

Freemasonry in Brazil

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THIS PAPER DESCRIBES THOSE EVENTS IN THE NOT SO DISTANT PAST, IN WHICH Freemasonry played an important and relevant role;¹ in particular during the period leading up to the proclamation and formation of the Republic in Brazil.

First Signs of Regional Republicanism

Before the Proclamation of Independence in Brazil there were four unsuccessful regional republican attempts at insurrection, with the participation of Brazilian Freemasons. The first attempt at autonomy, which became known in history books as *Inconfidência Mineira* (the ‘Minas Treachery’), took place in 1789, in the town of Vila Rica, capital of the colonial Captaincy of Minas Gerais;² it came as a result of the discontent with tax abuses by the Portuguese Crown (already in decline at the time) in the exploitation of the mineral wealth of this wealthy captaincy.³

A group of intellectuals in the Minas Captaincy cherished dreams of republican autonomy, mirroring the French Revolution and more particularly the independence of

¹ For a deeper and complete panoramic view about the history of Brazilian Freemasonry, from the earliest times to the present day, see José Castellani and William Carvalho, *História do Grande Oriente do Brasil* (São Paulo: Madras, 2009).

² José Castellani and Frederico Guilherme Costa, *Conjuração Mineira e a Maçonaria que não houve* (São Paulo: Gazeta Maçônica, 1992).

³ In the Portuguese Empire, captaincies (*capitanias*) were the administrative divisions and hereditary seigneuries of the Portuguese state in some of its former colonies.

the United States of North America. The group leaders were an intellectual elite of students, attending European universities, and who had been initiated into French Freemasonry around 1776. These students now fiercely sought that independence and autonomy which would liberate their homeland.

The main leaders were José Álvares Maciel, José Joaquim da Maia, and Domingos Vital Barbosa. Maia even sent a letter to Thomas Jefferson, North American minister in France, asking for support in the event of a revolt aiming to liberate the Minas Captaincy. Jefferson's answer was vague and ambiguous. Maciel was a member of a London Masonic political group led by Francisco Miranda,⁴ who was interested in the independence of all Iberian-American colonies. Maciel would be the intellectual soul of the Vila Rica move to independence.

Back in Brazil, several intellectuals, members of the armed forces and clergymen, also shared the Masonic liberal and libertarian views and adhered to the movement. They included Cláudio Manoel da Costa, Inácio José de Alvarenga Peixoto, Tomás Antônio Gonzaga, Canon Luís Vieira, Fr Rolim, Fr Carlos Toledo, Lt. Colonel Freire de Andrade, Sgt-Major Luiz Piza, and 2nd Lieutenant Joaquim José da Silva Xavier, nicknamed *Tiradentes* ('Tooth-puller') who, since he was neither a priest, nor had influence with the judiciary, was condemned to die when the conspiracy failed. Tiradentes is the protomartyr of Brazilian Independence.⁵

The flag of the movement showed an equilateral triangle (or delta) – one of the most significant Masonic symbols – surrounded by Virgil's words: *Libertas Quae Sera Tamen* (roughly translated as 'Freedom, although late').⁶ In secret meetings the movement considered a number of proposals: the implantation of a Republic in Minas Gerais; the changing of the capital to São João del Rey; the setting up of the *Casa da Moeda* (the Mint); the establishment of iron and gunpowder factories, and the stimulation of the private sector to develop the mining industry. The partisans of the movement were arrested and the rebellion was crushed. Tiradentes was hanged on 21 April 1792.⁷

The second attempt was the 1817 *Revolução Pernambucana* ('Pernambuco Revolution'),⁸ a revolutionary movement of strong nationalist tendencies, whose main

⁴ The discussion about the legendary participation of Francisco Miranda is now very controversial. See William Almeida de Carvalho, *Maçonaria, Tráfico de Escravos e o Banco do Brasil* (São Paulo: Madras, 2010).

⁵ Donatello Grieco, *História Sincera da Inconfidência Mineira* (Rio de Janeiro: Record, 1990).

⁶ This flag has been adopted as the flag now used to denote the Brazilian State of Minas Gerais, which is the second most populous State in Brazil.

⁷ 'Tiradentes' is now commemorated by a municipality within the State of Minas Gerais. Tiradentes was born there in 1746.

