

## Freemasonry and Society: Case study of the fraternity in Guantanamo. 1960–2017

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**ABSTRACT:** *The need to deepen the study of nationality formation and consolidation processes in Cuba, has found in the Masonic fraternity an unobjectionable source of information, closely linked to the deepest roots of nationalist thought and feeling. Masonic researches have become vital in unraveling the historical fabric that gave way to the beginning of struggles for the Island independence.*

*The present research, as part of a doctoral thesis project -in the initial phase-, aims to elucidate the importance this subject refers to researchers from Cuba and the world. It also pretends to focus on Freemasonry in Guantánamo province, as an effort to explain the main factors that contribute to the social reproduction of Masonic fraternity from a sociological perspective which is an insufficiently studied subject into the Cuban context. The relationships that underlie the fraternal group's behavior and cohesion will be revealed by using the prosopographic method, the theory of social networks and the analysis of socialization forms.*

**KEYWORDS:** *Freemasonry, Fraternity, networks, prosopography, sociology*

### I. INTRODUCTION

Masonic studies have reached a notorious relevance in academic aspect, positioning themselves as important subject of debates in dissimilar Latin America and Europe universities and research centers. The curiosity to elucidate Masonic postulates, its precepts and vitality to 300 years of its creation, have found answer in several studies from different disciplines of social and humanistic sciences, mainly from a historical perspective, which has allowed to recreate the fraternity's historiographic scene from its origins to the present.

At the same time, during the last few decades, a more critical and serene vision has been consolidated in most researchers from all tendencies, thanks to the advance of interdisciplinarity and use of primary documentary sources; something unknown or little used until a few years ago. In Europe, specifically in Spain, since the 1980s the driving force behind studies on Freemasonry has been the Center for Historical Studies of Spanish Masonry [CEHME], according to notes by Yván Pozuelo Andrés in the current *Latin American Masonic Historiography. Present and Future* (Santiago de Compostela, 2010)<sup>[1]</sup>. Composed by more than hundred professors from Universities, Secondary Education Institutes [IES] and Research Centers. It has coordinated a large part of work that has been done in Freemasonry over the last thirty years: doctoral and degree theses, congresses, seminars, courses, conferences, exhibitions and all kinds of scientific publications. The methodology followed in general and exposed in different forums and journals can be consulted in José

Antonio Ferrer Benimeli, *History before Freemasonry. Methodological Reflections* (Oviedo, 1980); *Method and experiences in the study of the history of Spanish Freemasonry* (REHMLAC, 2010)<sup>[2]</sup>, and in Eric Saunier, *The prosopography, a new way for the history of Freemasonry* (Bordeaux, 2006 - REHMLAC, 2010)<sup>[3]</sup>.

From a historical perspective, superiority that the Masonic theme exhibits is undeniable, José Antonio Ferrer Benemelli in *Approach to the Historiography of Latin American Freemasonry* (REHMLAC 2012)<sup>[4]</sup> offers an extensive and chronologically detailed overview of the main authors and researches around Freemasonry and its incidence in the European, Latin American and Caribbean region, from its role in the Ibero-American independence processes, to its introduction and expansion in the Caribbean and Central America. This work, of incalculable investigative value, becomes a source of obligatory consultation for the most experienced researchers of the Masonic subject at any time.

However, while inquiries are growing regarding this issue, the social and cultural perspective, that focus researches, is becoming increasingly interesting. This, without losing historical perspective, allows to analyze the phenomenon in a different way. Authors such as Pierre-Yves Beaurepaire, *Sociability and Freemasonry. Proposals for a history of social and cultural practices in the Enlightenment* (REHMLAC 2013)<sup>[5]</sup>, taking into account previous researches, proposes some clues to make a deeper exploration of new perspectives in the Masonic sociability study. Beaurepaire does it by using conceptual analysis of three fundamental theorists Georg Simmel, Maurice Agulhon and Daniel Roche from the area of sociability research. This to reaffirm that the Masonic lodge during the Enlightenment came about in the laboratory of observation and renewal of sociability, mirror of the elites, of their strategies and individual trajectories and creates a social bond rich in teachings. David Martín López in *Masonic scenography as an aesthetic resource. Duality of ends (19th-21st centuries)* (Mexico, 2017)<sup>[6]</sup> reflects on the values of Masonic scenography as an aesthetic resource in contemporary art, from the beginning of the 19th century to the present, by analyzing the work of several artists, who have set out scenographies, sets and Masonic environments with different purposes.

