

Autochthonous Freemasonry in the Spanish Antilles during the Second Half of the Nineteenth Century

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THE AUTOCHTHONOUS¹ GRAND LODGES OF THE SPANISH GREATER ANTILLES (Cuba, Puerto Rico and the Dominican Republic) have been studied by several European academic historians, in the past twenty five years. Some, including Professors Ayala,² Ferrer Benimeli,³ and Castellano Gil,⁴ have done it as part of their study of Spanish Freemasonry in these islands. Others, such as Prof. Soucy,⁵ have under-

¹ Independent of foreign (Masonic) obediences, and integrated mostly by the people of these islands (Creoles).

² J. A. Ayala, *La masonería puertorriqueña de obediencia española: siglo XIX* (Secretariado de Publicaciones, Universidad de Murcia, Spain) 1991. Referenced in this paper as *Obediencias*.

³ J. A. Ferrer Benimeli: (1) *Apuntes históricos de la masonería cubano-española del siglo XIX* (CEHME, 1993); (2) 'La logia dominicana Aurora No. 82 de San Pedro de Macorís (1889–1923)' in *REHMLAC*, Vol. 3, No. 2, December 2011–April 2012.

⁴ J. M. Castellano Gil, *La Masonería Española en Cuba* (Santa Cruz de Tenerife: Centro de Cultura Popular Canaria, 1996). Referenced in this paper as *Masonería*.

⁵ D. Soucy: (1), *Masonería y Nación* (Santa Cruz de Tenerife: Editorial Escuadra y Compas, 2006); (2) with D. Sappez, 'Autonomismo y masonería en Cuba' in *REHMLAC* Vol. 1, No. 1. 2009.

taken a specific study of an Autochthonous Freemasonry. These latter have apparently been influenced by the concepts in the books of the earlier authors.

Moreover the two books written by Professors Castellano Gil and Soucy stem from their doctoral dissertations, directed by two well-known specialists in this field, Professor Paz for Castellano Gil's dissertation,⁶ and Professor Estrade for Soucy's dissertation.⁷ The responsibilities of a dissertation adviser include reading and approving the material included in the defence of the thesis. Hence dissertation advisers also become responsible for the dissertation material they have authorized.

Because the readers of *AQC* are mostly from outside the Spanish Caribbean region and may not be aware of its historical circumstances, I shall begin with a short geographic introduction, combined with a brief history of the region's travels to independence, followed by a section listing the various countries involved, its Grand Lodges, including their dates of formation and closing, famous figures, etc. sufficient to provide the *AQC* reader with the necessary context for its full appreciation.

I shall then discuss four key concepts alleged by the above-mentioned six professors, making it clear where my interpretation differs from theirs, and why. These concepts are:

- That the Cuban Autochthonous Grand Lodge of Columbus and the Sovereign Grand Lodge of Puerto Rico, which was derived from the Grand Lodge of Columbus, were Cuban-American, suggesting that they were somehow dependent on, and subservient to, American Grand Lodges.
- That the members of the said obediences lacked a consistent ideology, because in different epochs their members favoured autonomy, independence, reform or annexation.
- That the Grand Lodge of Columbus and the Sovereign Grand Lodge of Puerto Rico did not respond to Creole class ideology and political interests.
- That Spanish obediences or Grand Lodges could invade these already-occupied Masonic territories, including that of the Dominican Republic, an independent republic.

These concepts will be analyzed and contrasted using the work of academic and Masonic historians from the Americas. Our sources include for Cuba: Miranda,⁸

⁶ Manuel de Paz, 'Masonería Española y Emancipación Colonial', *Revista de las Indias*, Vol. LXVI, 238.

⁷ His bibliography <https://dialnet.unirioja.es/> includes Betances mason inconforme; Decanato Estudios Graduados.

⁸ A. Miranda y Álvarez, *Historia documentada de la masonería en Cuba*, Ed. Molina (La Habana, 1933).

Denslow,⁹ Murphy,¹⁰ Fernández Callejas,¹¹ Torres Cuevas,¹² and Romeu,¹³ for Puerto Rico: Cordero,¹⁴ Rodríguez Escudero,¹⁵ González Ginorio,¹⁶ and Pereira;¹⁷ and for the Dominican Republic: López Penha,¹⁸ Ghasmann,¹⁹ and Moya Pons.²⁰ The latter authors mentioned in each Caribbean country group above are academic historians.

For the historical background we have consulted among other texts those of Moreno Fraginalls²¹ and Masó²² for Cuba, Franco Pichardo²³ for Haití and Santo Domingo, Morales Carrión²⁴ for Puerto Rico, and Comellas²⁵ for Spain. To document the autonomic developments we consulted, among other sources, Bizcarrondo,²⁶ Bizcarrondo and Elorza,²⁷ and Guiven Flores.²⁸

Some academic historians have criticized Masonic historians on the grounds that these idealize, embellish, or in other ways alter historical events to make Freemasonry

⁹ R. V. Denslow, an American historian who wrote about Cuban and Puerto Rican Freemasonry in his two books (1) *Freemasonry in the Western Hemisphere* (1953), 317–337, Cuba; and 317–348, Puerto Rico; (2) *Cuba, Queen of the Antilles* (1944). Both books are accessible in the Library of the Grand Lodge of Iowa.

¹⁰ W. Murphy, *A History of Freemasonry in Cuba* (Walter Meir Lodge of Research V. 4. 1974), 69–78.

¹¹ R. F. Callejas, *Cien Años de Actividad Masónica*, Ed. Academia Cubana de Altos Estudios Masónicos of the Grand Lodge of Cuba (La Habana, 1961).

¹² E. Torres Cuevas: (1) *Historia de la Masonería Cubana: Seis Ensayos* (La Habana: Edición Imágenes Contemporáneas, 2003). (2) *Masonería en Cuba durante el Siglo XIX, REHMLAC*, Vol. 3. No. 2. (3) *El Proyecto Independientista de 1868 y la Masonería Cubana* (Habana, Casa de Altos Estudios, 2004).

¹³ J. L. Romeu: (1) ‘Cuban Freemasons: Analysis of a Unique Niche’, *AQC* 127 (2014), 217–40; (2) ‘Estudio Demográfico del Nuevo Auge de la Gran Logia de Cuba’, (Gibraltar: *Actas del CEHME*, Vol. 1. 2014, 581–600). (3) ‘Apuntes para un Estudio Comparativo de las Masonerías Autóctonas de Cuba y Puerto Rico’ (Simp. Historia de la Masonería. Española: *CEHME* Gijón, 2015).

¹⁴ M. Cordero, ‘Apuntes Históricos de la Masonería en Puerto Rico’, *Junto al Ara*. Ed. V. Escolar (Mayagüez: Puerto Rico), 25–51.

¹⁵ N. R. Escudero, *Apuntes Sobre la Historia de la Masonería Puertorriqueña*. Ed. GLSPR (San Juan: Puerto Rico, 1964).

¹⁶ J. G. Ginorio, *Luminarias*. Ed. GLSPR (San Juan: Puerto Rico, c.1934).

¹⁷ M. A. Pereira, ‘Las relaciones exteriores de la Gran Logia Soberana de Libres y Aceptados Masones de Puerto Rico como elemento de afirmación de la identidad nacional puertorriqueña, 1885–1888’. (Doctoral Dissertation. Dept. History. Universidad Inter Americana de Puerto Rico. Recinto Metropolitano, 2015).

¹⁸ H. H. L. Penha, *La Masonería en Santo Domingo* (Ciudad Trujillo, 1956).

¹⁹ J. G. Bissainthe, *Papel de la masonería Haití-RD en siglo XIX*. Hoy Digital: <http://hoy.com.do/papel-de-la-masoneria-haiti-rd-en-siglo-xix/> Accedido (IV/2015).

²⁰ F. M. Pons, *Para estudiar la masonería*. Diario Libre.com (23 de Agosto, 2008), appeared in: http://www.diariolibre.com/noticias/2008/08/23/130109_para-estudiar-masonera.html Accedido (IV/2015).

