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**“Freemasonry in Brazil (Nineteenth Century):  
History and Sociability”**

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**Abstract**

This paper intends to present some important questions that characterize Masonic activity in Brazil during the nineteenth century by approaching it in three stages: discuss the introduction of the Masons in Brazil at the end of the eighteenth century and at the beginning of the nineteenth century, when the country was still part of the Portuguese Empire; analyze the Masons’ activities in events that culminated with the Declaration of Independence in September 1822; and, finally, analyze the achievements of Brazilian Freemasonry in the second half of the nineteenth century and assess how the Freemasons flourished into one of the fastest-growing movements of that period.

**Resumo**

Esse artigo tem por objetivo apresentar algumas questões importantes que marcaram a atividade maçônica no Brasil ao longo do século XIX e estará dividido em três grandes partes: discute a inserção da sociabilidade maçônica no Brasil no final do século XVIII e início do século XIX, quando o Brasil ainda fazia parte do Império Português; analisa a participação dos maçons nos episódios que culminaram com a declaração de Independência em setembro de 1822; e, por último, analisa a atuação da maçonaria brasileira na segunda metade do século XIX, durante o reinado de D. Pedro II, período no qual o Brasil vivenciou algumas transformações sociais, sendo a mais importante delas o fim do trabalho escravo em 1888.

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## **“Freemasonry in Brazil (Nineteenth Century): History and Sociability”<sup>1</sup>**

Alexandre Mansur Barata

### **Introduction**

This paper intends to present some important questions that characterize the past and present of Freemasonry in Brazil. In order to achieve this general goal, I will analyze the Masonic activity in Brazil during the nineteenth century by approaching it in three stages. First, I will discuss the introduction of the Masons in Brazil at the end of the eighteenth century and at the beginning of the nineteenth century, when the country was still part of the Portuguese Empire. Secondly, I will analyze the Masons' activities in events that culminated with the Declaration of Independence in September 1822 and the subsequent proclamation of D. Pedro I as emperor of Brazil. Finally, I will analyze the achievements of Brazilian Freemasonry in the second half of the nineteenth century and assess how the Freemasons flourished into one of the fastest-growing movements of that period. It was also during this time, under the rule of Emperor D. Pedro II, that Brazil experienced profound social changes, the most important being the abolition of slavery in 1888.

### **The introduction of Masonic sociability in Portuguese America**

Putting aside the historiographical controversies, there is plenty of evidence of the presence of Freemasons in Brazil by the end of the eighteenth century. Despite the persecution by civil and ecclesiastic Portuguese authorities, a number of sections of the colonial society belonged to Freemasonry already. Similarly, other civil societies emerged during this period.

According to some scholars, by the end of the eighteenth century the sons of the agrarian elites and wealthy businessmen studied at European universities, namely Coimbra (Portugal) and Montpellier (France). These individuals would be the main founders of the first Masonic lodges in Brazil. During their sojourn in Europe, many of them became Masons. After returning to Brazil, they strove to initiate new members and establish a number of lodges, especially in the provinces of Rio de Janeiro, Minas Gerais, Bahia, and Pernambuco.

Besides the role played by Masonic students, however, it is necessary to recognize the importance and the participation of other social groups during this initial phase of Freemasonry in Brazil. I refer here, for example, to the role played by businessmen, the military, the clergy, and civil servants. When we enlarge the scope and reach of the Masonic ability for recruitment, it is possible to understand why one of the first regular Masonic lodges established in the city of Rio de Janeiro was formed by businessmen; many of them had strong connections with the slave trade, especially the trade which was taking place on the

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<sup>1</sup> I want to thank Laura Normand for revising this paper.

coast of Mozambique, in Africa<sup>2</sup>. This lodge, *Reunião*, was founded in 1801<sup>3</sup>. It is reported that, two years later, it became affiliated with French Masonic obedience.

