

Chloë Duflo-Ciccotelli, La franc-maçonnerie en Guadeloupe, miroir d'une société coloniale en tensions (1770–1848), Bordeaux (Presses universitaires de Bordeaux) 2021, 360 p. (Monde maçonnique), ISBN 979-10-300-0315-4, EUR 20,00.

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Until the recent work of John Garrigus and Jan Jansen, French colonial Freemasonry during the 18th and 19th centuries had not attracted much attention beyond Élisabeth Escalle and Mariel Gouyon-Guillaume's monumental inventory of colonial Freemasons compiled thirty years ago. Duflo-Ciccotelli's monograph on Freemasonry in Guadeloupe from the prerevolutionary era to the 1830s is thus a welcome addition to the field. One of the reasons why so few historians have ventured into the colonial theatre is because of the paucity of sources, and this problem is apparent in the present study. Although Duflo-Ciccotelli has drawn effectively from some of the *assemblées révolutionnaires* archives, she is compelled to rely primarily on the *fonds maçonnique* at the Bibliothèque nationale. Duflo-Ciccotelli readily acknowledges the limits of this »monoexplotation« (to borrow a term Pierre-Yves Beaurepaire coined), so the reader is prepared at the outset for the multiple dead ends throughout this work where the documentary evidence simply runs out.

Duflo-Ciccotelli's central argument that Freemasonry's values, recruitment parameters and social life reflected the wider context of colonial society – hence the term »mirror« in her subtitle – is unsurprising. It reinforces Gérard Gayot's argument from over forty years ago that lodges were deeply reflective of Old Regime socio-cultural norms and the corporative establishment, and similar conclusions have since been drawn in numerous regional monographs. She also finds that brethren »ne réagissent pas uniformément au message révolutionnaire« (p. 25), which also lines up with the »dispersion« thesis first explicitly articulated in an important 1969 article from André Bouton which escaped the author's bibliography.

Freemasonry emerged in Guadeloupe in 1745 in the bustling port town of Sainte-Anne where the French admiralty was located. This site served as a natural incubator for masonic activity since it concentrated so many of the itinerant professions (officers of various ranks, merchants, and ship captains) who were drawn to the fraternity across the Atlantic world for its ready-made trust networks and conviviality. Duflo-Ciccotelli charts the rise and fall of lodges from the reign of Louis XV to the eve of the Second Republic and uncovers evidence for twenty-five lodges; all but six were founded in the 18th century and most of these emerged in the 1770s and 1780s. This book thus is primarily centered around the



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last generation of Old Regime France. This study divides lodges into »urban« and »countryside« varieties, the former welcoming government and military administrators as well as the commercial (including the slave trade) and liberal professions while the latter recruited primarily from the sugar plantation economy. What makes colonial Masonry distinct from its metropolitan counterpart is the strong presence of Freemasonry in agricultural zones, and the use of race as a category of exclusion from lodges: free men of color – to say nothing of enslaved – were essentially absent until the middle of the 1830s. As La Paix lodge pithily remarked in 1784, only those who maintained »la pureté du sang européen sans aucun mélange de l'africain« (p. 169) were eligible for initiation. One exception were the *frères servants* who could not advance beyond the first degree of apprenticeship, and who never occupied a leadership position. Akin to the sexton of a church or synagogue, this subordinate class of Freemasons oversaw a lodge's upkeep and were typically drawn from brethren's domestic staff. In the Guadeloupean context, this meant that free men of color often filled this role where they experienced limited and unequal access to masonic sociability.

Life inside lodges resembled metropolitan Masonry where introductory and more advanced rituals (known as the »higher degrees«) were performed, charitable funds were collected and distributed to needy brethren or members of the public, and banquets punctuated meetings. One notable difference was that the extreme distance separating Guadeloupean lodges from the administrative headquarters of Freemasonry in Paris – the Grand Orient – heightened masonic anxiety on the island over receiving official constitutions, instructions, and ritual procedures.

The revolutionary era inaugurated political instability, war and foreign occupation in Guadeloupe. Whereas some French lodges in cities like Bordeaux, Brest, Marseille and Toulouse were able to continue meeting well into the Reign of Terror and started back up in earnest under the Directory, no documentary trace of Freemasonry on the island can be found between 1792 and 1801. Having found Freemasons comprising between 9 and 18 percent of local political clubs, Duflo-Ciccotelli reasonably speculates that brethren likely abandoned Freemasonry for more explicitly politically minded arenas during this turbulent time. Throughout the Revolution in Guadeloupe, Duflo-Ciccotelli finds that the masonic view and reaction to events – such as the proclamation of the Republic in 1792 – were no different from that of the wider public; brethren were not transparent personifications of some type of coherent masonic vision towards political authority. Masonic affiliation appears as a rather unpredictable variable for determining revolutionary political orientation, as individuals and their lodges made choices based on other factors, notably their profession and social status. There was, however, one issue that all Freemasons in Guadeloupe could agree on: slavery needed to be maintained in order to ensure the economic prosperity and future of the colony.



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The revolutionary shock dealt a serious blow to Guadeloupean Freemasonry as only two Old Regime lodges survived. Masonic activity reemerges only slowly during the Napoleonic period, due in part to continual war and occupation at the hands of the British and Swedish. The handful of lodges that were founded continued to reflect the socioeconomic elites of the island – now in a slightly different form from their 18th-century counterparts – made up chiefly of the civil and military administration. In 1835, a new chapter began when a group of free men of color requested to be formally constituted into a lodge. Unfortunately, the vocal protests of local white Masons succeeded in delaying this project for over a decade. But official recognition did finally come a year before the birth of the Second Republic, representing the end of racial homogeneity in Guadeloupean Freemasonry.

The numerous graphs, tables and maps are a helpful apparatus to a straightforward prose aimed at specialists and generalists alike. Duflo-Ciccotelli is to be commended for having wrung as much as she possibly can out of the Bibliothèque nationale's sources which are frustratingly uneven and often unrevealing. Thanks to her labors, we no longer see the history of Freemasonry in Guadeloupe through a glass darkly.



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