

## FREEMASONRY IN EGYPT

### Introduction

The mysteries of ancient Egypt have always held an attraction – both for their mysticism and to professional archeologists and anthropologists. Napoleon was not immune to this attraction and, during his short governance of Egypt, had many treasures and ideas brought back to France. Much of this mystery is associated with the Magi of Southern Persian origin which was the religious caste into which Zoroaster was born. The Magi were a priestly caste and, as part of their religion, they studied Zurvanism or astrology. Their religious practices led to the English term “*magic*” and they are referred to in Mathew’s gospel as the three wise men from the East. Therefore it can be no surprise that the fraudulent **Cagliostro**’s mystical “Egyptian Rite” appears in Egypt’s Masonic history.

Strong Egyptian nationalism, sometimes appearing as Pan-Arabic nationalism, derived at least in part from the long period of foreign occupation, which, since the fall of the pharaohs to 1952, dominated Egypt and governed its rather turbulent politics. It is also no surprise to find Freemasons at the forefront of Egypt’s long fight for independence.

### History of Egypt



The pharaohs prior to 2000 BC ruled from Memphis and their lives are known in detail from inscriptions<sup>1</sup>. Nubia's mines were the chief source of Egyptian wealth and rare commodities, such as ivory and ebony, the skins of leopards and the plumes of ostriches, used to travel down the upper Nile to be traded for Egyptian goods. From the 7th century BC Egypt was controlled by a succession of powerful empires – Greek, Roman, Ottoman, French and British.

Alexander the Great arrived in Egypt in 332 BC, replacing the Persian administration and the Greeks ruled Egypt until 30 BC. In 323, on Alexander’s death, his empire was divided among his generals. Egypt fell to Ptolemy, whose descendants built Egypt’s capital at Alexandria. Alexandria is important in the rise of Christianity in Egypt as the first Coptic Monks were based there

Egypt then fell to Rome. Cleopatra, the last Ptolemaic ruler, met Julius Caesar in 48 BC. She later met Mark Antony and, in 41 BC, died a year after the battle of Actium, where Egypt was defeated by the Roman Empire, which ruled Egypt for the next six centuries.

In the 7<sup>th</sup> century the Prophet Mohamed was succeeded by four of his Companions, who were related by blood or marriage to the Prophet, and each took the title Caliph. Under the command of Umar bin al-Khattab, Caliph in 634 AD, the Arab armies overwhelmed the Byzantine forces in Egypt. By the time of the Arab conquest of Egypt, in 642, the majority of Egyptian Christians were Copts.

The Fatimid rulers (909-1171) were adherents of the Shiite branch of Islam, in opposition to the Sunni branch expounded by the Caliphs of Baghdad, and proclaimed themselves rival Caliphs. They founded the city of Cairo, and ruled from there.

<sup>1</sup>Wikipedia

During their time, the First Crusade established Western Christian kingdoms in the Levant. Despite this, the age of Fatimid rule was one of great prosperity, and the new city of Cairo came to outshine the older centres of the Islamic world, Damascus and Baghdad. Fatimid rule was ended by Saladin, who restored Sunni Islam<sup>2</sup>.

The Mamluks took control of Egypt in 1250 and achieved the reconquest of the last of the Crusader kingdoms in the Levant. In 1517 the Ottoman Empire conquered Egypt and until the **Muhammad Ali** dynasty in the nineteenth century, Egypt remained a part of the Ottoman Turkish Empire.

In 1798 Napoleon decided to invade Egypt. The French Army confronted the Mamluk army at Giza and their fire-power overpowered the Egyptians. Napoleon organized Egypt as a French territory and his archaeologists and scientists searched for the Egyptian mysteries. The Napoleonic period was short-lived and the French army was expelled from Egypt in 1801 by a Turkish and British force.

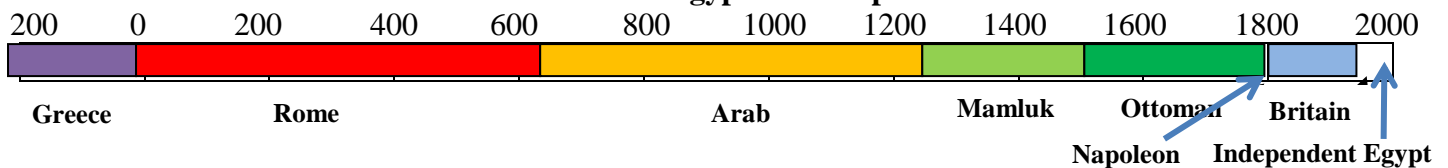
The Dynasty of **Muhammad Ali** began in 1805 and lasted until 1953. **Muhammad Ali** was of Turkish Albanian origin, and came to Egypt as part of the Ottoman forces sent to expel the French Revolutionary expedition of 1798-1801. He rose to power, removing the Mamluk ruling class, and obtained the title Pasha as governor of Egypt, however until the proclamation of the kingdom in 1914, Egypt was still nominally under Ottoman rule. He led the modernisation of Egyptian technology.

