

FREEMASONRY IN COLOMBIA (18TH-19TH CENTURIES): FRENCH OR CONTINENTAL ORIGIN, LEADING FREEMASONS, THE CATHOLIC CHURCH, POLITICAL PARTIES AND REVOLUTIONARY ELEMENTS IN SOUTH AMERICA^a

La masonería en Colombia (siglos XVIII–XIX): origen francés o continental, masones referentes, Iglesia católica, partidos políticos y elementos revolucionarios en Suramérica

Artículo de reflexión derivado de investigación

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Abstract

The history of Colombian Freemasonry can be divided into three clearly identifiable stages, this work focused on the first historical stage characterized by the influence of continental European Freemasonry. This article analyzed the essence of French freemasonry on the origin of the Colombian nation-state. The impact of operative or patriotic lodges in South America was reviewed in general, as well as the relations between the Catholic Church and the 19th-century leading freemasons. The methodology used is documentary review, bibliographic and critical analysis when consulting, reviewing and analyzing reference sources. The article attempts to gauge the scope of the masonic influence on the process of independence from Spain, and it arrives at the conclusion that without the intervention of masonic elements the revolutionary goals would not have materialized in the way they did.

Keywords

Colombia; Continental Freemasonry; Colombian Independence; Masonic Lodges; Republic.

Resumen

La historia de la masonería colombiana se puede dividir en tres etapas claramente identificables, el presente trabajo se centró en la primera etapa histórica caracterizada por la influencia de la masonería continental europea. En el artículo se analizó la esencia de la masonería francesa en el origen del Estado-nacional colombiano y de manera general se revisó el impacto de las logias operativas en Suramérica, además se examinaron las relaciones entre la iglesia católica y masones referentes del siglo XIX. La metodología utilizada es la revisión documental, bibliográfica y el análisis crítico al consultar, revisar y analizar las fuentes de referencia. El artículo intenta calibrar el alcance de la influencia masónica en el proceso de independencia de España, y llega a la conclusión de que sin la intervención de elementos masónicos los objetivos revolucionarios no se hubieran materializado de la forma en que lo hicieron.

Palabras clave

Colombia; Logias Masónicas; Masonería; Independencia colombiana; República.

Introduction

The history of Colombian freemasonry can be divided in to three stages marked by changes in the masonic paradigms, in turn profiled by progressive and conservative agendas. It must be noted however, that this should not be associated with the doctrines of the traditional Colombian political parties (Liberal and Conservative Party) but rather with the development of different masonic institutions within specific political contexts. The republican and secular agenda at the heart of continental (French) freemasonry is contemporaneous with the Independence period, whereas English freemasonry, monarchic and religious in character, is framed within a more modern context. In general, however, Colombian freemasonry is identified with the Liberal party as will be explained later.

The first historic cycle of Colombian freemasonry comprises the period between the independence to the first decade of the twentieth century. This period is characterized by the influence of European continental freemasonry. The second period, which extends from the early twentieth century to the 1980's, is defined by Anglo-Saxon influence (in particular from the United States). The third phase comprises from the 1980's to the present day and can be described as a heterogeneous period marked by the return of French or continental freemasonry. This article centers only on the first cycle of Colombian freemasonry and its impact on the establishment of the Colombian state, it will also analyze the structural problem that has afflicted the instituted republic as Nation-State: its national component.

The essence of French freemasonry

French or Continental freemasonry is the type that developed in continental Europe mainly through the influence of the Grand Orient de France. This institution was founded with the name of Grand Lodge of France in 1728, but in 1773, under the leadership of Louis-Philippe d'Orléans, Duke of Chartres, was restructured and renamed as Grand Orient of France. This administrative

reform took place after 19 sessions of debate (Since March 5, 1773 till September 1, 1773) in which all the lodges of the kingdom of France participated. All the sessions were presided by the Vice-Grand-Master Agustin Jean-François Chaillon Jonville (Bauer & Moller, 2010).

French freemasonry evolved on the ideals of the Republic and freedom of conscience. Both ideals are the product of events that took place prior and posterior to the French Revolution with a direct influence from the Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen. This particular context shaped freemasonry in two aspects; first, it shaped the structure of masonic High Degrees (this happened during the period of the French Enlightenment), and second, it gave freemasonry a republican vision, unlike its English counterpart, which was tolerant with monarchy. It is important to remind that since 1721 English freemasonry is governed by nobles related to the Royal House of the United Kingdom through the United Grand Lodge of England, known as the Mother Grand Lodge (Arrieta-López, 2020).

In continental Europe, the conditions for masonic development were peculiar. The freemasonic continental bodies (Grand Orient of France and General Scottish Grand Lodge of France) developed administrative structures that comprised all the masonic degrees divided between symbolic degrees (Entered Apprentice, Fellow Craft, and Master Mason) and philosophical degrees (*haute grades maçonniques* or high masonic degrees). In the Anglo-Saxon world, on the other hand, the governing structure only preserved the first three degrees (with only a few exceptions, as in the case of the Royal Arch). The spread of the continental model is a result of the development and success of the High Masonic Degrees, whose result was the Rite of Perfection, predecessor of the Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite which was impelled by the ideals of the Enlightenment, the fall of the French monarchy, and the birth of universal rights (Arrieta-López, 2020).

The man responsible for the creation of the high masonic degrees in France was Andrew Michael Ramsay (1686-1743), a member of James Stuart's entourage and a disciple of the mystic Bishop François de Salignac de la Mothe-Fénelon and Jeanne Marie Bouvier de la Motte Guyon (Henderson, 1952). Ram-

say wrote the *Conversations of Fenelon with Michael de Ramsay* (1710), *Political Essay* (1719), *A History of the Life of Fenelon* (1720), *The Travels of Cyrus* (1727), *History of Viscount de Tourenne* (1735), *Plan of Education* (1741), and *Philosophical Principles of Religion Revealed and Expressed in Geometric Order* (1743) (Cherel, 1926). In 1729, Ramsay was elected as a member of the Royal Society of London, and he received a doctorate in law from Oxford University. He was initiated in the Horn Lodge (London) in 1730, and in 1736, in his role as Grand Orator of the Great Lodge of France (1728), Ramsay gave a speech at the Lodge of Saint Thomas in Paris that would earn him accolades among his masonic brothers. The same speech, with some modifications, was given again in 1737 at the Assembly of the French Order. This speech led Daniel Ligou to write in his *Dictionary of Freemasonry* that Ramsay was one of the “columns of French freemasonry” (Arrieta, 2016).