Something similar exposes Pere Sánchez Ferré in *Masonic iconography and its sources* (REHMLAC 2014)<sup>[7]</sup> where he analyzes sources in which the Masonic imaginary has been inspired; in order to understand its first and radical meaning, its original nature and its components. It is also tried to highlight the itinerary experienced by this iconographic universe from 18th century to present, which reveals the nature of the metamorphosis experienced by modern Freemasonry since its foundation. Thus, it is impossible to understand first meaning of Masonic iconography without help of its hermeneutics. Other researches such as *Freemasonry in literature. A general overview*, (REHMLAC 2014)<sup>[8]</sup>, by José A. Ferrer Benemellior *Music and Masonry: a synopsis for a state of the art* (REHMLAC 2014)<sup>[9]</sup> by Fernando Anaya Gámez who has tried to make a brief guide on possible investigation future lines about relationships that can be established between Music and Freemasonry. This allows to reveal this subject importance, since the beginning of the 80s, as well as the use of Masonic aesthetics terminology, conceptually separated from the so-called Masonic art.

In the same way, the need to make a deeper study about Masonic fraternity extends to the Latin American and Caribbean region. The foundation of *Revista de Estudios Históricos de la Masonería Latinoamericana y Caribeña* (REHMLAC) promoted a space for debate and scientific exchange among researchers from all regions of the world. Ricardo Martínez Esquivel, director of REHMLAC and professor of History of Culture at the University of Costa Rica., is one of the outstanding researchers in the region. He demonstrates the possibility of studying the subject from a new perspective: the sociological. In the article *Towards the construction of a social*

*history of Freemasonry in Central America* (REHMLAC 2013) <sup>[10]</sup>, Martínez Esquivel proposes new lines and problems from which it could be addressed the object, then in *Prosopography and social networks: methodological notes on the study of Freemasonry in Costa Rica* (REHMLAC 2015) <sup>[11]</sup> suggests to know, through the prosopographic method, who the Freemasons were from a sociological point of view (characteristics and social traits). He also provides information on the dynamics and individual social praxis, which allows us to get closer to the relationships between structure and social dynamics of the Mason groups, as well as the social reality and the socio-historical context in which they develop.

Likewise, following the sociological trend, there are other authors such as Marisol Atuesta Bernate with *Freemasonry in nineteenth-century Colombian society* <sup>[12]</sup>, master's thesis defended in 2015, where she proposes a historical-interpretative perspective, which in addition to historical analysis and compilation of various historiographical approaches, clarifies the role of Freemasonry in Colombian society. Meanwhile James Scott Keney in *Broughtto light. Contemporary Freemasonry, Meaning and Society* (REHMLAC 2016) <sup>[13]</sup> studies the Freemasonry symbolic actions, from a sociological point of view with emphasis on the pragmatic construction of meanings from qualitative data; where he also includes the interaction between symbol, act and emergent meaning, dramaturgical analysis, genre, emotion and its handling, the phenomenology of experiences, the ethnomethodology and implications of all this based on the theory of action by George Herbert Mead.

Equally important, Tiago Valenciano Previatto Amaral, uses the prosopographic method in *O compasso, or esquadro e a ordem discreta: Sociological profile dos Grão-Mestres da maçonaria Paranaense*, (Curitiba 2016) <sup>[14]</sup> to collectively analyze, from the prosopography, notions of social trajectory, field, habitus (according to Bourdieu) and profile of Grand Masters of the *Grand Orient of Brazil - (GOB / PR)*, the *Grand Lodge of Paraná (GLP)* and the *Grand Orient of Paraná (GOP)*, with the objective to delimit a strategic elite, constituted from individuals and specific social capitals, such as profession, schooling and political and social insertion, which is destined to understand this social-strategic group, measuring the limits of presence and cohesive social action in the Paraná.

