Challenges and Characteristics of Cuban Freemasons in the XX Century: a demographic approach

Int’l Conference on American and Latin American Freemasons: A New Past and a New Future

Freemasonry and Civil Society Program at UCLA

UCLA’s History Department in collaboration with the Grand Lodge of the State of California and its Masonic Foundation.

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Outline

- Introduction and background
- Demographic study results
- Freemasons in Civil Society
  - Comparisons with their Past
- Discussion and Conclusions
Objectives

- Discuss Cuban Freemasons development
  - From 1945 to 2008, using demographic data
- Characterize such Cuban Freemasons
  - And how they became what they are today
- Propose specific ways they can contribute
  - To the development of Civil Society in Cuba
Three Questions

- Why is the Grand Lodge of Cuba important?
  - And how did GLC get to where it is now?
- How has GLC developed in the recent past?
  - What difficulties has it found, and its resolutions?
- How does GLC fit within Cuban Civil Society?
  - What can GLC do, to efficiently participate in it?
**Cuban Freemasons/Grand Lodge**

- **CF/GLC**: Masons of the **First Three Degrees**
- Freemasons: “The organization of morality”
  - ‘To make some good men, better.’
- They are Independent of the Government
- Discourage **partisan** politics or religion
  - But, individually, take active part in their societies
- Admit adult men of all races, professions,
  - Political persuasions, religions, social class, etc.
- Based on **tolerance**, respect and brotherhood
Grand Lodge of Cuba (GLC)

- One of the oldest organizations
  - 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
- International: well-known/respected
(Freemasonry) does not intend to impede the struggles for the different ideals that exist among men, but to seek that everyone may be able to defend one’s principles, against the principles of others, without using any other weapon than reason, and without bringing to the struggle any other pursuit than the noble desire of seeing their ideals succeed, based upon their own merits. (Freemasonry) does not pretend to castrate the human thought, but on the contrary, to energize it in such a way, that it is no longer necessary to use imposition by force, to succeed. (Gran Logia de Cuba. 1936. *La masonería: sus fines, su historia, su obra*. Molina y Cia. Habana. Page 36).
Cuban Freemasons Composition

- All religions, all races, all walks of life
- All social and economic sectors
- 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
**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).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YEAR</th>
<th>Members</th>
<th>Lodges</th>
<th>Population</th>
<th>Effective</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1948</td>
<td>22757</td>
<td>259</td>
<td>5329100</td>
<td>17.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1958</td>
<td>34025</td>
<td>340</td>
<td>6638133</td>
<td>20.50</td>
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<td>1968</td>
<td>25072</td>
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<td>1981</td>
<td>19690</td>
<td>326</td>
<td>9794900</td>
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<td>1990</td>
<td>21153</td>
<td>314</td>
<td>10433000</td>
<td>8.11</td>
</tr>
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<td>2000</td>
<td>28689</td>
<td>314</td>
<td>11142000</td>
<td>10.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>29110</td>
<td>316</td>
<td>11417246</td>
<td>10.20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Time Series of Total and Effective yearly membership:

Miembros Por año: 1940 - 2010
Caracterization of CF by historical periods: 1945 to 2008:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Historical Epoch</th>
<th>Years</th>
<th>Membership trend</th>
<th>Relevant Events</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Before the revolution</td>
<td>1945-1958</td>
<td>Accelerated growth</td>
<td>Grau, Prío and struggle against Batista</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First Years after the revolution</td>
<td>1959-1969</td>
<td>Accelerated reduction</td>
<td>Emigration; B. Pigs; October Crisis; Rev.. Ofensive; Umap</td>
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<tr>
<td>Second Revolutionary Period</td>
<td>1970-1976</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>1977-1981</td>
<td>Moderate reduction</td>
<td>State Economy; Visits from “Community”; Mariel Boats</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fourth Revolutionary Period</td>
<td>1982-1990</td>
<td>Slow growth</td>
<td>Economic Liberalization after Mariel: Gorbachev; Disolution of USSR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fifth Revolutionary Period</td>
<td>1991-2000</td>
<td>Accelerated growth</td>
<td>IV Congress of PCC; Special Period; Rise of Tourism and Economic Liberalization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sixth Revolutionary Period</td>
<td>2001 to date</td>
<td>Stability</td>
<td>More Tourism; Support from Venezuela; Raul Castro.</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 Development