⁸ José Castellani, *A Ação Secreta da Maçonaria na Política Mundial* (São Paulo: Landmark, 2007), 62–5; Evaldo Cabral de Melo, *A outra Independência: o Federalismo Pernambucano de 1817 a 1824* (São Paulo: Editora 34, 2004); Francisco Muniz Tavares, *História da Revolução de 1817* (Recife: Governo do Estado de Pernambuco, 1969).

purpose was to install a republic in the province of Pernambuco, its leader being the Freemason, Domingos José Martins.⁹

Domingos was a merchant established in the town of Recife, capital of the province of Pernambuco, who travelled frequently to the United Kingdom, where he came into contact with Masonic circles, and was allegedly initiated in 1812 by Hipólito José da Costa, the patriarch of the Brazilian press. Hipólito da Costa was also the private secretary to the Duke of Sussex, and became Provincial Grand Master of Rutland in the United Grand Lodge of England (1813–1823).¹⁰

With popular support, the conspirators succeeded in deposing the governor of the province and installed a government on March 8, 1817. Count dos Arcos, the governor of the neighbouring province of Bahia, immediately surrounded Recife with 1500 men. On 20 March the rebels were defeated and arrested. Domingos and all the other forty-three revolutionary leaders – civilians, members of the armed forces and three clergymen – were taken to the town of Salvador, tried and sentenced. Among them was Fr Roma, a priest, and an active and forceful Freemason, who also faced the firing squad.

The third movement was called *Confederação do Equador* ('Confederation of the Equator').¹¹ By the early 1820s Brazil was independent of Portugal, and struggled for national unification. In the province of Pernambuco, the remaining rebels of the 1817 revolution strongly opposed the Emperor's prerogative of choosing the president of the province. The leader of this movement, with the rather long-winded name of Joaquim do Amor Divino Rabelo e Caneca,¹² was a well-known and popular Carmelite monk – known as Frei Caneca. He was also a Freemason, a journalist and promoter of republican ideals.¹³ He was also appointed to the chair of Philosophy, Rhetoric, and Geometry at the Olinda Seminary, near Recife.

In his newspaper, *Típhis Pernambuco*, Caneca waged an intense campaign against the Emperor, who was also a Freemason.¹⁴ Dom Pedro I had decided to dissolve the Constituent Assembly and then imposed the 1824 Constitution: the first constitution in the

⁹ Adriana Lopez and Carlos Guilherme Mota, *História do Brasil – Um interpretação* (São Paulo: Senac, 2008).

¹⁰ William Carvalho, 'Hipólito da Costa: Patrono da Imprensa Brasileira, amigo de Reis e Grão-Mestre Provincial na Inglaterra', *Magazine Engenharia & Arte na Maçonaria Universal*, Rio de Janeiro, n° 8, Fall of 2001.

¹¹ Ulisses Brandão, *A Confederação do Equador* (Recife: Instituto Arqueológico, Histórico e Geográfico de Pernambuco, 1924); Barbosa Lima Sobrinho, *Pernambuco: da Independência à Confederação do Equador* (Recife: Conselho Estadual de Cultura, 1979).

¹² Frei Joaquim do Amor Divino Caneca, *Obras políticas e literárias de Frei Joaquim do Amor Divino Caneca* (Recife: Assembléia Legislativa de Pernambuco, 1972); Evaldo Cabral de Melo, *Frei Joaquim do Amor Divino Caneca 1779-1825* (Recife: Coleção Formadores do Brasil, 2001).

¹³ There are no documents proving Caneca's membership of the Craft, but Kurt Prober says that he was initiated in the paramasonic secret society *Areópago de Itambé*. See Isa Ch' an (Prober's pseudonym), *Achegas para a História do da Maçonaria no Brasil* (Elul: São Paulo, 1968), 30.

¹⁴ The 9th Minute of the Grand Orient of Brasil shows that Dom Pedro was initiated on 2 August 1822: J. Castellani and W. Carvalho, *História do Grande Oriente do Brasil*, 42.

independent country. The Revolution hoped to depose the recently-installed Empire, and proclaim a Republic, the *Confederação do Equador* ('Confederation of the Equator'), which extended to the neighbouring provinces, with the support of the regional Masonic lodges and Freemasons.

The uprising was promptly overcome by the forces of the new Brazilian Empire. The President of the this confederation, Manuel de Carvalho Paes de Andrade – also a Freemason – escaped to the United States, helped by American Freemasons. Other leaders faced a worse fate: they were arrested and hanged, except for Frei Caneca, who was shot. No executioner would dare hang him, in view of his charisma, his moral authority, but principally because of his status as a clergyman

The fourth and last regional republican movement began in 1835 in the extreme south of Brazil (Rio Grande do Sul) as an autonomist and federalist revolution, self-entitled the Piratini Republic or *República Farrroupilha* ('The Ragged Republic').¹⁵

At this time Masonic associations were expanding quickly, and Freemasonry held significant influence. There were clergymen in its ranks, and many of the influential men of the province were Freemasons. Among illustrious Freemasons was Bento Gonçalves,¹⁶ who organized several lodges along the Southern border, and whose code name among the Freemasons, was Sucre. Other famous leaders of the movement were Davi Canabarro,¹⁷ the Italians Tito Lívio de Zambecari¹⁸ and the well-known Giuseppe Garibaldi,¹⁹ who was initiated into the lodge *Abrigo da Virtude* ('Shelter of Virtue'),²⁰ in the province of Rio Grande do Sul. Garibaldi later put to good use the guerilla tactics he had learned in southern Brazil in his struggle for Italian unification.

