchate in İstanbul, via the archives of the Grand Lodge of Greece.

I wish to thank Bro. Dave Harbath, Master of the Lodge Freedom No. 35, for the redaction of this short history, Bro. Tümer Argın and MS Beyza Kaynar for the mise en page.

Celil Layiktez

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1721-1826

First known Freemasons

A lodge which name is lost operated in Istanbul, somewhere near the Galata Tower, during the reign of Osman III (1703 – 1730). The lodge was founded probably c. 1721 by Levantines (mainly Genoese people) living in the Tower quarters. The first known Turkish Mason is Sait Çelebi, ambassador to France and later grand vizier. The French officer, Count de Bonneval, after some intrigues in the French Court during the reign of Louis XIV, immigrated to England and later came to Turkey to reorganize the Turkish army. Count de Bonneval took a Turkish name and became Kumbaraci (or Humbaracı) Ahmet Osman Pasha. It is said that he was a mason. Another known mason in this period is Ibrahim Müteferrika, who together with the above mentioned Sait Çelebi, started the first printing press used by Muslim subjects of the Ottoman Empire. (The Christians and Jews had their printing presses at the end of the 15th century).



Osman III



Sait Celebi

Masonic ritual translated into Greek

In the Phanar (The Greek Orthodox Patriarchate) archives a French Masonic ritual translated into Greek in 1747 was discovered.



Humbaracı (Bombadiers) Soldiers

Life in Istanbul in the 18th century



Clement XII and first prohibition of Freemasonry

10 years after the 1738 papal bull "In Eminenti", by Clement XII, excommunicated freemasons, Sultan Mahmut I, under the pressure of his Christian subjects and also the Muslim clergy, which thought that the Pope would not charge a fraternity with atheism in vein, outlawed freemasonry in the Ottoman Empire. An English lodge was operating in the house owned by the dragoman (secretary – official translator of the embassy). We are in possession of the copy of letters addressed to the Prime Ministers of the UK (The Duke of Bedford) and France, by the Ambassadors of the UK (Porter) and France (the Count of Desalleurs) and of the copy of a letter written by Desalleurs to the Grand Vizier. The Catholic and Greek Orthodox Ottoman subjects were complaining that in spite of the Pope's excommunication decree, Freemasons dared to meet freely at the said address, and that they were sorcerers planning to overthrow the Sultan using black magic. The lodge building was sacked by the police, but as the UK ambassador gave notice in due time, the list of members had been rescued. In the Vatican archives, there is a letter by the Pope congratulating the French Cardinal Tencin, and wishing that the same operation would be repeated in Naples.



Mahmut I



Clement XII

District Grand Master for Aleppo

According to Gould, the British Consul in Aleppo, the Grand Lodge of England had appointed Alexander Drumond District Grand Master for the Orient. Later in 1764, Dr. Dionysios Menasse had been appointed District Grand Master for Asiatic Turkey and Armenia.

Saint Jean d'Ecosse des Nations Réunies

In 1786 the lodge Saint Jean d'Ecosse in Marseilles had issued a second charter to the Lodge Saint Jean d'Ecosse des Nations Réunies in Izmir. The first charter had been lost during the big Izmir fire. According to the correspondence, this lodge had been consecrated after 1751 and before 1778. The lodge was closed in 1826.

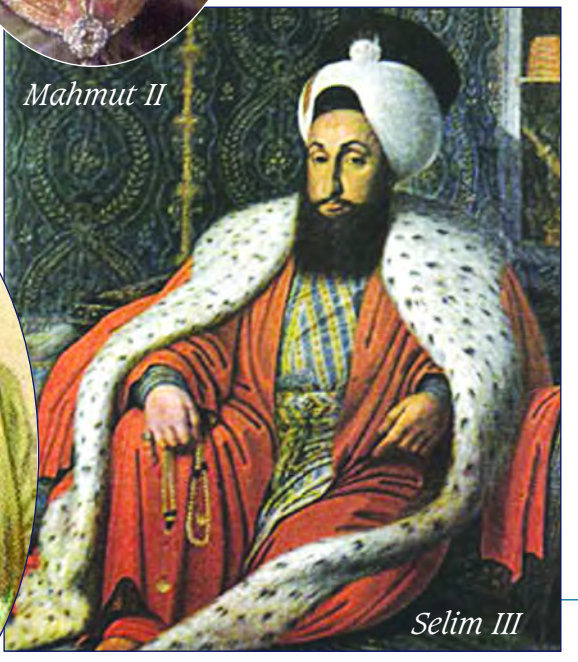




Janissaries

End of the Janissaries and outlawing of Freemasonry

In the last decade of the 18th Century, Selim III's step mother and counsellor in his foreign policy, Nakshidil Sultan (Wife of Abdulhamit I and mother of Mahmut II) was the cousin of Josephine, Napoléon's wife. Under her influence, lodges from different obediences prospered in the Empire. But in 1826, Mahmut II abolished the Janissaries to create a modern army and outlawed the order of the Bektashis to which they all belonged. Freemasonry being described as a "kind of Bektashism", was also closed and known freemasons were sent into exile.