Ramsay’s speeches manifest the spirit that moved the individuals who gave shape to the masonic movement. Ramsay is also the visible nexus between French and Scottish Freemasonry. It was in France that the Rite of Perfection of the 25 Degrees was first developed. The Rite of Perfection was transformed into the Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite of the 33 Degrees and established in Charleston, South Carolina in 1801, after the French freemason Alexandre François Auguste de Grasse Tilly spread it through Europe and the American continent through the establishment of the first seven Supreme Councils of Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite.

The first version of Ramsay’s speech is preserved in a manuscript dated December 26, 1736 and now located at the library of Épernay. The second version was published in 1837 in *Lettres de M de V. Avec plusier pieces de deferens auteurs* (sic.), The Hague, 1738. In one of these speeches Ramsay states:

The whole world is nothing more than a great republic in which each nation is a family and each individual a child. Sirs, our organization was founded to revive and propagate the old principles deriving from the nature of human beings. We want to bring together all the men of sublime taste and amiable humor through the love of the arts, where ambition becomes virtue and the feeling of benevolence for the brotherhood is the same one feels for all of humanity, where all nations can obtain solid knowledge, and where the subjects of all kingdoms can cooperate without envy, can live without discord, and can love each other. Without renouncing their principles, let us

banish from our laws all the disagreements that can alter the tranquility of the spirit, the gentleness of customs, the feelings of affection, the genuine happiness, and that absolute harmony that one can only find in the elimination of all the improper excesses and all the discordant passions (Négrier, 1995, p. 397).

Ramsay, the originator of the High Masonic Degrees, was telling his fellow French freemason during the time of absolutism that the world should be a great republic, a universal republic. He was also promoting the idea of confraternity whose interest was not men, not women but rather the whole human race. This speech was ahead of its times in envisioning the integration of the world.

The philosophical context that influenced Ramsay's speeches began to develop with Pierre Bayle, an important figure of liberal convictions who initiated the encyclopedic movement. Bayle is also considered the precursor of Enlightened Freemasonry (Bord, 1908). He openly criticized Louis XIV with his work *Ce que c'est que la France toute catholique sous le règne de Louis le Grand*. The piece was written in response to the issuance of the Edict of Nantes, which eliminated religious tolerance in the country. Bayle's *Dictionnaire historique et critique* was quite influential in the later publication of *The Encyclopedia*, a work and a movement that promoted the education of the people, the destruction of superstition, and universal access to human knowledge.

Another antecedent to Ramsay's speech can be found in the work of Abbé Charles Irénée Castel de Saint-Pierre, who in 1713 published a work entitled *Project for Perpetual Peace in Europe*. The central idea of Saint Pierre's work is the establishment of a Christian Republic inspired in great part by medieval institutions and the organization of the German principalities within the framework of the Holy Roman Empire (Garzón Valdés, 1991). Saint-Pierre states the following:

In examining the government of the sovereign states of Germany, I did not encounter more difficulties in creating this European Union for our time, than they [videlicet the German sovereigns] did previously when they created the Germanic Union, to execute on a larger scale what had already been created on a smaller (Garzón Valdés, 1991, p. 16).

Saint-Pierre also advocated for an equitable and graduated system of taxation in which the contributions of the taxpayers would be proportional to their wealth. He also considered the necessity to establish a system of free public education for men and women. In his *Project for the Peace of Europe* he proposed the creation of an international court of justice as an instrument for the preservation of peace. Saint-Pierre is a veritable precursor to the Enlightenment and the idea of demarcation of the different functions of the State.

Although Saint-Pierre circumscribes his idea to the European continent, he is a major influence on Ramsay's concept of Universal Republic. Ramsay was familiar with Saint-Pierre's work, and both participated in the formation of the Club de l'Entresol¹ in Paris (Childs, 2000). This club would be frequented by many French intellectuals such as Montesquieu and Claude-Adrien Helvétius.

Within the philosophical context of Ramsay's speeches we also find Charles Louis de Secondat de Montesquieu, one of the first and main figures of the Enlightenment, initiated into freemasonry at the Horn Lodge in London in 1730 (Shackelton, 1977). Between 1725 and 1728 Montesquieu lived in Paris as a guest to Maximilien de Bethune, Duke of Sully, and during this time he frequented the Club de l'Entresol, where he met Ramsay (Childs, 2000). Ramsay was a popular author at that time, and his work *The Voyages of Cyrus* was a veritable bestseller in that time. Later, in December of 1729, Ramsay and Montesquieu would be inducted as members of the Royal Society of London, and in 1730 both were initiated into freemasonry at the Horn Lodge in London. Montesquieu would later move to France where he would continue his masonic activities in the lodges of Paris and Bordeaux. Montesquieu, as we know, is a harsh critic of the absolutism of the French monarchy. In *The Spirit of the Laws* he talks about the necessity of separation of powers into three bodies: executive, legislative, and judicial (Arrieta-López, 2019). His work also promotes religious tolerance and opposes slavery and torture. His ideas were present in the minds of many of the participants in the French Revolution.

¹ Club de l'Entresol was a circle of intellectuals created in Paris in 1820 with the purpose of discussing political, economic, and social issues.

For Andrew Michael Ramsay, besides Montesquieu, another important influence was Claude-Adrien Helvétius, one of the founders of the influential literary club 'L'Entresol of Paris. Helvétius was also the founder of the masonic lodge Les Sciences (Amiable, 1989). He was a financial supporter of Diderot during the publication of the *Encyclopedia*. Helvetius' philosophical work *De l'esprit* was publicly burned since it was considered dangerous and a threat to religion and the kingdom. Helvetius attempted to build a moral theory based on the methodology of experimental physics. One of his most "dangerous" claims was that we do not need God nor any kind of divine revelation in order to create a moral order.