- Members CurrentYear =
  - Members PreviousYear – Losses + Gains

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

- Politically induced losses include:
  - Emigration to the US and other countries;
  - 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>Year</th>
<th>TotEmigr</th>
<th>Members</th>
<th>EffectMasons</th>
<th>Emigrat(x1.5)</th>
<th>Deaths(1%)</th>
<th>Losses(2%)</th>
<th>Gains</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1959</td>
<td>62,800</td>
<td>32738</td>
<td>0.02051</td>
<td>483</td>
<td>340</td>
<td>681</td>
<td>238</td>
<td>32759</td>
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<tr>
<td>1960</td>
<td>60,781</td>
<td>31492</td>
<td>0.01836</td>
<td>418</td>
<td>327</td>
<td>655</td>
<td>229</td>
<td>31567</td>
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<tr>
<td>1961</td>
<td>50,857</td>
<td>30449</td>
<td>0.01643</td>
<td>313</td>
<td>315</td>
<td>630</td>
<td>220</td>
<td>30454</td>
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<tr>
<td>1962</td>
<td>73,632</td>
<td>28940</td>
<td>0.01643</td>
<td>454</td>
<td>304</td>
<td>609</td>
<td>213</td>
<td>29295</td>
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<tr>
<td>1963</td>
<td>15,535</td>
<td>28621</td>
<td>0.01544</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>289</td>
<td>579</td>
<td>203</td>
<td>28184</td>
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<tr>
<td>1964</td>
<td>15,045</td>
<td>28313</td>
<td>0.01575</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>286</td>
<td>572</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>27874</td>
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<tr>
<td>1965</td>
<td>25,366</td>
<td>27793</td>
<td>0.01575</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>283</td>
<td>566</td>
<td>198</td>
<td>27512</td>
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<tr>
<td>1966</td>
<td>55,422</td>
<td>26657</td>
<td>0.01575</td>
<td>327</td>
<td>278</td>
<td>556</td>
<td>195</td>
<td>26826</td>
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<tr>
<td>1967</td>
<td>49,756</td>
<td>25637</td>
<td>0.01308</td>
<td>244</td>
<td>267</td>
<td>533</td>
<td>187</td>
<td>25800</td>
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<tr>
<td>1968</td>
<td>50,182</td>
<td>24608</td>
<td>0.01247</td>
<td>235</td>
<td>256</td>
<td>513</td>
<td>179</td>
<td>24813</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1969</td>
<td>49,415</td>
<td>23595</td>
<td>0.01202</td>
<td>223</td>
<td>246</td>
<td>492</td>
<td>172</td>
<td>23819</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>508,791</strong></td>
<td><strong>34025</strong></td>
<td><strong>0.01202</strong></td>
<td><strong>3026</strong></td>
<td><strong>3193</strong></td>
<td><strong>6385</strong></td>
<td><strong>2235</strong></td>
<td></td>
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</table>
Membership Reduction: 1959-69

- Deaths, natural reduction: 3088 (L.B.)
- Left the country: 3026 (Lower Bound)
- Left/did not join for ideological reasons
- Left/did not join due to government policies
- Never (re)affiliated, for ideological reasons
- Never (re)affiliated, due to government policy
Expansion of state economy; Visits from “Community”; Mariel Boatlift.
After Mariel: Economic liberalization; Visits; Gorbachev; Disolution of USSR.
IV Congress PCC authorizes members; Special Period: Private Ent./Tourism
# Growth by IV PCC Congress & Economy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Population</th>
<th>Estimate</th>
<th>Members Estimate</th>
<th>IV-PCC Difference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>10433000</td>
<td>0.007</td>
<td>21153</td>
<td>0.021</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>10574800</td>
<td>10506031</td>
<td>21918</td>
<td>21597</td>
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<tr>
<td>1992</td>
<td>10645700</td>
<td>10648824</td>
<td>21962</td>
<td>22051</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1993</td>
<td>10716600</td>
<td>10720220</td>
<td>22539</td>
<td>22514</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1994</td>
<td>10787500</td>
<td>10791616</td>
<td>23321</td>
<td>22987</td>
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<tr>
<td>1995</td>
<td>10858400</td>
<td>10863013</td>
<td>24169</td>
<td>23469</td>
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<tr>
<td>1996</td>
<td>10929300</td>
<td>10934409</td>
<td>25301</td>
<td>23962</td>
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<tr>
<td>1997</td>
<td>11000200</td>
<td>11005805</td>
<td>26344</td>
<td>24465</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1998</td>
<td>11071100</td>
<td>11077201</td>
<td>27635</td>
<td>24979</td>
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<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>11142000</td>
<td>11148598</td>
<td>28173</td>
<td>25504</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>11176406</td>
<td>11219994</td>
<td>28689</td>
<td>26039</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## 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>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>109,886.19</td>
<td>11,177,743</td>
<td>316</td>
<td>29127</td>
<td>92.2</td>
<td>10.423</td>
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<tr>
<td>PINAR DEL RIO</td>
<td>10,904.03</td>
<td>726,574</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>2706</td>
<td>159.2</td>
<td>14.897</td>
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<tr>
<td>PROV. HABANA</td>
<td>5,791.59</td>
<td>711,066</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>2494</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>14.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CIUDAD HABANA</td>
<td>721.01</td>
<td>2,201,610</td>
<td>111</td>
<td>9329</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>16.49</td>
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<tr>
<td>MATANZAS</td>
<td>11,802.72</td>
<td>670,427</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>2370</td>
<td>84.6</td>
<td>14.14</td>
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<td>VILLACLARA</td>
<td>8,412.41</td>
<td>817,395</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>2667</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>13.051</td>
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<td>CIENFUEGOS</td>
<td>4,180.02</td>
<td>395,183</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>1387</td>
<td>99.1</td>
<td>14.039</td>
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<td>SANCTI SPIRITU</td>
<td>6,736.51</td>
<td>460,328</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>991</td>
<td>90.1</td>
<td>8.611</td>
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<tr>
<td>CIEGO DE AVILA</td>
<td>6,783.13</td>
<td>411,766</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>449</td>
<td>56.1</td>
<td>4.362</td>
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<td>CAMAGUEY</td>
<td>15,615.02</td>
<td>784,178</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>709</td>
<td>50.6</td>
<td>3.617</td>
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<tr>
<td>LAS TUNAS</td>
<td>6,587.75</td>
<td>525,485</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>604</td>
<td>100.7</td>
<td>4.598</td>
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<tr>
<td>HOLGUIN</td>
<td>9,292.83</td>
<td>1,021,321</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>1138</td>
<td>94.8</td>
<td>4.457</td>
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<tr>
<td>GRANMA</td>
<td>8,375.49</td>
<td>822,452</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1104</td>
<td>110.4</td>
<td>5.369</td>
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<td>STGO DE CUBA</td>
<td>6,156.44</td>
<td>1,036,281</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>1992</td>
<td>104.8</td>
<td>7.689</td>
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<tr>
<td>GUANTANAMO</td>
<td>6,167.97</td>
<td>507,118</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1187</td>
<td>169.6</td>
<td>9.363</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Some observations from the past - 1