This regional rebellion began as a result of a number of factors: isolation of Rio Grande do Sul from the centres of power, general discontent with customs controls, obligation of the province to pay off the debt owed to British interests, circulation of false coinage which complicated the economy, and political tensions in the frontier region.

¹⁵ Alfredo Varela, *História da Grande Revolução: o Ciclo Farrroupilha no Brasil* (Porto Alegre: Globo, 1933, 6 vol.); Walter Spalding, *A Revolução Farrroupilha* (Brasília: Unb, 1982); Morivalde Calvet Fagundes, *História da Revolução Farrroupilha* (Caxias do Sul: EDUCS, 1984).

¹⁶ Eliane Colussi, *A Maçonaria Gaúcha no Século XIX* (Passo Fundo: EDIUPF, 1998); Herbert Canabarro, 'Bento Gonçalves e Davi Canabarro' *Revista do Instituto Histórico e Geográfico Brasileiro*, Year 129, No. 280: 267–84 (Rio de Janeiro: Jul/Sep 1968).

¹⁷ Walter Spalding, 'David Canabarro – Mestre de Brasilidade', *Revista do Instituto Histórico e Geográfico Brasileiro*, Year 119, No. 197 (Rio de Janeiro, 1950), 3–36.

¹⁸ Laura de Leão Dornelles, *Risorgimento e Revolução: Luigi Rossetti e os ideais de Giuseppe Mazzini no movimento farrroupilha*, (Porto Alegre, 2010), 19–31 – http://tede.pucrs.br/tde_busca/arquivo.php?codArquivo=2637; Moacyr Flores, *Modelo Político dos Farrapos* (Porto Alegre: Ed. Mercado Aberto, 1978), 52.

¹⁹ Giuseppe Garibaldi, *Autobiography 1807–1849* (London: Walther Smith & Innes, 1889); Moacyr Flores, *Modelo Político dos Farrapos*, 49.

²⁰ J. Castellani and W. Carvalho, *História do Grande Oriente do Brasil*, 60, 109.

In 1829 these groups gathered in secret societies. One of them was called the *Sociedade dos Amigos Unidos* (Society of United Friends), in Rio de Janeiro, and its objective was to fight against the monarchy. They were called *farroupilhas* from that time. Some historians insist that the word *farrapos* ('tatters'), refers to striped wool trousers worn by the revolutionaries, in opposition to the knee breeches adopted by the wealthy. According to Evaristo da Veiga, the term was inspired by the French *sans culottes*, the most extreme revolutionaries of the French Convention (1792 to 1795). The *sans culottes*, literally meaning 'without breeches', wore striped wool trousers, in contrast to the knee breeches adopted by the better off citizens.²¹ The truth, however, is rather different. The name already existed before the *Revolução Farroupilha* and was used to describe liberal groups with exalted views.

The fighting lasted practically until 1840; from then onwards the rebels adopted guerrilla tactics against the Imperial army. However, during the Battle of Fanfa, Bento Gonçalves, an insurgent, was taken prisoner and confined in the Forte do Mar in the distant province of Bahia, from which he mysteriously escaped with the help of Bahia Freemasons on 10 September 1837. Then in 1842 Baron Caxias, an illustrious Freemason, and one time Grand Master of the Grand Orient of Brazil and Patron of the Brazilian Army, was appointed Commander-in-Chief of the Imperial Forces and Governor of the province. He promptly initiated the process of pacifying the rebel areas.²²

Immediate Background to the Proclamation of the Republic

I have mentioned above some of the events which led to the Proclamation of the Republic in Brazil. In addition they include:

- i) the Masonic and political conflict between José Bonifácio de Andrada e Silva, patriarch of independence in Brazil, and Joaquim Gonçalves Ledo, Masonic leader of the liberal faction in Rio de Janeiro;
- ii) the 1870 Republican Manifesto;
- iii) the 1873 Itu Convention;
- iv) religious and military issues; and
- v) the abolition of slavery²³

Due to the lack of political parties (as we now know them) during the period leading to independence, within Freemasonry there were factions which adopted the role of polit-

²¹ Sérgio Buarque de Holanda (org), *História Geral da Civilização Brasileira – II O Brasil Monárquico – 2 Dispersão e Unidade* (São Paulo: Difusão Européia do Livro, 1964), 9.

