

2011

La Masonería en el mundo - Brasil

Archivo C I E M - Madrid

Documentación - países

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03/04/2011



Brazilian Freemasonry

1 – Freemasonry in Brazil is Christian oriented, or at least, the majority of its members are Christians. We have a good number of Jews and even some Muslims. A small part declare themselves as part of some African religion, or “spiritualist” which means they don’t have a single religion but may have more than one – this is common in Brazil, especially with the great influence of African origin cults. We don’t require candidates to be Christian, but a belief in a Supreme Being is mandatory.

2 – The first Grand Lodge in Brazil was the “Grande Oriente do Brasil” and its origins go back to the move of Portuguese royal family to Brazil, running away from Napoleon invasion in Portugal. That was in 1808. Grande Oriente was not so stable in its beginning, and some schisms happened in Century XIX. However, at the beginning of XX Century, it was developing fast and reasonably stable.

3 – In 1927, a big schism, leaded by its own MW Grand Master Mario Behring. Bro Behring was, at that time, the MW Grand Master and, at the same time, the Sovereign Grand Commander of Scottish Rite. The newly elected Grand Master, to replace Mario Behring, was from other Rite, and he refused to pass the chair of Grand Commander, creating the schism that was the origin of the Grand Lodges movement in Brazil. Of course, there were other reasons, but this is the main “official” reason for the problem. Behring was a Grand Officer of Grand Orient for many years when this problem happened.

4 – Mario Behring created several Grand Lodges, chartering them under the authority of the Supreme Council of Scottish Rite that he then presided. At the moment, there are 27 Grand Lodges in Brazil, one for each State plus the Federal District Brasilia, where our capitol is located),

5 – These Grand Lodges are confederated under a organizing body, similar to COGMINA, the Confederacao da Maconaria Simbolica do Brasil. (CMSB). The Supreme Council of Mario Behring continued with its works, but Grand Oriented created its own Supreme Council and up to now they claim that their Supreme Council is the oldest. Grand Orient kept recognition of UGLE, and some of Grand Lodges of Commonwealth. Grand Lodges of US recognized the Grand Lodges, but not the Grand Orient. Check older versions of List of Lodges Book (Pantagraph) and you will not see Grand Orient there, except recently. I have my own theory about this situation (UGLE recognizes only three Grand Lodges, and Grand Orient gets the recognition of all COGMINA members) but I will not discuss it here. Reading a very nice work of our Brother Jack Buta made me understand better the motivations behind many of these movements. .

6 – Around the 40’s, another schism in Grand Orient generated what is now called “Independent Grand Orient”. These kinds of organization are similar to Grand Lodges, organized on a state basis, but keeping some of the habits of their origin. For example, Scottish Rite in Grand Lodges use mainly the blue colour, while in Grande Oriente and in Independent Grand Orient, this rite uses the red colour.

7 – These independent grand orients gather themselves in a confederation similar to CMSB, called COMAB (Confederacao da Maconaria Simbolica Brasileira). As far as I know, COMAB grand lodges don't have a wide recognition in the world. However, some of them were recently admitted into Latin American Masonic Confederation. This organization used to gather all the Brazilian grand lodges (CMSB). However, a good number of them left this organization for reasons that I wouldn't like to discuss here. Some of them remained, and one of our Grand Lodges (Rio Grande do Sul State Grand Lodge) is actually in charge of the V Region.

8 – A few years ago, three of our Grand Lodges obtained the recognition of UGLE. That was a good motive for Grand Orient find a way to obtain the recognition of COGMINA Grand Lodges and become part of the List of Lodges as well. At the same time, or around that, Grand Orient also joined the Latin American Confederation.

9 – Relationship amongst Grand Lodges of CMSB is quite good, and we have a year meeting, on a rotation basis in different states. Some of Grand Lodges have good relationship with their counterpart in COMAB, according to their states, but this is not so harmonic, specially in some northeastern states. COMAB, naturally, does not have such relationship with Grand Orient. Grand Orient, as a reaction to these organizations, changed its own organization and decided to elect state Grand Masters, similar to the Grand Lodges, but under the Command of a General Grand Master, based in Brasilia.

10 – I guess COMAB has its own Supreme Council for Scottish Rite. However, this separation is not so clear for me once I know that there are brethren from Grand Lodges who participate in the Supreme Council of Grand Orient.

11 – UGLE has also a District Grand Lodge and Mark Master Lodges as well. I am a member of one of these MM Lodges (Guanabara Chapter). Meetings are in English Language. We have also created at least two Mark Master Grand Lodges, one under the control of Grand Orient and other under control of Grand Lodge of Rio de Janeiro State. I was appointed Grand Overseer of this Grand Lodge, and our meetings are once a year, in Portuguese language.

12 – In south of Brazil, precisely in Rio Grande do Sul State, there is a very interesting organization called “Maconaria Unida do Rio Grande do Sul” who gathers the local Grand Orient, the Independent Grand Orient and the Grand Lodge. They work together, plan their activities together and have even a common password. This experience may be the beginning of a global union of Masonry in Brazil, but its too early to say that. In other states, relationship between the three main groups is not so good.

13 – Finally, I am, at the moment, the Grand Chancellor (or Grand Secretary for Foreign Relations) of Grande Loja do Rio de Janeiro State. Its possible that my period ends this year, although my Grand Master will be there for another period of 5 years. I have been in this position for 4 years now, and before that I was a member of the Foreign Relations Committee, a mechanism to support the Grand Chancellor, but that does not really works so intensively. For my own use, I had the opportunity to develop a software program that contains all the Grand Lodges in the world and their declared recognitions. Ambiguity, as you may imagine, is very easy to find. The recognition processes, sometimes, are led by other reasons, non-Masonic, as very clearly demonstrated Bro Jack in the mentioned work.

There is no Grand Lodge of Brazil, in the sense of a unique Grand Lodge for the whole federation of the "Estados Unidos do Brasil". There are about twenty "Estados" and in each one of them there are three Masonic bodies:

1) A "Grande Oriente", mostly Christian-oriented and working the Rectified Scottish Rite. These Grand Orients being federated into a "Grande Oriente Estadual" for the whole of Brazil and in good relations with the United Grand Lodge of England (and with the USA?).

2) A "Grande Loja Maçônica" for each "Estado", recognized at least theoretically by the UGLE too, and by the USA Grand Lodges at least until two years ago. These Grand Lodges being inter-connected within a national Brazilian entity, the CMSB (Confederação de Maçonaria Simbólica do Brasil), in turn a member of the CMI (Confederacion Masonica Inter-Americana).

3) A number of "Independent Grand Orients", GOI, mostly not recognized by the Anglo-American Masonry.