



Hungarian Freemasons as “Builders of the Habsburg Empire” in Southeastern Europe

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In the 1890s, Hungarian Freemasonry began to expand its sphere of influence in southeastern Europe. The establishment of lodges in the southeastern border areas and even outside the Kingdom of Hungary exemplifies this expansion. When devising explanations for this policy, the Hungarian Freemasons made use of colonial and imperial discourses to justify expansion into the “Orient” with reference to the alleged civilizing role they attributed to Freemasonry. They divided the world into two parts from a cultural-civilizational point of view: one where Freemasonry was already established and flourishing and another where this form of community and social practice was not yet known or established. This discourse was entangled with political, economic, and academic practices that were prevalent among the Hungarian Freemasons. Masonic activities and discourses therefore merit consideration in the cultural and social context of their time and analysis from the perspective of new imperial histories, especially since the importance of the discourses and political symbolisms used in the expansion and maintenance of imperial structures has already been pointed out by many historians and scholars of cultural studies within the framework of New Imperial History and postcolonial studies

With a view to the undertakings of Hungarian Freemasons in the Balkans, this paper asks whether Hungarian Freemasons can also be considered “Builders of the Habsburg Empire.” This question is particularly relevant given that Freemasonry was only permitted in the Hungarian half of the Dual Monarchy. Thus, Hungarian Freemasons acted as both national and imperial actors, and they did so independently of Vienna. As the framework for my discussion here, I focus in this article on the discourses and activities of the Symbolic Grand Lodge of Hungary and the contributions of the most relevant actors, such as the Turkologist Ignác Kúnos and the journalist and deputy director of the Hungarian Museum of Commerce, Armin Sasváris.

Keywords: freemasonry, Balkan Peninsula, Budapest, empire building

Introduction

In the 1890s, Hungarian Freemasonry began to expand its sphere of influence in southeastern Europe. The establishment of ties to Ottoman, Greek, and later Bulgarian Freemasons and of lodges in the southeastern border areas and even outside the Kingdom of Hungary (for instance, in cities such as Belgrade,

Sarajevo, and later İzmir) exemplifies this expansion. Thus, the Hungarian Freemasons made use of both transnational fraternal as well as colonial and imperial discourses, justifying their policy of expansion into the “Orient” with reference to the civilizing role they attributed to Freemasonry. These discourses were entangled with the political, economic, and academic practices that were prevalent among the Hungarian Freemasons.

Against this backdrop, this paper aims to analyze the networks of Hungarian Freemasonry from the perspective of New Imperial History. Austria-Hungary has already been analyzed by historians and scholars of cultural studies within the framework of New Imperial History and postcolonial studies, especially since researchers began calling attention to the importance of the discourses and symbolic politics used in the expansion and maintenance of imperial structures.¹ However, Hungary’s role as an independent actor in these processes has not yet been investigated in the international historical research. Indeed, Hungary was not an independent geopolitical actor. Nevertheless, Ignác Romsics has written about the “Hungarian imperialist idea,” referring both to the hoped-for shift of power to Budapest and the aspired expansion of Hungarian positions in the Balkans.² Recently, Krisztián Csaplár-Degovics and Gábor Demeter considered Hungarian ideas concerning penetration into the Balkans in the nineteenth century and the first decade and a half of the twentieth.³ Both Csaplár-Degovics and Demeter elaborate on Hungarian endeavors in the European “Orient” and the imperialist aspirations behind these endeavors. They also take a stand in

1 Jörn Leonhard and Ulrike Hirschhausen and also Pieter M. Judson in his “new history” of the Habsburg Empire write about “imperializing nation-states” and “nationalizing empires.” They argue against a strict distinction between empire and nation-state in the nineteenth century. Kerstin Jobst, Julia Obertreis, and Ricarda Vulpius argue in their article for a multifocal rather than a two-dimensional view of Eastern European empires, while Claudia Kraft, Alf Lüdtker, Jürgen Martschukat, and, elsewhere, Johannes Feichtinger call for rethinking colonialism and imperialism from the perspective of Eastern European state structures. By introducing the concept of micro-colonialism, they want to break down dichotomies such as center-periphery. They consider that there was not a single empire-wide colonial discourse, but different bearers of power. In the same volume by Claudia Kraft et al., Anna Weronika Wendland makes Orientalism as a form of cultural colonialism fruitful for her argumentation in order to show the relativity and constructedness of metropolis and periphery. See Jobst et al., “Neuere Imperiumsforschung in der Osteuropäischen Geschichte”; Judson, *The Habsburg Empire*; Kraft et al., “Einleitung: Kolonialgeschichten”; Feichtinger et al., *Habsburg postcolonial*; Feichtinger, “Komplexer k.u.k. Orientalismus”; Wendland, “Randgeschichten?”

2 Romsics, “A magyar birodalmi gondolat,” 124.

3 Demeter, “A modernizációtól a kolonizációs törekvésekig”; Csaplár-Degovics, “A századfordulós Közép- és Délkelet-Európa értelmezési lehetőségei globális perspektívából”; Csaplár-Degovics and Jusufi, *Das ungarisch-albanische Wörterbuch von Zoltán László (1913)*.

the historical-theoretical debate concerning whether one can even speak about imperialism or colonialism in relation to Austria-Hungary, let alone Hungary. Moreover, the imperialist policies of the colonial powers were not always focused on geographical expansion but rather on economic penetration (one might think, for example, of the British in the Ottoman Empire). In this sense, as Demeter argues, it is possible to speak about Hungarian imperialism, as Hungary was involved in similar undertakings in the Balkans.⁴ Furthermore, Csaplár-Degovics draws attention to informal Hungarian foreign affairs, which can be considered Hungarian imperial policy.⁵ I start from his theoretical vantage point and take into consideration the functions of imperial discourses and practices in culturally or economically asymmetrical relations, and I also consider the uses of colonial discourses and practices in relation to Masonic expansion.

This study is based on Jessica L. Harland-Jacob’s investigations into British Freemasonry’s connections with imperialism and colonialism. Harland-Jacob sheds light on the reciprocity of Freemasonry and imperialism, calling the British Freemasons “Builders of Empire.”⁶ Following Harland-Jacob, this paper asks whether Hungarian Freemasons can also be considered “Builders of the Habsburg Empire” with a view to the endeavors of the Hungarian Freemasons in the Balkans. This question is particularly relevant, given that Freemasonry was only permitted in the Hungarian half of the Dual Monarchy. This also meant that Budapest and not Vienna was the center of Habsburg Freemasonry, and this created a reciprocal situation between the Austrian Crown Lands and Hungary. This becomes even more apparent when one considers the situation of the so-called Austrian border lodges. After 1867, the Symbolic Grand Lodge of Hungary (SGLH) also offered Austrians opportunities to found their own lodges on the territory of the Hungarian Kingdom in the vicinity of the Austrian border. However, the Austrian Freemasons had to orient themselves towards the Hungarian capital and accept the leading power of the Hungarians in Freemasonry in the Habsburg Monarchy. Thus, Hungarian Freemasons were acting as both national and imperial actors. Against this background, the strivings of Hungarian Freemasons in the Balkans, which after 1867 became the target

4 Csaplár-Degovics, “A századfordulós Közép- és Délkelet-Európa értelmezési lehetőségei globális perspektívából,” 154; Demeter, “A modernizációtól a kolonizációs törekvésekig,” 287.