Yet another figure who continued the momentum of the Enlightened Freemasonry² was Joseph Jérôme Lefrançois de Lalande, a lawyer, astronomer, writer, and contributor to the *Encyclopedia*. He contributed with several articles on astronomy to Diderot's monumental work, and he was member of many prestigious institutions, such as the Swedish Royal Academy of Science, the Prussian Academy of Science, The American Academy of Arts and Sciences, the French Academy of Inscriptions and Ancient Languages, and the Royal Society of London. A great pacifist, on one occasion de Lalande told the British king George III that he should invest money on telescopes rather than war. In the philosophical field, de Lalande believed in the existence of a morality that was completely secular. He was a member of the masonic lodge Les Sciences and later founded the lodge Neuf Soeurs³ in honor of the deceased Helvétius.

² This term refers to the influence of Enlightenment ideas upon French freemasonry.

³ Other notable members of lodge des Neuf Soeurs of Grand Orient de France were Jean-Francois Fain (?-1780), Benjamin Franklin (1706-1790), Jean-François Marmontel (1723-1799), Jacques Rangeard (1723-1797), Pascal Paoli (1725-1807), Jean-Baptiste Greuze (1725-1805), Antoine Court de Gébelin (1725-1784), Niccolò Vito Piccinni (1728-1800), Augustin Pajou (1730-1809), Nicolas Bricaire de la Dixmerie (1731?-1791), Joseph Ignace Guillotin (1738-1794), Sébastien-Roch Nicolas de Chamfort (1741-1794), Jean-Michel Moreau, dit Moreau le Jeune (1741-1814), Jean-Antoine Houdon (1741-1828), Antoine-Alexis Cadet de Vaux (1743-1828), Jacques Montgolfier (1745-1799), Joseph Bologne de Saint-George, dit le chevalier de Saint-George (1745?-1799), Nicolas Roze (1745-1819), John Paul Jones (1747-1792), Pierre-Louis Guinguené (1748-1815), Emmanuel Joseph Sieyès (1748-1836), Antoine Mailly de Chateaurenaud (1742-1819), Dominique Joseph Garat (1749-1833), Nicolas François de Neufchâteau (1750-1828), Henri Grégoire (1750-1831), Jean-Nicolas Dêmeunier (1751-1814), Nicolas Dalayrac (1753-1809), Emmanuel de Pastoret (1755-1840), Bernard Germain de Lacépède (1756-1825), Pierre Jean Georges Cabanis (1757-1808), Louis de Fontanes (1757-1821), Claude-Joseph Vernet (1714-1789), Dionisio Diderot (1713-1784), Georges-Jacques Danton (1759-1794), Camille Desmoulins (1760-1794), Jérôme-Pélagie Masson de Meslay (1742-1798), Louis-Félix Guynement de Kéralio (1731-1793), and François Lay (1758-1831) (Arrieta 2016).

This lodge was founded under the auspices of the Grand Orient of France and had the honor of initiating Voltaire when Lalande was serving as Worshipful Master (Ferrer Benimelli, 1975).

Unlike English freemasonry, consistently aloof to issues social politics, many of their French counterparts were deeply involved in revolutionary affairs, including the creation of the Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen. Lodges like Neuf Soeurs, La Concorde, Le Contrat Social, and L'Olympique de la Parfaite Estime were intellectual centers where social themes and the issue of the absolute monarchy, were routinely discussed (Arrieta, 2016).

The French Revolution was the most radical socio-political event of the eighteenth century in Europe. Its impact was felt in many countries where similar political and social contexts existed. This revolution represented the triumph of the mass of the tired and oppressed people fighting against the privileges of the nobility and the absolutist state. There are some authors with anti-masonic biases that have advanced conspiracy theories claiming that the French Revolution was the work of the freemasons. This is patently untrue. The French Revolution was caused by a myriad of factors that built up against the abuses and excesses of monarchic absolutism that, in the end, contributed to its own demise. The dream of many who participated in the revolution was the establishment of a republic.

According to Abert Soboul, one can point up to seven main causes of the Revolution: 1) A monarchic regime that collapsed do to its rigidity in the face of a changing world; 2) An aristocracy (and clergy) irrevocably attached to their feudal privileges; 3) The rise of a bourgeoisie that after achieving great economic success claimed political power; 4) The exasperation of the urban and rural lower classes, impoverished and burdened by the rise in prices, increase of taxation and the pressures of feudal and royal obligations; 5) The expansion of the ideas of the Enlightenment; 6) Economic regression and cyclical agricultural crises; and 7) The financial bankruptcy of the State caused by administrative inefficiency, unequal taxation, the expenditures of the Court, the cost of wars in general, and the fiscal crisis created by the financial and military support to the United States in its war for independence (Soboul, 1994, p. 33).

As the economic and social situation deteriorated and the outrage over injustice increased, the path towards revolution became clearer. Many freemasons actively participated during the Revolution, among them Joseph-Dominique Garat Iriarte, Jacques Perre Brissot, Camille Demouslins, Nicolas-Sebastien Roch de Chamfort, Georges-Jacques Danton, Claude Fauchet, and Nicolas de Bonneville (Arrieta, 2016, pp. 49-60).

On August 26, 1789, the French National Constituent Assembly approved the Declaration of Rights of the Man and of the Citizen, a universalist document considered the precursor of modern notions of human rights. Thanks to the work of historian Marcel Aucho, we know that 214 members of the Assembly were freemasons (Aucho, 2005, p. 360), among whom we find nobles like Louis-Philippe de Orléans, who was the fifth Grand Master of the Grand Orient of France and a supporter of the Third Estate despite his noble status.