The connections of the *Reunião* lodge with a French obedience gave rise to the distrust of Portuguese Masons belonging to the *Grande Oriente Lusitano*, founded in 1802. As a result of this conflict, a few delegates were sent from Lisbon to Rio de Janeiro aiming to take control of the lodge. Although a failed attempt, it resulted in the establishment of two other lodges, *Constância* and *Filantropia*<sup>4</sup>.

After 1808, with the transference of the Portuguese Royal Family to Brazil, and the following establishment of the administration of the Portuguese Empire in Rio de Janeiro, other lodges appeared such as *Emancipação*, *São João de Bragança*, *Beneficência*, and *Comércio e Artes*<sup>5</sup>. These new lodges counted upon a certain tolerance by high-ranked civil officials, many of them already initiated in Lisbon lodges. In addition to the lodges linked to the French and Portuguese obediences, there existed Brazilian lodges with a deep affinity to British Freemasonry. According to Evaldo Cabral de Mello, this is what can be perceived in the province of Pernambuco from 1813 onward. We know this by examining the role played by the businessman Domingos José Martins. A Mason himself, he was one of the main leaders of the Republican insurrection that took place in the city of Recife in 1817<sup>6</sup>.

Although it is very difficult to determine the number of persons that belonged to Freemasonry in Brazil as well as in the whole of the Portuguese Empire during that time, the relative growth of Masonic activity may be verified indirectly by analyzing the documentation of the Portuguese institutions responsible for its repression: the *Tribunal do Santo Ofício* (the Portuguese Inquisition) and the *Intendência Geral de Polícia* (in Lisbon and Rio de Janeiro). Despite the differences between these two institutions, both the Inquisition and the police acted in an articulated and autocratic way by the turn of the eighteenth century, allowing for a more root-and-branch approach to cracking down on Masonic assembly. From the period between 1790 and 1821, I was able to identify in the archives of the Inquisition in Lisbon a set of thirty-eight proceedings relating to the crime of Freemasonry besides hundreds of other types of denunciations: eleven referred to the year 1791; eight to 1792; one to 1793; one to 1794; two to 1796; eight to 1799; one to 1800; one to 1802; four to 1803; and one to the year 1807. Among the 38 prosecuted, eleven were military, seven were members of the clergy, five were businessmen, two were civil servants, and thirteen belonged to other professions. As for their place of birth, twenty-six were natives of Portugal, four were born in Brazil, and eight were foreigners<sup>7</sup>.

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<sup>2</sup> José Capela, *O escravismo colonial em Moçambique* (Lisboa: Afrotamento, 1997), 197.

<sup>3</sup> See Manifesto do Gr. Or. do Brasil a todos os GGr. OOr., GG. LL., LL. RR. e MM. de todo o mundo (Rio de Janeiro: Typ. Austral, 1837).

<sup>4</sup> A. H. de Oliveira Marques, *História da Maçonaria em Portugal* (Lisboa: Presença, 1990), 85-86. William Almeida de Carvalho, “Pequena História da Maçonaria no Brasil”, in: *REHMLAC* 2, no. 1 (mayo-noviembre 2010 [cited May 7th, 2011]): available <http://rehmlac.com/recursos/vols/v2/n1/rehmlac.vol2.n1-walmeida.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> Oliveira Marques, “História da Maçonaria em Portugal”, 106. Carlos Rizzini, “Dos clubes secretos às lojas maçônicas”, in: *Revista do Instituto Histórico e Geográfico Brasileiro* 190 (1946): 29-44.

<sup>6</sup> Evaldo Cabral de Mello, “Dezessete, a maçonaria dividida”, in: *Tópoi* 4 (2002): 9-37.

<sup>7</sup> Alexandre Mansur Barata, *Maçonaria, sociabilidade ilustrada e Independência do Brasil (1790-1822)* (São Paulo - Juiz de Fora: Annablume - Ed.UFJF, 2006), Chapter 3.