5 Csaplár-Degovics, “A századfordulós Közép- és Délkelet-Európa értelmezési lehetőségei globális perspektívából,” 154.

6 Harland-Jacobs, *Builders of empire*.

of Austro-Hungarian imperialism,⁷ gain more relevance. In this paper, I analyze the discourses used by the SGLH and the activities in which the SGLH engaged. I also consider the contributions of the relevant lodges and some prominent actors, including Turkologist Ignác Kúnos (1860–1945), who served as director of the Oriental Academy of Commerce (Keleti Kereskedelmi Akadémia), which was supposed to further the spread of Hungarian products to the East through the training it provided.⁸ I also take into consideration the contributions of Armin Sasvári, a journalist and deputy director of the Hungarian Museum of Commerce. I take a closer look at the lodges and Masonic relations, but I also put the networks into a larger context and analyze them from the perspective of imperialism as policy, practice, and discourse. On the meta-level of academic discourse, my findings are also intended further a nuanced answer to the following question: how should new findings regarding Austria-Hungary's behavior in the Balkans be interpreted from the perspectives of New Imperial History?

Freemasonry in the Habsburg Monarchy and Austria-Hungary

Freemasonry was established in England early in the eighteenth century, but its origins can be traced back to the local fraternities of the fourteenth century.⁹ Modern Freemasonry spread quickly all over the continent. It was a melting pot of intellectuals and the middle class on a spectrum of political ideologies that ranged from progressive to radical revolutionary. The secret to the efficiency of the lodges lay in the fact that they united the followers of the Enlightenment ideals and thus helped the existing political tendencies break through.¹⁰ While Freemasonry in Anglo-Saxon countries maintained a relationship of trust with the respective dynasty and state,¹¹ Freemasons in continental Europe were perceived by the rulers and religious authorities as people who challenged the existing class society and state order around the time of the French Revolution.¹² This perception, together with the fact that the Freemasons did indeed have many goals which diverged from the goals of the ruling classes, is one of the

7 Donia, *Islam under the Double Eagle*, 9; Schöllgen and Kießling, *Das Zeitalter des Imperialismus*, 3.

8 Erdélyi, "A Keleti Kereskedelmi Akadémia és az orientalisták: tudomány, a gazdaság és a politika interakciója."

9 Reinalter, "Die historischen Ursprünge und die Anfänge der Freimaurerei"; Bogdan and Snoek, *Handbook of Freemasonry*.

10 Reinalter, *Die Freimaurer*, 128–29.

11 On the early development of modern Freemasonry, see Bogdan and Snoek, *Handbook of Freemasonry*.

12 L. Nagy, *Szabaddkőművesek*, 15–16.

primary reasons why Freemasonry in France, Italy, and Europe’s eastern stretches was always more politically active (so-called Latin lodges) than it was in Great Britain, Germany, and Scandinavia.

The Brotherhood entered the Habsburg Monarchy in various ways with the help of English, Prussian, and, later, French lodges in the mid-eighteenth century. The transfer of masonic ideas and structures was closely linked to the mobility of certain intellectual groups. Reform-minded aristocratic state officials, officers, doctors, students, university professors, and even clergymen brought Freemasonry to Central and Eastern Europe.¹³ The Habsburg dynasty’s dealings with the lodges were dynamic: while the fraternity enjoyed the relative protection of the dynasty in its initial phase (1740s), the subsequent period up to the end of the eighteenth century was characterized by ever-increasing state control and growing mistrust.¹⁴ This contrasted with the fact that most lodge members were unwilling to participate in revolutionary activities, both because of their social position and because of the prohibition laid down in basic Masonic law.¹⁵ The state distrust for the brotherhood stemmed from Freemasonry’s function of testing the mechanisms of a democratic, bourgeois society in the protected space of the lodge.¹⁶ With the sense of community created by the rituals and secrecy, the practiced principle of equality, and their civic ideal of equality, the Freemasons challenged the traditional social structure and thus indirectly also the ruling structure of absolutism.¹⁷ As Reinhard Koselleck aptly describes this inherent contradiction of Freemasonry, “Directly apolitical, the mason is indirectly political.”¹⁸ In 1795, Emperor Franz I ordered the lodges to stop operating because some Austrian and Hungarian freemasons were thought to have been involved in the uprising against Austria. The suspected rebels were executed, and Freemasonry was banned for the next 72 years.¹⁹ After the Civic Revolution and War of Independence of 1848–1849, the first Hungarian

13 Aigner, *A szabadkőműveltség története Magyarországon*; Berényi, *A szabadkőműveltség kézikönyve*, 101–3.

14 For a general view of the Habsburg Freemasonry at the time of Enlightens, see Seewann, “Freimaurer (Ungarn).”

15 According to the Constitution of James Andersen (1723/1738, London), the members of the lodges were not allowed to politicize within the lodges. Budde, *Blütezeit des Bürgertums*, 18; Reinalter, *Die Freimaurer*, 53–54; Bogdan, “The Sociology of the Construct of Tradition and Import of Legitimacy in Freemasonry,” 218–19.

16 Budde, *Blütezeit des Bürgertums*, 15–17; Michaud, “Felvilágosodás, szabadkőműveltség és politika a 18. század végén.”

17 Seewann, “Freimaurer (Ungarn),” in *Lexikon Zur Geschichte Südosteuropas*, 240.

18 Koselleck, *Kritik und Krise*, 68, 74.

19 Berényi, *A szabadkőműveltség kézikönyve*, 82–84.

freemason networks were developed as a consequence of the fact that many of those who had taken part in the revolution were forced to flee the country.²⁰ They tried to explore the political potential of Freemasonry in the hope that this kind of an international organization would be helpful for the Hungarian cause, and they joined lodges in Italy, Switzerland, England, France, and the United States.

As a result of the Compromise of 1867, the Habsburg Monarchy was transformed into the dual state of Austro-Hungary. Hungary became autonomous with self-rule over internal matters. This constitutional restructuring paved the way for the golden age of Hungarian Freemasonry. The first prime minister, Baron Gyula Andrásy, himself a Freemason, overturned Franz I's ban after 72 years.²¹ While Freemasonry was used as a means of organizing resistance after the struggle for freedom, after the Compromise, it became the stronghold of a political elite that saw Hungary's future in loyalty to the Habsburg dynasty. This loyalty was reflected in the "respect for the law of the land"²² demanded by the basic document of Hungarian Freemasonry and in the frequent references to Emperor Franz Joseph in lectures and writings.²³ Nonetheless, the independent Hungarian Freemasonry that emerged after 1867 had its spiritual kinship through its context of origin with the generally more radical, actionist so-called Latin lodges.²⁴ This meant that the aforementioned Symbolic Grand Lodge of Hungary, which was founded in 1886 as the main institution of Hungarian Freemasonry, supported virtually all the positions that mattered to the liberal and radical bourgeoisie. Politically, socially, ethno-nationally, and denominationally it united the most diverse parts of society in the Hungarian half of the empire and evolved into the motor of various socio-political developments.²⁵ The different socio-cultural circumstances (the liberal nationalism of the nineteenth century, the later formation of the bourgeoisie, and the delayed processes of

20 Vári, "Magyar szabadkőművesség külföldön."

21 L. Nagy, *Szabadkőművesek*, 54.

22 *Ibid.*, 51.