²¹ M. M. Fraginalls, *El Ingenio* (La Habana: Editorial Ciencias Sociales, 1978).

²² C. Masó, *Historia de Cuba* (Miami: Ediciones Universal, 1998).

²³ F. F. Pichardo, *Historia del Pueblo Dominicano* (Sociedad Editorial Dominicana, 3rd Ed. 2002).

²⁴ A. M. Carrión, *Puerto Rico: a political and Cultural History* (Nashville: Norton & Co. NY/American Association for State & Local History, 1983).

²⁵ J. L. Comellas, *Historia de España Moderna y Contemporánea*, Ed. *RIALP*, Madrid

²⁶ M. Bizcarrondo, El Autonomismo Cubano 1878-98: las ideas y los hechos, *Historia Contemporánea UAM*. Vol. 19, 1999, 69–94.

²⁷ M. Bizcarrondo & A. Elorza, *Cuba/España: El dilema autonomista 1878-98* (Madrid: Colibrí, 2001).

²⁸ C. G. Flores, ‘Vigencia en Puerto Rico de la Carta Autonómica de 1897’, *Anuario Mexicano de Historia del Derecho* No. 10, 1998, 399–423.

look good.²⁹ This is sometimes the case. However academic historians are not exempt from similar problems. As we shall show in this paper, several academics have also embellished, manipulated, changed, or omitted historical facts that improve the image of colonial authorities and obediences, or demean the image of the autochthonous obediences.

Therefore in the rest of this paper the history of the Spanish Antilles and its Grand Lodges during the nineteenth century is briefly overviewed in order to provide the historical context in which these Masonic organizations operated. Then I contrast and discuss the four concepts stated above, providing documentation that supports my position. Then I develop a statistical model to support my key assertion that autochthonous Freemasonry was a school for leaders. Finally I provide some general conclusions.

Overview of the Historical Background of the Spanish Antilles

The Antilles comprise the archipelago that borders the Caribbean Sea on the north and the east. They are divided into the Greater Antilles (the islands of Cuba, Jamaica, Hispaniola, and Puerto Rico), and the Lesser Antilles, a string of smaller islands that run south from the Virgin Islands, west of Puerto Rico, to Trinidad and Tobago off the coast of Venezuela. The northern coast of Venezuela and Colombia, and the eastern coast of Panama, Costa Rica, Nicaragua, Honduras, Guatemala, Belize, and Yucatan constitute the southern and western limits of the Caribbean. This sea was for the Antilles and Central and South America (similar to the Mediterranean for southern Europe, the Middle East and North Africa) the vehicle of exchange and transport.

The Greater Antilles were discovered by Christopher Columbus in the 1490s during his first and second voyages to America. Consequently they were the first Spanish colonial posts in America. However their pre-eminence was short-lived. In 1519 Hernán Cortés sailed from Cuba and conquered Mexico. Shortly after other Spanish conquistadors discovered Peru, Ecuador, Colombia, and Bolivia, where gold, silver, emeralds, and copper (which the Antilles did not have) was found. The Spanish settlers quickly moved out, leaving these islands semi-abandoned.

During the seventeenth century Spain lost Jamaica to the British and Haiti (Saint Domingue, in the West part of Hispaniola) to the French. All the Lesser Antilles were colonized by the English, French, and Dutch, who brought in tens of thousands of African slaves and planted sugar.

Throughout the next two centuries Cuba, Puerto Rico, and the Dominican Republic (the Eastern part of Hispaniola) remained as poor, sparsely-populated agricultural

²⁹ See, for example, the prologue of Prof. Ferrer Benimeli to Castellano Gil's book, *Masonería Española en Cuba*, 16 –17, or the concepts written by Prof. Castellano Gil in the first chapter of that book.

colonies.³⁰ In contrast the English and French ‘sugar islands’ became the richest European colonies of their time, owing to their large production of sugar, produced by an overwhelmingly slave population.

Spain invested in its rich Mexican and South American colonies, and spent very little time or money in the Spanish Antilles. Only Havana, Cuba’s capital, had importance as the port where the Spanish Fleet met, to sail with its shipment of gold, silver, and spices, back to Europe. The rest were left to their own scant resources, which encouraged illegal commerce with freebooters.

Roads were few and rough. Communication was by sea and was between the few big cities: San Juan in Puerto Rico, Santo Domingo and Puerto Plata in Hispaniola, and Havana and Santiago in Cuba. Two universities – in Havana and Santo Domingo – taught scholastic topics to a small number of students.

In 1762, during the Seven Years’ War, Britain took Havana and held it for two years. Its strategic position induced Spain to trade it for Florida, which Spain recovered a few years later as a war prize for helping the Americans fight in their revolution for independence.

It was only after Spain lost its continental colonies in America that it started turning attention to its two remaining colonies in the Caribbean, Cuba and Puerto Rico. And this is when the real social and economic development of the Spanish Antilles really began.

Such important changes started with the 1790s slave revolt in Haiti (or Saint Domingue) and strongly impacted on the life and economy far beyond the Antilles. Hundreds of white French colonists emigrated with their families to neighbouring Cuba, Puerto Rico, Jamaica, and the USA, taking with them their skills and their Masonic lodges.³¹ The eastern (Spanish) part of Hispaniola (today’s Dominican Republic) was then successively invaded by Haitian, Spanish, British, and French troops, which ruined the country and created another exodus among the Dominican upper classes.

After the economic destruction of Saint Domingue (Haiti) Cuba filled its place in the world sugar market. Consequently hundreds of thousands of new slaves were introduced during the nineteenth century and immigration thrived. Cuba developed swiftly, and the Creoles started reclaiming a larger political and economic standing from colonial Spain.

Fathers Caballero in 1808 and Varela in 1821 presented to Spain two autonomic projects. After 1820 Jose A. Saco, Cuba’s first statesman, and Jose de la Luz, spent decades teaching, writing, and submitting autonomic projects requesting for Cuba a sys-

³⁰ English and French sugar islands had a slave population of over 90%, while the Spanish Antilles slaves before 1800 were always less than 1/3 of the total population. See data in the book by Dr Eric Williams.

³¹ During the 19th century Freemasonry was deeply established in France and its colonies.

tem similar to the one Britain had in Canada: an insular elected parliament under a governor representing Spain. But Spain constantly harassed and deported Creoles who disputed its absolute rule. Annexation to the USA was then considered. Finally in 1868, after all hope of obtaining autonomy from Spain was lost, Cuba went to war for its independence.

Puerto Rico, smaller and poorer than Cuba, evolved in a similar manner. In 1809 Ramon Power Giralt, who also supported autonomy, was elected to the Spanish Cortes (Parliament). Bro. Eugenio Ma. Hostos during the 1860s proposed in Madrid a 'Spanish Antilles Autonomous Confederation' (of the three Spanish islands). Finally, also after losing hope, an uprising took place in 1868, similar to that in Cuba. It was soon overcome by Spain, who then offered political and economic reforms to thwart this other embryonic revolutionary movement.

The Cuban war of 1868–78 failed to bring about independence. Autonomy under Spain was now considered the next best solution. However Spain created all sorts of obstacles, until finally the Cubans went again to war in 1895. With the help of American troops Cuba obtained its independence. Puerto Rico was taken over by the USA as a war prize.

The Dominican Republic's history was very different. From 1796 to 1809 they suffered the devastation from several wars and invasions,³² followed by neglect and stagnation back under Spain. In 1821 the Dominicans declared their independence, but were soon invaded by the Haitians, who feared that their territory would again be used to attack them and reinstate slavery there.

The Dominicans were under Haitian occupation until 1844, when they rebelled and proclaimed again their own republic. But poverty and the constant threat of another Haitian invasion made them pursue annexation to France, the USA, and finally Spain, which accepted them as a province. Soon the Spaniards clashed with largely mixed-race, free Dominicans, accustomed to participation in government. These were very different social conditions to those existing in Cuba and Puerto Rico, where Creoles, many of whom were also free and of mixed race, were deprived of rights.