Another way of inferring the growth of Freemasonry can be obtained through the analysis of the records and inquests of three Masonic lodges in the city of Rio de Janeiro from the year 1822. The ability of Freemasonry to attract new members is impressive. In only three months, the Rio de Janeiro lodges affiliated or initiated 152 new members, a large number of them civil servants, military, clergy, and people of diverse professions<sup>8</sup>. As Marco Morel highlights, within the spectrum of the so-called modern sociabilities developed in Brazil during that period, Freemasonry was the most dynamic and numerous. In the first half of the nineteenth century, 42 percent of the societies operating in Rio de Janeiro were of Masonic leanings<sup>9</sup>.

The dynamic character of the Masonic activity in Brazil in the period previous to its independence raises an important question. Why were so many people mobilized by the Masonic sociability at the turn of the eighteenth century and the first years of the nineteenth century?

It is not an easy task to answer this question. First of all, one must put aside the historiographical interpretation that favors a conspiratorial narrative of the Masonic phenomenon. This leads to a more difficult and broader understanding of people's involvement within Freemasonry<sup>10</sup>.

In this sense, I call attention to the fact that the inclination toward Freemasonry was often associated with an emerging criticism of the typical values of an *Ancient Regime* society, evidenced by the people's increasingly deep tensions against the state and the Catholic Church. Seeking initiation in Freemasonry, reading banned books, and disregarding certain Catholic sacraments were all expressions of the cultural change affecting sections of the Portuguese-Brazilian society by that time.

The sources I worked on reveal that an initial motivation to become a Mason was the mere curiosity of being part of a society considered secret. The character of secrecy nurtured the fantasies of many regarding the goals of the fraternity. However, if curiosity was the initial motivation, it was not sufficient in itself. Another motivation, often mentioned, was that one's participation in Freemasonry granted access to a large net of mutual assistance. In the case of businessmen, for instance, it was usual at that period to justify one's affiliation to Freemasonry on the basis of its benefits; that is to say, the gains that one could achieve in belonging to a solid net of connections and transnational solidarity.

Other sources talked about Freemasonry as a space of conviviality, a school of virtues, of learning how to live among a collective; a space where ideas could be debated. Brazilian journalist Hipólito José da Costa (1774–1823), for example, the editor of the newspaper

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<sup>8</sup> See IHGB. Livro de atas da Loja Maçônica Esperança de Niterói. (ARQ. 1.5.33); IHGB. Livro de Cópias dos Ofícios dirigidos da G.: L.:a esta R.: L.: Esperança de Niteroy, 3 de junho (ARQ. 1.5.32); AHMI. Arquivo da Casa Imperial do Brasil. Atas (minutas) de sessões maçônicas, 1822. (II-POB-1822-Maç.at 1-10); Barata, *Maçonaria, sociabilidade ilustrada*, chapters 2 and 4.

<sup>9</sup> Marco Morel, *As transformações dos espaços públicos: imprensa, atores políticos e sociabilidades na cidade imperial, 1820-1840* (São Paulo: Hucitec, 2005).

<sup>10</sup> Margaret Jacob, *Living the Enlightenment: Freemasonry and Politics in Eighteenth-Century Europe* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 3-22.

*Correio Braziliense*, justified his Masonic initiation in Philadelphia during his 1789–1800 journey to the United States with the following arguments:

The usefulness of the society of the franc masons can be considered in relation to the nation or to the individuals, members of the society. If we consider it by the utility that can result for the nation (...) it becomes proven that all particular societies, (...) are useful because they increase the sociability among men, they refine the costumes, and promote the patriotic and yet some moral virtues; (...) <sup>11</sup>.

None of these motivations appeared in isolation. Freemasonry was simultaneously seen as a channel of social mobility, a net of protection and solidarity, and a space of moral refinement and intellectual improvement for its members. In a sense, its capacity to attract members was related to its identity as a space for the construction of a political culture in which one might enjoy the practice of debate, representation, and elaboration of laws while regarding merit—not birth—as the foundation of a new social and political order.