On the other hand, Freemasonry also becomes an study object in Cuba from early times, taking into account its indissoluble connection between the fraternal institution, the beginning of independence struggles and the formation and consolidation process of Cuban nationality. In *Approach to the Historiography of Latin American Freemasonry* (DIALNET 2012) <sup>[15]</sup>, José A. Ferrer Benemelli offers an overview of the first scientific inquiries about this subject in the island. The marked historical perspective suggests a deep field to study the object. Classics such as Aurelio Miranda Álvarez, *Documented history of Freemasonry in Cuba* (Havana, 1933), Emilio Canciobello and Arango, *Freemasonry as a decisive factor in the formation and development of Cuban Nationality* (Havana, 1932), Roger Fernández Callejas, *Modern History of the Freemasonry in Cuba. Its influence on Cuban independence* (Havana, 1985) and Ferrer Benemelli's works *History of Freemasonry in Cuba* (Havana, 1944), *Cuban origin of regular masonry* (Havana, 1951), *A Report of masonry in Cuba in 1969* (London , 1969), *One Hundred Years of Masonic Activity* (Havana, 1961) and *First Independent Masonic Public Manifestation* (Havana, 1949), testify to the arduous scientific activity surrounding the study object.

However, nowadays in Cuba the point of reference is the professor of the University of Havana and Director of the National Library José Martí, Eduardo Torres Cuevas, author of *History of Cuba (1868-1989)* (Havana, 1994-96), whose second volume, dedicated to national independence struggles and social transformations, devotes a brief section to Freemasonry. More recently, in his *History of Cuban Freemasonry* (Havana, 2006) <sup>[16]</sup>

he analyzes Cuban Masonry through six essays, which makes his work a compulsory reference for investigative foundations on the subject in Cuba.

Since then, national studies appear as *Freemasonry and nation. Masonic networks and policies in the Cuban identity construction (1811-1902)* (Dialnet 2006)<sup>[17]</sup> by the French researcher Dominique Soucy. According to Soucy, *liberal-masonic thought constitutes an essential element in the Cuban national construction process. What is relevant is not so much that a kind of Masonic filtering occurs in the process ... but that this process has in its essence the Masonic element.*

In addition to this work, *La pensée maçonnico-libérale à Cuba (1811-1902): expression, diffusion et appropriation nationale*, (REHMLAC 2012)<sup>[18]</sup> highlights the importance of the Cuban obediences external relations in construction of a national Freemasonry as well as the Masonic practice ambiguity in a colonial, elitist and slavery society; and *Cuban Freemasonry before the feminine initiation: between traditionalism and reformism (1874 - 1881)*, (REHMLAC 2013)<sup>[19]</sup>.

Other investigations that occupy national scope are *Freemasonry in the Republic origins. The Elections of 1908: The Masons and their lodges in politics of the Cuban Republic first years* (HAL 2010)<sup>[20]</sup> and *The Masonic symbolism in the Cemetery of Columbus*, (REHMLAC 2010), by Janet Iglesias Cruz and Javiher Gutiérrez Forte; and by Haens Beltrán Alonso and Jency Mendoza Otero: *Approach to the masonry-society relationship in Cuba. The editorials of the great lodge magazine between 1920-1924*, (Chile 2013)<sup>[21]</sup>, where the authors analyze the Cuban Freemasonry official press organ as a way to reveal the position assumed by this Freemasonry regarding the Cuban society problems in the period 1920 -1924.

A year later, Delphine Sappez delivered to the specialized public, the PhD thesis: *Citizenship and autonomy in Cuba in the 19th century: the Antonio Govín y Torres's commitment (1847-1914)*, (REHMLAC 2014)<sup>[22]</sup> which reconstructs a Cuban patriot's trajectory in the crossroads that implied the need to enter into the modern world for a slavery society, dominated by an arbitrary government. In the following, there are works such as *Liberalism, Freemasonry and a national question in Cuba. 1808-1823*, (Santiago de Cuba, 2015)<sup>[23]</sup> by Manuel Hernández González; *A pre-revolutionary parenthesis: Four years of popular actions in Cuba (1808-1812)*. (American Debates 2016)<sup>[24]</sup> by María del Carmen Barcia Zequeira and *Contribution of the Masonic University of Cuba (1955-1961) to Higher Education in Cuba*, (REHMLC 2016)<sup>[25]</sup> by Haens Beltrán Alonso.

