
H-France Review Vol. 3 (July 2003), No. 75

Pierre Beaurepaire, *Nobles jeux de l'arc et loges maçonniques dans la France des Lumières: Enquête sur une sociabilité en mutation*. Collection "Les Architectes de la Connaissance." Grosley, Val d'Oise: Éditions Ivoire-Clair, 2002, 255 pp. Notes, documents, and bibliography. 18 € (pb). ISBN 2-913882-15-3.

Review by Gail Bossenga, University of Kansas at Lawrence.

For over two centuries, Masonic lodges in France have been seen as instigators, in some form or fashion, of democratic revolution. Already in 1797 the abbé Barruel traced the outbreak of the French Revolution to a sinister Masonic plot, a thesis that numerous historians took pains to rebut. In the early twentieth century, a more subtle and sociologically-informed perspective of Masonic activity was offered by Augustin Cochin, who rejected the idea of plot and, indeed, all historical explanations that looked to human intention as the motor of historical change. Rather than examining human motivation, Cochin sought to uncover general laws conditioning human activity. In examining the transition to modernity, he opposed two forms of society: the corporate and the democratic. Corporate society was traditional, hierarchical, and "holistic" in that individuals derived their identities and rights from membership in preordained groups. By contrast, democratic society was voluntaristic, rooted in abstract, equal individuals who had to create consensus and identity through opinion. In the old regime, the rise of democratic society occurred outside corporate bodies through the growth of "philosophical societies:" academies, literary circles, and Masonic lodges that were voluntary in nature and egalitarian in membership. These associations paved the way for the Jacobins, who represented the purest form of democratic society. Half a century later, François Furet resurrected Cochin's ideas in his search for theoretical alternatives to a Marxist model of the French Revolution. Inspired by Furet, Ran Halevi published his work on Masonic lodges, which presented the Masons as a case study in the rise of "pre-revolutionary democratic sensibility."^[1]

The purpose of Pierre-Yves Beaurepaire's book is to attack the notion that Masonic lodges represent a new form of democratic sociability and, more generally, to comment on the nature of institutional change. During his research on Masonic lodges, Beaurepaire discovered that in the mid-eighteenth century a number of chivalric confraternities that monopolized the practice of archery, crossbow, and arquebuse (the *chevaliers du jeux de l'arc, de l'arbeltier, and l'arquebusier*) had joined their confraternities to local Masonic lodges. The ethos of these shooting confraternities was decidedly hierarchical, corporate, and traditional. They harked back to times when local citizens defended their cities from attack, and they perpetuated aristocratic airs even though most members were bourgeois. Militarily obsolete, the chevaliers clung to their martial identity by marching in civic processions and organizing shooting contests at local festivals. Why would these guardians of urban corporate identity be merging their organizations with that of Masonic lodges, the purported vehicles of democratic sociability?

In exploring this question, Beaurepaire argues that a clear-cut opposition between corporate and democratic forms of association is unhelpful for understanding the nature of sociability in the old regime. The chivalric archery confraternities and Masonic lodges shared a number of characteristics. First, and foremost, both types of groups met the members' need for everyday sociability: they provided

a place where men could play games, talk, engage in charitable activities, and just pass the time. Scottish Masons in Edinburg, Beaurepaire observes in a particularly interesting example, used their organizational savvy to create the first formal golf club. Both Masonic lodges and chivalric archery confraternities affirmed masculinity by generally excluding women from secret initiation rites and private leisure activities, but they also created a space where husbands and wives could mingle together at banquets or other public activities that were sponsored after competitions or meetings. Both groups practised socially-restrictive recruitment that qualified any claims Masons might make for advancing the cause of equality. They were sanctioned by the political authorities, and relied upon highly-placed patrons to lend their organizations luster. In the 1780s, the duc de Montmorency-Luxembourg was simultaneously administrator general of the Grand Orient de France (the head lodge of the national Masonic network) and colonel of the noble *jeu de l'arc* of Paris.

Both groups also responded to an ongoing desire for spiritual fulfillment. Their initiation rites provided for a time of reflection in isolation before the initiation, an oath taken to maintain the secrets of their organizations, a symbolic death to profane life, and a subsequent rebirth as a member of the group. Masons were not anti-clerical. Not only was it common to find chivalric archers in Masonic lodges, it was also common to find members of penitential confraternities in lodges in southern France. The patron saint of the Freemasons was Jean-Baptiste. Beaurepaire also calls our attention to the religious dimension of games. Religious metaphors are often used to describe great sport events, which serve to renew social bonds. In the old regime, the victor in an archery match might be conducted in triumph to a church where the product of his skill could be displayed as a monument to his piety.