²² William Almeida de Carvalho, *Maçonaria, Tráfico de Escravos e o Banco do Brasil* (São Paulo: Madras, 2010), 147.

²³ J. Castellani and W. Carvalho, *História do Grande Oriente do Brasil*, 33–139.

ical parties. At that time Freemasons pledged allegiance both to uphold Masonic principles and to fight for national independence. The situation was mirrored in the political and ideological conflict between two Brazilian Freemasons, José Bonifácio de Andrada e Silva, and Joaquim Gonçalves Ledo, and applied to two different factions of Freemasonry: the former supported the monarchy, and the latter defended the republican ideal.²⁴

Brazil had a significantly different outcome from the rest of the American continent in choosing a monarchic regime when it declared independence; it became a monarchy surrounded by republics. At the time of independence the wise counsel of the political elite, consisting largely of Freemasons, was shown in the crowning of the Portuguese Prince Regent (son of the King of Portugal) as Emperor of Brazil. This strategy was largely responsible for the unity of the national territory. While the rest of Latin America fragmented into one or two moderately-sized and small states, the Brazilian Empire succeeded, through the perceived legitimacy of its ruler, in containing regional trends of a republican character, and so kept intact the unity of the national territory. Bolívar's dream of South American unity indeed came true, but in Portuguese America, rather than in former Hispanic colonies.

The republican ideal, however, was cherished by a small number of Freemasons during the Empire, and grew with each crisis faced by the imperial regime. This ideal eventually surfaced on 3 December 1870 with the Republican Manifesto. This was clearly of Masonic inspiration; its leader was Joaquim Saldanha da Gama, a Freemason who was at the time Grand Master of the combative Grand Orient of the Benedictine Valley, a dissident faction of the Grand Orient of Brazil.²⁵ Several Freemasons signed the Republican Manifesto, drafted by another Freemason, Quintino Bocaiúva, who would later, in Republican times, become Grand Master of the Grand Orient of Brazil.

As had happened at the time of the French Revolution, when Freemasons embraced both monarchic principles and republican notions, the Republican Manifesto also proved to be a duel between Freemasons – monarchists and republicans: while republican Saldanha Marinho was Grand Master of the Grand Lodge of the Benedictine Valley, Viscount Rio Branco was the Grand Master of the Grand Orient of Brazil and was also appointed Chairman of the Council of the Ministers of the Empire. His was the longest mandate in the history of the Empire.

The Itu Convention in 1873 came before the three main crises that eventually brought down the Empire: the military and religious issues and the abolition of slavery. Sao Paulo province, under the leadership of Freemason João Tibiriçá Piratininga (native names were adopted by the main patrician families to express the indigenous spirit), established a Republican Club which was to serve as the caucus for the organization

²⁴ It was an internal conflict inside the Grand Orient of Brazil, at that time called Grand Orient Brazilico.

²⁵ J. Castellani and W. Carvalho, *História do Grande Oriente do Brasil*, 140–50.

of the future Republican Party. On 18 April 1873 at the home of Carlos Vasconcelos de Almeida Prado, the first Republic Convention in Brazil was held – it would be known, later on, as the Itu Convention, so-called after the town in which the meeting was held.

Several Freemasons took part in this Convention, and they would later belong to the elite of the future Republic: Américo Brasiliense de Almeida Melo, Francisco Rangel Pestana, Manoel Ferraz de Campos Sales (a future President of the Republic), Américo de Campos, Bernardino de Campos, Ubaldino do Amaral Fontoura, Francisco Glicério, Manoel de Moraes Barros, Venâncio Aires, Prudente de Moraes Barros (also a future President of the Republic) and others. The Itu Convention brought together 134 participants, mostly from the neighbouring towns in the province of São Paulo, but the city of Rio de Janeiro, the capital of the Empire, was also represented by a delegation.²⁶

The religious issue, essentially a Masonic one, involved a conflict between the Catholic Church and the Empire, represented by its Cabinet, mostly Masonic, and which became one of the basic pillars of Brazilian lay historiography. A more remote influence on the religious issue in Brazil was Italian unification, the work of the *Carbonaria* ('Charcoal Burners') – a republican secret society of Neapolitan origin – and of Freemasons, led by Mazzini and Garibaldi; another background issue was the loss of temporal power by the Papacy. But one of the immediate causes was the speech by a priest, Almeida Martins to Viscount Rio Branco, head of the Cabinet and Grand Master of the Grand Orient of Brazil, on 2 March 1872, when the clergyman, also a Freemason,²⁷ praised Rio Branco on behalf of the 'Law of the Free Womb', of 28 September 1871. This ruled that all slaves born from then on would be born free.²⁸

The conflict involved the intellectual elite of the Catholic Church and the Empire. Since the Catholic Church, at the time, was part of the State, the great majority of the clergymen were civil servants. The so called 'right of padroado' meant that Portuguese and Spanish monarchs had been *de facto* heads of the Church in Latin America. The main protagonists involved in this conflict were Dom Vital de Oliveira, bishop of Recife (capital of the province of Pernambuco), educated in Paris and Toulouse, a Capuchin friar and received at Versailles, and Dom Antônio de Macedo, bishop of the province of Pará, formerly a student at St Sulpice, Paris.

