

LA MASONERÍA EN LA REGIÓN AFROCARIBEÑA: PRINCE HALL

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RÉSUMÉ

Pratiquement toutes les loges maçonniques noires du monde font remonter leurs origines à la loge établie par l'afrocaribéen Prince Hall, fondateur en 1784 de la première loge africaine aux États-Unis. Après la mort de Prince Hall, "la maçonnerie noire", mieux connue sous le nom de Maçonnerie Prince Hall, s'est étendue à travers toute la Caraïbe.

Ce texte, portant sur les contributions caraïbes à la franc-maçonnerie, décrit l'évolution de la participation des afro-caraïbes dans les fraternités noires caraïbes depuis l'apparition des loges maçonniques dans la région au XVIII^e siècle. Celles-ci suivent de très près l'expansion coloniale et se trouvent marquées par les changements politiques survenus dans les métropoles. L'objet des débats, finalement, est de déterminer si la couleur de la peau constituait ou non un facteur décisif de la participation des afrocaribéens dans les fraternités et dans la reconnaissance des loges Prince Hall par les États-Unis et par les Indes Occidentales.

SAMENVATTING

Praktisch alle zwarte vrijmetselaarloges gaan terug op de Afrocaribische Prince Hall, die in 1784 in de Verenigde Staten gevestigd werd als "African Lodge No. 1". Vaak wordt "zwarte vrijmaatselarij" geïdentificeerd met "Prince Hall Masonry", een systeem die zich na de dood van Prince Hall in het Caraïbisch gebied verspreid had. Dit artikel, dat de Caraïbische bijdragen aan de vrijmetselarij behandelt, beschrijft de evolutie van de zwarte Caraïbische vrijmetselarij, sinds het begin van de vrijmetselarij in het Caraïbisch gebied in de achttiende eeuw. Deze vrijmetselaarloges waren sterk geïdentificeerd met koloniale expansie en politiek gewin. De discussie betreft de factor van de huidskleur als bepalend voor de lidmaatschap van vrijmetselaarloges in het Caraïbisch gebied, en de herkenning van Prince Hall loges in de VS en in het Caraïbisch gebied.

FREEMASONRY AND THE AFRICAN CARIBBEAN: PRINCE HALL

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ABSTRACT

Virtually all black Masonic lodges in the world trace their origins to the Afrocaribbean Prince Hall, who established African Lodge No. 1 in the United States in 1784. "Black Freemasonry" is referred to more frequently as Prince Hall Masonry, a system which after Prince Hall's death spread to the Caribbean. This paper, touching on Caribbean contributions to Freemasonry, describes the evolution of black Caribbean participation in the fraternity, beginning with the appearance of Masonic lodges in the Caribbean in the eighteenth century. These were closely identified with colonial expansion and political fortunes. The discussion turns around the question of whether or not color was or is a factor determining either acceptance of afrocaribbeans into Masonic lodges, or recognition of Prince Hall lodges in the United States and the West Indies.

RESUMEN

Prácticamente todas las logias masónicas negras en el mundo tienen sus orígenes en la logia establecida por el afrocaribeño Prince Hall. Él fundó la primera logia africana en los Estados Unidos en 1784. La "Masonería Negra", mejor conocida como masonería Prince Hall, se expandió hacia el Caribe después de la muerte de éste. Este trabajo, referente a los aportes caribeños en la masonería, describe el desarrollo de la participación de los afrocaribeños en las fraternidades, partiendo de la llegada de la primera logia en el Caribe en el siglo XVIII. Las logias estaban estrechamente identificadas con la expansión colonial, y eran sensibles a los cambios políticos en las metrópolis. La discusión gira en torno a la pregunta de si era o no el color un factor determinante en la participación de los afrocaribeños en las fraternidades o en el reconocimiento de las logias Prince Hall en los Estados Unidos y en las Indias Occidentales.

Virtually all black Masonic lodges in the world trace their origins to an Afro Caribbean named Prince Hall who immigrated from Barbados to Boston in the eighteenth century. Black lodges tracing their history to Prince Hall have been established throughout the Caribbean partly, it would appear, in answer to racial discrimination by the long existing white lodges. Since Freemasonry bases part of its appeal and reason for existence on its alleged capacity to bring together people of different backgrounds in a universal fraternity, the allegation that it has been racist in its relationships with Afro Caribbean society is obviously one that requires careful study.