According to Beaurepaire, Masonic lodges and shooting confraternities served as agents in the civilizing process described by the sociologist Norbert Elias. The lodges were schools in virtue, fraternal aid, and self-mastery. Less obviously, chivalric confraternities helped to tame violence by differentiating bloodless urban games (which used wooden birds for matches), from gory village archery competitions in which live animals were shot and displayed.

Finally, just as Masons claimed to be patriotic, so did the chevaliers. In fact, when the Revolution broke out, chevaliers in several towns, including Paris, marched under their own standard in the newly-formed national guards and hoped that their military functions would be recreated. At one point in 1790 none other than Jean-Paul Marat praised the "patriotic virtue" of the "honorable chevaliers," who would be the "despair of the enemies of the State" (p. 145). Nonetheless, the anti-corporate impulse of the Revolution reigned supreme, and in 1790 the confraternities of archers and crossbow men were ordered to merge directly into the National Guard.

Not all of Beaurepaire's critique is new. The inegalitarian aspects of Masonic lodges, most notably, have been cited by others. Yet Beaurepaire does make a contribution by inviting us to consider the complementary functions of organizations previously considered as parts of different spheres of sociability. By evaluating Masonic lodges within a wider field of "traditional" organization, rather than as a vehicle of "enlightened" sociability or precursor to revolution, we can see that new forms of sociability did not emerge in opposition to old forms, but developed through a process of cultural transposition, imitation, and syncretism. This meant that freemasons could turn their organizational skills toward political subversion, but they could also use them to fix the rules of golf. Members of an institution, furthermore, were never fully determined by the rules and habits of that institution. They always retained a degree of choice. Thus, although Beaurepaire does not make the point explicitly, we are not forced to choose between either a voluntaristic or structural theory of historical change; in fact, both individual intention and social conditioning were perpetually in operation.

Beaurepaire does not reject a thesis of modernization entirely. He is aware, implicitly at least, that the "modern" world is characterized by translocal civic allegiances, an expanded sphere of voluntaristic and intimate social relations, and enhanced emphasis on merit as opposed to birth. An undated painting that

showed representatives of the three orders in a Masonic temple shaking hands, for example, demonstrated that the lodge participated in the "modernization....of social relations" based in the mingling of birth and merit (p. 143). Yet modernization was not limited to Masonic lodges or enlightened reading clubs. Chivalric confraternities could also participate in these changes. Modernization, furthermore, did not have to be measured solely through reference to a Jacobin democratic vision but could have multiple points of reference.

Beaurepaire could have made his readers' work easier. The book is slim, but the author loads his prose with parenthetical expressions and qualifications. More background information would have been helpful. Readers are often plunged immediately into the argument and have to pay close attention to piece the details together for themselves. After reading the book, this reviewer still does not have a good sense of exactly when these archery confraternities arose, how they were integrated into local society, and how they had been evolving over time. At times evidence is slight, and not because Beaurepaire is a poor researcher. On the contrary, he has written and co-edited over half a dozen books on Freemasons since 1991. Rather, secret societies tend not to produce a great many records divulging their mysteries. Some comparisons thus tend to be schematic. Well aware of the problem, the author provides a small number of documents, including, among others, the early nineteenth-century "catechism" of a *chevalier de l'arc* and statutes from the mid eighteenth century regulating the merger of the Masonic lodge of Saint-Maurice and the company of *chevaliers du jeu* in Clermont. Finally, Beaurepaire does not offer any hypotheses as to why the Revolution was characterized by such an insistent anti-corporate, egalitarian sentiment and where the origin of that sentiment might be located. After all, despite Marat's homage to them, the chevaliers' confraternities were shut down as corporate bodies. It may be that the answer to this question lies less in the realm of sociability than in the field of political power and the integration of corporate organizations into the structure of the monarchic state. Nonetheless, Beaurepaire's general approach is illuminating and thought-provoking. Individuals interested in the problem of sociability and the problem of modernization, broadly-conceived, will benefit from his insights.

NOTES:

[1] Ran Halevi, *Les Loges maçonniques dans la France d'Ancien Régime* (Paris: Colin 1984), 16. My summary of Cochin is based on chapter three, "Augustin Cochin: the Theory of Jacobinism," in François Furet, *Interpreting the French Revolution*, trans. Elborg Forster (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981).

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