The accomplishments of the French Revolution can be summarized in the abolition of feudal privileges, the elimination of tithing and the promulgation of the Declaration of the Rights of the Man and of the Citizen (which established liberty, equality, and fraternity as the ruling principles the republican ideal), the civil constitution of the clergy, the separation of Church and State, the promulgation of a constitution in September of 1791, the separation of powers and the establishment of the first French Republic in 1792 (Arrieta-López, 2018).

The Declaration of the Rights of the Man and of the Citizen in 1789 constituted a progressive normative that can be considered a direct antecedent to the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), whose main proponent was Henri Laugier⁴, initiated into freemasonry in July of 1914 at the lodge Les Étudiants of Grand Orient de France (Trebitsch, 1995). Laugier was General Subsecretary of the UN and President of the Humans right commission, named by the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) of the UN for the development of the Human Rights International Charter.

⁴ Henri Laugier was a member of the French Resistance. After the war he played a role in the establishment of the United Nations and working of the Declaration of Human Rights.

The active participation of freemasons in the construction of norms and models that were universalist and liberal in character can be directly linked to the axioms of continental freemasonry and the political postulates of the Republic⁵. Coincidentally, the use of the principles of liberty, equality, and fraternity as motto of the first French Republic (Romero, 1972) are also part of the coat of arms of the Grand Orient de France (Borgetto, 1997, pp. 15-16), established that same year.

The essence of French freemasonry on the origin of the *Arcano Sublime de Filantropía*

In Colombia the first stage of freemasonry is marked by masonic bodies that managed all the masonic degrees, in particular those of the Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite (continental-style freemasonry). As we will later explain, the first Scottish Rite body in Colombia was established in 1833 as the Gran Oriente y Supremo Consejo Neogranadino which would manage all the masonic degrees, from 1° to 33°. The Republic of Colombia it is defined as:

A social State of rights organized in the form of unitarian republic, decentralized and with the autonomy of its territorial units, democratic, participative and pluralist, founded with respect for human dignity through the work and solidarity of the persons who integrate it for the good of the general interest (Constitution of the Republic of Colombia, 1991).

This definition includes the three components of the classical definition of a nation-state: State, Nation and Country. However, the Republic of Colombia has faced challenge to this conception throughout its history. In the words of the assassinated political leader Luis Carlos Galán “Colombia is more territory than nation, and more nation than State” (González Uribe, 2016).

The concept of a national State emerges out of the peace treaties of Westphalia, signed in October of 1648 in the cities of Osnabrück and Münster (Manzano, 2007, p. 618). These treaties, which put an end to the Thirty-Years War⁶,

⁵ The term “republic” understood in its literal Latin meaning as public thing, a public endeavor.

⁶ A war among most of the great European powers between 1618 and 1648.

superseded feudal concepts of government and recognized territorial entities and its respective populations under a government that exercises sovereign power over geographic limits.

The Colombian conception of a nation-state starts to be delineated at the end of the eighteenth century when the first proto-masonic lodges were organized in Santa Fé de Bogotá. In 1789 Antonio Nariño y Álvarez, inspired by the ideas of the Enlightenment and the French Revolution, created the *Arcano Sublime de la Filantropía* lodge, an organization that many historians to these day misunderstand as a literary circle. Journalist Enrique Santos⁷ has pointed in the journal *El Tiempo*:

(...) Américo Carnicelli, in his book *La Masonería en la Independencia de América*, indicates that Nariño was indeed a freemason with an active participation on neogranadine masonry and that the *Arcano Sublime de Filantropía* was in effect a masonic lodge, from which Nariño was one of its creators. This lodge was functioning in his house in a room organized accordingly. This room was baptized *The Sanctuary*. In this room, the *Sanctuary*, Nariño had a bust of Benjamin Franklin (American Freemason) bearing the inscription “ERIPUIT CAELO FULMEN SPECTRUMQUE TYRANNIS” (I take from the sky the lighting from its hands and the center from tyrants) and surrounding this piece were notes dedicated to prominent masonic figures, such as Raynal, Buffon, William Pitt, Washington, and Montesquieu (Santos, 2015, párr. 4).

The intellectuals of Bogotá were frequent visitors to Nariño's lodge. Among the visitor were Jose Antonio Ricaurte y Rigüero, Jose Maria Lozano y Manrique, Jose Luis Azuola, Luis Eduardo Azuola, Esteban Ricaurte Muñoz, Francisco Antonio Zea, Francisco Tovar, Jose Joaquín Camacho y Lago, Pedro Fermín Vargas, and many others.

Antonio Nariño is considered one of the forefathers of the Latin American independence movement, along with Francisco de Miranda⁸. Nariño was responsible for the clandestine publication of the Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen in December of 1793, a document that had been banned in the Spanish colonies by the Holy Office of the Inquisition and a document that was

⁷ Santos was the president of Pen Club in Colombia, and he is a journalist and author of novels,

⁸ There is no document that attests Miranda's official entry into a masonic organization, but since the nineteenth century oral tradition has claimed that he was a mason.

the main instrument for the liberal a progressive movement. This act landed Nariño in prison in August 29th, 1794, followed by his exile by the charges of high treason in October 30th, 1795.

The archaeologist, ethnologist and Colombian historian Luis Duque Gómez, who studied Nariño's judicial declarations, states that:

French freemasonry was very active in the revolutionary movement supporting the end of feudalism, the proclamation of The Declaration of the Rights of the Man and of the Citizen in August 1789, the establishment of democratic government, and the abolition of slavery in August 29th, of 1793. This was the politic and philosophical message that reached the American colonies through clandestine publications that were distributed by secret societies that were emerging in the capital of the colony, such as the one founded by Nariño. Nariño's "literary society" was created in association with his French Physician friend Luis Francisco de Rieux y Sabaire, also a freemason. They operated as a literary club for distinguished members of society. Here, surely, was born the idea of publication and translation of the declaration of the Human rights and of the citizen. During his trial, Nariño made an passionate defense of his beliefs. These declarations probably made a greater impact than the publication of the illicit document upon the magistrates of Real Audiencia, who were completely unaware of the new political and philosophical currents, even though these ideas were quite familiar to individuals close to the Crown" (Duque, 1993, p.5).

