



# Ritual, Secrecy, and Civil Society

Vol. 11, No. 1 • Spring 2024







## Table of Contents

**Foreword** ..... 1

*Eric Saunier*

**An Approach Concerning the Relationship between Spanish  
Freemasonry and the Abolition of Slavery** ..... 21

*Yván Pozuelo Andrés*

**Portuguese Freemasonry between Slavery and Antislavery:  
Transoceanic Masonic Networks in the Portuguese Empire** ..... 63

*Fernando Marques da Costa*

**Prince Hall Freemasonry Reconsidered: Mistakes Historians Make** ..... 93

*Paul Rich*

**Toward an Understanding of Mexican Freemasonry: A Panoramic  
and Theoretical Approach** ..... 105

*Guillermo De Los Reyes Heredia, PhD*

**Enlightenment Sociability: Strengths and Weaknesses** ..... 119

*Cécile Revauger*

***Le secret des francs-maçons* (1744)** ..... 125





## Foreword

The pairing of slavery and Freemasonry may be surprising. It actually forms an antinomy a priori, which may seem to make a study on this theme impossible, except perhaps from the angle of the involvement of Masonic circles in the fight for the abolition of slavery, proclaimed in 1834 in the English colonies, in the French colonies in 1848, in the United States in 1861, then in Cuba and Brazil later, between 1880 and 1888. However, aiming to analyze without prejudice the relations between the Freemasons of the great slave powers on the one hand, the practice of trafficking and slavery by these powers on the other hand, is of real interest.

Born in the 18th century, at the very moment when the Atlantic slave trade was experiencing a remarkable boom which would make it the “dark side of the Age of Enlightenment” (Y. Benot), strongly open to the world of shipowners and naval officers, quite established in the ports starting with the quartet of trading ports, Freemasonry was never in fact—although it refers to the notion of Fraternity—a form of sociability whose members were unanimously abolitionist and as inherently impervious to participation in or support for slavery. In fact, it took an evolutionary process, sometimes slow, linked to the Revolution of 1789 in France, to the progress of political liberalism to which most Freemasons in Spanish-speaking and Portuguese-speaking countries adhered in the 19th century, for European Masonic societies, as a whole, take a position against slavery, more in line with the representations we have of Freemasonry.

For this reason, the analysis of this ambivalent and evolving relationship between Masonic sociability and the question of slavery is placed at the heart of this issue of *Ritual, Secrecy, and Civil Society* resulting from the contributions presented during the round table organized by IDERM on June 10, 2022 at the Cadet Hotel, during the 4th World Congress on Freemasonry which offers an overview of the situation in three of the greatest European slave-holding powers of the 18th and 19th centuries, also in the United States.

Eric Saunier,  
*Secretary General of IDERM*



# The triangle and the chains: French Freemasonry between captivity and liberty (1770–1848)

Éric Saunier,

*Director of the Institut d'Etudes et de Recherches Maçonniques (IDERM) (Institute for Masonic Studies and Research), Fondation pour la Mémoire de l'Esclavage (FME) (Foundation for the Remembrance of Slavery)*

More than twenty years ago, in the spring of 1998, on the University of Martinique, in Schoelcher, Martinique, I participated in one of that year's key academic events. The event in question was the 123th congress of the Comité des Travaux Historiques et Scientifiques (CTHS) (Committee for Historical and Scientific Studies), which focused on the history of slavery and its abolition in France, in commemoration of the 150th anniversary of France's abolition of slavery in 1848.

This edition of the annual CTHS congress was the first to be held outside mainland France by this “grand old lady” of French research, founded in 1836. The year 1998 represented a turning point for both civil society and academia in terms of the prominence afforded to the history and memory of slavery in the public space. This turning point would culminate spectacularly, shortly after the 128th CTHS congress, in the passing of the so-called Taubira Law of May 21, 2001. By defining the slave trade and slavery as a “crime against humanity,” this law would accelerate the movement toward the recognition of France's involvement in the Atlantic slave trade. It was soon fol-

lowed, in 2005, by the establishment of May 10 as a national day of commemoration. Then, a decade later, in 2016, May 23 was similarly recognized as a day of remembrance. (I had the privilege of witnessing this recognition firsthand, having been recently appointed to the Comité National pour la Mémoire et l'Histoire de l'Esclavage [CNMHE] [National Committee for the Memory and History of Slavery], the predecessor of the current Fondation de la Mémoire de l'Esclavage [FME] [Foundation for the Remembrance of Slavery], where I serve on the scientific board.)

These initiatives, as we know, have contributed to constructing a shared memory surrounding the four-centuries-long tragedy that was the Atlantic slave trade and slavery, in which, from the establishment of the first Portuguese trading settlements and forts on the coasts of Cape Verde and Angola in the mid-fifteenth century to the abolition of slavery by the last two major slave-trading powers, Cuba and Brazil, in 1886 and 1888 respectively, 12 million human beings were rounded up and sold.

But let us return to the CTHS congress held in Schoelcher twenty-five years ago and, above all, to what led me to bring it up to introduce this paper.

I did so because at that congress I presented the first paper, a study of the coupling of Freemasonry and slavery: “Les négriers et la franc-maçonnerie. Les pratiques culturelles dans un port de traite: Le Havre à la fin du XVIII<sup>e</sup>” (Slave traders and Freemasonry. Cultural practices in a slave-trading port: Le Havre in the late eighteenth century). It can be read in *Esclavages: Résistances et abolitions*, a splendid volume edited by my late colleague and friend, Marcel Dorigny.<sup>1</sup>

On that occasion, and thus in that paper, I discussed for the first time the complex and paradoxical relationship—present throughout this paper too—between Freemasonry and the Atlantic slave trade and slavery in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. The paper was based on a survey exploiting the rich archival collections on Freemasonry held by the Bibliothèque nationale de France (BNF), carried out as part of a thesis on the 6,000 Freemasons who were members of Normandy’s fifty-four lodges and chapters between 1740 and 1830. The aim of the paper was to explain the apparent “paradox”—in view of the essential place occupied by fraternity within Masonic values and the important role of Freemasons in the abolitionist struggle in the nineteenth century—represented by the strong affinities between the world of slave ship owners and Masonic circles in Le Havre, part of the “quartet

of major French slave-trading ports,” during the Enlightenment.<sup>2</sup>

Using classic positivist methods based on the exploitation of Masonic sources held at the BNF, and applying a historical prosopographic approach to the Masonic milieu—which at the time was relatively untouched by this now-classic type of investigation within Masonic studies—I highlighted not only the significant presence of slave traders (about twenty) in the two lodges in Le Havre (La Fidélité and L’Aménité), but also the fact that some of these slave traders had served as lodge officers and even Worshipful Masters, including in 1787, the year when the port of Le Havre’s involvement in the slave trade reached its peak, with nearly thirty expeditions. This “detail” was not trivial. It showed that Freemasonry’s slave-trading affiliations in slave-trading ports held substantial interest in terms of historical analysis. Those affiliations were not simply indicative of a mere crossing of paths that, although certainly inappropriate, could be explained by the dominant sociology of specific lodges (70 percent of the members of which were merchants and ships’ officers) and the existence of various fleeting affiliations in the eighteenth century.

As I presented my findings and analysis, intending only to inject some historical reflection on Freemasonry into the congress, I, as a recent PhD graduate, observed the attendees’ re-

1 Éric Saunier, “Les négriers et la franc-maçonnerie. Les pratiques culturelles dans un port de traite: Le Havre à la fin du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle,” in *Esclavage: Résistances et abolitions*, ed. Marcel Dorigny (Paris: Editions du CTHS, 1999), 139–151.

2 Éric Saunier, *Révolution et sociabilité en Normandie au tournant des XVIII<sup>e</sup> et XIX<sup>e</sup> siècles: 6000 francs-maçons de 1740 à 1830* (Rouen: Presses universitaires de Rouen et du Havre, 1999/2000).



actions. Some were surprised—raising the issue of the Masonic presence within the slave-trading world was seen by some as a real scoop twenty-five years ago—while others seemed more suspicious that I was being anti-Masonic—which was distasteful—in a context where studies on the relations between Freemasonry and slavery were scarce. These reactions drove me to delve deeper into Masonic sources, beyond the case of Le Havre, and to gradually expand my prosopographic approach to the Masonic populations of all of France’s major slave-trading ports. They also led me to study and develop our understanding of the relationships between the port lodges and the Antillean lodges, as well as of the abolitionist circles that grew in influence following the publication of the *Histoire des deux Indes* in 1770.

These investigations gave rise to a series of studies published in French or Spanish,<sup>3</sup> the conclusions of which I wish to present today at the World Conference on Fraternalism 2022 *Are the Ancient Landmarks Ancient?*

### **The Atlantic slave trade, slavery, and Freemasonry during the Enlightenment: An inevitable encounter**

**W**as what I observed in Le Havre while working on my thesis a local epiphenomenon? Or was it a phenomenon that could be observed in all slave-trad-

ing ports? This was the first question I sought to answer. Then, having confirmed the widespread nature of the phenomenon observed in Le Havre, another question arose: How and why, given the affinities existing between certain lodges (in the colonies and in the slave-trading ports) and slave-trading culture, could a number of Freemasons have become involved in abolitionism in the first half of the nineteenth century, to the point where the Grand Orient could—without causing too much uproar—turn the bust of Brother Victor Schœlcher into a powerful symbol of a republican, progressive, and emancipatory Freemasonry?

The answers to these two questions will drive my argument here, which I cannot begin without first emphasizing an essential prerequisite for understanding my thesis, and, even more so, the significance of the question I am dealing with for all Freemasons: the extent to which, despite the few speeches written by the free-masons in the lodges on the subject, the issues of the slave trade and slavery were raised within the Masonic micro-society during the Enlightenment.

Before proceeding to describe and analyze the close ties that brought the Freemasons of the slave-trading ports and colonial lodges together with the world of the slave trade, and then with abolitionist circles, it is indeed important to recall this crucial fact. Even if it is not contested or denied, downplaying it or not being aware of it could be used

---

<sup>3</sup> All the works that the author of this article has written on the relationship between the slave trade, abolition, and Freemasonry are indicated in the reference list at the end of this article.

as a cheap way of justifying this “paradox of Freemasonry” and therefore evading the essential reflexive approach that Freemasons must undertake when faced with their history—in this case, the affinities of a part of Freemasonry with the slave-trading world of the eighteenth century. While I would say that there are no, or hardly any, planches from eighteenth-century lodges dealing with slavery or related issues—though this absence is actually due to the nature of Masonic sources on this era that researchers can make use of—except for a few written in the Antillean lodges to prevent the initiation of free people of color in the 1780s (a point I will return to), the slave trade and slavery undeniably raised profound questions for the Freemasons of that era, both in mainland France and in the colonies, for two reasons:

- The first stems from the chronology of the development of the Atlantic slave trade and French Freemasonry, which shows two entirely parallel ascents. Let us begin by recounting the steps in the rise of the French Atlantic slave trade and slavery, the development of which lagged behind its English counterpart. The latter benefited from the capture of Jamaica in the mid-seventeenth century (1653–1655), while the French trade had to wait for the “certainty of possession of Saint-Domingue” forty years later. Emerging as early as the mid-sixteenth century—as business contracts dealt with by notaries in 1548 show—and authorized by an edict recorded by the Parlement while Louis XIII was on his deathbed (1642), the French Atlantic slave trade expanded

significantly when colonial plantations switched from growing tobacco (then known in France as *pétun*) to sugar. It developed further when it was taken over by companies holding royal charters—these were founded by Colbert, who consolidated the slave trade system by enacting the Code Noir (1685)—and then when it was released from the chartered companies’ control in 1716 during the Régence period. Above all, however, the economic impact of the Atlantic slave trade and slavery on the Kingdom of France and its colonies was greatest after the loss of New France in 1763, when, as a result of the ignominious Seven Years’ War (1756–1763), the French colonial empire was refocused to center around the island of Saint-Domingue, which France had acquired at the end of the Nine Years’ War (1697). The French Atlantic slave trade was at its peak between 1763 and 1791; of the 1.5 million slaves trafficked by the French, nearly half were trafficked during this period. Yet this was also the moment when Masonic sociability experienced its demographic upswing, following the implementation of the reform that gave birth to the Grand Orient in 1773. From the 1760s onward, Freemasonry had brilliant success not only in mainland France (the number of lodges in the kingdom increased from 165 in 1765 to 635 in 1789, with the number in the provinces rising from 85 to 448!) but also in the colonies, and particularly in those of the Antilles, where two-thirds of the seventy-two French colonial lodges were concentrated.

The period between 1763 and 1792 witnessed two impressive waves

of founding: between the Seven Years' War and the American War of Independence, twenty-two lodges were established, and then between the latter conflict and the beginning of the Haitian Revolution, another twenty-three were set up. In this context of chronological concordance between the respective ascents of the slave trade and Freemasonry, how could the sociability of lodges not have been permeable, in one way or another, to the debate on the enslavement of Black people? How could it not have been challenged by the argument of the Abbé Raynal, who, in his *Histoire des deux Indes*, called for the emergence of a Black Spartacus, who would be embodied by Toussaint L'Ouverture and Louis Delgrès, respectively twenty and thirty years later? This impossibility was even more pronounced in the Antillean colonial world, where Masonic sociability was a major cultural phenomenon (there were, at the very least, 3,000 Freemasons in Martinique and Guadeloupe from 1740 to 1848) and where the question of emancipation clearly arose from 1787, before the French Revolution of 1789 added the question of the human limits of political rights, with article 1 of the Declaration of the Rights of Man presupposing the possibility of free people of color—at least the wealthiest among them—having the right to vote. The question of the morality of slavery, and even more so that of its economic utility, clearly must have arisen within lodges, though we have little trace of its having done so.

• However, if the Atlantic slave trade and slavery would undoubtedly have posed questions for Masonic sociability from the eighteenth century, they partly would have done so—and herein lies the second explanation—for sociological reasons inherent to French Freemasonry in general and to the mainland lodges of the slave-trading ports and the colonial lodges in particular. We know that the reform that gave birth to the Grand Orient in 1773 was marked by the democratization of regulations (rotation of terms of office, adoption of the elective principle instead of co-optation, and so on), but it also entailed a human democratization. Within the context of this democratization that, until the late 1770s, took the form of an expansion of recruitment beyond the aristocratic circles that had dominated the Masonic space since the 1730s, though without the aristocratic character of Freemasonry disappearing, this human democratization—which would play an important role in the thesis that the French Revolution had Masonic origins—worked in favor of the bourgeoisie up to its middle strata and, above all, benefited the merchant community, as was demonstrated forty years ago by the late Daniel Roche<sup>4</sup>, who passed away on February 19, 2023. It was assisted in doing so by the festive and fun dimension of Masonic sociability, which was in perfect harmony with the aspirations of that community. Indeed, sociologically speaking, merchants were lodges' regular clientele—yet they were also at the heart of the slave trade's operations. In

4 Daniel Roche, *Le siècle des Lumières en province: Académies et académiciens provinciaux, 1680–1789* (Paris: Mouton, 1978).

this context, whether it liked it or not, the “Masonic body,” more so than other structures of sociability, had to address the questions raised by “the odious trade,” including that of its economic utility, which divided the economists of the *Encyclopédie* (Véron de Forbonnais against the Physiocrats). And it should be added that within the “Masonic body,” the Freemasonry that was flourishing in the major slave-trading ports and in the Antilles faced this question to a greater extent than its counterparts did. Indeed, the success of Freemasonry in these places had involved very strong and early growth, and it was characterized by the presence of shipowners and ships’ officers, who had more of a stake than did others in the Atlantic slave trade and slavery. Let us recall here a few dates and some significant figures relating to this phenomenon. Bordeaux, which was one of the most important slave-trading port, was the city where the first provincial lodge was established, in 1732, and from the outset it was open to the merchant community and seafaring officers. The city had more than ten active lodges in 1789. Six years later, in 1738, Freemasonry reached Le Havre, and then La Rochelle in 1745, with the merchant community either bringing it to these places or being a major presence in their lodges. I mention 1745. This was also the year when the first lodge emerged in Guadeloupe, in Sainte-Anne, and seven years later a lodge was established in Martinique, in Saint-Pierre, as was one in Saint-Domingue, in Les Cayes Saint-Louis. Merchants had a strong presence in these lodges, and they held a monopoly

over the lodges of Saint-Pierre, Martinique. In 1745, the slave trade, having been liberated thirty years earlier from the control of the royal companies, was already operating at a rate of four to five expeditions per year in the slave-trading ports where the lodges were gaining ground. Bordeaux had become one of the two largest provincial Masonic centers, the other being Lyon. It was very open to the merchant community, which was the group best represented in the lodges. There were also five lodges in Nantes, all of which were open to merchants. And in Le Havre, two-thirds of the 200 Freemasons were either merchants or ships’ officers. Evoking this group that was central to the Atlantic slave trade, via the figure of the *capitaine gèreur* (a ship’s captain who handled the buying and selling of slaves), it is appropriate here to recall that this group was the other major beneficiary of the democratization of Masonic sociability, from the reign of Louis XVI onward. They represented one in three Masons in Le Havre; a slightly higher proportion in Brest, where the two lodges competed for the initiation of Bougainville and La Pérouse; and there were four specific lodges in Brest, Rochefort, and Toulon for maritime officers. The “social descent of Freemasonry” in the late eighteenth century took the way of the initiation of this group of intermediaries who were indispensable to the smooth running of the triangular trade. It is true that additional benefits in the form of the social prestige of entering a lodge and the possibility of obtaining a Master Mason’s certificate that could be presented on arrival in a

port, plus the allure of a philosophy that placed death at the heart of initiations, inevitably attracted ships' officers.

Antillean lodges, meanwhile, were dominated by colonial administrators and merchants—the groups most invested in the smooth running of the slave economy. Alongside them there were a significant number of plantation owners, a point long underplayed until the work of Chloë Duflo.<sup>5</sup> They were particularly numerous in Guadeloupe, where the Masonic fabric was characterized by a high dispersion of lodges and a strong presence in very modest towns. In this sociological context, how could one think that Freemasonry did not in one way or another come face to face with the questions of slavery and the slave trade, or at least with issues closely related to these? The force with which the question of the initiation of free men of color in the lodges of the Antilles was raised is perhaps the most enlightening proof here.

### **The paradox of Enlightenment Freemasonry: The deep- rootedness of slave-trading culture in the lodges of the colonies and slave-trading ports**

**W**as the situation in Le Havre indicative of a particular sensitivity within the two Masonic lodges in this city, where the maritime elites had been particularly

effective in establishing a panopticon (Michel Foucault<sup>6</sup>) to fight against the spread of abolitionist theses? Or did it reveal a general sensitivity within the lodges in the slave-trading ports that attests to the permeability of Masonic culture to the mentality of those who benefited from the triangular trade? To answer this question, it was necessary to study the situation in other major slave-trading ports, particularly Nantes. I visited the archives of the five lodges in this city that were regularized by the Grand Orient of France after 1773.

#### ***From Le Havre to Nantes via Gorée: Masonic culture and slave-trading culture***

What were the results of extending the original research to France's primary slave-trading port? To me, it doesn't seem very useful to list all the Freemasons of Nantes who were slave traders in the eighteenth century, because the list is long (sixty at least) and above all because beyond the strong attraction of Masonic sociability to shipowners and ships' officers who worked on slave ships (four of the five Nantes lodges—Saint-Germain, Les Cœurs Unis, La Parfaite, L'Harmonie, and Paix et Union—counted slave traders among their members), the standout result of this investigation is that it makes us aware of how deeply rooted slave-trading culture was in the Masonic sociability in the slave-trading ports. This was something I only had an inkling of

5 Chloë Duflo, *La franc-maçonnerie en Guadeloupe, miroir d'une société coloniale en tensions (1770–1848)* (Bordeaux: Presses universitaires de Bordeaux, 2020).

6 Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, translated by Alan Sheridan (New York: Pantheon Books, 1977 [1975]).

when I studied Le Havre's two lodges, suggested by the fact that the position of Worshipful Master was held by slave ship owners and captains and, above all, by the startling choice of the name *Le Franc-Maçon* for a 135-ton slave ship that sailed from Le Havre on May 21, 1787, for the mouth of the Gabon River, where a revolt that broke out during the eight-month stopover allowed women and men destined for slavery to regain their freedom.

The first major sign of this rooting of slave-trading culture within the culture of these Nantes lodges—which was noticeable in Le Havre because of this incident involving the ship, but which could not be investigated further owing to the small number of lodges in Le Havre (two)—is the presence of a semantic connection between the names of slave ships and the names of lodges (which we know were the result of a vote by the brothers). In Brittany, *L'Union* was the ship name most frequently used by Nantes slave ship owners (with thirty-three slave expeditions) and was also adopted early on by colonial lodges (a *Parfaite Union* was founded in Port-au-Prince in 1742); it had been the favorite lodge name among Freemasons since the middle of the Enlightenment. Paired with the adjective “*Parfaite*,” “*L'Union*” was used to name the first lodges in Rennes (in 1758), Quimper (1769), and Ploërmel (1776), the latter having been founded in the year when *La Paix et Union* was regularized in Nantes. Was the link between lodge names and ship names all down to chance, to the simple act of drawing from a common corpus of philanthrop-

ic values linked to the general influence exerted by friendly and familial references in eighteenth-century society? Or did it have to do with Masonic affinities? The answer to this question remains open, but a study of Masonic sources seems to show the role played by slave traders who were present in the lodges at the time when their names were being decided. This was certainly the case for *La Paix et Union*. From 1714 to 1728, René Montaudouin, a slave trader based in Nantes, outfitted six slave expeditions on ships named *L'Union*. In 1714, one of his ships was named *La Paix*. This representative of one of the most important slave-ship-owning families was an active member of the Nantes lodge into which slave-trading circles had made the most inroads at the time when, in 1776, the brothers of that lodge decided to name it *La Paix et Union*. By the time a second lodge, *La Concorde*, was created in 1750, René Montaudouin had also already given this name to one of his slave ships (1713) in Nantes, the port where the corpus of common symbolic references in the names of lodges and ships seems to have been the largest.

The second phenomenon of interest in illustrating the important relationship between the Nantes Masonic lodges and slave-trading circles has to do with the fact that slave traders did not gravitate toward any one particular lodge, even if they had family or professional ties to one. Since this phenomenon can be generalized to the four major slave-trading ports (even though slave traders showed a clear preference for *L'Amitié* in Bordeaux), this proves the capacity of slave-trading

culture to permeate the Masonic fabric of the slave-trading ports. Here are a few examples to illustrate my point. A merchant by the name of Murphy, who fitted out nine slave expeditions, was a member of La Parfaite, yet his main captain, Joseph Galland, also a Freemason, was a member of the Saint-Germain lodge. Galland was also chosen to command the slave ship *Bailli de Suffren* on three occasions; this ship was fitted out by another Freemason slave trader named Desclos Lepeley, who was the Worshipful Master of a third Nantes lodge: Les Coeurs Unis. The tendency of slave traders to be initiated in different lodges across the city without having a clear preference thus runs counter to the phenomenon of family ties deciding individuals' choice of lodge, which was particularly marked among groups whose presence in lodges was the least assured. For example, Clément Duchesne, a captain recruited by the shipowner Desclos Lepeley, attended L'Harmonie, while his brother Pierre was initiated at Paix et Union.

But perhaps more so than the semantic transfer of the names of “floating coffins” to lodges or the dispersed presence of slave traders in the lodges of Nantes, we must highlight how the Nantes lodges drew attention to the practice of the slave trade within their ranks. L'Harmonie, the Nantes lodge most open to slave traders, unabashedly displayed the slave-trader status of its members on its Master Mason's certificates, which were invaluable for the pur-

pose of being welcomed abroad. This was at a time when French lodges were careful not to display the status of “Protestant” on the certificates of some of their members! This example is perhaps the one that most powerfully shows how strongly slave-trading culture permeated the Nantes lodges. This permeation was facilitated by the advantages that Masonic sociability could offer to actors in the slave trade, who, having to “travel long-haul,” were concerned about finding an initial point of welcome at a lodge when they arrived in a far-off port.

With this observation, I seem to touch on one of the explanations for this troubling affinity between the Masonic and slave-trading worlds in the eighteenth century: lodges could be particularly useful in the context of the long journeys that marked the triangular trade. But it is also important to highlight that slave ships' voyages could also be useful in allowing Freemasonry to penetrate new territories. This is demonstrated by the case of a sailor from France's fourth-largest slave-trading port, La Rochelle. His actions allowed the Royal Art to penetrate more deeply into Africa—a continent that, with the exception of Senegal, was weakly Masonized—by sparking the creation of a short-lived lodge in Gorée at the very end of the eighteenth century.

The brief but emblematic history of the Gorée lodge in the spring of 1799<sup>7</sup> was due to the initiative of a ship captain named Rivaud, who was an ac-

7 Éric Saunier, “Le fait maçonnique en Afrique sub-saharienne de la fin du XVIIIe siècle au début du XXe siècle,” in *Ecrire et traduire les Afriques noires*, ed. Cécile Bertin-Elisabeth and Érick Noël (Pessac: Presses Universitaires de la Nouvelle Aquitaine, forthcoming [late 2023])

tive member of L'Union Parfaite in La Rochelle. At a time when Gorée was in the hands of the English, he decided to found La Sincérité, the second lodge established in Senegal under the aegis of the Grand Orient of France. Rivaud had left the East Indies (Pondicherry) to return to his home port of La Rochelle. However, when he made a stopover in Gorée, a cut-off group of brothers there took advantage of his arrival. Knowing he was an active and high-ranking Mason, they asked him to create a regular Masonic entity to receive passing initiates coming from European ports and the colonies. About ten Freemasons, gathered behind Brother Le Gros, managed to convince him to set up the lodge, whose links with slave-trading culture are evident both because of the history of its establishment and the Masonic career of Brother Le Gros, the lodge's first Worshipful Master. Before he took up that position, he had been an active member of the La Sincérité des Cœurs lodge in Martinique, which we will discuss later. English domination and the disturbances that Freemasonry experienced during its reconstitution under Napoleon quickly got the better of the brothers' project in Gorée. However, this very brief project was more a new and very strong indicator of the slave-trading world's permeation of Masonic culture than an explanation of it.

### ***An attempt to explain an apparent contradiction***

Two explanations for the rooting of slave-trading culture within a segment

of Freemasonry can be advanced. One relates to the mindset of European societies and their elites, of which the Freemasons of the Enlightenment are a reflection. The other, more interesting from a Masonic perspective, is linked to how the Masonic space functioned during the eighteenth century.

The first concerns the impact that Enlightenment-era anthropology had on the mentality of the elites. Jaucourt's remark about slavery is well known: "Sensitive and generous souls would undoubtedly applaud these reasons in the name of humanity, but the avarice and greed that dominate the earth, will always refuse to listen to them." But this philosopher, the most prolific contributor to the *Encyclopédie*, might have added that on top of avarice and greed there were polygenist ideas. . . ones that were to be found in colonial lodges, particularly when these were confronted from the 1780s onward with initiation requests from free people of color! Consider, for example, the words of the Worshipful Master of Saint-Louis de la Concorde. He condemned a brother (Aurange) who "contracted a marriage that removes him from all civil status."<sup>8</sup> Academic papers, periodicals, and, especially, private writings from the slave-trading ports attest to the strength of this color prejudice, which led maritime officials and priests in these cities to use racist language, even though this was totally redundant in European port societies, where the presence of people of color remained very modest. In this eighteenth-century societal context, unless one is being

---

8 References to sources in Duflo, *La franc-maçonnerie en Guadeloupe*.



naive, why would one think the average Freemason would have escaped the influence of these prejudices?

While Enlightenment-era anthropology explains the passage of at least a hundred slave traders through the slave-trading ports, the primary reason for the slave-trading world's permeation of Masonic culture can be found by examining how Masonic sociability functioned. This sociability was characterized, on the one hand, by a strong spirit of independence in France's provinces and colonies, which encouraged resistance to any critical ideas about slavery expressed by the obedience's leaders or by Parisian lodges, and, on the other hand, by the very close ties between the colonial lodges, where polygenist ideas prospered (as we know from the works of Alain Le Bihan<sup>9</sup> and Pierre-Yves Beaurepaire<sup>10</sup>), and the lodges of the slave-trading ports, whose members readily adhered to these same ideas.

Regarding the first point, the spirit of independence in lodges during the eighteenth century, it should be noted that although the Masonic reform that gave birth to the Grand Orient of France in 1773 answered an institutional need to face the three demands of democratization, opening up to women, and bringing order to the jumbled system of high degrees, it was not well received by provincial lodges, including those in the slave-trading ports and, in particular, the powerful Masonry of Bordeaux. It was even more poorly accepted in the colo-

nial lodges, which were accustomed to Masonic self-government. Splits within the lodges and the brothers' inclination to maintain undemocratic practices, such as keeping Worshipful Masters in their positions instead of implementing three-year rotations of offices, were everyday facts of life in provincial lodges after 1773, including those of the slave-trading ports. This spirit of resistance combined with a spirit of "proud Freemasonry of the islands," where it took on the aspect of a "culture of distinction" that sometimes took the form of successful dissenting rites such as the future Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite (AASR). One of the consequences was the refusal to accept any climbdown in color prejudice when free people of color knocked on the Temple door.

Bearing other grievances toward the Grand Orient of France, the lodges of the slave-trading ports were ready to join forces with the colonial lodges, where one could hear Freemasons such as those of La Paix declare:

Among the members of the other tableau of the Cœurs Unis, we note only one who has strayed, and it is the Senior Warden who entered an unsuitable marriage that absolutely casts him from all society, and it even seems astonishing to us, V.D.B., to speak frankly to you, that several other of the members whom we know could have admitted him among them.<sup>11</sup>

However, if the lodges of the slave-trading ports were so susceptible to

9 Alain Le Bihan, *Loges et chapitres de la Grande Loge et du Grand Orient de France: Loges de province* (Paris: Editions du CTHS, 1990), 383–413.

10 Pierre-Yves Beaurepaire, *L'Autre et le Frère: L'étranger et la Franc-maçonnerie en France au XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle* (Paris: Honoré Champion, 1998), 539–607.

11 References to sources in Duflo, *La franc-maçonnerie en Guadeloupe*.

polygenist ideas, this was mainly because of the very close ties, which for a long time were barely studied, between the brothers of the colonial lodges and those of the slave-trading port cities. These connections were due to the role that the Grand Orient conferred upon brothers from the port lodges during their stopovers in the colonies. The brothers did not simply settle for a warm welcome for the duration of the few meetings taking place during their travels. To ease rivalries between lodges that could put the Masonic edifice at risk, the Grand Orient of France tasked the brothers with transmitting the patents needed to regularize colonial lodges. This institutional role had consequences on the mindset of the Freemasons of the slave-trading ports. Through attending the colonial lodges for an extended period, the Freemasons of the trading ports became privy to the debates and issues surrounding the initiation of people of color that animated the Freemasons of the colonies, who for the most part held a polygenist ideology. In solidarity with the brothers of the colonies, the Freemasons of Le Havre and Nantes subscribed to these ideas, which prompted them, upon their return, to appoint Worshipful Masters who were committed to the ideas of slavery and to elect to the Grand Orient of France delegates who defended these “racialist” ideas, as was the case of Brother Lamarque, who represented the lodges of Le Havre at the Rue du Pot de fer.

And this shared culture was further solidified by the consequences of the stopovers made by colonial Masons in port cities. Let us take the example of

Bordeaux, which Nozomu Tase recently studied in his thesis. He demonstrates that the registers of L'Anglaise recorded thirty-seven visitors from the colonies between 1749 and 1799, with sixteen coming from the “pearl of the Antilles” (Saint-Domingue), seven from Guadeloupe (Basse-Terre and Pointe-à-Pitre), and five from Martinique. Most importantly, he also shows that they had the task of bringing planches, membership tableaux, and requests for constitutions entrusted to them by the colonial lodges. L'Anglaise did not hesitate to grant patents to other lodges on its own authority, taking advantage of its members' voyages to establish daughter lodges while issuing membership certificates or “passports of Masonic enlightenment” to its members who were leaving for the Antilles. It also entrusted them with planches for the colonial lodges to ensure correspondence and visitation links were maintained between Bordeaux and the Antilles.

In this context, we can better understand, among other things, why, on returning to Le Havre at the beginning of the French Revolution, a Freemason lawyer, Nicolas-Alexandre Lacorne, Worshipful Master of the La Fidélité lodge, led a petition movement that brought the merchants of Le Havre and Rouen together around the idea of mobilizing, in 1790, the deputies of the two major cities of Normandy against the “abolitionist threat”; why it was a Freemason prosecutor of the Admiralty and member of the same lodge who took up his pen to refute the “negrophilic” theories of Brissot and the Société des Amis des Noirs (Society of the Friends of the

Blacks); and why a Freemason theater enthusiast, Louis-Augustin Pinel, wrote a play, *Le Barbier d'Ingouville*,<sup>12</sup> in which a man's madness is represented by his love for a woman of color. In short, we can better understand the deep-rooted presence of slave-trading culture in eighteenth-century Masonic sociability, which today comes across as a paradox in view of the promotion of the value of fraternity and the role Freemasonry played in the abolitionist struggle in the nineteenth century, the first inklings of which can be seen not in colonial lodges and slave-trading ports, but instead in the life of Parisian Freemasonry that the first man of color initiated into Freemasonry took part in: Joseph Bologne, Chevalier de Saint-George.

### **The early nineteenth century: Active Freemason participation in the abolitionist struggle arising from the transformations of lodges during the revolutionary period**

**T**he fleeting mention of the Chevalier de Saint-George in this overview of the relationships between Enlightenment Freemasonry and slavery presents an opportunity to leave behind this picture of the deep-rootedness of slave-trading culture in the life of the lodges of the slave-trading ports and the Antillean colonies in the eighteenth century and to turn our attention

instead toward a more positive aspect of the history of Freemasonry. Doing so will allow a response to the second question I posed in my introduction, namely the reasons behind the prominent role played by the lodges in the abolitionist struggle that marked the first half of the nineteenth century, between the abolition of the slave trade in 1815 under government pressure during the First Restoration and the abolition of slavery in spring 1848.

For in Paris, the provinces, and the colonies, Masonic lodges indeed occupied a prominent place in this struggle. However, we must deconstruct the somewhat excessive mythical vision of the role played by Freemasonry that the Grand Orient constructed after 1848 owing to the very strong Masonization of the political personnel who came to power with the February Revolution of 1848. The results of the piecing together of the “Masonic careers” of figures such as Victor Schoelcher have been very useful from this standpoint. Anne Girollet<sup>13</sup> has highlighted how his successive affiliations to the Amis de la Vérité at the end of the Bourbon Restoration and to La Clémentine Amitié at the end of the July Monarchy were fleeting, which somewhat renders null and void the hypothesis of a deep influence exerted by Schoelcher's passage among the brothers of these two famous lodges.

But it remains the case that recent research has confirmed the progressiv-

12 Brendan Chabannes, Hervé Chabannes, and Bénédicte Obitz, *Le Barbier d'Ingouville ou le Retour du Barbier de Séville: Une comédie inédite de Louis-Augustin Pinel composée en 1776* (Rouen: PURH, 2014).

13 Anne Girollet, *Victor Schoelcher, abolitionniste et républicain: Approche juridique et politique de l'œuvre d'un fondateur de la République* (Paris: Karthala, 2000).

ism and the role played by Freemasons in the struggle that brought about the abolition of slavery in France in 1848—those from the Parisian lodges especially, which were more democratic than their counterparts in the provinces during the Bourbon Restoration and the July Monarchy. The emblematic initiations of Félix Bisette and Louis Fabien; the attitude of the lawyer Barthe, who rose up against those who persecuted these two mixed-race brothers; and, especially, the very strong Masonic character of the *Société Française pour l'Abolition de l'Esclavage* (French Society for the Abolition of Slavery), whose activities were decisive in advancing the abolitionist cause and which counted among its members almost the entire staff of the Parisian lodges under the July Monarchy, are enlightening proof of this.

If we leave Paris for Guadeloupe and Martinique, we find that recent historiography also tends, in a way consistent with highlighting lodges' progressivism between 1815 and 1848, to mitigate what has been deemed the hesitant and late opening up of the first lodges—*Les Emules d'Hiram* in Guadeloupe in 1836 and *Union et Tradition* a little later in Martinique—to men of color in the Antilles. Of course, the dates may seem late, and we also know that there was strong internal resistance to these lodges' initiatives, but considering the difficulties that these two lodges had experienced in the context of the collapse of the colonial empire between 1810 and 1815 and the colonial policy conducted under the Bourbon Restoration (it was under the threat of cannon fire and the imposition of a shameful

debt, which is the focus of many recent studies, that Haiti's independence was recognized in 1825), even the timid start of such a movement toward openness before 1848 attests to a real change of mentality that was more spectacular in the slave-trading ports, where the illegal slave trade nevertheless resumed with strength and vigor, at least between 1815 and 1824. At least in Le Havre, it seems that from the Directory onward there was no longer any affinity between slave-trading circles and the Masonic world, with the Freemasons of this port even in fact very actively participating—as I have shown, and as others have shown in the case of Brest—in the liberal struggle waged in other parts of the Caribbean, including in Brazil. Le Havre's three Masonic lodges were the hub for organizing aid efforts for liberals leaving for South America between 1820 and 1830, with the lodges setting up a very structured mutual aid network that was intended to facilitate the passage and improve access to relief for those who wanted to seek refuge in England or Rio de Janeiro.

Given what we have outlined about Masonic life in the eighteenth-century slave-trading ports and colonies, how could such a conversion have occurred? This is where the need to understand the diversity of Freemasonry comes into play, as does the need to accept the idea of metamorphosis that I have deliberately included in the title of my paper. The progressive role of early-nineteenth-century Freemasonry in the struggle against slavery did not develop out of nothing, and it is far from the case that the lodges in the slave-trading

ports and the colonies represented all of eighteenth-century Freemasonry. Little is known about the views on slavery expressed in the lodges or by Freemasons in the provinces, but there is little doubt that in Lyon or Strasbourg, where slave-trading interests were more distant than they were in Nantes or Bordeaux, there were brothers who took up critical positions against the trade and the enslavement of Black people. This is certainly true of Rouen, where the journalist Jean-Baptiste Milcent, who arrived in the city from Paris to set up a newspaper and who was a member of the Bons Amis lodge, battled in the columns of his newspaper against the pro-slavery positions of the planter David Duval-Sanadon. Research on this point remains to be conducted, but what we know about Parisian Freemasons aligns with this, and it goes beyond the often-cited example of the attitudes of brothers at lodges such as the Neuf Sœurs. Beyond the specific case of the relations between Freemasonry and Saint-George, which, albeit tenuous, attest to a “negrophilic” sensitivity—to adopt the vocabulary in use in the eighteenth century—it is now known that there were about forty Freemasons from various Parisian lodges who were members of the Société des Amis des Noirs. The society’s founding speech was delivered by Brissot; although he himself was outside the Masonic sphere, his speech embodied the cardinal values of fraternity that his friends Mirabeau and Lafayette subscribed to.

Let us take things a bit further. Was the racialist Freemasonry of the slave-trading ports and the colonies entirely closed off to “progressive” ideas? At times, this seems doubtful, especially if we trust the findings of recent studies on the behaviors adopted toward the “serving brothers,” among whom there were about thirty free people of color in Guadeloupe and Martinique. In Martinique, the behaviors observed in a Saint-Pierre lodge, La Sincérité des Cœurs, which had five serving brothers—three free men of color and two white men—invite contemplation.<sup>14</sup> The three free men of color, two of whom were merchants, were all elevated to the rank of Companion, whereas the two white servants, a navy *archer* and a carpenter, remained at the rank of Apprentice. Did merit and social status carry more weight than color? This hypothesis is plausible, as is, perhaps, that of the initiation of a man of color to the rank of Master, if one gives credence to this question that the brothers of La Sincérité des Cœurs asked the Grand Orient: “Can lodge servants be admitted to the ranks of Companion and Master? Those from the isles are people of color but free.”<sup>15</sup> This was on the eve of the Revolution. Things were ultimately left at that, but this might be a reflection of the prospect of a man of color being granted full Masonic rights, which worried brothers from La Parfaite Union et la Tendre Fraternité Réunie, who tried to stop the lodge granting recognition. La Parfaite Union et la Tendre Frater-

14 Emelie Rondel, “La franc-maçonnerie antillaise: L'exemple de la Martinique (1738-1848)” (master’s thesis, Université Le Havre Normandie, 2022).