Most black Freemasonry is not called "black Freemasonry" but rather Prince Hall Masonry, commemorating his efforts in founding the first black lodge in Boston. Prince Hall was allegedly born in Bridgetown, Barbados, in 1748 and went to Boston, Massachusetts, in 1765. But there were several Prince Halls living in colonial Boston and his Barbados origins have been challenged (see Walkes, Jr., 1979, p. 3).

The vocabulary dealing with black Masonry, in the Caribbean or elsewhere, is itself controversial. One writer complains that

In the first place, the name "Black Masonry," is itself a misnomer. It should be "Masonry among Colored, or Black Men," for there is but one Freemasonry. For many years, there has been working in our midst, in the United States, a group which calls itself "Prince Hall Freemasonry." This too is a misnomer, for it should really be described as the "Prince Hall Organization" [Miller, 1989, p. 10].

To explain, as is the burden of this paper, how the situation has evolved regarding black Caribbean participation in Masonry, it is necessary to review the general development of Freemasonry in the Caribbean. As we have written elsewhere (Rich and De los Reyes, 1995, pp. 35-37), Freemasonry, regardless of the controversy about its origins in the Middle Ages, became prominent in the eighteenth century. During that period it attracted a number of entrepreneurial adventurers who brought Masonry to the New World, including the Caribbean. It became closely identified with the extension of colonialism and the growth of imperialism in the West Indies, as well as with the ebb and flow of the colonial powers' political fortunes. The Masonic grand lodges of England, Scotland, Ireland, France, and the Netherlands established a substantial number of subordinate lodges in the

region. So did the Grand Lodge of Pennsylvania and other American state grand lodges. The Danish, Spanish and Swedish grand lodges were also active in the islands. To a certain extent these different varieties of Masonry had different stances towards admitting representatives of the African Caribbean community.

By no means is Freemasonry to be spoken about only in the past tense in the Caribbean, because most of the islands have active lodges. However, past or present, there is a lack of scholarly publishing on the topic. The subject of Caribbean Freemasonry involves archives which are scattered and records which, because of the private nature of the Masonic fraternity, are in attics and cellars rather than government repositories. One complication is that many Masons in the Caribbean belong to lodges affiliated with British grand lodges of Scotland, England, and Ireland, which are particularly circumspect in their dealings with non-members and not interested in having their affairs subject to a researcher's inquiries, nor criticisms of Masonic admission policies.¹

While therefore the lodges are secretive and selective, the point should be made that on the other hand, and contrary to what might be presumed, by no means were lodges organized by the Grand Lodge of Scotland in the Caribbean confined to Scots, or Irish lodges limited in membership to the Irish. Moreover, English lodges recruited Scots and Irish. So all three of those jurisdictions recruited their members from all three nationalities and on occasion from other nationalities and other races. To this day the Caribbean has English, Irish and Scottish lodges with members of a variety of backgrounds. To our knowledge these lodges have had, not just recently but over a period of many years, some black members. That is not the case with all such lodges, but British lodges have on occasion reflected the multi-racial and wide-ranging nature of the Empire.

For example, South Carolina Lodge No. 390 of the Grand Lodge of Ireland still works in Jamaica. The lodge was established in 1905 for the West India Regiment which alternated in service between Ghana (then the Gold Coast) and Jamaica. The regiment through amalgamations traced its lineage to a cavalry regiment which had fought with

¹ To give one illustration of this circumspection, British Masons, unlike American Masons, usually do not wear identifying Masonic jewelry. The idea of entering a float in the Rose Bowl parade as American Masons do strikes them as bizarre.

the British forces in the American Revolution and was composed of South Carolina loyalists. Although the West India Regiment was terminated in 1927, the lodge continued and has drawn its members from the Jamaican police, among other sources (Groves, 1978, p. 114).