### **Freemasonry and Brazilian independence**

If, as already mentioned, the Masonic activity cannot be reduced to a conspiring space for revolutions, it remains undeniable that in the early 1820s some Masonic leaders assumed a protagonist role in the constitutionalist movements that put an end to the absolutism of the Portuguese crown. In fact, what happened at the beginning of the 1820s was a two-way process: on the one hand, external issues, especially political ones, mobilized the Masons' debates. Their meetings counted on the protection given to them by their closed and secret character. On the other hand, the debates and projects that mobilized the Masons spread out over the society at large as well.

A milestone of this new moment of the Masonic movement was the foundation of an independent Masonic obedience, the *Grande Oriente do Brasil*, in June 1822 in Rio de Janeiro. The main goal here was the transformation of the *Grande Oriente do Brasil* into a center of Masonic power independent of the *Grande Oriente Lusitano*. By the same token, those Brazilian Masons intended to galvanize, and control, the Masonic activities already existing in a number of Brazilian provinces.

In this period, however, the Masons in Brazil did not constitute a homogeneous, uniformed body; quite the contrary. The different disputes, projects, and ideas crossed the Masonic intellectual space. This rich mix of ideas created an uncertainty, and it was difficult at times to reach any kind of consensus. It naturally generated dissensions and divisions among the Masons. This would mark the history of Freemasonry throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Freemasonry was, then, a privileged space of discussion and political

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<sup>11</sup> “A utilidade da sociedade dos Framaçons, ou se pode considerar relativamente à nação, ou relativamente aos indivíduos, membros da sociedade. Se considerarmos pela utilidade que dela pode resultar à nação; (...) fica provado que todas as sociedades particulares, (...) são úteis; porque aumentam a sociabilidade entre os homens, pulem os costumes, e fomentam as virtudes patrióticas, e ainda algumas morais; (...)” See *Correio Braziliense ou Armazém Literário* (London) 16 (1809): 270.

articulation, but also a space where different political projects clashed, mobilizing its participants.

The initial sessions of the *Grande Oriente do Brasil* were often tumultuous, and revealed the difficulties in reaching consensus within the Masonic sociability. An issue especially discussed was the recognition in support of those favorable to breaking the bonds with Portugal. There was not a consensus about such question. For instance, José Bonifácio de Andrada e Silva—one of the chief Masonic leaders of the period— supported the idea of union; that is to say, of the construction of a Portuguese-Brazilian Empire in July 1822, just two months before the official Declaration of Independence. In a speech addressed to the Masons, he asserted:

(...) I cordially express my gratitude for being chosen by you, and I will seek to protect the rights and privileges of the Order; and at least to hew some unhewn stone, that could also be useful to you in order to build the majestic Palace of the vast Portuguese-Brazilian Empire<sup>12</sup>.

Gradually, however, within the *Grande Oriente do Brasil*, more room was made by those who defended a political project that did not give up the hope of finding a solution for an Independent Brazil, a project of building a new “political pact” based on the union of the provinces, having Rio de Janeiro as the Politico-administrative center. As for the political regime, the intention was to found a Constitutional Monarchy without breaking with the dynastic legitimacy. Accordingly, the *Grande Oriente do Brasil* defined as a quality for being a Mason, besides those qualities traditionally required, the fact of being a supporter of the “cause of Brazil and its Independence.” Therefore, the oath taken at the initiation should be understood as the “support of Brazil and its Independence under the auspices of its August Defender, D. Pedro I<sup>13</sup>.”

At the beginning of September 1822, such a political project was expressed by Joaquim Gonçalves Ledo:

(...) the present political circumstances of our homeland, the rich, fertile and powerful Brazil, imperiously demand and require that its category be unshakably settled with the proclamation of our Independence and of the Constitutional Royalty in the person of the August Prince, Perpetual Defender of the Kingdom of Brazil<sup>14</sup>.