15 Rondel, “La franc-maçonnerie antillaise.”

nité Réunion was soon reassured. The question remained unanswered. Nevertheless, it must be acknowledged that there existed some doubt about the validity of this racist Freemasonry of the eighteenth-century colonies in the minds of a few Masons working in the late 1780s in the city founded by Belain d'Esambuc.

A segment of Freemasonry was thus prepared to take the leap from darkness to light. However, an event was needed to make this leap, and this is where I would like to conclude. This event was the French Revolution, owing to the transformations it brought about in Freemasonry, as we demonstrated in our thesis on Masonic Normandy (6,000 Freemasons) between 1740 and the *Trois Glorieuses* of 1830. Three key transformations came to the fore at this juncture. These were deep sociological transformations. The Freemasonry that re-emerged from the ashes of the Revolution under the First Empire was less connected to merchants and thus less susceptible to being compromised by pro-slavery ideas in the lodges of the slave-trading ports. Whether they liked it or not, the emerging lodges were also politicized (and the First Empire did not erase this evolution), just as they were introduced to a new form of philanthropy, shifting from charity to a social utilitarianism inspired by the ideas of Jeremy Bentham. This evolution was enduring. It is crucial to note that abolition was primarily a political cause

brought to the Assemblée nationale by liberals, as well as a philanthropic issue that placed the question of social utilitarianism—that of slave labor—at its heart, via a dual reflection on the profitability of slavery and on the benefits of emancipation, which was eventually incorporated into the abolitionist campaign. Moreover, the Freemasons of the Bourbon Restoration and the July Monarchy addressed “the worker question” in Paris. They therefore naturally turned to the questions of the morality and utility of slave labor. In Paris, and also in the colonial lodges, as the correspondence of the Bélisaire lodge in Algeria and that of the lodges of the old colonies (especially the last colony in the Indian Ocean) show, they concluded it was futile. The Worshipful Master of L'Amitié, Charles Desbassyns, issued the sharpest criticisms of the effectiveness of slave labor shortly before the last edition of the Code Noir was issued, in the very year England abolished slavery.

Between captivity and fraternity, therefore, a revolution was needed to raise awareness within the Masonic world of the need for liberty, just as Freemasonry required the Paris Commune for it to give free rein to its inventiveness in societal reform. This acquired consciousness is why both the bust of Schœlcher and the Communards' Wall fully belong in both the imaginary and the symbolism of Freemasonry.

## Reference list

### *Other articles from the author on this theme*

Saunier, Éric. 1999. “Les négriers et la franc-maçonnerie. Les pratiques culturelles dans un port de traite: Le Havre à la fin du XVIIIe siècle.” In *Esclavage: Résistances et abolitions*, edited by Marcel Dorigny, 139–51. Paris: Editions du CTHS.

Saunier, Éric. 2009. “El espacio caribeño: Un reto de poder para la francmasonería francesa.” *Revista de Estudios Históricos de la Masonería Latinoamericana y Caribeña* 1, no. 1: 42–56.

Saunier, Éric. 2017. “El espacio caribeño: Un reto de poder para la francmasonería francesa.” In *300 años: Masonerías y masones 1717-2017: Tomo I Migraciones*, edited by Ricardo Martínez Esquivel, Yván Pozuelo Andrés, and Rogelio Aragón, 76–91. Mexico City: Palabra de Clío.

Saunier, Éric. 2017. “La emergencia de la masonería liberal en tiempos de la Santa Alianza: Una historia en herencia.” In *La masonería hispano-lusa y americana: De los absolutismos a las democracias (1815-2015)*, edited by José Miguel Delgado Idarreta and Yván Pozuelo Andrés, 1–15. Oviedo: CEHME, Universidad de Oviedo.

Saunier, Éric. 2019. “‘El compás y los grilletes’. La masonería y el mundo negrero: Balance y perspectivas.” In *Resistencia, delito y dominación en el mundo esclavo: Microhistorias de la esclavitud atlántica (siglos XVII-XIX)*, edited by Vicent Sanz Rozalén, Michael Zeuske, and Santiago de Luxán, 211–29. Granada: Comares Historia.

Saunier, Éric. 2021. “Las logias del Gran Oriente de Francia en el Caribe: Del poderío al declive (1738-1900).” In *Estudios de la masonería en América Latina y el Caribe*, edited by Mariana Anecchini, Yván Pozuelo Andrés, and Ana María T. Rodríguez, 129–51. Buenos Aires: Teseo.

Saunier, Éric. 2022. “Les loges du Grand Orient aux Caraïbes: De la puissance au déclin (1738-1900).” In *La Franc-maçonnerie dans les colonies: De l’Atlantique à la mer de Chine (XVIIe-XXe siècle)*, edited by Éric Saunier, 101–13. Paris: Hémisphères Éditions.

Saunier, Éric, ed. 2022. *La Franc-maçonnerie dans les colonies: De l’Atlantique à la mer de Chine (XVIIIe-XXe siècle)*. Paris: Hémisphères Éditions.





# An Approach Concerning the Relationship between Spanish Freemasonry and the Abolition of Slavery

Yván Pozuelo Andrés

CEHME, REHMLAC+

As to banishing slavery,  
I approve of it as a lover of humanity;  
but as a lover of political order,  
I disapprove.<sup>1</sup>

## Introduction

All history that has to do with the Freemasons is complex, accentuating this complexity when encountering the issue of slavery, since the historiography of Freemasonry and of slavery are characterized by unequal geographical situations that lead to contextual nuances. Thus, in Spain, although slavery continues to be a marginal issue compared to its remarkable imprint in the country's history, exclusively enclosed within the academic world and without real memory, Freemasonry has benefited from numerous studies for 50 years. This situation draws our attention, knowing that Spain was the last country in Europe to have abolished slavery in its overseas territories in 1880. It even took six more years for a new decree to free 30,000 people who were still in bondage in 1886. They were enslaved because the decision made in 1880 introduced a progression towards emancipation and not a general order of immediate abolition.

A Venezuelan Freemason, a diplomat, quoted in 1933 in a dissertation on Spanish slavery declared that: "When laws that are enacted in Europe reach the New World, sea water very often erases the ink in which they were written". It is perhaps a "romanticized" expression, rather verifiable at the beginning of colonization in the 15th and 16th centuries, but much less when we look at the history of the second half of the 19th century. It was not the sea that erased the orders, it was the local authorities of the colonies. Reviewing Spanish historiography in general, one could even conclude that the history of slavery has been more silenced than that of Freemasonry. That silence, that thematic marginality, can only provoke in historians the desire to put in its place an economic system on which the political and social systems of a long period of the past were based.

In the famous sessions that gave rise to the Constitution of Cádiz of 1812, the abolition of slavery was one of the topics discussed<sup>2</sup>. It was not "said

1 *El Español*, n°XIV, May 30th, 1811, "Debates de las Cortes de España sobre las Américas, 9 de enero de 1811", Cádiz. Uttered by representative Esteban Palacios.

2 *El Español*, n°XIV, May 30th, 1811, "Debates de las Cortes de España sobre las Américas, 9 de enero de 1811", Cádiz, 149.

and done”, as the abolitionist legislators pointed to “the moral inability of slaves to receive freedom all at once and suddenly” and “the desire to avoid the ruin of a large portion of owners, from which would result a desolation, and universal upheaval”<sup>3</sup>, said by the representative of Venezuela, Esteban Palacios in response to deputy Quintana who advocated giving a voice and even the vote to black people. The abolition of slavery was proposed, but not included in the Constitution<sup>4</sup>.

The complexity of the history of the abolition of slavery can in no way be explained by the intervention of Freemasonry, even if it played a role, in a dynamic where the economy, demography and the colonial interests of the great world powers of the time preceded political and moral decisions<sup>5</sup>. There came a time when even slave owners understood that abolition was inevitable in a capitalist system that they had helped to create. On the other hand,

the entire complex understanding in favor of the abolition of slavery on the Spanish side consisted in knowing how to move from the slave-owning mode to the globalized capitalist mode without losing the benefits that the former brought, hence the laws and successive decrees so that the abolition in no way marked the end of the economic domination of slaveholders<sup>6</sup>.

This question formed part of the political battle throughout the Spanish 19th century. A first abolition was promulgated in 1817, affecting only the Iberian Peninsula and not the colonies. With the independence of the American territories, slavery continued in Puerto Rico<sup>7</sup> and Cuba until 1873 and 1880 respectively. “Special laws” (1837 and 1845) tried to isolate and protect the two territories from Spain, but also from the greed of the United States. In December 1864, a Puerto Rican, Julio Vizcarrondo<sup>8</sup>, created the Spanish Abolitionist Society, accompanied by

3 *El Español*, nºXIV, May 30th, 1811, “Debates de las Cortes de España sobre las Américas, 9 de enero de 1811”, Cádiz, 153.

4 Hernández Sánchez-Barba, Mario, “Las Cortes españolas ante la abolición de la esclavitud en las Antillas (Opinión institucional ante un tema de política social)”, *Quinto Centenario* 8, Universidad Complutense de Madrid, 1985, 25-28. Ferrer Benimeli, José Antonio, *La masonería hispana y sus luchas democráticas. Sueños de libertad*, masonica.es, Oviedo, 2022.

5 Torres-Cuevas, Eduardo y Loyola Vega, Óscar, *Historia de Cuba (1492-1898)*, editorial pueblo y educación, Havana, 2002, 99-173.

6 Torres-Cuevas, Eduardo y Loyola Vega, Óscar, *Historia de Cuba (1492-1898)*, 301-309. Hernández González, Manuel, *Liberalismo, masonería y cuestión nacional en Cuba (1808-1823)*, Idea, Las Palmas de Gran Canarias, 2012.

7 In Puerto Rico, slavery was vanishing, the opposite of Cuba. Almudena Hernández Ruigómez, “La abolición de la esclavitud en Puerto Rico: Introducción al estudio de las mentalidades anti-esclavistas”, *Quinto centenario*, num. 14. Edit. Univ. Complutense. Madrid, 1988.

8 Several authors mention Vizcarrondo’s Masonic adherence, but for the moment no document has shown it, as noted by historian López Casimiro, Francisco, “Aproximación a un catálogo de diputados masones durante la Restauración (1876-1901)”, en Delgado Idarreta, José Miguel y Morales Benítez, Antonio, *Gibraltar, Cádiz, América y la masonería. Constitucionalismo y libertad de prensa, 1812-2012*, CEHME, Zaragoza, 2014.

its journal, many decades after those founded, for example, in France<sup>9</sup>. Vizcarrondo came from a family of slaveholders and dedicated his life to the fight for abolition. The issue was a marginal concern in political circles until the early 1870s. It was liberal reform youth who had a hand in creating the wave that would end slavery.

The relationship between slavery and Freemasonry was not retained as a priority issue within Spanish historiography. However, it appears in the background in the works that have analyzed the Masonic routes between Spain and Spanish colonial America. Thus, before answering the question of what the relationship between slavery and Spanish Freemasonry was, it is necessary to focus on what has been written so far, since this research horizon is just opening. This study intends to describe and analyze in broad strokes the official positions of Freemasonry, that is, the official bodies of obedience, and does not intend to create a list of members of Freemasonry who, in addition to their membership, before, during and after the great abolition debates, would have participated in these in their own name

or in the name of their political organization with more or less influence of their Masonic allegiances.

## A Historiographic Balance

The relationship between slavery and Freemasonry in Spanish territories focuses mainly on Cuba. Before 1763 there were about 50,000 entries of slaves, from that date until the 1880s, about a million<sup>10</sup>.

French refugees from Santo Domingo (1804) established the first Masonic lodges on the large Caribbean island. In the Iberian Peninsula, it was Napoleon's troops (1808) who introduced it during their invasion in a context until then of radical prohibition, imposed by the Spanish crown, on this fraternity<sup>11</sup>. The French presence, including that of the French Freemasons exiled after the black revolution in Santo Domingo, particularly in Cuba, will introduce fear of slave insurrection into Cuban society. They were refugees who had made their fortunes through the slave trade. Their objective was to continue with said trade in their new destination, even arriving

9 Schmidt, Nelly, "Les abolitionnistes français de l'esclavage, 1820-1850", *Revue française d'histoire d'outre-mer*, tome 87, n°326-327, 1er semestre 2000. *Les Juifs y la mer*, under the direction of de Richard Ayoun. 205-244. The history of the abolition of slavery in Puerto Rico and Cuba should not be observed as the whole or only prioritize that of Cuba because that territory had the largest number of slaves and was the last in which abolition was imposed. See María Margarita Flores Collazo, « José Antonio Piqueras, *La esclavitud en las Españas. Un lazo trasatlántico*, Madrid, Catarata, 2011, 261 p. », *Nuevo Mundo Mundos Nuevos* [En línea], Acts and historiographical essays put online on July 11, 2012, accessed on May 26, 2022. URL: <http://journals.openedition.org/nuevomundo/63538>; DOI: <https://doi.org/10.4000/nuevomundo.63538>

10 Luxán Meléndez, S. de; Luxán Hernández, L. de (2016), "Cuba: comercio de esclavos y tabaco 1696-1739". *XXI Coloquio de Historia Canario-Americana* (2014), XXI-028, 2. <http://coloquioscanarias-america.casadecolon.com/index.php/aea/article/view/9510>

11 Ferrer Benimeli, José Antonio, *Masonería española contemporánea*, 2 vol., Siglo XXI, Madrid, 1987.

in Cuba with their own slaves brought from Santo Domingo<sup>12</sup>. For its part, the invasion of the Iberian Peninsula by the Bonaparte family, despite the air of freedom that accompanied it, did not allow confidence in an invading foreign sociability. Despite everything, lodges were created outside the French military lodges made up of admirers of the French revolution and liberal reformists. In general, Spanish historians did not monographically study this relationship<sup>13</sup>.

This difference in historiographical rhythm in comparison, especially with French-speaking historiography, raises the problem of the sources to be used. In this case, it could be understood that it is first a question of consulting the works written by the Freemasons on slavery. These sources, distributed among the different Spanish lodges, will be taken in several stages, presenting those that will use the references published in the different official bulletins of the Spanish obediences of the 19th and 20th centuries.

For historians, colonial history

always poses the problem of using the current “nationality” of the inhabitants of the different territories under study as a reference to apply to times when these territories shared the same “nationality”. Spanish historians, and Hispanic Americans in general, encounter this problem as soon as they study the contemporary history of Spain and Latin America. That is why it is always dangerous to use “nationalist” limits to explain a history that is conflictive while still being common.

A recent article opened the doors to the history of the relationship between Freemasonry and slavery by a historian who has just defended her doctoral thesis on Spanish Freemasonry in Morocco, Valeria Aguiar Bobet, and a veteran historian of the Masonic history of Canary Islands, Manuel de Paz Sanchez. Their article addresses the relationship in a period of “republicanization” of Spain<sup>14</sup>, where liberal ideas were exhausting the monarchical power that lived through setback after setback, especially with the revolution of 1868 and then with the proclamation

12 Renault, A. (2009), “La influencia de la masonería francesa en el Departamento Oriental de Cuba en los años veinte del siglo XIX. Los aportes de la prosopografía”, *REHMLAC+*, Revista De Estudios Históricos De La Masonería Latinoamericana Y Caribeña Plus, 1(1). <https://revistas.ucr.ac.cr/index.php/rehmlac/article/view/6856>

13 See José Antonio Ferrer Benimeli’s last book, *Napoleón el grande y la masonería bonapartista en España*, masonica.es, Oviedo, 2023.

14 Aguiar Bobet, Valeria and Paz Sánchez, Manuel de, “La masonería española y la abolición de la esclavitud en las Antillas durante el Sexenio Democrático: movilización y dinámica socio-cultural”, *Anuario de Estudios Americanos*, 78, 2 Sevilla (Spain), July-December, 2021, 629-659 ISSN: 0210-5810. <https://doi.org/10.3989/aeamer.2021.2.08>. Also published in a recent joint work: Aguiar Bobet, Valeria y Paz Sánchez, Manuel de, “Los masones españoles y el movimiento abolicionista en la época del patronato”, in Naranjo Orovio, Consuelo, *Los márgenes de la esclavitud. Resistencia, control y abolición en el Caribe y América Latina*, Dykinson, Madrid, 2021. Even more recent, on the Maghreb: Aguiar Bobet, Valeria y Paz Sánchez, Manuel de, “La cruzada antiesclavista del cardenal Lavignerie (1888-1892). Notas preliminares”, en Valeria Aguiar Bobet, Ed. *Nosotras, ustedes y ellos. Espacios, interacciones y exclusiones durante el periodo colonial y poscolonial en el norte de África*, ediciones Ideas, Las Palmas de Gran Canarias, 2022.

of the First Republic in 1873. Although the abolition of slavery had been on the agenda for some time, it was during this period when the issue was raised in political terms in parliament. This was a point in favor of abolition when the following generation of Freemasons would be in charge of writing laureate texts to convince their fellow citizens that Freemasonry had played a vital role in the abolition of slavery.

The historiographical effort of the Center for Historical Studies of Spanish Freemasonry (CEHME) of the University of Zaragoza is widely known, with its 15 international symposiums accompanied by 29 volumes of proceedings<sup>15</sup>, so it is surprising that no communication addresses slavery in the Spanish Colonies head on<sup>16</sup>. There is an article by historian María José Lacalzada de Mateo about the feminist figure of Concepción Arenal who likens the emancipation of all people, especially women, to that of slaves<sup>17</sup>, as a common strug-

gle both at the time and as a concept. Historiographical interest appeared thanks to researchers of other nationalities who became a little more interested in the subject, especially from the French-speaking world.<sup>18</sup>

We must go to the authors who conducted their research on Cuba to see this object of study timidly integrated into this whole perspective. Thus, historian José Manuel Castellano Gil dedicated only a small chapter of seven pages of the more than four hundred of his history of Spanish Freemasonry in Cuba<sup>19</sup>. In general, there is some ambiguity in these writings by historians. We could repeat what Freemasonry theoretically affirmed around the abolitionist era and after it, with a clearly anti-slavery position, but without hiding the reality that shows that “many Freemasons belonged to the Cuban slave-owning bourgeoisie, and were slave masters.”<sup>20</sup>, even within Partido Liberal Autónomo<sup>21</sup>. In recent years, a

15 In 2023 it was the 40th anniversary of CEHME. A historiographical analysis can be consulted at Yván Pozuelo Andrés, *Hacia una mirada holística de la historia. El ejemplo de la historiografía masónica española (1972-2022)*, masonica.es, Oviedo, 2023.

16 Instead, the abolition of slavery in Brazil was the subject of several communications. See Neves, Carvahlo, “La abolición de la esclavitud y la masonería brasileña” y Enrique de Almeida, Santiago Marcos, “La masonería y la abolición de la esclavitud en Brasil”, in Ferrer Benimeli, José Antonio, *Masonería española y América*, CEHME, Vol. I, Zaragoza, 1993, respectively 57-72 and 73-80.

17 Lacalzada Mateo, María José, “Concepción Arenal: por la abolición de la esclavitud y a favor de la emancipación de la persona humana”, in Ferrer Benimeli, José Antonio, *Masonería española y América*, CEHME, Vol. II, Zaragoza, 1993, 737-748. Despite numerous allusions to the adherence of Concepción Arenal to Freemasonry, she was never initiated.

18 Puerto Rican Otero González, Luis A., «La masonería autóctona y española ante la esclavitud», en Ferrer Benimeli, José A. (coord.), *La masonería española, represión y exilios*, Vol.I, CEHME, Almería, 2010, 393-410. French Sappez, Delphine, “Antonio Govín y Torres, nexo entre masonería y autonomismo en Cuba”, Ferrer Benimeli, José A. (coord.), *La masonería española, represión y exilios*, Vol.I, CEHME, Almería, 2010, 559-572.

19 Castellano Gil, José Manuel, *La masonería española en Cuba*, Taller de Historia, Santa Cruz de Tenerife, 1996, 307-314.

20 Castellano Gil, José Manuel, *La masonería española en Cuba*, Taller de Historia, Santa Cruz de Tenerife, 1996, 307.

21 Sappez, Delphine, “Antonio Govín y Torres, nexo entre masonería y autonomismo en Cuba”,

prolific historian, Manuel Hernández González, has published many of these studies on Cuba and in general on the trips of the Freemasons between the Peninsula and America at the end of the 18th century and first half of the 19th century where this question is raised, not in the foreground but as the background of the narrative, as part of the historical landscape of the time, but without delving into the analysis<sup>22</sup>.

Even Cuban authors did not address the issue with the vigor that the relationship between Freemasonry and slavery might have encouraged, separating the two elements in their research efforts without putting them side by side. It is within French-speaking historiography where we will find authors who delve into the subject. These are the cases of the historians Dominique Soucy, Agnés Renault and Delphine Sappez<sup>23</sup>.

It is also necessary to mention anti-

Masonic and Masonic authors who, despite having published on the subject, cannot be considered as references other than to write the history of Masonic or anti-Masonic legends such as Tirado y Rojas, Lafuente, Díaz y Pérez and Morayta.<sup>24</sup> Thus, we are just beginning to ask ourselves the big questions and to collect the first data on a transcendental topic to understand the history of contemporary societies. Slavery would be “acceptable” before the rise of Enlightenment ideas, but after? When were we in context and when would it end? What about the power of ideas and the strength of privileges?

## Freemasonry to the Beat of Society

In 1870, one hundred years after the publication by Abbot Raynal of his denunciation of colonialism and slavery<sup>25</sup>, in Spain, Segismundo Moret,

---

Ferrer Benimeli, José A. (coord.), *La masonería española, represión y exilios*, Vol.I, CEHME, Almería, 2010, 570.

- 22 Hernández González, Manuel, *Liberalismo, masonería y cuestión nacional en Cuba (1808-1823)*, Idea, Las Palmas de Gran Canarias, 2012. *Estados-Unidos y Canarias. Comercio e ilustración. Una mirada Atlántica*, Idea, Las Palmas de Gran Canarias, 2016. *Liberalismo y masonería entre Europa y América. Diego Correa (1772-1843)*, Idea, Las Palmas de Gran Canarias, 2017. y *Del cielo al infierno. Miguel Cabral de Noroña. Vida y obra de un eclesiástico filomasón*, Idea, Las Palmas de Gran Canarias, 2019.
- 23 Soucy, Dominique, *Masonería y nación. Redes masónicas y políticas en la construcción identitaria cubana (1811-1902)*, Idea, Las Palmas de Gran Canarias, 2006. Renault, A. (2009), “La influencia de la masonería francesa en el Departamento Oriental de Cuba en los años veinte del siglo XIX. Los aportes de la prosopografía”, *REHMLAC+*, Revista De Estudios Históricos De La Masonería Latinoamericana Y Caribeña Plus, 1(1). <https://revistas.ucr.ac.cr/index.php/rehmlac/article/view/6856>. Sappez, Delphine, *Ciudadanía y autonomismo en Cuba. Antonio Govín (1847-1914)*, Universitat Jaume I, Castellón, 2016.
- 24 That said, in the case of Nicolas Díaz y Pérez, regardless of his pro-Masonic writings, he was a fierce fighter in favor of abolition, launching his entire lodge, Comuneros de Castilla nº289, in the fight to achieve this.
- 25 Guillaume-Thomas Raynal, *Histoire philosophique y politique des établissements y du commerce des Européens en les deux Indes*, chez Jean Léonard Pellet, édition 1780. The criticism was directed more against the Portuguese and the Spanish, even against the Dutch than against the French and English. Despite everything, the book was banned in France because it was not acceptable to read that

Minister of Overseas, approved a law known as “libertad de vientres” (freedom of wombs) which stipulated that all newborn slaves were born free, being a copy of a law promulgated in Latin America in its different territories throughout the 19th century. For those years, there is no reference to Moret’s Masonic membership, which only appears from the 1880’s<sup>26</sup>. It is a common tendency to identify as a Freemason anyone who acted “humanely” even before being initiated.

In a masonic document, Freemason Emilio J. M. Nogués Guerrero, inadvertently reveals that the position in favor of the abolition of slavery came more from the political profile of each individual than from the Masonic<sup>27</sup>. Politics was ahead of Freemasonry. I quote a work by Enrique Vera y González<sup>28</sup>, of the Federal Party and a Freemason of the same obedience (Ancient and Primitive Oriental Rite of Memphis and Misraim), entitled “La esclavitud”, with a prologue by Rafael María de Labra, born in Havana, son of one of the Con-

stitutionalists of Cádiz of 1812, fervent abolitionist, who was never a Freemason<sup>29</sup>. The latter will be the first deputy to offer an abolitionist speech without duplicity in the parliamentary chamber, in 1871, a speech that encouraged those against slavery to persevere in their fight. The fact that he had strong friendships with many Freemasons does not make him a Freemason nor does his parliamentary activity mean it was dictated by his friends of the Royal Craft. His profile provides an interesting study in the opposite direction of what historians usually look for, namely, why he never joined despite being surrounded by Freemasonry and having a profile that aligns with that of a Freemason. In general, the passion in favor of abolition will increase *in crescendo* from the end of the 1860s. Freemasons took the opportunity to discuss the issue within the lodges, but it was not always a welcomed topic, sometimes provoking strong reactions far from tolerance and sympathy, qualities that should be inherent to a person as a member of the fraternity.

---

“This insatiable thirst for gold gave birth to the most infamous, the most atrocious of all trades, that of slaves.” in the original: “Cette foif infatiable de l’or a donné naissance au plus infâme, au plus atroce de tous les commerces, celui des esclaves” (p.476). Likewise, while the anti-slavery position is clearly exposed, there is a barely concealed anti-Semitic tone throughout the work. Lazarte María Florencia (2013), “Reflexiones de Raynal acerca del rol colonizador francés y la utilización de Voyage d’un philosophe como intertexto”, XIV Jornadas Interescuelas/Departamentos de Historia. Departamento de Historia de la Facultad de Filosofía y Letras. Universidad Nacional de Cuyo, Mendoza.

26 Ferrer Benimeli, José Antonio, *Jefes de Gobierno Mases. España 1868-1936*, Madrid, 2007, 169-192.

27 *Boletín de procedimientos del Soberano Gran Consejo General Ibérico*, 28-06-1893, 15.

28 Sánchez Collantes, Sergio, “Las ilusiones marchitas: democracia republicana y federalismo en Enrique Vera y González (1861-1914)”, en *Actas del XV Congreso de la Asociación de Historiadores de la Comunicación*, Universidade do Porto. Reitoria. Porto. 2018, 752-771.

29 Domingo Acebrón, M<sup>a</sup> Dolores (2014), “Rafael María de Labra: doceañista, liberal y demócrata: la Constitución de 1812”, en Delgado Idarreta, José Miguel y Morales Benítez, Antonio, *Gibraltar, Cádiz, América y la masonería. Constitucionalismo y libertad de prensa, 1812-2012*, Vol. II, CEHME, Zaragoza.

In 1871, the first issue of *Boletín Oficial del Gran Oriente de España* published a document from the Madrid lodge titled “la Discusión”, of the French Rite, under the aegis of the Lusitano United Grand Orient of the Grand Orient, addressing the issue<sup>30</sup>. By way of presentation, the text affirms that the abolition of slavery is one of the missions of Freemasonry, therefore it proposes the abolition of slavery in Cuba and Puerto Rico, and it wishes that the rest of the lodges adhere to it. It proposes to draft a text with the intention of submitting it to parliament, draw up a list of Masonic writers and verify, after the legislative elections, which of the elected officials belonged to the Royal Art. At some Masonic banquets, participants toasted to abolition<sup>31</sup>.

At the end of 1872, the debate on the abolition of slavery raged in force in the parliamentary halls. *Boletín Oficial del Gran Oriente de España* published two writings that reveal that this obedience, taking advantage of the parliamentary debate on the subject, proposed to its lodges to debate it. Not all the lodges accepted this movement, considered excessively militant for this type of organization. For example, the “Fé y Abnegación” lodge of Cádiz is pleased not to have participated in the discussion on the abolition of slavery and at the same time the abolition of the death penalty:

“This Resp.: Lodge.: only has to

state, in response to the mentioned., that being inspired, as it always tries to do, by the exact fulfillment of all its duties, not only has it not dealt with or discussed in relation to said matters, but that by unanimous agreement taken in Cam.:. from Maest.:, several pplan.: were archived inadvertently in Lodg.:. referred by other TTall.:. and that they referred to said individuals”<sup>32</sup>.

The position was not to get involved in political issues. The last *Boletín* reveals deep disagreement about how to conduct the discussion. It is even said that several lodges communicated their discomfort for “the political conduct of the hh.: Mas.: that in the profane world, as representatives of the Spanish nation, they have expressed their opinion against the immediate abolition of slavery and the death penalty”. It is a text “from above”, from the Supreme Council of the Order, which intends to threaten the lodges that have protested the “politicization” of the issue of slavery in the lodges, turning the same argument against them and insisting that “It is never allowed in Lodg.: to talk about religion, or the State, or any other profane subject.”<sup>33</sup>. In addition, this text is framed in the “Official Section” to leave no doubts about the orientation desired by the leaders of the obedience. According to this body, the criticism of the Freemasons against

30 *Boletín Oficial del Gran Oriente de España*, 01/05/1871, 6-7.

31 *Boletín Oficial del Gran Oriente de España*, 15-02-1872, 2.

32 *Boletín Oficial del Gran Oriente de España*, 01-02-1873, 1-2.

33 *Boletín Oficial del Gran Oriente de España*, 15-12-1872, 2.



political brothers is “unjustifiable”, defending the position of the latter within their State responsibilities. In the name of individual freedom, it defends its political brothers and threatens critical lodges on this point without much diplomacy. There is even a statutory reminder: Art. 325 “It is not allowed in the Lodge to talk about any matter of religion, or the State, or any other profane subject.” The position is somewhat tricky since this debate on slavery is a matter of State, so it would be “forbidden” to say that we cannot talk about it. The controversy was strong enough, to such an extent that the troublesome lodges threatened to spread this internal problem on the stage of the profane world.<sup>34</sup> : “Some of these LLog: also seem to want the publication of their indicated censorship not only in the Mas: world but also in the prof:”. These Freemasons insist that “the llog: have not been able and cannot engage in the conduct that the hh: MMA: have had or have deemed convenient to observe, as representatives of the Spanish nation, when they have been or are being treated in the co-legislative bodies the questions of slavery and the death penalty, or any other similar; for there all these questions are dealt with main-

ly under their political aspect, and only under this aspect are they resolved. The LLog: cannot deal with any question under this aspect, having to limit themselves to treating them under the purely philosophical and humanitarian...”<sup>35</sup>. The tone had risen. There is even talk of the possibility of reaching a Masonic trial if “the beliefs of all men” are not respected since the Spanish Freemasons, according to the authors of this letter, “admit the various ideas and all the established social systems”.

Immediately afterwards, the second letter from the “Fraternidad n°32» lodge of San Fernando, a port near Cádiz, congratulates the Head of Government, Manuel Ruiz Zorrilla<sup>36</sup>, Grand Master of the Grand Orient of Spain, for having defended the rights of “...our hh: of the race condemned until now to slavery by the eternal enemies of humanity”<sup>37</sup>. Congratulations will also come from the Gran Oriente Unido Lusitano. This relationship between head of government and “head” of the Grand Orient of Spain in the same person will delight anti-Masonism, but also “Masonism”<sup>38</sup>: “slavery, fought by Freemasons”<sup>39</sup>, at another time it was used to emphasize that “the charity of the Freemasons will preach, encourage and

34 *Boletín Oficial del Gran Oriente de España*, 15-12-1872, 2.

35 *Boletín Oficial del Gran Oriente de España*, 15-12-1872, 3.

36 A few days later, Ruiz Zorrilla went into exile after the proclamation of the First Spanish Republic.

37 *Boletín Oficial del Gran Oriente de España*, 01-02-1973, 2-3. Days later, this lodge sent a new, similar message using the following expression: “our brothers of the African race”.

38 Aguiar Bobet, Valeria y Paz Sánchez, Manuel de, “La masonería española y la abolición de la esclavitud en las Antillas durante el Sexenio Democrático: movilización y dinámica socio-cultural”, *Anuario de Estudios Americanos*, 78, 2 Sevilla (Spain), July-December, 2021, 645, 629-659 ISSN: 0210-5810. <https://doi.org/10.3989/aeamer.2021.2.08>. *Boletín Oficial del Gran Oriente de España*, 15-01-1873, 2.

39 *Boletín Oficial del Gran Oriente de España*, 15-05-1871, 7.

propagate the abolition of slavery”<sup>40</sup>.

According to historian Francisco López Casimiro, Freemason representatives vote according to the instructions of the party and not according to those of Freemasonry. However, all the Freemason Representatives in the late 1870s and early 1880s were all anti-slavery. He pointed to ten Freemason representatives who intervened in favor of abolition without specifying whether they were already initiated at that time<sup>41</sup>. It is also interesting to know that the Masonic abolitionism in Spain arrived a little later in Cuba<sup>42</sup>. After the abolition of slavery in Puerto Rico in 1873, some lodges in Cuba began to emancipate slaves, especially women, by buying their freedoms.<sup>43</sup>

Even within the anti-slavery sector, the Freemasons who collided with each other, between obediences, both between those in Spain and in the Cuban ones, used slavery to discredit the opponent. For example, at the time of the “imperfect” anti-slavery law of 1880, the Freemasons in Havana launched accusations against those in Spain, ac-

cusings them of having voted against the abolition decreed by the 1880 law, then the *peninsulares* defended themselves from having voted against the abolitionist ambiguity of this law<sup>44</sup>. This latter proved to be true, as it would take a new legislative initiative in 1886 to end slavery completely. In 1888, the “Luz de Mantua” lodge in Madrid congratulated its Brazilian brothers for the abolition of slavery, a congratulation that other workshops also joined in<sup>45</sup>.

From a strictly Masonic point of view, the abolition of slavery changed one of Mackey’s landmarks, which would be noted by one of the most studious and rigorous Spanish Masons, Pedro González Blanco, who listed, much later, in the thirties of the 20th century, people who in a generic way cannot be initiated, especially slaves (Landmarck 18)<sup>46</sup>.

However, the relationship between slavery and Freemasonry did not begin after the 1868 revolution. Both existed well before, their relationship began on Spanish soil as soon as Freemasonry installed somewhat stable lodges at the

40 *Boletín Oficial del Gran Oriente de España*, 15-12-1871, 6.

41 On the 1876-1901 period, of 2266 representatives, only 83 were initiated in the Royal Art. Several of them were heads of government or ministers. That being said, the weight ratio was pretty weak. To make successful vote, it would have taken a lot more votes. López Casimiro, Francisco, “Aproximación a un catálogo de diputados masones durante la Restauración (1876-1901)”, en Delgado Idarreta, José Miguel y Morales Benítez, Antonio, *Gibraltar, Cádiz, América y la masonería. Constitucionalismo y libertad de prensa, 1812-2012*, CEHME, Zaragoza, 2014, 843-872.

42 Castellano Gil, José Manuel, *La masonería española en Cuba*, Taller de Historia, Santa Cruz de Tenerife, 1996, 309.

43 Castellano Gil, José Manuel, *La masonería española en Cuba*, Taller de Historia, Santa Cruz de Tenerife, 1996, 310.

44 Soucy, Dominique, *Enjeux coloniaux et franc-maçonnerie à Cuba au XIXe siècle. Un renouveau historique à la lumière des archives du Grand Orient de France*, PUB, Bordeaux, 2006, 82 y 202-205.

45 *El Simbolismo*, 01-06-1888, 8 y 10-06-1888, 14.

46 *Latomia*, Madrid, Volumen IV, 1935, 16.

beginning of the nineteenth century.

Indeed, at the beginning of the century, the organizational structure of Freemasonry was used as one more tool to achieve political hegemony of the *criollos*. Correlatively, then, the *criollos* express through hiramist installations the same that they propagate in the non-Masonic world: all the power, or at least much more, for the wealthy white elites. Freemasonry was a colonialist sociability brought by the English who invaded Cuba in the 18th century and then especially by the French who fled from Saint Domingue at the beginning of the 19th century. These exiles installed different lodges without letting the natives cross the threshold. It took decades to see the initiation of the natives. The *criollo* oligarchy exhibited Enlightenment ideas, but that would apply only to wealthy white *criollos*. This oligarchy preferred to back down on its claims rather than grant enlightened projects to the rest of the island's population. Slavery was its business, it was never questioned. Indeed, during this period, its thoughts and actions are gripped by the "Great Fear" of suffering what happened in Saint Domingue, which had become Haiti, the first independent state ruled by former slaves. To which was added the "Great Fear" of what happened in Mexico and Gran Colombia with their respective independence from Spain where later war had become a constant in the political and therefore economic situation. War, revolution and the abolition of slavery would precipitate Cuba, according to

this *criollo* oligarchy, to the economic ruin of this social elite. The "revolution" that would lead to Independence would lead to the revolution of the slaves. This shared vision between the two Spanish oligarchic factions, the American and the European, did not, however, manage to unite them. Wealthy white *criollos* have constantly tried to convince and fight for the right to be the political and economic owners of Cuba. It was the battle between the powerful to monopolize the economic, political and social power of the island. At most, the proposals for political change were oriented toward autonomy or federalism<sup>47</sup>.

As we know, competition plays a fundamental and permanent role in the history of Freemasonry, between obediences and between lodges, often based on differences in the social and political bases of its members, although all at the beginning of the 19th century within the well-to-do classes in society. French-influenced Freemasonry in Cuba also included rich people, but a little less than those belonging to the local oligarchy, a Freemasonry that acquired a profile influenced by the sugar aristocracy. Although it is not an easy task, the two types of Freemasons, those from the oligarchy and the wealthy, merged during the liberal triennium (1820-1823). Even during this period that finally seemed to open the great door to liberalism, the "Great Fear" loomed over the "Pearl of the Antilles", threatening to plunge it into a period of permanent violence that would destroy the economic system based on

---

<sup>47</sup> Hernández González, Manuel, *Liberalismo, masonería y cuestión nacional en Cuba (1808-1823)*, Idea, Las Palmas de Gran Canarias, 2012.

slavery, “a system to preserve above all else: above autonomy, above federalism, and, most importantly, independence<sup>48</sup>.

French Freemasons and Cuban *criollos* promoted the ideas of the Universal Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen, which according to them excluded slaves from that framework. This aspect coincides with the conclusions of the historian Chloë Duflo-Ciccotelli on Guadeloupe: “In this conjecture, the question of slavery and abolition hardly divides the brothers, whether they are revolutionaries or monarchists”, “the brothers of the noble elite and of the bourgeoisie observe a consensus on the question.”<sup>49</sup> The economics of the black slave trade was not a topic of discussion<sup>50</sup>. This is a position held by other so-called “secret” or “patriotic” associations, such as Gran Legión Águila Negra of Mexican origin<sup>51</sup>. As the 19th century progressed, the pressure in favor of abolition, guided by British interests, grew and penetrated all strata of society, except, of course, the slaveholders who went to great lengths to maintain their privileges. Anti-abolitionist resistance was strong. In 1847, sectors of the Cuban

slaveholding bourgeoisie undertook political propaganda in favor of the annexation of Cuba by the United States, maintaining the slave system. But everything depended on the position of the slaveholders in a dreamed society without slavery. The negotiation was thus: how to maintain their privileged status after the abolition of slavery? What were the long-term guarantees?

Even in 1860, under an increasingly Spanish Freemasonry, the ban on initiating black people was recalled<sup>52</sup>. It was in 1862, in the context of the American Civil War, that Cubans created the Grand Orient of Cuba and the Antilles (GOCA), of an independent nature, to finally see an anti-abolitionist Freemasonry<sup>53</sup> that little by little was going to be more influential, with commitments such as compensation or gradual liberation, without questioning white hegemony over all black people, free or not<sup>54</sup>.

