Cuban Freemasons in the Development of Civil Society and of a Political Opening

Cuba Futures: Past and Present
Bildner Center for Western Hemisphere Studies
Cuba Project

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Outline

- Introduction and background
- Demographic study summary
- Freemasons and Civil Society
- Discussion
- Conclusions
Objectives of this paper

- Fill a void in the literature
  - Of Cuban Civil Society (CS)
- Characterize Cuban Freemasons (CF)
  - And describe how they became what they are
- Propose specific ways they can contribute
  - To an Opening and Transition, through the CS
Three Research Questions

- Why are Cuban Freemasons important?
  - And how did they get to where they are now?

- Why is Civil Society important to an opening?
  - And what alternatives are there to an opening?

- What can Cuban Freemasons do, within Civil Society, to help facilitate an opening?
  - And what do they need to better achieve this?
CF missed in most studies of CS

- **One of the oldest**
  - With 150 years of continued existence
- **One of the largest**
  - Nearly 30K members, nation-wide
- **One of the most widely spread**
  - Over 300 lodges, one in every town
- **Internationally known organization**
Possible reasons for this absence

- Emphasis on dissident/religious groups
  - Freemasons are neither

- Anti-Masonic bias
  - Well-studied (CEHME, CEHMLAC)

- Incompetence
  - If studying Cuban civil society
What are the Freemasons?

- “The organization of morality”
  - ‘To make some good men, better.’
- Independent of any government
- Discourage partisan politics or religion
- Admit adult men of all races, professions,
  - Political persuasions, religions, social class, etc.
- Based on tolerance and brotherhood
  - XIX Century: Washington, Bolivar, Marti
  - XX Century: Cardenas, Churchill, Allende
About Civil Society

- It is a continuum; not a dichotomy
  - CS always exists, in some form or degree
- Groups are Independent from the state
- Not necessarily antagonistic to the state
  - Pro, against and indifferent to establishment
- Not necessarily politically motivated
  - Cultural, sports, social, religious, etc.
- Very strong indicator of a free society
About the Cuban situation

- Politically, experimenting slow change
  - Leadership change, after half-a-century
  - New economic areas, to private enterprise
  - Forthcoming PCC congress, long overdue
  - New administration in the United States

- Economically, experimenting problems
  - Increasing unemployment among young
  - Government closing down enterprises
  - Sugar, tourism, etc. down; oil price, up
Cuban Freemasons Composition

- All religions, all races, all walks of life
- All provinces, all regions, all towns
- Older, less ‘educated’ than in pre-1959
- Under strong government supervision
- Since 1992, PCC and government members
- Since 2003, 13 ‘dissidents’ of the Group of 75
- Representative cross-cut of Cuban society
**CF Membership: Effective Masons**

*Effective masons*: number per 1000 ha, with respect to *population at risk* (i.e. men, of required age, circumstances and requirements to belong).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Ano</th>
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Membership Development:

**Effective masons:** number per 1000 ha, with respect to *population at risk* (i.e. men, of required age, circumstances and requirements to belong).

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<td>316</td>
<td>11417246</td>
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Demography 1945-2008

Scatterplot of TtMbr vs AnoPico


AnoPico

15000 17500 20000 22500 25000 27500 30000 32500

TtMbr
Time Series of total and effective yearly membership:

Miembros Por año: 1940 - 2010
# Membership Distribution by Province

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PROVINCE</th>
<th>Area (km²)</th>
<th>Population</th>
<th>Lodges</th>
<th>Membrs</th>
<th>Mbr/Ldg</th>
<th>Efective</th>
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<td>13.051</td>
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**Caracterization of CF historical periods: 1945 to 2008:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Historical Epoch</th>
<th>Years</th>
<th>Membership trend</th>
<th>Relevant Events</th>
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<tr>
<td>Before the revolution</td>
<td>1945-1958</td>
<td>Accelerated growth</td>
<td>Grau, Prío and struggle against Batista</td>
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<td>First Years after the revolution</td>
<td>1959-1967</td>
<td>Accelerated reduction</td>
<td>Emigration; B. Pigs; October Crisis; Rev. Offensive; Umap</td>
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<tr>
<td>Second Revolutionary Period</td>
<td>1968-1971</td>
<td>Some stability</td>
<td>Zafra de los 10 Millones; End of Legal Emigration</td>
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<tr>
<td>Third Revolutionary Period</td>
<td>1972-1981</td>
<td>Moderate reduction</td>
<td>State Economy; Visits from “Community”; Mariel</td>
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<td>Fourth Revolutionary Period</td>
<td>1982-1990</td>
<td>Slow growth</td>
<td>Economic Liberalization after Mariel: Gorbachev; Disolution of USSR</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fifth Revolutionary Period</td>
<td>1991-2000</td>
<td>Accelerated growth</td>
<td>IV Congress of PCC; Special Period; Rise of Tourism</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sixth Revolutionary Period</td>
<td>2001 to date</td>
<td>Stability</td>
<td>New Millenium; Tourism; Support from Venezuela</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
First years of revolution: accelerated reduction of members: strong emigration; B. Pigs; October Crisis; statization of economy; UMAP; revolutionary offensive
Membership movement in any organization