But the British lodges, while important, are hardly the entire story when it comes to Masonry in the Caribbean. Few parts of the world have a more complicated Masonic history (see Appendix). To understand these roots and the varieties of Freemasonry practiced in the area, it must be appreciated from the outset that the most common lodges in the Caribbean as elsewhere are “blue” lodges, *i.e.* lodges conferring only the first three degrees or initiatory rites of Masonry: Entered Apprentice, Fellowcraft, and Master Mason. There are other “higher” degrees, some of which have a long Caribbean history, and in respects the so-called “higher” degrees are more intriguing than the “plain vanilla” first three degrees of the blue lodges. There was a ritualists’ underworld in the Caribbean that produced many of the degrees which to this day are practiced throughout the Americas.² Individuals seem to have derived part of their income from selling degrees, and of course the more degrees in their portmanteau the better their business. They disdained involvement with the initial three degrees, which were lackluster compared to the glorious titles which they could confer and the assertions of the honor arising from achieving initiation in such degrees as Knight of the Brazen Serpent and Prince of the Royal Secret.³

² An example of the itinerants who brought a more esoteric brand of Masonry to the region will make the point. On any list would appear Henry Francken (1720?-1795). Francken apparently was born in the Netherlands but arrived in Jamaica in 1754, becoming sergeant-at-arms in the court of the vice-admiralty and the interpreter of English and Dutch languages. In 1767 he traveled to Albany in New York and there established a lodge working the fourth to the fourteenth degrees. He then returned to Jamaica and in 1770 started a chapter of Sublime Princes of the Royal Secret (Denslow, 1958, p. 71). In Jamaica Francken evidently associated with Estienne (Stephen) Morin, who was a founder of the Grande Lodge d’Ecosse in Bordeaux in 1745 and died in Kingston in 1771. Morin had been involved in Antigua Masonry in 1744, receiving degrees from William Mathews, governor of the Leeward Islands. A document establishing a lodge in Santa Eustatia exists signed by Mathews in 1747. But we know little about Mathews as a Mason and even less about Morin, although Morin obviously had a long career in Caribbean Masonry as well as in France (Bernheim, 1988, pp. 92-97).

³ Two black organizations in the United States work the Scottish rite thirty-three degree system, headquartered at Philadelphia and Washington and chartering bodies both in the continental United States and overseas. Their legitimacy is claimed on the basis of initiations conducted in 1850 by a representative of the Supreme Council of France.

Of course not all Freemasons in the eighteenth-century Caribbean were degree salesmen. It seems likely that Freemasonry was also spread by the immigration of ordinary members. For example, Samuel Frances (1722?-1795) was a West Indian black who kept a tavern in New York in 1762-1765 and 1770-1789 and was the household steward to George Washington in 1789-1794. He was a member of Holland Lodge No. 8, New York City. His other Masonic activities, particularly in the Indies, await investigation (Denslow, 1958, p. 75).

When people think of Freemasonry in the Caribbean, if indeed they think about it at all, they probably associate it with the British or Spanish or perhaps Dutch influence. But Caribbean Freemasonry has closer ties to the worldwide Scottish Rite, which owes part of its origins to the Caribbean and which is not Scottish at all but at least partly French. The thirty-three degrees or plays of this well-known rite deal, as do many other Masonic systems, with the completion of King Solomon's temple.⁴ Several are about vengeance, specifically about the punishment of the assassins of Hiram Abiff, who in Masonic lore was the master mason in charge of the temple's construction. Other degrees deal with the rebuilding of the temple by Zerubbabel; and with the search for lost secret knowledge in the ruins of the old building. Further degrees include those giving the power of inspection and of discipline over other Masons, and with philosophical and esoteric themes such as in the celebrated eighteenth Rose-Croix degree (Jackson, 1987, pp. 22-23). Current scholarship holds that the degrees of this elaborate rite originated in France and were taken to the French West Indies in 1748.⁵ There they were supervised by inspectors who were appointed by the headquarters in Bordeaux. From the West Indies the degrees found their way to New Orleans, and subsequently

⁴ "The 'Rite of Perfection' of twenty-five degrees was reorganized into the Scottish Rite with the addition of eight degrees, some of which may have been originally 'side' degrees. There have been many speculations as to why the new Rite chose to have thirty-three degrees... Thirty-two could be symbolic of the ten Sephiroth of the Kabbalah and the twenty-two letters of the Hebrew alphabet, and thirty-three could be seen as presiding over this mystical union. The speculations are virtually endless, but as yet no firm answer has been given to this basic question about Scottish Rite Masonry" (Morris, 1992, p. 15).

⁵ Many of these degrees were certainly known in Britain in the eighteenth century. There is a disputed tradition that Thomas Dunckerley, the natural son of King George II, wrote out the rituals of twenty-six and twelve Masonic orders in 1777 (Chudley, 1982, p. 25).

spread throughout North America. Later, amplified and changed, the rituals went back to Europe (Lindsay, 1958, p. 25).

