



UNIVERSIDAD  
DE COSTA RICA

REHMLAC

REVISTA DE ESTUDIOS HISTÓRICOS DE LA MASONERÍA

LATINOAMERICANA Y CARIBEÑA | ISSN 1659-4223



**“Presentation UCLA–*Grand Lodge of California* Special Issue”**

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**UCLA**

 **Masons  
of California**

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Professor Vázquez Semadeni was previously a postdoctoral fellow at the Instituto de Investigaciones Históricas, UNAM, México (2008–2010), where she taught courses about liberal political culture in Latin America in the graduate program and carried on a research about the redefinition of political alliances in Mexico after the first decade of independence. She was awarded the fellowship granted by the California Masonic Foundation and UCLA to be a postdoctoral Scholar at the Department of History in UCLA (2010–2011). She is a member of the Center of Historical Studies on History of Spanish Freemasonry and a founder of the Center of Historical Studies on History of Latin American and Caribbean Freemasonry. E-mail: [maryuvas@gmail.com](mailto:maryuvas@gmail.com)

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## **“Presentation UCLA–*Grand Lodge of California* Special Issue”**

In 2009 an unprecedented partnership between the academic and Masonic worlds in the United States emerged. Under the leadership of Professor Margaret Jacob, UCLA’s Department of History and the Grand Lodge of California—through its Institute for Masonic Studies—joined forces to establish the Freemasonry and Civil Society program at UCLA. Funds from the Masonic Foundation sponsored the creation of a postdoctoral fellowship and diverse research and teaching positions. Postdoctoral fellows were chosen from an international competition. In 2009 Natalie Bayer (Ph.D. Rice University) held the position, and in 2010–11 it was María Eugenia Vázquez Semadeni (Ph.D. El Colegio de Michoacán). Research assistants are chosen from advanced graduate students who are in the process of writing their dissertations. Former assistants include Matthew Crow and Jesse Sadler, and this year Naomi Taback, Ph.D.

We are proud to say this has been a real and successful partnership, because both institutions acknowledge they would not have been able to reach their goals without the support of the other.

Thanks to this program, graduate students and recently graduated Ph.D.s have had the opportunity to teach at UCLA, one of the most prestigious universities in the United States, giving every year at least four courses on Freemasonry. Also, they have been researching Masonry around the world, and publishing their results in diverse academic journals. We have had undergraduates who produced publishable research papers on aspects of Masonic history.

UCLA’s undergraduate and graduate students have been able to learn about the history of this brotherhood, its origins, development and influence in American sociopolitical life, but also abroad, since several courses on European and Latin American Freemasonry have been taught in the last four years.

These courses have promoted new studies on Freemasonry, and students have published final papers in renowned academic journals, attended international conferences on Freemasonry and written honors thesis on the topic. These studies have been done academically so that they possess the scientific rigor and the objectivity required to address an always-controversial topic like Freemasonry.

But the program did not stop there. We wanted to go further because we had at least two more very important objectives to achieve. Firstly, the Grand Lodge of California considers Masonic education a lifelong process. Thus, it is very interested in providing its members with knowledge to better understand the fraternity and its relevance throughout history until the present. We want to help the Masonic community to better understand the history of its institution, its ups and downs, its achievements and its problems, but above all its diversity. Secondly, we wanted to bring together Anglo-Saxon and Ibero and Luso-American scholarship on Freemasonry, because these two academic spheres had had little contact, and in some cases had even ignored what had been done in Masonic studies beyond their borders.

With those objectives in mind, we decided to organize the First International Conference on Freemasonry at UCLA focused mainly on the influence of the brotherhood in the Hispanic world. Our featured speaker was Professor José Antonio Ferrer Benimeli, who is arguably the leading authority on European freemasonry and its relationship to the Catholic Church. He is also founder of the CEHME (Center for Historical Research on Spanish Freemasonry). This center, affiliated with the University of Zaragoza, was created thirty years ago to promote the scientific development and diffusion of Masonic studies, create groups for research, organize conferences and symposiums, and teach courses on Freemasonry in diverse Spanish universities. Such an institution has been an important example to follow for our program at UCLA

Six of the eight guest speakers in that first conference were members of the CEHME. This was the first time these scholars had the opportunity to present their research results to an exclusively American audience; to show the American public the role played by the fraternity in the social, political and cultural development in Spain and Hispanic America, and the myths surrounding the brotherhood. As Adam Kendall has noted, the American masons had centered their interests and research on the link between their institution and American history, putting aside the importance and impact American Masonry had in the rest of the continent.<sup>1</sup> Thus, this was an excellent opportunity to present different perspectives to them about the propagation of Masonry to the New World and the links between American and Latin American Freemasonry.

Since this event generated a lot of interest and we received good feedback, we decided to organize the Second International Conference on Freemasonry, this time with a more ambitious global perspective. We wanted to discuss not only the history but also the present and the possible future—from the scholars' perspective—of the fraternity in France, Italy, Brazil and the United States. The challenges that the Masonic institution currently faces were a recurrent topic in the presentations, generating a number of questions among the attendees.