Mahmut II

Selim III



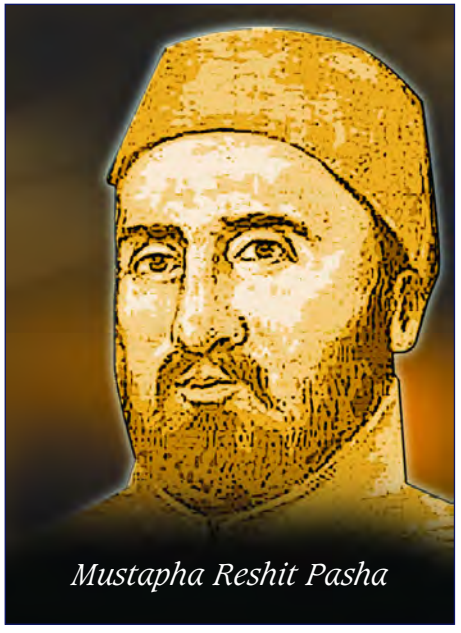
Bektashis

Mustapha Reshit Pasha and the Reform Edict

Mustapha Reshit Pasha, Grand Vizier, had promulgated the Reform Edict of 1839. It is said that he had been initiated while he was Ambassador to London. His good friend, the British Ambassador to Istanbul, Lord Reading, was a known freemason. After 1839, with the unofficial permission by the Grand Vizier, Freemasonry had a slow revival in Turkey.

The Crimean War (1854 – 1856)

The arrival of British, French and Piemontise expeditionary forces and diplomats in Istanbul and Izmir during the Crimean War led to an explosion of lodges under different obediences. In 1857 the short-lived Grande Loge de Turquie was founded in Izmir, by the Grand Orient of France. After the end of the Crimean War, with the departure of foreigners, this grand lodge came to an end.



Mustapha Reshit Pasha

The creation of an irregular Irish Grand Lodge

In 1856, Captain Atkinson, an Irish officer in the 47th British Regiment, claiming to possess an Irish warrant created three lodges in Izmir and then "The Grand Lodge of the Ancient and Honourable Fraternity of Free and Accepted Masons of Turkey" (We have a copy of the Constitution of this grand lodge, the original is in the Irish archives.) This was a fraudulent commercial enterprise. Atkinson initiated 200 masons and then disappeared with the funds.

The creation of the District Grand Lodge of Turkey (English Constitution)

The irregular masons, initiated by Captain Atkinson, started to visit or join English and French lodges. There was literally a panic in London and in a swift move, Grand Master Lord Zetland ordered the foundation of the Provincial Grand Lodge of Turkey, in Istanbul, the first Provincial Grand Master being the British Ambassador Sir Henry Bulwer. His consecration ceremony took place on the 24th June 1862 in the British Embassy.



Lord Bulwer

The Supreme Council of Turkey (1861)

The founder (1861) and first Sovereign Grand Commander of the Scottish Rite in Turkey (1864) was Prince Abdülhalim Pasha, or shortly, Halim Pasha, Son of Kavalalı Mehmet Ali Pasha, founder of the Egyptian Khedivate, Brother of the Khedive (Governor of Egypt, attached to the Ottoman Empire) , uncle of the Khedive Ismail Pasha under whose rule the Suez Channel had been opened and father of the Ottoman Grand Vizier during World War 1, Sait Halim Pasha. Prens Halim Pasha was also Grand Master of the Provincial Grand Lodge of Egypt (English Constitution). In 1869 the American Southern Jurisdiction had recognized this Supreme Council, 1861 being the accepted consecration date.



Khedive Ismail Pasha



Said Halim Pasha

The extinction of the Provincial Grand Lodge of Turkey

In 1869 Lord Bulwer had been recalled to London. The above-mentioned Halim Pasha was in exile in Istanbul. Having good relations with the Sultan, he was proposed as Provincial Grand Master. But as his proficiency of the English language was not sufficient, an American, John Peter Brown, Secretary at the American Embassy and known writer and researcher of the Islamic mysticism was elected in his place. Hyde Clark, the Deputy District G.M. in a letter to a Bro. Harvey[1] in London, proposed that two Grand Masters should be elected together, Peter Brown for the current management of the Grand Lodge and Halim Pasha for his relations with the Sultan. This proposition was not carried on. After Brown, in 1873 Bro. Stephen Scouloudi has been elected Provincial Grand Master. The Provincial Grand Lodge was run inefficiently. Dues were not or could not be collected. In 1884 when Scouloudi resigned, no one was elected in his place. At that time there were 4 English Lodges in Istanbul and 7 in Izmir.