One such curious player in these Masonic intrigues is a mulatto from San Domingo or Bogota (depending on authority cited) named Marie Antoine Nicolas Alexandre Robert de Jachin de Ste. Rose de Roume de St. Laurent, Marquis de Ste. Rose, Comte de St. Laurent, Commander in the Mexican Navy. He appears in New York in 1832 claiming to be the Sovereign Grand Commander of the Supreme Council for New Spain and Mexico, Terra Ferma, Southern America from One Sea to the Other, the Canary Islands, etc. After amalgamating his Council with the New York Council as the United Supreme Council for the West Hemisphere, St. Laurent went to Paris where he was involved in an 1834 alliance between the Supreme Councils of France, Brazil, Belgium, and the United Supreme Council in New York.

His color was not a bar to St. Laurent, who was able to make such impressive headway on the basis of his alleged possession of original copies of Grand Constitutions which he claimed were signed by Frederick the Great of Prussia. He asserted that these Grand Constitutions had been in the possession of the Count de Galvez, who was Viceroy of Mexico.⁶ The Grand Constitutions exist today only as copies, and the patents of St. Laurent have been roundly denounced as spurious.⁷ He is an example of the Masonic degree peddler on a grand scale, and possibly of a buccaneer feeding on human vanity.

So the Scottish Rite of Freemasonry as it is now practiced around the world owes something of its shape and form to its sojourn in the West Indies. Nevertheless, the mainstay of the movement in the islands has been and still is the initial three degrees, and the British grand lodges were forceful exponents of these. Although in a sense the three grand lodges were competitive, at least in recruiting, the lodges owing obedience to them were at least usually on speaking terms with each other. How much fraternizing there was between

⁶ "St. Laurent claimed that he left his original copy of the 1786 Grand Constitutions which he had got from a former Viceroy of Mexico, who, by this time, was conveniently dead, in the archives of this new Supreme Council. Soon afterwards, these archives were, equally conveniently, destroyed by fire" (Jackson, 1987, p. 77).

⁷ "The count, if we take his word for it, should be given the palm of seniority since his Supreme Council in Central America would be dated 1797, but I refused to admit this" (Lassalle, p. 79).

these lodges as well as between them and other lodges outside of the British system, often working within hailing distance in a small island community, is a question requiring more research.⁸ One justification for such a line of inquiry is that the civic culture of the Caribbean may have been influenced by the Grand Lodges.⁹ Eighteenth-century Masonic lodges were not only emporiums of symbolism and ceremony but social and charitable organizations, so the study of their membership tells much about the mores and relationships of a society (Bridenbaugh, 1963, pp. 28, 80, 100).

The British lodges were at least more often on speaking terms than not, while in other instances in the Caribbean the relationship between the different European grand bodies and their subordinate lodges in the islands amounted to no less than a state of war. There was little love lost (at times) between the brothers of various jurisdictions and one can say that the fraternity lacked fraternity. This should be kept in mind before reading racism into all relationships of white Masonic groups with Afro Caribbeans. In other words, white Masons at times have been unwilling to recognize or acknowledge each other as fellow Masons, so blacks may have been the victims of a general perversity rather than racism.

One quarrel that spilled over from Europe into the Caribbean and which illustrates that a racial reading *may* be given to Masonic history in the region was the one between the British grand lodges and the Grand Orient of France. The continental lodges preferred calling their governing bodies "Orients," which was objectionable to the British since it seemed authoritarian, referring as it did to the location of the Master's throne rather than to the entire body corporate. Anglo-Saxon lodges could not accept the dropping of references to God from the ritual while some French Freemasonry continues to this day. A current guide for visitors to Masonic lodges glumly warns about Haiti, "The situation in the second half of the twentieth century remains unclear, except to say that the Grand Orients of Haiti and France maintain fraternal relations. On that basis alone, the Haitian Craft remains irregular." The author similarly dismisses Masonry on Guadeloupe:

⁸ Certainly in Curaçao, where the authors visited both of the island's Masonic temples in May 1995, the various lodges have at times been enemies of each other.

⁹ Joseph A. Walkes, Jr., one of the foremost black Masonic historians working today, is the son of a St. Lucia mother and the grandson of a native of Barbados. Several of his works are cited here.