The *REHMLAC* team, acknowledging the interest that the papers presented at both conferences may have for a larger public, was generous enough to offer us its renowned journal to publish them for this special issue. We want to thank their tireless efforts to make this possible. In this volume we are including eleven of the thirteen conference papers. We have organized them thematically. The first group of works is dedicated to the challenges that Modernity has posed to the fraternity.

If Freemasonry is a great topic in and of itself, it is also a very useful tool—sometimes indispensable—to understanding some of the most important historical processes of the last three centuries, such as the Enlightenment, Liberalism and Globalization. In this category we present four papers. Margaret Jacob, in her work “The Radical Enlightenment and Freemasonry: Where We Are Now”, explores how the conception of Radical Enlightenment has changed after she first coined the term in 1981. Nowadays some scholars have called into

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<sup>1</sup> Adam G. Kendall, “*Conferencia Internacional sobre Masonería Americana y Latinoamericana: Un nuevo pasado y Un nuevo futuro* (Los Ángeles, Estados Unidos, 2011)”, in: *REHMLAC* 4, no. 2 (diciembre 2012-abril 2013 [cited July 16<sup>th</sup>, 2013]): available <http://rehmlac.com/recursos/vols/v4/n2/rehmlac.vol4.n2-akendall.pdf>

question the influence or importance of actions and political interventions as radical elements, placing the impulse solely in the realm of ideas. The American Revolution, for instance, has lost its place among the radical movements for not being secular enough, despite the fact that the Founding Fathers did radical things. And according to these authors, since Freemasonry was incapable of promoting absolute equality, the brotherhood did not contribute at all to the Enlightenment; rather, it betrayed it. Margaret Jacob reminds us that ideas may also change, and that political concepts acquire new life and meanings when are put into action. The lodges could in effect function as schools of government, providing a link between civil society and the Enlightenment. This way, she highlights the role played by Freemasonry in this process. The Radical Enlightenment did not invent or create Freemasonry, but within the context of secularism and the struggle against absolutism in the Church and the State, the fraternity became more appealing by offering a sociability separated from those two institutions, that might be, in Lessing's words, a state of mind, a way to be in the world.

José Antonio Ferrer Benimeli, in "Utopia and Reality of Masonic Liberalism: From the Parliament of Cadiz to the Independence of Mexico (1810–1821)", analyses the myth of Masonic liberalism as the cause of the liberal reforms adopted by the Courts of Cadiz after Napoleon's invasion of the Spanish Peninsula, as well as Freemasonry as the putative impulse for Mexican independence. He states that during these transitional years—from an absolute to a constitutional monarchy in Spain, and from being a Hispanic realm to becoming an independent republic in the case of Mexico—in Spain and New Spain (later Mexico) Freemasonry was neither a strong institution nor a space for liberal conspiracy. Nevertheless, the newspapers, books, leaflets and many other publications of the time blamed Freemasonry for every radical reform proposed by the Courts of Cadiz—such as proclaiming the sovereignty of the nation or abolishing the Inquisition—and for every insurgent movement looking for independence in New Spain. The reason for this paradox lays in the impact that anti-Masonic literature, published during the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, had in the Hispanic people's imagination.

Regarding globalization, in general we are used to consider it a very recent phenomenon, promoted by the mass media, jet planes, and the Internet. In "Global Brotherhood: Freemasonry, Empires, and Globalization" Jessica Harland-Jacobs argues that Freemasonry made a major and plural contribution to the history of globalization during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Granting charters for travel lodges and certificates for Freemasons moving throughout the empires, appointing provincial grand masters and grand lodges, authorizing the establishments of lodges in their colonies, Freemasonry created a global network that transcended boundaries, favored cosmopolitanism, and helped to consolidate modern European empires such as the British.

The article by Cécile Révauger, "Gender in French Freemasonry, From the Eighteenth Century Until Today" addresses one of the most controversial topics regarding Freemasonry: gender. Traditionally, Anderson's *Constitutions* have been blamed for the exclusion of women from the lodges. But Cécile Révauger argues that he was not especially sexist; rather, women were regularly excluded from the eighteenth-century English public sphere. The

situation was different in France, where women were usually accepted in salons, cafes, and many other public spaces, making the early appearance of the lodges of adoption understandable. The local context influenced the development of Freemasonry in France and explains several differences the order presented on both sides of the Channel. Recently, major changes have taken place in French Freemasonry. The Grand Orient of France decided to accept members irrespective of gender. This means that about 1,200 women have been admitted in lodges under the Grand Orient's jurisdiction. It seems like, once again, the context is influencing the fraternity's decisions. Will other Masonic obediences follow these steps in the coming years?