Masonic Hall in Istanbul

Lodges at the end of the 19th Century

At the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th , there were 11 English, 7 Scottish, 2 Irish, 1 Polish, 2 Spanish, 5 German, 15 Italian, 2 Greek, 6 French, 1 Hungarian lodges plus a few chapters attached to the English, Scottish and Irish lodges in Istanbul, Izmir and Thessalonica alone. {There were many lodges in the rest of the big cities of the Empire too (in the provinces of Syria, Lebanon, Palestine, Bulgaria, Romania and Macedonia and also in different cities of Anatolia) but as they were irrelevant in the creation of the Grand lodge of Turkey, they were not included in this study.}



Masonic Hall in Izmir

1 His full signature on the letter could not be red.



Gate of the Dolmabahçe Palace in Istanbul

Constitutional Monarchy

Three sons of Sultan Abdulmedjit, the Prince Murat (later Sultan Murat V) and two of his brothers, Prince Nurettin and Prince Kemalettin had been initiated in the French Lodge Prodoos. Five Grand Viziers, including Mithat Pasha who masterminded the first Constitutional Monarchic regime, Turkish ambassadors to European countries and foreign ambassadors to Turkey, famous freedom writers and poets were members of this lodge. Louis Amiable[2], French Lawyer and politician, writer of the history of the Lodge "les Neufs Soeurs" cradle of the Encyclopedists in Paris before the Revolution, was the Orator of the Lodge. Prince Murat accessed the throne on the 30th May 1876. Due to a mental illness, he was deposed three months later and his brother Abdulhamit was enthroned, after bargaining with Bro. Mithat Pasha, and thus promising to start the constitutional process. He was not long to go back on his promise.



Sultan Murat V



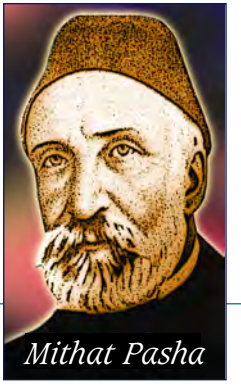
Abdulmedjit



Abdulhamit II

Closing of the parliamant and absolute rule

On the 5th February 1878 Abdulhamit sent Grand Vizier Bro. Mithat Pasha in various exiles, finally to Taif (port city of Yemen, then a province of the Ottoman Empire) arranging his execution by strangulation there. On the 13th February 1878 Abdulhamit adjourned the parliament indefinitely, starting a period of absolute despotism, which lasted 30 years. Cleanti Scalieri, W.M. of the lodge Prodoos plotted a bloody but unsuccessful kidnapping of Murat V from the Çiragan Palace, to restore him on the throne.



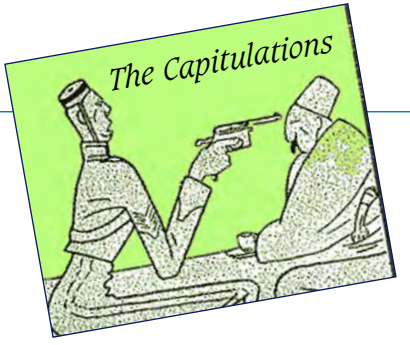
Mithat Pasha

2 He was in Istanbul on contract to reorganize the Turkish Bar Association.


100
years
TALÂT PAŞA
V. MURAD
MUSTAFA NECATİ
M.REŞİT PAŞA
NAMIK KEMAL
MITHAT PAŞA
H.ALİ YÜCEL
Milli Eğitim Bakanı
ŞÜKRÜ KAYA
İçişleri Bakanı
S.HAYRİ ÜRGÜPLÜ
R.NURİ GÜNTEKİN
Yazar ve Öğretmen
ZİYA GÖKALP
LÜTFİ KIRDAR
İstanbul Valisi
KÂZIM ÖZALP
Büyük Millet Meclisi Reisi
AYHAN IŞIK
Sinema Yıldızı
YUNUS NADİ
MESUT CEMİL TEL
Bestekâr
BESİM ÖMER PAŞA
Doktor
MİM KEMAL ÖKE
Atatürk'ün Doktoru
G.OSMAN PAŞA
Plevne Kahramanı
HÜR VE KABUL EDİLMİŞ MASONLAR BÜYÜK LOCASI
100 yıl
TÜRKİYE 1909-2009
Turkey 1909 2009
TÜMER ARGIN

A Masonic political party: Union and Progress, created according to the model of the "Carbonaries" in Italy.