Between the time he was captured in his room in Santafé de Bogota (August 1794) and his liberation in Cartagena (in June 1810) sixteen years went by. This imprisonment was only briefly interrupted by his short escape between March 17, 1796 and then his voluntary surrender in Bogotá on July 19, 1797 (Arrieta-López et al., 2018).

About Nariño's Trial and his stay in Europe the historian Julio Hoenigsberg has specified that the judicial case file had no delay on condemning Nariño, and his accomplices De Rieux and others, as guilty for all charges. He was very missed in the colonial lands when he was sent to a Spain port in Cadiz. There, in Cadiz, other Freemason lodges also fought for the progressive ideas. Nobody knows the misfortune of this great precursor on the dungeons of medieval prisons. But the Precursor, who has taken charge of the crusade for the independence of American colonies, premeditated the alibi, makes his scape in the middle of the ports natural disorder, and gets himself on a save spot. Under the false name of Francisco Simón Álvarez Orduz, he hides in Cadiz and contacts

Spanish freemasons who facilitate his escape across the Pyrenees into French territory. In France, Nariño contacts Jean-Lambert Tallien in order to request help for the independence of New Granada (modern-day Colombia, Venezuela, Ecuador and Panama), and then travels to England, where he meets he meets Francisco de Miranda, a pivotal figure in the early independence movement of South America (Hoenigsberg, 1944). Francisco de Miranda would eventually die in prison, while Nariño became president of the Republic of Colombia in 1811.

According to historian Carnicelli (1975), freemasonry was established in the Colombian city of Cartagena through the Britannia Lodge⁹ with a patent letter from the Provincial Grand Lodge of Jamaica¹⁰, which in turn was affiliated to the Grand Lodge of London and Westminster. The founder of the Britannia lodge was the Englishman Wellwood Hyslop (1780-1845), a friend of the liberator Simón Bolívar. There are not enough archives and data for let us know of their activities and members.

In 1808 another lodge was founded in Cartagena, the Lodge of the *Tres Virtudes Teologales* with a patent letter from the other Provincial Grand Lodge of Jamaica¹¹.

This Jamaican Provincial Grand Lodge was affiliated with the Grand Lodge of Free and Accepted Freemasons of England (known as “the ancients” and founded in 1751). In 1813 “the ancients” joined “the moderns” of the Grand Lodge of London and Westminster (1717) to form the United Grand Lodge of England.

The Lodge of the *Tres Virtudes Teologales* became more of a revolutionary lodge, in the tradition of the continental freemasonry. The Three Theological Virtues Lodge became a center of revolutionary fervor and place of the declaration of independence of November 1811, were the revolution was incubated. Among the prominent members of this lodge were José María García de

⁹ The foundation date is unknown. According to Carnicelli, the lodge may have disappeared by 1815 when the Spanish general Pablo Morillo (also a freemason) took the city from the revolutionaries.

¹⁰ This lodge was founded between 1742 and 1744. Its first Grand Master was Ballard Beckford (Wright 1936).

¹¹ The Grand Master of this lodge was the surgeon Michael Benignus Clare (Wright 1936).

Toledo, José Fernández Madrid, Joaquín Villamil y Canabal, Juan Neponuceno Berruero, Manuel Rodríguez Torices, and Juan Fernández de Sotomayor y Picón (Carnicelli, 1975).

When Spanish general Pablo Morillo y Morillo, Count of Cartagena, Marquis of La Puerta, also known as “The peacemaker” captured Cartagena during the first phase of the War of Independence, the freemasons of the city became targets of persecution. The Freemasons of the city were very lucky as none of them were captured due to their ease on hiding. It must be noted that Morillo “The Peacemaker”, in his capacity as supreme commander of the Spanish Royalist Army, re-established the Court of the Holy Inquisition in the territories he controlled. What is ironic is that Morillo was also a freemason¹². Some authors claim that the fact that Morillo was a mason facilitated the signing of the Treaty of Armistice and Regularization of War with Simón Bolívar in Venezuela in 1820. This treaty established a six-month truce, abrogated the Decree of War to the Death and, most importantly, the treaty was a *de facto* recognition of the Colombian State.

After different difficulties and taking advantage of the occupation of Napoleonic Troops in Spain in 1810, enters to the scene the famous Freemason Simon Bolívar who joined the independence revolution that started in Venezuela led by Francisco de Miranda. In 1813, started a great independence/military campaign named “*Campaña Admirable*”, which entered triumphant in Caracas. Then Bolívar stated the third revolution between 1816 and 1819 which granted effective control a great percentage of the neogranadine territory. Two years later he will accomplish Venezuelan independence, defeating Spanish troops in the battle of Carabobo in 1821.

¹² According to Colombian author Sánchez Neira (2011), the masonic trajectory of Morillo is determined by three events in his life: his stay in the city of Cadiz, his meeting with Simón Bolívar, and his return to Spain where the leaders of the failed Spanish revolution of 1820 welcomed him as one of their own. Morillo is one of the most controversial figures of Colombian history. He has been simplistically portrayed as a bloodthirsty commander; however, he was a far more complex individual. Morillo came from humble origins and was self-taught. He made a name for himself in the Spanish struggle for independence against the French during the Napoleonic period. It was his role in this conflict that propelled him to the high ranks of the Spanish army and what led to his appointment as commander of the expeditionary force sent to pacify the Viceroyalty of New Granada. By all accounts, Morillo carried out his task in an honorable manner, adhering for the most part to the accepted norms of war of the period. The violence and brutality of the conflict in New Granada marked his reputation in the Americas, but when he returned to Spain, he became an important figure in the civil conflicts that took place in the 1820's and 1830's. Morillo died in France in 1837.

Bolívar dreamed with forming a great confederation that could join all the former Spanish colonies in America, inspired in the U.S.A model. For this, not satisfied with the liberation of Venezuela, crossed the Andes and defeated the Spanish troops in the battle of Boyacá in 1819. Which granted independent to the Viceroyalty of New Granada, current Colombia (Parlamento Andino, 2017, párrs. 3-4).