Dom Vital de Oliveira, recently appointed bishop of Recife, had returned from Europe full of Pope Pius IX's anti-Masonic ideas; he suspended all Masonic priests in Recife and ordered the expulsion of all Freemasons from religious brotherhoods. In view of this stance, the Freemasons asked the Crown for support and the State Council gave it.

²⁶ J. Castellani and W. Carvalho, *História do Grande Oriente do Brasil*, 137.

²⁷ J. Castellani and W. Carvalho, *História do Grande Oriente do Brasil*, 129.

²⁸ J. Castellani and W. Carvalho, *História do Grande Oriente do Brasil*, 127–139.

On 12 June 1873 the Government ordered the bishop, as a civil servant, to cancel the interdiction and allow Freemasons within all religious brotherhoods. The bishop refused to submit, based on allegations of incompatibility of the position of the Church in respect of Freemasonry. At the same time the bishop of Pará also forbade Freemasons in his province. With this insubordination of two bishops, the Government ordered their arrest and imprisonment in 1874, and they were sentenced to four years of hard labour. Soon afterwards the sentence was changed to simple imprisonment, and finally in 1875 the two bishops were given an amnesty by the new Cabinet, chaired by the Duke of Caxias, who was also a Freemason.

Another important event which widened the gap between landowners and the Empire was the abolition of slavery. The country's economy was essentially agrarian. Slave labour was the main pillar of such economy, and landowners stood to lose significantly from the abolition measure. Brazil was one of the last countries in the American continent to abolish slavery.

Since the middle of the nineteenth century, external pressures – mainly from England and France – and the growing anti-slavery consciousness among the urban middle classes, mostly conducted by Freemasons, forced the imperial government to implement changes in the status of slavery.

At the time of independence, the Freemason José Bonifácio had already proposed the abolition of slavery together with a comprehensive agrarian reform. Also on 11 May 1839, during the *Farrroupilha* Rebellion, Freemasons Bento Gonçalves and Davi Canabarro had enacted by decree the abolition of slavery.

The external pressure became evident with the 1845 'Aberdeen Act', passed in the United Kingdom, clearly of liberal inspiration, which gave the Royal Navy authority to search any Brazilian ship on the high seas, and impound those ships transporting slaves. Finally, a law introduced by Eusébio de Queirós,²⁹ (another illustrious Freemason, and member of the Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite) effectively brought to a close the international slave trade in Brazil.³⁰

However, external pressure was not exerted by the United Kingdom alone. In 1867 The French Emancipation Committee, a Masonic entity organized by the Grand Orient of France, demanded that the imperial government implement the complete freedom of remaining slaves.³¹ Internal pressure in Brazil, exerted by middle-class public opinion,

²⁹ There is no documentation about his membership of the Craft, but he was a 33° Mason in the Ancient Accepted Scottish Rite and an honorary member of the Supreme Council of Brazilian Empire (9th of the world: William Carvalho, *Gênese e Expansão dos Supremos Conselhos do REAA* in <http://www.freemasons-freemasonry.com/carvalhofr.html>). J. Castellani and W. Carvalho, *História do Grande Oriente do Brasil*, 115.

³⁰ J. Castellani and W. Carvalho, *História do Grande Oriente do Brasil*, 115.

³¹ J. Castellani and W. Carvalho, *História do Grande Oriente do Brasil*, 121.

found an echo in Masonic lodges, which linked the abolitionist struggle to the Republican campaign. Middle-class opinion was represented by a group within the central government, by members of Parliament, by part of the Armed Forces, and by intellectuals: scholars and scientists.

Two important initiatives by Freemasons on the slavery issue were:

- i) The creation, on 7 September 1869, by the *Perseverança III* lodge of an emancipation fund to free female slave children aged from two to five years old; and
- ii) the proposal in April 1870 in America Lodge in São Paulo, by Rui Barbosa (a future Minister of Finance in the Republican government) to the Grand Orient of the Benedictine Valley, which aimed to collect funds for the enfranchisement of children. This initiative proposed that only those who declared all female slave children free could be initiated as Freemasons. Those already initiated should sign a pledge to free all female children, daughters of their female slaves.