After the model of Young Italians, Young Germans, Young Swiss, the Young Turks organised in Paris with the aim of bringing back the constitutional monarchy. The Young Turks talked a lot and did not act. 5 Freemasons, military students in the faculty of medicine started a revolutionary party, which later took the name of Union and Progress. Their model was the Italian paramasonic revolutionary society, the "Carbonaries" and their relations with the Grand Lodge In the second half of the 19th century, the main European powers had obtained immunity for their subjects living in the Ottoman Empire. This immunity system was called "The Capitulations". The Turkish police did not have the right to enter a house belonging to a foreign subject. Thus the members of Union and Progress in Thessalonica plotted their revolution in Italian, French and Spanish lodges gathering in houses belonging to foreigners. To get around the Capitulations, the police organized a robbery in the temple of the lodge Macedonia Risorta, were the archives were kept, to obtain the members' lists, but a freemason in the police force tipped in time the Worshipful Master of the lodge. The frustrated policemen took revenge on the furniture of the temple. The police tried also to harass the members, waiting in the street for them to leave the building.



Abdulhamit and Freemasons, good relations with British Lodges, persecution of Continental Lodges

Abdulhamit knew very well what Freemasonry was about. As stated above, three of his brothers were freemasons. The princes Kemalettin and Nurettin were in line for the throne. Most of the European powers were governed by freemason kings and ministers. For these reasons, Abdulhamit did not want to alienate Freemasonry. While persecuting the revolutionary lodge members of the Italian, French and Spanish lodges in Thessalonica, he gave large donations to the charity efforts of English Lodges in Istanbul. He even planned the creation of a Grand Lodge in Istanbul, of which he would be the Grand Master. This lodge would act as a senate, assembling the leaders of the different warring communities in Istanbul, (mainly Turkish intellectuals, the members of the Italian, Levantine, Greek, Armenian and Jewish communities). This project was never realised but shows the intricacies of the way Abdulhamit's mind worked.


نیه‌نك احیاسی
ΕΛΕΥΘΕΡΙΑ ΙΣΟΤΗΣ ΑΔΕΛΦΟΤΗΣ
ماشا سره قانون اساسی
ΖΗΤΩ ΤΟ ΣΥΝΤΑΓΜΑ
VIVE LA CONSTITUTION



Poster by Sotiris Hristidis (1858-1940), printed in Athens, symbolising the link between the first and second parliamentary governments. The angel is carrying a pancart reading "Liberty, Equality, Fraternity". On the right upper corner of the poster we read "Revitalisation of the Ottroman Empire". The group of four with the liberated Freedom Lady, are Bro.Mithat Pasha, Prince Sabahattin, Fuad Pasha and Bro. Namık Kemal, Namık Kemal and Prince Sabahattin are representing the first Constitutional parliamant, Mithat Pasha and Fuad Pasha the second. Bro. Resneli Niyazi is holding the chisel, while Enver Pasha is brandishing the hammer to brake the chains.

The second Constitutional Monarchy

A great number of high-ranking army officers were Freemasons and also members of the Union and Progress Party, low ranking officers were not required to become Freemasons to be accepted into the Union and Progress Party, but they hoped to get a quicker promotion if they would be initiated first. The action of the Union and Progress Party, and its threat to invade Istanbul with the armies stationed in Thrace, obliged Abdulhamit to promulgate once more the Constitutional Monarchy on the 23rd July 1908. The reaction was not long to come. On the 31st March 1909[3] the fundamentalists took the control of Istanbul.



The freemasons in Thrace, mainly from Thessalonica organised an army of reservists. Almost all officers were Freemasons (the regular army had to stay in place to defend the borders in the Balkans). There were too many officers; some joined the expeditionary force in the uniforms of plain soldiers. The army took back Istanbul from the fundamentalists, there were bloody battles and hangings, and a committee of 5 deputies representing 5 different ethnic groups in Turkey dethroned Abdulhamit. All five of them were Freemasons. As a result of all this, Freemasons became the hate center of fundamentalist Islam. *Abdulhamit II*

3 According to our present calendar the date would be 13th April 1909



First Grand Master: Talat Pasha

HÜR VE KABUL EDİLMİŞ MASONLAR BÜYÜK LOCASI

100 yıl

TÜRKİYE 1909-2009

The Creation of the Grand Lodge of Turkey (Ottoman Grand Orient)

On the 3rd March 1909, the dormant Supreme Council of Turkey (1861) was revived. This Supreme Council first consecrated 4 Turkish lodges. These 4 lodges plus 3 Italian, 2 French, 1 Spanish, 1 Palestinian and 2 Egyptian lodges (One of them, Resne, English Constitution) assembled to form the Grand Orient of Turkey on the 13th July 1909, and elected its first Grand Master, the Minister of the Interior Mehmet Talat Sai Pasha, who later became Grand Vizier (Prime Minister). This Grand Lodge was consecrated by the Supreme Council.