As a result, the Dominicans rebelled and reinstated their republic. Spain lost the opportunity first to establish an 'Autonomous Spanish Antilles Confederation of Cuba, Puerto Rico and Santo Domingo' under Spanish suzerainty, and secondly to avoid the military conflict with the United States, which occurred thirty years later,³³ and which caused Spain to lose their navy in the battles of Manila and Santiago as well as the remains of their colonial empire (Philippines, Guam, Puerto Rico), an event that is remembered in Spanish history as 'The Disaster of 1898'.

³² Invasion of the French, English, and Spanish armies, as well as by the Haitian ex-slaves.

³³ During the Cuban War of Independence 1895–1898.

The responsibility for Spain losing its empire did not lie with disloyal Cuban and Puerto Rican Creoles, Freemasonry, or American imperialism, as some have claimed. It came about because of the disastrous Spanish colonial policy, implemented throughout the nineteenth century by its government!

For neither the 1808 *Junta de Cadiz*, nor king Ferdinand VII, nor the Liberal government of 1820–23, nor Ferdinand VII's restoration, the regency and long reign of his daughter Isabella, nor the revolution of 1868, the reign of king Amadeus of Savoy, the First Republic, nor the restoration of King Alphonse XII, gave Cuba and Puerto Rico their long-requested autonomy.

Autochthonous Freemasonry, as we will show in this paper, provided the vehicle that allowed Cuban and Puerto Rican intellectuals and politicians to gather, interact, improve their skills and ideas and bring their efforts to improve the governments of their islands, to fruition.

Overview of the Spanish Antilles Masonic Background

Apart from the sources in English mentioned near the start of this paper there exist many papers and books in Spanish about Freemasonry in the Spanish Antilles, all of which are referenced in footnotes 6–28. To provide even a short history in English, would require a paper in itself. Here is presented an overview of such a history for Cuba, based on the seminal work by Bro. Miranda, on which source most subsequent accounts are based, and on my own previous work; for Puerto Rico on the book by Professor Ayala, and for the Dominican Republic on the book by Bro. Lopez Penha.

Freemasonry was forbidden in Spain – hence also in all its colonies. However, in 1751–54 the Grand Lodge of England appointed eight Provincial Grand Masters, one of them being for Cuba.³⁴ In 1762 during the time of the British occupation of Havana Alexander Cockburn was initiated in an Irish military lodge, No. 218.³⁵ No Cuban took part, nor belonged to any lodge during that time. These are merely two anecdotal incidents without further consequences in Cuba.

Freemasonry arrived Spain in 1808 with the French armies. It reached Cuba and Puerto Rico with white French colonists, who fled Saint Domingue after the slave revolt of the 1790s. It entered the Dominican Republic with the French armies that went there to fight such a revolt, and later with the Haitian invasion of 1822. In all three cases it lasted briefly and was an activity of the higher classes, as these islands were not well-developed at the time.

³⁴ J. Findel, *History of Freemasonry*, mentioned in Prof. Benimeli's *REHMLAC* paper.

³⁵ Torres Cuevas in his book *Historia de la Masonería Cubana*.

Developments in Cuba (following Aurelio Miranda)

In 1798 French emigrés from Haiti founded the lodges *La Perseverance* and *La Concorde*, in Santiago, and in Havana the lodges *L'Amitié* and *La Bénédicte Concorde*. The charters were from the Grand Orient of France; the members were French, and all lodges had a short life. In 1804 the lodge *Le Temple des Vertus Théologiques*, which was chartered by the Grand Lodge of Pennsylvania, was created in Havana. Its first Worshipful Master was Joseph Cerneau, who later moved to New York, granted the higher degrees of the Scottish Rite, and created a schism in the Northern Jurisdiction. In 1805 *Réunion de Coeurs* was founded in Santiago. Its Master was Antoine Bideaud, who also moved to New York and communicated the higher degrees of the Scottish Rite to American Masons. Confirmed by the Mother Council of the Scottish Rite (Southern Jurisdiction), Cerneau and Bideaud became the first members of the Supreme Council of the Scottish Rite Northern Jurisdiction. In 1808 French troops invaded Spain. French citizens became *personae non gratae*; most left Cuba for North Carolina, Louisiana, Pennsylvania, or New York and Freemasonry decayed.

After a hiatus of twelve years following the French invasion of 1808, the return to Spain of King Ferdinand VIII and the rebellion of troops in Cadiz assembled to fight independence armies in Spanish America, the Constitution of 1812 was restored and Freemasonry was again allowed.

In Havana, the mainly pro-Spanish *Gran Oriente Territorial Espanol Americano del Rito Escoces* was created in 1818 under a charter from the Grand Orient of France. In 1820 the *Gran Logia Espanola de Antiguos y Aceptados Masones del Rito de York* (chartered by the Grand Lodge of Pennsylvania and headed by Pedro Pablo O'Reilly and de las Casas, the Count of O'Reilly,³⁶ and other important and rich Creoles), was created. After a couple of years Creoles also became pre-eminent in the *Gran Logia Espanola*, and these obediences merged with the objective of creating a single body, independent from the control of Spaniards. A similar situation arose during the 1860s, as Creoles were always trying to establish their autonomy. But French troops invaded Spain, restored King Ferdinand VII, and absolutism proscribed Freemasonry again.

There was again a long hiatus of almost forty years before Freemasonry could reappear. In 1857 two lodges (*Fraternidad* and *Prudencia*) were created in Santiago. They tried to obtain the support of the *Grand Orient Hisperico Reformado* from Spain, but it was unavailable. The Grand Lodge of South Carolina, through the intercession of Bros. Pike and Mackay, provided charters for a third Lodge (*San Andres*), thus enabling the creation of the *Gran Logia de Colon* in 1859. Its first Grand Master was Francisco Grinan. Bro. Andres Cassard, following instructions of, and with a charter from Bro. Albert

³⁶ For his becoming Grand Master see Soucy, *Masoneria*, 41.

Pike, who had recently been elected Supreme Commander of the Mother Council of the Scottish Rite, then created the Supreme Council of the 33rd Degree (Colon) for Cuba and the Spanish Antilles. Bro. Antonio Vinent, a rich Spanish noble, was its first Supreme Commander.

From the start there were strong differences between the Supreme Council and the *Gran Logia de Colon*, as Bro. Cassard had used the Naples Charter [what is this?] to create them, under which the Grand Lodge was under the control of the Supreme Council. Bro. Pike then sent Bro. Vicente De Castro to sort things out. Instead Bro. De Castro created another obedience in 1862, the *Gran Oriente de Cuba y Las Antillas*. Now there would be three bodies fighting for the pre-eminence.

As in the 1820s Creoles started taking over the *Gran Logia de Colon*. The *Gran Oriente de Cuba y Las Antillas* was completely in their hands, and was preparing an armed insurrection against Spain. For such political activities the *Gran Oriente de Cuba y Las Antillas* was considered an irregular body. In 1868 the Grand Secretary, Benjamin Odio, with the support of the Grand Master, Andres Puente Badell, presented a new constitution for the *Gran Logia de Colon*, separating the Grand Lodge from the Supreme Council of Colon, to which the latter strongly objected.³⁷

In 1868, the first Cuban War of Independence started, and the *Gran Oriente de Cuba y Las Antillas* was disbanded. In 1870 the Grand Master, Puente Badell, the Grand Treasurer, and several other important *Gran Logia de Colon* officers were murdered by Spanish troops near Santiago. Remnants of the *Gran Oriente de Cuba y Las Antillas* lodges plus several others from *Gran Logia de Colon* created the first Provincial Grand Lodge of Havana, dissolved in 1874. A Second Provincial Grand Lodge of Havana was created in 1875. The first Spanish obediences appeared in Cuba.