The defeat of France in the Napoleonic Wars gave Britain access to Egypt trade and an interest in limiting the power of their former allies, the Ottoman Empire. The construction of the Suez Canal by a British-French group in 1869 made Egypt of strategically important to the Europeans. But Arab nationalists forced political changes and the western powers became alarmed at the Egyptian Government's inability to control the Mahdist movement in the Sudan, which aimed at removing all foreign control. In consequence in 1882 a British fleet was sent to Alexandria and subsequent events led to a British invasion of Egypt which led to it becoming a British protectorate.

Egypt was not directly involved in World War I but in 1914 Britain formally declared that Egypt was to be a British protectorate. The defeat of the Axis powers, including Turkey, led to immediate Egyptian hopes of independence. Within two days of the signing of the armistice, an active political party was formed in Cairo by **Saad Zaghlul**. Martial law was introduced and **Zaghlul** and several colleagues were arrested and deported. The situation became tense and in 1922 Britain proposed immediate independence conditional upon British troops remaining in Egypt to protect the Suez Canal. The Sudan was left out of the settlement, which eventually led to armed conflict between Egyptian forces and Britain. Sudan was lost to Britain with the death of **Lord Kitchener**.

Egypt remained neutral throughout World War II, but the British forces - previously so unwelcome - now had the important task of driving back the Italians and Germans. Independence was secured by the revolution of 1952, forcing the abdication of **King Farouk**. Since 1953 Egypt has been an independent republic.

**Timeline of Egyptian Occupation**



During the 1990s Muslim terrorism became an increasing problem for Egypt, severely harming the nation's crucial income from tourism. A prolonged campaign of violence began in March 1992.

<sup>2</sup> Wikipedia

The Mubarak government reacted vigorously, introducing martial law and imprisoning some 20,000 militants. The largest and oldest fundamentalist group, the Muslim Brotherhood, was the mainstream movement although still officially banned.

There are other causes of tension within contemporary Egypt. The Coptic Christians, amounting to some 10% of the population, feel ill-served by the government as well as frequently suffering Muslim terrorist attacks. However the current political crisis is mainly derived from economic and poverty causes.

### **Freemasonry in Egypt**

Many French military lodges functioned in Egypt during Napoleon's expedition (1798-1801) but when they returned to France it is likely that there were no more Lodges in Egypt. However, interest in Egyptian Masonry grew in France and the Lodge "*Saint John of Scotland's Great Sphynx*" was created mainly made up of painters, writers, architects, etc.

The French Military Lodges brought back to Paris 60 mouldings of Egyptian bas-reliefs to put in the collection of antiquities at the Mother Lodge Scottish France. There **Claude-Antoine Thory**, the main facilitator of the Scottish Rite, set up a museum to demonstrate that Freemasonry was the heiress of the ancient mysteries, including the Egyptian Mysteries<sup>3</sup>. He invited the archaeologist **Alexandre Lenoir**, curator of the Museum of French Monuments to give a series of lectures<sup>4</sup>.

During the period of unrest and civil wars that followed the departure of the French, **Muhammad Ali** took command of Egypt in 1811, crushing the opposition of the Mamluks. He then undertook a policy of making Egypt independent of the Sublime Porte in Constantinople and autonomous within the Ottoman Empire.

It was also in 1811 that Masonry reappeared in Egypt. Two Lodges were created at that time of the Scottish Rite - "*The Knights of the Pyramids*" based in Cairo in 1811, and "*the Amis de la Concorde*", based in Alexandria in 1812<sup>5</sup>.

This was at a time when **Drovetti Bernardino** was in Cairo and **Mathieu de Lesseps** was in Corfu, where he was very active not only to administer the Ionian Islands, but also to develop Freemasonry. These two French diplomats who were both fascinated by ancient Egypt and formed Masonic Lodges in Egyptian-held territory and both Lodges were politically active.

In the Ionian Islands **Mathieu de Lesseps** supported a Freemasonry linked to the Greek nationalist movement led by **Dionysios de Roma**. In Corfu, **Mathieu de Lesseps** was one of the main leaders of the Masonic lodges of the island. In addition, **Mathieu de Lesseps** is named as "*Commander of the Order of the Knights Defenders of the Universal Freemasonry*", an honorary Order attached to Misraïm.