The Masonic State

According to the French historian Thierry Zarcone, the period from 1908 to 1918 could be called "The Masonic State". The Union and Progress Party in power used Freemasonry in its foreign relations. Deputations of parliamentarian Freemasons went to Italy, France, Hungary and Germany. The Freemason deputies claimed that with their effort, democracy, according to the French slogan of liberty, equality and fraternity was prevailing now in Turkey and that the European powers should be of assistance.

Revolt in Albania and occupation of Libia by Italy

At the end of 1910 the Albanians had revolted against the Ottoman rule and the Italian parliament was about to vote a military aid program for the rebels. After the intervention of the Grand Lodge of Turkey, the Italian Freemasons in the parliament were effective in blocking the motion 11 months later, at the end of 1911, after Italy's expedition to Libya (which was Ottoman territory at the time), the same scenario was repeated, but naturally this time the Grand Orient of Italy could not act against its own government. In answer to the letter from the Grand Lodge of Turkey, the Grand Master issued a very general statement on the 29th September 1911 ("Per l'Ingresso di Tripoli", Rivista Massonica, 1911, No. 15-16). The Italians only promised to care for wounded Turkish Prisoners of War.



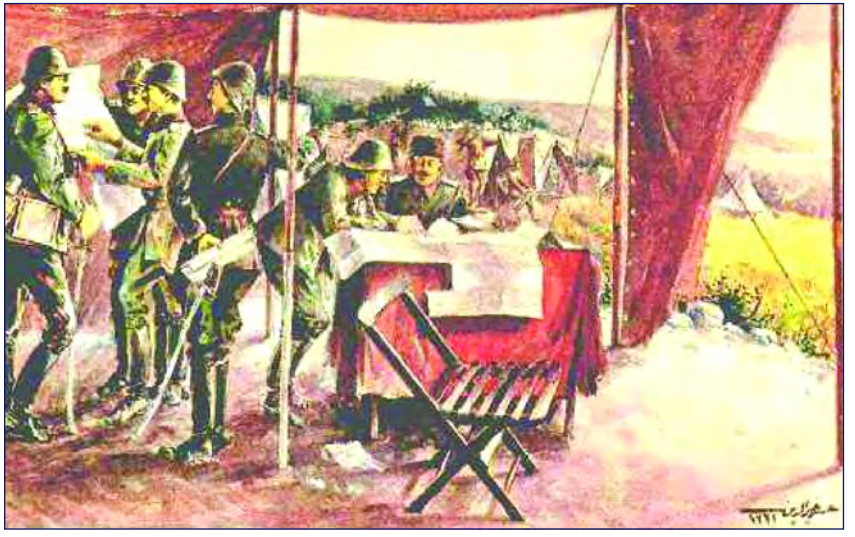
Cover of the Revista Masonica No:15-16 / 1911



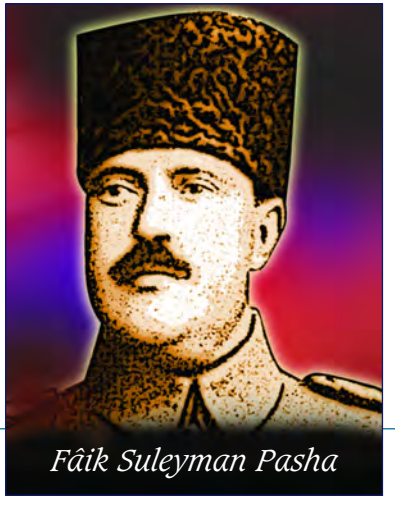
Corporal Seyit Charging a gun during the Battle of the Dardanelles

The War Years

Fâik Süleyman Pasha had been initiated in the years 1904 – 1905 either in the Macedonia Risorta or the Veritas lodge in Thessalonica. On the 1st of August 1909, he signed the declaration for the creation of the Ottoman Grand Orient, in the name of Macedonia Risorta Lodge. On November 3, 1909 he was given the 33rd degree in the Scottish Rite. In 1910 after Talat Pasha, he was elected Grand Master (1910-1912), and was elected again to the grand mastership in 1915. Lieutenant General Fâik Pasha commanded with valour the 2nd Army Corps in the Battle of the Dardanelles, and in July 1916 was transferred, with the 2nd Corps to the Caucasian front. On August 30 he ordered a bayonet charge against the Russian forces and was hit by a bullet during the charge. He was buried at the Elaziğ Military Cemetery. The Deputy Grand Master, Câvid Bey, minister of finance, was Grand Master per interim, until the end of the war.