"...irregular French lodges have long since worked on the large French island of Guadeloupe" (Henderson, 1984, pp. 168-169).

The suggestion has been made that the alleged atheism of French Masonry was simply a trumped-up charge that masked the British unwillingness to accept racial egalitarianism in French lodges. Racism has also been a charge against American lodges. There is certainly evidence that American white grand lodges uniformly refused admission to blacks. They were until recently resolutely Jim Crow, and so much of the American influence on Afro Caribbean Masonry in the Caribbean was through black American lodges which we will discuss, called Prince Hall lodges after the founder of black Freemasonry in the United States.

No generalizations can be made about the Masonic attitude toward blacks. British lodges throughout the world in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries did not uniformly practice a color bar, although as suggested the French and Continental lodges apparently have had a better record as far as interracial admissions.¹⁰ There are early examples of blacks being initiated into British lodges in Africa.¹¹

Moreover, blacks have participated in organizations without knowing that they were Masonic in their origins. In addition to the involvement of Caribbean blacks with Masonic lodges, there is an interesting history of Caribbean blacks' involvement with two nineteenth-century religious movements which were in certain respects offshoots of Masonry and which were to find their way to the Afro Caribbean, Mormonism and black Islam (known as the Nation of Islam or Moorish Science). Much Mormon or Latter-Day Saint ritual was stolen from the Masons. The Mormons have always had black members, although only recently with a "revelation" to the Church

¹⁰ An illustration of footdragging on the racial issue in the British colonies is provided by the history of the initiation of Indians. British Masons in India had a spotty record (Walker, 1988, pp. 94-99).

¹¹ E.g. Gold Coast Lodge in Ghana, founded in 1859, and still in existence. No. 773 on the roster of the United Grand Lodge of England, this lodge from its inception initiated Africans into membership while at the same time it boasted of three British Governors of the colony as presiding Masters (Wolsey, Usher, Rowe). A number of leading black Ghana families (including McIntyre, Hutchinson, Bartels and Clark) have had several generations holding membership. In Nigeria F.D. Cole, a black, was admitted to Lagos Lodge of the United Grand Lodge of England in 1868 in the first year of its existence. He is described as chief clerk at the Colonial Hospital and "a well known dandy" (Bassou, 183-185).

leadership were blacks permitted the priesthood.¹² The predecessor of the black Muslim sect, or Nation of Islam, had its roots in Masonry and in the Masonic society known as the Shrine. A reminder of this occurred during the "Million-Man March" in October 16, 1995, when blacks responded to a call by the Nation of Islam leader Louis Farrakhan to go to Washington for a massive demonstration of black solidarity. Farrakhan puzzled those unfamiliar with early Nation of Islam ties to Masonry with his references at the rally to Freemasonry, even mentioning the assassins (*Jubela*, *Jubelo*, and *Jubelm*) who take part in the Masonic third degree, whom he renamed *Jubela Fuhrman*, *Jubelo Billbo*, and *Jubelm Helms* after Mark Fuhrman, the racist detective at the O. J. Simpson trial; Theodore Billbo, the racist Governor of Mississippi; and Jesse Helms, the senior U.S. Senator from North Carolina.¹³ Since the vast majority of those at the rally had no appreciation of the Masonic background to black Islam, the references seemed incoherent whereas in fact they were within the Nation of Islam's tradition.¹⁴

There has been, incidentally, at least one black Prince Hall Shrine in the Caribbean: Al-Ali Temple at Bimini in the Bahamas (Walkes, Jr., 1993, p. 383).

However, the main institutional expression of black Freemasonry in the Afro-Caribbean is the Prince Hall movement. Prince Hall and

¹² The Mormons have a problem reconciling the origins of their religion with the Masonic membership of their founder, Joseph Smith, and with the resemblance of Mormon temple rituals to Masonic ones. This is part of a larger problem the Mormons have in attempting to show that the various events of their scriptures and the various rituals they practice have the historical background that he asserted they had. Their efforts at reconciliation continue. See, e.g., "Expert on Egyptian culture and religion speaks an BYU," and "BYU Symposium Focuses on Historicity and Scriptures," *Insights: an ancient window — The newsletter of the Foundation for Ancient Research & Mormon Studies*, April, 1996, p. 3.