- Members CurrentYear =
  - Members PreviousYear – Losses + Gains

- In the CF case, we can break down Losses & Gains:
  - Gains = New members + Re-affiliationes
  - Losses = Withdrawals + Payment + Deaths + PoltIndcd

- Politically induced losses include: Emigration;
  - Left or never joined, due to adverse government policies
  - Left because new ideology was more attractive/fulfilling
Cuban Emigration to USA (INS Data): 1959 -1969

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Yr</th>
<th>TotMason</th>
<th>TotEmigr</th>
<th>Miembros</th>
<th>EffectiveMas</th>
<th>MsEmig(x1)</th>
<th>MsEmig(x1.5)</th>
<th>Death(1%)</th>
<th>Left(2%)</th>
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<td>*</td>
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<td>483</td>
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<td>0.01836</td>
<td>279</td>
<td>418</td>
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<td>1961</td>
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<td>209</td>
<td>313</td>
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<tr>
<td>1962</td>
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<td>73,632</td>
<td>28940</td>
<td>0.01643</td>
<td>302</td>
<td>454</td>
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<td>1963</td>
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<td>15,535</td>
<td>28621</td>
<td>0.01544</td>
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<td>90</td>
<td>286</td>
<td>572</td>
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<td>1964</td>
<td>29446</td>
<td>15,045</td>
<td>28313</td>
<td>0.01575</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>89</td>
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<td>235</td>
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<td>0.01202</td>
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<td>223</td>
<td>236</td>
<td>472</td>
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<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>2017</td>
<td>3026</td>
<td>3088</td>
<td>6177</td>
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Function (Effective Masons) is annually adjusted for two estimates (x1 & x1.5) of number of masons yearly emigration, providing Lower Bounds, as we are only considering the emigration to the USA, and not elsewhere.
Membership Reduction: 1959-69

- **Attrition**: $3K + 3K + 6K = 12K$
  - Left the country: 3026 (Lower Bound)
  - Left the Institution for ideological reasons
  - Left the Institution due to government policy
  - Deaths, natural reduction: 3088 (L.B.)

- **Balking**: $(25K + 12K) - 34K = 3K$
  - Never (re)affiliated, for ideological reasons
  - Never (re)affiliated, due to government policy
  - Transfers, new ordinary affiliations
Scatterplot of Efectivos vs Anos

Zafra de los 10 Millones; End of emigration; Full state economy
Expansion of state economy; Visits from “Community”; Mariel Boatlift
Economic liberalization after Mariel: Gorbachev; Disolution of USSR.
Demographic Data for Period 1982 - 91

Notice population growth is the same as that of Masons

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Members</th>
<th>Estimate</th>
<th>Population</th>
<th>Estimate</th>
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IV Congress PCC authorizes members; Special Period: Private Ent./Tourism
## Growth by IV PCC Congress & Economy

<table>
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<th>Year</th>
<th>Population</th>
<th>Estimate</th>
<th>Members</th>
<th>Estimate</th>
<th>IV-PCC</th>
<th>Difference</th>
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</table>
Scatterplot of Efectivos vs Anos

New Millenium; Tourism; Private Enterprise; Hugo Chávez & Venezuela.
<table>
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<th>Members</th>
<th>Estimate</th>
<th>Effective</th>
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Notice how 0.3% describes well total growth: of the country as well as of the members of the institution. Last column, approximately 10.27 effective masons shows how there is no real growth: only keeping up with population. Impact of the institution, remains therefore constant.
Demographic Summary: 1959-2007

- Total Mason losses between 1959-69:
  - Lower Bound: 12K (includes only emigration to USA)
- 1992 IV Congress PCC + Economy: extra growth
  - Members of PCC, and government officials
  - Citizens previously concerned about joining CF
  - Dissidents (e.g. 13 of the 75 prisoners of Spring 2003)
- Stabilization, after hitting 29K (in the 2000s)
  - Saturation? More emigration (lottery)? Other?
- Result: CF are true cross-cut of Cuban society
  - Economic, political, educational social, racial, religious
Two Historical Examples:

- **Spain 1960s: Laureano Lopez Rodo**
  - And his Opus Dei economic group developed
  - From within, the Economic opening that
  - Eventually brought fourth a Transition (1975+).