Grand Master Fâik Süleyman Pasha was commanding the Second Army Corpse at the Dardanelles. The painting by Hayri Özel, shows him at his command post during the Battle of Ziğindere (28th June - 3rd July 1915). He was later transferred with the Second Corps to the Caucasus front, to fight the Russian army. He was killed on the front, just after he had ordered a bayonet charge.



Fâik Suleyman Pasha



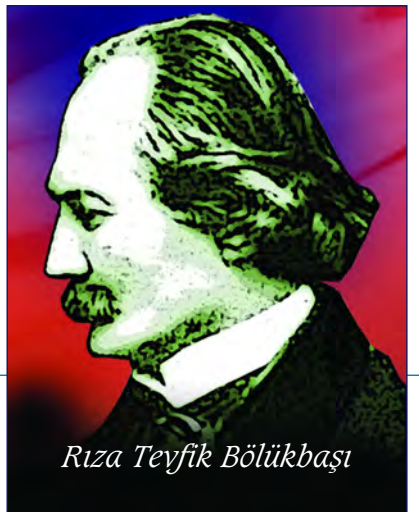
Câvid Bey

Rıza Tevfik Bölükbaşı (1869-1949)

Rıza Tevfik was one of the founders of both the Ottoman Scottish Rite and the Grand Orient. He was elected Grand Master at the end of the war (1918). He was known as a philosopher, mystic and folk poet, Bektashi, politician and wrestler. Although he was a doctor in medicine, he was a teacher of philosophy and participated in the preparation of a dictionary of philosophy. He was a good speaker, teacher, sufi guru, prolific writer, a good cook. He was fluent in French, English, Italian, Greek, Armenian, Ladino[4], Arabic and Persian. He entered parliament and defended a socialist and mystic liberalism.

In 1913, when the Party of Union and Progress came to absolute power after a coup, he joined the opposition actively, was arrested and imprisoned. In 1918, he joined the government as minister of education. As Grand Master, he took revenge on the Freemasons who participated in the war government who had acted against him and was the cause of their arrest and deportation in exile. As he was a part of the Turkish mission that signed the treaty of Sèvres in 1920, in 1924 he was included in the list of 150 collaborators and sent into exile in Egypt. He came back to Turkey in 1943 and continued his carrier as a writer, poet and journalist. He died on the 30th December 1949. At the end of 1918 he was forced to resign from the Grand Mastership. As his life as a Freemason and philosopher was a mirror of Freemasonry in the Ottoman Empire, we would like to include in this essay the evaluation on his life and work by Prof. Dr. Thierry Zarcone, as published in the Canonbury Papers, Volume 5. It is interesting to note that, in spite of being the Grand Master of the Turkish Grand Orient, he was against atheism.

"A Turkish Bektashi and Freemason, Riza Teyfik was a Socialists and revolutionary, a prolific writer on Sufism and a renowned mystic poet. Riza Teyfik who was the Grand Master of the Ottoman Grand Orient in 1918-1920, disagreed with the atheist approach adopted by French Freemasonry, in the form of the Grand Orient of France. Although the Ottoman



Rıza Teyfik Bölükbaşı

4- Judeo-Spanish language spoke by the Sefaradi Jews·

Grand Orient was related with this French masonic body, the Ottoman ritual never dropped the invocation to the Great Architect of the Universe, and belief in a Supreme Being has continued to be the rule. For instance, Teyfik admits, in one of his articles, that a Mason must believe in a 'Creative Power' {Kudret-i Halike) - he didn't say God. Teyfik also thought as a Muslim Neoplatonist and a Hermetist; for example, he advocates, like the Ismaili movement (which had an influence on Bektashism), the methodology of the ta 'wil (hermeneutic[5]) which permits us to understand the inner meaning of the sacred scriptures. ('Come believer! Throw the Quran out your pocket / This book will never bring you to salvation' (poetry of R. Teyfik). Teyfik also emphasises the knowledge of the self, - or self realisation, another Gnostic idea - which leads to the knowledge of God according to the famous Sufi expression 'one who knows himself (his soul) knows his master'. Regarding Bektashism, Teyfik wrote that the members of this order "are indeed the most liberal dervishes among all other secret (esoteric) sects," and that "All of them are non-conformist towards the State religion which is (sunnite-orthodox!)."- From Teyfik's articles, we understand that the liberalism he defended was both social and mystic. Unlike the French freemasons, Teyfik did not fight to eradicate religion, but acted as Social reformers looking behind the outward meaning of the holy scriptures, and endeavouring to reform Turkish society according to esotericism or 'post-Gnosticism'. His writing and poetry refer to the major post-Gnostic ideas: restoration of lost wholeness, superiority of pure knowledge (knowledge of the heart) over the faith and the sacred scriptures, self-realisation and mystic experience. More than political liberalism and ritual gestures, the 'esoteric' masons and 'para-masons,' like Teyfik, although few in number, might have recognised also in Freemasonry the common ground inherited from Greek Hermetism and Neoplatonism upon which Medieval Islam and Renaissance Christianity had elaborated a new Gnostic tradition."