23 "A nyolcvanéves király." *Kelet*, August, 1910, 295.

24 The lodges in non-Protestant countries began to interfere in politics in the nineteenth century through manifestos and acts committed under the banner of liberal nationalism and secularism. This caused conflicts and fractures in the international Masonic landscape. In 1815, the Grand Lodge of England amended Andersen's constitution to make belief in an explicitly Christian God a condition of membership. As a result, a great dispute arose over faith. This resulted in the Grand Orient de France amending its own constitution in 1877 to remove any reference to faith. L. Nagy, 48–49.

25 L. Nagy, 55.

democratization) led the Freemasons in Hungary to become politically active and induced them to offer possible solutions to social problems.

Lodges were closed societies in which rules applied that differed from the rules in the outside world. The structural criteria of the society were abolished. Ethno-confessional and social differences played no role in the interactions within the lodge or in the admission of new members. On the contrary, the mixing of different social classes and ethno-confessional groups was an explicit wish of the SGLH.²⁶ It is important to emphasize this practice of inclusion, as the lodges hosted many multilingual citizens of Austria-Hungary.²⁷ These people belonged mostly to the new elite of Germans of Jewish origin who in the 1880s began joining the lodges in growing numbers. Therefore, Hungarian Freemasonry was linked to the rise of a new economic elite whose large number had very successfully modernized by collaborating with the Magyar nobility.²⁸ The lodges favored the organic fusion of the new and old elite into a new bourgeois upper and middle class, since the decisive factors for membership were performance and character rather than origin. In particular, the Jews of Hungary took advantage of the symbolic resources of freemason networks and the inclusiveness of the lodges in order to achieve a social role which corresponded to their economic strength.²⁹ Ultimately, they were the ones who turned with “patriotic enthusiasm”³⁰ to the southeast to develop new markets under the slogan of economic nationalism, and as multilinguals, they proved perfect mediators of Freemasonry in the European “Orient.”³¹

Hungarian Freemasonry in the Balkans

Despite the boom in Hungary, Freemasonry remained banned in Cisleithania. Since it was allowed to exist officially only in the territory of the Hungarian Kingdom, the SGLH had a monopoly within the multi-ethnic Austro-Hungarian Empire and could develop without competition. By 1896, there were 2,805

26 “Oda kellene törekednünk, hogy társadalom minden rétegéből igyekezzünk az alkalmas anyagot kiválasztva, ügyünknek megnyerni.” [We should strive to select the appropriate material from every social stratum and win it for our cause]. “Marcel Neuschloss XII. Rendes közgyűlés” *Kelet*, April, 15, 77.

27 Buchen and Rolf, “Eliten und ihre imperialen Biographien,” 14–15.

28 Patai, *The Jews of Hungary*, 195.

29 Karády, “Asszimiláció és társadalmi krízis. A magyar-zsidó társadalomtörténet konjunkturális vizsgálatához”; Karády, “Elitenbildung im multiethnischen und multikonfessionalen Nationalstaat.”

30 McCagg, *A history of Habsburg Jews*, 192.

31 Sdvižkov, *Das Zeitalter der Intelligenz*, 231.

members in 40 lodges.³² Moreover, unlike Hungarian political institutions, the SGLH was able to act as an autonomous player in the international arena of Freemasonry. This was the initial period of Masonic internationalism,³³ when relations among the European Masonic umbrella associations were intensifying under the aegis of universally understood fundamental values. Around 1900, the lodges and grand lodges built up a dense network of correspondence. Their members visited one another across state borders, and the first international Masonic conferences were organized. This was accompanied by a lively exchange of ideas reflecting ideational motivations, pragmatic motivations, and conflicts.³⁴ In the process, masonic Grand Lodges attempted to draw into their own spheres of activity areas like the “Orient,” which had not yet been opened up to Freemasonry.

Lodges had occasionally been founded in southeastern Europe and the eastern Mediterranean as early as the eighteenth century, but it was not until the 1860s that their number began to increase notably.³⁵ The Ottoman Empire and the new states that had seceded from its territory were considered “free prey” for foreign grand lodge authorities, which did not have their own masonic grand authorities that would have taken control over the foundation of new lodges. Therefore, the founding of new lodges was mostly initiated by foreigners and inspired by foreign grand lodges.³⁶ This changed to some extent after the establishment of the first domestic grand lodges in the last third of the nineteenth century. These lodges tried to establish themselves within but often also beyond their own national borders.³⁷ As a result of these developments, southeastern Europe and the eastern Mediterranean region became an area in which an array of interests collided when the SGLH came on the scene in 1886, and this lasted into the first decades of the twentieth century.³⁸ Therefore, while the SGLH was able to carry out its activity as a sole actor within the Dual Monarchy, in

32 “Bericht der Symbolischen Großloge von Ungarn über das Jahr 1896.” *Orient*, March, 25, 1897, 31.

33 Berger, “Europäische Freimaurereien (1850–1935)”; Berger, “‘un institution cosmopolite?’ Rituelle Grenzziehungen im freimaurerischen Internationalismus um 1900.”

34 Berger, “Europäische Freimaurereien,” 25–30.

35 See Lennhoff et al., *Internationales Freimaurer-Lexikon*; Grimm, “Freimaurer (SO-Europa ohne Ungarn)”; Boogert, “Freemasonry in Eighteenth-Century Izmir?”; Beaurepaire, “Le cosmopolitisme maçonnique.”

36 Paul Dumont writes of Ottoman Freemasonry in the nineteenth as a “by-product of Western penetration.” Cf. Dumont, “Freemasonry in Turkey: a by-product of Western penetration,” 481–82.

37 Marković, *Freemasonry in Southeast Europe*; Dumont, *Osmanlılık, ulusçu akımlar, ve Masonluk*, 93.

38 Conti, “From Brotherhood to Rivalry. The Grand Orient of Italy and the Balkan and Danubian Europe Freemasonries”; Žugić, “I Garibaldi e la fondazione della prima Loggia in Serbia,” 84.

the “European Orient,” it entered an arena of competing foreign grand lodges, where it tried to expand its sphere of influence over the course of its more than three decades of existence.