- **Portugal 1970s: Marcelo Caetano**
  - Post-Salazar slow and inadequate change
  - Provoqued the military insurrection
  - Revolucion de los Claveles, 1973
  - That brought about the fall of this government.
Alternatives to an Opening

- Maintaining the Status Quo
  - Economic, political and social status

- Implosion and Violence in the streets

- Coup d’état -or such attempt- followed by:
  - Civil war, or by faction in-fighting, or by
  - Military intervention and foreign occupation

- Triggers massive, uncontrolled exodus
  - Toward USA, and other Caribbean areas
  - Failed State: drugs and terrorism hub
Examples of Successful Transitions

- Spain, during the 1960 - 1975
- Portugal, after Salazar/Caetano: 1973+
- Chile, during the years 1988 - 1998
- Brasil under the Generals: 1970 - 1985
- Mexico, with the PAN: 1980 – 2000

All these Transitions started with:
  - A social and economic liberalization
  - A strengthening of Civil Society
Pre-conditions for a Transition

- Preparing an economic opening
  - Showing potential for economic growth

- Existence of an Alternative Space

- Development of a strong Civil Society
  - That interacts internally and with government

- Cooperation and an Understanding

- Avoid Foreign Intervention in the process
  - Only, as impartial arbiters and supporters
Freemasons and Civil Society

**Singular Characteristics of CF**

- Seniority, extension, membership, egalitarianism, inclusiveness, variety, brotherhood, tolerance, ethical nature, international, democratic rules
- Allows examining topics openly, having various points of view, from different groups coming from the Civil Society.
- Potential to become a Forum for alternative and new Ideas, and a source of new leaders.
Freemasons in Civil Society

- Incubators of Citizens
  - Free men; independent thinkers
- Incubator of new Ideas
  - Open discussions, in an environment of respect
- Increases Social Capital
  - Interaction between different social strata
- Tolerance and Acceptance
  - Of new/different ways of thinking
- Democratic rules and procedures
  - Freely elected leaders and judicial system
Others abilities developed

- Effective public speaking
- Listening and arguing respectfully
- Use of persuasion and reason
- Organization skills of large groups
- Democratic methods of leadership
- Dealing and living with a budget
- The art of Negotiation with others
- Abiding by a system of rules/regulations
Advantages over other organizations

- Egalitarian
  - Does not have over-riding hierarchies

- Democratic
  - Members elect and are elected, periodically

- Participative
  - Precludes captive audiences: objecting is possible

- Open
  - Open to larger variety of groups (religious, social etc.)
  - Allows for a more general exchange of views
Other advantages/disadvantages

- Part of a large international organization
  - May obtain aid from foreign sources
- 1992: government and party membership
  - Allows the possibility of a real *FORUM*
- Institutional opportunity to grow
  - No other competing organizations now exist
- Needs to become completely independent
  - To develop its full capacity of action.
Some restrictions suffered

- Loss of some Lodges, locals and income
- Restrictions to develop social programs
- Legal and extralegal government control
- Economic restrictions on membership
- Imposition of fines, of reports, etc.
- Limited access to media/Internet
- Restrictions to form new Lodges
- Limitations to receive foreign support
Some Progress Made

- Official visits from masons from abroad
- Reduction of constrains on membership
- 1992: membership of government officers
  - And of previously concerned citizens
- A few new Lodges: Diaz Bravo/Acacias
- Intermittent access to the Internet
  - Yahoo Listserve – no longer operating
  - La Colmena Blog – intermittent
  - Web pages exist for a few Lodges
Discussion

- Has the potential to contribute to an opening
- Needs to have the same advantages
  - That today enjoy some religious organizations,
  - And their International central organizations
- Example: the Catholic Church and Caritas
  - Have Web Pages and Journals in the Internet
  - Receive remittances and materials from abroad
  - Can develop community social programs.
Some necessary steps for CF:

- Lodges to create their Web Pages/Bulletins
  - Unconstrained access to Internet and Media
- Stronger interaction, within and abroad
  - Between Lodges, and with other Grand Lodges
- Possibility to implement in every Lodge
  - Social, economic and cultural programs as before
- Re-establish links with Cuban Diaspora
  - Regularize, individual and institutional situation
  - Of current Cuban Freemasons and Organizations
Social Function of Freemasons

- Non political: good men => better men
- Some Masons feel a call to act on social problems
  - Peacefully but actively, to improve their environment
- Examples of such participation in the past:
  - In Cuba: under Spain, the autonomic movement
  - In Puerto Rico: under Spain, autonomic movement
- **Connecting** Function: establish contacts/interact
- **Spreading** Function: discuss the key issues
- **Incubator** Function: individual/organizations.
Conclusions

- Strengthening Civil Society
  - Key to develop an Opening in Cuba
- Negotiation, not Confrontation FORUMS
- Recognize Freemasons as an institution
  - Of large importance to Cuban Civil Society
  - Given its human and geographical breadth
  - In fact, an Un-Official, Popular Parliament
- Unique opportunity for institutional growth
  - Does not have to compete: Rotary, Lions, etc.