The second set of works in this issue is dedicated to Freemasonry in Latin America. One of the special side effects of the UCLA-Masonic collaboration has been the opportunity to meet with Cuban scholars in what is a time of rapid change in the island's history. Thus, this group of papers begins with Eduardo Torres Cuevas' article "The Complicated Origins of Cuban Masonry: The Temple of the Theological Virtues", in which the author shows us how the establishment of Freemasonry in the Island reflected the struggle that was taking place among the diverse imperial forces for controlling the Caribbean waters. Freemasonry was one more of the elements creating a complex dynamic in such a culturally diverse region extending from Haiti to Louisiana, passing by Cuba and the Gulf of Mexico coasts. According to his work, in Louisiana the eight new degrees were created that led to the Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite Freemasonry. The Temple of the Theological Virtues lodge's history, passing from its French-Saint Domingue origins to an American jurisdiction—the Grand Lodge of Pennsylvania—and then to become the first "Cuban" lodge shows how Freemasonry and Freemasons in the region were adapting to survive the political instability caused by the Napoleonic wars and the dissolution of the Spanish empire.

It was probably this effervescent atmosphere what promoted the political character adopted by many Masonic entities in Latin America. This is María Eugenia Vázquez Semadeni's belief, as shown in her work "From the sea to politics: Masonry in New Spain/Mexico, 1816–1823". She analyses some of the first lodges established in three of the most important ports of the Gulf of Mexico. The Grand Lodge of Louisiana chartered these lodges and many of their members were sailors, either military or commercial. Thus, these lodges were following the maritime routes of the region and they seem to have been spaces for socio-economical networking—similar to those described by Steven Bullock for the pre-revolutionary American Freemasonry—rather than political groupings. The dramatic changes suffered a few years later by colonial New Spain in the process of becoming independent Mexico and a federal republic were the causes that led Mexican Freemasonry to transform itself into a political organization.

The situation was a bit different in Brazil during this period, because after Napoleon's invasion of Portugal the king fled to Brazil and established his court there, transforming the colony into the metropolis. Some years later, his son declared Brazilian independence and became emperor. Freemasonry found a fertile ground to grow and flourished during the nineteenth century. Alexandre Mansur Barata, in his "Freemasonry in Brazil (Nineteenth

Century): History and Sociability” addresses the diverse stages of Masonic development within the peculiar Brazilian political context and the role played by this institution on civil society, social mobility, networking, and as a school of Enlightenment and intellectual improvement.

Lastly, Jorge Luis Romeu brings us up to the twentieth century by analyzing the factors contributing to the quick growth and decline of Freemasonry in Cuba from 1945 to 2010. In “Characteristics and Challenges of Cuban Freemasons in the Twentieth Century: A demographic approach” he revises the evolution of the Grand Lodge of Cuba and discusses some important characteristics of the fraternity in the Island as well as its influence on Cuban civil society. He also offers some ideas about how the Grand Lodge of Cuba can enhance its contributions to the development of Cuba’s civil society.

The third set of papers elaborates on Freemasonry as a form of sociability, its links with religiosity in general and its complicated relation with political power. Ricardo Martinez Esquivel, using a prosopographical approach, analyses in “Sociability, Religiosity and New Cosmovisions in Costa Rica at the turn of the Nineteenth to Twentieth centuries” the fraternity’s relation with the new worldviews that emerged in Costa Rica during the transition from the nineteenth century to the twentieth, within the Modernity framework. From spiritualism to atheism, including the Theosophical Society and the *Liberal Catholic Church*, he traces the networks in which the Freemasons were involved and the social context in which they developed.

Guillermo de los Reyes’ essay “Freemasonry and Civil Society: The Case of the United States” calls into question the how voluntary associations have contributed to democratization. Freemasonry is a voluntary association, and as such it can be considered a modern sociability. But this brotherhood also keeps a lot of the ancient regime corporations’ features, especially the secrecy and an authoritarian internal organization. Thus, how can we consider that Freemasonry contributes to democratic culture? These are some of the questions that the author seeks to answer in this paper.

To close with a flourish, Aldo Mola presents an authoritative survey article about the history of Freemasonry in Italy, based on his own many books on the topic. In “Masons in Italy: The Borderland Between Fanaticism and Liberty” he discusses many myths surrounding the order’s influence on Italian political history, such as the one stating that Freemasonry achieved the unification of the country. Also, he revises the complex relationship between the fraternity and the Catholic Church in a territory dominated by this creed, not only spiritually but for a long time also politically.

This is, we believe, an outstanding selection of works presenting to both academic and general audiences the most recent cutting edge scholarship on Freemasonry. But this effort was just the beginning. A third International Conference on Freemasonry at UCLA will take place on March 22, 2014 and hopefully many more thereafter. We also hope that this successful program and partnership will encourage other Grand Lodges and educational institutions all over the world to work together in to advance understanding of Freemasonry and its undeniable impact on modern societies. Our wish is to inspire many scholars to

participate with us in these activities. And above of all, we aim to bring together scholars of Freemasonry worldwide and make their scholarship available not only for academics but also for the Freemasons and the general public.

Last but not least, we want to acknowledge all the people who made this publication possible: the authors, the reviewers, the translators, the editors, the website creators, the journal editor and director, the academic committee, and of course the sponsors. This special volume is the result of teamwork and we are proud of being part of that team.

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