The expansion of Hungarian Freemasonry began when Hungarian lodges encouraged the local elites in the southeastern borderland to become Freemasons and establish their own lodges. In 1889, the Lodge Stella Orientalis was founded with the support of the Hungarian Lodge Árpád in Semlin/Zemun (today a district in Belgrade) and later in Pancsova/Pančevo.³⁹ Both cities were border towns in the Habsburg Monarchy on the Danube River, very close to Belgrade. This is why “all the prestigious circles of Belgrade were represented” in the Stella Orientalis, such as the merchants Stojko Obradović and Izsó Neumann.⁴⁰ This is true of another lodge in Belgrade, Pobratim, on the other side of the Danube River in the Kingdom of Serbia. It was founded as the first lodge of the SGLH outside the Habsburg Monarchy one year after the Stella Orientalis in 1890.⁴¹ The two lodges played a key role in Serbian-Hungarian relations. Because of their proximity to each other and their common institutional affiliation, their members, who were predominantly Serbian (though the members from Pancsova were citizens of the Dual Monarchy, while the others were citizens of the Serbian Kingdom), were able to maintain contact and interact without any problems.⁴² Thus, the members of the two lodges saw an advantage in Freemasonry and their affiliation to the SGLH. However, the question arises as to what motivated the SGLH to promote the founding of lodges outside the monarchy.

It was the lodge Demokrácia (Democracy) in Budapest that had a particularly strong interest in targeting territories in southeastern Europe for Hungarian Freemasonry. It belonged to one of the largest lodges and one that actively worked for social progress. Its program included education of the common man, the promotion of the peasantry, the question of workers, and universal suffrage. It supported the Free School of Social Sciences (Társadalomtudományok Szabadiskolája) and the Galilei Circle (Galilei kör), both of which were meeting places for members of the young intelligentsia.⁴³ The members of Demokrácia

39 The Árpád, located in Szeged, organized Freemasonry in several towns in southern Hungary, such as Szabadka, Zombor and Orsova. “Bericht der Symbolischen Großloge von Ungarn über das Jahr 1889.” *Orient*, March, 1890, 93–94; Péter, “A szabadkőművesség Szegeden,” 265.

40 A “‘Stella Orientalis’ páholy felavatási ünnepélye.” *Kelet*, January, 24, 5. Palatinus, *A szabadkőművesség bűnei*, 245.

41 “Eine neue Loge in Belgrad.” *Orient*, October, 1890, 224.

42 *Kelet*, 12, no. 1 (1900): 5.

43 Pataky and Dzubay, “A szabadkőmves szervezetek levéltára,” 107. Demokrácia Páholy, 117, 119.

were mostly lawyers, journalists, businessmen, bankers, or merchants related to the “Orient” in some way.⁴⁴ The most important actors among them regarding networking in the Balkans and the Ottoman Empire were the journalist and secretary of the State Industry Association (Országos Iparvédelmi Egyesület) Mór Gelléri (1854–1915), the secretary and later deputy director of the Trade Museum Ármin Sasvári (1853–1924), and the founder and first director of the Orient Trade Academy, the internationally known aforementioned turkologist Kúnos. The first two were also involved in the foundation of the Lodge Pobratim.⁴⁵ Their connection to some key figures among Serbian academics, politicians, and businessmen, such as politician and literary scholar Svetomir Nikolajević (1844–1922), made the affiliation with the SGLH possible. The first Serbs were admitted to the Hungarian Masonic Union on October 5, 1890 during a celebration which was reported on in detail by Gelléri, who was also the editor of the Masonic magazines *Kelet* and *Orient*.⁴⁶ This meeting took place under the motto of Masonic brotherhood and “Serbian-Hungarian friendship.”⁴⁷ Sasvári welcomed them with the following greeting:

It is not with suspicion that we look at the progress of Serbia, but we are pleased when it jealously preserves and expands its national character [...]. And again you [the Serbs] turn to us, to your old ally, with whom you fought against the Crescent.⁴⁸

In the meanwhile, the SGLH considered the foundation of the Pobratim as the first step in an expansionist policy of Hungarian Freemasonry into the “Orient.” It referred in its documents to the conquest of Serbia by and for (Hungarian) Freemasonry.⁴⁹ It believed that “with the Masonic opening of this Lodge a new era will dawn not only in Serbia, but perhaps in the whole Orient for Freemasonry, which will conquer new territories for the victory of our

44 MOL P 1083-I-38-XLVI Demokrácia Páholy, Névjegyzék 1912.

45 MOL 1106-1 Demokrácia Tagok felvételi kérelmei, anyakönyvei (Életrajz, jellemzések) no.292; Mór Gelléri, “Eine neue Loge in Belgrad.” *Orient* 12, no. 10 (1900): 222–26.

46 Ibid.

47 *Orient* 12, no. 10 (1900): 223.

48 “Nicht mit Misstrauen Blicken wir auf den Fortschritt Serbiens, sondern wir freuen uns, wenn es seine nationale Eigenart eifersüchtig bewahrt und erweitert [...]. Und wieder wendet ihr [die Serben] an uns, an euren alten Verbündeten, mit dem ihr gemeinsam gegen den Halbmond gestritten.” *Orient* 12, no. 10 (1900): 225.

49 “Bericht der Symbolischen Großloge von Ungarn über das Jahr 1890.” *Orient* 3, no.1 (1891): 10

philanthropic principles.”⁵⁰ The use of terms familiar from colonial discourses, such as “conquest” of the “Orient” and “suitable terrain,” indicated power-based cultural relations. The Hungarian nation was presented in the discourse as bringing “light” in the form of Freemasonry, as well as lofty and progressive principles, to the Serbian soil.⁵¹ Thus, the argumentation mixed thinking styles of colonialism and Masonic ideals such as fraternity to justify expansionist undertakings and aims.

In the new century, the intention among Hungarian Freemasons to expand into southeastern Europe was even more explicitly in the foreground. From 1906 onwards, expansion was included as a goal in the annual “work program,” a kind of declaration of intent of the SGLH:⁵²

The most effective factor of masonic ideas is the establishment of new workshops in those Orients [i.e. places] where there is not yet a Lodge, each Lodge shall consider it one of its main tasks, as soon as it is sufficiently strengthened, to unfurl up our flag on the pinnacles of new castles.⁵³

To achieve this goal, the Grand Lodge called upon the Lodges to launch a campaign to acquire the leading men of the society.⁵⁴ Thus, the SGLH created a suitable climate for further initiatives to found new lodges, such as in Sarajevo, which in the wake of the Austro-Hungarian annexation (1908) was home to a large number of state bureaucrats.⁵⁵ There, because of the Austrian prohibition, Hungarian Freemasonry again had the privilege to integrate the local elite into the economic and cultural cycle of the Empire, while Austria had to accomplish this task without this effective tool. The SGLH tasked the Budapest Lodge *Demokrácia* with the foundation of the lodge in the new territory of Austria-

50 “mit der fr[ei]m[aure]rischen Eröffnung dieser Loge nicht nur in Serbien, sondern vielleicht im ganzen Orient eine neue Aera für die Fr[ei]m[aure]rei heranbrechen werde, welche zum Siege unserer menschenfreundlichen Prinzipien neue Gebiete erobern wird.” *Orient* 3, no. 1 (1891): 10.