In 1876 Bro. Aurelio Almeida, one of the most important Freemasons of the nineteenth century, created the Grand Lodge of the Island of Cuba in Havana. Also the *Gran Logia de Colon* and the Supreme Council officially separated into two independent bodies. In 1877 the *Gran Logia de Colon* headquarters moved to Havana from Santiago, and Bro. Antonio Govin was elected as Grand Master.

In 1878 the first War of Independence ended with the Zanjón Peace Treaty.³⁸ In 1880 the Grand Lodges of Colon and Isla de Cuba merged into one body, under Grand Master Govín,³⁹ with the philosophy that the *Gran Logia Unida de Colon y Isla de Cuba*

³⁷ As in the 1820s Creoles were becoming pre-eminent in Grand Lodge, several of them being elected to active office and who sought more independence from the pro-Spanish Supreme Council. Almeida, *Historia*, chapter 24 has details.

³⁸ Spain conceded to Cuba the freedom of the press, the freedom of slaves who had fought for independence, and the fully-fledged status of becoming a province of Spain, including political party representation to its Parliament, among other important gains.

³⁹ *Gran Logia Unida de Colon e Isla de Cuba*.

would strive to obtain by evolution what had not been achieved by war. Finally in 1891 all the Spanish obediences joined the *Gran Logia Unida de Colon y Isla de Cuba*, creating a single Masonic body in the island: the *Gran Logia de Cuba*.⁴⁰ As Professor Torres Cuevas says: ‘Cuban Freemasons have always sought Unity, a trait that differentiates it from Spanish Freemasons, characterized by fragmentation.’⁴¹

Developments in Puerto Rico (following Jose Antonio Ayala)

In 1789 there were close to forty lodges under the Grand Orient of France in the Caribbean, half of them in Saint Domingue (Haiti). After the slave revolt of the 1790s most of them closed or moved out to Cuba, Puerto Rico or the Dominican Republic. In 1809 a Provincial Grand Lodge was created in Haiti under the United Grand Lodge of England, which became independent in 1823 under Haitian President Boyer.

In 1802 Bro. Nicolas Panel, a Frenchman established in Puerto Rico, promoted the creation of Masonic lodges. Several were founded during the period 1808 to 1814 in San Juan, Ponce, and Mayaguez. After a similar hiatus to that in Cuba Masonic activity restarted in 1820. At least two Rose Croix chapters, receiving their charters from Cuba and New York, were created, implying that symbolic lodges, that nurtured them [??], existed in San Juan, San German, and Mayaguez.

After another long hiatus, owing to the restoration of absolutism in Spain, Masonic activity restarted, some young men who had studied abroad returning and bringing their Masonic experience.⁴² Lodge *Union Germana* (with a charter from the *Gran Oriente Nacional de Venezuela*) was created in San German in 1866.⁴³ Lodge *Estrella de Luquillo* (with a charter from the Grand Orient of Colon) was created in 1867, and in 1871 the Spanish *Gran Oriente Nacional de Espana* founded *Logia Colombia* in San Juan.

The first Spanish obediences entered Puerto Rico at about this time. They usually pursued a political ideology and followed a political leader. For example, the conservative *Gran Oriente Nacional de Espana* was created in 1865.⁴⁴ Its Grand Commander was Marques de Seoani. The liberal *Gran Oriente de Espana* was created in 1868, led by the Grand Commanders Ruiz Zorilla, Sagasta, and Becerera. Some years later in 1889 the liberal *Gran Oriente Espana* and the republican *Gran Logia Simbolica Espanola* were created, led by Grand Commanders Morayta, Moreno Roure, and Sallaberry.

⁴⁰ *Gran Logia de Cuba*, the name that continues to this day.

⁴¹ Torres Cuevas, *REHMLAC*, Vol. 3, No. 2, 100.

⁴² Such as Hostos, Betances, and Ruiz Belvis, who went mainly to Spain, France, Germany or the USA.

⁴³ Bro. Eugenio Maria de Hostos, a prominent educator, and Bro. Santiago Palmer, the Father of Puerto Rican autochthonous Freemasonry, were initiated there.

⁴⁴ *Gran Oriente Nacional de Espana*; *Gran Oriente de Espana*; *Gran Oriente Espanol*; *Gran Logia Simbolica Espanola*. They responded to well-established political parties or organizations.

In 1880 Bro. Palmer founded *Adelphia* in Mayaguez, among several other lodges, under the philosophy that ‘Masonic autonomy would bring political autonomy.’ In 1881 Puerto Rico’s Provincial Grand Lodge was created by the *Gran Logia Unida de Colon y Isla de Cuba*. In 1885 it became the independent *Gran Logia Soberana de Puerto Rico*, with Bro. Palmer as Grand Master. After that the struggle between the autochthonous *Gran Logia Soberana de Puerto Rico*, and all other Spanish obediences became much stronger.

A list of the most important officers of the *Gran Logia Unida de Colon y Isla de Cuba* and the *Gran Logia Soberana de Puerto Rico*, their positions in the Grand Lodge, in government, civic organizations, their occupations, and the main countries where they studied their professions, are given below in Tables 1 and 2.

Table 1. Grand Lodge, Government and Civic Leaders

Leaders GLSPR	Leaders GLUCIC	Positions
Santiago R. Palmer	Antonio Govín	Grand Masters
R. Matienzo Cintron	Aurelio Almeida	Grand Secretaries
Segundo Ruiz Belvis	José Fdez. Pellon	Grand Line Officers
Antonio Ruiz Quinones	Fco. de P. Rodriguez	Political Leaders
Luis Munoz Rivera	Aurelio Miranda	Newspaper Editors
Manuel Fdez Juncos	José Ma. Galvez	Members of the
José Celso Barbosa	Juan Hdez. Barreiro	Autonomic Government

Bros. Palmer and Govin were Grand Masters; Bros. Matienzo Cintron, Ruiz Belvis, Ruiz Quinones, Almeida and Miranda, were Grand Secretaries; Bros. Munoz Rivera, Fernandez Juncos, and Galvez were leaders of autonomic political parties, and members of the autonomic government formed by Spain at the end of the Spanish–Cuban–American war in 1898.

Table 2. Main Leaders, Main Professions & Main Centres of Study

Leaders in P.R.	Leaders in Cuba	Professions	Studies
Roman Baldorioty	Ricardo del Monte	Doctors, Teachers	Cuba
Federico Degateau	Rafael Montoro	Lawyers	Puerto Rico
Cayetano. Coll Toste	Enrique J. Varona	Journalists	United States
Franco. M. Quinones	José A. Cortina	Writers, Poets	Spain
Antonio Cordero	Raimundo Cabrera	Industrialists	Germany
José De Diego	Eliseo Giberga	Farmers	France
José Claudio Vera	Miguel Gener	Merchants	England

The best minds and intellectuals, both in Cuba and in Puerto Rico, during the last quarter of the nineteenth century were Freemasons. Most of them were associated with the *Gran Logia Unida de Colon y Isla de Cuba* and the *Gran Logia Soberana de Puerto Rico*. For details, see the papers of Torres Cuevas, Ayala, Romeu, and Souci, which have already been mentioned.

Developments in the Dominican Republic (following Bro. Lopez Penha)

After the French troops withdrew from the Dominican Republic in 1809, the country was devastated by war and invasions. It declared a short-lived independence in 1821, followed by the occupation of Haitian troops, who brought Freemasonry with them, under the Grand Orient of Haiti. In 1825 Bros Generals Borgella and Riche founded the lodge *Constante Union* in Santo Domingo in 1825. Bro. Juan Pablo Duarte, leader of the Independence, was a member. Bro. Tomas Bobadilla founded the Grand Lodge of *Republica Dominicana*, and *Logia Cuna de America* in 1859, and became its Grand Master as well as Grand Commander of the Supreme Council. The lodges *Nuevo Mundo* in Santiago de los Caballeros and *Concordia* in La Vega were also founded at that time.