Freemasonry, the town hall, the political and social representations, were meeting places for the upper and middle classes of island society. “Controlling” all spaces of political influence—in the Greek sense of the term—was one of

48 Hernández González, Manuel, *Liberalismo, masonería y cuestión nacional en Cuba (1808-1823)*, Idea, Las Palmas de Gran Canarias, 2012.

49 Duflo-Ciccotelli, Chloë, *La franc-maçonnerie en Guadeloupe, miroir d'une société coloniale en tensions (1770-1848)*, Bordeaux, PUB, 2021, 248-254.

50 Soucy, Dominique, *Masonería y nación. Redes masónicas y políticas en la construcción identitaria cubana (1811-1902)*, Idea, Las Palmas de Gran Canarias, 2006, 55-58.

51 Soucy, Dominique, *Masonería y nación. Redes masónicas y políticas en la construcción identitaria cubana (1811-1902)*, Idea, Las Palmas de Gran Canarias, 2006, 87-92.

52 Soucy, Dominique, *Masonería y nación. Redes masónicas y políticas en la construcción identitaria cubana (1811-1902)*, Idea, Las Palmas de Gran Canarias, 2006, 114.

53 Soucy, Dominique, *Masonería y nación. Redes masónicas y políticas en la construcción identitaria cubana (1811-1902)*, Idea, Las Palmas de Gran Canarias, 2006, 125-127.

54 Soucy, Dominique, *Masonería y nación. Redes masónicas y políticas en la construcción identitaria cubana (1811-1902)*, Idea, Las Palmas de Gran Canarias, 2006, 264-265.

the fundamental pillars of the action of each sector in the competition between Hispanic Americans and Europeans and between *criollo* liberals and exalted liberals. Therefore, it was also necessary to control Freemasonry, as well as the universities, the press, the town halls, etc. With the following nuance, trying to make Freemasonry the center of the union of tolerance between the two *criollo* strata with an intention to safeguard the necessary peace that protects their properties, their advantages and their dominant social positions.

It is not a question here of enumerating the Spanish (Cuban) Freemasons who owned slaves or managed the slaves of their families. It is a job to be completed. However, there is no doubt that all the measures adopted during the first half of the 19th century to improve the living conditions of slaves served, above all, to prolong their useful life and therefore their usefulness<sup>55</sup>. Even buying the freedom of slaves was a type of trade<sup>56</sup>. The main Cuban Freemasons belonged to the sugarcane oli-

garchy. The Grand Master of the Gran Logia Española of the island, Francisco Javier de Santa Cruz y Montalvo, belonged to a large family of slaveholders whose sister was one of the main slavery activists, the Countess of Merlín, who would maintain a vast correspondence with several French slaveholders and a cordial relationship with many French personalities of the time quite opposed to slavery<sup>57</sup>.

In truth, thanks to the studies carried out on Cuba, the Cuban lodges reflected the external divisions of the different bourgeoisies that inhabited the Spanish territories in America. Therefore, there was no Masonic “militancy” out of context or, in other words, *avant-garde*.

## Conclusion

When we think of slavery, we automatically think of the black slave trade, while Asian slavery is less visible in the work of historians<sup>58</sup>. However, the abolition

55 Karim Ghorbal, “La política llamada del “buen tratamiento”: reformismo criollo y reacción esclavista en Cuba (1789-1845)”, *Nuevo Mundo Mundos Nuevos* [En ligne], Débats, puesto en línea el 30 de noviembre de 2009, consulted on February 19, 2022. URL : <http://journals.openedition.org/nuevomundo/57872> ; DOI : <https://doi.org/10.4000/nuevomundo.57872>

56 Manzano, Juan Francisco, *Autobiografía del esclavo poeta y otros escritos*, Madrid, Iberoamericana, 2007, 17.

57 Hernández González, Manuel, *Liberalismo y masonería entre Europa y América. Diego Correa (1772-1843)*, Idea, Las Palmas de Gran Canarias, 2017, 163. Ulrike Schmieder. «La condesa de Merlin una aristocrática intelectual entre Francia y Cuba», in scarzarella, Eugenia y Schpun, Mónica Raisa, *Sin fronteras. Encuentros de mujeres y hombres entre América y Europa, siglos XIX-XX*, Iberoamericana / Vervuert, Madrid / Frankfurt 2008.

58 A footnote in the work of the Costa Rican historian, Ricardo Martínez Esquivel, reveals this still unknown field of research.: *Masones y masonería en la Costa Rica de los albores de la modernidad (1865-1899)*, UCR, 2017, 114. Knowledge even unknown at the university level in general, also mentioned for Cuba by Sappez, Delphine, *Ciudadanía y autonomismo en Cuba. Antonio Govín (1847-1914)*, Universitat Jaume I, Castellón, 2016, 256. Holder, Charles Frederick, “Chinese Slavery in America”, *The North American Review*, Vol.165, n°490 (Sep. 1897), 288-294. Keresey, Déborah Oropeza, “La esclavitud asiática en el virreinato de la Nueva España, 1565-1673”, *Historia Mexicana*

of black slavery led to the search for a solution that resorted to another type of slavery, particularly of Chinese and Asians in general, which already had a long and discrete history. Slave traders sought alternatives to the prohibition of the slave trade and turned to Asia. But without losing sight of Africa, they tried to find new slaves due to recent conquests, mainly in the Maghreb<sup>59</sup>. Slavery is a widespread desire that is omnipresent in the privileged strata that dominate world economic and political power. Color and ethnicity, among other things, were used as “scientific” excuses to justify this submission. In the 19th century, slavery and its abolition were more of an intellectual debate and represented the conflicting economic interests of the wealthier sections of society rather than a terrible injustice that needed to be remedied. The transition from the idea of the abolition of slavery to its actual abolition lasted for several generations.

It is surprising that the official bulletins of the Spanish obediences, especially those of the 20th century, did not address the issue since, the official

Masonic and anti-Masonic history reported on this issue that fraternity had been a fundamental component in Spain that led to the abolition of slavery. Once again, we can conclude that the “historical event” (the abolition of slavery) was not triggered or developed by the Freemasons who appropriated it after the fact. They were part of this coalition, technically unofficial, of various associative sectors that militated in favor of abolition. Spanish-American Freemasons followed the general context of society. There was no seamless Masonic manifesto in favor of abolition during the first half of the 19th century. The abolition of slavery is a major event of the first period of contemporary history that can in no way be summed up in Masonic efforts, but rather in those of liberal society as a whole. There was a strong pressure by the emergence of socialist ideas that, with respect to slavery, proposed an unequivocal fight for its abolition. This evolution of a slave-owning Spanish Freemasonry towards an abolitionist Freemasonry was also experienced within the Catholic Church through the publication of

---

61, nº1 (241) (2011): 5-57. <http://jstor.org/stable/23032051>. Rodríguez Pastor, Humberto, “Abolición de la esclavitud en el Perú y su continuidad”, *Investigaciones Sociales* 9 (15), 2005, 441-456. <https://doi.org/10.15381/is.v9i15.7008>. Kapsoli Escudero, Wilfredo, “Cimarronaje de chinos”, *La vida y la Historia* nº6 (abril 2019), 88-92, <https://doi.org/10.33326/26176041.2017.6.414>. Claverán, Virginia González, “Un documento colonial sobre esclavos asiáticos”, *Historia Mexicana* 38, nº3, 1989, 523-532, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/25138234>. Slavery and not forced labor, as suggested by Cuban researchers who do not hesitate to affirm that Chinese migrants’ conditions were worse than that of slaves “La situación del emigrante chino fue peor que la del esclavo” in Montes de Oca Choy, M., & Ydoy Ortiz, Y. (2009), “Chee Kung Tong ¿Vínculos masónicos?”, *REHMLAC+*, Revista De Estudios Históricos De La Masonería Latinoamericana Y Caribeña Plus, 1 (1), 237. Retrieved from <https://revistas.ucr.ac.cr/index.php/rehmlac/article/view/6865>.

59 Aguiar Bobet, Valeria y Paz Sánchez, Manuel de, “La cruzada antiesclavista del cardenal Lavigerie (1888-1892). Notas preliminares”, in Valeria Aguiar Bobet, Ed. *Nosotras, ustedes y ellos. Espacios, interacciones y exclusiones durante el periodo colonial y poscolonial en el norte de África*, ediciones Ideas, Las Palmas de Gran Canarias, 2022.

anti-slavery statements by its authorities and firm positions of some of its representatives in the slave-holding regions<sup>60</sup>. Once abolition was achieved, “everyone”, supposedly, had been against slavery for centuries, rewriting history in their favor, forgetting their business in the slave trade as an association, institution or political and religious representation.

What is the “evidence” of an abolitionist Spanish Freemasonry? For the Spanish Freemasons after the abolition, the proof is in the fact that their enemies spread it that way. That would be proof enough for them, not for history. More in line with the reality that is still being investigated, from the last third of the 19th century, some members of Freemasonry who participated in abolitionist demonstrations<sup>61</sup> were members of abolitionist associations, forming part of Spanish liberal society in general. At that time, several Spanish lodges wrote anti-slavery documents that, quite frequently, included the fight against the death penalty or the emancipation of women at the same level.

However, the abolition of slavery did not come to abolish racial discrimination, not even within the Masonic lodges of the last Spanish colonies whose black presence was still exceptional. In fact, racism did not disappear.

This topic has just been opened.

Undoubtedly, there is a long way to go to carry out an in-depth investigation on Spanish Freemasonry and slavery. In fact, it is worth asking: what happened after abolition? In Cuba, what did we do with the “black class”?

Spanish Freemasonry followed the evolution of nineteenth-century liberal thought that divided its supporters on certain issues, such as slavery. It was born with a slave-owning thought, naturally integrated into the living conditions of its members, and slowly evolved towards abolitionist thought and combat. It is not surprising that the Spanish-Cuban Freemasonry fought more against abolitionism and that Peninsular Freemasonry fought in favor of abolition because they did not have the same economic interests, some survived, some had made their fortune, some had reached a social elite thanks to the slave trade, others coveted that success, that dominant position, fighting to remove the power of slavery by interfering with “public opinion” through the game of morality.

In short, Freemasonry followed the beat of civil society much more than the other way around. Perhaps it is not just a small detail that Anderson’s *Constitutions* made it clear that in order to be a Freemason one had to be a “free man”...

---

60 Aguiar Bobet, Valeria y Paz Sánchez, Manuel de, “La cruzada antiesclavista del cardenal Lavigerie (1888-1892). Notas preliminares”, en Valeria Aguiar Bobet, Ed. *Nosotras, ustedes y ellos. Espacios, interacciones y exclusiones durante el periodo colonial y poscolonial en el norte de África*, ediciones Ideas, Las Palmas de Gran Canarias, 2022.

61 Aguiar Bobet, Valeria y Paz Sánchez, Manuel de, “La masonería española y la abolición de la esclavitud en las Antillas durante el Sexenio Democrático: movilización y dinámica socio-cultural”, *Anuario de Estudios Americanos*, 78, 2 Sevilla (España), July-December, 2021, 629-659 ISSN: 0210-5810. <https://doi.org/10.3989/aeamer.2021.2.08>

## Sources

*Boletín de procedimientos del Soberano Gran Consejo General Ibérico y Gran Logia Simbólica Española*, Madrid, Soberano Gran Consejo Ibérico.

*Boletín Oficial del Gran Oriente de España*, Madrid, Gran Oriente de España.

*Boletín Oficial del Gran Oriente Español*, Madrid, Gran Oriente Español.

*Boletín Oficial del Grande Oriente Español*, Madrid, Grande Oriente Español.

*Boletín oficial y revista masónica del Supremo Consejo del Grado 33 para España y sus dependencias*, Madrid, Supremo Consejo del Grado 33.

*El Español*, nºXIV, 30 de mayo de 1811, “Debates de las Cortes de España sobre las Américas, 9 de enero de 1811”, Cádiz.

*El Simbolismo*, Madrid, Gran Oriente Nacional de España.

*Latomia*, Loge Unión nº88 de Madrid, Gran Logia Española y Gran Oriente Español.

*Vida masónica*, Madrid.

## Bibliography

Aguiar Bobet, Valeria y Paz Sánchez, Manuel de, “La masonería española y la abolición de la esclavitud en las Antillas durante el Sexenio Democrático: movilización y dinámica socio-cultural”. *Anuario de Estudios Americanos*, 78, 2 Sevilla (España), julio-diciembre, 2021, 629-659 ISSN: 0210-5810. <https://doi.org/10.3989/aamer.2021.2.08>

Aguiar Bobet, Valeria y Paz Sánchez, Manuel de, “Los masones españoles y el movimiento abolicionista en la época del patronato”, en Naranjo Orovio, Consuelo, *Los márgenes de la esclavitud. Resistencia, control y abolición en el Caribe y América Latina*, Dykinson, Madrid, 2021.

Aguiar Bobet, Valeria y Paz Sánchez, Manuel de, “La cruzada antiesclavista del cardenal Lavigerie (1888-1892). Notas preliminares”, en Valeria Aguiar Bobet, Ed. *Nosotras, ustedes y ellos. Espacios, interacciones y exclusiones durante el periodo colonial y poscolonial en el norte de África*, ediciones Ideas, Las Palmas de Gran Canarias, 2022.

Benimeli, José A. (coord.), *La masonería española, represión y exilios*, Almería, CEHME, 2010, vol. I.



Castellano Gil, José Manuel, *La masonería española en Cuba*, Taller de Historia, Santa Cruz de Tenerife, 1996.

Claverán, Virginia González, “Un documento colonial sobre esclavos asiáticos”, *Historia Mexicana* 38, nº3, 1989, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/25138234>.

Domingo Acebrón, M<sup>a</sup> Dolores (2014), “Rafael María de Labra: doceañista, liberal y demócrata: la Constitución de 1812”, en Delgado Idarreta, José Miguel y Morales Benítez, Antonio, *Gibraltar, Cádiz, América y la masonería. Constitucionalismo y libertad de prensa, 1812-2012*, Vol. II, CEHME, Zaragoza.

Duflo-Ciccotelli, Chloë, *La franc-maçonnerie en Guadeloupe, miroir d'une société coloniale en tensions (1770-1848)*, Bordeaux, PUB, 2021.

Ferrer Benimeli, José Antonio, *Napoleón el Grande y la masonería bonapartista en España*, masonica.es, Oviedo, 2023

Ferrer Benimeli, José Antonio, *La masonería hispana y sus luchas democráticas. Sueños de libertad*, masonica.es, Oviedo, 2022.

Ferrer Benimeli, José Antonio, *La masonería*, Alianza editorial, Madrid, 2019.

Ferrer Benimeli, José Antonio, *Masonería española contemporánea*, 2 vol., Siglo XXI, Madrid, 1987.

Ferrer Benimeli, José Antonio, *Masonería española contemporánea. Desde 1868 hasta nuestros días*, Vol.2, Siglo XXI, 1987.

Flores Collazo, María Margarita, “José Antonio Piqueras, *La esclavitud en las Españas. Un lazo trasatlántico*, Madrid, Catarata, 2011, 261 p.”, *Nuevo Mundo Mundos Nuevos* [En línea], Actas y ensayos historiográficos, puestos en línea el 11 de julio de 2012, consultado el 26 de mayo de 2022. URL : <http://journals.openedition.org/nuevomundo/63538>; DOI: <https://doi.org/10.4000/nuevomundo.63538>

Hernández González, Manuel, “Los planteamientos sociales y económicos del liberalismo exaltado en el Trienio Constitucional cubano”, *Trocadero*, nº 31 (2019), ISSN 2445-267X. <https://dx.doi.org/10.25267/Trocadero.2019.i31.11>

Hernández González, Manuel, *Del cielo al infierno. Miguel Cabral de Noroña. Vida y obra de un eclesiástico filomasón*, Idea, Las Palmas de Gran Canarias, 2019.

Hernández González, Manuel, *Estados-Unidos y Canarias. Comercio e ilustración. Una mirada Atlántica*, Idea, Las Palmas de Gran Canarias, 2016.

Hernández González, Manuel, *Liberalismo y masonería entre Europa y América. Diego Correa (1772-1843)*, Idea, Las Palmas de Gran Canarias, 2017.

Hernández González, Manuel, *Liberalismo, masonería y cuestión nacional en Cuba (1808-1823)*, Idea, Las Palmas de Gran Canarias, 2012.

Hernández Sánchez-Barba, Mario (1985), “Las Cortes españolas ante la abolición de la esclavitud en las Antillas (Opinión institucional ante un tema de política social)”, *Quinto Centenario* 8, Universidad Complutense de Madrid.

Holder, Charles Frederick, “Chinese Slavery in America”, *The North American Review*, Vol.165, nº490 (Sep. 1897).

Kapsoli Escudero, Wilfredo, “Cimarronaje de chinos”, *La vida y la Historia* nº6 (abril 2019), <https://doi.org/10.33326/26176041.2017.6.414>.

Karim Ghorbal, « La política llamada del “buen tratamiento”: reformismo criollo y reacción esclavista en Cuba (1789-1845) », *Nuevo Mundo Mundos Nuevos* [En línea], Débats, puesto en línea el 30 de noviembre de 2009, consultado el 28 de febrero de 2022. URL: <http://journals.openedition.org/nuevomundo/57872>; DOI: <https://doi.org/10.4000/nuevomundo.57872>

Keresey, Déborah Oropeza, “La esclavitud asiática en el virreinato de la Nueva España, 1565-1673”, *Historia Mexicana* 61, nº1 (241), 2011. <http://jstor.org/stable/23032051>.

Lazarte María Florencia (2013). “Reflexiones de Raynal acerca del rol colonizador francés y la utilización de Voyage d’un philosophe como intertexto”. XIV Jornadas Interescuelas/Departamentos de Historia. Departamento de Historia de la Facultad de Filosofía y Letras. Universidad Nacional de Cuyo, Mendoza.

López Casimiro, Francisco, “Aproximación a un catálogo de diputados masones durante la Restauración (1876-1901)”, en Delgado Idarreta, José Miguel y Morales Benítez, Antonio, *Gibraltar, Cádiz, América y la masonería. Constitucionalismo y libertad de prensa, 1812-2012*, CEHME, Zaragoza, 2014.

Luxán Meléndez, S. de; Luxán Hernández, L. de (2016). Cuba: comercio de esclavos y tabaco 1696-1739. XXI Coloquio de Historia Canario-Americana (2014), XXI-028. <http://coloquioscanariasmerica.casadecolon.com/index.php/aea/article/view/9510>

Manzano, Juan Francisco, *Autobiografía del esclavo poeta y otros escritos*, Madrid, Iberoamericana, 2007.

Moreno García, Julia, “La esclavitud según la reciente bibliografía cubana”, *Cuadernos de Historia Contemporánea*, nº12, 1990, Editorial Universidad Complutense. Madrid.

Naranjo Orovio, Consuelo, *Los márgenes de la esclavitud. Resistencia, control y*

*An Approach Concerning the Relationship between Spanish Freemasonry & the Abolition of Slavery*  
*abolición en el Caribe y América Latina*, Dykinson, Madrid, 2021.

Odo, Georges, *La franc-maçonnerie en les colonies (1738-1960)*, Éditions maçonniques de France, Paris, 2001.

Otero González, Luis A., «La masonería autóctona y española ante la esclavitud», en Ferrer Benimeli, José A. (coord.), *La masonería española, represión y exilios*, Vol.I, CEHME, Almería, 2010.

Pabón Serrano, Óscar Mauricio, “Las cortes de Cádiz y los españoles de ambos hemisferios: el debate sobre la igualdad de representación entre americanos y peninsulares”, *Revista Temas*, Núm. 6 (2012), Universidad de Santo Tomás, DOI: <https://doi.org/10.15332/rt.v0i6.701>

Paz Sánchez, Manuel de, *La masonería y la pérdida de las colonias. Estudios*, IDEA, Las Palmas de Gran Canaria, 2006.

Periáñez Gómez, Rocío, “La investigación sobre la esclavitud en España en la Edad Moderna”, *Norba. Revista de Historia*, Vol. 21, 2008.

Piqueras, José Antonio (2011), *La esclavitud en las Españas. Un lazo trasatlántico*, Madrid, Catarata.

Renault, A. (2009). “La influencia de la masonería francesa en el Departamento Oriental de Cuba en los años veinte del siglo XIX. Los aportes de la prosopografía”. *REHMLAC+*, *Revista De Estudios Históricos De La Masonería Latinoamericana Y Caribeña Plus*, 1(1). Recuperado de <https://revistas.ucr.ac.cr/index.php/rehmlac/article/view/6856>

Renault, A. (2009). “Los francmasones franceses de la jurisdicción de Cuba al principio del siglo XIX”. *REHMLAC+*, *Revista De Estudios Históricos De La Masonería Latinoamericana Y Caribeña Plus*, 1(1). Recuperado de <https://www.revistas.ucr.ac.cr/index.php/rehmlac/article/view/6857>

Renault, Agnès, “Les francs-maçons français exilés à Cuba”, en *Les francs-maçons y l'exil*, Chroniques d'histoire maçonnique n°82, été-automne 2018, IDERM, Paris.

Révauger, Cécile (2003). *Noirs et francs-maçons*. Edimaf, Paris.

Sappez, Delphine, *Ciudadanía y autonomismo en Cuba. Antonio Govín (1847-1914)*, Universitat Jaume I, Castellón, 2016.

Rodríguez Pastor, Humberto, “Abolición de la esclavitud en el Perú y su continuidad”, *Investigaciones Sociales* 9 (15), 2005, <https://doi.org/10.15381/is.v9i15.7008>.

Schmidt Nelly. “Les abolitionnistes français de l'esclavage, 1820-1850”. In: *Revue française d'histoire d'outre-mer*, tome 87, n°326-327, 1er semestre 2000. Les Juifs y

la mer, bajo la dirección de Richard Ayoun.

Soucy, Dominique (2016). *Enjeux coloniaux y franc-maçonnerie à Cuba au XIXe siècle. Un renouveau historique à la lumière des archives du Grand Orient de France*, PUB, Bordeaux.

Soucy, Dominique, *Masonería y nación. Redes masónicas y políticas en la construcción identitaria cubana (1811-1902)*, Idea, Las Palmas de Gran Canarias, 2006.

Torres-Cueva, Eduardo, *Historia de la masonería cubana. Seis ensayos*, Imagen Contemporánea, La Havane, 2013.

Torres-Cuevas, Eduardo y Loyola Vega, Óscar, *Historia de Cuba (1492-1898)*, editorial pueblo y educación, La Habana, 2002.

Ulrike Schmieder. «La condesa de Merlin una aristocrática intelectual entre Francia y Cuba», en Scarzanella, Eugenia y Schpun, Mónica Raisa, *Sin fronteras. Encuentros de mujeres y hombres entre América y Europa, siglos XIX-XX*, Iberoamericana / Vervuert, Madrid / Frankfurt 2008.

## ORIGINAL TEXT

# Aproximación a la relación entre la masonería española y la abolición de la esclavitud

Yván Pozuelo Andrés

CEHME, REHMLAC+

En cuanto á que se destierre la esclavitud,  
lo apruebo como amante de la humanidad;  
pero como amante del orden político,  
lo repruebo.<sup>62</sup>

## Introduction

Toda historia que tiene que ver con el hecho masónico es compleja, acentuándose esta complejidad al entrar en contacto con la cuestión de la esclavitud ya que la historiografía de la masonería y la de la esclavitud se caracterizan por situaciones geográficas desiguales que conducen a matices contextuales. Así pues, en España, aunque la esclavitud sigue siendo un tema marginal en comparación a su destacable impronta en la historia del país, exclusivamente encerrado dentro del mundo universitario, sin memoria real<sup>63</sup>, la masonería ella benefició de numerosos estudios desde hace 50 años. Llama poderosamente la atención esta situación a sabiendas de que España fue el último país de Europa en haber abolido la esclavitud en sus territorios de ul-

tramar en 1880. Hizo incluso falta seis años más para que un nuevo decreto liberase en 1886 a 30000 personas que aún estaban esclavizadas debido a que la decisión tomada en 1880 introducía una progresión en la emancipación y no una orden general de abolición inmediata.

Un masón venezolano, diplomático, todavía citaba en 1933 en una disertación sobre la esclavitud española una expresión habitual: “Cuando la ley que se dicta en Europa arriba al Nuevo Mundo, el agua del mar ha borrado, muy a menudo, la tinta con que se escribió”<sup>64</sup>. Es quizás una expresión “romantizada”, más bien comprobable al inicio de la colonización en los siglos XV y XVI, pero mucho menos cuando miramos la historia de la segunda mitad del siglo XIX. No fue el mar el que borró los órdenes, fueron las autorida-

62 *El Español*, nºXIV, 30 de mayo de 1811, “Debates de las Cortes de España sobre las Américas, 9 de enero de 1811”, Cádiz. Expresión dicha por el diputado Esteban Palacios.

63 Piqueras, José Antonio, *La esclavitud en las Españas. Un lazo trasatlántico*, Madrid, Catarata, 2011.

64 *Boletín Oficial y Revista Masónica del Supremo Consejo del Grado 33 para España y sus dependencias*, Madrid, marzo-junio 1933, 4. Sobre el autor de esta disertación, Rufino Blanco-Fombona véase: Pinillos Iglesias, María de las Nieves, “El masón Rufino Blanco Fombona, gobernador provincial de la República española”, en Ferrer Benimeli, *Masonería española y América*, CEHME, Zaragoza, 1993, 637-647.

des locales de las colonias. Repasando la historiografía española en general, se podría incluso concluir que la historia de la esclavitud ha sido más silenciada que la de la masonería. Ese silencio, esa marginalidad temática, no puede más que provocar en el historiador las ganas de poner en su lugar un sistema económico sobre el que se asentaron los sistemas políticos y sociales de un largo periodo del pasado.

En las famosas sesiones que darán lugar a la Constitución de Cádiz de 1812, la abolición de la esclavitud fue uno de los temas tratados<sup>65</sup>. No se trataba de un “dicho y hecho”, ya que los legisladores abolicionistas apuntaban a “La incapacidad moral de los esclavos de recibir la libertad todos a la vez y repentinamente” y “el deseo de evitar la ruina de una gran porción de propietarios, de que resultaría una desolación, y trastorno universal”<sup>66</sup>, dicho por el diputado representante de Venezuela, Esteban Palacios a modo de respuesta al diputado Quintana que abogaba por dar voz e incluso voto a los negros. La abolición de la esclavitud fue planteada, pero no incluida en la Constitución<sup>67</sup>.

La complejidad de la historia de la

abolición de la esclavitud de ninguna manera puede explicarse por la intervención de la masonería, aunque fuera parte de ella, en un juego de roles donde la economía, la demografía y los intereses coloniales de las grandes potencias mundiales de la época preceden a las decisiones políticas y morales<sup>68</sup>. Llegó un momento donde incluso el dueño de esclavos entendió que la abolición era inevitable en un sistema capitalista que él había ayudado a crear. Por otro lado, toda la compleja comprensión a favor de la abolición de la esclavitud del lado español, consistió en saber pasar del modo esclavista al modo capitalista globalizado sin perder los beneficios que trajo el primero, de ahí la leyes, decretos sucesivos para que la abolición no marcara en modo alguno el fin de la dominación económica del esclavista<sup>69</sup>.

Esta cuestión formó parte de la batalla política a lo largo del siglo XIX español. Una primera abolición se promulgó en 1817, afectando únicamente a la Península Ibérica y no a las colonias. Con la independencia de los territorios americanos, la esclavitud continuó en Puerto Rico<sup>70</sup> y Cuba respectivamente hasta 1873 y 1880. “Leyes especiales”

65 *El Español*, n°XIV, 30 de mayo de 1811, “Debates de las Cortes de España sobre las Américas, 9 de enero de 1811”, Cádiz, 149.

66 *El Español*, n°XIV, 30 de mayo de 1811, “Debates de las Cortes de España sobre las Américas, 9 de enero de 1811”, Cádiz, 153.

67 Hernández Sánchez-Barba, Mario, “Las Cortes españolas ante la abolición de la esclavitud en las Antillas (Opinión institucional ante un tema de política social)”, *Quinto Centenario* 8, Universidad Complutense de Madrid, 1985, 25-28. Ferrer Benimeli, José Antonio, *La masonería hispana y sus luchas democráticas. Sueños de libertad*, masonica.es, Oviedo, 2022.

68 Torres-Cuevas, Eduardo y Loyola Vega, Óscar, *Historia de Cuba (1492-1898)*, editorial pueblo y educación, La Habana, 2002, 99-173.

69 Torres-Cuevas, Eduardo y Loyola Vega, Óscar, *Historia de Cuba (1492-1898)*, 301-309. Hernández González, Manuel, *Liberalismo, masonería y cuestión nacional en Cuba (1808-1823)*, Idea, Las Palmas de Gran Canarias, 2012.

70 En Puerto Rico, la esclavitud se desvanecía, caso contrario en Cuba. Almudena Hernández Ruigó-

(1837 y 1845) intentarán aislar y proteger a los dos territorios del de la península, pero también de la codicia de los Estados Unidos. En diciembre de 1864, un puertorriqueño, Julio Vizcarrondo<sup>71</sup>, creó la Sociedad Abolicionista Española, acompañada de su revista, muchas décadas después de las fundadas, por ejemplo, en Francia<sup>72</sup>. Vizcarrondo provenía de una familia de esclavistas y dedicó su vida a la lucha por la abolición. La cuestión fue una preocupación marginal en los sectores políticos hasta principios de la década de 1870. Fue la juventud liberal-reformista la que participó en crear la ola que acabaría con la esclavitud.

La relación entre esclavitud y masonería no se fue retenida como tema prioritario dentro de la historiografía española. Sin embargo, aparece de fondo en los trabajos que han analizado las rutas masónicas entre la península y la América colonial española. Así, antes de responder a la pregunta de cuál fue la relación entre la esclavitud y la ma-

sonería española es necesario centrarse en lo escrito hasta ahora ya que este horizonte de investigación apenas se está abriendo. Este estudio pretende describir y analizar a grandes rasgos las posturas oficiales de la masonería, es decir, los órganos oficiales de obediencias, y no elaborar una lista de miembros de la masonería que además de su pertenencia, antes, durante y después de los grandes debates sobre la abolición, habrían participado en estos en nombre propio o en nombre de su organización política con más o menos influencia de sus obediencias masónicas.

## Un Balance historiográfico

La relación entre la esclavitud y la masonería en territorio español se centra principalmente en Cuba. Antes de 1763 hubo unas 50.000 entradas de esclavos, desde esa fecha hasta la década de 1880, cerca de un millón<sup>73</sup>.

Refugiados franceses de Santo Domingo (1804) establecieron las prime-

---

mez, “La abolición de la esclavitud en Puerto Rico: Introducción al estudio de las mentalidades anti-esclavistas”, *Quinto centenario*, núm. 14. Edit. Univ. Complutense. Madrid, 1988.

71 Varios autores mencionan la adhesión masónica de Vizcarrondo, pero por el momento ningún documento lo demostró, tal como lo señaló el historiador López Casimiro, Francisco, “Aproximación a un catálogo de diputados masones durante la Restauración (1876-1901)”, en Delgado Idarreta, José Miguel y Morales Benítez, Antonio, *Gibraltar, Cádiz, América y la masonería. Constitucionalismo y libertad de prensa, 1812-2012*, CEHME, Zaragoza, 2014.

72 Schmidt, Nelly, “Les abolitionnistes français de l’esclavage, 1820-1850”, *Revue française d’histoire d’outre-mer*, tome 87, n°326-327, 1er semestre 2000. *Les Juifs y la mer*, bajo la dirección de Richard Ayoun. 205-244. La historia de la abolición de la esclavitud en Puerto Rico y en Cuba no debe observarse como un todo o tan solo priorizar la de Cuba porque dicho territorio reunió el mayor número de esclavos y fue el último en la que se impuso la abolición. Véase María Margarita Flores Collazo, « José Antonio Piqueras, *La esclavitud en las Españas. Un lazo trasatlántico*, Madrid, Catarata, 2011, 261 p. », *Nuevo Mundo Mundos Nuevos* [En línea], Actas y ensayos historiográficos puestos en línea el 11 de julio de 2012, consultado el 26 de mayo de 2022. URL : <http://journals.openedition.org/nuevomundo/63538> ; DOI : <https://doi.org/10.4000/nuevomundo.63538>

73 Luxán Meléndez, S. de; Luxán Hernández, L. de (2016), “Cuba: comercio de esclavos y tabaco 1696-1739”. *XXI Coloquio de Historia Canario-Americana* (2014), XXI-028, 2. <http://coloquioscanariasamerica.casadecolon.com/index.php/aea/article/view/9510>

ras logias masónicas en la gran isla caribeña. En la península ibérica, fueron las tropas de Napoleón (1808) quienes la introdujeron durante su invasión en un contexto hasta entonces de radical prohibición, impuesta por la corona española, de esta fraternidad<sup>74</sup>. La presencia francesa, incluida la de los masones franceses exiliados tras la revolución negra de Santo Domingo, en particular en Cuba, introducirá en la sociedad cubana el temor a la insurrección de los esclavos. Eran refugiados que habían amasado sus fortunas a través del comercio de esclavos. Su objetivo era el de proseguir con dicho comercio en su nuevo destino, llegando a Cuba incluso con sus propios esclavos traídos de Santo Domingo<sup>75</sup>. Por su parte, la invasión de la Península Ibérica de la mano de la familia Bonaparte, a pesar de los aires de libertad que la acompañaron, no permitió tener confianza en una sociabilidad extranjera invasora. A pesar de todo, se crearon logias al margen de las logias militares francesas integradas por admiradores de la revolución francesa, compuestas por reformistas liberales. En general, los historiadores españoles no estudiaron monográficamente esta relación<sup>76</sup>.

Esta diferencia de ritmo historiográfico en comparación especialmente con la historiografía francófona plantea el problema de las fuentes a utilizar. En

este caso, se podría entender que se trata primero de consultar las obras (planchas) escritas por los masones sobre la esclavitud. Estas fuentes, repartidas entre las distintas logias españolas, se van a tomar en varias etapas, presentando las que utilizarán las referencias publicadas en los distintos boletines oficiales de las obediencias españolas de los siglos XIX y XX.

Para el historiador, la historia colonial plantea siempre el problema de utilizar la “nacionalidad” actual de los habitantes de los distintos territorios objeto de estudio como referente a aplicar a épocas en los que estos territorios compartían la misma “nacionalidad”. El historiador español, e hispanoamericano en general, se encuentra con este problema en cuanto estudia la historia contemporánea de España y América Latina. Por eso siempre es peligroso usar límites “nacionalistas” para explicar una historia que es conflictiva sin dejar de ser común.

Un reciente artículo vino a abrirnos las puertas de la historia de la relación entre la masonería y la esclavitud de una historiadora que acaba de defender su tesis doctoral sobre la masonería española en Marruecos, Valeria Aguiar Bobet y de un veterano historiador de la historia masónica de Canarias, Manuel de Paz Sánchez. Su artículo aborda la relación en un período de “republica-

74 Ferrer Benimeli, José Antonio, *Masonería española contemporánea*, 2 vol., Siglo XXI, Madrid, 1987.

75 Renault, A. (2009), “La influencia de la masonería francesa en el Departamento Oriental de Cuba en los años veinte del siglo XIX. Los aportes de la prosopografía”, *REHMLAC+*, Revista De Estudios Históricos De La Masonería Latinoamericana Y Caribeña Plus, 1(1). <https://revistas.ucr.ac.cr/index.php/rehmlac/article/view/6856>

76 Véase el último libro de José Antonio Ferrer Benimeli, *Napoleón el grande y la masonería bonapartista en España*, masonica.es, Oviedo, 2023.



nización” de España<sup>77</sup>, donde las ideas liberales estaban agotando el poder monárquico que vivía tropiezo tras tropiezo, especialmente con la revolución de 1868 y luego con la proclamación de la Primera República en 1873. Si bien la abolición de la esclavitud había estado en la agenda durante algún tiempo, fue durante este período cuando la cuestión se planteó realmente en términos políticos en el parlamento. Un período a favor de la abolición cuya generación siguiente de masones se encargaría en escribir laureadas líneas para lograr convencer a sus conciudadanos de que la masonería había jugado un papel vital en la abolición de la esclavitud.

De todos es conocido el esfuerzo historiográfico del Centro de Estudios Históricos de la Masonería Española

(CEHME) de la Universidad de Zaragoza, con sus 15 simposios internacionales acompañados de 29 tomos de actas<sup>78</sup>, por lo que sorprende que ninguna comunicación aborde la esclavitud en la Colonias españolas de frente<sup>79</sup>. Hay un artículo de la historiadora María José Lacalzada de Mateo sobre la figura feminista de Concepción Arenal que viene a unir la emancipación de todas las personas, especialmente de las mujeres, a la de los esclavos<sup>80</sup>, como una lucha común tanto en el instante como en el concepto. El interés historiográfico apareció gracias a investigadores de otras nacionalidades que se interesaron un poco más por el tema, especialmente procedente del mundo francófono<sup>81</sup>.

Debemos acudir a los autores que dirigieron sus investigaciones sobre

---

77 Aguiar Bobet, Valeria y Paz Sánchez, Manuel de, “La masonería española y la abolición de la esclavitud en las Antillas durante el Sexenio Democrático: movilización y dinámica socio-cultural”, *Anuario de Estudios Americanos*, 78, 2 Sevilla (España), julio-diciembre, 2021, 629-659 ISSN: 0210-5810. <https://doi.org/10.3989/aeamer.2021.2.08>. Igualmente, publicado en esta reciente obra colectiva: Aguiar Bobet, Valeria y Paz Sánchez, Manuel de, “Los masones españoles y el movimiento abolicionista en la época del patronato”, en Naranjo Orovio, Consuelo, *Los márgenes de la esclavitud. Resistencia, control y abolición en el Caribe y América Latina*, Dykinson, Madrid, 2021. Aún más reciente, orientado hacia el Maghreb: Aguiar Bobet, Valeria y Paz Sánchez, Manuel de, “La cruzada antiesclavista del cardenal Lavignerie (1888-1892). Notas preliminares”, en Valeria Aguiar Bobet, Ed. *Nosotras, ustedes y ellos. Espacios, interacciones y exclusiones durante el periodo colonial y poscolonial en el norte de África*, ediciones Ideas, Las Palmas de Gran Canarias, 2022.

78 En 2023 se cumplieron los 40 años del CEHME. Un análisis historiográfico se puede consultar en Yván Pozuelo Andrés, *Hacia una mirada holística de la historia. El ejemplo de la historiografía masónica española (1972-2022)*, masonica.es, Oviedo, 2023.

79 En cambio, la abolición de la esclavitud en Brasil fue el objeto de varias comunicaciones. Véase Neves, Carvahlo, “La abolición de la esclavitud y la masonería brasileña” y Enrique de Almeida, Santiago Marcos, “La masonería y la abolición de la esclavitud en Brasil”, en Ferrer Benimeli, José Antonio, *Masonería española y América*, CEHME, Vol. I, Zaragoza, 1993, respectivamente 57-72 y 73-80.

80 Lacalzada Mateo, María José, “Concepción Arenal: por la abolición de la esclavitud y a favor de la emancipación de la persona humana”, en Ferrer Benimeli, José Antonio, *Masonería española y América*, CEHME, Vol. II, Zaragoza, 1993, 737-748. Pese a numerosas alusiones a la adhesión de Concepción Arenal a la masonería, no fue nunca iniciada.