On 28 September 1871, the 'Law of the Free Womb', sponsored by a Freemason Viscount Rio Branco, was passed in Parliament. This was the final blow to slavery; first, the ban on slave traffic; now the freedom of all children born of slaves. Complete slave abolition was now just a matter of time, as pressure by Freemasons grew in Parliament and the Press.

Illustrious Freemasons fighting for the cause of abolition and leaders in their respective fields were many: Américo Brasiliense, Américo de Campos, Luis Gama, Francisco Glicério, José do Patrocínio, Joaquim Nabuco, Quintino Bocaiúva, Silva Jardim, Ubaldino do Amaral, Rui Barbosa, Pimenta Bueno, Jerônimo Teixeira, José Leite Penteado, and many others. Then again, on a Masonic initiative, the Saraiva-Cotegipe Law in 1885 released all slaves over the age of sixty.

Finally, on 13 May 1888 Regent Princess Isabel signed the *Lei Áurea* ('The Golden Law'), which abolished slavery in Brazil. Pro-slavery partisans, however, still held significant power and influence. With the end of slavery, the days of the Empire were numbered. There was no civil war, but the provinces that depended on slavery for their economic sustenance, and had been the main supporters of the Empire, now withdrew their support for the Emperor. A republic was proclaimed on 15 November 1889, and Dom Pedro II and his family left for exile in France.

The last immediate contribution to the cause of the Republic was the military issue.³² After the victory against Paraguay by the Triple Alliance (Brazil, Argentina, and Uruguay), the Brazilian army succeeded in playing a role of growing importance in the political destiny of the country. The two dominant political groups at the time of the Empire, Liberal and Conservative, had always counted on the armed forces, particularly

³² J. Castellani and W. Carvalho, *História do Grande Oriente do Brasil*, 140–50.

the army, for support in their political struggles. The army's influence was so strongly apparent that Marshall Manoel Luiz de Osório, Marquess of Herval, initiated into Freemasonry in the province of Rio Grande do Sul, became the leader of the Liberal Party, while the Duke of Caxias, Luiz Alves de Lima e Silva, future head of the army and Honorary Grand Master of the Grand Orient of Brazil, was the political leader of the Conservative Party, and later on, Prime Minister.

After the death of those great military and political leaders, the Liberal Party chose as their leader General Correia da Câmara, Viscount Pelotas, and senator for the province of Rio Grande do Sul. The Conservatives approached General Deodoro da Fonseca, a Freemason and future Grand Master of the Grand Orient of Brazil, and author of the Proclamation of the Republic.

Freemasonry was a growing force among the middle classes. Army officers were recruited from among their ranks, and soon the army was full of Freemasons. We can name a number of military Freemasons who at some stage played critical roles in the Empire and the Republic: Duque de Caxias (Prime Minister), Marshal Osório (senator, Minister of War and Head of the Cavalry), Deodoro da Fonseca (President of the Republic), Benjamin Constant (minister), Floriano Peixoto (President of the Republic), Lauro Sodré, Hermes da Fonseca (President of the Republic), Gomes Carneiro, and many others.

Account should also be taken of the fact that military Masonic lines of thought had been strongly influenced by the positivist notions and theories of Auguste Comte, and his visions for a sociocratic dictatorship. Such positivist doctrine had also found civilian supporters, especially in the province of Rio Grande do Sul.

Disputes between the armed forces and politicians reached their peak between 1883 and 1889. These were engendered by the lack of insight by politicians into the army's assumed new role after the Paraguayan War on one side, and the extreme sensitivity of the status of the armed forces on the other. This was particularly evident in a new generation which graduated from military academies: it was well versed in the new ideas of positivism and sociology, and these ideas were essentially promoted by Lieutenant Colonel Benjamin Constant, a Freemason, positivist and republican, also known as the 'Father of the Republic'.³³

The crisis was triggered in 1885 by the punishment of Lieutenant Colonel Cunha Matos and Major Sena Madureira, ordered by the Minister of War, a civilian, for public statements criticizing his performance. Cunha Matos had published an article in a daily newspaper, in response to a Congressman who had allegedly offended him, blaming the

³³ Benjamin Constant (1836–91) is not to be confused with the famous Swiss Benjamin Constant (1767–1830), European liberal thinker, writer and politician.

Minister of War himself for the imbroglio. It soon became a political issue when the liberal Viscount Pelotas overtly supported his brother-in-arms in Parliament.

Sena Madureira's insubordination towards the Minister of War was a more serious question, as he turned to the army for support. Marshal Deodoro, held in respect and high regard by his men in the army, at that time commander of a garrison stationed in the south, also came to support Sena Madureira, helped by Viscount Pelotas. A crisis was taking shape: the civilian government tried to negotiate with Marshal Deodoro over his public statements, but he would not compromise; consequently he was forced to surrender his command in the south.

