Heritages of Migration: The Movement of Fraternal Societies, Belonging and Home

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The Americas is a migratory space characterised by various waves of migration over time. Migrants to, from and within the Americas such as the indigenous peoples, Europeans, Africans and Asians have carried their cultural baggage in forced or voluntary movements between the Old World and the New World. This paper seeks to discuss the heritage of trans-Atlantic encounters through the cultural practice of fraternal organisations brought from the Old World into the New World. The ritual of fraternity has been valued by men such as colonists, soldiers, sailors from Europe and became part of their cultural equipage. Freemasonry represents one of the oldest fraternal societies that spread throughout the British Empire. In the Anglophone Caribbean, Freemasonry was established in the early eighteenth century. The paper explores some of the routes of fraternity during the epoch of enslavement of Africans in the British West Indies. It also discusses how fraternal culture continued to be replicated in the Caribbean through highlighting the role of Caribbean migrants who crossed distances within the Americas to places such as Costa Rica and Panama. In their effort to seek better opportunities, particularly in the late nineteenth century, some migrants transplanted their way of life, that is, mutual-aid and fraternal societies, recreating that sense of home and brotherhood, social and economic support in these spaces.