81 El portorriqueño Otero González, Luis A., «La masonería autóctona y española ante la esclavitud», en Ferrer Benimeli, José A. (coord.), *La masonería española, represión y exilios*, Vol. I, CEHME, Almería, 2010, 393-410. La francesa Sappez, Delphine, “Antonio Govín y Torres, nexos entre masonería y autonomismo en Cuba”, Ferrer Benimeli, José A. (coord.), *La masonería española*,

Cuba para ver este objeto de estudio tímidamente integrado en toda esta perspectiva. Así, el historiador José Manuel Castellano Gil dedicó sólo un pequeño capítulo de siete páginas de las más de cuatrocientas de su historia de la masonería española en Cuba<sup>82</sup>. En general, hay cierta ambigüedad en estos escritos de historiadores. Podríamos repetir lo que teóricamente afirmó la masonería en torno a la época abolicionista y después de ella, con una posición claramente antiesclavista, pero sin ocultar la realidad que demuestra que “que muchos masones, pertenecían a la burguesía esclavista cubana, y fueran amos de esclavos”<sup>83</sup>, incluso dentro del Partido Liberal Autónomo<sup>84</sup>. En los últimos años, un prolífico historiador, Manuel Hernández González, ha publicado muchos de estos estudios sobre Cuba y en general sobre los viajes de los masones entre la Península y América a finales del siglo XVIII y primera mitad del

XIX donde se plantea esta cuestión no en primer plano pero sí como fondo del cuadro narrado, como parte del paisaje histórico de la época, pero sin profundizar en el análisis<sup>85</sup>.

Incluso los autores cubanos no abordaron la cuestión con el vigor que podría haber suscitado la relación entre la masonería y la esclavitud, separando los dos elementos en sus esfuerzos de investigación sin ponerlos uno al lado del otro. Es dentro de la historiografía francófona donde encontraremos autores que profundizan en el tema. Son los casos de las historiadoras Dominique Soucy, Agnés Renault y Delphine Sappez<sup>86</sup>.

También es necesario mencionar a autores antimasones y masones que, a pesar de haber publicado sobre el tema, no pueden ser considerados como referentes más que para escribir la historia de las leyendas masónicas o antimasones como Tirado y Ro-

---

*represión y exilios*, Vol.I, CEHME, Almería, 2010, 559-572.

82 Castellano Gil, José Manuel, *La masonería española en Cuba*, Taller de Historia, Santa Cruz de Tenerife, 1996, 307-314.

83 Castellano Gil, José Manuel, *La masonería española en Cuba*, Taller de Historia, Santa Cruz de Tenerife, 1996, 307.

84 Sappez, Delphine, “Antonio Govín y Torres, nexos entre masonería y autonomismo en Cuba”, Ferrer Benimeli, José A. (coord.), *La masonería española, represión y exilios*, Vol.I, CEHME, Almería, 2010, 570.

85 Hernández González, Manuel, *Liberalismo, masonería y cuestión nacional en Cuba (1808-1823)*, Idea, Las Palmas de Gran Canarias, 2012. *Estados-Unidos y Canarias. Comercio e ilustración. Una mirada Atlántica*, Idea, Las Palmas de Gran Canarias, 2016. *Liberalismo y masonería entre Europa y América. Diego Correa (1772-1843)*, Idea, Las Palmas de Gran Canarias, 2017. y *Del cielo al infierno. Miguel Cabral de Noroña. Vida y obra de un eclesiástico filomasón*, Idea, Las Palmas de Gran Canarias, 2019.

86 Soucy, Dominique, *Masonería y nación. Redes masónicas y políticas en la construcción identitaria cubana (1811-1902)*, Idea, Las Palmas de Gran Canarias, 2006. Renault, A. (2009), “La influencia de la masonería francesa en el Departamento Oriental de Cuba en los años veinte del siglo XIX. Los aportes de la prosopografía”, *REHMLAC+*, Revista De Estudios Históricos De La Masonería Latinoamericana Y Caribeña Plus, 1(1). <https://revistas.ucr.ac.cr/index.php/rehmlac/article/view/6856>. Sappez, Delphine, *Ciudadanía y autonomismo en Cuba. Antonio Govín (1847-1914)*, Universitat Jaume I, Castellón, 2016.

jas, Lafuente, Díaz y Pérez y Morayta<sup>87</sup>. Así, apenas comenzamos a plantearnos las grandes preguntas y a recopilar los primeros datos sobre un tema trascendental para comprender la historia de las sociedades contemporáneas. La esclavitud sería “aceptable” antes del surgimiento de las ideas de la Ilustración, pero ¿después de estas? ¿Cuándo estábamos en contexto y cuándo terminaría? ¿El poder de las ideas? ¿La fuerza de los privilegios?

## La masonería al compás de la sociedad

En 1870, cien años después de la publicación por parte del Abad Raynal de su denuncia del colonialismo y de la esclavitud<sup>88</sup>, en España, Segismundo Moret, Ministro de Ultramar, aprobó una ley conocida como “libertad de estómagos” que estipulaba que todo esclavo recién nacido nacía libre, siendo una copia de una ley

promulgada en América Latina en sus diferentes territorios a lo largo del siglo XIX. Para esos años, no existe ninguna referencia a la pertenencia masónica de Moret, apareciendo esta a partir de la década de 1880<sup>89</sup>. Es una cierta manía, demasiado recurrente, la de identificar como masón a todos aquellos y a todas aquellas que habrían actuado “humanitariamente” incluso antes de haber sido iniciados.

En una plancha, el masón Emilio J. M. Nogués Guerrero, revela sin querer que la postura a favor de la abolición de la esclavitud procedía más del perfil político de cada individuo que del masónico<sup>90</sup>. La política estaba por delante de la masonería. Cita una obra de Enrique Vera y González<sup>91</sup>, del Partido Federal y masón de su misma obediencia (Rito Oriental Antiguo y Primitivo de Memphis y Misraïm), titulada *La esclavitud*, con prólogo de Rafael María de Labra, nacido en La Habana, hijo de uno de los Constitucionalistas de

87 Dicho esto, en el caso de Nicolas Díaz y Pérez, al margen de su prosa promasónica, fue un luchador encarnizado a favor de la abolición, lanzando a toda su logia, Comuneros de Castilla nº289, en la batalla para lograr ese fin.

88 Guillaume-Thomas Raynal, *Histoire philosophique et politique des établissements et du commerce des Européens en les deux Indes*, chez Jean Léonard Pellet, édition 1780. La crítica iba más dirigida contra los portugueses y los españoles, incluso contra los holandeses que contra los franceses e ingleses. A pesar de todo, el libro fue prohibido en Francia porque no era aceptable leer que “Esta sed insaciable del oro dio nacimiento al más infame, al más atroz de todos los comercios, el de los esclavos”. En el original: “Cette foif infatiable de l’or a donné naissance au plus infâme, au plus atroce de tous les commerces, celui des esclaves” (p.476). Asimismo, estando la postura antiesclavista claramente expuesta, existe a lo largo de la obra un tono antisemita apenas disimulado. Lazarte María Florencia (2013), “Reflexiones de Raynal acerca del rol colonizador francés y la utilización de Voyage d’un philosophe como intertexto”, XIV Jornadas Interescuelas/Departamentos de Historia. Departamento de Historia de la Facultad de Filosofía y Letras. Universidad Nacional de Cuyo, Mendoza.

89 Ferrer Benimeli, José Antonio, *Jefes de Gobierno Masones. España 1868-1936*, Madrid, 2007, 169-192.

90 *Boletín de procedimientos del Soberano Gran Consejo General Ibérico*, 28-06-1893, 15.

91 Sánchez Collantes, Sergio, “Las ilusiones marchitas: democracia republicana y federalismo en Enrique Vera y González (1861-1914)”, en *Actas del XV Congreso de la Asociación de Historiadores de la Comunicación*, Universidade do Porto. Reitoria. Porto. 2018, 752-771.

Cádiz de 1812, fervoroso abolicionista, que nunca fue masón<sup>92</sup>. Este último será el primer diputado que ofrecerá en el hemiciclo parlamentario un discurso abolicionista sin dobleces, en 1871, toma de palabra que animó a los antiesclavistas a perseverar en su lucha. Que tuviera fuertes amistades con muchos francmasones no lo convierte en francmasón ni su actividad parlamentaria en una actividad al dictado de sus amigos del Arte Real. Es precisamente un perfil a estudiar en sentido contrario a lo que solemos buscar los historiadores e historiadoras, a saber, por qué nunca se inició si estaba tan rodeado de masonería y su perfil correspondía al de un masón. En general, la pasión a favor de la abolición irá *in crescendo* a partir de finales de los años sesenta del siglo XIX. Los masones aprovechan para discutir de la cuestión dentro de las logias, pero no siempre como un tema bienvenido, provocando incluso fuertes reacciones alejadas de la tolerancia y de la simpatía, cualidades que deberían ser inherentes a la persona como miembro de la fraternidad.

En 1871, el primer número del *Boletín Oficial del Gran Oriente de España* publica una plancha de la logia madrileña “la Discusión”, de Rito Francés, bajo la égida del Gran Oriente Unido Lusitano del Gran Oriente, abordando el tema<sup>93</sup>. A modo de presentación, el texto afirma que la abolición de la esclavitud es una de las misiones de la masonería, por lo que propone la abolición de la esclavitud en Cuba y en Puerto Rico, y desea que el resto de las logias se adhieran a ella. Propone redactar un texto con vistas a someterlo al parlamento, elaborar una lista de escritores masónicos y verificar, después de las elecciones legislativas, cuáles de los cargos electos pertenecían al Arte Real. En algunos banquetes masónicos, los participantes brindaron por la abolición<sup>94</sup>.

A fines de 1872, el debate sobre la abolición de la esclavitud surgió con fuerza en los recintos parlamentarios. El *Boletín Oficial del Gran Oriente de España* publica dos escritos que revelan que esta obediencia, aprovechando el debate parlamentario sobre el tema, propone a sus logias debatirlo. No todas las logias aceptaron este movimiento, considerado excesivamente militante para este tipo de organización. Por ejemplo, la logia “Fé y Abnegación” de Cádiz se congratula no haber participado en la discusión sobre la abolición de la esclavitud y a la vez de la abolición de la pena de muerte:

“Esta Resp.: Lóg.: sólo tiene que manifestar, en contestación al citado bal.:, que inspirándose, como procura siempre hacerlo, en el cumplimiento exacto de todos sus deberes, no sólo no se ha ocupado ni discutido en lo referente á dichos asuntos, sino que por acuerdo unánime tomado en Cam.:.

92 Domingo Acebrón, M<sup>a</sup> Dolores (2014), “Rafael María de Labra: doceañista, liberal y demócrata: la Constitución de 1812”, en Delgado Idarreta, José Miguel y Morales Benítez, Antonio, *Gibraltar, Cádiz, América y la masonería. Constitucionalismo y libertad de prensa, 1812-2012*, Vol. II, CEHME, Zaragoza.

93 *Boletín Oficial del Gran Oriente de España*, 01/05/1871, 6-7.

94 *Boletín Oficial del Gran Oriente de España*, 15-02-1872, 2.

de Maest.:, fueron archivadas sin dar cuenta en Lóg.:, varias pplan.:. remitidas por otros T Tall.:. y que se referían á dichos particulares”<sup>95</sup>.

La postura era no involucrarse en cuestiones políticas. El *Boletín* anterior revela un profundo desacuerdo sobre cómo llevar a cabo la discusión. Incluso se dice que varias logias comunicaron su malestar por “la conducta política de los hh.: Mas.: que en el mundo profano, como representantes de la nación española, han manifestado su opinión contra la inmediata abolición de la esclavitud y de la pena de muerte”. Es un escrito “desde arriba”, del Consejo Supremo de la Orden, que pretende amenazar a las logias que han protestado contra la “politización” del tema de la esclavitud en las logias, volviendo contra ellas el mismo argumento e insistiendo que “Jamás es permitido en Log.: hablar de cosas de religión, ni del Estado, ni de otro objeto profano”<sup>96</sup>. Además, este texto se encuadra en la “Sección Oficial” para no dejar dudas sobre la orientación deseada por los líderes de la obediencia. Según este organismo, las críticas de los masones contra los hermanos políticos son “injustificables”, defendiendo la posición de estos últimos dentro de sus responsabilidades de Estado. En nombre de la libertad individual, defiende a los hermanos políticos y amenaza sin demasiada diplomacia a las logias críticas sobre este punto. Incluso hay un recordatorio estatutario: Art. 325 “No está

permitido en la Logia hablar de ningún asunto de religión, ni del Estado, ni de cualquier otro objeto profano”. La posición es algo capciosa ya que este debate sobre la esclavitud es una cuestión de Estado por lo que estaría “prohibido” decir que no podemos hablar de ello. La controversia fue lo suficientemente fuerte, hasta tal punto de que las logias molestas amenazaron con difundir esta problemática interna en el escenario del mundo profano<sup>97</sup>: “Alguna de dichas LLog.: parece pretender además la publicación de sus indicadas censuras no solo en el mundo Mas.: sino también en el prof.:”. Insisten estos masones en que “las llog.: no han podido ni pueden ocuparse en la conducta que los hh.: MMA.: hayan tenido ó tengan por conveniente observar, como representantes de la nación española, cuando se han tratado ó se traten en los cuerpos legisladores las cuestiones de la esclavitud y de la pena de muerte, ó cualquiera otra semejante; pues allí todas estas cuestiones se tratan principalmente bajo su aspecto político, y solo bajo este aspecto se resuelven. Las LLóg.: no pueden ocuparse en cuestión alguna bajo ese aspecto, debiendo limitarse á tratarlas bajo el puramente filosófico y humanitario...”<sup>98</sup>. El tono había subido. Incluso se habla de la posibilidad de llegar a un juicio masónico si no se respetan “las creencias de todos los hombres” ya que los masones españoles, según los autores de esta misiva, “admiten las diversas ideas y todos los sistemas sociales establecidos”.

95 *Boletín Oficial del Gran Oriente de España*, 01-02-1973, 1-2.

96 *Boletín Oficial del Gran Oriente de España*, 15-12-1872, 2.

97 *Boletín Oficial del Gran Oriente de España*, 15-12-1872, 2.

98 *Boletín Oficial del Gran Oriente de España*, 15-12-1872, 3.

Inmediatamente después, la segunda carta de la logia “Fraternidad nº32” de San Fernando, puerto cercano a Cádiz, felicita al Jefe de Gobierno, Manuel Ruiz Zorrilla<sup>99</sup>, Gran Maestre del Gran Oriente de España, por haber defendido los derechos de “...nuestros hh.: de la raza condenada hasta ahora á la esclavitud por los eternos enemigos de la humanidad”<sup>100</sup>. Felicitaciones que le llegarán también del Gran Oriente Unido Lusitano. Esta relación entre jefe de gobierno y “jefe” del Gran Oriente de España en una misma persona hará las delicias del antimasonismo, pero también del “masonismo”<sup>101</sup>: “la esclavitud, combatida por los masones”<sup>102</sup>, en otro momento se aprovechará para recalcar que “la caridad de los Masones predicará, fomentará y propagará la abolición de la esclavitud”<sup>103</sup>.

Según el historiador Francisco López Casimiro, los diputados masones votan según las instrucciones del partido y no según las de la masonería. No

obstante, todos los diputados masones de finales de los 70 y principios de los 80 eran todos antiesclavistas. Señaló a diez diputados masones que intervinieron a favor de la abolición sin mencionar exactamente si, en ese preciso momento, ya estaban iniciados o no<sup>104</sup>. Es de interés conocer igualmente que el abolicionismo masónico de la península llegó un poco más tarde a Cuba<sup>105</sup>. A partir de la abolición de la esclavitud en Puerto Rico en 1873, algunas logias en Cuba empezaron a emancipar a esclavos, especialmente a las mujeres, mediante la compra de sus libertades<sup>106</sup>.

Incluso en el seno del sector antiesclavista, los masones que chocaron masónicamente entre ellos, entre obediencias, tanto entre las de la metrópoli como entre éstas y las cubanas, utilizaron la esclavitud para desacreditar al oponente. Por ejemplo, en la época de la “imperfecta” ley antiesclavista de 1880, los masones de La Habana lanzaron

99 Unos días más tarde, Ruiz Zorrilla se fue al exilio tras la proclamación de la I República española.

100 *Boletín Oficial del Gran Oriente de España*, 01-02-1973, 2-3. Días más tarde, esta logia enviará un nuevo mensaje, similar, utilizando la expresión siguiente: “nuestros hermanos de la raza africana”.

101 Aguiar Bobet, Valeria y Paz Sánchez, Manuel de, “La masonería española y la abolición de la esclavitud en las Antillas durante el Sexenio Democrático: movilización y dinámica socio-cultural”, *Anuario de Estudios Americanos*, 78, 2 Sevilla (España), julio-diciembre, 2021, 645, 629-659 ISSN: 0210-5810. <https://doi.org/10.3989/aeamer.2021.2.08>. *Boletín Oficial del Gran Oriente de España*, 15-01-1873, 2.

102 *Boletín Oficial del Gran Oriente de España*, 15-05-1871, 7.

103 *Boletín Oficial del Gran Oriente de España*, 15-12-1871, 6.

104 Sobre el periodo de 1876-1901, de 2266 diputados, solo 83 fueron iniciados en el Arte Real. Varios de ellos fueron jefe de gobierno o ministro. Dicho esto, el peso de la proporción es bastante débil. Para hacer votar una ley haría falta bastante más votos. López Casimiro, Francisco, “Aproximación a un catálogo de diputados masones durante la Restauración (1876-1901)”, en Delgado Idarreta, José Miguel y Morales Benítez, Antonio, *Gibraltar, Cádiz, América y la masonería. Constitucionalismo y libertad de prensa, 1812-2012*, CEHME, Zaragoza, 2014, 843-872.

105 Castellano Gil, José Manuel, *La masonería española en Cuba*, Taller de Historia, Santa Cruz de Tenerife, 1996, 309.

106 Castellano Gil, José Manuel, *La masonería española en Cuba*, Taller de Historia, Santa Cruz de Tenerife, 1996, 310.

acusaciones contra los de la metrópoli acusándolos de haber votado en contra de la abolición decretada por la ley de 1880, cuando se defendían los peninsulares de haber votado en contra de la ambigüedad abolicionista de esta ley<sup>107</sup>. Esto más tarde resultó ser cierto, ya que se necesitaría una nueva iniciativa legislativa en 1886 para acabar por completo con la esclavitud. En 1888, la logia “Luz de Mantua” de Madrid felicitó a sus hermanos brasileños por la abolición de la esclavitud, felicitación a la que se sumarían otros talleres<sup>108</sup>.

Desde un punto de vista estrictamente masónico, la abolición de la esclavitud cambió uno de los landmark de Mackey, que sería señalado por uno de los masones españoles más estudiosos y rigurosos, Pedro González Blanco, quien enumeró, mucho más tarde, en la década de los treinta del siglo XX, a las personas que de forma genérica no pueden ser iniciadas, especialmente los esclavos (Landmarck 18)<sup>109</sup>.

Sin embargo, la relación entre la esclavitud y la masonería no comenzó después de la revolución de 1868. La una y la otra existían bien antes, su relación empieza en suelo español en cuanto la masonería instaló logias más o menos estables al principio del siglo diecinueve.

En efecto, a principios de siglo, la estructura organizativa de la masonería se utilizó como una herramienta más para lograr la hegemonía política criolla. Correlativamente, pues, los criollos

expresan a través de las instalaciones hiramistas lo mismo que propagan en el mundo no masónico: todo el poder, o al menos mucho más, para las élites blancas y adineradas. La masonería fue una sociabilidad colonialista traída por los ingleses que invadieron Cuba en el siglo XVIII y luego especialmente por los franceses que huyeron de Saint Domingue a principios del siglo XIX. Estos exiliados instalaron diferentes logias sin dejar cruzar el umbral a los nativos. Tomó décadas para ver la iniciación de los nativos. La oligarquía criolla exhibió ideas de la Ilustración, pero que se aplicarían solo a los criollos blancos y ricos. Esta oligarquía prefirió dar marcha atrás en sus pretensiones antes que otorgar proyectos ilustrados al resto de la población de la isla. La esclavitud era su negocio, nunca lo cuestionó. En efecto, durante este período, su pensamiento y sus acciones están atenazados por el “Gran Miedo” de sufrir lo que sucedió en Saint Domingue, convertido en Haití, el primer estado independiente gobernado por ex esclavos. A lo que se sumaba el “Gran Temor” de lo ocurrido en México y Gran Colombia con sus respectivas independencias de España donde posteriormente la guerra se había convertido en una constante de la situación política y por ende económica. La guerra, la revolución y la abolición de la esclavitud precipitarían a Cuba, según esta oligarquía criolla, a la ruina económica de esta élite social. La “revolución” que conduciría a la In-

107 Soucy, Dominique, *Enjeux coloniaux y franc-maçonnerie à Cuba au XIXe siècle. Un renouveau historique à la lumière des archives du Grand Orient de France*, PUB, Bordeaux, 2006, 82 y 202-205.

108 *El Simbolismo*, 01-06-1888, 8 y 10-06-1888, 14.

109 *Latomia*, Madrid, Volumen IV, 1935, 16.

dependencia conduciría a la revolución de los esclavos. Esta visión compartida entre las dos facciones oligárquicas españolas, la americana y la europea, no logró sin embargo unir las. Los criollos blancos adinerados han tratado constantemente de convencer y luchar por el derecho a ser los dueños políticos y económicos de Cuba. Era la batalla entre los poderosos por acaparar el monopolio económico, político y social de la isla. A lo sumo, las propuestas de cambio político se orientaron en una dirección autonomista o federal<sup>110</sup>.

Como sabemos, la competencia juega un papel fundamental y permanente en la historia de la masonería, entre obediencias, entre logias, a menudo basada en diferencias de bases sociales y políticas de sus integrantes, aunque todos en ese principio del siglo XIX dentro de las clases acomodadas de la sociedad. La masonería de influencia gala en Cuba también incluía gente rica, pero un poco menos que la perteneciente a la oligarquía autóctona, una masonería que adquirió un perfil influido por la sacarcocracia. Aunque no es tarea fácil, las dos masonerías, la de la oligarquía y la de las capas adineradas, se fusionaron durante el trienio liberal (1820-1823). Incluso durante este período que finalmente pareció abrir

la gran puerta al liberalismo, el “Gran Miedo” prevaleció sobre la “Perla de las Antillas”, amenazando con sumergirse en un período de violencia permanente que destruiría el sistema económico basado en la esclavitud, sistema a preservar ante todo: antes de la autonomía, antes del federalismo y sobre todo antes de la independencia<sup>111</sup>.

Los masones franceses y los criollos cubanos fomentaron las ideas de la Declaración Universal de los Derechos del Hombre y del Ciudadano, que según ellos excluían a los esclavos de ese marco. Este aspecto coincide con las conclusiones de la historiadora Chloë Duflo-Ciccotelli sobre Guadalupe: “En esta conjetura, la cuestión de la esclavitud y la abolición apenas divide a los hermanos, ya sean revolucionarios o monárquicos”, “los hermanos de la élite noble y de la burguesía observan un consenso sobre la cuestión”<sup>112</sup>. La economía de la trata de esclavos negros no fue un tema de discusión<sup>113</sup>. Esta es una posición que también mantienen otras asociaciones llamadas “secretas” o “patrióticas” como la Gran Legión Águila Negra de origen mexicano<sup>114</sup>. A medida que avanzaba el siglo XIX, la presión, guiada por los intereses británicos en la abolición, creció y penetró en todos los estratos de la sociedad, excepto, por su-

110 Hernández González, Manuel, *Liberalismo, masonería y cuestión nacional en Cuba (1808-1823)*, Idea, Las Palmas de Gran Canarias, 2012.

111 Hernández González, Manuel, *Liberalismo, masonería y cuestión nacional en Cuba (1808-1823)*, Idea, Las Palmas de Gran Canarias, 2012.

112 Duflo-Ciccotelli, Chloë, *La franc-maçonnerie en Guadeloupe, miroir d'une société coloniale en tensions (1770-1848)*, Bordeaux, PUB, 2021, 248-254.

113 Soucy, Dominique, *Masonería y nación. Redes masónicas y políticas en la construcción identitaria cubana (1811-1902)*, Idea, Las Palmas de Gran Canarias, 2006, 55-58.

114 Soucy, Dominique, *Masonería y nación. Redes masónicas y políticas en la construcción identitaria cubana (1811-1902)*, Idea, Las Palmas de Gran Canarias, 2006, 87-92.



puesto, en los propietarios de esclavos que hicieron grandes esfuerzos argumentativos para mantener sus privilegios. La resistencia antiabolucionista era fuerte. En 1847, sectores de la burguesía esclavista cubana emprendieron propaganda política a favor de la anexión de Cuba por Estados Unidos, manteniendo el sistema esclavista. Pero todo dependía de la posición de los esclavistas en la soñada sociedad sin esclavitud. La negociación estaba ahí: ¿cómo mantener el estatus privilegiado tras la abolición de la esclavitud? ¿Cuáles eran las garantías a muy largo plazo?

Incluso en 1860, bajo una masonería cada vez más específicamente española, se recordó la prohibición de iniciar a los negros<sup>115</sup>. Fue en 1862, en el contexto de la Guerra de secesión de Estados Unidos, que los cubanos crearon el Gran Oriente de Cuba y las Antillas (GOCA), de carácter independentista, para ver finalmente una masonería antiabolucionista<sup>116</sup> que poco a poco iba a ser más influyentes, con compromisos como la compensación o la liberación gradual, sin por ello cuestionar la hegemonía blanca sobre todos los negros, libres o no<sup>117</sup>.

La masonería, el ayuntamiento, las representaciones políticas y sociales,

fueron lugares de encuentro de las clases altas y medias de la sociedad isleña. “Controlar” todos los espacios de influencia política en el sentido griego del término fue uno de los pilares fundamentales de la acción de cada sector en la competencia entre hispanoamericanos y europeos, entre liberales criollos y liberales exaltados. Por lo tanto, también era necesario controlar la masonería, así como la universidad, la prensa, los ayuntamientos, etc. Con el siguiente matiz, tratar de hacer de la masonería el centro de la unión de tolerancia entre las dos capas criollas con miras a salvaguardar la paz necesaria que proteja sus propiedades, sus ventajas y sus posiciones sociales dominantes.

No se trata aquí de enumerar a los masones españoles (cubanos) que poseían esclavos o administraban los esclavos de sus familias. Es un trabajo por hacer. Sin embargo, no cabe duda de que todas las medidas adoptadas durante la primera mitad del siglo XIX para mejorar las condiciones de vida de los esclavos sirvieron sobre todo para prolongar su vida útil y por tanto su fuerza de trabajo<sup>118</sup>. Incluso comprar la libertad de los esclavos era un tipo de comercio<sup>119</sup>. Los principales masones cubanos pertenecían a la oligarquía de

115 Soucy, Dominique, *Masonería y nación. Redes masónicas y políticas en la construcción identitaria cubana (1811-1902)*, Idea, Las Palmas de Gran Canarias, 2006, 114.

116 Soucy, Dominique, *Masonería y nación. Redes masónicas y políticas en la construcción identitaria cubana (1811-1902)*, Idea, Las Palmas de Gran Canarias, 2006, 125-127.

117 Soucy, Dominique, *Masonería y nación. Redes masónicas y políticas en la construcción identitaria cubana (1811-1902)*, Idea, Las Palmas de Gran Canarias, 2006, 264-265.

118 Karim Ghorbal, “La política llamada del “buen tratamiento”: reformismo criollo y reacción esclavista en Cuba (1789-1845)”, *Nuevo Mundo Mundos Nuevos* [En ligne], Débats, puesto en línea el 30 de noviembre de 2009, consultado el 28 de febrero de 2022. URL : <http://journals.openedition.org/nuevomundo/57872> ; DOI : <https://doi.org/10.4000/nuevomundo.57872>

119 Manzano, Juan Francisco, *Autobiografía del esclavo poeta y otros escritos*, Madrid, Iberoamericana, 2007, 17.

la caña de azúcar. El Gran Maestre de la Gran Logia Española de la Isla, Francisco Javier de Santa Cruz y Montalvo pertenecía a una numerosa familia de esclavistas cuya hermana era una de las principales activistas de la esclavitud, la Condesa de Merlín, quien mantendría una vasta correspondencia con varios esclavistas franceses y una relación de entendimiento con muchas personalidades francesas de la época bastante opuestas a la esclavitud<sup>120</sup>.

Lo cierto, gracias a los estudios realizados sobre Cuba, es que las logias cubanas reflejaron las divisiones externas de las distintas burguesías que habitaron los territorios españoles en América. Por lo tanto, no hubo una “militancia” masónica fuera de contexto o dicho de otra manera vanguardista.

## Conclusión

Cuando pensamos en la esclavitud, automáticamente pensamos en el comercio de esclavos negros, siendo la esclavitud asiática menos visible en el trabajo de los historiadores<sup>121</sup>. Sin embargo, la abolición de la esclavitud de los negros llevó a la búsqueda de una solución que recurrió a otra esclavitud, particularmente de chinos y asiáticos en general, que ya contaba con una larga y discreta historia. Los traficantes de esclavos buscaron alternativas a la prohibición de la trata de esclavos y se dirigieron a Asia. Pero sin perder de vista África, intentando encontrar nuevos esclavos gracias a las últimas colonizaciones, principalmente en el Magreb<sup>122</sup>. La esclavitud es un deseo generalizado omnipresente en los

120 Hernández González, Manuel, *Liberalismo y masonería entre Europa y América. Diego Correa (1772-1843)*, Idea, Las Palmas de Gran Canarias, 2017, 163. Ulrike Schmieder. «La condesa de Merlín una aristocrática intelectual entre Francia y Cuba», en scarzanella, Eugenia y Schpun, Mónica Raisa, *Sin fronteras. Encuentros de mujeres y hombres entre América y Europa, siglos XIX-XX*, Iberoamericana / Vervuert, Madrid / Frankfurt 2008.

121 Una nota a pie de página en la obra del historiador costarricense, Ricardo Martínez Esquivel, desvela ese campo de investigación aún desconocido: *Masones y masonería en la Costa Rica de los albores de la modernidad (1865-1899)*, UCR, 2017, 114. Conocimientos incluso desconocidos a nivel universitario en general, igualmente mencionado para Cuba por Sappez, Delphine, *Ciudadanía y autonomismo en Cuba. Antonio Govín (1847-1914)*, Universitat Jaume I, Castellón, 2016, 256. Holder, Charles Frederick, “Chinese Slavery in America”, *The North American Review*, Vol.165, nº490 (Sep. 1897), 288-294. Keresey, Déborah Oropeza, “La esclavitud asiática en el virreinato de la Nueva España, 1565-1673”, *Historia Mexicana* 61, nº1 (241) (2011): 5-57. <http://jstor.org/stable/23032051>. Rodríguez Pastor, Humberto, “Abolición de la esclavitud en el Perú y su continuidad”, *Investigaciones Sociales* 9 (15), 2005, 441-456. <https://doi.org/10.15381/is.v9i15.7008>. Kapsoli Escudero, Wilfredo, “Cimarronaje de chinos”, *La vida y la Historia* nº6 (abril 2019), 88-92, <https://doi.org/10.33326/26176041.2017.6.414>. Claverán, Virginia González, “Un documento colonial sobre esclavos asiáticos”, *Historia Mexicana* 38, nº3, 1989, 523-532, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/25138234>. Esclavitud y no trabajo forzado, como lo sugiere por el contrario investigadoras cubanas que no dudan en afirmar que “La situación del emigrante chino fue peor que la del esclavo” en Montes de Oca Choy, M., & Ydoy Ortiz, Y. (2009), “Chee Kung Tong ¿Vínculos masónicos?”, *REHMLAC+*, Revista De Estudios Históricos De La Masonería Latinoamericana Y Caribeña Plus, 1 (1), 237. Recuperado de <https://revistas.ucr.ac.cr/index.php/rehmlac/article/view/6865>.

122 Aguiar Bobet, Valeria y Paz Sánchez, Manuel de, “La cruzada antiesclavista del cardenal Lavigerie (1888-1892). Notas preliminares”, en Valeria Aguiar Bobet, Ed. *Nosotras, ustedes y ellos. Espacios, interacciones y exclusiones durante el periodo colonial y poscolonial en el norte de África*, ediciones Ideas, Las Palmas de Gran Canarias, 2022.

estratos privilegiados que dominan el poder económico y político mundial. El color y la etnia, entre otras cosas, se utilizaron como excusas “científicas” para justificar esta sumisión. En el siglo XIX, la esclavitud y su abolición fueron más un debate intelectual provocado por los intereses económicos en conflicto de los sectores más ricos de la sociedad que una terrible injusticia en sí misma que habría que remediar. La transición de la idea de la abolición de la esclavitud a su abolición real se prolongó durante varias generaciones.

Sorprende que los boletines oficiales de las obediencias españolas, especialmente las del siglo XX, no trataran la cuestión ya que la historia oficial masónica y la antimasonica relataba sobre esta cuestión que la fraternidad había sido un componente fundamental en España de la abolición de la esclavitud. Una vez más, podemos concluir que el “acontecimiento histórico”, aquí la abolición de la esclavitud, no fue desencadenado ni desarrollado por los masones que se apropiaron de él a posteriori. Formaban parte de esta coalición, técnicamente no oficializada, de varios sectores asociativos que militaban a favor de la abolición. Los masones españoles-americanos siguieron el contexto general de la sociedad. No hubo un manifiesto masónico sin fisuras a favor de la abolición durante la primera mitad del siglo XIX. La abolición de la esclavitud es un acontecimiento capital del primer período de la historia contemporánea que de ninguna manera puede resumirse en los esfuerzos masónicos sino en los del conjunto de la sociedad liberal, muy fuertemente presionada por el surgimiento de las ideas socialistas que, con respecto a la esclavitud, proponía una lucha inequívoca por la abolición. Esta evolución de una masonería española esclavista hacia una masonería abolicionista también se vivió dentro de la Iglesia Católica con de vez en cuando palabras contra la esclavitud publicadas por sus autoridades y posiciones firmes de algunos de sus representantes en las regiones esclavistas<sup>123</sup>. Una vez lograda la abolición, “todos”, supuestamente, habían estado durante siglos en contra de la esclavitud, reescribiendo la historia a su favor olvidando como asociación, institución o representación política y religiosa sus negocios en el comercio de esclavos.

¿Cuál es la “evidencia” de una masonería española abolicionista? Para los masones españoles posteriores a la abolición, la prueba está en el hecho de que sus enemigos así lo difundieron<sup>124</sup>. Eso sería prueba suficiente para ellos, no para la historia. Más acorde a la realidad que aún se está investigando, a partir del último tercio del siglo XIX, algunos miembros de la masonería participaron en manifestaciones abolicionistas<sup>125</sup>,

123 Aguiar Bobet, Valeria y Paz Sánchez, Manuel de, “La cruzada antiesclavista del cardenal Lavignerie (1888-1892). Notas preliminares”, en Valeria Aguiar Bobet, Ed. *Nosotras, ustedes y ellos. Espacios, interacciones y exclusiones durante el periodo colonial y poscolonial en el norte de África*, ediciones Ideas, Las Palmas de Gran Canarias, 2022.

124 *Boletín de procedimientos del Soberano Gran Consejo General Ibérico*, 14-IV-1893, 10.

125 Aguiar Bobet, Valeria y Paz Sánchez, Manuel de, “La masonería española y la abolición de la esclavitud en las Antillas durante el Sexenio Democrático: movilización y dinámica socio-cultural”,

fueron miembros de asociaciones abolicionistas, formando parte de la sociedad liberal española en general. En ese momento, varias logias españolas escribieron planchas contra la esclavitud que, con bastante frecuencia, incluían al mismo nivel la lucha contra la pena de muerte o la emancipación de la mujer.

Sin embargo, la abolición de la esclavitud no vino a abolir la discriminación racial, ni siquiera en el seno de las logias masónicas de las últimas colonias españolas cuya presencia negra aún era excepcional. De hecho, el racismo no desapareció.

Este tema se acaba de abrir. Sin duda, queda un largo camino por recorrer para realizar una investigación profunda sobre la masonería española y la esclavitud. De hecho, cabe preguntarse incluso ¿y después de la abolición? En Cuba, ¿qué hacer con la “clase negra”?

La masonería española siguió la evolución del pensamiento liberal decimonónico que en determinados temas dividió a sus partidarios, como fue el caso de la esclavitud. Nació con un pensamiento esclavista, naturalmente integrado a las condiciones de vida de sus miembros y evolucionó lentamente hacia el pensamiento y el combate abolicionista. No es de extrañar que la masonería hispano-cubana luchara más contra el abolicionismo y que la masonería peninsular luchase a favor de la abolición porque no tenían los mismos intereses económicos, los unos sobrevivieron, habían hecho fortuna, habían llegado a una élite social gracias a la trata de esclavos, los otros codicia-

ron ese éxito, esa posición dominante, luchando para eliminar el poder de la esclavitud interfiriendo en la “opinión pública” a través del juego de la moralidad.

En definitiva, la masonería siguió el compás de la sociedad civil mucho más que a la inversa. Quizás no sea solo un pequeño detalle que *Las Constituciones* de Anderson dejaran claro que para ser masón había que ser un “hombre libre”...

## **Fuentes**

*Boletín de procedimientos del Soberano Gran Consejo General Ibérico y Gran Logia Simbólica Española*, Madrid, Soberano Gran Consejo Ibérico.

*Boletín Oficial del Gran Oriente de España*, Madrid, Gran Oriente de España.

*Boletín Oficial del Gran Oriente Español*, Madrid, Gran Oriente Español.

*Boletín Oficial del Grande Oriente Español*, Madrid, Grande Oriente Español.

*Boletín oficial y revista masónica del Supremo Consejo del Grado 33 para España y sus dependencias*, Madrid, Supremo Consejo del Grado 33.

*El Español*, nºXIV, 30 de mayo de 1811, “Debates de las Cortes de España sobre las Américas, 9 de enero de 1811”, Cádiz.

*El Simbolismo*, Madrid, Gran Oriente Nacional de España.

*Latomia*, Loge Unión nº88 de Madrid, Gran Logia Española y Gran Oriente Español.

*Vida masónica*, Madrid.

## **Bibliografía**

Aguiar Bobet, Valeria y Paz Sánchez, Manuel de, “La masonería española y la abolición de la esclavitud en las Antillas durante el Sexenio Democrático: movilización y dinámica socio-cultural”. *Anuario de Estudios Americanos*, 78, 2 Sevilla (España), julio-diciembre, 2021, 629-659 ISSN: 0210-5810. <https://doi.org/10.3989/aeamer.2021.2.08>

Aguiar Bobet, Valeria y Paz Sánchez, Manuel de, “Los masones españoles y el movimiento abolicionista en la época del patronato”, en Naranjo Orovio, Consuelo, *Los márgenes de la esclavitud. Resistencia, control y abolición en el Caribe y América Latina*, Dykinson, Madrid, 2021.

Aguiar Bobet, Valeria y Paz Sánchez, Manuel de, “La cruzada antiesclavista del cardenal Lavigerie (1888-1892). Notas preliminares”, en Valeria Aguiar Bobet, Ed. *Nosotras, ustedes y ellos. Espacios, interacciones y exclusiones durante el periodo colonial y poscolonial en el norte de África*, ediciones Ideas, Las Palmas de Gran Canarias, 2022.

Benimeli, José A. (coord.), *La masonería española, represión y exilios*, Almería, CEHME, 2010, vol. I.

Castellano Gil, José Manuel, *La masonería española en Cuba*, Taller de Historia, Santa Cruz de Tenerife, 1996.

Claverán, Virginia González, “Un documento colonial sobre esclavos asiáticos”, *Historia Mexicana* 38, nº3, 1989, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/25138234>.

Domingo Acebrón, M<sup>a</sup> Dolores (2014), “Rafael María de Labra: doceañista, liberal y demócrata: la Constitución de 1812”, en Delgado Idarreta, José Miguel y Morales Benítez, Antonio, *Gibraltar, Cádiz, América y la masonería. Constitucionalismo y libertad de prensa, 1812-2012*, Vol. II, CEHME, Zaragoza.

Duflo-Ciccotelli, Chloë, *La franc-maçonnerie en Guadeloupe, miroir d'une société coloniale en tensions (1770-1848)*, Bordeaux, PUB, 2021.

