



FREEMASONRY I. INTRODUCTION

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i. Introduction

The Ancient, Free, and Accepted Masons, a body generally referred to as the Craft, is the foundation of all Masonic orders. Freemasonry's avowed ideals include universal brotherhood, religious toleration, and political compromise. Most Masonic orders, with the exception of the Grand Orient of France, believe in the Great Architect of the Universe, a kind of rational and secular deistic belief, and, true to their ecumenical inspirations, use the holy scripture of their members for their swearing in ceremonies. *The Lodge*. Symbolizing King Solomon's Temple, the lodge room and its ritual is structured around the mythology of the Temple and the murder of its chief architect and master of all the stonemasons during its construction (Figure 1). The lodge room is built, therefore, toward the Orient, the source of light and authority, the seat of Solomon.

The Officers of the Lodge. The principal officers of the Lodge are the Worshipful Master and the Senior and Junior Wardens. The Worshipful Master is the head and chief of the Lodge, the source of light, of knowledge, and instruction. Dressed formally and sitting on a high pedestal at the eastern edge of the Temple, the Worshipful Master presides over the formal Masonic



sessions. He is symbolically supposed to fill the place over the Craft once occupied by King Solomon. Senior and Junior Wardens, who assist the Worshipful Master and preside when he is absent, sit at lesser pedestals in the west and the south respectively. Other officers include the Orator, a person accomplished in Masonic knowledge and skilled in expressing Masonic tenets and ideals, entrusted with the proper mode of performance in the ceremonies; Treasurer, the keeper of the Masonic purse; Secretary, in charge of all correspondence of the Lodge; Inner Guard, Master of Ceremonies, an important office usually conferred on a past Master; Senior Deacon and Junior Deacon, the two lowest of the internal officers, who are entrusted with the general instruction of visitors and general surveillance of the security of the Lodge; and Tyler, or Outer Guard, the officer in charge on the farther side of the Lodge door whose duty is to guard the lodge against the intrusion of the profane (see [Table 1](#) and Figure 1). Each official position in the Masonic Order has its own particular emblem. This takes the form of a jewel hung from the collar of the individual official during formal ceremonies (for detail see Mackey, pp. 229-31). *Masonic degrees*. The lodge operates under a charter issued by a grand lodge exercising administrative power. It offers the first basic three degrees of Entered Apprentice (*šāgerd, kārāmūz*), Fellowcraft (*raftq, yār*), and Master (*ostād*) Mason. Thirty higher degrees (from 4th up to 33rd) are also awarded by the Scottish Rite, one of the main Masonic affiliated rites which is popular among Persian Masons (Gould; Pick and Knight; de Pace; Waite).

Rituals. Masons have an elaborate system of rituals, mimetically representing the various stages of a stonemason's craft. These are performed at the opening and closing of their sessions, at the initiation of apprentices, at "raising" (*tanšīb*) a Mason to a higher degree, and other ceremonies of the order. New members are elected through a process of nomination by the Lodge members and their unanimous ratification. The initiation ritual depicts the journey from darkness to light. It is intended to inculcate the masonic mysteries and the need to preserve secrecy as well as obedience of its rules in the mind of the new apprentices. In the ceremony of admittance to the Temple candidates must be blindfolded and dressed in loose-fitting white garbs, with one foot in a simple slipper. The candidate declares his sincere wish to be admitted to the Lodge and swears his loyalty and obedience to the brotherhood. The blindfold is removed when the Worshipful Master asks: "Having been in a state of darkness, what is the predominant wish of your heart?" and the candidate answers: "Light." At this moment the Worshipful Master draws the attention of



the candidate to the emblematic Light of Freemasonry, i.e., the holy scriptures of the candidate's particular faith (the Bible, the Torah, the Qur'ān, or the Avesta), as well as the square and the compass used as part of a mason's tools. Then the secret signs, hand grips, and the password of the first degree of the entered Apprentice is explained to him. Finally the novice is presented with a simple white calf-skin apron which symbolizes the rank of a new apprentice (for details, see Knight and Lomas, pp. 5-18; see also Rā'īn, III, pp. 198-22, 274-303, 316-21; Täfta, p. 50).