**Bernardino Drovetti** started a Masonic "Egyptian Rite" in Egypt who worked for the political independence of **Muhammad Ali** against the Ottoman Empire. The Mother Lodge was the "Scottish Rite" in France.

In 1848 some secret documents from the Austrian police in Italy contained a report dated 1818 concerning a *certain "Egyptian Secret Society"*. It describes a secret sect in Egypt politics, under the protection of the Pasha, whose aim seems to be to bring about political changes in the Ionian Islands and Italy, using forms and Masonic symbols.

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<sup>3</sup>Claude-Antoine Thory, "*Timeline of the history of Free Masonry*"

<sup>4</sup>Collected by **Lenoir** in his book, "*Franche-Masonry restored to its true origin*" (Paris, 1814).

<sup>5</sup>"Proceedings of the Mother Lodge Scottish France" of December 10, 1813



The text leaves little doubt that it refers to a Lodge practising **Cagliostro's** "*Egyptian Rite*". All sects were allowed including the Illuminati and other customs related to the Rite of Egyptian Masonry<sup>6</sup>. The Lodge practiced the degrees of Scottish Rite of France, at least in the lower orders, and admitted women, although "Turkish" (probably meant Muslim) women were not allowed<sup>7</sup>. There were two lodges in Egypt, one in Alexandria and one in Cairo. **Cagliostro** was a fraudulent Italian Count, whose "Egyptian Rite"<sup>8</sup> allegedly included alchemy, séances and healing ceremonies<sup>9</sup>. This was the Lodge of the ex-consul of France in Cairo, **Bernardino Drovetti**, Grand Copt of the Lodge of Alexandria.

In 1804, **Mathieu de Lesseps** and **Bernardino Drovetti** had supported the rise to power of **Muhammad Ali**. Later, **Drovetti** remained a trusted adviser of the Pasha. There is little doubt that the **Cagliostro** Lodges involved themselves in political support of **Mohammed Ali Pasha**, who supported Freemasonry, and adapted a Napoleonic brand of the Scottish Rite.

Although it was believed that **Cagliostro's** Egyptian Rite ceased with his death, it was practiced in various cities of Italy after 1815, at a time when people believed Masonry was completely prohibited<sup>10</sup>. It was reported that there was a dozen Lodges distributed throughout Italy. There were reported to be 2 Lodges in Egypt. It is possible that the Egyptian Masonry of **Baron de Montemayor** did not share policy objectives with that of **Drovetti** and there was no direct relationship between the two organizations. But in both cases, these Lodges remained after 1815 and claimed the tradition of **Cagliostro**.

After 1815 Freemasonry was well established in the area having quickly spread through the region. But the Masonic legacy in Egypt was confused at best. French, Italian, English, Scottish and Irish jurisdictions worked at times together and at times at loggerheads.

At the end of the Napoleonic Wars, England took the place of France as a liberating power. The first Lodge of UGLE came into existence in Alexandria in the early 1860s – "*St John's*" No 919 but it was erased in 1877. Two others, "*Hyde Clark*" and "*St John's and St Paul's*" also lasted for short periods. "Bulwar" No 1068 meeting in Cairo since 1868 and "*Grecia*" and "*Zetland*" both survived under the District Grand Lodge of Egypt with **Sir Henry Bulwer**, and later **Prince Halim Pasha** as DGM.

In 1873 the various lodges in Alexandria united to form the National Grand Lodge of Egypt warranted by the Grand Orient of Italy and moved to Cairo. **Tawfiq Pasha**, then Khedive (Viceroy) was elected Grand Master in 1881 and many Egyptian figures such as **Jamal al-ed'din Afhani**, the great Islamic scholar and reformer, joined the Masonic Lodges, which allegedly numbered more than 500, "*working in English, French, Greek, Hebrew and Italian, in addition to Arabic.*"

**Tawfik Pasha** resigned in 1890 and **Idris Raghieb Bey** was elected Grand Master. Egyptian Freemasonry flourished during the period when he was Grand Master. However, when **Prince Mohammed Ali Idriss Raghieb** was elected as Grand Master of the National Grand Lodge of Egypt, **Idris Raghieb Bey** challenged the decision and founded a rival Grand Lodge. This conflict between the two Masonic groups results in withdrawal of recognition by the Grand Lodges of England and Scotland. The National Grand Lodge of Egypt turned to France and, with the assistance of the Grand Orient of France, a new National Grand Lodge of Egypt was founded in 1932 with **Younis Abdel Meguid** as Grand Master. In consequence UGLE became disillusioned and decided to form, for a second time, its own District Grand Lodge<sup>11</sup>.