51 “Wie wir [die ungarische Freimaurerei] in ihr [in der Pobratim] nicht nur eine neue Loge sehen, sondern weil hier davon Rede ist, dass wir das für die Fr[ei]m[aure]rei so geeignete serbische Terrain unserer kön.[igliche] Kunst erobern“ sondern “im benachbarten Königreiche eine neue Aera eröffnen.” *Ibid.*

52 “Arbeitsprogramm 1906.” *Orient*, October 20, 1906, 255; “Arbeitsprogramm.” *Orient* September 30, 1907, 223.

53 “Der wirksamste Faktor der freimaurerischen Ideen ist die Errichtung neuer Werkstätte in solchen Orients [d.h. Orte], wo es noch keine Loge besteht, jede Loge betrachte es als eine ihrer Hauptaufgaben, sobald sie genügend erstarkt ist, unsere Fahne auf der Zirne neuer Burgen aufzupflanzen.” *Arbeitsprogramm*, 20. Oktober 1906. *Orient* October 20, 1906, 255.

54 *Ibid.*

55 Malcolm, *Geschichte Bosniens*, 175–76.

Hungary.⁵⁶ Its members systematically searched for state employees who had been sent to Bosnia and Herzegovina and were open to Freemasonry, such as Mór Gerő, the Director of the Hungarian Commercial Bank in Sarajevo, and Ernő Borda, a Bosnian government engineer.⁵⁷ The SGLH showed a strong interest in masonic development in the new area, and this clearly reflects the importance of these initiatives. The SGLH did not leave the task of organizing the new lodge to the Zagreb Lodge Ljubav bližnjega, which was also subordinated to the SGLH and wanted to take the foundation of the Sarajevo lodge into its own hands with the permission of the SGLH.⁵⁸ In this sense, during the preparations in Sarajevo, Demokrácia spoke of “preparing the ground accordingly for further work,” or in other words, “preparing the lay population of these countries for our ideas and institutions [...]”⁵⁹ After two years of intensive preparations, however, all mention of the Sarajevo project disappears from the archival sources. Further research needs to be done to find out the reasons of its failure. For the moment, all that can be said is that it was related to mobility dynamics.

As a result of the annexation of Bosnia, there was a cooling off between the Serbian and Hungarian Freemasons. Where the preparations were being made to found a lodge in Sarajevo, the members of Demokrácia were busy with another issue regarding the “Orient”: the establishment of a Hungarian-Ottoman masonic network. The exchange between the Hungarian and Ottoman Freemasons began in 1908 with the Young Turk Revolution and the establishment of the Ottoman Grand Orient in 1909.⁶⁰ These two events were closely intertwined with each other and resulted in a forced change of elites with the rise of the Committee of Union and Progress, the Young Turks’ more and more centralistic and nationalistic branch of power. Since most of the members of this committee were Freemasons in Saloniki and Constantinople/Istanbul (people such as Mehmed Talaat, Midhad Şükrü, and Maliye Nazırı), the

56 “Aus dem Jahresbericht der Loge Demokrácia.” *Orient* January 18, 1909, 50.

57 MOL P 1083-38-XLVI Demokrácia Páholy, A Demokrácia páholy jelentése az 1909. Évről. Bp, 1910, 23; MOL P 1083-38-XLVI Demokrácia Páholy, member list 1912.S 8, Palatinus *A szabadság bűnei*, 103.

58 “Sitzung des Bundesrates am 18. Januar 1909” *Orient* January 18, 1909, 14.

59 “Boden für die weitere Arbeit entsprechend zu bearbeiten [...] die profane Bevölkerung dieser Länder auf unsere Ideen und Institutionen vorzubereiten [...]” Brief der Loge Demokrácia an die Loge Pobratim P 1106-1.

60 “Sitzungen des Bundesrates am 26 April.” *Orient* April 26, 1909, 143; Letter from the Ottoman Grand Orient to the SGLH on November 16, 1909. MOL P 1083-38-XLV Idegen páholy jelzetű iratok.

establishment of friendly relations with the new Masonic authority was not only a Masonic but also a political act.⁶¹

Hungarian-Ottoman Masonic relations intensified at the end of 1909 as a result of a visit of Ottoman Masons to Budapest. In autumn 1909, an Ottoman delegation was traveling through Europe promoting their new government. Many of the Ottomans who were part of this delegation were also Freemasons. Rıza Tevfik led the delegation, which included journalists Hasan Tahsin and Samuel Levy and the CUP officer Kâzım Nami Duru. On the Hungarian side, the Grand Master and internist Árpád Bókay, Ignác Kúnos, the politician and writer Pál Farkas, the chemist Ignác Pfeiffer, and the aforementioned Ármin Sasvári gave speeches in honor of the guests in Turkish and French.⁶² While of course working in the interests of achieving the official aims of their trip, these men were also striving to have the young Ottoman Grand Orient recognized by the European masonic authorities. They also spent a week in Budapest from October 21 to 27, where they were invited to a banquet “in honor of the Ottoman Freemason” at the Hungarian Grand Lodge.⁶³ The meeting resulted in a mutual commitment to cooperation inside and outside the lodges in future. Kâzım Nami Duru, an Ottoman Freemason and an emblematic figure of the Young Turk movement, held an enthusiastic speech to the Hungarian Freemasons in Turkish:

Give us more light! Where should we take this full light from, if not from you, dear Hungarian blood comrades, to whom we are tied indissolubly and inseparably not only by the general and eternal ideas of Freemasonry but also by the relationship of race and language. Come to us, be it to Saloniki or to Istanbul! Our brotherly arms will await you there, long live the Turkish-Hungarian brotherhood, freedom, and equality!⁶⁴

The view of the Ottoman Freemasons, who considered the Hungarian Freemasons their Hungarian brothers and teachers, corresponded with both the Freemason concept of transnational fraternity and the Hungarian nationalist aspiration to identify the Hungarians as a cultural nation. As a cultural nation, the

61 For the entanglements of Freemasons and the CUP, see Hanioglu, “Freemasons and Young Turks”; Iacovella, *Gönye ve hilal İttihad-Terakki ve Masonluk*; Koloğlu, *İttihatçılar ve masonluk*; Hanioglu, *The Young Turks in opposition*, 39.

62 “Festrede zu Ehren der türkischen Brüder.” *Orient*, October 22, 1909, 274–84.

63 Ibid.

64 *Orient*, October 22, 1909, 277.

Hungarian people could assert its claim to the right to play an allegedly civilizing role vis-à-vis its southeastern neighbors. At the same time, this role gave them the right to economic penetration into the areas where they transmitted culture understood in Western terms.⁶⁵ I discuss this in greater detail below.