As stated previously, Bolívar was also a freemason. Most historians agree that he joined the masons in the city of Cadiz, Spain, in 1804, during his second trip to Europe. Bolívar was an active participant in masonic activities during his stay in Paris, particularly at the lodge “Saint Alexandre of Scotland” of the Grand Orient de France. Documents show that in 1805 he received the degree of Fellow Craft. Bolívar was initiated (second degree) in mixed lodge. An interesting detail recorded on the register of the lodge is that a female freemason, Jeanne de la Salle, was present during Bolívar’s initiation ceremony¹³. According to records of the priest and general José Felíz Blanco, Bolívar was invested with the 33rd Degree of the Scottish Rite (Carnicelli, 1975).

In 1833, in the city of Cartagena, the Supreme Council, Neo-Granadine Grand Orient of the Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite, was established. This institution would control all the masonic degrees granted in the country. The patent letter of this institution was granted in 1851 by the Grand Orient de France. The development of freemasonry during these years takes place within the context of state formation after the wars of independence. As an example of the influence of freemasonry during this period, we can look at the presidency of José Hilario López.

López served as president of the republic between 1849 and 1853. During his tenure, the country abolished slavery and carried out a series of political, economic, and religious reforms. Among the most important initiatives of the

¹³ According to Herrera Michel (2018), the Supreme Council of the 33rd Degree was instituted in 1804 by Auguste Grasse de Tilly from five lodges that had come into conflict with the Grand Orient de France. Along with other seven lodges they later became the Great General Scottish Lodge of the Ancient and Accepted Rite under the Grand Master Louis Bonaparte. Soon after, the negotiation between the two masonic groups were initiated, and on the 27th of November, 1804 the lodges fused into one, with Joseph Bonaparte as Grand Master and Louis Bonaparte as First Adjunct Grand Master. The Act of Union and Concordat between the two lodges was officially signed three days after the coronation of Napoleon Bonaparte as Emperor of France. This is the organization from which Bolívar received the degree of Companion in 1805, later reaching the degree of Master.

López administration was the secularization of the Colombian State. Incidentally, López, like many political leaders of the period, was a member of Logia Hospitalidad Granadina of Cartagena (Carnicelli, 1975).

According to Williford (2005):

(...) during the three centuries of Spanish colonial rule, the Catholic Church acquired vast properties and became the administrator of hospitals as well as educational institutions throughout Latin America. With the advent of independence, one of the main targets of the Liberal sectors was the confiscation of Church lands for private development and the establishment of secular schools and universities. Under the influence of their European brothers, Latin American freemason played a crucial role in the creation of anti-clerical laws. Benito Juárez in Mexico, Antonio Guzmán Blanco in Venezuela, Eloy Alfaro in Ecuador, and Tomás Guardia in Costa Rica (all freemasons) enacted anti-clerical policies in their respective countries. In Colombia the Liberal anti-clerical policies began under José Hilario López in 1849. He was responsible for the expulsion of the Jesuits and attempted to achieve the separation of Church and State with other measures. Predictably, this led to confrontations with the Catholic Church and the eventual exile of the Archbishop of Bogotá, Manuel José Mosquera¹⁴ (Williford, 2005, p. 33).

Despite that the general Santander derogated the Bolivarian decree only until 1849 we see a rebirth of the masonic movement with the establishment of the lodge Estrella de Tequendama No. 11, an organization that counted with nine Colombian presidents among its membership¹⁵.

During the 1860's, President Tomás Cipriano de Mosquera, also freemason, enacted a new set of anti-clerical policies. De Mosquera ordered a new expulsion of the Jesuits, de confiscation of lands in "dead hands" (measure directed mostly towards Church lands), the closing of convents and monasteries, the establishment of civil marriage, and the legalization of divorce. With these the released of another archbishop in Bogotá, Antonio Herrán, and established this divorce of State and Church in the Rionegro Constitution of 1863.

¹⁴ The Archbishop's brother, Tomás Cipriano de Mosquera, a mason and radical Liberal, was president of the republic on different occasions.

¹⁵ In 1851 members of the lodge used communal funds for the poor to buy a lot of slaves at an auction. When the representative of the lodge was asked who should be entered as owner in the contract, his asked the clerk to register the slaves under the name of liberty. The slaves were freed without anyone knowing that the act was carried out by the masonic lodge (Quiroz Otero, 2006).

Under López and Mosquera the Jesuits were treated with particular harshness. The history of the Jesuits goes back to the period of the Counter-Reformation. Founded by Ignacio de Loyola in 1540, that order became renowned for their spiritual discipline and academic rigor of their priests. They founded many schools, universities and institutions in Europe and America. In Paraguay, the Jesuits are remembered for their particular control in the colonial era. In Spanish America, they play an important role in the evangelization of the natives and the establishment of missions across the continent (including the grasslands of the Viceroyalty of New Granada). In Bogotá, they established the college of San Bartolomé, where many leaders of the colony and the country were educated.

Due to their political influence and economic power, the Jesuits were expelled from Spanish America in 1767 and suppressed as a religious congregation by the Pope. However, after the Napoleonic conflict the order was reinstated by the Papacy as a bulwark against the growth of Liberalism. It is then clear why the Society of Jesus became one of the main targets of Liberal masons in Latin America during the nineteenth century.

In 1862 de Mosquera founded a political organization along masonic lines (Olave Quintero, 2012). This organization was called the Supreme Council of the Redemptive and Glorious Order of Colombia with only 3 degrees, 4, 21, and 34 (each degree possessing its liturgies and rules). The aim of this organization was to integrate the masonic organizations the former Gran Colombia (the republics of Venezuela, Ecuador and New Granada). In a sense, this was a revival of Simón Bolívar's political dream (Carnicelli, 1975).