<sup>6</sup> According to descriptions in the "*Astrological Journal*", 1948, p. 50

<sup>7</sup> See also the "*Rite of Egyptian Masonry*" of Cagliostro published in 1817

<sup>8</sup> The Rite of Mizraim, see Gérard Galtier, "*Egyptian Masonry, Rosicrucians and New Chivalry.*"

<sup>9</sup> **Marc Bédarride**, "*the Masonic Order of Mizraim*", 1845, vol. 2, p. 147.

<sup>10</sup> See the various documents published by Giuseppe Gabriel in the "*Rivista Massonica*"

<sup>11</sup> Kitchener of Khartoum: Masonextraordinary MQ Magazine Jan 2006





The Craft was unable to work during the troubled political period in the 1870s and 1880s but revived and flourished after that with the new District Grand Lodge of Egypt and Sudan being formed in 1899 with **Lord Kitchener** as DGM. Kitchener was 33 when he was initiated, almost certainly, in the Italian-speaking “*La Concordia*” Lodge No. 1226 in Cairo in 1883. By 1920 there were 13 Craft Lodges and 6 Royal Arch Chapters as well as Mark Lodges.

A list of the Egyptian Lodges working under the District Grand Lodge of Egypt and Sudan provided by the Masonic High Council of Egypt were<sup>12</sup>:-

Lodge Name	No	Location	Founded
Zetland	1157	Alexandria	1867
Star of the East	1355	Cairo	1871
Pelusium	3003	Port Said	1904
Delta	3060	Nile Delta	1904
Lotus	396	Cairo	1907
Ataka	3367	Suez	1909
Lord Kitchener	3402	Cairo	1909
Alexandria	4184	Alexandria	1921
United Services of Alexandria	4571	Alexandria	1923
Serapeum	5312	Ismailia	1924

By 1924 there were 17 Craft Lodges spread between Alexandria, Port Said, Suez, Khartoum and Atbara<sup>13</sup>. **King Edward VII** visited Lodge “*Bulwar*” it being the first Lodge he visited after his initiation.

Lodge “*Grecia*” initially worked in the Greek language, “*Concordia*” worked in Italian and “*Star of the East*” initially worked in Arabic although most Lodges used the English language. Lodge “*Mahfal el Ittihad*” (Union) No 3348 in Khartoum was established especially to work in Arabic becoming the only Lodge under UGLE that did so.

Freemasonry was well established and active in Egypt until it was banned by **Abdul Nasser** after he assumed power after the overthrow of **King Farouk** (who was also a Mason). Following **Nasser’s** example, Masonry was also banned in Syria, where it had been very prominent, and other Arab countries followed suit.<sup>14</sup> The ban was not lifted by **Anwar Sadat**, when he assumed the Presidency.

**Some Famous Egyptian Freemasons**

**Silvestre de Sacy** (1758-1838) was a French linguist and orientalist. In 1781 he was appointed Councillor and was advanced in 1791 to be a commissary-general. Having studied Semitic languages, he made a name as an orientalist, and worked on the Pahlavi inscriptions of the Sassanid Kings. In 1792 he retired from public service and later became professor of Arabic in the School of living Eastern languages. He made some progress with interpreting the Rosetta Stone and was an honorary member of the Philosophical Scottish Rite.



<sup>12</sup> Masonic High Council of Egypt website “*Freemasonry in Egypt*”

<sup>13</sup> “*District of Egypt and the Sudan*” W Bro A E Biggs UGLE

<sup>14</sup> Askafreemason.org



**Mathieu de Lesseps** (1774-1832) was first French Consul in Morocco. He joined the army in Egypt in 1800. He was Commissioner-General to Livorno and Imperial Commissioner in Corfu from 1810-1814. Then he was Consul-General in Philadelphia, in 1821 in Syria, then in 1827 in Tunis where he died. He was a Commander of the Order of the Knights Defenders of Freemasonry Universal (Mizraim) and in 1822 a member of the Mizraim Lodge, "the followers of Truth".

**Drovetti Bernardino**, born in 1776, had fought in Italy in the Napoleonic armies. In 1803 he was sent to Egypt, as deputy of the Consul **Mathieu de Lesseps** and eventually he managed the Consulate General until September 1814. He lost his position at the accession of Louis XVIII, as it was considered too Bonapartist. Nevertheless, he remained in Egypt, and gave him his office of Consul General of France in 1821. He remained in Egypt until 1829.