Within the regional studies, the closest theoretical references are found in *The Masonic lodge in Cienfuegos Fernandina de Jagua (1878-1902). A case study*, (REHMLAC 2010)<sup>[26]</sup> by Samuel Sánchez Galvez, a PhD thesis that demonstrates with strong elements the José Martí's Masonic affiliation. This same author worked hand by hand with Aimara Olga Amador Alonso in her degree thesis: *Sociocultural meaning of the symbols used in the Masonic lodges of Cienfuegos city* (Cienfuegos, 2011).

Years later, product of the investigative process, would appear *Approach to the study of Freemasonry in Baracoa (1902-1954)*, (Santiago de Cuba 2012)<sup>[28]</sup> by Carlos Rafael Urgellés Columbié and *Cultural memory of the lodges of Victoria de Las Tunas 1930-1945*, (Didasc@lia 2012)<sup>[29]</sup> by Milena Medina Pérez; and, more recent, the work *Sociocultural meaning of Freemasonry in Guantanamo city (1900-1958)*, (Guantánamo 2014)<sup>[30]</sup> by Suray Olivares Pérez. On this last case the author reveals that the Masonic fraternity's sociocultural significance in Guantanamo city is expressed in its contribution to the cultural development from its historical, social and cultural dimensions. However, researches in Cuba are still insufficient, taking into account a

sociological point of view that allows a better understanding of social, cultural and holistic factors which sustain the behavior and durability, fundamentally in the foundational precepts of this social institution.

Despite some inquiries from science and properly from memories collected by the fraternal in different literary materials, the insufficient available information contributes to sustain the hermeticism and little knowledge that has always intrigued more than one interested. Nowadays, this situation produces in Guantánamo's citizens distrust towards the fraternity, which does not allow an unprejudiced imbrications between Guantánamo's society and a Masonic fraternity willing to share the system of values, traditions and human relationships that for centuries has characterized the fraternity. Although, numbers regarding lodges, membership and total male province population are not representative, in observation and documentary review of different lodges, it's perceived the sustainability that has maintained the Order in time. This allows us to ensure that the flow among its membership has been enough to maintain vitality and connection to the goals that fraternity pursues. That's the reason why there is a social perception of the existence of an own's life, that even when it is not revealed quantitatively, it is in qualitative way, what leads to the analysis that in some way, even if it does not grow, there will be elements that guarantee group's social reproduction as a social structure.

Hence the need to a deeper study from the sociological inquiry in Masonic society to know what factors contribute to Masonic fraternity's social reproduction in Guantanamo province?

This issue' novelty lies in the lack of a study from the sociological perspective on Guantanamo's brotherhood. The research has links with the Cuban economic and social model updating; specifically with the lineament 117 of Social Policy, where Freemasonry could contribute with the transmission and preservation of ethical, moral and patriotism values, from the knowledge of history, culture and national identity to the Guantanamo's current and future generation.

The theoretical contribution lies in the sociological framing of the Masonic fraternity as study object and the relationships that sustain the sociological profile of group's internal structure.

The practical contribution lies in a sociological profile for the study of Masonic fraternity based on social relations and resources put into circulation, as well as the complementarity that from methodological structure occurs between classical and contemporary sociological theories. In this case Simmel, with the study of socialization forms, to reveal group's interiorities, the structuralist constructivism by Pierre Bordieu, that contributes concepts such as habitus, field, social and cultural capital; and the analysis of social networks as a methodological tool which approach allows to observe group dynamics and insertion of the actions and roles of individual and collective actors in the creation or transformation of structures; what means, to be witnesses of a permanent dialogue between the micro (masonic networks) and the macro (society), making the active social subject (the masons) visible in the constant flow of resources.

## II. CONCLUSION

In general, bibliographic review corroborates the Masonic theme' vitality in the scientific community as a study object in progress towards new edges that, without detaching themselves from historical perspective, contributes to enrich Masonic researches, as well as to clarify its origins, behavior and sustainability through time; in order to give it the place it has earned in during the formation and consolidation of peoples' history all over the world.



Likewise, it warns about the limited existing evidence of this issue in Guantanamo province from a sociological perspective, which makes it relevant.

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