Hacı Bektaş

5- The study of the methodological principles of interpretation (as of the Bible) Merriam-Webster



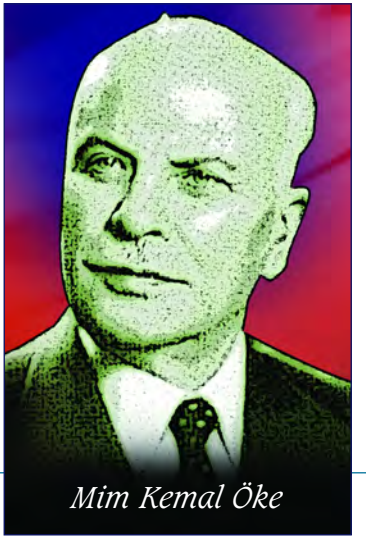
- *Brothers who created the Society for the Protection of Children*
- *Gold Medal of the Society in the Grand Lodge museum*
- *Stamp in commemoration of war orphans.*

The creation of the Society for the Protection of Children

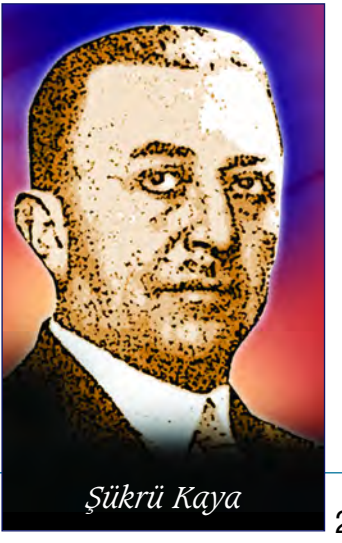
In March 1917 members of the lodge “Necat” (Nedjat) founded the “Society for the Protection of Children”, to care for the war orphans in İstanbul. In 1921, while the War of Independence was going on, the headquarters of the Society was transferred to Ankara, and the Grand Master, Besim Ömer Pasha became its president.

The closing of lodges in 1935

The Grand Orient of Turkey chartered a total of 66 lodges, mainly in Turkey but also in Egypt, Syria, Iraq, Greece, Lebanon and Palestine. In 1935, the year when Freemasonry decided to hibernate, 6 ministers, the President of the Parliament, more than 60 deputies and many state governors, were Freemasons, Ataturk’s private doctor, M. Kemal Öke, was a Past Grand Master. In 1935 the English, Germans and Russians transformed Turkey into a vast stage for propaganda and espionage. The Nazi propaganda machine was also stressing the Judeo-Masonic danger. The Minister of the Interior, Şükrü Kaya, a 33° Scottish Rite Mason, in order to curb these activities passed a law from parliament closing all clubs and societies, in the exception of sportive clubs. Freemasonry was not mentioned in the text, but the minister warned his brothers that it would be wiser to stop the activity of Freemasonry by its own free will. That’s how things happened and the reason why Freemasonry was able to recover its possessions after the war. All lodges did not close. The Supreme Council continued its activity behind closed doors, even chartered 3 new lodges. Craft lodges met at the homes of brothers. The police showed a knowing tolerance to all this, while Atatürk and later President Ismet Inönü, gave a small financial aid to the Supreme Council.



Mim Kemal Öke



Şükrü Kaya







Atatürk with

- *The President of the Panliament Bro. Kâzım Özalp*
- *The Minister of Foreign Affains Bro. Tevfik Rüştü Aras*
- *The Minister of the Interior Bro. Şükrü Kaya*

The awakening (1948)

Turkey wanted to be accepted in the U.N. Turkish diplomats were told that Turkey was a totalitarian state, and that even Freemasonry was closed, as it was under all totalitarian regimes. The President approached his personal doctor, Supreme Grand Commander (Scottish Rite) M. Kemal Öke, the same doctor who cared for Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, and told him that the time to resume official working had come.

In 1948 lodges, under the Supreme Council, started to labour in Istanbul and Izmir, and in 1949 in Ankara. A troubled period started with lodges trying to liberate themselves from the Supreme Council's rule. The Grand Lodges of Istanbul, Ankara and Izmir were created, finally those three grand lodges united on the 16th December 1956 to create a totally independent Grand Lodge of Turkey.