The political transformations of the Balkans over the course of the Balkan wars directed the attention of the Hungarian Freemasons to the new states in southeastern Europe. A long article in a 1913 edition of *Orient* by Ármin Sasvári, one of the best connoisseurs of the region, offers ample testimony to the strong interest among Hungarian Freemasons in the “Balkans.”⁶⁶ Sasvári had been a student of the famous orientalist and Turkologist Ármin Vámbéry, and he later had worked as a journalist. In 1875, he reported as a war correspondent during the uprising in Herzegovina.⁶⁷ In 1890, he became the secretary of the Hungarian Trade Museum, where he headed the newly established information office. In 1907, he was made deputy director.⁶⁸ In *Orient*, Sasvári analyzed the Balkan Wars and the political developments from the point of view of Hungarian Freemasonry. He also reported on the visit of the Albanian Freemason and politician Dervish Hima (1873–1928), who had conversations with the Hungarian Grand Master and other officials in the Hungarian Freemasonry organizations and pleaded for support for Freemasonry in Albania and an Albanian state against Serbian territorial claims. In this conversation, the Hungarian Freemasons offered to allow the Albanian lodges to work under the SGLH until the establishment of their own grand lodge, and they also provided him with additional contacts in the political sphere.⁶⁹ This meeting represented the beginning of official Albanian-Hungarian Masonic relations, and the article describes a hitherto unnoticed chapter in Albanian-Hungarian relations as well. Thus, it can be claimed that the SGLH was one of the political puppet masters of Albanian-Hungarian rapprochement, which certainly corresponded with foreign policy developments within the Dual Monarchy,⁷⁰ since Albania’s independence had been recognized

65 Hidvégi, *Anschluss an den Weltmarkt*, 341.

66 *Orient*, February 3, 1913, 47–54.

67 “A szandzsák megszállása 1879 augusztus havában.” *Pesti Napló*, November 3, 1912, 38.

68 Szinnyei, “Sasvári Ármin.”

69 *Orient*, February 3, 1913, 52–53.

70 Milo, “Politika austro-hungareze ndaj Shqipërisë në vitet 1914–1918,” 21; Csaplár-Degovics, “Lajos Thallóczy an Albanian Historiography,” 122–23; Csaplár-Degovics, “Az első magyar-albán szótár születése.”

by the great powers at the London Ambassadors’ Conference on July 29, 1913, after long negotiations and with the help of Austria-Hungary.⁷¹

On the eve of World War I, a Hungarian freemason lodge called Zoroaster was established in Izmir/Smyrna.⁷² The city was not only one of the most important trading centers in the Ottoman Empire in the early twentieth century but also a multicultural metropolis⁷³ where many Masonic lodges existed.⁷⁴ How did a Hungarian lodge get into the Ottoman Empire? The *Zoroaster* was founded by Christians and Jews of the Ottoman Empire, Austria-Hungary, and Germany and was affiliated with the SGLH.⁷⁵ The link between Budapest and the Freemasons in Izmir was Josef Kármán, the head of the Hungarian Commercial Bank Inc. Towards 1912, he became the branch director of the bank’s new branch in Izmir. By that time, he had joined the lodge “Neuschloss, a régi hívek” in Budapest,⁷⁶ whose members were engaged, as he was, in the financial sector.⁷⁷ All other founding members switched to Zoroaster from the French lodge of the city, which consisted for the most part of Jews.⁷⁸ According to the Zoroaster member list, its founding members were part of the upper middle class: a doctor, a lawyer, merchants, and Armenian dragomans.⁷⁹ The Armenians in Izmir maintained a large communication network which linked the various empires, and they controlled trade with Persia.⁸⁰ New members who joined the lodge in the following years were mostly merchants from Austria-Hungary or Germany or employees of the Hungarian Commercial Bank Inc.⁸¹ The lodge was a sort of mixture of an intellectual club and a charitable association where the German-speaking elites of the city gathered. On the other, however,

71 Scheer, “Österreich-Ungarns Besatzungsregime in Südosteuropa im Ersten Weltkrieg und Albanische Fragen,” 294.

72 “A szabadkőműves országgyűlés.” *Kelet* May, 1914, 7. For a first analysis, see Turóczy, “Freimaurerei: ausgrenzende Entgrenzung?”

73 Nezihi and Üyepazarıcı, *İzmir’in tarihi*; Smyrnelis, *Smyrne, la ville oubliée?*

74 Dumont, *Osmanlılık, ulusçu akımlar, ve Masonluk*, 88.

75 MOL P 1083 38./CXXI, Zoroaster.

76 MOL P. 1083-38-VIII Neuschloss, a Régi Hívek.

77 Pataky and Dzubay, “A szabadkőműves szervezetek levéltára,” 39.

78 MOL P 1083 38./CXXI; Dumont 2000, S. 88.

79 The members were: Angelo Margulies, Josef Kármán, Stephan Avedikián, Jules Szilvassy, Josef Margulies, Bernath Burger, Albert Tarica, Vadis Bardisbanian, Jaques Ungar, Ornik Zakian, and Max Watzke. MOL P 1083 38./CXXI.

80 Schmitt, *Levantiner*, 223.

81 MOL P 1083 38./CXXI, Zoroaster, 51.

it was a social interest club, where social, spiritual, and even business practices could be cultivated.

Imperial Freemasonry?

What does imperial Freemasonry constitute? Several aspects of Freemasonry in Austria-Hungary suggest that it should be understood as imperial Freemasonry. The first is simply its expansionist undertakings, i.e., the establishment of lodges outside the state borders. The Pobratim, the Zoroaster, and the failed attempt to found a lodge in Sarajevo are examples of this. These practices were accompanied, on the one hand, by discourses of egalitarian Masonic brotherhood and, on the other, by discourses of cultural superiority and a civilizing mission. The inclusive principle of fraternal equality made the Masonic lodges attractive for non-Hungarians too, both in an ethnic and political sense, as the lodges seemed to function at least in part as sites where elites could come together and exchange ideas regardless of ethnic-national, confessional, or social boundaries.

At the same time, Hungarian Freemasonry cherished the claim of ethical-intellectual leadership. They divided the world into two parts from a cultural-civilizational point of view: one in which Freemasonry was already established and flourishing and one in which this form of community and social practice was not yet known or established. One recalls the passage cited earlier in this essay from an article *Orient* according to which the “South Slavic” parts of the monarchy were “a prototype of such civilizational neglect.” This imagined cultural hegemony led the Hungarian Freemasons to see the “Orient” as a culturally fallow area that was eager to be cultivated. Hence, they interpreted the foundation of the first Hungarian lodges in the southeastern territories of the monarchy and outside as “conquests” for “the royal art.”⁸² This interpretation made Freemasonry compatible with the colonial discourse of the Dual Monarchy, which justified expansion by reference to an alleged civilizing mission.⁸³ While the Dual Monarchy quickly abandoned its colonialist goals in Africa, it clearly pursued imperialist goals in the “European Orient” through political influence and economic-cultural practices.⁸⁴ These undertakings and discourses used in various bodies in Austria-Hungary with regards to the lands on its southeastern

82 *Orient*, January, 1891, 10.

83 Loidl, “*Europa ist zu enge geworden*,” 9.

84 Bilgeri, “*Österreich-Ungarn im Konzert der Kolonialmächte*.”

borders have been examined in the secondary literature under the banners of micro-colonialism,⁸⁵ border colonialism,⁸⁶ and Orientalism.⁸⁷

However, exclusively Hungarian endeavors can be identified by means of Freemason sources that go beyond Freemasonry. They were characterized by cultural or economic asymmetric relations, and thus they can be interpreted as imperial practices. Indeed, the informal politics practiced by Hungarian Freemasons, especially towards the “European Orient,” reached its peak in the High Imperialism in the years before and during World War I.