Ferrer Benimeli, José Antonio, *Napoleón el Grande y la masonería bonapartista en España*, masonica.es, Oviedo, 2023

Ferrer Benimeli, José Antonio, *La masonería hispana y sus luchas democráticas. Sueños de libertad*, masonica.es, Oviedo, 2022.

Ferrer Benimeli, José Antonio, *La masonería*, Alianza editorial, Madrid, 2019.

Ferrer Benimeli, José Antonio, *Masonería española contemporánea*, 2 vol., Siglo XXI, Madrid, 1987.

Ferrer Benimeli, José Antonio, *Masonería española contemporánea. Desde 1868 hasta nuestros días*, Vol.2, Siglo XXI, 1987.

Flores Collazo, María Margarita, “José Antonio Piqueras, *La esclavitud en las Españas. Un lazo trasatlántico*, Madrid, Catarata, 2011, 261 p.”, *Nuevo Mundo Mundos Nuevos* [En línea], Actas y ensayos historiográficos, puestos en línea el 11 de julio de 2012, consultado el 26 de mayo de 2022. URL : <http://journals.openedition.org/nuevomundo/63538>; DOI: <https://doi.org/10.4000/nuevomundo.63538>

Hernández González, Manuel, “Los planteamientos sociales y económicos del liberalismo exaltado en el Trienio Constitucional cubano”, *Trocadero*, nº 31 (2019), ISSN 2445-267X. <https://dx.doi.org/10.25267/Trocadero.2019.i31.11>

Hernández González, Manuel, *Del cielo al infierno. Miguel Cabral de Noroña. Vida y obra de un eclesiástico filomasón*, Idea, Las Palmas de Gran Canarias, 2019.

Hernández González, Manuel, *Estados-Unidos y Canarias. Comercio e ilustración. Una mirada Atlántica*, Idea, Las Palmas de Gran Canarias, 2016.

Hernández González, Manuel, *Liberalismo y masonería entre Europa y América. Diego Correa (1772-1843)*, Idea, Las Palmas de Gran Canarias, 2017.

Hernández González, Manuel, *Liberalismo, masonería y cuestión nacional en Cuba (1808-1823)*, Idea, Las Palmas de Gran Canarias, 2012.

Hernández Sánchez-Barba, Mario (1985), “Las Cortes españolas ante la abolición de la esclavitud en las Antillas (Opinión institucional ante un tema de política social)”, *Quinto Centenario* 8, Universidad Complutense de Madrid.

Holder, Charles Frederick, “Chinese Slavery in America”, *The North American Review*, Vol.165, nº490 (Sep. 1897).

Kapsoli Escudero, Wilfredo, “Cimarronaje de chinos”, *La vida y la Historia* nº6 (abril 2019), <https://doi.org/10.33326/26176041.2017.6.414>.

Karim Ghorbal, « La política llamada del “buen tratamiento”: reformismo criollo y reacción esclavista en Cuba (1789-1845) », *Nuevo Mundo Mundos Nuevos* [En línea], Débats, puesto en línea el 30 de noviembre de 2009, consultado el 28 de febrero de 2022. URL: <http://journals.openedition.org/nuevomundo/57872>; DOI: <https://doi.org/10.4000/nuevomundo.57872>

Keresey, Déborah Oropeza, “La esclavitud asiática en el virreinato de la Nueva España, 1565-1673”, *Historia Mexicana* 61, nº1 (241), 2011. <http://jstor.org/stable/23032051>.

Lazarte María Florencia (2013). “Reflexiones de Raynal acerca del rol colonizador francés y la utilización de Voyage d’un philosophe como intertexto”. XIV Jornadas Interescuelas/Departamentos de Historia. Departamento de Historia de la Facultad de Filosofía y Letras. Universidad Nacional de Cuyo, Mendoza.

López Casimiro, Francisco, “Aproximación a un catálogo de diputados masones durante la Restauración (1876-1901)”, en Delgado Idarreta, José Miguel y Morales Benítez, Antonio, *Gibraltar, Cádiz, América y la masonería. Constitucionalismo y libertad de prensa, 1812-2012*, CEHME, Zaragoza, 2014.

Luxán Meléndez, S. de; Luxán Hernández, L. de (2016). Cuba: comercio de esclavos y tabaco 1696-1739. XXI Coloquio de Historia Canario-Americana (2014), XXI-028. <http://coloquioscanariasamerica.casadecolon.com/index.php/aea/article/view/9510>

Manzano, Juan Francisco, *Autobiografía del esclavo poeta y otros escritos*, Madrid, Iberoamericana, 2007.

Moreno García, Julia, “La esclavitud según la reciente bibliografía cubana”, *Cuadernos de Historia Contemporánea*, nº12, 1990, Editorial Universidad Complutense. Madrid.

Naranjo Orovio, Consuelo, *Los márgenes de la esclavitud. Resistencia, control y*

*abolición en el Caribe y América Latina*, Dykinson, Madrid, 2021.

Odo, Georges, *La franc-maçonnerie en les colonies (1738-1960)*, Éditions maçonniques de France, Paris, 2001.

Otero González, Luis A., «La masonería autóctona y española ante la esclavitud», en Ferrer Benimeli, José A. (coord.), *La masonería española, represión y exilios*, Vol.I, CEHME, Almería, 2010.

Pabón Serrano, Óscar Mauricio, “Las cortes de Cádiz y los españoles de ambos hemisferios: el debate sobre la igualdad de representación entre americanos y peninsulares”, *Revista Temas*, Núm. 6 (2012), Universidad de Santo Tomás, DOI: <https://doi.org/10.15332/rt.v0i6.701>

Paz Sánchez, Manuel de, *La masonería y la pérdida de las colonias. Estudios*, IDEA, Las Palmas de Gran Canaria, 2006.

Periáñez Gómez, Rocío, “La investigación sobre la esclavitud en España en la Edad Moderna”, *Norba. Revista de Historia*, Vol. 21, 2008.

Piqueras, José Antonio (2011), *La esclavitud en las Españas. Un lazo trasatlántico*, Madrid, Catarata.

Renault, A. (2009). “La influencia de la masonería francesa en el Departamento Oriental de Cuba en los años veinte del siglo XIX. Los aportes de la prosopografía”. *REHMLAC+*, *Revista De Estudios Históricos De La Masonería Latinoamericana Y Caribeña Plus*, 1(1). Recuperado de <https://revistas.ucr.ac.cr/index.php/rehmlac/article/view/6856>

Renault, A. (2009). “Los francmasones franceses de la jurisdicción de Cuba al principio del siglo XIX”. *REHMLAC+*, *Revista De Estudios Históricos De La Masonería Latinoamericana Y Caribeña Plus*, 1(1). Recuperado de <https://www.revistas.ucr.ac.cr/index.php/rehmlac/article/view/6857>

Renault, Agnès, “Les francs-maçons français exilés à Cuba”, en *Les francs-maçons y l'exil*, Chroniques d'histoire maçonnique n°82, été-automne 2018, IDERM, Paris.

Révauger, Cécile (2003). *Noirs et francs-maçons*. Edimaf, Paris.

Sappez, Delphine, *Ciudadanía y autonomismo en Cuba. Antonio Govín (1847-1914)*, Universitat Jaume I, Castellón, 2016.

Rodríguez Pastor, Humberto, “Abolición de la esclavitud en el Perú y su continuidad”, *Investigaciones Sociales* 9 (15), 2005, <https://doi.org/10.15381/is.v9i15.7008>.

Schmidt Nelly. “Les abolitionnistes français de l'esclavage, 1820-1850”. In: *Revue française d'histoire d'outre-mer*, tome 87, n°326-327, 1er semestre 2000. Les Juifs y



la mer, bajo la dirección de Richard Ayoun.

Soucy, Dominique (2016). *Enjeux coloniaux y franc-maçonnerie à Cuba au XIXe siècle. Un renouveau historique à la lumière des archives du Grand Orient de France*, PUB, Bordeaux.

Soucy, Dominique, *Masonería y nación. Redes masónicas y políticas en la construcción identitaria cubana (1811-1902)*, Idea, Las Palmas de Gran Canarias, 2006.

Torres-Cueva, Eduardo, *Historia de la masonería cubana. Seis ensayos*, Imagen Contemporánea, La Havane, 2013.

Torres-Cuevas, Eduardo y Loyola Vega, Óscar, *Historia de Cuba (1492-1898)*, editorial pueblo y educación, La Habana, 2002.

Ulrike Schmieder. «La condesa de Merlin una aristocrática intelectual entre Francia y Cuba», en Scarzanella, Eugenia y Schpun, Mónica Raisa, *Sin fronteras. Encuentros de mujeres y hombres entre América y Europa, siglos XIX-XX*, Iberoamericana / Vervuert, Madrid / Frankfurt 2008.



# Portuguese Freemasonry between Slavery and Antislavery: Transoceanic Masonic Networks in the Portuguese Empire

Fernando Marques da Costa

*Center for Historical Studies of Universidade Nova de Lisboa and Universidade Lusófona – Area of Sciences of Religions*

“[...] these and others sold, in Rio de Janeiro, large quantities of tisu-sus to the African coast, drugs, paints, etc., eventually making their fortune in slave smuggling. You see, Your Lordship, that it is not the carts nor the hoe that make fortunes in Brazil to supply capital to Portugal” (Moreira, 1862: 42).

With the vanguard of Junot’s army (1771–1813) at the gates of Lisbon on November 30, 1807, the Prince Regent Dom João (1767–1826) embarked for Brazil on the 29<sup>th</sup> under English naval escort, taking with him the treasury, the aristocracy and high civilian and military officials, all kinds of goods, and about 10,000 people. He arrives in Brazil on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of January 1808. On the 28<sup>th</sup> he signs the accord to open Brazil’s ports to international trade, read British. Portugal and its Empire will change radically. With the king and the court settled in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil becomes central to the Empire and continental Portugal becomes, as was bitterly said at the time, a colony of the colony. In 1815, already in the context of the Congress of Vienna (09.1914–06.1815), the country changed its name to United Kingdom of Portugal, Brazil, and the Algarve on the 16<sup>th</sup> of December

1815, changing Brazil from colony to kingdom, an alteration that indicated the change from a European project to an American project grounded in Brazil. In Portugal, four French invasions<sup>1</sup> and a scorched earth defensive military strategy leave the economy in ruins, the army under the command of English military forces, a commercial class impoverished by the opening of Brazil’s ports, and the country handed over to a regency council without governing autonomy, depending on decisions from Rio de Janeiro that only in travel took almost six months outside the time of dispatch. It was in this context that the Liberal Revolution broke out on the 24<sup>th</sup> of August 1820. Elections were called and a constitution was drawn up, which limited the king’s powers to almost nothing, and the “commercial class” nurtured the illusory hope of regaining part of the commercial privileges lost with the opening of Brazil’s

1 Junot 1807; Soult 1809; Massena 1810; Marmont 1812.

ports. D. João VI, already king, left his first-born son in Rio de Janeiro and returned, against his will, to Lisbon on the 3rd of July 1821, accompanied by his remaining family, namely his wife Carlota Joaquina (1775–1830), who refused to swear to the Constitution, and his son Miguel, who together with his mother would become the face of the counter-revolution. The liberals split into antagonistic groups during the liberal triennium. Between 1823 and 1826, the counter-revolution consolidates positions. D. João VI dies in 1826, but D. Pedro, the firstborn, is now Emperor of Brazil, independent since the 7<sup>th</sup> of September 1822. He granted Portugal a Constitutional Charter and arranged for his brother's marriage to his daughter D. Maria, on whom he renounced the throne. Miguel, after various vicissitudes, proclaimed himself absolute king in 1828. Exiled in London and Paris, the liberals, divided but converging in the purpose of overthrowing D. Miguel, lean on D. Pedro, who renounces the Empire of Brazil, and install a regency in the Azores. On the 8<sup>th</sup> of August 1832 they land in continental Portugal and win the civil war in 1834. They returned divided into two large factions. The supporters of the Constitution of 1822, more radical, heirs to the politics of the liberal triennium, and the supporters of the Constitutional Charter that gave the king a "fourth power," the moderating power, which sought a conciliation of interests among more conservative groups, including some former supporters of D. Miguel. In September

1838 a revolution brings to power the group of defenders of the 1822 Constitution, which will become known as the "setembrists" opposing the policy of the charter's defenders: the "chartists." These two groups fought each other until 1850 in successive military coups and a civil war in 1846–47. It is in this political context that the slavery and masonic issues have to be analyzed.

### **Masonic Conjecture**

**P**ortuguese Freemasonry develops mainly after 1797, with the creation of the Loja Regeneração Maçónica Lusitana (Lodge Lusitanian Masonic Regeneration) aboard a ship from the United Kingdom. The presence of the Duke of Sussex in Portugal (1773–1843) between 1801–05 will allow the development of Freemasonry with the contradictory condescension of the Intendence of the Police that was powerless before the symbolic power of the son of the King of England. In those years, military men, priests and some nobility in robes joined it, but rarely members of the aristocracy. The French invasions subverted this state of affairs by creating a violent national anti-French, anti-Jacobin and anti-masonic<sup>2</sup> climate. The Grande Oriente Lusitano (Lusitanian Grand Orient), weakened and undermined by police spies, interrupted work in 1815 and resumed activity in late 1816. He elected Gomes Freire de Andrade (1757–1817), a prestigious military officer who had belonged to the Portuguese Legion in

---

2 In Portugal, Bonapartist lodges were never formed, unlike what happened in Spain, for example.

Napoleon's army. In 1817, Gomes Freire was involved in an unprepared and childish conspiracy against British rule in the army and was hanged on October 19<sup>th</sup>. The Grande Oriente Lusitano (Lusitanian Grand Orient) reaches the date of the 1820 Revolution with only two functioning lodges and suffers a split in 1821. However, in the absence of a party system, the various groups into which the liberal movement had been divided appropriated the masonic sociability model as a way to organize their political factions, with each of their leaders running their own masonic lodges (Costa, 2018). Freemasonry will suffer the same vicissitudes as the liberals. She will leave for exile and return irredeemably divided into the factions into which the liberals have been split. In 1834 there are three main groups: the Grande Oriente Lusitano (Lusitanian Grand Orient), headed by chartists, mainly by its leader António Bernardo da Costa Cabral (1803–89), who became Grand Master in 1839; the North Freemasonry, said to be the Oriente de Passos Manuel (Orient of Passos Manuel) (1801–62), setembrist, and Grand Master between 1834 and 1850; and, the South Freemasonry, called Oriente de Saldanha (Orient of Saldanha) (1790–1876), of which the great military, Duke of Saldanha, will be the Grand Master, known as the man of 100 faces, for having been in the first half of the century with everyone and against everyone. During the troubled period from 1834 to 1850 it will continue to play its role as an organizer of political factions with

the setembrist and chartist movements controlling the main groups, extending its influence not only to the political elites but also to the military bodies on which their power rested. Setembrism had its armed arm in the National Guard controlled by the freemasons and patriotic societies, which mobilized up to 12,000 troops.

It is among these masonic groups divided into factions that the question of the slave trade will arise. This pulverization of Portuguese Freemasonry between 1834 and 1869<sup>3</sup> makes it difficult to identify the organizations involved for two reasons; first, because the records from the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century are very rare and, second, because this diversity confused at the time those who had to refer to the masonic reality. For this reason, we find expressions such as “secret societies,” “secret clubs,” “lodges,” “orients,” etc. Even when quoting the name of an organization, it is usually not correct. Essentially, they always refer to an autonomous lodge or dependency of an organization based outside the territory, in the case of the colonies. Perhaps the exception is the use of the phrase “secret clubs,” where from reading the documentation of the time that uses it, two realities can be deduced: masonic lodges; but also slavers' clubs, sociabilities created exclusively to repair anti-abolitionist positions and formed by Portuguese, Brazilians, and Goeses.

For reasons that are not yet well studied, the presence of masonic orga-

---

3 The Grande Oriente Lusitano Unido (United Lusitanian Grand Orient) is created, where almost all masonic organizations and the existing Supreme Councils merge.

nizations in Angola is almost non-existent, unlike what happens in the Indian Ocean, where, in what corresponds to the current territory of Mozambique, that presence has been recorded since the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. It is mainly on this territory and in its transoceanic relations that we will focus.

## Slavery

This text is not about slavery, but about the relations between the slave trade and Freemasonry, especially between Portugal, Brazil and Mozambique. The word “slavery” is translated in Portuguese, as in French, as “*escravismo*” (esclavagisme) or “*escravidão*” (esclavage) and the difference between these two concepts is well marked in both Portuguese and Brazilian bibliography. The concept of “*esclavagisme*” (Gorender 1978) is associated with slavery as a form of production and was developed by Marxist historiography with particular emphasis on Jacob Gorender (1923–2013).<sup>4</sup> The concept of “*esclavage*,” on the other hand, is associated with the analysis of the conditions of slavery as an institution, studying its forms and the way in which slaves suffered this condition. In this text we will adopt the concept “*esclavagisme*” not because of adherence to this school of thought, but because what this brief essay is about are the relations between the actors of this method of production that almost exclusively dominated the economic life of Mozambique for

decades and Freemasonry in the resistance to the anti-slavery movement.

Even before the departure of the court to Brazil there was no significant slave trade from the port of Lisbon (Alexandre: 1991, 300). This point is important and marks a difference from what was happening in other countries in the relationship between metropolis and colonies. For a long time and until Brazil’s independence (1822), the Portuguese Empire was Brazil, the other colonies in Africa or the Indian Ocean were complementary to the Brazilian economy, namely in the slave trade. If it is true that there were merchants who armed ships from Lisbon for this purpose, their number is reduced. Masonic activity in Portugal involving Portuguese was also reduced. The few existing lodges were, generally speaking, of foreigners (Costa, 2018: 65-79), which makes the development between networks of merchants and masons happen later than was the rule in the rest of Europe. When it develops it follows the network of commercial relations between Brazil and the Atlantic coasts of Africa and the ports of the Indian Ocean. In this aspect the Portuguese (and later Luso-Brazilian) networks differ from what we will find in other European ports. The cases studied, for example by Harrison for the relations between Freemasonry and the slave trade in Liverpool, where he underlines the significant capital accumulation generated by the slave trade in that

4 Gorender was a Marxist researcher and member of the Communist Party of Brazil. Imprisoned and brutally tortured during the military dictatorship, he shared the prison and the harsh mistreatment with Dilma Russef, former president of Brazil who recounts in an introductory text to the latest edition those dark years they lived through (Gorender 2016: 9-13).

city (Harrison, 2011: 97-120), have no parallel in ports of mainland Portugal. The same happens with the studies on slave trade relations in French ports such as the works by Delobette (2005) and Saunier (2007) on Le Havre or Saugera (1995), on Bordeaux, for example, among others that could be cited. The studies that focus on the colonial reality, and that focus mainly on the 18th century, rich in their approach, analyze one of trafficking and public sociabilities, that is, both operating freely in the geographical space studied. Now, for known reasons, Freemasonry is a repressed social group in the Portuguese Empire, as it will be in the beginning of the Brazilian Empire.<sup>5</sup> Therefore, the reality of the relations between slave trade and Freemasonry will only become more notorious after the Liberal revolution of 1820 and the independence of Brazil in 1822. Even then, the existence of formal lodges (of which documentation has survived) is rare, which does not allow to make, for example, a comparative study with that of Smith-Burch (2017) that covers the same chronological period. Reichert's (2017) work on Freemasonry in Mauritius<sup>6</sup> is extremely useful since, as we will see, it is from these French lodges ("clubs" in Portuguese documentary language) that the masonic influence for the Portuguese colony of Mozambique will come.

The relations between Brazil and the west coast of Africa were the central axis

of the traffic. In the case of Mozambique, there were no direct communications with Portugal. Navigation passed through Rio de Janeiro and, in this sense, Mozambique was more a colony of Brazil than of Portugal (Capela, 1979: 153-154).

Admittedly, many conceived of slavery as wrong, but continued to speak out for tolerantism. As the deputy Ramiro Coutinho pointed out "a state of tolerance existed in Portugal and slaves were tolerated in the overseas provinces out of necessity"<sup>7</sup> (Marques, 2008:87).

This is partly why in Portugal there was no debate on the question of slavery. Few authors refer to it and when they do it is to deal either with its conditions or its indispensability for the functioning of the colonial economy, not to suggest its end. The relocation of the court to Brazil (1808) made the continental European territory even more peripheral in relation to this traffic. It will be English pressure that will put the slavery issue on the political agenda, where it will always encounter resistance. The Portuguese strategy has always been to delay impositions, even after Sá da Bandeira (1795–1876) made the first proposal to abolish trafficking on December 10, 1836. The strategy of the slavers was always to organize successive stratagems to circumvent the legislation and avoid arrest by the warships of the United Kingdom.

Without much internal debate, the anti-abolitionist pressure came from the colonies where the economic consequenc-

5 Not that it was illegal, since papal bulls never passed into the internal legal order, nor was there any law forbidding it until 1818.

6 Almost always referred to in Portuguese documentation as "Iha de França."

7 Câmara dos Deputados, session of February 23, 1861, in *Diário de Lisboa*, February 26, 1861. Apud, (Marques 2008: 87).

es were directly felt (Alexandre, 1991: 300). But the debate had little echo in Portugal. The successive slave dealer strategies to maintain trafficking, which not only continued but increased in the first half of the 19th century, meant that abolitionism was not perceived for decades as irreversible, either for the economy of Brazil (already independent) or for the Portuguese colonies, thus not giving rise in Portugal to an internal debate that, in terms of ideas, also did not mobilize political actors. It is only at the end of the 1830s that some public interventions manifest themselves in a more expressive way, and it is in this context that Sá da Bandeira's policy gets some support in the Chamber of Peers. However, this limited support will generate a wave of resistance from the big slavers that drags the abolitionists into a permanent policy of compromise (Marques, 2008: 55).

The absence of a national abolitionist sentiment is also due to the fact that great figures of national political life such as the Dukes of Saldanha (1790–1876) and Terceira (1792–1860), for example, had made a career in Brazil where they had contact and established relations with the slave trade. As much as the great politicians verbalized ideas common to the Europe of their time, and negatively adjectivized trafficking, they never felt morally bound to fight it (Alexandre, 1991: 302) and they did not. Thus, only the permanent pressure from the United Kingdom will give life to abolitionist measures in Portugal, and not the culmination of any public opinion campaign or abolitionist movement that truly never existed (Capela, 1979: 31).

The pressure from the United Kingdom to put an end to trafficking has been

evident since the arrival of the Court in Brazil and was established in Article X of the *Tratado de Aliança e Amizade* (Treaty of Alliance and Friendship) signed in Rio de Janeiro on February 19, 1810, and later revised in 1815.

The presence of the court in Brazil represented, in every respect, a development that the territory had never known before, and the shortage of slave labor was growing. With Rio de Janeiro now the center of the transoceanic trade (Atlantic and Indian) Brazil will extend its slave trade beyond the geographically closer Atlantic coasts of Africa to the Indian Ocean to make up for the shortage of manpower. Despite the increased costs of the voyage and the preference for slaves from the Atlantic coasts, the slave trade grew, changing the traditional trans-Indian routes, namely with Mauritius, and even with the Arabs who until then dominated this trade. In a short period of time, trafficking became the main economic activity and the only source of income for the colony, limited mainly to the islands of Ibo and Mozambique and to the vast Zambezi, expanding from the rivers of Sena to Zumbo and Tete. Colonial slavery reaches proportions that alter the functioning of Mozambican society, involving in its commerce all the cadres of the administration, including practically all the governors, as well as the military. It is, therefore, on Mozambique that this study will focus, because it is in this territory that Freemasonry will develop around the slave trade and extend its ramifications to the masonic organizations in Lisbon, Havana, and even Montevideo, where the trade gains a new dimension in the 1930s. "The British ambassador in Rio de Janeiro in late 1834 informs Lord Palm-



erson about the scale the trade was taking in Montevideo stating that the creation of the colony of free Africans was nothing more than a pretext to import slaves and re-export them to Brazil” (Capela 2012: 149). This is one of the reasons for the reference to the links of secret societies in Mozambique, Brazil, Havana, and Montevideo in a transoceanic network based on the slave economy.

The overseas dimension of Portugal is ignored, or only slightly mentioned, in the histories of Freemasonry. The case of Brazil is significant. Even the pioneering works of Silva Dias (1916–1994) and Oliveira Marques (1933–2007) barely deal with the reality of Freemasonry in Brazil until its independence (Dias 1980; Marques 1990). The Brazilian historiography (Castelanni 2009; Morel 2008), for example, also hardly integrates the Portuguese reality in its works. This national — perhaps even nationalistic—perspective has historiographical consequences that have not yet been overcome.

When Freemasonry is studied from a strictly institutional point of view this fact has little relevance. However, when one wants to analyze the network of sociabilities and masonic solidarities in the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the Empire space has to be studied in an articulated way, especially in the relationship between continental Portugal, Brazil, Mozambique, and Angola.

This text is made with the intention of trying to identify the networks of slave and masonic sociabilities and solidarities without national concerns, thus including the Portuguese Empire, until the independence of Brazil, but also, afterwards, the relations between the kingdom of Portugal,

the empire of Brazil and the Portuguese colonies of Africa and the Indian Ocean, because the networks formed around the slave issue focus on the specific interests of colonial slavery at the margin of the various national interests, either ignoring them or fighting them in an articulated manner between these territories of various nations. Likewise, we will not make the difference between “reinóis”—that is, inhabitants of Brazil from Portugal—and natives of Brazil, involved in slavery—not because it is not of the utmost importance for the history of Brazil, but because it is not relevant for this text.

Although the great movement of slave trade was for decades between Brazil and the west coast of Africa, the truth is that there is no data so far that allows us to identify a significant masonic activity in those colonies, especially in Angola. The reasons for this are not yet well studied. One reason might be the fact that French influence in the Angolan ports was almost non-existent. But the truth is that for this period the main testimony is a communication sent to the Governor of Angola on the 26th of March 1821 about the arrest in Benguela of Elias Vieira de Andrade, arrested for having some masonic catechisms and sent to Brazil from where he manages to escape thanks to a set of supports that included a major-captain, an ombudsman and a bishop (Rodrigues, 1961: 133).

The United Kingdom’s naval pressure on the slave trade is greatest on the west coast of Africa which therefore suffered a greater impact from restrictive measures, giving a boost to colonial slavery in the Indian Ocean. For this reason, it was also in Mozambique that the great anti-abolitionist resistance movement would be concen-

trated. It was the repression of the traffic in Angola that gave rise to the golden period of the slave trade between Brazil and Mozambique (Lopes, s/d: 168), which we will focus on in its relations with Freemasonry.

### **A thread of the meshes that the empire weaves: a study's case**

**F**rancisco Álvaro Silva Freire (1763–?) was an unrepentant freemason. A merchant, born in Porto, living in Lisbon, he was initiated in July 1791, in the Lisbon lodge<sup>8</sup> known as André de Morais Sarmiento's (1761–1821?), by invitation of two French merchants, together with João Luís do Couto (1763–?), Jerónimo José Nogueira, José Joaquim Aranha, Manuel dos Santos Rocha (1761–?) and Vicente de Oliveira Sampaio. He was arrested on September 7<sup>th</sup> of the same year by the Police Prefecture and sent, in March, to the prison of the Inquisition, which sentenced him to one month of private instruction (on catechism)<sup>9</sup> at the Convent of S. Pedro de Alcântara (Barata, 2006: 66-67). He did not repent, nor did the months of imprisonment and the month of forced prayers in the convent discourage him from continuing to belong to Freemasonry. In March 1799, he was arrested again. In April, he is ordered to be de-

ported to Goa and embarks on the ship “Nossa Senhora da Conceição e Santo António,” with 243 other prisoners, also sent to India. Silva Freire arrives in Rio de Janeiro in July 1799, and is imprisoned in the island fortress of Ilha das Cobras (Island of Snakes), while awaiting transport to the East (Barata, 2006: 66-67). He leaves a detailed account of his trip in a letter he sends to Lisbon to the freemason Modesto António Mayer, appointed ombudsman of Vila Rica,<sup>10</sup> in Minas Gerais, on 19.05.1798, but still in Lisbon (Appendix 2).

Not everything went according to plan. Well installed thanks to his network of masonic contacts, he decides to write to friends in Lisbon. In his letter to Modesto, he explains that he sends his correspondence through the Chancellor of the Rio de Janeiro Court, Luís Beltrão de Gouveia de Almeida (c. 1750–1814), member of the Overseas Council (01.09.1798–22.06.1805). It is not clear whether he knew Gouveia de Almeida personally, or only knew of his relationship with Modesto. The truth is that he asks for his protection and he intervenes on his behalf, but ends up denouncing him. Gouveia was afraid of attracting new suspicions about himself, after having seen his name involved in the *Inconfidência Mineira*<sup>11</sup> (1789). Gouveia was also a great friend of Tomás António

8 The Lodge is said to have lasted from 1780 to 1792 (Marques 1990: Vol. I 132-134).

9 José Liberato Freire de Carvalho, in his memoirs, comments on this type of sentences: “The hypocritical, and stupid Inquisition always supposed that the individuals, whom it arrested, did not know the catechism” (Carvalho, 1982).

10 See note below.

11 *Inconfidência Mineira*, was a conspiracy of a separatist nature that took place in the captaincy of Minas Gerais, in Vila Rica, in February 1789, against taxes and against Portuguese rule. It was subdued in 1789. Its leader Joaquim José da Silva Xavier, known as “Tiradentes,” was executed on April 21, 1792.

Gonzaga (1744–1810), a judge and also a freemason, sent to be deported to the Island of Mozambique for his involvement in the same conspiracy, where he receives the protection of a group of freemason slave traders, who support him since his arrival (Gonçalves 1999: 399-400).

Beltrão Gouveia, in view of Freire's correspondence, which he considers "not very innocent," decides to communicate its contents to the vice-king José Luís de Castro (1744–1819), Count of Resende, appealing to the need to avoid "correspondence and communications with a dangerous lunatic, at the present time, as to political opinions; for the religious ones, neither I understand them for lack of theology, nor does the Great and Incomprehensible Entity need a small insect to defend it." Once the correspondence was seized, a new investigation was opened against him. In addition to Modesto, the letters were addressed to António Mendes Bordalo (1750–1806), freemason and lawyer at the Casa da Suplicação (House of Supplication) in Lisbon, Lúcio José Bolonha and Simão Pires Sardinha, and contained associated with the expression "honorable men" the sign ∴ used as a masonic abbreviation. From the letter to Modesto, it is

clear that the group met at Mendes Bordalo's house in Lisbon and that a nucleus of Portuguese and "Brazilians" connected to the trade with Brazil was structured there, some of them relatives of the slavers.

The Count of Resende considers "[...] by the enclosed letters, and especially by the one he addresses to his partial and intimate friend Modesto, quite patent the poison that covers his malevolent heart, for he not only wishes, but actually expects, to see his country involved in the same confusion, disorder and ruin in which France is submerged by the upheaval of its monarchy."<sup>12</sup>

During the investigation, information was requested from the government of Lisbon, to which the Police Intendant Pina Manique (1733–1805) replied in May 1801 in an official letter to Minister Rodrigo de Sousa Coutinho (1755–1812).<sup>13</sup> This new investigation will allow us to discover important elements of this masonic relationship in the Empire. The letter he writes to his friend Modesto Mayer reveals the network of contacts that allows him, despite being a prisoner, to be "very well received by the commander, officers, and passengers" during the trip and that they let him walk "armed with sword and pis-

12 Arquivo Nacional do Rio de Janeiro, Vice-Reinado, box 491, parcel 1, 02.08.1799, apud (Gonçalves 1999: 400).

13 [...] His Majesty was served to approve all the procedures I had ordered against the said Francisco Álvaro da Silva Freire, for being a refined Jacobin and framing [Mason] with a master's degree. In the Inquisition to which I referred his guilt, he was punished, but the amendment he had after he abjured was none because he continued in the infamous society of those of his sect, and the records show that he is firm in his old feelings and that the two imprisonments he has suffered for correction were not able to make him change his mind, being a fearful and dangerous lunatic to society. This is the third time that he appears in court clinging to the abominable doctrines that he wants to persuade, and, for this very reason, makes one believe that he will never cease to be tenacious in his depraved sentiments. It is certain, Your Honor, that many of those who are implicated in these proceedings as advocates of these Jacobin opinions are not unknown to me. I have put all my strength into combating them, for there are five stores of free masons and enlightened Irishmen that I have already discovered in this kingdom, with people entering this infamous society, many people of all ranks. Apud, (Leite, 1995: 193-200).

tols, serving as an orderly for one of the passengers, a frigate captain,” when there was a threat of danger from a French ship. Once in Brazil, this network continues to exert its influence: “The captain of the ship recommended me to the governor, which caused him to give me a good headquarters, and, beginning to have conversation with me, he has become my friend to such an extent that his house is mine.”

During the trip from Portugal to Brazil he lived with two masons on board. A frigate captain, “a man of 24 years old, well educated, a close friend [...] of most of our friends, came up to me to comment on so many gallantries, and with him and another passenger, a son of Mozambique.” This “son of Mozambique” was the freemason Vicente Guedes da Silva e Sousa, who had studied eight years in Portugal, son of João da Silva Guedes, a known slave trader. He stayed at merchants’ houses in Portugal and is believed to have interacted with the great shipowner José Nunes da Silveira, who was represented in Mozambique by his father. José Nunes da Silveira was a well-known liberal who was part of the Junta Provisional after the Revolution (Leite 1992). João da Silva Guedes, on the other hand, was a great friend of Tomás António Gonzaga (1744–1810) during his banishment to Mozambique, where he arrived on July 31, 1792. Gonzaga was a judge, and although he did not participate in the traffic, he became from his arrival an important legal supporter of the slavers’ business, thanks to the masonic network that protected him.

Freire is clear about the masonic quality of his new friends. In Vicente Guedes da Silva’s luggage several books by Rousseau, Voltaire, Helvetius, Condillac, etc.<sup>14</sup> were seized. Also seized were six handwritten notebooks, in French, of which one was a masonic catechism, another the ritual of the reception of a master narrating the stories of Hiram and Adoniram (Gonçalves, 1999: 401).

Realizing he was going to be arrested, Vicente Guedes manages to board a ship to Mozambique, where Silva Freire will meet him, when he is finally sent to his banishment in Goa, with a stop in Mozambique, in 1802. His contacts with the freemasons in Mozambique, and of course with Vicente Guedes da Silva e Sousa, Tomás António Gonzaga and others, prevented him from going to India.

Adelto Gonçalves confirms that Silva Freire begins by working for Vicente Guedes’ family until the governor gives him a “sinecure” as “clerk of the treasury of the Junta da Real Fazenda, probably under the protection of the masonic lodge that secretly operated on the island. He is then appointed secretary of the government of Mozambique in 1802 and governor Isidro de Sousa e Sá (08.1801–18.1805), despite instructions to watch his movements, responds by stating that Vicente Guedes was not a Jacobin (Gonçalves, 1999:403; Capela, 2005: 246).<sup>15</sup> The masonic solidarities will have continued to function, exercising their protective action, influencing and acting with colonial authorities that did not belong to Freemasonry, but

14 The complete list of seized works was published in (Leite, 1991: 18-23). Mansur Barata states that the original list is in Arquivo Nacional do Rio de Janeiro, Vice-Reinado, box 491, parcel I.

15 AHU - Arquivo Histórico Ultramarino, Box 88, Doc., 33, Letter from the Governor General to D. Rodrigo de Sousa Coutinho, 22.08.1801.

that had their own autonomy, or acted as if they had it, accepting the influence of this group of important masons and slavers, to ignore the directives of Minister Rodrigo de Sousa Coutinho, in the name of their commercial interests in the traffic.<sup>16</sup> The slave trade relations, to which all the governors were associated, will have facilitated the influence of the powerful slave trader João da Silva Guedes in defense of his son Vicente Guedes and his friend Silva Freire, both masons. The governor ignores the orders received from Lisbon.

### **Transoceanic networks and actors**

About half of the masons were merchants in the late eighteenth century. One mason in two is a merchant or ship captain in Saint-Malo, two-thirds in Rouen, and four-fifths in Nantes (Saugera, 1995: 110-111). It is not strange, therefore, that many of the French who were frequenting the ports of Mozambique also had this profile. Thus, the diffusion of Freemasonry to Brazil followed the path of the French slavers: Mauritius, Reunion, Mozambique (Capela 2016: 205).

From early on, the Ibo Island was used by Arab and Bourbon French who were mainly dedicated to slavery (Botelho 1835: 398). But also since the eighteenth

century, French shipowners began to frequent the port of Mozambique Island. It was by this route that the first influences of “pernicious doctrines” arrived in the Portuguese Indian Ocean colony and the government soon realized that the danger was contagion from French ships and “clubs” in the French Indian Ocean islands. “The external defense of the country offers likewise an object that should occupy the attention of governors, especially in that the French, common enemies, making war on all nations, even less with arms than with pernicious maxims, lose no occasion to invade and infest the states by other means.”<sup>17</sup> What the Portuguese government feared from the French was the dangerousness of the ideas, the “propagation of the abominable and destructible principles of Liberty and Equality.”<sup>18</sup>

“In 1793 is received on the island of Mozambique communication that France is moving war to Portugal. From Lisbon they wanted to know if in Mozambique, there had been any communication with Mauritius and if there were any individuals of the “pernicious doctrines.”<sup>19</sup> The French, whether coming from the Indian colonies or from the ports of Nantes, Bordeaux, and Marseille, had long been frequenting the east coast of Africa in search of slaves for Santo Domingo.

The government’s concern was with Freemasonry that was expanding through

16 The rest of Freire’s biography is equally adventurous. François-Timoléon Bègue-Clavel, in his *Histoire Pittoresque de la Franc-Maçonnerie* refers to Freire stating that in 1805 he was admitted to the Order of the Temple and that he was a spy of King John VI, having become intimate with Fabre Palaprat (1773–1838). (Clavel 1853: 217).

17 Biblioteca Nacional de Portugal - BNP, Coleção tarouca, no. 53, instructions from the prince regent to the captain-general of Mozambique Isidro Sá, October 16, 1800.

18 Arquivo Histórico Ultramarino - AHU Mç Xx, box 65, no. 11, of September 1st, 1793.

19 BNP, Tarouca Collection, no. 53 Instructions to the Governor-General of Mozambique Isidoro Sá of October 16, 1800.

the French Indian colonies, or directly from France or Brazil, through ship-owners and captains, political deportees, and returning students. By some or all of these means Freemasonry arrived early in Mozambique, still in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, constituting either lodges or networks of masonic solidarity.

It was also in the eighteenth century that the *Inconfidentes* from Minas deported to Mozambique, including the poet Tomás António Gonzaga and people like Eleutério José Delfim, originally from Rio de Janeiro, a student in Montpellier, who went from Goa to Mozambique as an army officer, and then as a slaver. The masonic associations have arrived in Brazil exactly through the students who attended the European universities, namely those of Coimbra, Montpellier and Perpignan, where there were two Brazilian student lodges (Barata, 1999: 59).

The network of relations established between these spaces not only served commercial slavery objectives, but also favored the dissemination in Mozambique of French “pernicious maxims,” that worried the Portuguese government so much, coming mainly from the Island of France (Mauritius), where some Mozambicans also went to study and came from there “with very French customs” and where they would have lived with the existing masonic lodges.<sup>20</sup> It is thus particularly relevant the generation of sons of slavers who studied in Lisbon, Coimbra, Rio de Janeiro, in the Mascarenhas, Goa, and Montevideo. António da Cruz e Almeida, for

example, one of the richest slavers sends his sons “José and Vitorino to Mauritius to study” (Capela, 2016: 152, 302). Others, like Francisco Álvaro da Silva Freire, also studied in England, Paris, and Holland (Leite, 1992). The influence that some of the sons of the merchant and slave bourgeoisie exercised when they returned to those territories after years of studies in Portugal or other countries was determinant in the networks they would establish.