The Dominican Republic was annexed to Spain in 1861, and Freemasonry was again forbidden. This union proved unsuccessful and was short-lived. After the War of Restoration in 1865 Freemasonry was again allowed to function, and new lodges were created. For example, the lodge *La Restauracion* was founded in Puerto Plata in 1868. Several generals and presidents of the reinstated Dominican Republic, including General Luperon, and Presidents Baez and Espaillat, were Freemasons as well as members of the Scottish Rite.⁴⁵

Four Statements and our Counter-Arguments

The European historians and their dissertation advisors mentioned at the start of this paper have made four statements regarding autochthonous Freemasonry in the Spanish Antilles that I find biased, inaccurate, and misleading. To support such statements these authors have omitted or manipulated historical events in their work. Historians on the American side of the Atlantic need to address such statements for two very important reasons. First it is fair and necessary to set the record straight, as there are always two sides to an argument. Secondly we want future historians to be able to read alternative views of these events and to be able to hear both sides of the arguments, enabling them to form their own impartial judgment about such historical events.

⁴⁵ Where they held the 33rd degree.

In this section I present and analyze the statement and support material of these European historians (all quotes have been translated by myself from their Spanish sources), and then I provide evidence to show how such statements are incorrect or biased.

1 That both autochthonous Grand Lodges (Gran Logia de Colon & Gran Logia Soberana de Puerto Rico) were Cuban-American, thereby subtly suggesting that they were somehow used as tools of the United States against Spain.

- ‘Freemasonry of Cuban-American origin . . . self-defined as autochthonous comes from Cuba, existed prior to Spanish Freemasonry . . . In 1871 the penetration of Spanish Freemasonry started in Puerto Rico . . . contested up to 1898 by a Freemasonry self-defined as autochthonous, coming from Cuba.’ Ayala.⁴⁶
- ‘To confront this type of [Spanish] Freemasonry another type was created at the end of the decade of 1870, self-defined as autochthonous, when in reality it was of Cuban-American origin.’ Ayala⁴⁷
- ‘The opportunistic support of the GLSPR [*Gran Logia Soberana de Puerto Rico*] to the new American regime will earn the patronage . . . of their northern neighbour.’ Ayala.⁴⁸
- ‘The Masonic influence originated in the United States left its footprint.’ Castellano Gil.⁴⁹

Counter-Argument

These Spanish historians single out Cuba’s Grand Lodge and Supreme Council because they were chartered from American and not Spanish Masonic obediences, a nomenclature that European authors equally fail to employ to identify their own obediences (as Franco-Spanish or Portuguese-Spanish), suggesting that the United States used Cuban Freemasons as a political tool.

Our argument is based upon Masonic law, possibly unknown to these Spanish authors. According to such law, in order to create a Grand Lodge three conditions are required:

1. that there are at least three active lodges;
2. that the territory is not already masonically occupied; and
3. that some regular Grand Lodge provides a charter for its creation. In the case of Cuba, the charter came from the United States; in the case of Spain, it came from France and Portugal.

⁴⁶ J. A. Ayala, ‘La Masonería de obediencia Española ante el conflicto colonial puertorriqueño’, *Cuadernos de Investigaciones Históricas*, 22, 23. Referenced in this paper as *Cuadernos*.

⁴⁷ Ayala, *Obediencias*, 15.

⁴⁸ Ayala, *Cuadernos*, 35.

⁴⁹ Castellano Gil, *Masonería*, 60.

For Cuba there was a reason. In 1859 Freemasonry was prohibited in Spain. Therefore no Spanish Grand Lodge could provide such a charter. Many Cubans and Puerto Ricans were political exiles,⁵⁰ or had emigrated to the United States, where some had already joined the Craft. In the USA there existed a Grand Lodge and a Supreme Council,⁵¹ willing and able to provide such a charter.

The two Masons sent successively to Cuba by Albert Pike,⁵² who had just been elected Grand Commander of the mother Supreme Council in Charleston, were Bros. Andrés Cassard and Vicente Antonio De Castro. They were both Cubans and had lived in the United States as political exiles because of their pro-independence views and activities, and had joined the Craft during their exile.

Regarding Professor Castellano Gil's alleged American Masonic influence in Cuba, it was quite limited. For example, in lieu of adopting the York Rite for the three symbolic degrees, as was usual in the United States, the Cuban and Puerto Rican lodges used the Scottish Rite protocol. American liturgies and monitors were not translated but were re-written by Bros De Castro and Cassard. Professor Castellano Gil recognizes such Cuban character, when he writes: 'from 1859 onward proliferation of obediencias of purely Cuban character would generate an environment full of rivalries.'⁵³

Moreover, Professor Torres Cuevas, a Cuban academic historian, agrees with the Cuban character of *Gran Logia de Colon* when he writes: 'the most remarkable of the *Gran Logia de Colon* lay in the fact that, in spite of having obtained their charter from American Masonic organizations, their behaviour and projections were closer to what has been called Latin Freemasonry.'⁵⁴

To summarize: unless the nineteenth-century Spanish obediences had created themselves, as did the Grand Lodge of England in 1717, they must have followed a similar legal procedure to obtain their charters (also from a foreign country). And they did!

Spanish obediences obtained their charters from the Grand Orient of France and the Grand Orient of Portugal. For example Professor Paz writes: 'Lodge *Taoro, Canarias*, . . . was erected under the auspices of the *Grande Oriente Lusitano Unido*, as well as many other Spanish lodges.'⁵⁵

However neither Professors Ayala or Castellano Gil, or any other European academic historian, identify Spanish obediences as Hispano-Lusitana or Hispano-French.

⁵⁰ Accused by the Spanish government of being autonomists, reformists, annexionists or separatists.

⁵¹ The Supreme Council, Charleston, South Carolina, provided the charter to create Cuba's *Gran Logia de Colon*. & Supreme Council.

⁵² Ill. Bro. Pike controlled the Mother Supreme Council with a firm hand from 1859 until his death in 1892. He sent in succession two independent and assertive Cubans, Bros Cassard and De Castro. See also Soucy, *Masoneria*, 141.

⁵³ Castellano Gil, *Masoneria*, 270.

⁵⁴ Torres Cuevas, 'Masonería en Cuba durante el Siglo XIX' in *REHMLAC* Vol. 3. No. 2., 86–88.

⁵⁵ Paz, *Masoneria*, 740. A similar concept can be found in Soucy, *Masoneria*, 136.

This obviously constitutes a double standard and a subtle but factual mis-representation of autochthonous Grand Lodges.

Finally, the attitude of the *Gran Logia Soberana de Puerto Rico* vis-a-vis the Americans, after the change of landlords resulting from the 1898 War, has been qualified by Prof. Ayala as opportunistic. However a sounder explanation for the positive attitude of the *Gran Logia Soberana de Puerto Rico* towards the Americans is advanced by Professor Ayala himself, when he writes, a few pages further on in the same paper: ‘The inept Spanish colonial administration discriminated, without doubt, against these overseas Spanish subjects, and favoured the European Spaniards, who enjoyed in the islands a wealth of privileges: trades, positions, and the confidence of the Spanish authorities.’⁵⁶ I rest my case.

2. *That the members of these two Grand Lodges lacked a consistent political ideology; thence, these Grand Lodges should not be considered as centres of revolutionaries.*

- ‘There were Freemasons in the Conservative party, and there were also in the Liberal Party, and later in the Autonomist Party. However the most numerous examples have been found in the latter one.’ Ayala.⁵⁷
- ‘We disagree that the participation of some Freemasons in the ranks of the Liberation Army determines that this Obedience may have passed into history as a Center of Pro- Independence Revolutionaries.’ Castellano Gil.⁵⁸

Counter-Argument

There are several parts to my counter-argument to the above statement that Cuban and Puerto Rican Lodges were ideologically inconsistent with the liberal philosophy and the efforts of the Creole class to obtain political and socio-economical improvements in their two islands.

First, in the fifty years between 1850 and 1899, strategies toward Spanish colonial rule varied as political circumstances varied. So we can find at different times trends favouring reform, autonomy or independence. But at all times such strategies pursued the same objective: to improve the political, socio-economic, and cultural conditions, whether within or without Spanish rule.