Despite the (narrowly interpreted) ban on politics, independent Hungarian Freemasonry interfered both in domestic and foreign affairs in the interests of Hungarian politics. The prerequisite for this was that by the turn of the century the SGLH had become a significant player both in Hungarian society and in Central and Southeastern Europe. It acted with other Masonic major authorities as well as with actors from other fields to achieve certain common political goals, such as the secularization of the state.⁸⁸ This can be seen in the fusion of political motives with Masonic ones in the Hungarian-Ottoman Masonic friendship. The same socio-political goals and similarly understood political ideals played an important role in the fact that a relationship of trust quickly developed between the two Freemasonries. For instance, the Freemasons took up the cause of secularism in Hungary and in the Ottoman Empire.⁸⁹ In addition, there was also a strong connection understood culturally, historically, and economically that went beyond the Masonic concept of brotherhood. And again, it was Sasvári who talked about the Hungarian-Turkish (Ottoman) relationship and about the potential for future cooperation between the two nations on the basis of Masonic ideas and this strong friendship:

85 Wendland, “Imperiale, koloniale und postkoloniale Blicke auf die Peripherien des Habsburgerreiches.”

86 Gingrich, “The Nearby Frontier: Structural Analyses of Myths of Orientalism.”

87 Kraft et al., “Einleitung: Kolonialgeschichten”; Ruthner, “Kakakniens kleiner Orient.”

88 “Sitzung des Bundesrates am 6. März.” *Orient*, March, 6, 1905,86–87; “Protokoll der am 7. Und 8. April 1906 abgehaltenen XXI. Ord. Grossversammlung der Symbolischen Grossloge von Ungarn.” *Orient*, April 8, 1906, 8–9.

89 The speech held by Rıza Tevfik offers one example. Tevfik was a Bektashi leader and Freemason as well. In his speech, he made the following proclamation: “We want to put an end to the secular rule of the church and we strive to make religious conviction a private matter of every citizen.” [Wir wollen die weltliche Herrschaft der Kirche ein Ende machen und wir streben danach, daß die religiöse Überzeugung zur Privatsache jedes Bürgers werde.]. *Orient*, October 22, 1909, 281. For the Hungarian attitude, see A Demokrácia páholy jelentése az 1909. évről. MOL P 1083-38-XLVI Demokrácia, 23.

We proclaim Turkish-Hungarian solidarity. When the nation, being the defensive wall of Christianity, reaches out to the Turkish nation, which strides on top of the Mohammedan word, so it gives a shining example for Freemasonry, which will be universal, if all the nations embrace one another without race and faith.⁹⁰

In this extract, as in the abovementioned speech given by Kâzim Nami Duru (who spoke about “Hungarian blood comrades”), the idea of Turanism resonates, and this was an idea which, given its cultural and economic overtones, received a strong boost at the time in Hungary.⁹¹ Turanism formed the ideal basis of Turkish-Hungarian Masonic rapprochement. Scientific, political, and idealistic arguments concerning the alleged common “descent,” common national interests, and shared masonic philosophy intertwined. The purpose of Turanism was to strengthen the Hungarian cultural, political, and especially economic presence in the Balkans and in the Ottoman Empire, or, as historian Balázs Ablonczy notes in his monograph, “to colonize with love.”⁹² It meant the alleged mutual strengthening of common interests and treating the Ottoman Empire and Balkan states as equals. In the scholarship on Turanism, it has been presented as a kind of “Hungarian imperialism.”⁹³

This rapprochement, the prelude to which was the Ottoman-Hungarian Masonic meeting in Budapest in 1909, took place without consultation with Vienna. On the official political level, such a meeting between Hungary and the Ottoman Empire would have been unthinkable, first and foremost because of Hungary’s legal status but also because of the international political mood after the annexation crisis (1908), in the wake of which Austria-Hungary found

90 “Verkünden wir also die türkisch-ungarische Solidarität. Wenn die Nation, die so viele Jahre lang die Schutzmauer der Christenheit gewesen ist, dem an der Spitze der mohammedanischer Welt schreitenden türkischen Volke die Hand reicht, dann geben sie der Freimaurerei ein glänzendes Beispiel, die nur dann universell werden wird, wenn alle Völker der Erde einander umarmen, ohne Unterschied der Rasse und des Glaubens!” *Orient*, October 22, 1909, 277.

91 Turanism, an idea of that the Turkic peoples once had a common homeland, has its origins among the Hungarian Orientalists, especially Lajos Thallóczy and Ármin Vámbéry. In the nineteenth century, Turanism was an idea which meant different things to different people, but it was definitely a “hit,” not only in the Ottoman Empire but also among the (allegedly) related peoples. The strongest voice was from the Turáni Társaság, or “Turanian Association,” which was founded 1910 and which enjoyed the support of the Hungarian government. Ablonczy, *Keletre, magyar!*; Fodor, *Hungary between East and West The Ottoman Turkish Legacy*; Fodor, “A Konstantinápolyi Magyar Tudományos Intézet,” 413–16. For more research on the Hungarian-Ottoman relationship in the main years of the “Turanian vision,” see Fodor, “A Konstantinápolyi Magyar Tudományos Intézet megalapítása.”

92 Ablonczy, *Keletre, magyar!*, 61.

93 Demeter, “A modernizációtól a kolonizációs törekvésekig,” 315.

itself increasingly isolated. Thus, despite the cultural and economic aspects, the rapprochement of the Masons of the two nations (the Hungarians and the Ottoman Turks) has to be evaluated primarily as a political act. There are other arguments in favor of a political reading of Ottoman-Hungarian Masonic relations. Even if, on the Hungarian side, high-ranking political officials were only indirectly involved in this Freemason network, the network certainly gave them greater political agency. In addition, deputies such Pál Farkas (1878–1921), who was later the “representative” of the Ottoman Grand Orient, were active players in the rapprochement. Farkas was an assimilated Jew and belonged to the circle around István Tisza and his conservative-nationalist party, Nemzeti Munkáspárt, or National Workers’ Party. In the literary field, he published in *Új idők* (New Times), a journal edited by Ferenc Herczeg (and founded by his stepfather’s publishing house), and later *Magyar Figyelő* (Hungarian Watchman), which represented conservative, nationalist political, social, and artistic values.⁹⁴ Farkas prepared and nurtured the cooperative initiatives by making himself available as a contact person between the two major authorities.⁹⁵

The entanglement of politics and Freemasonry in the Ottoman-Hungarian Masonic network became even more evident during World War I, when the two states became official allies.⁹⁶ World War I also showed the political impotence of Freemasonry, which was unable to use Masonic ideals to transcend these frontlines. The international Freemason landscape shifted dramatically. Different camps emerged along the frontlines, and the Grand Lodges of the opposing states engaged in war propaganda.⁹⁷ Hungarian Freemasonry was no exception.⁹⁸ Only when the new emperor of Austria-Hungary adopted a new policy aimed at making peace was Hungarian Freemasonry able to carry out its political activity behind the scenes, exploring the conditions of a special peace with the help of its international networks.⁹⁹

At the Ottoman-Hungarian Freemason meeting in 1909, the Freemasons of the two Empires promised to support each other inside the lodges and in the economic sphere. These pledges were not merely empty rhetoric, as revealed by

94 Balázs, *Az intellektualitás vezérei*, 40.

95 “Sitzung des Bundesrates am 25 April.” *Orient*, April 25, 1909, 143; Farkas *Staatsstreich und Gegenrevolution in der Türkei*, 31–33.