The origin and development. There are many legendary accounts regarding the origin of the Craft among Freemasons, but it is generally acknowledged that, drawing on guilds practices of medieval stone-masons, the order's first Grand Lodge was founded in London in 1717 and expanded to other Western countries in the 18th-19th centuries (Hamill, pp. 15-25, 87-98). The burgeoning of Freemasonry in 18th century Britain was influenced by the development of modern bourgeoisie, commercial democracy, and the rise of voluntary associations. In 17th and 18th century Britain, modernizing guild masters, hand-in-hand with some enlightened members of the gentry, became the champions of modern industries and rising capitalism. Substituting the declining familial ties in growing urban centers, and combining social prestige with class diversity, the Masonic network of brotherhood furnished a common ground for fraternal ties between rising bourgeois elements and the old aristocracy (Clawson, pp. 53-83).

Great Revolutions. With the slogan of "liberty, equality, fraternity," Freemasons played an active part in the American Revolution of 1775-83 against the British Empire, and the French Revolution of 1789 against the *ancienregime*. They were even more instrumental in Persia's Constitutional Revolution (q.v.) of 1905-9 against the Persian absolutist monarchy and its Czarist Russian ally.

In the Orient. The Masonic history in the Orient "is closely bound up with that of the East India Company and the armed forces" (Pick and Knight, p. 308). The first Freemasonry lodges in the Orient were established in Bengal, Madras, and Bombay (1728-58) for British colonizers. In 1844 the first lodge was formed in Bombay for the general admission of upper class Indians, including Parsis. Thereafter, many Indian princes and members of the ruling caste joined the Order and rose to high Masonic ranks (*ibid.*, pp. 308-9). It was in the 19th century that the Craft was introduced to the Ottoman Empire, Egypt, and Persia.



Size of membership. According to *Encyclopedia Americana* (1993, XI, p. 432), as of the early 1990s, there were more than five million Freemasons around the world of which over 3.5 millions were in the United States, one million in Great Britain, 350,000 in Canada, 50,000 in France, 50,000 in South America, while the remaining 50,000 members were scattered throughout other countries.

Conspiracy theories. Freemasonry's identification with universal liberal ideas has led to reactions by conservatives, nationalists, radical groups, and religious fundamentalists; its anticlericalism has brought the hostility of the Roman Catholic Church; its mythological origin in King Solomon's Temple has elicited the hatred of anti-Semitic groups, while its secrecy and affiliation with Britain has encouraged many to believe in its association with a presumed Anglo-Zionist world conspiracy. Totalitarian regimes, including National-Socialist and Communist states have consistently suppressed Freemasonry (see E. Decker; El-Amin; Leazer; Lemaire; Vaughn; Knight; Short).

In Persia. Freemasonry in Persia began its activities in the mid 1850s-early 1860s with the formation of a short-lived, irregular (i.e., unaffiliated, unofficial) lodge of Farāmūš-kāna (lit., The House of Oblivion; the Persian term coined for Freemasonry in the late 18th century India). It was founded by Mīrzā Malkom Khan Nāẓem-al-Dawla, a self-promoting reformer with a somewhat dubious reputation. An attempt to revive the Lodge was made later by his disciple 'Abbāsqolī Khan Qazvīnī Ādamīyat, who founded a short-lived Majma'-e Ādamīyat (lit., League of Humanity) during the Constitutionalist Revolution (q.v.) in 1907. The Lodge Bīdārī (Lož-e bīdārī-e Īrān; Le Reveile de l'Iran; also known as the Lož-e Tehran), founded on 21 April 1908 and continued until early 1920s, was the first lodge in Persia which became affiliated with a European grand lodge, L'Ordre Grand Orient de France, which itself was not recognized as a regular lodge by the mainstream Anglo-American system of the Ancient, Free, and Accepted Masons. The Lodge Pahlavi (or Homāyūn), which was founded in the early 1950s (after three decades of Freemasonry's dormant phase) to mobilize Persian notables against the government of Moḥammad Moṣaddeq, claimed to be affiliated also with the Grande Orient by mediation of an obscure grand lodge in Cairo. The establishment of the Ancient and Accepted Anglo-American Masonry in Persia, therefore, began in the mid-1950s and flourished through the 1970s when 43 Scottish, German, and French affiliated lodges, recognized by the British order, were formed by Persian notables with nearly 1,700 members (see iii. below).



Strong mistrust and suspicion of Freemasonry and its supposed agenda by many Persians of all persuasions led to the suppression of the order, the closure of lodges, and persecution of Freemasons after the 1979 Revolution. Since then a small number of Persian Freemasons have moved their order to the United States (see iv. and v. below).

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