Bro. Miguel Pereira’s doctoral dissertation explains how autonomists and Freemasons used the same concept of promoting Puerto Rican identity, as opposed to Spanish identity, as a fundamental element in their quest for political autonomy. The same concept applied in Cuba after 1880, when armed conflict failed to bring about independence from Spain.

⁵⁶ Ayala, *Cuadernos*, 27.

⁵⁷ Ayala, *Obediencias*, 15.

⁵⁸ Castellano Gil, *Masoneria*, 72.

Professor Ayala recognizes this: ‘at the heart of such disputes [between Creole and Spanish obediences] lies not only a political problem – the problem of the autonomy of the island and therefore the right of Puerto Ricans to create their own institutions – but also social . . . the Spanish obediences had a strong component of European Spaniards, who enjoyed considerable privileges in the island before 1898.’⁵⁹ The same also applies to Cuba.

Regarding Professor Castellano Gil’s comment that only some Masons participated in the Cuban War of Independence, and not entire Masonic lodges, we advance two arguments:

First, Professor Castellano Gil writes: ‘Among the Masons revolting against Spanish rule in 1868 we find an important contingent of members of the *Lodge Buena Fe* of Manzanillo: Carlos M. de Céspedes, Manuel de Jesús Calvar, Bartolomé Maso Márquez . . .’⁶⁰ And I add: from *Bayamo Lodge* Tomas Estrada Palma and Francisco Vicente Aguilera, and from *Lodge Tinima* Ignacio Agramonte. For those unfamiliar with Cuban independence history this list includes significant leaders: Céspedes, first President during the war and Father of the Country, Maso and Estrada Palma,⁶¹ also Presidents of the Republic in Arms (with the last elected as the First President of Cuba in 1902). Finally, Bros Francisco Vicente Aguilera and Ignacio Agramonte were two of the most important promoters and ideologues of the war of 1868–78.

Secondly, it would be naïve to search for lodge documentation involving revolutionary activity. Such activity is not allowed in open lodge by our ancient Landmarks. What happens before or after the meeting is another story, but this is not committed to the Minutes. In addition it would be even more naïve to expect any conspirator to commit to paper the names of their members and their plans, so Spanish authorities could find them and act accordingly.

Bro. Garrigó explains the traditional civic involvement of Cuban Freemasons: ‘it is not the Masonic institution that creates conspiracies; it is that Masonic doctrine is incompatible with the colonial regime . . . Masons as individuals feel the duty to fight for social and national human improvement.’⁶² Professor Torres Cuevas writes: The *Gran Logia Unida de Colón e Isla de Cuba* had aspects in common with Jose Marti’s Cuban revolutionary project . . . it shares the ethical concept that constitutes part of Masonic social activity . . . in favour of a democratic and non-denominational republic.⁶³ Professor Torres Cuevas adds: ‘The members of the leadership of the Autonomist Party were

⁵⁹ Ayala, *Obediencias*, 15.

⁶⁰ Castellano Gil, *Masonería*, 261, n. 429.

⁶¹ This author was initiated in *Lodge Estrada Palma*, Marianao, Cuba, in January of 1969.

⁶² Torres Cuevas, *Seis Ensayos*, 161.

⁶³ Torres Cuevas, *REHMLAC*, 99. The *Gran Logia Unida de Colón e Isla de Cuba* was the continuation of the *Gran Logia de Colon* after the war of 1868–78.

distinguished members⁶⁴ of the two [Cuban autochthonous] Masonic obediences, the *Gran Logia de Colon* and *Gran Logia Unida de Colon y Isla de Cuba* . . . Many of the best-known intellectuals of that time, both autonomist or independentist, were Masons.⁶⁵ Professor Soucy writes that between 1879 and 1895 ‘it was the Autonomist Liberal Party, organized and led mainly by Cuban Masons, which, in the opinion of Professor Torres Cuevas, developed the thesis that it was preferable to obtain through evolution what was not achieved [in 1868–78] by revolution.’⁶⁶

Professors Soucy and Sappez also state:

the *Gran Logia Unida de Colon y Isla de Cuba* as an institution affirms its non-political character; its members . . . their commitment as Masons and citizens . . . It would be Bro. Antonio Govín, as Grand Master, who was to say . . . that it would be a major misfortune that there was separation between the Freemason and the Citizen, because then, the work of the Fraternity would be useless; dead.⁶⁷

Our autochthonous obediences fostered the creation of leaders. Freemasonry was the catalyst that linked and refined them. Spanish obediences and the colonial authorities understood these issues very well. That is why they worked so hard to dismantle autochthonous obediences.

3 *That the Gran Logia de Colon & the Gran Logia Soberana de Puerto Rico did not respond to the Creole class ideology and political interests*

- ‘The Gran Logia de Colon not only set itself apart from any revolutionary or independence process but in addition it was against it.’ Castellano Gil.⁶⁸
- ‘The Gran Logia de Colon maintained during a long time its strong Spanish character, and only after the mid-1870s did it start showing some Cuban Masonic identity.’ Soucy.⁶⁹

Counter-Argument

I provide a two-part counter-argument. I consider the murder in February 1870 of the Grand Master of the *Gran Logia de Colon*, Puente Badell, and then I present several comments written in their same books by the authors above totally inconsistent with their above-mentioned statements.

⁶⁴ Many autonomists, such as Bro. Gálvez, were former *laborantes* during the war of 1868–78.

⁶⁵ Torres Cuevas, *Seis Ensayos*, 69.

⁶⁶ See the article of Profs. Soucy & Sappez, ‘Autonomismo y masonería en Cuba’, *Revista de Estudios Históricos de la Masonería Latinoamericana y Caribeña*, 2009. Vol. 1, No. 1., 95.

⁶⁷ Soucy & Sappez, *Masonería*, 96.

⁶⁸ Castellano Gil, *Masonería*, 261.

⁶⁹ Soucy, *Masonería*, 115.

First, Professor Castellano Gil alleges that the *Gran Logia de Colon* not only set itself apart but was against any revolutionary process. This is based on a few comments made by several *Gran Logia de Colon* Spanish Masons. However this same criterion was derided by Professor Castellano Gil when he disputed that the *Gran Logia de Colon* was pro-revolutionary, an obvious inconsistency.⁷⁰

The murder of Grand Master Andrés Puente Badell, of the Grand Treasurer, and of several other *Gran Logia de Colon* leaders, took place in February 1870 in San Juan de Wilson, a farm near Santiago de Cuba, by Spanish forces under Major Carlos González Boet. Bro. Aurelio Miranda writes a chapter on these events;⁷¹ Professor Torres Cuevas includes them in his book;⁷² Professor Soucy does too.⁷³ However this historical event is not even mentioned in Professor Castellano Gil's book.

The historical importance of Grand Master Puente Badell's murder is evident. First, it was not an isolated event during Cuba's wars with Spain. On 27 November 1871 the Spanish colonial government executed seven Cuban medical students from the University of Havana for joking over the tomb of Spanish journalist Gonzalo Castañón, killed in a duel with a Cuban journalist.⁷⁴

Then during the 1895 Cuban War of Independence Spanish General Valeriano Weiler decreed the *Bando de Reconcentración*. Several hundred thousand Cuban peasants were evicted from their farms,⁷⁵ their homes and crops burnt, and their animals killed. They then were forced to move into the towns, where over 200,000 perished from starvation and disease.

These three events pursued the same colonial objective: to send a clear message about the risks they were taking to the Cuban contingents of Masons, students and peasants who at least sympathized with, if not helped, the Cuban independence army.

After my presentation of this topic to the International Symposium on Latin American Freemasonry in San José, Costa Rica (UCR, XI/2015), Professor José Antonio Ferrer Benimeli,⁷⁶ a distinguished Spanish academic historian, justified the exclusion of Grand Master Puente Badell's murder in Professor Castellano Gil's book, stating that

⁷⁰ Castellano Gil, *Masonería*, 72.