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<sup>12</sup> “(...) eu vos agradeço cordialmente a escolha que de mim fizestes, e procurarei, quanto em mim cabe, proteger os direitos e privilégios da Ordem; e pelo menos lavrar sequer alguma pedra bruta que sirva também para com ela edificardes o majestoso Palácio do vasto Império Luso-Brasileiro.” APUD. João de Scantimburgo, *O Brasil e a Revolução Francesa* (São Paulo: Pioneira, 1989), 191-193.

<sup>13</sup> See AHMI. Arquivo da Casa Imperial do Brasil. Atas (minutas) de sessões maçônicas, 1822. (com anexos). II-POB-1822-Mac.at 1-10.

<sup>14</sup> “(...) as atuais políticas circunstâncias de nossa pátria, o rico, fértil e poderoso Brasil, demandavam e exigiam imperiosamente que a sua categoria fosse inabalavelmente firmada com a proclamação da nossa Independência e da Realeza Constitucional na pessoa do Aug: Príncipe Perpétuo Defensor Constitucional do Reino do Brasil”. See *Boletim do Grande Oriente do Brasil* (Rio de Janeiro, 1923): 791-793.

To summarize, the acclamation as “Constitutional Emperor” of D. Pedro I, son of the Portuguese King D. Joao VI, should be subjected to a previous oath and allegiance to the Constitution whose text was to be elaborated by a Constituent Assembly. The *Grande Oriente do Brasil*'s attempt to impose such previous oath to the future Emperor D. Pedro I ended up in unleashing violent repression against the Masons. Several among them were arrested and accused of conspiracy and of inciting a “civil war<sup>15</sup>.”

### **The Brazilian Masons in the second half of the nineteenth century**

After its political upheaval during the period of independence, Freemasonry would reorganize itself at the beginning of the 1830s. In 1831, facing a serious political crisis, Emperor D. Pedro I abdicated the throne of Brazil and returned to Portugal. It was the beginning of the so-called period of the Regencies given the fact that the royal heir was still a child. Freemasonry started to experience a situation of almost total visibility. Many Masons began to occupy important public positions. The 1820s' political persecutions of the Masons were gone. The places of the Masons' meetings were publicly known, and important political figures assumed openly the fact of being members of Freemasonry.

However, from an organizational perspective, this greater visibility of Masonic sociability came with a number of problems and power disputes. Such divisions were often related to conjunctural political struggles, but also expressed the existence of distinct political cultures mobilizing the Masons' action, political culture being understood here as a whole of references, ideas, memories, and histories creating the cohesion or identity of a group.

During the decades of 1830 and 1840, three major Masonic obediences were in conflict with each other. The *Grande Oriente do Brasil*, founded in 1822, was re-established in 1831 under the leadership of José Bonifácio de Andrada e Silva, recently appointed tutor to the Emperor D. Pedro II. At the same time, the *Grande Oriente Nacional Brasileiro* was founded. This new obedience had Senator Nicolau Vergueiro as its leading figure, and according to its Manifesto, published in 1834, the main problem hindering the union of the two obediences was the leadership of José Bonifácio. He was seen as an authoritarian leader, and along with D. Pedro I, was considered the chief architect in the repression and subsequent dismantling of the Masonic movement back in 1822.<sup>16</sup> According to Marco Morel and Françoise Jean de O. Souza, this second *Grand Orient* came to possess a network of more than fifty Masonic lodges in different provinces<sup>17</sup>.

Besides these two Grand Orients, the *Supremo Conselho do Rito Escocês Antigo e Aceito* was founded in 1832 by Francisco Montezuma. He opened the way for the adoption of that rite among Brazilian Masons. Many lodges that had adopted the French rite until then

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<sup>15</sup> See Processo dos cidadãos Domingos Alves Branco M. Barreto, João da Rocha Pinto e outros pronunciados na devassa a que mandou proceder José Bonifácio de Andrada e Silva, para justificar os acontecimentos do famoso dia 30 de outubro de 1822 (Rio de Janeiro: Typographia de Silva Porto, 1824).