This might be evidence that, as stated by sociologist Atuesta Bernate (2015), there is a "masonic project" behind the development of Colombian politics. This project becomes evident in the effort to create a space for the development of a Liberal system that would lead to the establishment of law and order (from a positivistic perspective). The Liberal system would become hegemonic through the embracement of the liberal arts as the tools would bring action upon society, with a special a very hegemonic place in the politics of the country.

Within this context, Tomás Cipriano de Mosquera creates a schism in the movement in order to legitimize the political project of his new Order of Colombia. According to Bruto (1856), “just men” sought refuge in seclusion and secrecy in order to avoid the “torrent of vices” that surrounded them. According to Atesta, Mosquera saw his new masonic Orden de Colombia as an entity that would bring light to the uninitiated. He had a vision of his Order as the guardian of wisdom and the protector of the people from the forces of obscurantism, and for fighting against the ignorance that was all above the Colombian people. When Mosquera, and other masons (Like Francisco Aranda and Vicente Gutiérrez) founded the Orden Redentora y Gloriosa de Colombia (under the Scottish Rite), he created an organization of political and military character that portrayed itself as the servant of the Colombian people in the image of Mosquera due to his leadership, wisdom and courage.

Hoenigsberg (1944) specifies, on the anterior topic, the following:

(...) the proposal of Tomás Cipriano de Mosquera was the creation of an Order or group for a new homeland that battered in political principles, with them he gave shape to his renovator thinking, forming that oven that give fire to patriotic believes, which was the *Supremo Consejo Central Colombiano* (p. 228).

In June the 3rd 1864, general Tomás Cipriano de Mosquera founded the second Supreme Council of the Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite in Colombia, also known as “Gran Oriente Central Colombiano”. In 1866, as Honisberg explains in his book “*Influencia Revolucionaria de la Masonería en Europa y America*”, the Gran Oriente Central Colombiano was granted their patent letter from the Great Orient of France.

The problems of the Colombian Nation-State

After independence from Spain was attained a debate about the future organization of the Colombian nation-state emerged. They started asking themselves: Would the state be a monarchy (absolutist or parliamentary) or a

republic (federalist or centralist). While the model of a federal republic seems to have been the consensus, the centralists never gave up and kept their vision alive through armed conflict throughout the nineteenth century.

(...) great part of the regional conflicts in the second half of the XIX century, known as “civil wars” had as a pretext the territorial organization of the political regime, expressed as centralism and federalism, even though in many occasions what they presented were the conflicts between regional groups and elites. The “Regeneración” movement, as Francisco Leal expresses, was the expression of a landholder political project that structured a political regime... a conservative regime, that was the foundation of a long part of the formation of Colombian nationality because of their effectiveness in the class domination, in a disintegrated society, overdue and with a national State extremely weak (Vargas Velásquez, 2002, pp. 141-142).

According to Thomas Willford, under the Colombian governments establishment after the Constitution of Rio Negro of 1863, freemasonry filled its initiatives with members of the Liberal Party. Most of the presidents between 1868 and 1886 were members of masonic lodges. However, the deepest influence upon Colombian freemasonry would come from a political leader who was never a member of the organization, Rafael Núñez.

Núñez came to power as part of the Regeneration¹⁶ movement, which was supported by “independent” Liberals and Conservatives. Núñez’ conservative movement replaced Liberal federalism and the Constitution of Rio Negro with a centralist state and a very strong executive power. This political shift is enshrined in the Constitution of 1886. Part of Núñez’ program of Regeneration was the reestablishment of formal relations with the Catholic Church (Ruiz Sánchez, 2019). There was reversal to the secularization of the previous twenty years. The Jesuits were allowed to return, and the Conservative government signed a concordat with the Vatican. As a result of this pact, the Colombian government granted the Church control over public education. The Constitution of 1886 had as its main aim the destruction of the federation conceived by the Liberals in 1863.

¹⁶ The Regeneración movement laid the foundations for the consolidation of the Colombian bourgeoisie. The ideologist and leader of the movement, Rafael Nuñez, said that politics should be a reflect of nature.

The government of Nuñez disapproved freemasonry since it saw it as an extension of the Liberal governments that had controlled the country since independence. By 1884, the harassment upon masons forced lodges of Bogotá to close down and even sell the building of their temple. Some lodges, like the ones of the Atlantic coast, survived, but their activities were largely restricted. During that period the only freemason in Congress was Luis Robles. By 1886 the Colombian Congress debated whether masonic societies should be protected under the Constitution. Colombian freemasonry survived the Conservative hegemony, and when the Liberals returned to power, under the Republican Union¹⁷, old and new initiates revived many of the lodges in Bogotá and the provinces (Williford, 2005, pp. 36-37).

The Constitution of 1886, created by Conservatives who called themselves “regeneradores” had as its main aim the dismantling of federation and the Constitution of Rio Negro of 1863. Under the new constitution the Colombian Republic is reconstituted as a “unitarian republic” The first article and the preamble tells the following:

In the name of God, supreme source of all justice, the delegates of the Colombian States of Antioquia, Santander and Tolima, reunited in the National Constituent Council; with the approbation that imparted the Colombian cities to the bases of the constitution issued December the 1st, 1885; and with the goal of securing national unity and securing freedom, justice and peace, we declare the following; Article 1. – The Colombian Nation reconstitutes itself as a Unitarian Republic.

It is for this reason that some historians and political scientists with Conservative tendencies see La Regeneración of Rafael Nuñez as the final step in the consolidation of the Colombian nation-state. However, as the history of the twentieth and nineteenth century shows, the question of the Colombian nation-State is still unresolved. It seems that the Colombian state has never been able to fully exercise the classic monopolies attributed to the nation-state, i.e., legitimate coercion, the delivery of justice, tributary powers, and complete control of territory. It is for this reasons that in the history of the country we see the emergence of extra-constitutional elements that try to fill the vacuum created

¹⁷ The Unión Republicana was a political party that amalgamated Liberals as well as Conservatives. The organization initially attempted to establish a dialogue with the Conservative president, but this plan felt through very rapidly (Llano, 2009, p. 53).

by the lack of consolidation of the nation-State (Vargas, 2007). This explains in part the recent armed conflict that has brought to prominence illicit entities like the guerrilla groups, the paramilitary outfits, and the narco-trafficking cartels.