Three vectors of articulation have thus special relevance: the universities, where some children of the slave-owning elites from Brazil, Angola, and Mozambique go to study; the mercantile relations associated with the slave trade, and the assistance solidarity among masons who circulate among these territories, of their own free will or as convicts.

It is in this context that we see the coincidence of Freemasonry with the slaveholding clubs when conflicts arose caused by the abolition of the slave trade. This connection is always referred to in the recriminations of the few who tried to apply abolitionist measures against slavers and who denounce their compromises with the secret societies, and the articulation of these clubs and societies in the axis Brazil, Mozambique, Mauritius (Capela, 1993: 197). The expressions of these interoceanic networks are of diverse nature and go beyond the chronology of Brazilian independence (1822), especially with regard to the articulation of slave trafficking networks. In the case of Mozambique, these networks and their masonic articulations<sup>21</sup>

20 Instructions from the Prince Regent to the Governor of Mozambique on October 16, 1800, quoted from Capela, *O Escravismo...*, 196. On Freemasonry in Mauritius see Allan Michael, “Mauritius a Multicultural Fraternity,” in John S. Wade, *Reflections on 300 Years of Freemasonry* (London: Lewis Masonic, 2017), 107-118.

21 One must, however, be careful with some statements from secondary sources. The “Anais maçõn-

only lost relevance in the 1850s and intensified until then as a form of resistance to the anti-slavery measures.<sup>22</sup>

The constitution of lodges is associated with the negotiable commercial articulation between these spaces. The confluence of these factors, where the defense of economic interests was prevalent, meant that Freemasonry developed around those same interests and that it was in the name of them, more than in the name of ideals, that resistance movements to the instituted powers developed, especially when the anti-slavery movement began to develop.

The elements known today reveal the existence of well-placed and influential masons in trade and in the Mozambican colonial administration, acting cohesively, which allows us to assume the existence of a lodge since the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. It is likely that lodges existed in Mozambique throughout the first half of the nineteenth century, perhaps without discontinuities. An Inquisition process reveals the existence of masonic lodges operating in that territory before 1812 and involving personalities already known to us, which reinforces the conviction of a continued activity since the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. (Appendix 3)

The denunciation is from 1812 and refers especially to José Joaquim de Araújo Aranha, in whose house the freemasons used to meet. Araújo Aranha was initiated in July 1791, on the same day and in the same lodge where Silva Freire was initiated, as we saw above. The network of relations of these men articulated itself throughout the Empire space and their activity was supported, either by masons, individually, or by organized lodges of a Freemasonry that operated clandestinely, but, apparently, with the condescension, or even complicity, of some governors (Costa, 2018). Great colonial officials had connections to Freemasonry or would even be freemasons such as the captain-general (1793–97) Diogo de Sousa Coutinho (Gonçalves 1999: 361), later count of Rio Pardo, and the ombudsman Tavares de Sequeira (Capela 2016: 304-305). The denunciation of 1812 hints that Freemasonry was a relatively well-known society, that it was known who were its main members, its “majoral,” and where they met. The presence of freemasons was not limited to the capital, at the time located in the Mozambique Island. Vicente Francisco Rangel is said to have taken possession of “a catechism of the sect of the freemasons,” which had come

---

icos fluminenses” of 1832 states that: “The first regular lodge of the Brazilian Freemasonry had the title of “Reunião” (Reunion) and was installed in Niteroi in 1801. It affiliated with the Orient of Mauritius. With a rite inexistent in Portugal, a rite exported from the French colonies in the last decades of the seventeen hundreds, this and another (1803) Brazilian lodge and one from the Cape of Good Hope (1824) were the only ones to adopt such a rite outside French territory” Anais Maçônicos Fluminenses, Rio de Janeiro: Typ. Imp. E Const. de Seignot-Plancher e C<sup>a</sup>, 1832. But this statement still lacks confirmation. More consistent seems to be the existing formation in the manuscript of a travel journal which states that there was a lodge in Mozambique with the name “União Fidelidade” (Fidelity Union) of the Scottish Rite which functioned since 1828, being nowadays believable that it existed much earlier. See Biblioteca Municipal do Porto (BMP) codex 1.317, Travel Diary from Lisbon to Tete (1859–1860).

22 Only the articulation between teams of researchers from Portugal and Brazil will allow us to study in detail the dimension and functioning of these overseas masonic and slave traders’ relation networks that have been in place since the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

from Sofala during the apprehension of Araújo Aranha's property. There were thus freemasons spread throughout Sofala, perhaps a store in operation. The denunciation mentions the registration of "new members" in 1812, revealing an expanding organization.<sup>23</sup>

### **The slave trade and the establishment and consolidation of Liberalism**

João Batista Moreira, Baron of Moreira (1798–1868) was involved in liberal circles in Porto before the Revolution of 1820 and when the liberal troops arrived in Lisbon he was seen at the public solemnities in the building of the old Inquisition Palace. He maintained close ties with great figures of liberalism. Moreira was initiated in the Porto Amor da Razão<sup>24</sup> (Love of Reason) lodge and later in the Eremia<sup>25</sup> and was a friend of Ferreira Borges (1786–1838), one of the great figures of the 1820 Revolution (Noronha, 1862).

The future Baron of Moreira always remained liberal, and it was he who made the connection of the support of the slavers to the Regency of D. Pedro in the Azores, during the preparation of the invasion of Portugal. As consul he ensured the landing

of slaves in Brazil as long as the slavers contributed to the regency on Terceira Island. Three major contributors stand out (coming from Mozambique to Brazil in 1829) João Bonifácio Alves da Silva, one of the richest Portuguese slavers financiers of the regency of Terceira Island, António José Pedrosa and João Manuel da Silva Sumatra Campeão. Between them they supplied four ships that were the first core of the constitutional fleet. The Brazilian newspaper "Imparcial" (Impartial) reported that these three merchants had offered the lugger Santo António, "sailboat, lined with copper, armed and equipped, loaded with rice, brandy, sugar and tobacco." Brazil recognized the regency and granted the Portuguese slavers the necessary facilities to land the slaves on Brazilian shores. "And so the slavers of Mozambique were financiers of the liberals against the absolutists in the Portuguese civil war" (Capela, 1979: 157).

In the controversy over his removal as consul in Rio de Janeiro for providing cover for the slave trade João Batista Moreira was protected in the Portuguese government by the viscount of Sá da Bandeira (abolitionist), Mendes Leal and Gaspar Pereira, as was widely commented in the newspapers when the pressure of opinion for his replacement for colluding with the slave traders increased.<sup>26</sup>

23 The closure, in that year, of the Inquisition court of Goa, which had jurisdiction over Mozambique, the absence of a law forbidding Freemasonry until 1818, and the condescension of the authorities, more concerned with assuring their share of the slave traffic, during the short periods in which they exercised those functions, than in pursuing secret societies to which some of their partners in this traffic belonged, makes one accept that masonic lodges existed without interruption, at least until the outbreak of Miguelism, which was also felt in the territory, imposing the application of the new law on secret societies of 1823.

24 Oliveira Marques refers to this lodge as the first in the 1821 list of lodges created after the 1820 Revolution (Marques 1996: vol. I 405.)

25 Although mentioned by his biographer, no data about this lodge is known.

26 Newspaper Comércio do Porto April 3, 1862.



During the difficult period of the *mi-guelismo*, of persecutions of liberals and freemasons, the Loja União e Fidelidade (Union and Fidelity Lodge), of the Scottish Rite supported the liberals degraded in Mozambique.<sup>27</sup> There is no doubt that the capital accumulated in Brazil and the African colonies from the slave trade financed Portuguese liberalism, both in the military action that consolidated it after 1832 and in the capitalist development that followed (Capela 2012: 7). Some of the great slavers joined Freemasonry at two key moments: during the resistance to abolitionist measures and, later, upon their return to Portugal as wealthy merchants, as we will see at the end. Their adherence should not be understood as principled, but merely the fruit of their status as wealthy merchants and the enjoyment of the transoceanic network from which they benefited (Capela, 2012: 175-176).

“The additional convention of 1817, agreed upon with the British, limiting trafficking on the west coast to the regions south of the equator and in the east between Lourenço Marques Bay and Cabo Delgado gave rise to the fact that from 1821 onwards slavery with the condescension of liberalism increased significantly. Brazil’s independence contributed to this increase, since England’s recognition of the new country was always conditional on the abolition of the slave trade, in conflict with Brazilian interests that depended on slave labor. The realization that English pressure was increasing encouraged an accelerated run for African slaves, particularly from the Indian Ocean. With the Mozambican economy converted to colonial

slavery soon Brazilians and Mozambicans created movements that favored a separation from Portugal, such as, for example, the attempt to subordinate the Captancy of Rios de Sena directly to Brazil in 1821, as a condition for maintaining their slavery benefits whenever they felt their interests were threatened. (Capela, 1979: 152; 1993: 184-185) and used masonic organizations to fight the anti-slavery movement. The secessionist movements in Mozambique did not refer to the independence of the colony, due to the total absence of a national feeling in its elites, composed of Portuguese, Goan, and Brazilian, but to its connection with Brazil to maintain the slave trade.

If liberals, slavers and freemasons coincided in the maintenance of this traffic for various opportunistic reasons, it is also true that the boundary is not between liberals and supporters of the old regime. Vasconcelos e Cirne, for example, governor of Quelimane and a slaver, remained a firm absolutist, opponent of the “freemasons” (Capela, 1979: 157). Liberals and absolutists coincided in the defense and practice of this trade. Both absolutist and liberal governors were among the main promoters of the transatlantic traffic from the ports of Mozambique.

The Liberal Revolution only came to Mozambique through a military coup on June 25, 1821, promoted by Domingos Correia Arouca (1790–1861). Arouca had been a militia captain in Portugal, then an army officer in Mozambique, and a member of the government of this colony. He was a well-known slaver and freemason, which we will cover later.

27 BPMP, codex 1317, Oliveira Travel Diary ..., fl 112.

António Júlio de Castro Pinto de Magalhães, secretary of the government of Mozambique between 1841 and 1843, states, in 1842, that a secret society with connections to lodges in Lisbon, Cuba, and Brazil had been formed since 1835 (Capela 1993: 199). The opposition to the anti-slave trader policies has long been based on the links between what the official reports from the governors to Lisbon call “secret societies from Havana, Rio de Janeiro, and Pernambuco” to which must be added the links between Mozambican and Portuguese lodges. There are, besides masons, lodges organized in Mozambique since the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, namely the Loja União e Fidelidade (Union and Fidelity Lodge), which in 1828 practiced the Scottish Rite in Mozambique Island.<sup>28</sup> The lodge must have been in operation since an earlier date. In 1843, the following members of the lodge belonged to it: José Inácio Andrade Néri, military, venerable of the lodge; Joaquim de Santa Ana Garcia Miranda, magistrate and slaver, 1<sup>st</sup> warden; Cândido José Bernardes, 2<sup>nd</sup> warden; Joaquim Faustino da Costa, orator and treasurer; Tito Augusto de Araújo Sicard, secretary. Joaquim de Santa Ana Garcia Miranda was mayor and member of the Government Council, between 1838 and 1840, a known slaver and one of the authors of what was called the “leading club of the slavers faction,” which sought to oppose the abolitionist policy, involved in the project of subordination of Mozambique to Brazil.<sup>29</sup>

## **Marquis Sá da Bandeira and abolitionism**

**B**ernardo de Sá Nogueira de Figueiredo, marquis Sá da Bandeira, took two abolitionist initiatives in 1836. The first, still as Minister of the Navy, at the beginning of the year, which he presents to the Chamber of Peers. It was not favorably received “and, in the brief appreciations that were made in the Chamber about it, voices were soon raised contesting the timeliness and feasibility of the proposed measures” (Marques, 2008: 38) and another, already as prime minister of a setembrist government, the decree of December 10. This decree was made “in dictatorship,” that is, without convening the Parliament, which in itself is significant as to the confidence in the support to pass the law. The decree is signed, in addition to Sá da Bandeira, by Passos Manuel (1801–62) and António Manuel Lopes Vieira de Castro (1796–1842). All were masons. Nothing is known about Vieira de Castro’s masonic activity. Passos Manuel (1801–62) was initiated in 1820 (?) and was Grão-Mestre da Maçonaria do Norte (Grand Master of the Masonry of the North) between 1834–52. Sá da Bandeira was initiated in 1820, but leaves Freemasonry the same year, like so many others initiated in the euphoria of the 1820 Revolution.<sup>30</sup>

The setembrist policy is strongly anti-British and the issue of slavery is at the origin of numerous conflicts with the United

28 Oliveira Marques only references this lodge for the 1940s (Marques 1996: Vol. II, T. I, 340-41).

29 Diary of the Trip from Lisbon to Tete (1859-1860). BMP - Codex 1.317.

30 Oliveira Marques indicates him as a probable member of a Lisbon lodge, about which nothing is known and that would have existed between 1820 and 1823 (Marques 1996: Vol. II, 173).

Kingdom. However, this initiative should be read in a different light: beyond the personal anti-slavery convictions of its authors, Sá da Bandeira had the intention of restoring a colonial empire in Africa, once Brazil was lost. For that it was necessary to have an economic development in the colonies that did not depend on the slave trade which, due to the easy wealth it generated, practically put a stop to any other economic activity. In support of Sá da Bandeira on this issue, there was always the Duke of Palmela (1781–1850), who was never a freemason, but was a convinced abolitionist, although for opposite reasons. His vision of foreign policy was European, favoring, above all, the strategic relationship with the United Kingdom. The pressure from the slave traders led Portugal to a permanent tension with the British. The persistence of slavers in the traffic until the end of the 1840s impeded the colonial project and brought relations between the two countries “to the brink of armed conflict,” a tension that ended with the approval of the Palmerson Bill of August 24, 1839, which in practice corresponds to an English Ultimatum over Portugal (Alexandre, 1991: 317, 333) that, after lengthy negotiations, would give rise to an amicable solution in the Treaty of July 3, 1842. Once this question was closed “the few abolitionists that existed in Portugal began to raise the issue of slavery again. However, they did it foot by foot and, instead of going straight to the heart of the problem, they moved in a peripheral way, opting for various forms

of approach” (Marques, 2008: 39).

Those who most opposed Sá da Bandeira’s abolitionist policy were the Mozambican representatives in the liberal parliaments, integrated into the freemasons, using this as a means of pressure in favor of the continuation of trafficking after its outlawing (Capela, 1993: 202). Sá da Bandeira himself attributes the failure of his abolitionist measures to the opposition of the slavers, but the setembrist policy (nor the setembrists) was clearly abolitionist, nor are some of its executors beyond suspicion of connivance with the traffic (Capela, 1979: 179). If the 1836 law was received without much enthusiasm in Portugal, yet in the colonies and in Brazil the reaction is significant.

We will find Masons on opposite sides—abolitionists and slavers—no less than two Grand Masters, Passos Manuel, signer of the 1836 law, and Domingos Correia Arouca (1790–1861).

Domingos Correia Arouca was initiated into Freemasonry on an unknown date and in an unknown Lodge. We only know that Domingos Correia Arouca, “[...] deputy to the first liberal Parliament also for Mozambique, taking advantage of his stay in Lisbon to affiliate the Mozambican lodge to the Grand Orient of Lisbon.”<sup>31</sup> He had a long colonial career. He attained Grade 33 of the Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite, and was a member of the Supreme Council. He was the third Sovereign Grand Commander of the Supreme Council attached to the Grand Orient of the Scottish Rite<sup>32</sup> the said José

31 It refers to the Grande Oriente Lusitano. AHU, Mozambique, cx 161, n° 17; cx 164, n° 23.

32 The Grand Orient of the Scottish Rite was known as the Oriente of José da Silva Carvalho (1782–1856) who founded it in 1840. This organization lasted until 1885, but practically without activity since 1861.

da Silva Carvalho (1782–1856) and cumulatively its third Grand Master, from 1858 until his death on January 24, 1861 (Marques, 1986: 98-99). Later, in 1840, Arouca affiliated another Mozambique lodge in the Orient said Silva Carvalho (Capela, 193: 199, 207) of which he was Grand Master, when he was in Lisbon as the first senator for Mozambique, together with deputy Teodorico José Abranches, both well-known slavers, with strong political connections, particularly to the ministers of the navy and overseas, many of whom were also masons. The coincidence of these Freemasonry affiliations with office-holding in the colonies and commercial activity is important for understanding the involvement of Freemasonry factions in colonial slavery.

Marquis Fronteira e Alorna (1802–1881), a chartist, ironizes in his memoirs about the political ingenuity of the setembrist Sá da Bandeira, stating that the latter, «a capital enemy of slavery and, without knowing it, surrounded by slavers, who were his close friends, gave them important commissions in our colonies, in order to put an end to the traffic they were about to carry out” (Andrade, 1929: 161). The indications of this are clear, as the consequences of the appointment of some governors illustrate.

João Carlos Augusto de Oyenhausen Gravenburg (1776–1838), marquis of Aracaty, friend of Dom Pedro I of Brazil and also a freemason, was governor in Brazil of Pará, Ceará, Mato Grosso and S. Paulo, and Minister of Foreign Affairs (1827–1829). Because of political disagreements, he renounces his Brazilian nationality and is appointed governor of Mozambique

(October 1837 to March 1838), where he dies. He is nominated by the setembrists to apply Sá Bandeira’s law and put an end to trafficking. Once in Mozambique he refuses to do so because he considers it inapplicable in the face of generalized resistance from the entire commercial body of the colony, and no actions of any nature are known to him to combat it.

He was succeeded by António Ramalho de Sá, governor from March 1838 to March 1840, and nothing changed, with the slavers continuing their activity despite the intensification of patrols of the Indian Ocean by ships from the United Kingdom. Ramalho de Sá complained in 1839 about the “societies” that were organized to fight abolitionism:

“[...] This society is organized masonically, and the masonic lodges that are in these works are not all conformed either in rites or in orient, but they are conformed and united for this purpose [the resistance to the antislavery current]. In Lisbon itself there is a lodge whose worshipful master is a certain Menezes, who was clerk of the junta here, and did a lot of thieving, and perversities, and later clerk of the Junta of Angola where he had the same behavior, who works in this way, and whose main goal is to obtain the independence of the African colonies. I don’t know this Menezes, but I have lots of ideas of him for this cause, and lots of ideas of his works. Here there is a lodge that is thought to be a chartist lodge, that persistently works in this same end, and that under different pretexts some partners have put in Lisbon in the hands of a João Gomes da Costa money to get certain things that will facilitate their work.”<sup>33</sup>

33 Governor-General’s reply to José Maria Marcelino da Rocha Cabral. AHM codice 11-2396, pages

This was the political climate in Mozambique where colonial slavery was organized in various forms, including masonic lodges linked to Portugal, to resist and combat abolitionist measures both in the colony and in Portugal, involving without much difficulty some governors in this traffic.

Ramalho de Sá was succeeded by Pereira Marinho in the government of Mozambique, from March 1841 to February 1843. He was the only governor who tried to stand up to colonial slavery, collaborating with the United Kingdom in the seizure of ships. His stay was conflictive and his official correspondence, as well as the work he dedicated to his government, allow us to understand many aspects of the slave trade already in the 40s, and to understand the involvement in it of major interests in Lisbon, which he claimed reached the court itself, and the coincidence of slave clubs with masonic lodges” (Marinho, 1842; Capela, 2016: 94). Marinho, claims there was in Mozambique a “leading club of the slavers faction” that had been installed by the Asian Joaquim de Santa Ana Garcia de Miranda “of combinations of some slavers to promote the separation of Mozambique from Portugal” (Marinho, 1842: 77). He was eventually removed from office, and chose to come out publicly to denounce the connection between secret societies and slavery, just as his predecessor had already done privately to the government yet not acting to combat it as Marinho did.

The violent campaign against Marinho had two opponents: the representatives of the slavers in Portugal and the coming to

power of the chartists who used their press to attack the governor who was a known setembrist, and through him the colonial policy of the setembrists (Alexandre 1991: 329).

António Júlio de Castro Pinto de Magalhães who was secretary of the government of the Province of Mozambique during the government of Pereira Marinho would say that “the African-Canarins to carry out all their plans [...] and to be able to traffic in slaves have long formed a secret society, which has aggregated to itself some mestizos and some degenerate Europeans; and although it is composed of few members, and all of them with very little fortune, and no education, nevertheless it has a gigantic strength which results from the union of intimate relations with other secret societies in Havana, Rio de Janeiro and Pernambuco.”<sup>34</sup> Insisting again on this aspect of the organized network of slavers between the Indian Ocean and the Atlantic. The statements of these various colonial interlocutors allow us to understand that there had to be a differentiation of organizational forms. While Freemasonry is linked to political and commercial elites with influence both in the colony and in the government of Portugal, Pinto de Magalhaes’ reference seems to point to “slave clubs” involving not merchant shipowners but local agents of lower social status, in both cases, however, establishing transoceanic networks.

Whenever conflicts arise as a result of attempts to abolish trafficking, those who tried to implement abolitionist measures and restrict the action of slave ships and

---

13. October 14, 1839.

34 AHU room 12 folder 8, nº 1 from António Júlio de Castro Pinto de Magalhães to the minister. Lisbon January 5, 1842.

denounce the action of secret societies and their articulation between Portugal, Brazil, Montevideo, Havana, Mozambique, and, for an earlier period, Mauritius. The solidarity among members of secret societies contributed to the organization of slavers who, through them, sought to structure a defense to maintain their activity between the coasts of India and the Americas.

In the 1840s, the chartists consolidated their power and, around the same time, many Portuguese with huge fortunes made in the slave trade began to arrive in Portugal. One of the most notorious is Joaquim Ferreira dos Santos, Count of Ferreira, a close friend and great financier of António Bernardo da Costa Cabral, a freemason and Grand Master, as we have seen. The connection between the Count of Tomar and the slavers (Capela 2012: 7, 151) is notorious. With the coup of January 1842 that brought him to power, the Count of Ferreira became an active financier of the chartist policy that rewarded him with the elevation in Pair of the Kingdom. The bulk of these returning slavers have their roots in the north of the country and it is in Porto that they settle. Proud of the fortune they have accumulated, they are politically conservative and, as a rule, chartists. Rocha Martins in 1849 characterizes these “Brazilians,” as they were known in Portugal, this way: “The lords of the Oporto square [mostly slavers] were homogeneous in temperament and opinions: cautious, reserved; in chartist politics [...]” (Martins, s.d: 5).

With the Regeneration<sup>35</sup> (1850) the return of Brazilians increases and it will be their great fortunes that allow the economic development of the country. The accumulated capital will be invested in banking and insurance houses, railroads, churches, hospitals, industry, and commercial companies of all kinds. “The British consul in Lisbon estimated 300 to 400 the number of Portuguese involved in the slave trade, in Brazil, who voluntarily returned to Portugal between March 1850 and March 1851, entering the amount he estimated to be as high as 400,000 pounds” (Capela, 1979: 220).

His connections to Freemasonry are discrete, but they do not go unnoticed by the more catholic press. Joaquim Pinto da Fonseca died in Porto on October 23, 1897. “As early as November 3, a note in “A Palavra” [a Catholic daily] under the title “A Maçonaria no Porto” [Freemasonry in Porto], quoting *Comércio do Porto*, mentions a donation of \$100,000 by Mr. Joaquim and Mr. Manuel Pinto da Fonseca to the Asilo de S. João, as a suffrage for the soul of his father,” to which they add a commentary: “readers may already know that the Asilo de S. João (Asylum of S. John) is a robust child that Freemasonry gave birth to in the invicta city of Porto, I don’t know exactly how many years ago” (Capela, 2012: 175).

When the Grande Oriente Lusitano Unido (United Lusitanian Grand Orient) was created in 1869 the debate was no longer about slavery. That issue was closed,

35 The Regeneration movement had as its agenda the renewal of the political system and the creation of the infrastructure necessary for the development of the country. The Regeneration sought to put into practice a set of administrative, economic and social reforms, in order to promote economic growth, remove the political and institutional constraints that were attributed to bad governance and to the time wasted in the permanent political-ideological struggles, unable to overcome the economic and social backwardness of the country.

but about forced labor that will remain on the masonic and political agenda for a few decades. But that is another topic.

There is no doubt that circumstances meant that in Mozambique trafficking relied on the protection of organizations such as the freemasons and slavers clubs to

maintain slavery, and that the Portuguese liberal revolution not only did not reject the financial support it received from the slave traders, but even regretted not having benefited from it more widely (Andrade, 1932: vol. I, 311).

**APPENDIX 1**

***Mozambique Governors 1797-1847***

Francisco Guedes de Carvalho Meneses da Costa (1797-09.1801)

Isidro de Sousa e Sá (09.1801-08.1805)

Francisco de Paula de Albuquerque do Amaral Cardoso (08.1805-12.1807)

Junta administrativa provisória (12.1807-08.1809)

António Manuel de Melo e Castro de Mendonça (08.1809-08.1812)

Marcos Caetano de Abreu e Meneses (08.1812-02.1817)

José Francisco de Paula Cavalcanti de Albuquerque (02.1817-09.1818)

Junta administrativa provisória (09.1818-11.1819)

João da Costa M. Brito-Sanches (11.1819-06.1821)

Junta administrativa provisória (06.1821-06.1925)

João Manuel da Silva (06.1925-03.1825)

Sebastião Xavier Botelho (03.1825-08.1829)

Paulo José Miguel de Brito (08.1829-03.1832)

Junta administrativa provisória (08.1829-03.1832)

José Gregório Pagado (03.1832-03.1836)

Junta administrativa provisória (03.1836-03.1837)

António José de Melo (03.1837-10.1837)

João Carlos Augusto de Oeynhausien Gravenburg (10.1837-03.1838)

A. de Ramalho de Sá (03.1838-03.1840)

Joaquim Pereira Marinho (03.1840-05.1841)

João da Costa Xavier (05.1841-02.1843)

Rodrigo Luciano de Abreu e Lima (02.1843-05.1847)



## APPENDIX 2

Rio de Janeiro, July 22, 1799.

My dear friend of the heart. There is no need to tell you what happened to me up to the day of my departure from Lisbon, because, as you were there you would come to know everything, and I was careful to instruct whoever gave the information. It is of my journey that I must inform you, and I will do so, so that, knowing the good treatment I received, you may lessen the sorrow that friendship would force you to feel about me.

As soon as I boarded the ship, I found a welcome among all her officers and those of the House of India. They recommended me to those to whom I was already highly recommended by good friends in Lisbon, and among them I am very grateful to Cunha and Bordalo.<sup>36</sup> The latter and his family not only recommended me, but their friendship forced them to do even more. I was soon approached by an ensign who is going to Goa with me, a friend of John Debeux, who gave me news of you that terrified me. In truth, the insolent Bazá or Vizir's insults went too far, and, although he partly remedied them, they still deserved, well ..., time, time.

Throughout the trip I did not feel a headache, and throughout I was very well received by the commander, officers and passengers, and, except for the small inconveniences of some rebates when we saw some ships that were supposed to be French, and for this reason they made us spend the nights standing, because of the beds going into the trenches, and this was practiced four times, fruitlessly, and nothing came of it, because the ships took another course. On these occasions I observed things that made me laugh, to see the commander—a lieutenant-captain by rank—running to the batteries with sword in hand, and encouraging with strong words the crew and the convicts to fight bravely against the wicked French, that His Majesty would reward them, and that the same God would fill them with blessings for the cause also being his, the chaplain and three benevolent “Rilhafolistres”<sup>37</sup> going to the mission of China wanting to confess all [illegible] confessing none, barely able to say a word for the fright that frightened them, the faces pale, the stench they exuded from the filth that fear deposited in the lining of their shorts put them in a despicable state, the officials in their places giving orders contrary to each other and causing much disorder, the artillerymen soldiers, divided by pieces—36 in all—and to each of them seven gentlemen degraded, and the others of this class, I entered, and although I was also wearing the mask of crime, I was ordered, armed with sword and pistol, to serve as assistant to one of the passengers, a frigate captain, who by reason of his rank commanded the starboard battery. This man of the age of 24, well educated, a close friend of Stokler<sup>38</sup> and most of our friends, came up to me to

---

36 António Mendes Bordalo.

37 It refers to the Convent of Rilhafoles (Miguel Bombarda Hospital in 1911), which belonged to the Congregation of the Mission of Saint Vincent of Paul and was founded in 1717.

38 This must be Francisco de Borja Garção Sockler (1759–1829), 1st baron of Vila da Praia, accused of collaborating with the French during the 1st invasion, denounced as a member of the Loja Amizade (Friendship Lodge) in 1809, he joined the Miguel movement in 1828. Marques, *História da*

comment on so many gallantries, and with him and another passenger, a son of Mozambique, who carried lots of good books, we always lived in good union, spending the days and nights together, talking and reading, to relieve the sadness that is regularly felt on a long journey. These two, that besides thinking the same thing, there was still another reason that connected us, and a lot—remember that inquiry you made to me at Borda-lo's house, and you will soon judge what I am talking about. With 47 days of travel, we arrived in this city on the 9th of this month, and on the following day we disembarked at the fortress of Ilha das Cobras where I am located. The captain of the ship recommended me to the governor, which caused the governor to give me good headquarters, and, after conversing with me, he became such a friend that his house is mine. He sent a clergyman, who is supposedly his son, to walk with me. Every day he presents me with a gift and allows me to be visited by those who seek me out, which is not a small number, and for which the naval officers who are here are enough, who, as soon as they heard that a prisoner was being held here by Jac[obino] and P[edreiro] L[ivre] came to see me and offer whatever was in their power. I hear that in these 12 days we will leave this port to continue our journey to India, where I know I will find friends, and many, and in this certainty I tell you now that I will not stay in that country for many months. From Goa to Bombay is close and from there to England there are many ships in one of which I will return to Europe at the expense of the Holy Brotherhood, which has obligations to do so. What I will feel is that I will receive benefits from the English, being a nation that I hate so much. From England I shall go to Holland, or stay there, or be transported to France, to live there while my beloved country has monsters in it. And as soon as I finish her [illegible] I will return to her [illegible] to sacrifice even my life, if necessary. In these terms only [illegible] you will receive news from me, and if I live and don't get the calculations wrong for the whole of August 1800 I will drink beer in London to your health, where I will stay a short time, because Pit's<sup>39</sup> agents hate them, as well as those of the decanted Manique. Whatever my destiny may be, and whatever country I live in, you can be sure that I will be the same in everything, because Freire will not change.

Earn good money, my good friend, so that you will not enter the class of suitors again when misfortune wants evil to still [?]

I will leave this one to your good friend Mr. Beltrão<sup>40</sup> to give it to you as soon as you arrive, to whom you will tell my story and tell him that I am your friend, so that he will more willingly excuse the confidence I have in taking charge of it and of others that are for the Kingdom and that I took as soon as I arrived here, asking for his protection so that on this island I will be well treated. I know that he has spoken to the Governor. I thank him and beg you to kiss his hand for me.

Farewell my dear M[odesto]. We will see each other again whenever it is. Let us

---

Maçonaria..., Vol. I, 358.

39 William Pitt (1759–1806), English Prime Minister from 1783 until 1801 and then from 1804 until his death.

40 Luís Beltrão Gouveia de Almeida, Chancellor of the Relation of Rio de Janeiro. Note by Gomes Leite in the transcription of the document.

always be friends, no matter how far apart we are. Remember me always, I will always remember you, and receive a hug from me, with the greatest tenderness from my heart, full of longing.

Health and Friendship

(a) Freire

P.S. You can write to me so that the letter will be in Lisbon in August next year and be sent to me as soon as you know where I will be there. Don't deprive me of your news too long.<sup>41</sup>

---

41 (Leite, 1995, 193-200).

### **APPENDIX 3**

#### **Denunciation**

On the twelfth day of March of this present year of one thousand eight hundred and twelve, in this residence of the cathedral of the capital of Mozambique, in this, I mean, being present the Most Illustrious Father José Nicolau de Jesus Maria Pegado, Commissioner of the Inquisition, with me Father Matos Inácio da Fonseca, curate of the said cathedral, elected as interim notary by the said Most Illustrious and ?? commissioner appeared the R. Fr. Salvador de S. Domingos Peres, religious of the Order of Preachers of the Congregation of India, and currently parochial vicar of the Church of Our Lady of the Conception of Mossuril; which, for saying that he came to denounce things pertaining to the holy office, gave the said Ilmo. and ? commissioner oath of the Holy Gospels; on which putting he denouncer his right hand, promised to tell the truth and keep secret.

And asked what he had to say, he replied that on the twenty-seventh of last month José Antonio Caldas Portuguese sergeant-at-arms of the Regiment of Militia of this capital, and married and living there, going to visit the complainant in the Convent of S. Domingos where he was in those days and Nicolau Caetano Almeida was present. In those days Nicolau Caetano de Almeida was there, born in the lands of the north, widower, Captain of the Ordnance, and resident in this same capital, and told him that in those days there had been nightly gatherings of members of the said sect of freemasons in the house of José Joaquim de Araújo Aranha, known as freemason, and reputed to be the leader of that sect; to whose house, or masonic lodge, the members went one by one, from ten o'clock onwards: But the said Caldas did not tell the complainant, neither who the members were, nor how he knew it.

He said more:

On the tenth of this month, being the complainant in the house of Vicente Francisco Rangel, natural of the city of Goa, and lawyer in this capital, being present in the same house the said José António Caldas and Benjamim Antunes de Melo, natural of the city of Goa, married, resident in this capital, the said lawyer Vicente Francisco Rangel had told him that in the nocturnal gatherings that had taken place of the members of the sect of freemasons in the same house of the said José Joaquim de Araújo Aranha new members had been enrolled, without however telling him who they were.

He said more: the complainant, that the said Vicente Francisco Rangel, had told him, before the said José António Caldas, that he had in his hand a catechism of the sect of the free masons of the handwriting of the said José Joaquim de Araújo Aranha, on which was written his name, that is, the name of the said Aranha; and that this catechism was found in the inventory that was made upon the death of Francisco António de Andrade, and that it was the same one that had come from Sofala taken from the estate of the said José Joaquim de Araújo Aranha; when it was apprehended and sent to His Excellency and [?] Bishop [?].

Asked, if he had more to say, he replied that he had nothing more to say.

And when this report was read to him, and heard and understood by him, he said

that it was in conformity with what he had said, and that he said and ratified it again, and signed herewith the said Illustrious and [??] Commissioner, and I the said priest and Mateus Inácio da Fonseca, acting notary, wrote.

(signatures of the commissioner of the Holy Office and the complainant)<sup>42</sup>

---

42 On the back of the last sheet is written: “Denunciation against José Joaquim de Araújo Aranha, whose witnesses referred to could not be questioned last year, and were not questioned this year because the court was extinct.” In a different handwriting is written: “Pedreiros Livres em Moçambique” (Free masons in Mozambique). The complaint was not followed up, because the Goa Inquisition was extinguished in 1812. Salvador de São Domingos Perez, *Denuncia Contra José Joaquim de Araujo Aranha por Pedreiro Livre*, manuscript, 12.03.1812. BN of Rio de Janeiro: [http://objdigital.bn.br/objdigital2/acervo\\_digital/div\\_manuscritos/mss1458899/mss1458899.pdf](http://objdigital.bn.br/objdigital2/acervo_digital/div_manuscritos/mss1458899/mss1458899.pdf).

## Bibliography

Ernesto de Campos de, (1832), (rev. e coord.) *Memórias do Conde de Lavradio*, Coimbra: Imprensa da Universidade.

BARATA, Alexandre Mansur, (1999), *Luzes e Sombras: a acção da Maçonaria brasileira 1870-1910*. Campinas: Editora Unicamp.

BARATA, Alexandre Mansur, (2006), *Maçonaria, Sociabilidade Ilustrada e Independência do Brasil (1790-1822)*. Juiz de Fora: Editora UFJF.

BARRETO, Célia, (1995), *Ação das sociedades secretas*, in: Holanda, Sérgio Buarque de (org), *História Geral da Civilização Brasileira*, São Paulo: Difel, t. II, vol.3.

BOTELHO, Sebastião Xavier, (1835), *Escravidão, Benefícios que podem provir às nossas possessões de África da proibição daquele tráfico...* Lisboa.

CAMINO, Rizzardo da, (2010), *Dicionário maçônico*. São Paulo: Madras.

CAPELA, José, (1979), *As burguesias portuguesas e a abolição do tráfico da escravidão, 1810-1942*. Porto: Edições Afrontamento.

CAPELA, José, (1993), *Escravidão Colonial*. Porto: Edições Afrontamento.

CAPELA José, (2005), "Mozambique-Brazil Influences Caused by the Slave Trade," em José C. Curto e Renée Souldre-La France, ed., *Africa and the Americas: Interconnections during the Slave Trade*. Trenton: Africa World Press, 2005.

CAPELA, José, (2012) *Conde de Ferreira & Cia Traficantes de escravos*. Lisboa. Edições Afrontamento.

CAPELA, José, (2016) *O Tráfico de escravos nos Portos de Moçambique 1717-1904*. Porto: Edições Afrontamento, 2ª ed.

CARVALHO, José Liberato Freire de, (1982), *Memórias da Vida de José Liberato freire de Carvalho*. Lisboa: Assírio e Alvim.

CASTELLANI, José William, e CARVALHO Almeida de, (2009), *História do Grande Oriente do Brasil: a Maçonaria na História do Brasil*, Madras.

CLAVEL, F. - T. B. -, (1853) *Histoire Pittoresque de la Franc-Maçonnerie et des sociétés secrètes anciennes et modernes*. Paris: Pagnerre Éditeur.

COLUSSI, Eliane Lucia, (2000), *A Maçonaria gaúcha no século XIX*. 2ª Edição. Passo Fundo: UPF.

COSTA, Fernando Marques, (2018), *A Maçonaria entre a força e o cacete, entre o mito e a realidade*. Lisboa: Campo da Comunicação.

DELOBETTE, Édouard, (2005), *Ces Messieurs du Havre. Négociants, commissionnaires et armateurs de 1680 à 1830*, Université de Caen. tel-00219751f

GONÇALVES, Adeldo, (1999), *Gonzaga um Poeta do Iluminismo*, Rio de Janeiro: Editora Nova Fronteira.

GOENDER, Jacob, (1978), *Escravidão Colonial*. Ática, 6ª ed: Editora Expressão Popular, 2016.

HARRISON, David, (2011), “Liverpool free-masonry, the slave trade and transatlantic network,” in David Harrison, *The Transformation of Freemasonry: “The Revolution of the World.”* Suffolk: Arima Publishing.

LEITE, Paulo Gomes, (1991), “A Maçonaria, o Iluminismo e a Inconfidência Mineira,” em, *Revista de Minas Gerais*, n.º 33, 1991.

LEITE, Paulo Gomes, (1992), “A Maçonaria, o Iluminismo e a Inconfidência Mineira,” in *Jornal Minas Gerais - Suplemento Literário*, 21 de abril 1992.

LEITE, Paulo Gomes, (1995), “Vieira Couto e as Ligações entre a Maçonaria do Tijuco, de Portugal e de Moçambique,” em *Revista Médica de Minas Gerais*, Vol. 5, n.º 3, julho a setembro 1995.

LOPES, Edmundo Correia, (s.d) *A escravatura: subsídios para a sua história*. Lisboa: Antígona.

MARINHO, Joaquim Pereira, (1842), *Memória de Combinações*, Lisboa.

MARQUES, A. H. de Oliveira, (1986), *Dicionário de Maçonaria Portuguesa*. Lisboa: Editorial Delta vol. I-II.

MARQUES, A. H. de Oliveira, (1990), *História da Maçonaria em Portugal*, vol. I. Lisboa: Editorial Presença.

MARQUES, A.H. de Oliveira, (1996), *História da Maçonaria em Portugal*, vol. II. Lisboa: Editorial Presença.

MARQUES, José Pedro, (2008), *Sá da Bandeira e o fim da escravidão vitória moral, desforra do interesse*. Lisboa Imprensa de Ciências Sociais,

MARTINS, Francisco José da Rocha, (s/d [1924?]), *A paixão de Camilo (Ana Plácido)*. Lisboa: Edição de autor, Composto e impresso nas Oficinas Gráficas do «ABC».