¹³ Recalling the speculation that the founder of black Islam, Elijah Muhammad, could have been a "twentieth-century Joseph Smith," a black Masonic historian commented on the rally and Farrakhan's speech that "The one thread that runs through this homemade version of American religion is Freemasonry. The Black Churches in America, Farrakhan's Nation of Islam, and its forerunner the Moorish Science Temple of America, all founded by or derived from Prince Hall Freemasonry may well be... a paradigm for the future of American Religion. However, all of it may be absorbed by a church also founded by a Freemason, the prophet, seer and revelator, Joseph Smith, and the fast growing church in Christianity, the Mormons, who continue to reach out to Africa America" (Walkes, Jr., 1996, p. 18).

¹⁴ The records of the black Shrine and of its relations with its sister organization, the Daughters of Isis, are housed at the Moorland-Spingarn Research Center at Howard University in Washington, D.C.

twelve other blacks were made Masons in the British army lodge at Boston in 1775. They organized themselves as African Lodge No. 1, a legitimate lodge of one of the two existing grand lodges of England. The warrant for this lodge was granted by Thomas Howard, Earl of Effingham, whose authority came from the royal Duke of Cumberland. It dates from 1784 and has been preserved by the Prince Hall Masons in Massachusetts. Prince Hall himself corresponded with the English grand lodge — and as this was a period when the appointment of overseas officers was informal, had a claim to being an officer of the English grand lodge who could charter additional lodges. He did in fact charter a black lodge in Philadelphia in 1800.

Prince Hall died in 1807, but African Lodge continued on the English roll of lodges until the merger of the two English grand lodges in 1813 to form the present United Grand Lodge of England. Grand Lodges for the several American states were subsequently organized by black Freemasons who traced their authority to the original Prince Hall lodges. Much later the Prince Hall lodge system spread to the Caribbean, but there as elsewhere did not win recognition from the white lodges.

Prince Hall lodges have long created a problem within Freemasonry. They had a good claim to being descendants of a lodge recognized by the early Grand Lodge of England and it was hard to avoid concluding that their non-recognition was because of race rather than history (Steinberg, pp. 257-268). A Prince Hall member comments:

Caucasian Grand Lodges, by shameful acts of official denial of our legitimacy, have sworn honesty to silence and allowed the hoodwink of bias and blind truth. Some have mimicked the role of Pontius Pilate trying to cleanse their conscience by dipping into murky waters of legality. Others have permitted themselves to be bullied by threats of recognition withdrawal by sister Grand Lodges. Worse are those who have simply chosen to ignore the problem, seeing most Prince Hall Masons as a convenient excuse for their exclusion of African Americans from their rosters. The worst of the lot are those remaining few who have cast aside Prince Hall Grand Lodges as some insignificant nuisance not worth their attention [Landers, 1993, p. 23].

A number of prestigious white American lodges are quite proud of a similar lineage to the Prince Hall lodges — that is to say, one which starts in the eighteenth century and includes (naturally) a break with

the parent British grand lodges and the setting up of independent jurisdictions. Particularly in the American South, Masonry has been as segregated by color as was American education in an earlier era. White American lodges have refused to recognize the black Prince Hall Masons because of their "irregularity" while boasting about the romance of their own chequered descent. This has been an ongoing scandal, and recently some American white grand lodges, led by Connecticut, have recognized the Prince Hall lodges.¹⁵

As a consequence of the Prince Hall fracas, the United Grand Lodge of England warned its members not to sit in lodges of the Grand Lodges of Connecticut, Wisconsin, Nebraska, and the State of Washington because they had recognized black Freemasonry (Tye, 1991, p. 16). It since then has recognized the Prince Hall lodges in Massachusetts but not elsewhere. Current Prince Hall lodges throughout the Caribbean are not recognized by the British lodges or by many of the Grand Lodges in the United States. This is largely in our opinion because they are black lodges.¹⁶

Until recently there have been individual Prince Hall lodges in the islands but there have not been grand lodges of Prince Hall Masons. The first Prince Hall Grand Lodge in the Caribbean was established in the Bahamas in 1951. It currently has 25 lodges and a membership of 1 345 (Walkes, Jr., 1989, p. 43).