Soon afterwards, Deodoro and Pelotas jointly subscribed to a manifesto entitled 'To the Parliament and to the Nation', authored by Rui Barbosa, which exposed the view of the armed forces. In 1887 the Military Club was created and Marshal Deodoro was elected President.

While the high-ranking military officers still held the Emperor in high respect, the same was not true in the case of most of the younger 'positivist' officers. The military crisis reached its climax when the landowners requested from the government that the army help in hunting down fugitive slaves. A letter from the Military Club, presided at the time by Deodoro and Benjamin Constant, was sent to Regent Princess Isabel requesting her to release the army from such demeaning and shameful task. This shows that both the army and the Freemasons were in the vanguard of the fight for abolition, but this dealt a hard blow to the imperial regime.

The Rebellion

By 1887 the Emperor was sick and elderly, largely unaware of the political and military developments that were taking place. His daughter, the future Empress, had married the Count of Eu, a Frenchman with severe hearing problems. This made him a recluse, declining any contacts with the Court and the government, but he was swept up in a whirlwind of court intrigue, during which Dona Isabel was accused of siding with the Church and her supposedly reactionary European husband. In the end the Emperor's statement, that the Royal family would never fight to keep the crown against the will of the people, helped the republican and Masonic counter-elite to bring about the Republic in 1889.³⁴

The rebellion that resulted in the establishment of the Republic was a movement devised by the military, republican and Masonic elites without any support from the people. A Brazilian historian even declared that 'the people were bewildered spectators to the Republican rebellion'. It was secretly planned to take place on 20 November 1889.

³⁴ J. Castellani and W. Carvalho, *História do Grande Oriente do Brasil*, 140–50.

While the leaders covertly conspired, the daily life of the general public continued normally and peacefully.

Finally, false reports of the capture and imprisonment of General Deodoro da Fonseca began to circulate. This caused the conspiracy to take action sooner than planned. The troops started being deployed at dawn on 15 November.

The fall of the Empire was decided in a secret meeting held at the home of Benjamin Constant. The only opposition was, strangely, from the old General Deodoro's affection for the Emperor. This was so evident that, after dismissing the Cabinet, the General told Viscount Ouro Preto, Chairman of the Council of Ministers, that they should meet the Emperor in his summer home in the neighbouring town of Petropolis in order to prepare a new Cabinet. Benjamim Constant, the leader of the rebellion, was the one chosen to make General Deodoro put aside his lifelong loyalty to the Emperor. His decisive, and ultimately persuasive, argument was that the Emperor wished to appoint Senator Silveira Martins, another Freemason and Deodoro's enemy, to the chair of the Cabinet.

The establishment of the Republic was proclaimed by Marshal Deodoro on 15 November 1889. He appointed himself head of the provisional government and chose members of the Grand Orient of Brazil to build his Cabinet: Minister Campos Sales for Justice; Wanderkolk for the Navy; Benjamin Constant for War; Rui Barbosa for Finance; Quintino Bocaiúva for Foreign Relations; and Aristides Lobo for the Interior. On 19 December, a little more than a month after the proclamation of the Republic, Deodoro was appointed Grand Master of the Grand Orient of Brazil.³⁵

At the time of this provisional government, two republican trends could be identified: first, a liberal wing, which eventually prevailed, and secondly, a movement influenced by Auguste Comte that proposed a sociocratic type dictatorship.

On 15 November 1890, one year after the proclamation of the Republic, the Constituent Assembly was convened, and on 25 February 1891, it promulgated the Constitution, which established federalism and a presidential regime.

On 26 February Deodoro was elected President of the Republic. The positivist younger generation succeeded in electing Marshal Floriano Peixoto, Commander-in-Chief of the armed forces, as Vice-President, against his opponent Admiral Wanderkolk, the candidate chosen by the liberal coalition.

This proved to be a politically stormy period, with a series of crises, typified by the disgruntled attitude of the navy, especially as it failed to obtain its candidate as the Vice-President in the majority liberal coalition. On 23 November 1891, before completing nine months of government, Marshal Deodoro was forced to resign in order to prevent a civil war. Admiral Custodio de Melo, head of the navy, had threatened

³⁵ J. Castellani and W. Carvalho, *História do Grande Oriente do Brasil*, 149.

rebellion against Deodoro for dismissing the Congress on 3 November. On 18 December Deodoro, disappointed, sickly and old, also resigned the Grand Mastership of the Grand Orient of Brazil.