<sup>16</sup> See Manifesto que a todos os sap.: GG.: OO.: AA.:LL.: e Resp.: MM.: dos dois mundos dirige o Gr.:Or.: Brasileiro ao Vale do Passeio no Rio de Janeiro (Rio de Janeiro: Typ. Nacional, 1835), p.02.

<sup>17</sup> Marco Morel and Françoise Jean de Oliveira Souza, *O poder da Maçonaria: a história de uma sociedade secreta no Brasil* (Rio de Janeiro: Nova Fronteira, 2008), 139-140.

started, after some time, to incorporate the Scottish rite as well. Between 1830 and 1860, out of a total of 143 Masonic lodges, ninety-five followed the Scottish rite, forty-six the French, and two the Adoniramite<sup>18</sup>. According to Celia M. Azevedo, the success of the Scottish rite may be explained taking into account the:

(...) longing for democracy of many masons belonging to more humble social segments who would see, in a ritualistic system of many degrees, the possibility of reaching the upper ones through merit (and not by birth), besides having this ascension symbolically well demarcated. The concern with the mutual assistance support which characterizes the Scottish Masonry might also have contributed for attracting a large number of men who did not count on material and financial support from the family, the Church, and the State<sup>19</sup>.

The conflicts between these three Masonic obediences during the decades of 1830 and 1860 are still a field of study whereby very little knowledge has been produced by historiography<sup>20</sup>. It is undeniable, however, that from the second half of the nineteenth century onward, besides the expansion of the Scottish rite among Brazilian Masons, Freemasonry assumed national dimensions. There were lodges operating in every province of Brazil, and with significant capacity of recruiting new affiliates. In this way Masonic sociability was able to differentiate itself from other types of existing civil societies.

From the point of view of social composition, there has been little variation in relation to the social segments predominant in the nineteenth century. A survey accomplished in the decade of 1870 shows that out of a total of 4707 masons, 55 percent were constituted by businessmen, 11 percent by public employees, 10 percent by professionals, 7 percent by urban owners and capitalists, 5 percent by farmers, and 3 percent by military<sup>21</sup>.

Nevertheless, as already mentioned, rivalries and disputes persisted. In 1863, a long way removed from the Empire of D. Pedro II (the son of Pedro the first), a new schism opened up affecting the Brazilian Masonic sociability. That year, the Grande Oriente do Brasil was divided into two new obediences: the *Grande Oriente do Brasil ao vale do Lavradio* and the *Grande Oriente do Brasil ao vale dos Beneditinos*. Such division would last until 1883, when the *Grande Oriente Unido e Supremo Conselho do Brasil* was created under the direction of Francisco José Cardoso Júnior.

The two conflicting obediences disagreed in their views on politics, and on the proper political orientation to be adopted by Freemasons. On the one hand, the Masons of the

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<sup>18</sup> Alex Moreira Andrade, "A Maçonaria no Brasil (1863-1901): poder, cultura e ideias" (Master diss., Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro, 2004), 17.

<sup>19</sup> "(...) anseios democratizantes de muitos maçons de segmentos sociais mais humildes que veriam num sistema ritualístico de muitos graus a possibilidade de alcançar os graus superiores por mérito (e não por nascimento), além de ter esta ascensão bem demarcada simbolicamente. Também a preocupação com o apoio mútuo assistencial que caracterizava a maçonaria escocesa pode ter colaborado para atrair grande número de homens que não contavam com apoios materiais e financeiros de família, Igreja e Estado." Celia Maria Marinho Azevedo, *Maçonaria, antirracismo e cidadania: uma história de lutas e debates transnacionais* (São Paulo: Annablume, 2010), 94.

<sup>20</sup> Azevedo, *Maçonaria, antirracismo e cidadania*, 144.

<sup>21</sup> Moreira Andrade, "A Maçonaria no Brasil", 91-93.