**Prince Tawfik Pasha**, Viceroy of Egypt (1852–1892) was Khedive of Egypt and Sudan between 1879 and 1892. Although he was said to be unambitious and not particularly intelligent or energetic, he had the wisdom to refrain from taking a part in the intrigues which then formed the chief part of political life in Egypt and Sudan<sup>15</sup>. When his father, Ismael, was deposed in 1879 Tewfik was proclaimed Khedive. He was not pleased by his accession as Egypt and Sudan at that time were involved in financial and political troubles. Disorder prevailed until dual control was re-established by the governments of Britain and France. Disaffection in the Egyptian army was increasing and culminated in the anti-foreign movement headed by Urabi Pasha, who had gained complete command of the army. **Tawfik** escaped Alexandria but had to accept British assistance and the guidance of a British Commission. **Prince Tawfik Pasha** was Grand Master of the National Grand Lodge of Egypt from 1881 to 1890.

**Prince Mohammed Ali** is regarded as the founder of modern Egypt. He was a commander of the Ottoman army that was sent to drive Napoleon's forces out of Egypt, but upon the French withdrawal, seized power himself. **Muhammad Ali** transformed Egypt into a regional power which he saw as the natural successor to the decaying Ottoman Empire. He summed up his vision for Egypt in this way: *"I am well aware that the (Ottoman) Empire is heading by the day toward destruction...On her ruins I will build a vast kingdom...up to the Euphrates and the Tigris."*<sup>16</sup>



At the height of his power, **Muhammad Ali's** military strength threatened the very existence of the Ottoman Empire as he sought to supplant the Osman Dynasty. Ultimately, the intervention of the Great Powers prevented Egyptian forces from marching on Constantinople, and henceforth, his dynasty's rule was limited to Africa, and Sinai.



**Jammaledinn al Afghani** (1838-1897), was a political activist and Islamic ideologist in the Muslim world during the late 19th century, particularly in the Middle East, South Asia and Europe. One of the founders of Islamic modernism and an advocate of pan-Islamic unity, he has been described as being *"less interested in theology than he was in organizing a Muslim response to Western pressure."* An ethnic Persian, **al-Afghani** claimed to be an Afghan in order to present himself as a Sunni Muslim and escape oppression by the Iranian ruler. He became a counselor to the King in Afghanistan and encouraged the king to oppose the British but turn to the Russians.

In 1871, he moved to Egypt and began preaching his ideas of political reform. His ideas were considered radical, and he was exiled in 1879.

<sup>15</sup> Wikipedia

<sup>16</sup> Wikipedia

**Mahmoud Sami Pasha** (1839-1904) was a significant Egyptian political and a prominent poet. He served as Prime Minister of Egypt from February 4, 1882 until May 26, 1882. What had started as a protest relating to restrictions on the promotion of Egyptian Officers turned into a mutiny and the Khedive fired Prime Minister Rifqi and appointed **Mahmoud Sami Al Baroudi Pasha**, the then Minister of Religious Affairs and a favourite of the Army, as Prime Minister. The Khedive promised to raise the soldiers and officers salaries and modernizing the military laws and regulations but was reluctant to implement these steps. The mutiny turned into a large scale Revolution, better known in history as the **Orabi** Revolution.



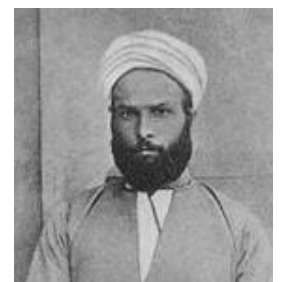
**Colonel Ahmad Orabi Pasha** (1841–1911) was an Egyptian army general, and nationalist who led the revolt in 1879 against **Tewfik Pasha**, the Khedive of Egypt and Sudan, and the increasing European domination of the country. The revolt was ultimately crushed in 1882 when the United Kingdom invaded at the request of **Tewfik**, thereby commencing the 74 year British occupation of Egypt. He was a galvanizing speaker. Because of his peasant origins, he was at the time, and is still today, viewed as an authentic voice of the Egyptian people. Khedive **Tawfiq** requested help the Ottoman Sultan, to whom Egypt and Sudan still owed fealty but the Sublime Porte hesitated. The British were especially concerned that **Orabi** would default on Egypt's massive debt and that he might try to re-gain control of the Suez Canal.

**Rifa'a al-Tahtawi** (1801–1873) was an Egyptian writer, teacher, translator, Egyptologist and renaissance intellectual. **Tahtawi** was among the first Egyptian scholars to write about Western cultures in an attempt to bring about reconciliation and an understanding between Islamic and Christian civilizations. He founded the School of Languages in 1835 and his work influenced grand Mufti **Muhammad Abduh**. Three of his published volumes were works of political and moral philosophy. They introduced his Egyptian audience to Enlightenment ideas such as secular authority and political rights and liberty; his ideas regarding how a modern civilized society ought to be and what constituted by extension a civilized or "good Egyptian"; and his ideas on public interest and public good. **Tahtawi** stressed that the Principles of Islam are compatible with those of European Modernity.