- *The more things change* - - - - -

- Some men and a few women sought to express those ideals sociably. Masonic Lodges were by far the most cosmopolitan.

- The lodges occupied a middle ground (…) government officials might be found (…) less official voices of the Masonic brothers who addressed one another

  - *Jacob; Enlightenment p. 143*
First and foremost, Lodges were schools of government (Ibid, p. 124)

(Lodges foster) the creation of constitutionally governed civil societies (Ibid, p. 135)

Lodges were spaces in a new zone of civil society (Ibid, p. 57)

Merit should be the sole criterion for status within the Lodge (Ibid, p. 56)

Promotion within the lodge grounded upon “real worth and personal merit only” (p. 54)
Tenets of Freemasonry (Ibid p.73)

- **Past (Enlightment)**
  - Religious toleration
  - Fraternizing among disparate social backgrounds
  - Ideology of assessing on work and merit
  - Government by constitutions and elections

- **Present (XXI Century)**
  - Political toleration and freedom of thought
  - Fraternizing among disparate social classes and races
  - Broad Merit Criteria
  - Political Pluralism and Open Participation
Freemasons in Cuban Civil Society

- Incubators of Citizens
  - Free men; independent thinkers (out of box)
- Incubator of new Ideas
  - Open discussions, in an environment of respect
- Increase the Social Capital
  - Interaction between different people/social strata
- Tolerance and Acceptance
  - Of new/different ways of seeing things
- Democratic rules and procedures
  - Freely elected leaders and judicial system
Social Function of Freemasons

- **Non political:**
  - good men => better men

- **Some better men** feel a call to act
  - as individuals, on societal problems

- **Connecting** Function:
  - establish contacts/interact

- **Spreading** Function:
  - proclaim publicly new ideas

- **Incubator** Function:
  - create new organizations.
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
  - All Third Degree Masons have same rights/duties

- Democratic
  - Members elect and are elected, periodically

- Participative
  - Precludes captive audiences: objecting is possible

- Open
  - To a larger variety of groups (religious, social etc.)
  - Allows for a more participatory exchange of views
Some restrictions suffered

- Loss of some Lodges, locals and income
- Limitations to develop social programs
- Legal and extralegal government control
- Socioeconomic concerns of membership
- Imposition of fines, mandatory reports
- Limited access to media/Internet
- Limitations to creating new Lodges
- Limitations to receiving remittances
Some Progress Made

- Official visits of Masons living abroad
- Reduction of constraints on membership
  - In 1992: membership of government officers
  - As well as of previously concerned citizens
- Still under surveillance (PGM Collera Vento)
- Intermittent access of GLC to the Internet
  - Internet is expensive and payments in CUCs
  - Limits Web and Forums to Members & Lodges
Some proposed steps:

- Lodges able to create Web Pages/Bulletins
  - Easier access to Internet and other Media
- Stronger interaction, within and abroad
  - Between Lodges, and with other Grand Lodges
- Possibility to implement in local Lodges
  - Social, economic and cultural programs, as before
- Re-establish links with Masons in Diaspora
  - Regularize, individual and institutional situation of
  - Cuban Freemasons and organizations abroad.
Conclusions

- GLC strengthens the Cuban Civil Society
  - FORUMS for Analysis, not Confrontation
- Freemasons constitute an organization
  - Of importance to the Cuban Civil Society
  - For its socioeconomic and political breadth
- Unique opportunity for Institutional growth
  - Does not have competition: Rotary, Lions, etc.