*Grande Oriente do Brasil ao vale do Lavradio* were monarchists, and defended that the lodges should devote themselves essentially to man's moral and intellectual improvement, and philanthropy. On the other hand, the Masons of the *Grande Oriente do Brasil ao vale dos Beneditinos* were Republicans, and insisted that Freemasonry should be involved more actively in political issues, that is, external to the closed world of the lodges. In this sense, Joaquim Saldanha Marinho, the main leader of the *Grande Oriente do Brasil ao vale dos Beneditinos*, wrote that Freemasonry should not remain indifferent to the interests that would contribute to the "general well-being of humanity." In obedience to common sense and reason, its program should disseminate free and rational education; promote the institution of civil marriage and registration; support the secularization of cemeteries; and encourage unrestricted religious freedom<sup>22</sup>.

Another issue highlighting the differences between these two Masonic groups was their distinct positions regarding the transnational Masonic debate about racism, which started in 1868. According to Celia M. Azevedo, the monarchist Masons of the *Grande Oriente do Brasil ao vale do Lavradio* criticized the support given by the *Grand Orient of France* to the *Supreme Council of Louisiana* in its decision to allow black men to be admitted as Masons in their lodges. On the contrary, the Republican Masons of the *Grande Oriente do Brasil ao vale dos Beneditinos* were the first in the American continent to declare support to that French obedience's decision. This fact allows one to imagine that Republican Masons were more inclined to abolitionism as well as to black and white Masons' integration into the lodges. From 1864 at least, the lodges linked to the *Grande Oriente do Brasil ao vale dos Beneditinos* collected funds among Masons in order to promote individual slave manumissions<sup>23</sup>. In 1882, the Beneditinos' periodical *Aurora Escocesa* made explicit its abolitionist program according to the following bases: disseminate free and rational education; encourage the admission of immigrant laborers to Brazil; develop the navigation along the coast of the country; promote religious freedom; and abolish slavery, considered an "infamy that impresses a shameful stigma upon the Brazilian's face<sup>24</sup>."

In spite of the institutional challenges, and the conflict with the Catholic Church, there was a rapid growth in the number of Masonic lodges in different regions of the country. Between 1861 and 1865, there were approximately 180 operative lodges. This number grew to 244 from 1885 to 1890, and reached a total of 615 between 1901 and 1905. Such growth may be explained by taking into account the role the lodges played in the field of beneficence and mutual assistance. Moreover, the lodges were active in creating a network of schools destined for children as well as for adults. As many historians have shown, Masonic sociability was not restricted to the closed space of their lodges<sup>25</sup>.

The solidarity among Masons varied from financial assistance to the brothers in need as well as to the widows and orphans of brother Masons. One may also observe, especially

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<sup>22</sup> See *Boletim do Grande Oriente Unido e Supremo Conselho do Brasil* 2. no. 4-6 (abr-jun/1873): 251.

<sup>23</sup> Azevedo, *Maçonaria, antirracismo e cidadania*, 244-5.

<sup>24</sup> See "Aurora Escocesa" (Rio de Janeiro, 1882), 2.

<sup>25</sup> Barata, *Luzes e sombras: a ação da maçonaria brasileira (1870-1910)* (Campinas: Ed.Unicamp-CMU, 1999). Azevedo, *Maçonaria, antirracismo e cidadania*, 155.

since 1870, a greater involvement of the lodges with beneficent activities turned to non-Masons. Many lodges built and financed asylums, orphanages, and hospitals.

Nevertheless, the more consistent instrument used by the Freemasons in order to publicize their ideas was the investment in setting up a network of schools like “evening classes,” and creating libraries. As asserted in the editorial of the *Aurora Escoceza* in 1881, Freemasonry should “act upon the education that gives to the human hearts their first form, acting upon the societies that bring individuals together, thus influencing governments that march ahead of societies<sup>26</sup>.”

This engagement of Freemasonry with education in Brazil started by the mid-1860s, reaching its height in the first years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. For the Masons, the universalization of secular education was the main source for struggling against the adversaries of progress, against the supporters of ignorance, fanaticism, and intolerance.