**Prince Ismail Pasha** (1830-1895) was Viceroy of Egypt was a son of **Ibrahim Pasha**. He was a member of the state council, and was given charge of the government while Said was away visiting Asia and Europe in 1861. In the same year, he was placed at the head of a body of 14,000 men, a force he used to quell the insurrection launched by the Sudan border tribes. When Said Pasha died in 1863, he was succeeded by Ismail. He was less sympathetic to the building of the Suez Canal than his predecessor and following negotiations between him and **M. de Lesseps**, the colossal enterprise came to a temporary halt but the difficulties were resolved.

**Grand Mufti Mohammed Abdou** joined an English lodge in Cairo working under UGLE. Islam does not permit "graven images" in art but **Abdou** issued a fatwa that permitted the production and exhibition of sculptures, also in private homes, as long as they were not for worshipping. The Grand Mufti had concluded that among modern Muslims, the worshipping of statues was not an issue anymore, thus loosening the restrictions on art and culture. His successor, however, Grand Mufti Gomaa, overturned his predecessor's fatwa<sup>17</sup>. **Abdou** was a member of the Grand Lodge of the Orient.



<sup>17</sup> afrol News 17 January 2012





**Prime Minister Saad Zaghloul** (1859–1927) was an Egyptian revolutionary, and statesman. He served as Prime Minister of Egypt from January 26, 1924 to November 24, 1924. He attended Al-Azhar University in Cairo. In the 1880s and became politically active being appointed judge, minister of education (1906–1908), minister of justice (1910–1912) and in 1913 he became vice president of the Legislative Assembly. In all his ministerial positions **Zaghlul** kept outside extreme Egyptian nationalist factions, and though he was acceptable to the British occupation, he was not thereby compromised in the eyes of his Egyptian compatriots. **Zaghlul** became increasingly active in nationalist movements, and in 1918 he led an official Egyptian delegation to the Paris Peace Conference demanding that the United Kingdom formally recognize the independence and unity of Egypt and Sudan. The British in turn demanded that **Zaghlul** end his political agitation. When he refused, they exiled him to Malta. On his death his Grand Lodges ordered 7 weeks of mourning.

**Ahmed Lutfi el-Sayed Pasha** (1872-1963) was an Egyptian intellectual, anti-colonial activist, the first director of Cairo University. He was an influential person in the Egyptian Nationalist movement and used his position in the media to strive and gain an independent Egypt from British rule. He was also one of the architects of modern Egyptian nationalism as well as the architect of Egyptian secularism and liberalism. He was fondly known as “*the Professor of the Generation*”. He was one of the fiercest opponents of pan-Arabism, insisting that Egyptians are Egyptians and not Arabs. He is considered one of the most influential scholars and intellectuals in the history of Egypt. **Lutfi** was against Pan-Islamic, Pan-Arab, and Pan-Ottoman ideologies and was against religion as a basis for nationhood.



**Prince Halim Pasha** was initiated in Lodge “Bulwar” in Cairo and became District Grand Master for Egypt for UGLE<sup>18</sup>. He was Viceroy of Egypt and Grand Master of the National Grand Lodge of Egypt from 1867 to 1868. He became head of the Grand Orient of Egypt's Rite of Memphis, which was founded in 1867.

**Ahmed Maher Pasha** (1888–1945) was the Prime Minister of Egypt from October 10, 1944 to February 24, 1945 and Grand Master of the Grand Lodge of Egypt. **Maher** declared war against the Axis Powers in World War II, primarily to gain a diplomatic advantage at the end of the war, but was assassinated while presenting this proposal to the Egyptian parliament. He attended Cairo University for a doctoral degree in law and economics. The Grand Lodge of Egypt was very active during his period as Grand Master.

**King Farouk I of Egypt** (1920–1965), was the tenth ruler from the Muhammad Ali Dynasty and the penultimate King of Egypt and Sudan, succeeding his father, Fuad I, in 1936. He was overthrown in the Egyptian Revolution of 1952, and was forced to abdicate in favor of his infant son Ahmed Fuad, who succeeded him as King Fuad II. He died in exile in Italy. He was educated at the Royal Military Academy, Woolwich, England. Farouk was widely condemned for his corrupt and ineffectual governance, the continued British occupation, and the Egyptian army's failure to prevent the loss of 78% of Palestine to the newly formed State of Israel in the 1948 Arab-Israeli War. Finally, in 1952, the Free Officers Movement under Muhammad Naguib and **Gamal Abdel Nasser** staged a military coup.