⁷¹ A. Miranda, *Asesinato de Andrés Puente. Historia de la Masonería*, Chapter 42, 313.

⁷² Torres Cuevas, *Seis Ensayos*, 61, 62; See also Torres Cuevas, *REHMLAC*, 90.

⁷³ Soucy, *Masonería*, 128, 164–5.

⁷⁴ Masó, *Historia*, 262–5. Captain Federico Capdevila defended these University of Havana students in the War Council that condemned them to death by firing squad. Capdevila was a Freemason, according to Cuban GM Piñeiro del Cueto in his Buenos Aires conference on Freemasonry, published in 1962 by the *Gran Logia Soberana de Puerto Rico*.

⁷⁵ Masó, *Historia*, 385.

⁷⁶ Jose A. Ferrer Benimeli, a Jesuit scholar whose doctoral dissertation on Spanish Freemasonry started a movement for the academic study of the subject. He founded and chaired *CEHME*, a professional society for such studies, in Spain.

his murder was important to us, but that it was not important to him. We have shown how Puente Badell was not just another Freemason. He was elected Grand Master in 1867 and was instrumental in the efforts to separate the Symbolic Grand Lodge from the Supreme Council, headed by wealthy Spaniards and evidently pro-Spanish.

Such an argument seems untenable for two important reasons. First, if every historian were allowed to include or exclude events only according to whim, history would soon become a discredited chaos. Secondly, more importantly, we believe that the case for the relevance of the murder of Grand Master Puente Badell in the history of Cuban Freemasonry has been objectively proven.

Additional evidence consists in providing several quotations from the same European authors about the autochthonous Grand Lodges and their participation in these events. If such Grand Lodges had been pro-Spanish, or if they had supported Creole struggles only from 1875 onward as Professor Souci claims, the Spanish colonial forces would have not murdered Puente Badell in 1870, and autochthonous lodges would not have been harassed and closed, in a period when most Spanish obediences were left to continue their work both in Cuba and in Puerto Rico.

Quotes about Cuban autochthonous Freemasonry

‘[the government intended] to cut off the resources that the *Gran Logia de Colon* was secretly sending to the rebels, throughout the island [of Cuba].’⁷⁷

‘Repression was practically constant.’⁷⁸

‘The publication [of the Cuban masonic paper] ceased as a consequence of the arrests produced on March 5, 1870 after the penetration into Lodge San Andres by colonial forces, while conducting a session to honor Grand Master Puente Badell.’⁷⁹

‘After the Spanish revolution of 1868 . . . Cuban Freemasons, under suspicion of fomenting the revolution, had seen a strengthening of the colonial government repression.’⁸⁰

Quotes regarding Puerto Rican autochthonous Freemasonry

‘The Manifiesto published by the Grand Council of the Grand Orient of Spain, in *Boletín Oficial* of 1892 . . . launched the accusation of autochthonous Freemasonry being separatist, and not only from a Masonic point of view, but also from a political one. The cause of the Spanish Freemasonry was a nationalistic, patriotic one, they argued.’⁸¹

⁷⁷ Castellano Gil, *Masonería*, 78. The *Gran Oriente de Espana* was a Spanish obedience which disputed territory with the *Gran Logia de Colon*.

⁷⁸ Soucy, *Masonería*, 115, 194.

⁷⁹ Castellano Gil, *Masonería*, 227.

⁸⁰ Soucy, *Masonería*, 149.

⁸¹ Ayala, *Cuadernos*, 25.

‘Challenging this pro-Spanish Freemasonry, it is possible that another type of Freemasonry co-existed – the autochthonous of the *Gran Logia Soberana* – less close to the national cause or to the Spanish colonial domination.’⁸²

‘The objective of [Grand Master Santiago R.] Palmer was to create . . . a Masonically independent territory for Puerto Rico; and also political autonomy for the island.’⁸³

Quotes regarding the Morro of San Juan Puerto Rico in October 1887.

Prof. Ayala briefly covers this historical event: ‘Governor Palacio lumped together his persecution of liberal autonomists and of Masons; and many lodges were forced to suspend their work, and many masons were sent to prison accused of conspiracy.’⁸⁴

Puerto Rican historians are less terse, dedicating full articles to these events. Dr Miguel A. Pereira writes: ‘On October 24 1887, the first Grand Master of Puerto Rican Masons, Santiago R. Palmer⁸⁵, was arrested in Mayaguez jointly with other prominent masons: Alberto Nadal, José Madera, José Vicente González, Salvador Carbonell Toro & Tomás Vázquez.’⁸⁶ Professor Luis A. Otero writes: ‘They were tortured after their arrest. Carbonell was lifted by his arms, his elbows tied together, until his feet barely touched the floor. Brutality was such that his arms were affected for the rest of his life.’⁸⁷

4 Spanish obediences felt they had the right to invade already-occupied Masonic territories. *Spanish Freemasons*

1. have never accepted the concept of having a single Grand Lodge per state or nation, and
2. espouse the concept whereby the Supreme Council is the highest ranking power, one that controls every lower echelon, including the Grand Lodge.

Cuban and Puerto Rican Freemasons favour the contrary concepts, which are more frequent in the Americas. They favour a single body per country and an independent Grand Lodge that manages itself without external interference. This divergence caused much trouble between the original Grand Lodge and Supreme Council of Colon and is at the heart of our current objection.

Spain perceived Freemasonry in a manner clearly explained by Professor Ayala:

⁸² Ayala, *Cuadernos*, 33.

⁸³ Ayala, *Obediencias*, 54.

⁸⁴ Ayala, *Cuadernos*, 28.

⁸⁵ L. S. Ramos, ‘Santiago R. Palmer: escribano y notario’, *Lumina* Vol. 2. 87–94.

⁸⁶ M. A. Pereira, ‘Encarcelamiento de Baldorioty y Palmer en El Morro en 1887’, *El Nuevo Periódico de Caguas*. Miércoles 24 de octubre del 2012.

⁸⁷ L. A. Otero, ‘The Prisoners of San Felipe del Morro’, *Scottish Rite Journal*, S. J. Nov/Dec. 2013, 22–4.

In the ideological battle that was ensuing at the end of the nineteenth century in these Antilles islands, to a greater or lesser extent was concealed the intention of domination by competing forces; we stress the meagre Masonic presence of Spain until 1868 which contrasted with the belligerence of the French . . . and the ever-stronger pre-eminence of the United States in the area.⁸⁸

This explains the motives of the Spanish obediences in our islands, and their suspicion of ours.

The Grand Lodges of the Dominican Republic and Cuba were created in 1858–59. The *Gran Oriente de Cuba y Las Antillas*, also in Cuba, was created in 1862. During the 1860s several lodges were created in Puerto Rico which were dependent on Venezuela, the Dominican Republic, and the Cuban *Gran Logia de Colon*. When after 1868 the first Spanish Lodges arrived in Puerto Rico, and after 1870 in Cuba, since this island was at war with Spain, these territories were both Masonically occupied.

The character of this difficult situation is clearly illustrated in an article by Professor Jose A. Ferrer Benimeli that asked ‘how did Lodge Aurora No. 82 of San Pedro de Macorís, Santo Domingo, face the Dominican and international context supported by the Spanish obedience *Gran Oriente Español* from 1889 to 1923?’ Professor Benimeli continued: ‘The official bulletin (of the *Gran Oriente Español*), whose first issue is dated 1 July 1889, No. 12, of December 15 explains who Montero Casal was and why there were three Dominican lodges founded by the *Gran Oriente Español*.’⁸⁹

Counter-Argument

It is obvious, from the cases presented, that confrontation between Caribbean Spanish and autochthonous Freemasonry at the end of the nineteenth century goes beyond just the Spanish colonies.