96 Ağaoğlu, *Müttefik devletlerin büyük localar toplantısı Berlin 1918*.

97 Berger, *Mit Gott, für Vaterland und Menschheit?*, 266–81.

98 Bókay, “Die ungarische Freimaurerei und der Weltkrieg. Rede des Grossmeisters in der Grossversammlung der Symb Grossloge von Ungarn am 30. Oktober 1915.” *Orient*, October 30, 1915, 2.

99 Berényi, “A magyar szabadkőművesség béke-kísérletei.”

a journey taken by a Hungarian to Istanbul and Saloniki, which included masonic meetings.¹⁰⁰ This shows that many Freemasons, who were industrialists, factory owners, representatives of particular interest groups, and economic experts and who formed a prominent part of Hungary's new bourgeois elite, used their transnational Masonic networks to improve Hungary's economic position within the Monarchy.¹⁰¹ Through the informal channels of freemasonry, they were able to circumnavigate the “matters of common interest” that were supposed to ensure a common economic policy directed from Vienna. Furthermore, mutual visits by the Ottoman and Hungarian Freemasons (for instance in 1909 and 1910) served to further “Masonic fraternization,” and, in connection with this, to strengthen economic ties. Gelléri was again on this trip, and he reported on the results to the Hungarian Masonic audience and the whole journey. While the report in *Orient* was about the Masonic meetings, where the most important representatives of the Ottoman politics and economic life were also present,¹⁰² the report for the lay readership was about the practical implementation of the “Hungarian-Turkish friendship,” especially in the field of economics and education:

I will only say that the Young Turks, as well as the leaders of the government and the authorities, have always emphasized that it is time not only to promote Hungarian-Turkish friendship in words, but to realize it practically in the field of the economy, for the benefit of both nations. Men such as Nazim Bey, Rıza Tevfik, Kiazim Nami Bey, Taxim Bey, Adil, Huszni, and others who are leaders of public life in Saloniki and who hold the political and social leadership of the Young Turkish Movement in their hands, have expressed their fullest support for this.¹⁰³

The practical implementation of “Hungarian-Turkish friendship” in the “field of the economy” corresponded with the plans of the SGLH after the trip, which organized the training of many Ottoman and later Albanian youths in Hungarian industry. This was clearly the result of this cooperative endeavor, which Hungarian Freemasons not only organized, but also made possible financially.¹⁰⁴

100 “Aus dem Bundesrate am 25. Mai 1910. Besuch in türkischen Logen.” *Orient*, May 25, 1910, 137–39.

101 Sasvári, Ármin Balkán szerződéseink és iparunk, *Honi Ipar*, Oktober 1, 1908, 4.

102 “Gelléri, Mór, Ungarische Brüder in der Türkei.” In: *Orient* 22, no.5 (1910): 148–150.

103 Mór Gelléri, “Ausflug ungarischer Industriellen und Händler in die Türkei.” *Magyar Ipar*, May 15, 1910, 465.

104 MOL P 1106-1 Demokrácia ügyviteli iratok; Brief von Gelléri Mór an den Großmeister der Symbolischen Großloge von Ungarn. Öffentliches Rundschreiben; ibid. Török ifjak elhelyezésének terve;

Conclusion

Following Harland-Jacobs, in this essay I have considered the extent to which the Hungarian Freemasons could be considered builders of the Habsburg Empire. There was a fundamental contradiction in Hungarian Freemasonry from this point of view: a tension between national and supranational ambitions, as it was structurally doubly embedded in the Hungarian political nation and the Dual Monarchy. Therefore, Hungarian Freemasonry was closely connected with both imperial and national traditions. Freemasons from all over the empire gathered in the lodges regardless of ethnic-confessional or national affiliations, and this was perceived as something which enriched the federation. The members felt committed primarily to their respective political nations, but the imperial framework was never questioned. It accepted as a given context which allowed greater room for movement and development in business, politics, education, and so on. The rhetoric and actions of many lodges and freemasons show that they wanted to strengthen Hungary’s position within the Monarchy, but at the same time, they staged Hungary as an imperial player in geopolitical terms in particular toward the Balkans and the Ottoman Empire while still functioning within and not challenging the dualist framework. This interpretation corresponds with the findings of much of the research in New Imperial History, which examines “imperializing nation-states” and “nationalizing empires,” because both forms of rule appropriated elements of power maintenance and expansion from each other.¹⁰⁵ Thus, it calls into question any strict distinction between empire and nation-state in the nineteenth century.

The networking and the founding of lodges of the SGLH in the “Orient” were interpreted as acts of Masonic fraternization but also as a way of “bringing light” to the cultures on the periphery. Thus, they corresponded with the soft-colonial and imperial discourses and practices of the monarchy. The difference was that it was the Hungarian, not the Austrians, who were the leading power in the Freemasonry in the Habsburg Monarchy, and the Freemason center was Budapest, not Vienna. The Hungarian freemasons were agents of Masonic diplomacy. In this context, the personal discursive entanglements as well as the entanglements of practices among freemasonry, politics, economics, and

Gelléri Mór, “Bosnyák, török és albán ifjak a magyar iparban.” *Honi Ipar*, January 4, 1914, 7–8.

105 Leonhard and Hirschhausen, *Empires und Nationalstaaten im 19. Jahrhundert*, 12.

culture toward the “Orient” reveal the very imperialistic attitude of Hungarian Freemasonry.

So, can the Freemasons be considered “Builders of Empire”? My answer to the question is that the Hungarian Freemasons saw themselves as the “Empire Builders” of a specific Hungarian imperialism. They neither sought nor intended to break the balance that had been created by the Compromise of 1867, because they saw their existence within the Monarchy, but they still demanded more and more independence, and they used the Masonic networks to pursue national interests. A history of Hungarian Freemasonry which examines these entanglements can convincingly demonstrate tendencies and aspirations for more autonomy without necessarily exaggerating them. Although the Hungarian political elite, which liked to see in Dualism the myth of independence and the equal status of Budapest and Vienna, apparently did not use all the tools at its disposal to help shape foreign policy, its activities along the unofficial channels of Freemasonry, especially from the beginning of the twentieth century, reveal clearly that it nonetheless made some efforts in this direction. Thus, I would suggest that future studies on Austria-Hungary should perceive Hungary as an actor within the framework of New Imperial History and should draw on new sources, beyond the classical sources of diplomacy and politics, that have not been considered so far.

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