This was followed by the founding of the Most Worshipful Prince Hall Grand Lodge of the Caribbean, which began when a college student in the United States was initiated in a Prince Hall lodge in California and, on returning to his native Barbados in 1960, started a

¹⁵ "Here the division is between the North American Grand Lodges and threatens to embroil the United Grand Lodge of England... To the United Grand Lodge of England and the majority of the Grand Lodges in North America, Prince Hall Grand Lodges are irregular, although not always for the same reasons, and do not meet the basic principles for regularity. Therefore they cannot be recognised. However, there are now some United States Grand Lodges, led by the Grand Lodge of the State of Connecticut, that consider Prince Hall Lodges legitimate Masonic bodies and have accorded them recognition. The division of opinion on the matter is such that one Grand Lodge, that of Louisiana, has broken off fraternal relations with that of Connecticut" (Linford, 1993, p. 81).

¹⁶ Recognition is being extended in the 1990's, one reason being that American grand lodges are apprehensive about losing tax privileges if they continue to discriminate against blacks. E.g. the Grand Lodge of New Mexico at its March 25, 1996 meetings recognized the Prince Hall Grand Lodge of New Mexico, ironically also recognizing the Grande Lodge du Senegal. (*The New Mexico Freemason*, vol. 61, no. 2, Spring 1996, p. 7).

Prince Hall lodge there. Prince Hall lodges of this grand lodge can now be found in a number of Caribbean countries, including Guyana, St. Maarten, St. Lucia, Dominica, and Trinidad (Payne, 1993, pp. 6-8).¹⁷

In summary, the Afro Caribbean involvement with Freemasonry must be considered alongside the histories of several strands of Freemasonry. Have blacks been discriminated against by the Masonic lodges in the Caribbean? Does the establishment of Prince Hall lodges indicate that blacks have been unable to participate in the existing Masonic lodges? Within British and former British possessions there are English, Scottish and Irish lodges that have initiated blacks. In the remaining French and Dutch possessions there are lodges with their origins in Continental Masonry, often in the French case of the Grand Orient variety, which have had black members. In American-dominated islands such as Puerto Rico and the American Virgins, there are lodges strongly influenced by the American lodges where the attitude towards extending Masonry to Afro Caribbeans has been influenced by the segregationist nature of American Masonry. The Dutch lodges in the Netherlands Antilles represent still another variety of Masonry and our personal investigations there indicate that few blacks have been initiated, but of course those possessions do not have large black populations.

The history of the Prince Hall lodges can contribute to our knowledge of the problems of the Afro Caribbean. There is an enormous amount to be done in the way of research into this phenomenon of black fraternalism.¹⁸ What persuades a black to become a Prince Hall Mason rather than to join one of the other Masonic groups? Are lodges in individual islands still discriminatory of blacks and does that encourage the Prince Hall Lodges?

The answers will not come easily, for the scholar investigating the relationship between the Afro Caribbean and Freemasonry has a

¹⁷ The Prince Hall movement in the United States is aware of ties to the Afro Caribbean, not only because of the grand lodges now operating there but because of other factors; the L'Overture Lodge No. 156 in Richmond, Virginia, for example, is named for the Haitian hero, the Prince Hall Grand Lodge of New York has lodges in Guyana and Barbados, and in the Netherlands Antilles and St. Lucia, and the Prince Hall Grand Lodge of Florida has lodges in Belize. Dr. Rich, co-writer of this article, has met with Prince Hall Masonic leaders on a visit to Belize.

¹⁸ A major reference source is the Harry A. Williamson collection on Prince Hall Masonry, which is maintained at the Schomburg Center for Research and Black Culture of the New York Public Library, 515 Lenox Avenue, New York.

major problem in dealing with many Masonic jurisdictions. Even if he is a Mason there is no guarantee that his membership will simplify his work. His own grand lodge may require that he conduct all correspondence with lodges in other jurisdictions through the grand lodge secretaries of respective bodies, which of course would make any large number of inquiries difficult if not impossible.

A suspicion that we entertain and a proposition that deserves testing is that Masonry seems to have given a small group of black West Indians an opportunity for social advancement. Some possibly sought membership in the British lodges because of a curiosity about lodges whose members had connections with colonial and imperial leadership. Prosopographical research may show that the Masonic lodges in the Caribbean were responsible for the integration of a small group of blacks into the colonial ruling class. In sum, Freemasonry's interaction with the Afro Caribbeans can provide an interesting commentary on the whole Afro Caribbean social situation.¹⁸

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APPENDIX²⁰

This quick survey of the most common lodges, that is to say those British lodges conferring the first three degrees, leaves out much interesting information but shows that Masonry became widespread in the Caribbean in the eighteenth century. There were often lodges of several national jurisdictions working on the same islands. Many of the lodges mentioned expired or merged, while many others arose to take their place.