### Final considerations

During the nineteenth century, Brazilian Freemasonry proved to be closely connected to the country’s political, social, and cultural life. Interacting, interfering, and bringing to its interior the debates that mobilized the public space, Freemasonry appears as a significant instrument for understanding Brazilian society at the time, along with its contradictions and idiosyncrasies.

Onward from the mid-1990s, one can observe the increase in historiographical studies seeking to understand the role of Freemasonry in Brazil. In spite of the persistence of some oversimplified interpretations, a number of studies carried on by Brazilian universities’ graduate programs —many of them yet unpublished— have been seeking to renew the understanding of the history of Freemasonry in Brazil<sup>27</sup>.

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<sup>26</sup> “atuar sobre a educação que dá a primeira forma aos corações humanos, sobre as sociedades que agrupam os indivíduos e, assim, influndo sobre os governos que caminham à frente das sociedades.” See “Aurora Escoceza” (Rio de Janeiro, 1/11/1881), 1.

<sup>27</sup> See Alex Moreira Andrade, “Maçonaria no Brasil (1863-1901): Poder, Cultura e Ideias” (Master diss., Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro, 2004). T. H. dos S. Buvalovas, “O “Diário da minha Viagem para Filadélfia”: impressões de um ilustrado luso-brasileiro na América (1798-1799)” (Master diss., Universidade de São Paulo, 2007). G. D. S. Castro, “A cruz e o compasso: o conflito entre igreja católica e maçonaria no contexto da reforma católica ultramontana em Juiz de Fora” (Master diss., Universidade Federal de Juiz de Fora, 2008). A. C. Galdino, “Campinas, uma cidade republicana: política e eleições no oeste paulista (1870-1889)” (PhD diss., Universidade Estadual de Campinas, 2006); J. W. Gohl, “O real e o imaginário: a experiência da maçonaria na Loja União III e Porto União da Vitoria, 1936-1950” (Master diss., Universidade Federal do Paraná, 2003). José Rodorval Ramalho, “Novae sed Antiquae: Tradição e Modernidade na Maçonaria Brasileira” (PhD diss., Pontifícia Universidade Católica-São Paulo, 2004). L. C. C. Ribeiro, “Uma América em São Paulo: a Maçonaria e o Partido Republicano Paulista (1868-1889)” (Master diss., Universidade de São Paulo, 2011). A. C. de S. Santos, “O que revelar? O que esconder? Imprensa & Maçonaria no findar do Dezenove (Pará, 1872-1892)” (Master diss., Universidade Federal do Pará, 2011). Marcos José Diniz Silva, “Lapidando a Pedra Bruta: a Maçonaria na Organização de Artistas e Proletários Cearenses” (Master diss., Universidade Federal do Ceará, 2000). L. F. Siqueira, “Hipólito da Costa e a Maçonaria: A formação da esfera pública moderna brasileira e o vocabulário político maçônico no Correio Braziliense” (Master diss., Universidade Federal de Ouro Preto, 2011). Souza, “Vozes Maçônicas na Província Mineira (1869-1889)” (Master diss., Universidade Federal de Minas Gerais, 2004). Patrícia Inês Garcia Souza, “Buscadores do Sagrado: As Transformações da Maçonaria em Belém do Pará” (PhD diss., Universidade Estadual de Campinas, 2006). Luiz Mário Ferreira Costa, “Maçonaria e

There are, however, some obstacles to overcome. First, I would like to emphasize the need to open the Brazilian Masonic archives to non-Mason researchers, as well as the necessity of preserving and organizing the sources generated by the Masonic lodges. Second, it is necessary to increase the studies about the Masonic activity in the 20 century, a period during which Freemasonry lost the prominence it experienced in the nineteenth century. Besides having to face new social actors, Masons found limitations to their activities as a result of the two dictatorial periods endured by the country (1937–45 and 1964–85). Finally, considering the transnational character of the Masonic sociability, it is also necessary to expand the studies by taking into view the international connections of Brazilian Masons and Freemasonry in general.

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