The Dominican Republic after the war of restoration became again an independent nation. Several of its presidents and generals, as well as other important leaders, were members of their autochthonous Grand Lodge. However, the fact of being independent with its Grand Lodge (occupied Masonic territory) was not a deterrent for Spanish obediences to install their own lodges there, as they had previously done in Cuba and Puerto Rico.

As stated by Professor Ayala, autochthonous and Spanish lodges functioned in practice as political organizations: ‘at the bottom of this difference [between autochthonous

⁸⁸ Ayala, *Obediencias*, 24.

⁸⁹ Ferrer Benimeli, ‘La logia dominicana Aurora No. 82 de San Pedro de Macorís (1889-1923)’, *REHMLAC* 3, Abstract & Introduction.

and Spanish obediences] there was not only a political problem . . . but also a social one.⁹⁰

The *Gran Logia Nacional Dominicana* deeply resented the Spanish invasion of its territory, and actively fought against it. Professor Benimeli writes:

There were still several difficulties to surmount, stemming from the members of the *Gran Logia Nacional Dominicana* who 'wage a continuous war against us, stating that our lodge [Aurora No. 84], because it depends on the Spanish obedience *Gran Oriente Español*, constitutes an invasion and thence is an irregular Lodge.'⁹¹

Professor Benimeli then writes:

On July 27, 1909, from the city of Santo Domingo, *Gran Logia Nacional Dominicana* Grand Master, J. Pardo, wrote personally to Don Miguel Morayta, Grand Master of the *Gran Oriente Español*, to send him an issue of *Boletín Masónico* that included the *Gran Logia Nacional Dominicana* decree that stated such difficulties between the Lodge Aurora of San Pedro de Macorís, established under the *Gran Oriente Español* . . . [was] 'considered irregular for having invaded our territory.'⁹² Professor Benimeli then quotes Bro. Fernando Jacobo, Worshipful Master of Aurora No. 84: 'we can counter the daily attacks suffered from the Dominican lodges that consider us irregular.'⁹³

Discussion

I have presented counter-arguments that challenge certain concepts and suggestions that some European historians have advanced regarding autochthonous Freemasonry in Cuba and Puerto Rico. These include that such obediences were pro-American, pro-Spanish (which constitute a contradiction), and that their political ideology was inconsistent and opportunistic.

On the other hand, if these autochthonous obediences were none of the above and if they were not a political party or a subversive movement either, what were they?

To provide an answer, we need to examine the historical context in which these events took place. During most of the second half of the nineteenth century neither of these two islands had political parties, clubs, unions, or civic organizations because most were either banned by the colonial authorities, or had not yet been created.

Moreover there were few schools, especially for mid-level education. In Puerto Rico and in the eastern half of Cuba there were no universities or seminaries; the only univer-

⁹⁰ Ayala, *Obediencia*, 15.

⁹¹ Ferrer Benimeli, *Aurora No. 82*, 22.

⁹² Ferrer Benimeli, *Aurora No. 82*, 23.

⁹³ Ferrer Benimeli, *Aurora No. 82*, 25.

sity was in Havana. Those few, such as Betances and Hostos in Puerto Rico or De Castro and Céspedes in Cuba, with the means to travel, studied in Havana, the United States, or Europe. The majority however grew intellectually by participating in lodges and literary societies. Hence autochthonous Freemasonry became for most of these Masons their school as well as the vehicle through which they prepared themselves to undertake their patriotic endeavours.

Such Masons in Puerto Rico included Bros Muñoz Rivera and Fernández Juncos, who edited newspapers and organized autonomous political parties. Bro. Cassard became a teacher, founded lodges, schools, and newspapers, and wrote rituals. In Cuba Bros Calixto García, Maceo and Máximo Gómez, who were rural entrepreneurs, became generals of the independence army. Their military strategies and campaigns were studied in several European military academies.

I explain such contribution of autochthonous Freemasonry to the process of nation-building in Cuba and Puerto Rico in the following way: ‘There exist three key functions that Freemasonry – in particular the Grand Lodges of Cuba [and Puerto Rico] – contributed to society . . . These are the connective, the disseminating and the incubating functions.’⁹⁴

A Statistical Model to Support our Assessment

The case of Puerto Rico is enlightening. I estimate conservatively that there would have been some 10,000 members of the population eligible, because of their knowledge and personal qualifications, to be potential candidates for inclusion in the autonomic government allowed by Spain from January 1898 at the conclusion of the Spanish-American war. Professor Ayala has estimated that there were then about 3,000 Freemasons within that population. He has established that that ‘The first (Puertorrican) autonomous government was formed on 10 February 1898. Out of its six Secretaries at least four were Freemasons . . . Out of the first five sub-Secretaries four were also Freemasons (the fifth one is in doubt).’⁹⁵

Without taking into account the doubtful person this means that, within the autonomous administration consisting of 11 officials, no fewer than 8 are identifiable as being Freemasons. On a duly proportionate basis within the ‘eligible population’, one might properly have expected that the ratio among ministers should have been reflected in a preponderance of non-Masons to Masons of 7: 3. Instead, not only is the ratio tilted the other way, but to an overwhelming extent: 8 out of 3,000 identifiable Freemasons compare to a paltry 3 out of 7,000 non-Masons within the new government of Puerto Rico.

⁹⁴ J. L. Romeu, ‘Characteristics and Challenges of Cuban Freemasons in the XX Century: A demographic approach’ in *REHMLAC* Special Issue: *Grand Lodge of California* (2013), 137–154.

⁹⁵ Cuadernos, 30

Consequently the doubt others have hitherto cast upon the instrumentality of Freemasonry as regards promoting autonomous government is firmly rejected as regards Puerto Rico. For Cuba the case must be even stronger since all the members of its autonomous government of 1898 were Freemasons. It is thus apparent that a major contribution of Cuban and Puertorrican autochthonous Freemasonry, in the struggle for sovereignty, cultural and economic development, was the grooming of its principal leaders.

Summary of Conclusions

- Autonomists and Freemasons (frequently overlapping) used the promotion of their own Creole identity against that of Spain as a fundamental element to seek and obtain their autonomy, both politically and Masonically.
- In different periods autochthonous Freemasons adopted different strategies, including reform, autonomy or independence, to attain a greater political and socio-economic development. Such variety of strategies does not imply a lack of consistent political ideology.
- Autochthonous Freemasonry functioned as a formative grouping for political and socio-economic leaders, especially for those Brethren lacking economic opportunity to obtain a formal higher education. Example of such include: in Cuba, Maceo, Gomez, Maso and Estrada Palma; in the Dominican Republic, Espaillat, Luperon, and Lilis; and in Puerto Rico, Palmer, Munoz Rivera and Fernandez Juncos. Developing such important national leaders was perhaps the greatest contribution of autochthonous Freemasonry in the Spanish Antilles.
- Several historians in Europe have unfairly judged some features of Cuban and Puertorrican autochthonous Freemasonry, such as the origin of their Charters, by branding them as Cuban-American. They have, however, failed to recognise their own Freemasonry (using the same logic) as being Franco-Spanish or Lusitano-Spanish by reason of their own Charters having come from other countries. This identification of being 'Cuban-American' has tended to imply that these Grand Lodges were agents of the United States, and represents a spurious interpretation.
- The same error has led such historians to omit certain critical historical events, such as the murder of Grand Master Puente Badell, or to minimize other events such as the imprisonment of several senior members of the Gran Logia Soberana de Puerto Rico in El Morro in October 1887.
- Similarly they have accepted or played down the invasion by Spanish obediences of already-occupied Masonic territories within the colonies of Cuba and Puerto Rico, as well as in the independent Dominican Republic as exemplified through Lodge Aurora.

Most importantly, it is high time that an alternative vision of these events should be presented, one providing perspectives from the American side of the Atlantic to counter-balance those expressed from the European side. The latter have been the only available ones up to now, already influencing some such as Professor Soucy. Having the fresh perspectives summarized above should enable future Masonic and academic historians to read and evaluate both sides. This should lead to a more informed and balanced result: historians will in the future be better prepared to provide a more objective view than has hitherto been the case.

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