¹⁹ The authors invite correspondence regarding the location of archives and anything else related to Caribbean Masonry. They can be reached at The University of the Americas-Puebla, Mexico.

²⁰ The following survey is primarily based on information in Henry Wilson Coil, *Coil's Masonic Encyclopedia* and K. W. Henderson, *Masonic World Guide* (see bibliography).

Dates of early Caribbean lodges & provinces

<i>Location</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Origin</i>	<i>Act</i>
Antigua	1737	Boston	Lodge established
	1753	English	Lodge established
The Bahamas	1752	English	Grand Master for the Bahamas appointed
	1803	Scottish	Lodge established
Barbados	1740	English	Province established
	1883	Irish	Lodge established
	1799	Scottish	Lodge established
Bermuda	1744	English	Provincial Grand Master
	1761	English	Lodge established
	1865	Irish	Lodge established
	1797	Scottish	Lodge established
British Honduras	1763-1820 1831	English	Lodge established
Cuba ²¹	1762	Irish	Lodge established
	1804	Pennsylvania	Lodge established
	1815	Louisiana	Lodge established
	1818	South Carolina	Lodge established
Curaçao	1757	Dutch	Lodge established
	1781	New York	Lodge established
	1810	English	Lodge established
Dominica	1773	English	Lodge established
Dominican Republic	1865	Grand Order of Santo Domingo	Grand Lodge founded
Grenada	1772	English	French
	1819	Irish	Lodge established
	1858	Scottish	Lodge established
Guadeloupe	1766	French Grand Orient	Lodge established
Haiti	1749	French	2 lodges established

²¹ Cuba developed a strong Masonic movement and powerful grand lodge of its own, which has continued to be active.

Dates of early Caribbean lodges & provinces

<i>Location</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Origin</i>	<i>Act</i>
	1786-1789	Pennsylvania	Lodges established
	Early 1800's	Pennsylvania	Many Lodges and a province established
Jamaica	1809	English	2 lodges established
	1739	English	Lodge established
	1760	Scottish	Lodge established
	1767-1791	Irish	5 lodges established
Leeward & Windward Islands	1738	English	Province established
Martinique	1769	Scottish	Province established
	1738-1786	French	Lodges established
	1801	Irish	Lodge established
Montserrat & Nevis	1813	English	Lodge established
	1734	English	Authority for a lodge granted
Nevis	1777	English	Lodge established
Puerto Rico	1811	French	Lodge established
	1821	Massachusetts	Lodge established
	1797	Swedish	Lodge established
St. Bartholomew	1763	English	Lodge established
St. Croix	1790	English	English lodge becomes Danish, Grand Lodge of the Netherlands founded
St. Eustatius ²²	1877	Scottish	Lodge established
	1747	English	3 lodges established
	1757	Dutch	4 lodges established

²² One authority claims that a total of twelve lodges were established in St. Eustatius in the eighteenth century, four English lodges and eight Dutch lodges. This is a clear example of how the formation of Masonic lodges in the Caribbean reflects larger historical developments. The period was one of great activity in St. Eustatius, which became a contraband center and free port and was especially active during the American Revolution.

Dates of early Caribbean lodges & provinces

<i>Location</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Origin</i>	<i>Act</i>
	1777	Dutch	Province established
	1754	English	Province established
St. Kitts	1739	English	Lodge established
	1769	Scottish	Lodge established
St. Lucia	1784	French Grand Orient	Lodges established
St. Martin	1800	Dutch	Lodge established
St. Thomas	1792	Pennsylvania	Dispensation for Lodge issued
	1798	Danish	Lodge established
	1769	French, English	Lodges
St. Vincent	1806	Irish	Lodge established
Tobago	1868	Scottish	Lodge established
Tortola	1760	English	Lodge established
Trinidad	1798	Pennsylvania	Lodge established
	1811	Irish	Lodge established
	1813	Scottish, Spanish	Lodges established
	1831	English	Lodge established

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