<sup>18</sup> “*District of Egypt and the Sudan*” – UGLE – A E Biggs



**Idris Raghیب Bey** was an Ottoman diplomat who served as the Imam's Chamberlain and Foreign Secretary<sup>19</sup>. He formed a Constitutional Party with high-minded and public-spirited ideals although his organ, *L'Egypte*, was sympathetic to the Extremist Party. **Idris Raghیب Bey** is reputed to have been Grand Master of the Grand Lodge of Egypt, which was said to be recognised by the Grand Lodge of Scotland, and was the founder of a number of lodges in Egypt, Syria, Palestine, and the Lebanon.

**Prince Ibrahim Pasha** was a Viceroy of Egypt. Born in Eastern Macedonia he temporarily governed Egypt while his father was fighting in Saudi. In 1816 he became commander of the Egyptian army in Arabia.

**Prince Ismail Pasha** (1830-1895) was Viceroy of Egypt and Grand Master of the Grand Lodge of Egypt. He was the son of **Ibrahim Pasha**, Khedive of Egypt, and was initiated in **Ferdinand de Lesseps'** French Lodge. He encouraged the building of the Suez Canal. In 1879 he presented the United States with the obelisk erected in New York<sup>20</sup>.



**Gamal Abdel Nasser Hussein** (1918–1970) was the second President of Egypt from 1956 until his death. A colonel in the Egyptian army, **Nasser** led the Egyptian Revolution of 1952 which overthrew the monarchy of Egypt and heralded a new period of modernization, and socialist reform together with the advancement of pan-Arab nationalism. He was a Freemason.<sup>21</sup> **Nasser** is seen as one of the most important political figures in both modern Arab history and politics in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Under his leadership, Egypt nationalized the Suez Canal Company and came to play a central role in anti-imperialist efforts in the Arab World and Africa. He was also instrumental in the establishment of the international Non-Aligned Movement. He favoured nationalist policies and pan-Arabism but lost support over the Israeli victory over the Arab armies in the Six-Day War. He sought to firmly establish Egypt as the leader of the Arab world but his aim of creating a United Arab Republic failed.

**Prince Mustafa Pasha Fazi** was the eldest son of **Muhammad Ali** and a half-brother of **Ismail Pasha** and was initiated in the “Union to the East” Lodge. He was Minister of Education in 1862, Minister of Finance in 1864, and chairman of the Treasury in 1865<sup>22</sup>.

President **Muhammad Anwar El Sadat** (1918–1981) was the third President, serving from 15 October 1970 until his assassination by fundamentalist army officers on 6 October 1981. In his eleven years as president he changed Egypt's direction, departing from some of the economic and political principles of **Nasserism** by re-instituting the multi-party system. He was a senior member of the Free Officers group that overthrew the **Muhammad Ali** Dynasty in the Egyptian Revolution of 1952, and a close confidant of **President Nasser**, whom he succeeded as President in 1970.

As president he led Egypt in the October War of 1973 to re-acquire Egyptian territory lost to Israel in the 1967 Six-Day War, making him a hero in Egypt and, for a time, the wider Arab World. Afterwards he engaged in negotiations with Israel, culminating in the Egypt-Israel Peace Treaty. This won him the Nobel Peace Prize but also made him unpopular among some Arabs, resulting in a temporary suspension of Egypt's membership in the Arab League, and eventually his assassination.

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<sup>19</sup> “*The Clayton mission to Sana'a of 1926*” by John Shipman

<sup>20</sup> the *Cahiers de l'Orient* No. 69

<sup>21</sup> *L'Orient-Le Jour* 1998

<sup>22</sup> “Thierry Zarcone, *Mystics, Philosophers and Freemasons in Islam*”, Jean Maisonneuve

He admired **Kemal Atatürk** of Turkey for his ability to overthrow foreign influence and his social reforms. He also idolized Mahatma Gandhi and his belief of non-violence. Some of the major events of the Sadat's presidency were his break with the USSR, the 1973 October War with Israel, the Camp David peace treaty with Israel and the opening up of Egypt's economy. This treaty, which gained wide support among Egyptians, was extremely unpopular in the Arab World and the wider Muslim World and, in 1979 the Arab League expelled Egypt although Egypt was restored in 1989<sup>23</sup>.

