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La Masonería en el mundo – China - Taiwán

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Freemasonry in China

Freemasonry first reached China on the Prince Carl, a ship of the [Swedish East India Company](#). The freemasons on board had a document giving them permission to hold meetings whenever they entered a port and they did so in Canton (Guangzhou) in late 1759.

The records of the Grand Lodge of England show that in 1768, Lodge Amity No. 407 was meeting in Canton; however, it had ceased working by the end of the century.

Two lodges were established in Hong Kong soon after the British acquired the Territory. The older one, Royal Sussex Lodge No. 501 EC (named after the Duke of Sussex, who was then the Grand Master of the English Freemasons) was warranted on 18 September 1844. It later moved to Guangzhou, then on to Shanghai and only returned to Hong Kong in 1952. The second lodge, Zetland Lodge No. 525 EC was warranted on 21 March 1846. It was named after the Marquis of Zetland, the next Grand Master. Zetland Lodge claims seniority over Royal Sussex Lodge as it has remained in Hong Kong since its formation. Other Lodges were established over the following years.

In 1853 Zetland Lodge built a hall for its meetings on the upper part of Zetland Street where New World Tower now stands. This was the first Zetland Hall and in time it became the meeting place of all the Hong Kong lodges.

In China, lodges were formed in Shanghai, then in Ningbo and Tianjin. Lodges were formed eventually in most of the ports of China that were open to foreigners, and in the inland cities of Nanjing, Beijing, Harbin and Chengdu. These operated under charters granted by the supreme Masonic authorities in many countries, with those with most lodges being from England, Scotland, Massachusetts and later, the Philippines.

Because of restrictions imposed by the Imperial Government, it was almost impossible for a Chinese to become a freemason during the Qing Dynasty, although in 1873 the leader of a Chinese educational mission in Massachusetts did so. The first known Chinese to become a mason in China was Bro. Shan Hing Yung, a lieutenant in the Imperial Navy, who was initiated into Lodge Star of Southern China No. 2013 EC in Guangzhou in 1889. Early Chinese freemasons in Hong Kong included Sir Kai Ho Kai and the Honourable Wei Yuk.

By the beginning of the Sino-Japanese War, many lodges in China had a majority of Chinese members, especially those meeting under the Grand Lodge of the Philippines. During the war, the Japanese persecuted Freemasons in the occupied areas of China. Lodges however continued to meet. Several of the Hong Kong lodges met informally and under very dangerous conditions in the internment camps and Perseverance Lodge No. 1165 EC, meeting in Stanley

prison, even kept a minute book.

With the end of the war, the lodges in China and Hong Kong revived, although some Lodges moved from the provinces into Shanghai, Tianjin and Hong Kong. Enthusiasm was so great that the six Philippine lodges meeting in China, which had an almost entirely Chinese membership, formed the Grand Lodge of China in 1949.

With the establishment of the People's Republic of China, all the lodges continued to meet, but those that met in the American Masonic Temple in Shanghai - including the Grand Lodge of China - closed down in 1952. The English District Grand Master of Northern China offered to close if the Central Peoples' Government requested it, affirming that regular Freemasons always give obedience to the lawful government of whichever country they are in. No request was made and the British lodges meeting in the Masonic Hall in Beijing Road West in Shanghai continued to meet without difficulty. Cosmopolitan Lodge No. 428 SC met there until 1962, when it transferred to Hong Kong. This was because its largely foreign membership had by then left China and not because of any conflict with the authorities. The British Masonic Hall then became the Shanghai headquarters of the Five Chinese Medical Associations.

[Zetland Hall](#) on Zetland Street in Hong Kong Island had been damaged by Allied bombing at the end of the war and the present Zetland Hall at No. 1 Kennedy Road, was constructed in 1950. This enabled lodges from Xiamen, Fuzhou, Guangzhou, Shantou and Shanghai to be revived, and also permitted expansion of the Craft to take place.

There are now twenty-seven lodges, with over 1,500 members, meeting at Zetland Hall, together with a considerable number of higher Masonic orders. All lodges and orders still meet under the three Grand Lodges of the British Isles, but enjoy considerable local independence.

Freemasonry in Taiwan

Bro. Shih-Ho (Simon) Chao, Ph.D.

Freemasonry in Taiwan originated from Mainland China. The first lodge appeared in China in 1767 in Canton (Home State of Dr. Sun Yat Sen), the No. 407 Yi Lodge which belonged to the Grand Lodge of England. All the Masonic membership in that Lodge were foreigners without Masonic descent. It was not until March 18, 1949, that the Grand Lodge of China was established in Shanghai, under the sponsorship of the Grand Lodge of Philippines. However, all Masonic activities were suspended in 1951 due to

civil war between Communist Government (the current Chinese Government) and KMT Government (The Government in Taiwan before 2000).

The Grand Lodge was reactivated in Taipei in 1954 after the KMT Government retreated to Taiwan. Under the excellent leadership of all the Grand Masters, including many from the United States and General Chiang, son of Chiang Kai-Shek, the Lodges grew stronger. Currently, there are 13 Lodges in Taiwan, with thousands of brothers. It is worth mentioning that the No. 7 Liberty Lodge is composed of Brothers all of whom are from other countries. Some of them were already Masons in their "Mother Countries" but needed to keep their light in Masonry growing and glowing. In addition to all the Lodges, the other Masonic bodies in Taiwan include:

- 1) The Ali Shan Oasis Shrine Club of Taipei, working on the care and foundation of Crippled and Burned Children;
- 2) YangMingShan Chapter No. 5, O.E.S. The Order of the Eastern Star is not an auxiliary of the Masonic Order but is an independent organization of its own. Its members are the wives, daughters, widows, mothers and sisters of Master Masons.
- 3) The Ancient Accepted Scottish Rite of Freemasonry of the Southern Jurisdiction, U.S.A. Valley of Taipei, Orient of Taiwan. There are now 816 members in total and 32 Brethren have been coroneted with the Thirty-third degree (33°).

At this time, due to the business activities between China and Taiwan, a host of Brethren have stayed in China, mostly in Shanghai. The former Worshipful Master of No. 9 Tang Lodge, the author's Blue Lodge, just went to Shanghai on Nov. 1st, 2004, and serves as the manger of a Company. It has been proposed by some brother in Shanghai that a regular Masonic meeting be begun so that they can continue the Masonic activities. Hopefully, Masonic bodies can return to Mainland China in the near future.