International Recognition

After the initial recognition by some American and European Grand Lodges, in 1959 an official deputation by the Grand Lodge of Scotland visited Turkey. The recognition process was delayed to 1963, due to the military coup of 1960. Most of the regular grand lodges, including the G. L. of Scotland, had recognized the Grand Lodge of Turkey, but England and Ireland did not. In order to satisfy them, the Grand Lodge of Turkey was re-consecrated by the Grand Lodge of Scotland in 1965. The Scottish Grand Master stressed the fact that this was a re-consacration, as it would not be proper to consecrate a Grand lodge that had been already recognised as regular. The colour of the regalia of the grand officers of the Grand Lodge of Turkey is the same green, as that of the regalia of the Grand Lodge of Scotland. Five years later, in 1970 the Grand Lodges of England and Ireland recognized the Grand Lodge of Turkey.

The schism of 1965



***Lord Bruce**: Grand Master of the Grand Lodge of Scottland*
***Dr. Alexander Buchan:** Grand Secretary*
***Dr. Necdet Egeran:** Hon. Grand Junior Warden (Grand Senior Warden of the Grand Lodge of Turkey, elected Grand Master next day).*
***Robert T. Sime:** Grand Master of Ceremonies (par interim)*

Friction was continuous between the Supreme Council and the Grand Lodge.
At the end of 1964, The Grand Secretary, on his own, gave a letter to a politician brother, stating that he was not a freemason. The Grand Secretary was the Senior Warden of the lodge in which that brother had been initiated in 1955. The politician brother used the said document against the allegations of the fundamentalist wing of his political party; he was thus elected to the presidency of the party and reigned on Turkish Politics until 2000, when he retired as President of the Republic.
In the 1965 Grand Master elections, the Brother who issued this letter was elected, in spite of the Supreme Council's secret opposition. The Supreme Council preferred the election of a Brother who would be obedient to them and tried to cancel these elections. This led to a lot of turbulence in the ranks of Turkish Freemasons. Finally a schism occurred, with a small group of brothers creating a separate Grand Lodge, which later attached itself to the French Grand Orient.
Today this irregular grand lodge has about 3000 members and is in relations with a Turkish Feminine Grand Lodge. This is a rather new outfit and has a few hundred members, organized in all major cities in Turkey.



Publications

The research Lodge Mimar Sinan, No. 43 was inaugurated in 1966. Later research lodges were created in Izmir and Ankara also. The “Mimar Sinan” research magasine is being published four times a year. Every article has a short abstract in English preceding it. Tesviye (Level), Masonic magasine, is published since 1992. A synopsis in English covers all the articles in the magasine. DVD’s equipped with search motors, covering all the publications of the Grand Lodge, before and after the war have been prepared in 2009.







The Rite of the Grand Lodge of Turkey

The Grand Lodge of Turkey labours using the Turkish Working. At its creation in 1909, lodges having their charters from different obediences had formed the Grand Lodge of Turkey. The different rituals had been mounted on the Grand Orient of Belgium ritual, while accommodating for Turkish customs. Later when international recognition was pursued, some modifications were made and after the reconsecration in 1965 by the Grand Lodge of Scotland, some additional modifications had been effectuated to close the gap with the Modern Scottish Ritual. We have three books on the altar, we do not kneel while taking the obligation, the candidate spends some time in the cabinet of reflection, writes his philosophical testimony, the chaplain has been replaced by the Orator, we have additional ceremonies, like the wedding confirmation, funeral and burial ceremonies, tenues blanches (with ladies) in the temples with the books of Sacred Law closed, no aprons, but white gloves, etc..... When we look at the sum of the new rituals thus created we have to call it “the Turkish Working”.



The situation as it is today

Today the Grand Lodge of Turkey has about 216 lodges with 15000 active members. It is recognized by all regular grand lodges and is active, promoting freemasonry in the Near East, the Balkans and the ancient Soviet republics in Central Asia. There are lodges labouring in Turkish in Washington DC, Germany (ACGL), Israel and Romania. Three research lodges and three lodges of Masonic education are active in Istanbul, Ankara and Izmir. Lodges labouring on the Mediterranean littoral have their vacations in winter and labour in the tourist season.

Freemasonry was introduced to Turkey in the first half of the 18th century. It had a tumultuous history, closed down three times, the archives were confiscated or lost in fires and wars.

Freemasons initiated modernisation, and thus, oscillated between power and persecution, ruling the Ottoman Empire and later the Republic or were outlawed.

All main European obediences had lodges in Turkey. In 1861 a Turkish Supreme Council tried unsuccessfully to bring them under a single roof.

The Grand Lodge of Turkey was founded in 1909. In 2009 Grand Lodge is celebrating the centenary of this event.

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