The genesis of the current Colombian armed conflict can be traced to the political persecutions orchestrated by the Conservative Party between 1946 and 1953. Most prominent among the acts of violence during this period was the assassination of the Liberal politician and freemason¹⁸ Jorge Eliécer Gaitán in 1948, which stands as an iconic marker in the conflict. Since 1982 Colombia has tried to negotiate seven peace treaties, only the last one was signed in 2016. Currently this last treaty (Definitive Termination of the Armed Conflict) is being slowly implemented with certain modifications imposed by the judicial and legislative branches of the country.

Among the components of the Colombian nation-state, the national and state component seems the most problematic. Indeed, this is what brought Galán Sarmiento to coin the phrase “in Colombia we have more territory than nation and more nation than State.” The first component of the State is its configuration as a country, which implies a geographic unit that takes a natural definite shape. The second element is its structuring as a State, i.e., the conformation of governmental and legislative institutions that are recognized as legitimate by the citizens and the international community. It is evident, however, that the model of national unity proposed by the Regeneración of 1886 failed to forge national unity through the imposition of centralism. From a sociological perspective, the nation is a broad community among people who have forged bonds through language, ethnicity, and culture (Subgerencia Cultural del Banco de la República, 2015). Historically, in Colombia its citizens have emphasized their regional ties rather than the national ones as a result of long-term relationships that have developed in regions that are geographically confined.

¹⁸ Jorge Eliécer Gaitán was killed 25 days after obtaining the degree of Fellow Craft.

The essence of Latin American freemasonry

According to Carnicelli (1975), masonic lodges in Latin America has been considered a precursor to the revolutionary struggles for independence. The ideas of liberty, equality, and fraternity became the banner and catalyst of political and social movements that advocated for the abolition of slavery, the overthrow of monarchies, the establishment of religious freedom, the creation of secular education, the separation of Church and State, and the establishment of republican systems. However, authors like Ferrer Benimelli (2019), del Solar Guajardo (2011) and Aguiar Bobet (2018) deny any link between the lodges of the independence period and freemasonry. Aforementioned authors look at these lodges as patriotic or operative societies similar to the masonic lodges but not linked to the masonic work.

The source of Latin American freemasonry is French or continental. The members of this movement developed over the course of its history ideas about the abolition of monarchy, separation of Church and State, religious freedom, freedom of thought, etc. This continental freemasonry suffered persecution and defamation for long periods. Contrary to the United States where freemasonry was firmly established by the seventeenth century (De Los Reyes Heredia, 2013), the effect of the masonic movement was limited in Latin America due to the absolutist power of the Church and the Spanish Crown (Aragón Juárez, 2011).

According to some accounts, between 1797 and 1798 Francisco de Miranda founded a proto-masonic society inspired by the ideals of freemasonry. This society, based upon the principles of liberty, equality and fraternity was called Rational Knights, outside of the domains of the Gran Lodge of London and Westminster (Moderns) and the Grand Lodge of England (Ancients). Many members of the Latin American independence movement would affiliate to this organization, and Miranda himself would proselytize in Cádiz and Madrid. The first branch of the Rational Knights, known as Lautaro Lodge, was created in Cadiz in 1811 (Porcel, 2007). The name of the lodge is quite revealing since Lautaro was the name of the Araucanian chief who led the resistance against Spanish conquistadors in Chile in the sixteenth century.

In 1812, Argentinian and Chilean patriots founded their own branch of the Lautaro lodge, an organization which was affiliated to the Rational Knights. This fraternity was created with the purpose of achieving independence from Spain.

Both, the lodges founded under the name of rational knights and the so-called lautaro lodges were patriotic or operative lodges (as opposed to speculative ones) but not in the traditional sense of the term (that is, linked to the construction guilds), but with revolutionary goals.

Among the members of this organization were Bernardo O'Higgins and José de San Martín, the two most prominent figures of the independence movement in South America after Bolívar¹⁹. These organizations (Lautaro Lodges and the Rational Knights) operated in a similar fashion to their French counterparts. However, it must be noted that the French lodges were real masonic organizations whereas Lautaro lodges and the Rational Knights were explicitly revolutionary organizations where the movement of independence was gestated (Corbière, 1998; Ferrer, 2019). It is difficult to envision the independence of the Spanish American colonies without the intervention of individuals deeply linked to masonic organizations. It is also difficult to envision the Liberal state that emerged in Colombia after independence without the role of prominent freemasons.

Conclusions

The masonic movement did not conspire to bring about independence to Colombia and in a more general manner to Latin America, nor did it have a master plan to establish Liberal republics afterwards. However, freemasonry nurtured political principles that were compatible with the aspirations of the founding fathers of some of the Latin American nations. The leaders of the

¹⁹ In 1814, a lodge of the Rational Knights was created in Montevideo. Members of this lodge played an important role in achieving the independence of Uruguay (Lappas, 2000).

independence movement in Colombia and the political leaders of the country in the nineteenth century found affinity between the principles of Liberalism, upon which they founded the republic, and the beliefs of the masonic movement.

The particular form of continental freemasonry that took root in Colombia has deep roots in the Enlightenment and French revolutionary circles, and this made it attractive to intellectual and political leaders who were framing the ideological justification for the break-up with Spain. During the emancipation struggle the masonic movement gave refuge to the rebel leaders and created a social network that enabled them to organize the movement. After independence, the masonic lodges became part of the social network of the Liberal elites, and, as such, they became places where the architecture of the new state was envisioned.

In synthesis, without the masonic method proper from the French freemasonry, there were the revolutionary, liberal and masonic elements were mixed, and further were envisioned and materialized in the independents revolutions of the Americas, wouldn't had have occurred all the processes of different independences in South America in the way they happened.

Conflict of interest

The author declares that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this article.

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