### Conclusions

Napoleon's armies carried Freemasonry into Egypt and his diplomats continued this tradition when the armies had left. The French consuls **Bernardino Drovetti** and **Mathieu de Lesseps** saw the advantage that they could make of their own passion for the esoteric Masonry of **Cagliostro**. Bonaparte's expedition to Egypt and the conquest of the Ionian Islands allowed them to revive the myths of antiquity and to restore dignity to a people who had been enslaved for centuries. A Freemasonry based on the builders of the Pyramids, unifying peoples and religions, was also bound to serve the ambitions of Napoleon Bonaparte who dreamed of being a new Alexander. **Cagliostro's** "Egyptian Rite" of Freemasonry became the esoteric key to attract important Egyptians and hence to carry out France's political purposes.

At the time of the arrival of British interests Freemasonry was well established but was dissipated with French, Italian, English, Scottish and Irish jurisdictions working different rituals and with different landmarks.

While **Cagliostro's** Masonry had disappeared, Egyptian Lodges still carried some unwarranted stigma from their origins. However, it should be noted that **Prince Abdul Qadir Al Jazairi**, who was the head of a very important Sufi mystic order, joined a recognized French Lodge. **Sheikh Jamal al-Din Afghani** and **Sheikh Mohamed Abdu**, the Grand Mufti of Egypt, joined UGLE Lodges in Cairo.

Whatever stigma remained was largely unwarranted and, in any case, the intelligent pursuit of esoteric knowledge should never be a basis for condemnation. Nevertheless the pseudo-Masonic work of **Cagliostro** and the Napoleonic diplomats does not seem to have revealed to the world any of the mysteries of ancient Egypt nor provided a prudent focus for National identity.

As has happened in other countries, Masonic unity was not a priority. Even the creation of the National Grand Lodge of Egypt did not settle the chaos for long and UGLE, after giving initial support, became disillusioned and went its own way.

Like France, Britain's arrival in Egypt also coincided with the rule of **Muhammad Ali** and his agenda to obtain independence from the Ottoman Porte in Constantinople, which heralded the rise of Egyptian Nationalism.

However, while Napoleon had been popular in Egypt, Britain had been France's enemy and British presence became the rallying point for National independence. Even in Masonic circles, the National Grand Lodge of Egypt turned away from UGLE to the Grand Orient of France.

Growing Egyptian Nationalism resulted in armed conflict with Britain both before and after World War II during which Britain again occupied Egypt and Sudan. The conflict after the Suez crisis finally resolved **President Abdul Nasser**, himself a Freemason, to ban Freemasonry in Egypt. His successor, **President Anwar El Sadat**, also a Freemason and Nobel Peace Prize winner, did not restore Freemasonry.

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<sup>23</sup> Wikipedia

There are good reasons why Nationalism has been a compelling political force in Egypt since 1811 when Egyptian independence was being sought from foreign occupying powers. However Egyptian Nationalism grew into Pan-Arab Nationalism and the war-torn and unsuccessful attempt to form a United Arab Republic under **Nasser**.

An Arab is defined as one who speaks Arabic<sup>24</sup>, which covers many tribal, ethnic and religious groups in 13 different countries so it should be no surprise that the Arab nations could not agree to work together under Egyptian leadership. Saddam Hussein's Iraq also vied for leadership of the Arab nations. Even many Egyptians did not see themselves as Arabs, distaining the nomadic Bedouin tradition.

**Nasser's** Nationalism also took the form of promoting Egyptian supremacy over the Arab world by strengthening the Muslim Brotherhood movement amongst the Sunni, Shia and Saudi Wahhabism sects. Nasser's tilt toward a Soviet-style system, attempting to merge Islamic and socialist thinking, was equally unsuccessful.

This leads to the question whether Nationalism can successfully and permanently be built on an ethnic or religious base. While it may have been useful in gaining Egyptian independence, it did not even lead Egyptians to loyally support their Government and take pride in their country for long. In searching for a cement to bind Pan-Arabism **Nasser** found a common characteristic and defined a common enemy but this did not bring about Arab unity or even an Egyptian cohesive loyalty despite his gift for binding rhetoric.

In multi-cultural countries like Australia Nationalism could not possibly be promoted in this manner but Australians are basically loyal to, and take pride in, their country. The principles and practice of Freemasonry helps to breed loyalty amongst a multi-cultural membership and strengthen ties between countries but leading Freemasons in Egypt forsook its beneficial potential and banned it.

It is very unlikely that, while the current political and economic unrest exists in Egypt and while fundamentalist terrorism continues, that Freemasonry will revive there. However, history in other countries points to the absolute resilience of Freemasonry and when the Egyptian people finally learn how to live together, it will rise again.

Let us hope that its revival is not based on an esoteric search for the lost wisdom of old, or on a false basis for national pride, or as a political instrument of power, but on a prudent use of our well-tested Masonic heritage.

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<sup>24</sup> “*The Arabs – Journeys beyond the Mirage*” David Lamb ISBN 1-4000-3041-2.