Power was now in the hands of the Vice-President, another Freemason, Marshal Floriano Peixoto,³⁶ known in history as the ‘Consolidator of the Republic’. During his administration he dealt with a rebellion in the fortress of Santa Cruz, a challenge from a ‘Manifesto of Complaints’ brought by thirteen generals, a federal revolution in the province of Rio Grande do Sul, and the second rebellion of the navy. At the end of his mandate, Floriano Peixoto handed over power to civilian presidents, mostly Freemasons, who then governed the country in the period up to 1930 – and it is now known as the Old Republic. Thereafter a more modern chapter began in the history of Brazil.

Conclusions

The Republican Constitution of 1891 provides an interesting history lesson. It confirmed the superiority of the liberal paradigm of respect for institutions and the rule of law – which were, and continue to be significant factors in the Order. However, it did not supply the means for the country to envisage itself as a real national entity, or to build its legal identity.

The legacy of the Iberian colonial paternalism, with its origins in an agrarian and exclusive society, was transformed into a republic of, and for, the few. It became an oligarchy, which, paradoxically, became more obsolete as a result of modernization efforts, and of the complexity of the country’s social structure.³⁷

During the Old Republic after 1889 the civilizing matrix of the old social elites of the Empire, shaped over a long historical period, began to crumble. The rational, legal order became a hollow dimension without substance, the law was often defied: it became a mere vehicle of empty mannerisms and legal formality.

And since the Republic still relied on patronage, the new rational and legalistic order conceived a republic without democracy, socially non-inclusive, and it crystallized liberalism as a theory for the elites, but failed to develop its potential in terms of representation, or of civil rights further down the social scale.

A reluctance to innovate, and an indifference in the face of pressure exerted by the new emerging social sectors (the entrepreneurs, younger army officers, the emerging middle class and urban workers), destroyed the essence of the liberal ideal, largely embraced by

³⁶ According to João Alves da Silva, one of the most important historiographers of Floriano Peixoto in his homeland, in 1875 he was initiated in the lodge *Perfeita Amizade Alagoana*, founded in 1868, in which his uncle, José Vieira de Araújo, was Secretary: William Carvalho, *Maçonaria Negra* (Londrina: Trolha, 1999), 162.

³⁷ Raimundo Faoro, *Os Donos do Poder: Formação do Patronato Político Brasileiro* (São Paulo: Globo, 2001); José Murilo de Carvalho, *A Construção da Ordem* (Rio de Janeiro: Civilização Brasileira, 2003).

Brazilian Freemasons, and which had hitherto been the underground force that directed the long process of change in the late nineteenth century. This ideal lost its substance, and frustrated national expectations to build a competitive and inclusive social order.

But the influence of Freemasonry in the events leading up to the establishment of the Brazilian Republic should not be understated, if only because most of the key figures, of whatever political persuasion, were Masons. From small beginnings in about 1800 until the 1830s, Freemasonry played a growing role in the affairs of the country, then reached its peak in the middle of the Second Empire (Dom Pedro II), and led eventually to the Proclamation of the Republic.³⁸

In addition, account should be taken of the teachings of sociological positivism, closely linked to Freemasonry, in the military as well as in the urban social classes. In contrast, an important thread was the role of patriarchal landowners which were the country's dominating elite, allied to a liberalism, the ideology that eventually prevailed. The conflict between positivism and liberalism was to remain a constant thread during the Republican period.³⁹

Thus the influence of Brazilian Freemasonry permeates the history of the country, from colonial times, through the Empire until the Republic and beyond. It was the spiritual heir to French Freemasonry, and it was sustained by liberalism, its strongest pillar. Republican tendencies grew in strength, influenced by the French and North American Revolutions.

In the complex events after the institution of the first Republic, the armed forces, particularly the army, acted as the moderating influence in the country, a role previously exercised by the Emperor. As the army gained institutional strength,⁴⁰ Freemasonry's political role dwindled, particularly after the 1930 revolution; its lack of political strength was offset by a growing moral ascendancy in cultural and social activities in the country.



³⁸ William Carvalho, 'Pequena História da Maçonaria no Brasil', *Revista de Estudios Históricos de la Masonería Latinoamericana y Caribeña- REHMLAC*, Year 4, Vol. II, No. 1, Mayo-Noviembre 2010, 12. (<http://rehmlac.com/index/vol2n1>).

³⁹ W. Carvalho, *REHMLAC*, Year 4, Vol. II, No. 1, Mayo-Noviembre 2010, 15.

⁴⁰ José Murilo de Carvalho, 'As Forças Armadas na Primeira República', in *História Geral da Civilização Brasileira*, vol. 9, t. III, *O Brasil Republicano* (Rio de Janeiro: Bertrand Brasil, 206), 197–257.