MICHAEL, Allan, (2017), “Mauritius a Multicultural Fraternity,” in John S. Wade, *Reflections on 300 Years of Freemasonry*. London: Lewis Masonic.

MOREIRA, João Batista, (1862), *Apologia perante o governo de Sua Majestade Fidelíssima apresentada por João Batista Moreira*. Rio de Janeiro: Typ Universal de Laemmert.

MOREL, Marco e SOUSA Françoise Jean Oliveira, (2008), *O poder da Maçonaria: a história de uma sociedade secreta no Brasil*. Rio de Janeiro: Editora Nova Fronteira.

NORONHA, José Feliciano de Castilho Barreto, (1862), *João Batista Moreira, Barão de Moreira*, esboço biográfico. Rio de Janeiro: Typographia Universal de Laemmert.

REICHERT, Sandra Danielle Brinda Venkaya-, (2017), *La franc-maçonnerie à l’Ile Maurice de 1778 à 1915 : entre influences françaises et britanniques, la construction d’une identité mauricienne*. Histoire. Université Michel de Montaigne - Bordeaux III. NNT : 2017BOR30012 ; tel-01617625.

ROCHA, Ilídio, (2000), *A Imprensa de Moçambique*. Lisboa: Edição Livros do Brasil.

RODRIGUES, José Honório, (1961), *Brasil e África outro horizonte (relações políticas brasileiro-africana)*. Rio de Janeiro: Editora Civilização Brasileira.

SAUGERA, Eric, (1995), *Bordeaux Port Négrier, XVIIIe-XIXe Siècles*. Karthala.

SAUNIER, Eric, (2007), “Le Havre, port négrier : de la défense de l’esclavage à l’oubli.” *Cahiers des Anneaux de la Mémoire, Les Anneaux de la Mémoire*. HAL Id : halshs-00467846.

SAUNIER, Éric, (2010), «La Traite des Noirs et l’esclavage à Rouen du siècle des Lumières au temps des abolitions, « *Fascicule Histoire*, no 40, CREA. Rouen.

SAUNIER, Éric, (2013), *Histoire et mémoires de la traite négrière, de l’esclavage et de leurs abolitions en Normandie*, Rouen.

SMITH, Donald BURCH, (2017), “Early Freemasonry in the British Colony of Demerary Essequibo 1813–1835: the Establishment of Union Lodge N.º 247 in an era of slavery,” em John S. Wade, *Reflections on 300 Years of Freemasonry*. London: Lewis Masonic.



# Prince Hall Freemasonry Reconsidered: Mistakes Historians Make

Paul Rich

## 1.



The excellent papers today, presenting aspects of the relationship between race and Freemasonry, show from a historical viewpoint how this has long been a subject worthy of attention. In discussing the situation in the United States, note that almost every country has issues involving race in its history and its fraternities, so by no means is it a unique American concern. If it reflects badly at times on America, similar episodes reflect on other nations.

Also keep in mind that African-American Freemasonry existed for many years while slavery was legal and an important part of the American economy. Black Freemasonry developed when it was impossible for Blacks to join the so-called white lodges.

My primary intention today is to correct a very widespread notion that there exists a single African-American system of Black grand lodges called Prince Hall lodges, and that giving recognition from white grand lodges will somehow solve racial problems in American Masonry and problems of recognition by European and other grand lodges. Nothing could be further from the truth. There are far more Black lodges than those that have been recently acknowledged by the white lodges.

This notion that there are only single Black grand lodges in each state worthy of recognition is a viewpoint actively promoted despite the contrary evidence. Explaining this is worthwhile exercise as the various Black grand lodge web sites could be a gold mine for

historians. They offer minutes of regional and national meetings of grand masters, and comments on relations with white grand lodges as well as assertions of the origins and legitimacy of their grand lodge. (<https://mwphglnc.net/> I will do my best to make this subject comprehensible, and keep in mind that legalisms that have been offered about black lodges often conceal racism. (I was possibly the second white person to join the black society of Masonic scholars, Phylaxis, thirty or more years ago. With Guillermo de los Reyes, I wrote a number of articles for their journal.)

The situation in the United States, regarding race and Freemasonry, is much more complicated than the scant attention it has received thus far, and so has confused historians. This is partly because one group of largely Black member lodges has gone to great efforts to assert its legitimacy over other

Black grand lodges, something those familiar with the claims of the United Grand Lodge of England and its branding of French grand lodges as irregular might appreciate. Prince Hall Affiliated grand lodges (PHA) are the grand lodges generally recognized by white grand lodges. They split off from the Prince Hall Origin or Compact grand lodges (PHO) associated with the National Grand Lodge in the nineteenth century. The PHO and PHA are two—but only two—of several groups of Black Masonic grand lodges. The irregularity of Black lodges except for PHA lodges is largely determined by the Commission on Bogus Masonic Practices. (<https://thephylaxis.org/bogus/>) The Bogus Commission is made up of Prince Hall Affiliated members. This map shows the recognition by the white grand lodges of the PHA grand lodges.

## 2.



It is the PHA lodges that have been getting recognition. While recognition may mean brethren from the lodges can visit each other, it is often recognition without free visitation privileges, and so is not a real recognition.

Putting all of this in a European

context, the various Black grand lodges have not confined themselves to the United States. Some American Black grand lodges have lodges in Europe (<https://mwphglmd.org/overseas/>) Indeed, Prince Hall lodges here in France have been the source of controversy:

3.



(<http://freemasonsfordummies.blogspot.com/2019/02/gl-of-utah-withdraws-recognition-of.html> At this site, please note my comments regarding Prince Hall in France and in other countries.)

The reason for this multiplicity of Masonic bodies is partly racial segregation. Clyde Forsberg describes the origins of Prince Hall lodges as, "...unable to become a Mason through the normal 'American' channels because of his race, in the end he gained entrance into the

order by going over heads to obtain a charter from the Grand Lodge in England ... Hall's African Lodge, by all accounts, offered middle-class black men like himself a ritual gathering place where not only dreams of economic advancement but a strong desire to join the ranks of America's white middle class

might be realized. Ironically, Prince Hall Masons discriminated against darker skinned applicants...". Forsberg claims that the Prince Hall lodges kept Masonry alive during the anti-Masonic era in the 1830s, when white lodges were shuttered. (Clyde R. Forsberg Jr., *Equal Rites: The Book of Mormon, Masonry, Gender, and American Culture*, Columbia University Press, New York, 2004, 22).

American Masonry is still struggling with racial issues. In *The Wall Street Journal* of all places, Alex Beam remarks about the white Masonic view, "The brotherhood of man had its limits. 'The truth is, they are ashamed of being on equality with blacks,' ... very few of the white lodge publications record how the black lodges raised money to support their brother Thurgood Marshall in his winning desegregation case, *Brown v. Board of Education*, or mention famous black Masons like W.E.B. DuBois, Nat King Cole, and Booker T. Washington. (Alex Beam, "On the Level and on the Square," *The Wall Street Journal*, August 22, 2020, C90). While institutions in America are now trying to rectify the benefits they received from slavery and removing the names of slaveowners and racists from building—in Harvard's case setting aside 100 million dollars to recompense descendants of slaves and changing the coat of arms of its famous law school from one of an early donor who had slaves—white lodges have not begun to look at how they benefitted from slavery in endowments and build-

ings, and had racist leaders they still honor. In *The Washington Post*, Colbert King writes, "White loathing of Black people was at the heart of legal and de facto segregation—including the voter suppression schemes now being crafted in states across this country ... White supremacy is America's burden. You know it. I know it." (Colbert I. King, "White supremacy is doing quite well for itself," *The Washington Post*, 21 May 2022, A19).

Connections with Prince Hall, a black leader in colonial and post-revolutionary Boston, are invoked by all the competing Black grand lodges as the litmus test of legitimacy on the grounds that he obtained a charter from the grand lodge of England. The impression created is that there is a lineal descent from that Boston lodge to the lodges that have been most successful in winning national and international recognition. The existence and activities of the original Black lodge in Boston were attacked for many years by white protagonists. The evidence is that the Boston lodge was chartered by the English grand lodge, regularly reported, and helped to start more lodges that in turn started other lodges—only some of which are part of the present group of lodges claiming sole legitimacy. Brent Morris and I published in *Heredom*, journal of the Scottish Rite Research Society, a survey of early American newspapers that traced the early efforts of Prince Hall and his black brothers.

4.



Just here in Paris there is a situation where history has created several grand lodges with roots in the past, and so it is with Black Masonry in the United States. America, with 50 states, presents a variety of Black Masonic grand lodges. Imagine if grand bodies as numerous as here in Paris were matched by competing independent grand bodies in every department of France.

The competing claims to legitimacy apply as well to the degrees beyond the blue lodge. Art deHoys, fortunately with us today, has written an important paper about the authenticity of degrees given by black jurisdictions, which I would urge everyone to read. [https://](https://srjarchives.tripod.com/1998-10/DEHOYOS.HTM)

[srjarchives.tripod.com/1998-10/DEHOYOS.HTM](https://srjarchives.tripod.com/1998-10/DEHOYOS.HTM) He writes—“An oft-encountered story maintains that Albert Pike shared his rituals with Prince Hall Masons. On January 16, 1945, Willard W. Allen, 33°, Sovereign Grand Commander of the United Supreme Council, 33°, SJ, PHA wrote about this to George W. Crawford, Lieutenant Grand Commander of the United Supreme Council, 33°, NJ, PHA He explained that Thornton A. Jackson, Sovereign Grand Commander United Supreme Council, 33°, SJ, PHA from 1887 to 1904, was a personal friend of Albert Pike. After Jackson mentioned to Pike how ‘seriously handicapped’ the PHA

bodies were for a lack of adequate rituals, Pike is said to have given him an autographed, complete set of the Scottish Rite rituals. The rituals were passed on to Jackson's successor and eventually came into the hands of Robert L. Pendleton, who was Sovereign Grand Commander from 1911 to 1929. The Pike rituals were said to have been revised and printed, but the original Pike set unfortunately disappeared following Pendleton's death. At the end of his letter Allen noted, "The important fact however is that Pike did give Jackson a complete set of Scottish Rite rituals. Incidentally, it is not necessary to remind you of what practically all Masonic scholars know very well, viz., that in the closing years of General Pike's Masonic career, he became a very staunch friend of Negro Masonry." (<https://srjarchives.tripod.com/1998-10/DEHOYOS.HTM>)

Following on the early activities of Prince Hall, Black Masonry in the United States spread on a federal basis, as did the white grand lodges. The federal system that prevails in American Masonry means that each state grand lodge claims sovereignty over Masonic affairs in its state and through controlling the first three degrees claims control over all other bodies such as those conferring so-called higher degrees. Since there may be a half dozen competing Black grand lodges in a state, that means there may be in a state at least a half dozen competing Black Scottish Rite bodies, a half dozen competing Royal Arch grand chapters, a half dozen competing Cryptic grand councils, and so on.

There was, as I have mentioned, an early effort to unite Black grand lodges,

known as the National Compact. The Prince Hall grand lodges, some of which have been recognized by the white grand lodges, mostly have origins as members of the National Compact, but they left it in 1863. They claim that the National Compact perished, but that is not the case. The grand lodges that have been receiving recognition from white grand lodges are known in some quarters as state rite grand lodges in contrast with the National Compact grand lodges. (<https://mwnationalgrandlodge.com/national-compact-history/>.) The grand lodges that remained in the National Compact have continued. None of these have been recognized by any white grand lodges, and the white Masonic world has gone along with the idea that Black Masonry is simply those PHA grand lodges that assert themselves as the sole Prince Hall grand lodges. Let me emphasize that they are by no means the only Black grand lodges with a claimed descent from the Boston lodge of Prince Hall. The Hiram grand lodges and the St. John's grand lodges are, for example, just two families of several, so to speak, and a Black grand lodge does not necessarily affiliate with one or another of these historically related groups. The Hiram grand lodges and the St. John's grand lodge exist in more than one state and have been involved in litigation with other Black grand lodges. (<https://law.justia.com/cases/oklahoma/supreme-court/1943/7433.html>) Having a PHA grand lodge is never the end of the story in a state. For example, Virginia has a large Prince Hall grand lodge, but the Bogus Commission lists some of the others:

5.

Abraham Grand Lodge of Virginia

Alpha & Omega Supreme Council, A.A.S.R. Enoch Supreme Council Inc.

Exodus Grand Lodge #001

Hiram Grand Lodge Inc.

Ibrahim Grand Lodge of Virginia

Joshua National Supreme Council, A.A.S.R.M. & Zipporah Supreme Grand Chapter

King Solomon Grand Lodge of Virginia

Most Worshipful Consolidated Hiram Grand Lodge of Virginia Most Worshipful Omega Grand Lodge, A.F. & A.M.

Most Worshipful Saint John Grand Lodge, FAAYM (PHO) Most Worshipful St. Johns Grand Lodge

Mt. Zion Grand Lodge of Virginia, AF&AM, Inc. Regular Grand Lodge of Virginia

Rose of Sharon Grand Chapter #002

Each of these grand lodges has its affiliates in other states. One Black grand lodge in Virginia lists among its affiliates these:

6.

**GRAND LODGES IN OUR NATIONAL AFFILITATION**

Most Worshipful King Solomon Grand Lodge – State of Alabama

Most Worshipful King Solomon Grand Lodge – State of D.C.

Most Worshipful Cypress Grand Lodge – Florida

Most Worshipful United Grand Lodge – State of Illinois

Most Worshipful St. John Grand Lodge – State of Louisiana

Most Worshipful Hiram Grand Lodge – State of Maryland

Most Worshipful Mt. Sinai Grand Lodge – State of Michigan

Most Worshipful King David Grand Lodge – State of Mississippi

Most Worshipful Oriental Grand Lodge – State of New Jersey

Most Worshipful Doric Grand Lodge – State of New York

Most Worshipful St. John Grand Lodge – State of Ohio

Most Worshipful Perfect St.

Most Worshipful Scottish Rite Grand Lodge – State of Texas

Most Worshipful Scottish Rite Grand Lodge – State of Arkansas

We can readily see why trying to sort this out is such a formidable task that it simply has been avoided as a subject for historical analysis, embracing the simplistic solution of accepting the dogma that there are only one set of black grand lodges to consider for recognition. An excellent consideration of this situation is by a Black Masonic historian, John Hariston. (<https://bluelitepha.files.wordpress.com/2013/10/the-united-most-worshipful-scottish-rite-grand-lodge-of-texas-revised.pdf>)

Some of these grand lodges have involved including Scottish Rite degrees as part of the grand lodge, recalling Brother de Hoyos' confirmation that Albert Pike gave copies of the degrees to the Black Freemasons and noting that Scottish Rite bodies claim to have the first degrees, but not confer them. In Louisiana, there are Scottish Rite blue or first three-degree lodges that are in obedience to the white grand lodge. In Washington, D.C., we have temples of the now fully multi-racial grand lodge, a Prince Hall grand lodge, and a St Johns grand lodge within a few blocks of each other. (<https://www.hiramunitedsovereigngrandlo9dge.com/About.html>)

The lines of descent are hotly contested and some of these grand lodges claim a national jurisdiction. A Hiram grand lodge complains:

Hiram United Sovereign Grand Lodge is a complete Jurisdiction, and not the Grand Lodge for the State of Georgia. Nehemiah Grand Lodge is in fact the Grand Lodge for the State of Georgia, with Sov/III. Nathaniel Thomas serving as its Grand Master, which operates under the jurisdiction of Hiram United Sovereign Grand Lodge. There are also other subordinate Grand Bodies throughout the world under this jurisdiction.

Since the late 1700s, much of the time spent by Prince Hall Masons has been dedicated to the non-recognition of other legitimate bodies of Masonry in the United States.

.... Although some factions may have been healed since this time, the level of ignorance regarding their origin cannot be refuted any longer.

([https://www.hiramunitedsovereigngrandlodge.com/prince\\_hall\\_exposed.html](https://www.hiramunitedsovereigngrandlodge.com/prince_hall_exposed.html))

These grand lodges each maintain the auxiliaries that are so much part of American Masonry: Many join Masonry in America so they can join the Grotto or the Tall Cedars or High Twelve or Amaranth. It is not surprising that they all have their Black versions.



7.



**All Jurisdictional Members that wish to join the Shrine shall endeavor \$200.00 plus any additional fees (hotel, etc.). All Non-Hiram Members shall endeavor \$400.00 plus additional fees. The fees for the Shrine Degree can be paid online by clicking on the button below...**

**Hiram Jurisdiction Members \$300.00 USD Non-Jurisdiction Members \$600.00 USD Hiram Jurisdiction Members Healing \$150.00 USD Non-Jurisdiction Members Healing \$300.00 USD**

**Hiram Jurisdiction Members \$300.00 USD Non-Jurisdiction Members \$600.00 USD Hiram Jurisdiction Members Healing \$150.00 USD Non-Jurisdiction Members Healing \$300.00 USD**

Healing refers to regularizing someone who has received degrees from one of the competing jurisdictions. It is usually just instruction in the esoterica rather than a full initiation.

8.

In closing, this is a favorite temple of mine, the PHA grand lodge in Baltimore, Maryland.



**THE MOST WORSHIPFUL PRINCE HALL GRAND LODGE OF MARYLAND**

# THE LIGHT

**WORDS FROM THE GRAND LODGE STAFF**  
FROM THE DESK OF THE MWGM,  
ELECTED OFFICERS AND REGIONAL  
DEPUTY GRAND MASTERS

**MONTHLY SPOTLIGHT**  
RW STEVE ISOM

**PRESERVING HISTORY**  
HISTORY OF THE SIGNING  
OF THE MEMORANDUM OF  
UNDERSTANDING

## THE NEW MWGM

CONGRATULATIONS TO THE NEW MOST WORSHIPFUL GRAND MASTER  
NOEL C. OSBORNE, SR.

*Ritual, Secrecy, and Civil Society*

Myra Grand Chapter  
Order of the Eastern Star,  
Prince Hall Affiliated Maryland Jurisdiction

Samuel T. Daniels Sr. Council of Deliberation  
A.A.S.R. Prince Hall Affiliation  
Southern Jurisdiction of the United States of America, Inc.

Maryland York Rite  
Concordant and Appendant Bodies of  
the MWPHGL of Maryland

# Toward an Understanding of Mexican Freemasonry: A Panoramic and Theoretical Approach

Guillermo De Los Reyes Heredia, PhD  
*University of Houston*

“Not even the vertigo of incessant transformation can make radical tradition fully anachronistic, upheld as it is in writings, in the quest for knowledge, in liberty’s tolerance and customs.”<sup>1</sup>

**O**n his brilliant essay, *Las herencias ocultas de la Reforma liberal del siglo XIX* (*The Hidden Legacy of the 19th Century’s Liberal Reform*) Mexican writer Carlos Monsiváis explores the contribution of a group of liberal Mexican writers of the twentieth century in order that their legacy not pass unnoticed he states that:

Among the truths of forgetful modernity, ubiquitous functional illiteracy, and the inaccessibility of books and periodical collaborations from another time, too much of the seminal works of the 20th century’s great writers has fallen by the wayside.<sup>2</sup>

Monsiváis approach has caused me to carefully consider not only the great number of writers, but also individuals, political, social and cultural organizations and movements, that have played vital roles in the formative process of the Mexican nation. Of these, many

have been relegated to obscurity or, if they have been studied, they have not received the attention they deserve. In some cases, this is due to their not forming part of Mexico’s official history; in others, it is because they have not attracted the interest of consecrated intellectuals or scholars. Such is the case with an organization that, early in the twentieth century, had a great impact on the liberal movement that began before the turn of that century. Despite this group having contributed significantly to the formation of national discourses and having had great political prominence, it is one that has not been studied in depth: the Masons. I am not arguing that there are no works that analyze in depth the role of Freemasons in history and society, what I argue is that the comprehensive works that are produced by people who are not experts on Freemasonry, usually neglects the works that such organization has had around the world. It is therefore this ar-

1 Carlos Monsiváis, *Herencias ocultas de la Reforma liberal del siglo XIX*, Mexico, Random House Mondori, 2006 [2000], p. 12.

2 *Ibid.*, 11.

ticle's objective to provide a closer study of the impact this organization has had in the development of formative and post-nationalist discourses of the nineteenth century Mexico. In addition, I attempt to bring Freemasonry into the light without considering it a forbidden topic and to study this organization's impact on the political history of Mexico.<sup>3</sup> As opposed to customary approaches to this topic, this essay asserts that Freemasonry, in its countless aspects, has been a transcendental force in Mexico since the end of the eighteenth century, in the time of the War for Independence from Spain, and through the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. In this work I argue that Masonry, by means of its lodges, played a key role in defining the canon of national thought which, in turn, was vital to the creation of the liberal and secular State, as well as to the development of rather anticlerical sentiments (among the laity) that promoted secularization, and which endured until the middle of the twentieth century. This participation manifested itself in the direct or indirect formation of political and lettered officials who influenced the national discourses. Masonry's participation in Mexico unfolded privately, transgressively, subversively, and/or secretly—and, at times, publicly. Their strategy: Since its membership was largely secret, this proved of great advantage to the organization's impact on the national discourses of the nineteenth century. In like fashion,

Freemasonry's participation in Mexico was due in large part to its forerunners in Europe; as Margaret C. Jacob accurately points out, and as this book corroborates, these Masonic lodges were the first forms of modern civil society,<sup>4</sup> and in the case of Mexico they became the first political forces (*yorkinos*—York Rite—and *esocesés*—Scottish Rite).

One possibility that has been largely ignored that is posited here is that in a Mexican society where opportunities for education were restricted for economic and social reasons, Masonic lodges provided a secure space in which political and philosophical topics could be discussed, oratory practiced, and networks of political influence forged. Likewise, they provided a place for young members with political aspirations to improve their rhetorical and organizational skills and to have access to the arena of government. The close relationship of many Mexican presidents—Guadalupe Victoria, Vicente Guerrero, Valentín Gómez Farías, Benito Juárez, Porfirio Díaz, Francisco I. Madero, Lázaro Cárdenas, and Miguel Alemán, among others—with the Masons illustrates this idea.

On the other hand, During the nineteenth century and part of the twentieth century the Masons served to counterbalance the influence of the Catholic Church, which constructed a clerical discourse that it used over centuries to maintain the status quo, especially when this institution felt threatened. Since the Masonic lodges served a function as political parties, they

3 Some of the ideas presented here were originated in one of my books: *Herencias secretas: Masonería, política y Sociedad en México*, BUAP, Puebla, Mexico, 2009.

4 Margaret Jacob, *Living the Enlightenment: Freemasonry and Politics in Eighteenth-Century Europe*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1991, 4.

promoted the development of a secular-anticlerical discourse that contributed enormously to liberal and lay thought in Mexico. The Church's clerical influence combined with the anticlerical influence of Freemasonry, which manifest in their constant confrontation, censure and subversive criticism, gave rise to a mixed discourse, one with both secular and religious elements, and one that combined the conservative traditions, ideas, and morality imposed by the Church with the liberal ideas of Freemasonry. Said another way, the Masons contributed to the formation of a hybrid discourse that bore influence upon the national imaginary. This discourse manifests as secular in the political realm, but with hybrid nuances due to religious influence in practice.

This article highlights the origins of secular liberal discourse and how that continues to develop. Nevertheless, while it is not the primary purpose of this work, I will emphasize the conservative-religious discourse as well as the mixed type of secular-religious, mixed discourse that has so marked Mexican political culture.<sup>5</sup>

## **Putting the Masonic Puzzle Together**

**W**hen discussing Freemasonry, it is important to note one's sources, due to the secretive, discreet or hermetic nature that characterizes this organization. One reason Freemasonry has been so little investigated is the difficulty en-

countered in compiling the materials necessary to reconstruct and interpret its history. This, in fact, was one of the greatest obstacles at the beginning of this project. In Mexico, neither national archives nor private records preserve much of the historical material relating to the Masonic lodges. As a consequence, the researcher's work soon becomes primordial, since in order to be able to create a narrative that allows a better telling of this organization's history, every piece of data must be hunted down and collected like a piece of a puzzle. Despite this limitation, it ultimately proved possible to compile reliable information by visiting a great many Masonic lodges within Mexico and in other countries. In Mexico: Tampico, Ciudad Madero, Mexico City, Puebla, Mérida, Zacatecas, Colima, Oaxaca, and Monterrey; in the United States: San Diego, San Francisco, New York, Philadelphia, Houston, El Paso, San Antonio, and Washington, D.C.; in Spain: Barcelona, Madrid, and Seville; in France: Paris; and in Great Britain: London and Edinburgh. In these lodges it was possible to consult a diversity of primary sources such as documents, letters, and essays. In the archives of lodges in countries outside of Mexico, documents issuing from within Mexico were reviewed, the majority of which contained valuable information about the circumstances surrounding Freemasonry in that country across vari-

---

5 See Guillermo de los Reyes, "The Cross and the Compass: The Influence of the Catholic Religion and Masonry in the Formation of the Mexican Political Thought", in: Nicolás Kanellos, ed., *Recovering Hispanic Religious Thought and Practice of the United States*, Cambridge, Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2007, 8-24; Paul Rich and Guillermo de los Reyes, "Freemasonry's Educational Role," *American Behavioral Scientist*, no. 40, June-July, 1997, 957-967.

ous historical periods. Also, secondary sources such as books, magazines, and monographs were consulted, and a number of Masons were interviewed. It should also be mentioned that the lodges that best preserve their history are those of the United States and Europe.

The lodges in Mexico have not sufficiently preserved their history, particularly their early history, from the end of the eighteenth century through the nineteenth. This was due in large part to persecutions brought by the Inquisition and the prohibition of Masonic practices. Later, the political chaos of the times contributed further to the difficulty of lodges keeping records and thus preserving their history. During the regime of Porfirio Díaz a few lodges attempted to safeguard their stories, but the struggles and chaos of the Mexican Revolution prevented such projects from crystallizing. This does not mean that there were no lodges concerned with the preservation of their historical memory, which have, in fact, saved part of that heritage; however, these efforts are not sufficient sources from which to reconstruct Freemasonry's past in Mexico. For a more complete investigation, it is necessary to search among other archives and to collect information from various sources. Particularly, this work was richly informed by Inquisitorial documents and by numerous publications put forth by the enemies of Freemasonry, which came to comprise a fund of sources that helped bring about this cultural and historical analysis. The lodges' lack of resources aimed at preserving their memories, together with the sim-

ilar lack of the custom of doing so, have resulted in an absence of significant Masonic records within Mexico.

For this article, primary sources were consulted: From legal and Inquisitorial documents, the latter of which are in the *Archivo de la Nación in Mexico* (National Archive of Mexico); to political essays, pamphlets and other written works of the time, both those sympathetic with the Masonic institution as well as those of its enemies. Only a small part of the material collected is presented, since space does not permit me to include it all. Also, it is worthwhile pointing out that when dealing with topics as controversial as Freemasonry, it is important that one be very cautious with the sources one compiles. One should maintain one's distance from the documents and books found within the Masonic institutions, as well as from the sources consulted in the "profane" world, to use Masonic jargon. I recommend that those interested in this topic endeavor to carry out field studies, visit libraries and archives, so that they may see up close the inner workings of this institution and gain a better understanding of, among other things, its history, its rituals, and its behavior.

### **Setting the Stage: A Theoretical, Historical and Conceptual Approach**

**T**he contributions of José Antonio Ferrer Benimeli, Margaret Jacob, María Eugenia, Vázquez Semadeni, Paul Rich, among others, in the field of Masonry and civil society;<sup>6</sup> and

6 Especially their thesis concerning Masonic lodges as promoters of modern civil society during the 18th century. See Margaret Jacob, *The Radical Enlightenment: Pantheists, Freemasons and Republicans*, Lafayette, Cornerstone, 1981; *Living the Enlightenment: Freemasonry and Politics in Eighteenth Century Europe*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1976.



those of Victor Turner,<sup>7</sup> with his theory of ritualism and liminality; together with the works of Benedict Anderson, Homi Bhabha, and Eric Hobsbawm on national discourse, imagined communities and the invention of traditions;<sup>8</sup> and those of Antonio Gramsci and Ángel Rama on the role of the intellectual and the learned;<sup>9</sup> have allowed me to study Freemasonry with an interdisciplinary focus that combines historiography and ethnology with cultural and postcolonial studies and, by doing so, to analyze in a more global manner this institution's contributions to and impact on the national discourse.

"Discourse" is defined here according to Michel Foucault's approach, which I conceive as "the general domain of all statements, sometimes as an individualizable group of statements, and sometimes as a regulated practice that accounts for a number of statements."<sup>10</sup> Foucault utilized

the term 'discourse' to describe a social system tied to specific historical contexts, responsible for generating knowledge and significance. He highlights that discourse has tangible consequences, shaping what he refers to as practices that consistently shape the subjects they discuss. According to the French philosopher, subjects come to define themselves through the regulating practice of the official and alternative discourses (by means of knowledge). Consequently, it is through the formation of these discourses that identities and subjectivities already established are reinforced.

The abovementioned theoretical approaches combined with my archival and ethnographic work have contributed to the definition of Freemasonry (particularly for the Mexican context, that I propose in this essay. I define Freemasonry as a ritualistic organization with rites of initiation; it is philanthropic, transnational, formed by intellectuals and educated people –

---

*teenth-Century Europe*, op. cit.; *The Origins of Freemasonry: Facts and Fiction*, Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006. For more on their proposal of Masonry as a model of secular organization and promoter of political ritualism and formers of political patterns, see Paul J. Rich, *Elixir of Empire*, London, Regency Press, 1993; *Chains of Empire*, Regency Press, London and New York, 1991; "Researching Grandfather's Secrets", *Journal of American Culture*, vol. 20, no. 2, Summer 1997, pp. 139-146; see also Paul Rich and Guillermo de los Reyes, "Ritual in the Service of the State", *Papers in International Studies*, Hoover Institution, Stanford University, 1-98.

7 Of particular interest is his thesis on ritual and liminality. See Victor Turner, *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure*, Aldine Transaction [1969] 1995; *From Ritual to Theatre: The Human Seriousness of Play*, PAJ Publications, 1982; *Liminality, Kabbalah, and the Media*, Academic Press, 1985.

8 In particular, see the works on imagined communities and nationalism, in Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, New York, Verso, 1991. For his study of nationalism and postnationalism, in addition to his thesis opposing the binarisms imposed by Western cultures, see Homi Bhabha, ed., *Nation and Narration*, New York, Routledge, 1990; *The Location of Culture*, New York, Routledge, 1994. See also Eric Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism Since 1780: Programme, Myth, Reality*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1990.

9 See Antonio Gramsci, *Prison Notebooks*, New York, International Publishers, 1971. Of particular interest also is Ángel Rama's signal work, *La ciudad letrada* [The Lettered City], Hanover, Ediciones del Norte, 1984.

10 Michel Foucault, *Archaeology of Knowledge and the Discourse on Language* (1969) (trans. AM Sheridan Smith, 1972), 135-140. See also M Foucault 'The Order of Discourse' in R Young (ed) *Untying the Text: A Post-Structuralist Reader* (1981).

mostly male – who convene for common interests, with the essential outcome of developing and defending these interests. Entry into the organization requires one to pass through a special ceremony of initiation, rituals are practiced that give it the feel of a secular religion, and its members follow the precepts of its constitution. The organization's meetings are held in a venue called a "lodge." The meetings are conducted according to a certain ritual, according to the rite and the degree, which is itself a collection of rites and symbols taken from a mythological past to which members feel closely bound. Some interpret this past literally and believe in this interpretation; others see it as a founding myth. Masonic meetings have a bureaucratic and hierarchical structure, which bestows certain titles and offices, such as Grand Master or Grand Potentate. Throughout the organization's history, the Masons have been responsible for promoting modern civil society in various countries of Europe and Latin America, as well as in the United States.<sup>11</sup> As Margaret Jacob and María Eugenia Vázquez Semadeni have argued, "The masonic vision of improvement was so compelling by the 1789s that some masonic reformers wanted to use the lodges as ways of gaining access to state authority, as places where masonic membership could translate into political power aim at reform."<sup>12</sup> In Mexico, the Masons have

recruited a great number of the educated class and intellectuals into their ranks. In this way, Freemasonry, from its very beginnings, succeeded in appropriating the images of national heroes, in practicing certain rituals, and in safeguarding its secrecy. These achievements imbued the organization with the mysterious and powerful character that has contributed to its success over the years.

As stated above, the Masons meet periodically in groupings known as lodges in appropriate locations also termed lodges, and it is understood by this that they meet to accomplish certain tasks. Even in present-day meetings, the vocabulary of working masonry is used. Today, there is at least one Masonic lodge in every modest-sized town in Mexico, each of which imparts the three basic degrees of symbolism, or Blue Lodge Freemasonry, namely: Entered Apprentice, Fellow Craft, and Master Mason. All of these lodges are incorporated into a Grand Lodge, the limits of whose jurisdiction usually reaches to the border of the state in which it is located.

Historically, as I have pointed out, Masonry in Mexico has been involved in controversies and struggles; this has contributed to its tight secrecy, and in turn has helped to create the disinformation one finds about it. My purpose here is not to promote Freemasonry or to create fantastical histories in which it is the cause,

---

11 It is important to note that in each country there are similarities and differences in this process, depending on the region and the time period in which it takes place. See Margaret Jacob, *Living... op. cit.*; Antonio Ferrer Beninteli, *Los Archivos secretos vaticanos y la masonería* [The Vatican's Secret Archives and Masonry], Caracas, Universidad Católica, 1976; *La masonería española: la historia en sus textos* [Spanish Masonry: The History in its Texts], Madrid, Istmo, 1996; David Stevenson, *The Origins of Freemasonry: Scotland's Century 1590-1710*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1988; Steven C. Bullock, *Revolutionary Brotherhood: Freemasonry and the Transformation of the American Social Order, 1730-1840*, Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina Press, 1996.

12 Margaret Jacob & María Eugenia Vázquez Semadeni, *Freemasonry and Civil Society: Europe and the Americas (North and South)*, New York: Peter Lange, 2023, p. 3.

either justly or unjustly, of revolutions, independence movements, or attempts at solving humankind's ills. The objective of this discussion is simply to recognize this organization's role within Mexico's historical evolution and its impact upon the secular and political discourse in various periods of that country's national history.<sup>13</sup>

The founding myths and the creation of a literary and philosophical canon has contributed to the expansion and maintenance of Freemasonry.<sup>14</sup> This formative process began with the association's members initially and strategically communicating passwords and other various verbal signs of brotherhood. These forms of expansion were similar to those employed by the romantic nationalists during the nineteenth century in some European countries and the Americas. Jacob and Vázquez Semadeni point out that in the regions mentioned previously, both "north and south, reveal similar nationalistic tendencies, but with vastly different outcomes."<sup>15</sup> In this way the Masonic precepts could be exchanged and applied with a degree of self-awareness to a wide range of social situations, merging with a variety of ideological and political elements that would influence the ways in which Masons perceive themselves.<sup>16</sup>

Some of the questions I try to address in this work are: What has been Freemasonry's influence in the various political movements over the course of Mexico's history? Similarly, what influence did these political movements have on the development of Freemasonry in that country? To answer these questions, it is important to define the concept of influence and how it is treated in this article: Influence is the process of either imposing policy (one's own) or accepting policy (that of others), aided by the threat of severe deprivations (either real or imagined) in the case such policy is not followed. In other words, "the power to make other persons act, think, or feel."<sup>17</sup> Based on historical experience, one can safely say that influence is always in play among those holding government office, outside the political parties. Sometimes this influence is invisible; the influence that groups not occupying positions of power exercise over those in power can be very discreet. The degree of influence can vary, depending on the parties in power and on those who would impose influence. So many organic political groups differ from political parties in that they bring influence to bear instead of directly wielding power. The Masons in Mexico have directly held power, as when they served

13 For the Masonic view on this topic, see Eulalio Morales Zepeda, "La masonería mexicana en defensa de nuestra independencia política y nacionalismo" ["Mexican Masonry in Defense of our Political Independence and Nationalism"], *Supremo Consejo* 1, Mexico, D.F., Spring 1993, 13.

14 Guillermo de los Reyes, Heredia, "La rehabilitación del mito en las masonerías mexicana y estadounidense," *Cultura masónica: Revista temática de francmasonería*, Vol. XIV, Issue 49, April 2022: p. 190-200. The production, distribution and translation of Freemasonry's books, as with the creation of regulatory institutions and the writing of a constitution and other documents are examples of this.

15 Jacob and Vázquez, *op cit*, 41.

16 B. Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 4.

17 Edward C. Banfield, *Political Influence*, The Free Press of Glencoe, 1971; José F. Gómez Hinojosa, *Intelectuales y pueblo*, San José, DEI, 75.

as proto-political parties (*yorkinos & escoceses*), and thus had direct access to it. On other occasions, which have comprised the majority of the time, Freemasonry's power has been attained through its exercise of influence.

As a consequence, it is necessary to inscribe Freemasonry's evolution in Mexico in accordance with the influence that it has exerted. To that end, I have developed a framework that permits an understanding of the process of this evolution, based on Gramsci's theoretical approach (hegemonic and subaltern blocs); influence theory; and Foucault's constructivist model, in which a subject or a group is influenced by historical, social, political and cultural context.<sup>18</sup> The framework is divided into four phases:

1. The formative years and persecution (1790-1820). In this phase the Masonic institution took very cautious first steps due to Inquisitorial persecution. During this time, the Freemasons formed part of the subaltern bloc, which kept a low profile; but gradually, both within and outside New Spain, those interested in the organization were preparing and promoting Masonic ideas.
2. Political prominence, secularization and anticlericalism (1820-1876). This was the most political and successful phase of Masonic society, which consolidated the organization as part of the hege-

monic bloc. Its lodges became political parties and were made up of the intellectual and scholarly class of the time, who influenced decision-making and the creation of laws. Many times they were involved in the development of political discourses of the epoch. It should be mentioned that this was also a violent period for Freemasonry.

3. The reign of Porfirio Díaz (the *porfiriato*), Masonic unification, and the Mexican Revolution (1876-1917). During this period, Porfirio Díaz held indisputable hegemonic power, taking advantage of Freemasonry's power, making the organization his ally and, at the same time, controlling it. During this time, the Masons had very little influence as an institution; only a few Masons, such as Bernardo Reyes, achieved any prominence. At the beginning of the Mexican Revolution, the Masonic organization tried to retake hegemonic power, but due to the chaos of the time it was unable to regain the strength it had during the nineteenth century.
4. The post-revolutionary period, decline and transformation (1917-2023). In the 1920s and 1930s, Freemasonry again achieved a certain prominence in the efforts to promote a secular

---

18 For a framework to study the different cycles of Freemasonry in México, see, Marco Antonio Flores Zavala, Los ciclos de la masonería Mexicana siglos XVIII-XIX," in José A. Ferrer Benimeli, *La masonería en Madrid y en España del siglo XVIII-XIX*, Vol.1, Zaragoza, Centro de Estudios Históricos de la Masonería Española, 2004.

state and in the anticlerical struggle. Later, the institution once again began to decline, due in great part to the manner in which hegemonic institutions develop; that is, the institutionalization of political organizations, since executive power and the political party of the majority (PRI-Institutional Revolutionary Party, ruled Mexico for over seventy years) became the hegemonic bloc. In this way, the Masonic lodges comprised the loyal instrument of the official party and of the State, as well as being a group that could exert pressure when it came to safeguarding the secular State, which, according to the organization's members, has been threatened in recent decades. The transformation happened when the conservative party took power and the Neoliberal ideas arrived in Mexico in which the masonic lodges in Mexico became less involved in politics and not so close to the government. It was until the current administration of President Andrés Manuel López Obrador, that Mexican freemasons have been more involved.

Ever since its formation in Mexico, the Mexican Masonic organization has maintained contact with international Freemasonry, which has been influential in the actions and political tendencies of its members. As an example, the anticlericalism that has characterized Mexican Freemasonry arose from con-

tinental Europe. This point is set forth and illustrated by Antonio Gramsci in his *Prison Notebooks*, where he asserts that religion and Freemasonry have served as a source of political-ideological fugue, both national and international, that have generated various political expedients of historical origin, and that these have contributed to the development and expansion of Freemasonry in some countries. Gramsci states that the function of Freemasonry and religion, as well as that of other volunteer organizations, "is to mediate between the extremes, to socialize technical discoveries that permit the function of leadership activities, to arbitrate agreements and ways out of tough situations."<sup>19</sup> As we have seen, Freemasonry in Mexico has had—and continues to have, although to a lesser extent—influence in the politics of Mexico.

Both within and outside present-day academia there has emerged a marked interest in the study of Freemasonry and nationalism, of laicism and liberalism – all key terms in the cultural, social and political life of Mexico and other parts of Latin America. Up to now, those publications concerned with these topics have been limited to academic articles that only analyzed these questions in part. Among these, the works of Virginia Guedea, Jean-Pierre Bastian, Juan-Jürgen Prien, Christopher Domínguez Michael, Beatriz Urías, Marco A. Zavala, María E. Vázquez, Paul Rich, Marco Antonio Flores Zavala, Marco Antonio García Robles, Ricardo Martínez Esquivel, and the author of this

19 A. Gramsci, *Prison Notebooks*, *op. cit.*, 415-416.

essay could be mentioned.<sup>20</sup>

In 2007, *Masones en México: historia del poder oculto* [*Masons in Mexico: History of Hidden Power*], by José Luis Trueba Lara, was published; this work attempts to present a comprehensive history of Freemasonry in that country. As the author notes, his book's objective is "to cover Freemasonry's history [...] not to claim in any way to be a book for experts in the field; in fact, the opposite is true. The book seeks an audience of readers who are not specialists but who are interested in Freemasonry."<sup>21</sup> As a consequence, Trueba's work, in spite of its limitations, brings the controversial subject of Freemasonry into the light. Few publications (those of Domínguez, Rich, and De los Reyes, among others) examine the degree of influence of the works done by the Masons and other co-Masonic organizations. Part of the reason for this is that many scholars believe there is not adequate material available on Freemasonry. It is therefore important that these works be studied with their Masonic influence firmly in mind. These works were instrumental in the development and promotion of political thought within the Republic of Mexico during the periods of independence and post-independence (at the beginning and middle of the nineteenth centuries).

There are other publications that it is important be mentioned: The compilation by Jean-Pierre Bastian, titled *Protestantes, liberales y francmasones: sociedades de ideas y modernidad en América Latina, siglo XIX*, [*Protestants, Liberals and Freemasons: Societies of Ideas and Modernity in Latin America, Twentieth Century*] (1993)<sup>22</sup>, and various works by Virginia Guedea, an outstanding example of which is "Las sociedades secretas durante el movimiento de independencia" ["Secret Societies During the Independence Movement"] (1989).<sup>23</sup> In the introduction to her compilation, Bastian notes that the study of Masonic lodges, of Protestant societies, and of liberal clubs is a relatively new field in the historical study of nineteenth-century Latin America. Even so, rarely has their relationship to each other been taken up as a topic of study as societies connected to form informal networks and, at times, political fronts.<sup>24</sup>

As Bastian states, the various organizations that have influenced the political development of Mexico have been given little importance; and on the occasions when these are taken into account, as with the case of the York Rite and the Scottish Rite at the beginning of the nineteenth century, they are not studied thoroughly,

20 See: Marco Antonio García Robles, *Arte, prensa y poder: historia de los masones y sus prácticas discursivas en el Aguascalientes del siglo XIX*, Universidad Autónoma de Aguascalientes, 2019; Carlos Francisco Martínez Moreno and José Luis Soberanes, *Masonería y sociedades secretas en México*, Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, 2018; María E. Vázquez Semadeni, *La formación de una cultura política republicana: El debate político sobre la masonería en México, 1821-1830*, Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, 2020.

21 José Luis Trueba Lara, *Masones en México: historia del poder oculto* [*Masons in Mexico: History of Hidden Power*], Mexico, Grijalbo, 2007, 18-19.

22 J.-P. Bastian, comp., op. cit., 7.

23 V. Guedea, "Las sociedades secretas durante el movimiento de independencia" [*Secret Societies During the Independence Movement*], op. cit. 45.

24 J.-P. Bastian, op. cit., 7.

their evolution and context not analyzed, nor the wide range of their development and impact over the years examined. Only the fact of these groups' participation in certain events is discussed, without consideration of either the causes or effects of such participation to various episodes in Mexico's history, and with scant consideration of the anti-Catholic front they would become, particularly since this was one of the pillars of the Mexican secular State that, in the nineteenth century, began the process of secularization. As mentioned previously, the Masons' anti-Catholic stance derived from the organization's European influence. Like Gramsci, Virginia Guedea, Rogelio Aragón, Marco Flores Zavala argue that from its European beginnings, "Freemasonry was regarded jealously by the Catholic Church. In Spain in particular, Fernando VII, states Guedea, outlawed the organization because it was "suspicious to Religion and to the State,"<sup>25</sup> As we will see further on, Freemasonry's role in Mexico's evolution shows it to be a multifaceted organization, one that cannot be viewed as apolitical and with simply ritualistic aims.<sup>26</sup> Throughout history, Freemasonry has had a close relationship with politics in Mexico, some of the institution's philosophies influencing certain political actions in that country, as with the separation of Church and State.

Despite the Masonic lodges' prominence in Mexico's history, few academic works have been published on the topic, as I have mentioned throughout this es-

say. Only recently has interest in the study of this subject been revived, in large part because of the important work done at Spain's Universidad de Zaragoza, under the direction of Professor José A. Ferrer Benimeli, who has been the chief promoter of Masonry in the Hispanic world. In addition, a group of Latin American scholars led by Ricardo Martínez Esquivel created an academic journal dedicated to the study of Freemasonry: *REHMLAC: Revista de Estudios Historicos de la Masonería Latinomaericana y Caribeña plus*. The most remarkable achievement on the study of Freemasonry in Mexico has been the founding of the "Cátedra Internacional Historia de la Masonería Latinomaericana y del Caribe José A. Ferrer Benimeli (Endowed Chair-- José A. Ferrer Benimeli) at the Universidad Autónoma de Zacatecas in Zacatecas, Mexico, led by Professor Marco Flores Zavala and Dr. Marco Antonio Garcia Robles. Its objective is to promote research and academic exchange related to Freemasonry. This is perhaps one of the most impactful initiatives on the serious study of Freemasonry in Mexico.

Nevertheless, even up until very recently, some Mexican scholars of the period in which Freemasonry played an important role in Mexican history took it as a given that since the Masons no longer had the power they had in the nineteenth century, it was of no use studying the organization. In fact, I posed this question to various intellectuals in Mexico whom I know, many of them historians, and their answer

25 V. Guedea, *op. cit.*, 46. See also Iris M. Zavala, *op. cit.*, 196-197.

26 The members of what seem to be secret societies, including the Masonic organizations, maintain that the Freemasonry is not a secret organization but rather a "discreet" one. Allen E. Roberts, *Freemasonry in American History*, Richmond, Macoy Publishing, 1985, p. 1; "Secrecy", *Royal Arch Mason*, vol. 18, num. 4, winter 1994, 118.

was: Why should it be studied? Or even: That seems a question for fanatics. I do not know if these views were due to ignorance of or bias toward the topic, or perhaps simply that they believe it to be irrelevant. Such views may be partly credited, as was pointed out earlier, to both the pro- and anti-Masonic propaganda so plentiful as to deflect interest from the topic and to cause scholars to keep away from it because of the many conspiracy theories surrounding it. Fortunately, in the last few years, as mentioned earlier, the group of scholars from different parts of the world, particularly from Latin America, Spain and France have contributed to *REHMLAC* and have published academic works that have had a big impact on the study of Mexican (and Latin American) Freemasonry. A pivotal work I cannot omit is, *Historia mínima de la masonería en México*, edited by Ricardo Martínez Esquivel, that includes works from scholars such as Yvan Pozuelo Andrés, Marco Antonio García Robles, Rogelio ragón, María Eugenia Vázquez Semadeni, Marco A. Flores Zavala, Julio Martínez, García, Carlos Francisco Martínez Moreno, Fredy Cauich Carrillo and the author of this article. This edited collection is perhaps one of the most important books that we currently have on Freemasonry in México that provides key information about the subject as well as detailed information about different aspects of Freemasonry in México. Such volume invites the reader to think Mexican modernity from

a different perspective, considering its alterity, contradictions, political culture, and peculiarities.<sup>27</sup>

## Epilogue: Mexican Freemasonry, Myth, Ritual, and Politics

As Benedict Anderson, Victor Turner, Eric Hobsbawm, Doris Sommer and Beatriz González Stephen<sup>28</sup> have proposed, every nation has need of the public theater, fabricated ritual, and foundational fictions by which they promote a national and emotional identity, vital in the construction of a national imaginary. Mexico is no exception. In fact, Mexico's rulers have been quite effective in the creation of symbols, rituals, texts and discourses, all of which have a great impact upon this construction. Of course there have been a certain number of Masonic acts performed publicly that have come to be associated with the images of Mexico's presidents. The square and the compass of Freemasonry are emblems that appear frequently on the floral arrangements placed on the tombs of Juárez, Díaz, Madero, Cárdenas, as well as those of other heroes entombed in the national pantheons and monuments, or in the very *Rotonda de los Hombres Ilustres* (Pantheon of Illustrious Men) of Mexico. One commonly sees magazines or other periodic publi-

27 Ricardo Martínez Esquivel, Editor; *Historia mínima de la masonería en México*, Texere Editores, 2021.

28 B. Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, Victor Turner, *Ritual Process*, op. cit.; E. Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism Since 1780: Programme, Myth, Reality*, op. cit.; Doris Sommer, *Foundational Fictions: The National Romances of Latin America*, California, University of California Press, 1993; Beatriz González Stephan, *La historiografía literaria del liberalismo hispanoamericano del siglo XIX*, Havana, Casa de las Américas, 1987.



cations that depict prominent Mexican political figures, both past and present, in their relationship to Freemasonry. Another example of the Masons' political participation are the public declarations of support the organization purchases either in national or regional newspapers on behalf of favored candidates aspiring to certain political posts.

As this investigation unfolds, one sees that indeed the Masonic elite form part of the "theater" of Mexican history. The Masonic lodges were precursors of liberal thought in Mexico and contributed to the development of a political perspective different from that proposed for a conservative Catholic State. Additionally, it was in these lodges that a great part of political discourse and practice was created during the nineteenth century. It should be noted that many times, from among the ranks of the Masons, there have emerged certain political elites who have sought to be part of the government. There have been a great number of Masons who have held high government posts, national as well as regional, and who have influenced the country's politics. The group of liberals making up the ranks of the Masons, and/or groups sympathetic to them, provided Masonic ideas that allowed and supported the discussion of political and religious ideas with a degree of freedom. Freemasonry in the first decades of the nineteenth century in Mexico, as well as prior to then in other parts of the world, had been recognized as an institution that promoted liberal and

revolutionary ideals. For that reason, it is important to mention that the period's intellectuals and politicians, such as Fernando de Lizardi and, later, Benito Juárez, and other liberals that Carlos Monsiváis revisits (as I mentioned at the beginning of this essay) recognized that the Masonic institution had contributed enormously to the consummation of independence and had been a key to overthrowing Emperor Iturbide. This does not mean that the intellectuals of the time did not criticize Freemasonry's mistakes and the rivalries that existed among the various Masonic groups. But at the same time, they were aware of the ideals proposed by this transnational organization despite the practices of the group's leadership.

The Church's clerical influence combined with the anticlerical influence of Freemasonry, which manifest in their constant confrontation, censure and subversive criticism, gave rise to a mixed discourse, one with both secular and religious elements, and one that combined the conservative traditions, ideas, and morality imposed by the Church with the liberal ideas of Freemasonry. Said another way, the Masons contributed to the formation of a hybrid discourse that bore influence upon the national imaginary. This discourse manifests itself as secular in the political realm, but with hybrid nuances due to religious influence in practice. Thus, it is paramount to study Freemasonry in Mexico as an agent that played an important role during different moments in Mexican history.



# Enlightenment Sociability: Strengths and Weaknesses

Cécile Revauger

When it was thought that human beings were completely subject to divine will and that all that counted was their relationship with God, interaction with one's peers was considered of little value. In 1690, in his *Two Treatises of Government*, John Locke argued that humans had left their state of nature to protect themselves from ferocious beasts and live in a society, thanks to a collection of laws that would preserve their natural rights, including freedom of thought but also the right to provide for their own everyday needs, and therefore also the right to property. Enlightenment thinkers placed man, and to a certain extent woman, at the center of the universe: not only the cosmic universe, but also and most importantly the social universe. Enlightenment thinking encouraged people to doubt and to have a critical approach, making them well suited to interacting with one another as they had a propensity to respect other people's points of view. Sociability was a new Enlightenment concept. Not only were humans living in society, but the company of their peers was considered beneficial, indispensable, vital. Man was understood as a social animal, who could not function as a hermit or monk. The art of "conversation" was valued. This meant exchanges that human beings needed to have with

one another if they wanted to improve themselves and make progress, in all senses. However, this sociability did not mean a wholesale acceptance of equality. In England, a new genre of painting emerged at this time, the "conversation piece," which depicted the members of a family, generally an aristocratic one, in a precise order. Sometimes, ironically, this included a servant, black or white, and pets. The extremely rigid order of appearance implicitly revealed the relationships between the subjects. There was no question of putting the father and the mother on the same footing, still less the aristocrat and the servant, even if everyone had the honor of being represented in the family portrait. In the English context, Gainsborough painted some particularly good examples. These trends coincided with the heyday of London gentlemen's clubs, which began at the turn of the century. These were very different to the later pre-1789 revolutionary political clubs in Paris.

## From London gentlemen's clubs to the first lodges

This was precisely the context in which the first English lodges emerged. The lodges had a bit more substance about them, so to speak, than the gentlemen's clubs. On the one hand, unlike the highly elitist London

clubs, they were not exclusively reserved for aristocrats, far from it, and on the other, by forbidding any political or religious argument, they allowed Protestant dissenters to rub shoulders with members of the Church of England in a spirit of tolerance rarely equaled in other organizations of the time. These two phenomena were in fact closely linked. In England at that time, all aristocrats were members of the Church of England for two reasons: one, aristocrats were the landed elite and, two, only Anglicans were considered full citizens. Both land ownership and Anglican faith were requirements for the right to vote. The dissenters had been partially emancipated by the Glorious Revolution: they were no longer persecuted, having secured their freedom of religion, but were nevertheless not considered full citizens, as non-Anglicans did not have the right to vote. However, the new lodges welcomed them. This is why, unlike the London clubs, the first lodges were not bastions of aristocracy but were open to artisans, shopkeepers, and merchants, and slowly also to the industrial middle classes. Social exclusion was not practiced on religious grounds, nor on the traditional English divide between the landed gentry on the one hand and the industrial and commercial middle classes on the other. This also explains why Jews were admitted to British lodges, unlike some French and German lodges of the same period. From the 1740s, Jewish prayers featured in the religious work edited by Laurence Dermott, *Ahi-*

*man Rezon*, for the “Antient” Grand Lodge. Nevertheless, the Protestant work ethic dominated British lodges. “Glory in work,” well known to today’s Freemasons, was not merely an empty phrase in eighteenth-century England, in the wake of Daniel Defoe’s *Robinson Crusoe* and with the industrial revolution still to come.

The primary purpose of eighteenth-century lodges in both France and England was to bring together men who were dispersed “at a perpetual distance” from one another, in the spirit of Enlightenment sociability. If we are to believe Anderson and Gould,<sup>1</sup> even if we do not take their assertions literally, the four London lodges decided to combine forces to organize an annual feast deserving of the name, with all appropriate pomp and splendor. Their primary motivation was therefore indeed a desire to come together in friendship. This extremely simple ritual was intended to strengthen the cohesion between lodge members. At that time, there was no initiation ceremony in the true sense of the term, simply a welcome or acceptance ceremony. The welcome speeches addressed to new initiates emphasized the convivial way in which brothers ought to treat one another, “Masonry... orders us to live within Compass, and always to act upon the Square with the World, and with one another. It is not gloomy, but cheerful; it forbids Intemperance, but encourages rational Mirth, and innocent Pleasure; in short, it is a Superstructure fixed with solid Firmness

---

1 Robert Freke Gould and Dudley Wright, *Gould’s History of Freemasonry*, 6 vols. (London: Caxton, 1931).

on the broad Basis of moral and social Virtue.”<sup>2</sup> Speech was regulated, brothers having to remain courteous both during and after the lodge’s business.

The lodge was the ideal setting for sociability. Nonetheless, this sociability had two major limitations, originating in Anderson’s 1723 *Constitutions*. Neither women nor slaves could become Freemasons.

### **The exclusion of women**

**T**he exclusion of women is the original sin of Freemasonry. It can only be explained by its context. At the time when Anderson and Desaguliers were writing, no English woman was allowed in the public sphere. London’s famous gentlemen’s clubs were exclusively male. Women were only accepted into Bible clubs, and even this was something that developed over the course of the eighteenth century. Was Anderson at fault? Not really, because during the Enlightenment women were still far from being emancipated.

In France, where aristocratic women had carved out a space for themselves in the public realm through salons, female Freemasonry began very early, in so-called “adoption” lodges. Frenchwomen were not the first to be included in Freemasonry: they were preceded by their sisters in The Hague, who participated in the De Juste Lodge alongside brothers in the 1750s. “Adoption” is a term that now has somewhat negative connotations. Certainly, at the time, it denoted a level of paternalism, as male Freemasons were the ones to es-

tablish these adoption lodges. However, these brothers, although concerned with equality, thought it necessary to welcome their sisters into their own specially created lodges with equal standing. In practice, in most lodges, each office was doubled, held at the same time by a brother and a sister, as the rituals that have now been made available to researchers show. The manuscripts from the Parisian Loge de la Candeur (Candor Lodge) preserved at the Bibliothèque nationale de France (BNF) (French National Library) are particularly eloquent. Adoption lodges grew over the eighteenth century, especially in France but also somewhat in Germany, and were officially recognized by the new Grand Orient de France (GODF) (Grand Orient of France) in 1774, one year after it was founded. These lodges were established during the Enlightenment and played a role, albeit a small one, in the emancipation of women.

It is important to note, however, that at a global level, the exclusion of women predominated in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Freemasonry, and persists in the vast majority of Masonic orders today. The first mixed Masonic orders appeared with Le Droit Humain (Human Duty) from 1893 onward, and the first female Masonic orders came in the post-war period (such as the Union Maçonique Féminine de France [French Feminine Masonic Union], forerunner of the Grande Loge Féminine de France [Grand Feminine Lodge of France], in 1945), but it was a century later that a male Masonic organization opened its doors to women (1982 for the Grand Orient de Luxem-

2 “A Charge delivered at the Union Lodge at Exeter,” in Péter, Révauger, and Snoek, *British Freemasonry*, 200–204.

bourg [Grand Orient of Luxembourg], and 2010 for the GODF).

While the GODF still does not officially refer to itself as mixed, preferring to state that it recruits “independently of any considerations of gender,” in practice the GODF has more and more sisters, almost 5,000 in 2021, present in about half of lodges (671 out of 1,338), and representing almost 10 percent of the GODF’s membership. There was some fear that sisters would come up against a glass ceiling in an organization that had been exclusively male for such a long period of time, but in fact, in January 2021, two sisters were elected to the ruling bodies of the GODF, one to the Conseil de l’Ordre (Order Council) and the other to the Chambre d’Administration du Grand Chapitre Général du GODF (Administrative Chamber of the GODF General Grand Chapter), the Ateliers de Sagesse (Workshops of Wisdom) of the French rite.

Following the example of the United Grand Lodge of England, most Grand Lodges around the world still exclude women. The arguments for their inadmissibility are of varying levels of obscurity,<sup>3</sup> but it would be wrong to lay the blame at the feet of Anderson and the Enlightenment. Instead it belongs to those brothers who have interpreted Anderson and failed to acknowledge the innovative nature of the *Constitutions* and the extent of this document’s capacity to develop as the historical context changes. In short, the belief that women should not be initiated into Freemasonry today is simply anachronistic.

## The exclusion of slaves or people “born slaves”

In Locke and Anderson’s time, the slave trade was in its infancy. The enslavement of Africans had begun much earlier, but the infamous triangular trade had not yet become established. The Atlantic slave trade only developed in the 1760s and 1770s, after the American Revolution had begun. When Locke mentions slaves, he is talking about prisoners of war, who at the time would only have been temporarily enslaved, and whose children would not have been considered slaves in their turn. When Anderson and his collaborators wrote in 1723 that Freemasons could not be “slaves” and must be “born free,” the reference to slavery was above all philosophical. The intention was not to exclude a section of the population but rather to extol the importance of the freedom to act and think for oneself, as a reasonable and responsible actor.

When the slave trade and slavery developed on the plantations of the American South and the Caribbean, in Saint Domingue, Barbados, and Jamaica in particular, Freemasons split into two camps. A number of plantation owners were Freemasons, and a slave ship even bore the ironic name “Le Franc-Maçon” (The Freemason), while Victor Schœlcher successfully persuaded the revolutionary government of 1848 to abolish slavery. The irrational people who destroyed the statues of Schœlcher in Martinique in 2020 and 2021 showed themselves to be both ignorant and racist.

<sup>3</sup> See Cécile Révauger, *La longue marche des francs-maçonnés: France, Grande Bretagne, États-Unis* (Paris: Dervy, 2018).

Toward the end of the eighteenth century, in 1784, Prince Hall, a former slave from Boston, created the first black lodge. His African Lodge was recognized by the Grand Lodge of England, but not by the Massachusetts Grand Lodge. Throughout the nineteenth century, Prince Hall's Grand Lodges gained momentum in the United States, but consistently came up against opposition from the white Grand Lodges. It was not until 1989 that a white Grand Lodge—the Connecticut Grand Lodge—recognized the Prince Hall Grand Lodge in its state, beginning a tradition of diplomatic relations between the white and black lodges of American states. It is regrettable to have to talk in this way of “white” and “black” lodges, but in the American context such ethnic divisions persist. Even today, four Grand Lodges in the Southern states maintain a discriminatory stance.<sup>4</sup>

French Masonic orders have never explicitly excluded Masons on the grounds of the color of their skin. Nonetheless, in Saint Domingue and Guadeloupe<sup>5</sup> the only black brothers allowed were servants, there to assist white brothers during festivities, with no route to becoming Masters. The Haitian Revolution of 1802 put an end to this practice. The United Grand Lodge of England, for its part, replaced the formulation “born free” in its constitution with “free” in 1849, one year after abolition in France, and nine years after abolition in Britain. Slavery was formally abolished throughout the British Empire in 1833, but the practice was not completely eradicated until 1838.

Neither Voltaire nor Montesquieu, whose works, in particular their use of irony, have so often been misunderstood, is responsible for racism and slavery. The blame lies with the ignorance and sordid economic concerns of the descendants of the Enlightenment. While Voltaire evoked the suffering of the maimed Negro in Suriname, plantation owners shamelessly profited from forced human labor.

At this time of decolonialization and intersectionality, it is important to remember the egalitarian and universalist principles of the Enlightenment. Admittedly, the principles emphasized during the American and French Revolutions were often utopian, but at the very least they had the merit of aiming to bring men and women together, rather than segregating them or setting them against one another in fruitless power struggles.

---

4 See Cécile Révauger, *Black Freemasonry. From Prince Hall to the Giants of Jazz*, Rochester, Vermont, Toronto, Canada, Inner Traditions, 2016.

5 See Chloé Duflo-Ciccotelli, *La franc-maçonnerie en Guadeloupe: Miroir d'une société en tensions (1770–1848)* (Bordeaux: Presses Universitaires de Bordeaux, 2021).





## *Le secret des francs-maçons* (1744)

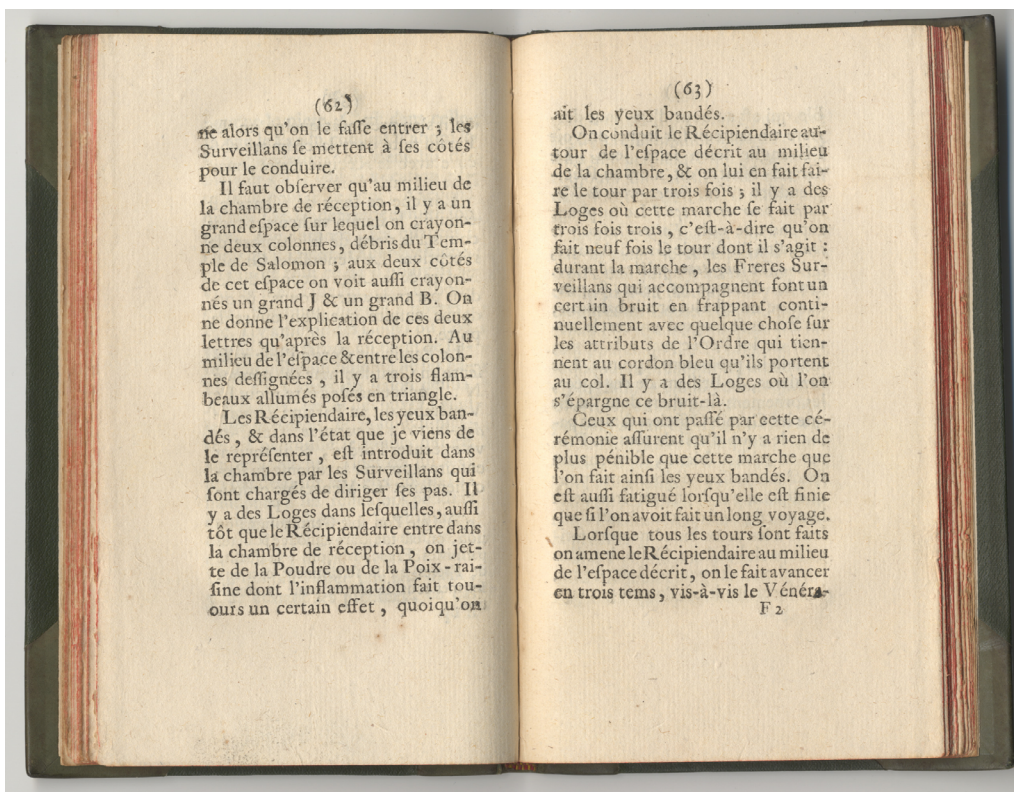
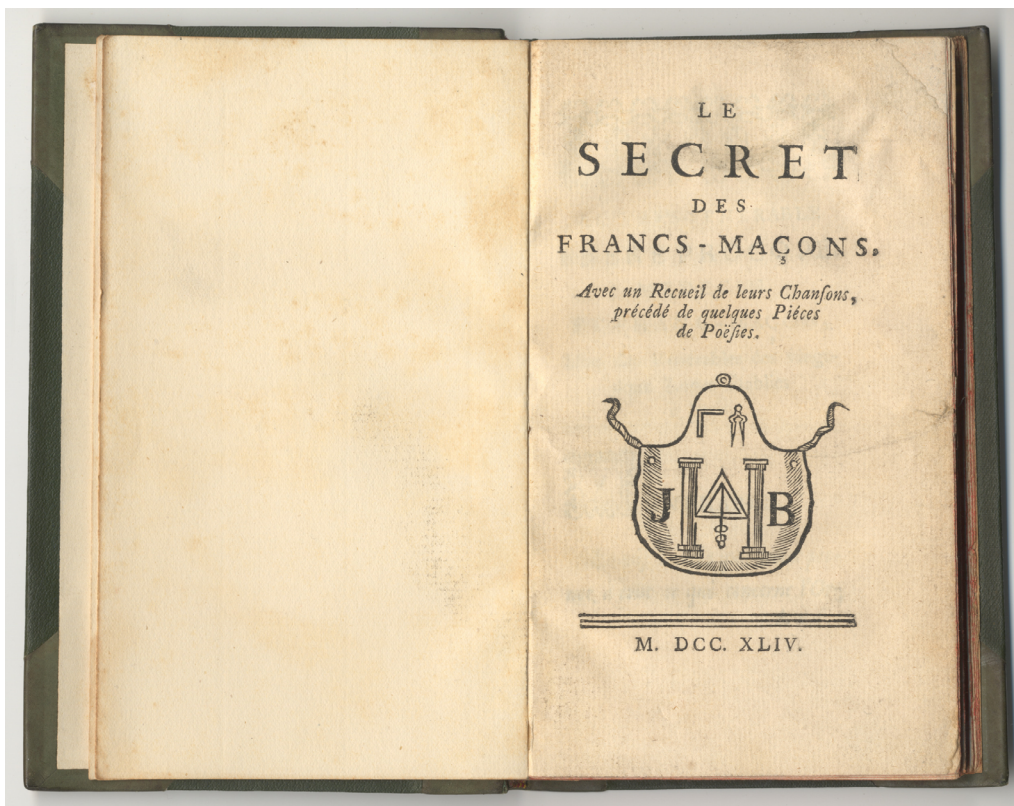
At the 2022 WCHF in Paris, PSO presented the Bibliothèque du Grand Orient de France with a fine copy of the first major masonic exposure published in France: *Le secret des francs-maçons*, printed in 1744 and attributed to Abbé Pérau.

Between 1717 (1721?) and 1730, the first Grand Lodge of London reorganized and enriched the ritual inherited from old Masonry from Scotland into a three-degrees system: Apprentice, Fellowcraft and Master. As early as 1730, this ritual was revealed in a small work: *Masonry dissected*, printed by a certain Samuel Prichard. *Masonry dissected* appears as the first “Exposure” of the masonic ritual. In Great Britain, it would be more than thirty years before other exposures were published, such as *The three distinct knocks or the door of the most ancient free-masonry* (1760) or *Jachin and Boaz or an authentic key to the door of Free-masonry* (1762).

But from the late 1730s and especially in the 1740s, the baton was passed to France. After *La Réception d'un Frey-maçon*, printed at the end of 1737 –an interesting but summary text that is sometimes difficult to analyse– *Le Secret des francs-maçons*, published in 1744, opened the cycle of French masonic exposures. The work is attributed to Abbé Pérau, who was very active in the Parisian book trade at the time. He publishes a fairly detailed description of the reception ceremony, the signs and, for the first time, extracts from the ritu-

al. This was the first time that part of the French ritual had been published *verbatim*. A few months later, *Le Catéchisme des Francs-Maçons* by Léonard Gabanon (probably Louis Travenol) presented in detail the Master’s degree, its instruction and, for the first time, reproductions of the Lodges’ Trestle boards. *Le Secret* and *Le Catéchisme* were merged by a compiler in 1745 under the title *L’Ordre des francs-maçons trahi*. Booksellers also offered *Le Sceau rompu ou la Loge ouverte aux profanes* (1745), *Les Francs-maçons écrasés* (1747) and *Le Maçon démasqué* (1751), among others. All these “exposures”, to use the name given to them by specialists, revealed the ritual customs and habits of Parisian Lodges in the Age of Enlightenment, i.e. the Moderns ritual introduced in the late 1720’s in Paris and practiced in France during the XVIIIth century.

Alain Bernheim has convincingly argued that, until 1750, British and French rituals must have been very similar. *Le secret des francs-maçons* is therefore a major testimony to the history of Masonic rituals. On the history of the French exposures and their importance for the study of Masonic ritual in general, see Harry Carr, *The Early French Exposures* (London, *The Quatuor Coronati Lodge no. 2076*, 1971). There is a chapter devoted to *Le secret des francs-maçons*, with a full translation of the work.



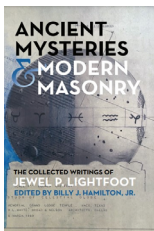




# Related Titles from Westphalia Press

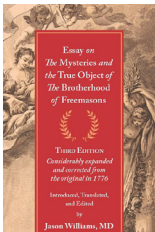
---

---



**Ancient Mysteries and Modern Masonry: The Collected Writings of Jewel P. Lightfoot, Edited by Billy J. Hamilton Jr.**

Jewel P. Lightfoot. Former Attorney General of the State of Texas. Past Grand Master of the Masonic Grand Lodge of Texas. From humble beginnings in rural Arkansas, he worked to become an educated man who excelled in law and Freemasonry. He was a gentleman of his time, well-known as a scholar, public speaker, and Masonic philosopher.



**Essay on The Mysteries and the True Object of The Brotherhood of Freemasons**  
by Jason Williams

This isn't a reprint of a classic. It's a new rendition with new life breathed into it, to be enjoyed both by the layperson trying to understand the Craft and Masonic scholars taking a deeper dive into the fraternity's golden years—when the concepts of liberty and equality were still fresh.



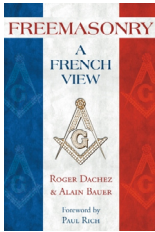
**Female Emancipation and Masonic Membership: An Essential Collection**  
By Guillermo De Los Reyes Heredia

Female Emancipation and Masonic Membership: An Essential Combination is a collection of essays on Freemasonry and gender that promotes a transatlantic discussion of the study of the history of women and Freemasonry and their contribution in different countries.



**Freemasonry, Heir to the Enlightenment**  
by Cécile Révauger

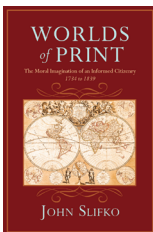
Modern Freemasonry may have mythical roots in Solomon's time but is really the heir to the Enlightenment. Ever since the early eighteenth century freemasons have endeavored to convey the values of the Enlightenment in the cultural, political and religious fields, in Europe, the American colonies and the emerging United States.



## Freemasonry: A French View by Roger Dachez and Alain Bauer

---

Perhaps one should speak not of Freemasonry but of Freemasonries in the plural. In each country Masonic historiography has developed uniqueness. Two of the best known French Masonic scholars present their own view of the worldwide evolution and challenging mysteries of the fraternity over the centuries.



## Worlds of Print: The Moral Imagination of an Informed Citizenry, 1734 to 1839 by John Slifko

---

John Slifko argues that freemasonry was representative and played an important role in a larger cultural transformation of literacy and helped articulate the moral imagination of an informed democratic citizenry via fast emerging worlds of print.



## Why Thirty-Three?: Searching for Masonic Origins by S. Brent Morris, PhD

---

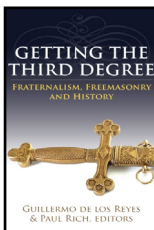
What “high degrees” were in the United States before 1830? What were the activities of the Order of the Royal Secret, the precursor of the Scottish Rite? A complex organization with a lengthy pedigree like Freemasonry has many basic foundational questions waiting to be answered, and that’s what this book does: answers questions.



## The Great Transformation: Scottish Freemasonry 1725-1810 by Dr. Mark C. Wallace

---

This book examines Scottish Freemasonry in its wider British and European contexts between the years 1725 and 1810. The Enlightenment effectively crafted the modern mason and propelled Freemasonry into a new era marked by growing membership and the creation of the Grand Lodge of Scotland.



## Getting the Third Degree: Fraternalism, Freemasonry and History Edited by Guillermo De Los Reyes and Paul Rich

---

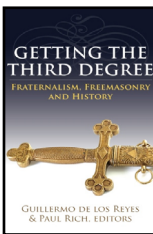
As this engaging collection demonstrates, the doors being opened on the subject range from art history to political science to anthropology, as well as gender studies, sociology and more. The organizations discussed may insist on secrecy, but the research into them belies that.



**The Great Transformation: Scottish Freemasonry  
1725-1810**  
by Dr. Mark C. Wallace

---

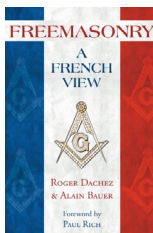
This book examines Scottish Freemasonry in its wider British and European contexts between the years 1725 and 1810. The Enlightenment effectively crafted the modern mason and propelled Freemasonry into a new era marked by growing membership and the creation of the Grand Lodge of Scotland.



**Getting the Third Degree: Fraternalism, Freemasonry  
and History**  
Edited by Guillermo De Los Reyes and Paul Rich

---

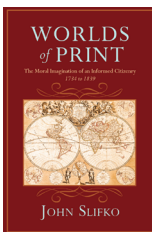
As this engaging collection demonstrates, the doors being opened on the subject range from art history to political science to anthropology, as well as gender studies, sociology and more. The organizations discussed may insist on secrecy, but the research into them belies that.



**Freemasonry: A French View**  
by Roger Dachez and Alain Bauer

---

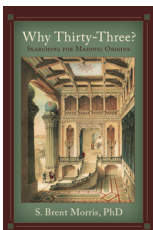
Perhaps one should speak not of Freemasonry but of Freemasonries in the plural. In each country Masonic historiography has developed uniqueness. Two of the best known French Masonic scholars present their own view of the worldwide evolution and challenging mysteries of the fraternity over the centuries.



**Worlds of Print: The Moral Imagination of an  
Informed Citizenry, 1734 to 1839**  
by John Slifko

---

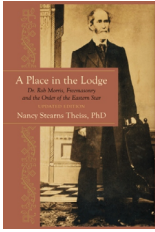
John Slifko argues that freemasonry was representative and played an important role in a larger cultural transformation of literacy and helped articulate the moral imagination of an informed democratic citizenry via fast emerging worlds of print.



**Why Thirty-Three?: Searching for Masonic Origins**  
by S. Brent Morris, PhD

---

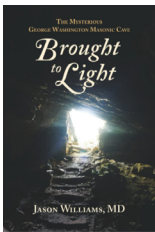
What “high degrees” were in the United States before 1830? What were the activities of the Order of the Royal Secret, the precursor of the Scottish Rite? A complex organization with a lengthy pedigree like Freemasonry has many basic foundational questions waiting to be answered, and that’s what this book does: answers questions.



## A Place in the Lodge: Dr. Rob Morris, Freemasonry and the Order of the Eastern Star by Nancy Stearns Theiss, PhD

---

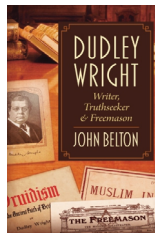
Ridiculed as “petticoat masonry,” critics of the Order of the Eastern Star did not deter Rob Morris’ goal to establish a Masonic organization that included women as members. Morris carried the ideals of Freemasonry through a despairing time of American history.



## Brought to Light: The Mysterious George Washington Masonic Cave by Jason Williams MD

---

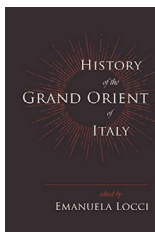
The George Washington Masonic Cave near Charles Town, West Virginia, contains a signature carving of George Washington dated 1748. This book painstakingly pieces together the chronicled events and real estate archives related to the cavern in order to sort out fact from fiction.



## Dudley Wright: Writer, Truthseeker & Freemason by John Belton

---

Dudley Wright (1868-1950) was an Englishman and professional journalist who took a universalist approach to the various great Truths of Life. He travelled though many religions in his life and wrote about them all, but was probably most at home with Islam.



## History of the Grand Orient of Italy Emanuela Locci, Editor

---

No book in Masonic literature upon the history of Italian Freemasonry has been edited in English up to now. This work consists of eight studies, covering a span from the Eighteenth Century to the end of the WWII, tracing through the story, the events and pursuits related to the Grand Orient of Italy.



westphaliapress.org





# Policy Studies Organization

---



The Policy Studies Organization (PSO) is a publisher of academic journals and book series, sponsor of conferences, and producer of programs.

Policy Studies Organization publishes dozens of journals on a range of topics, such as European Policy Analysis, Journal of Elder Studies, Indian Politics & Polity, Journal of Critical Infrastructure Policy, and Popular Culture Review.

Additionally, Policy Studies Organization hosts numerous conferences. These conferences include the Middle East Dialogue, Space Education and Strategic Applications Conference, International Criminology Conference, Dupont Summit on Science, Technology and Environmental Policy, World Conference on Fraternalism, Freemasonry and History, and the Internet Policy & Politics Conference.

For more information on these projects, access videos of past events, and upcoming events, please visit us at:

[www.ipsonet.org](http://www.ipsonet.org)

