

**REPORT OF THE
COMMISSION ON INFORMATION
FOR RECOGNITION**

22 February 2022

To the Chairman and Grand Lodge representatives of the Conference of Grand Masters in North America:

I seek leave to present to you two reports: that of the Commission on Information for Recognition and secondly a report of the Chairman.

Allow me to present the members of this Commission:

M.W. Jorge L. Aladro, Past Grand Master of Florida
M.W. Richard A. H. Brown, Past Grand Master of Saskatchewan
M.W. Cameron Bailey, Grand Master of Washington, elected to the remaining term of the prior Commissioner, who resigned from the Commission
M.W. Anthony R. Cracco, Past Grand Master of Illinois
M.W. Adam Hathaway, Past Grand Master of New Mexico

and I am Glen Cook, Past Grand Master of Utah.

We note that M.W. Richard Stewart, Past Grand Master of Massachusetts, resigned from the Commission due to health reasons on February 20, 2022. We will communicate with the Northeast Conference for a nomination of his replacement.

With the retirement of our Secretary/Treasurer, M.W. Glen Cook has been elected the Secretary/Treasurer of the Commission. M.W. John C. Liley, Past Grand Master of Utah, has been elected as the new member of the Commission.

You will see that our secretary, M.W. Joe C. Harrison, Past Grand Master of Tennessee and Past Chairman of the Commission is not present. He has asked that I read the following:

Hello Brethren,

I apologize for getting sick and missing this Conference. It is the first Conference I've missed in 24 years. It is especially annoying because today I retire from the Commission after 20 years. I wanted to be there to thank you for electing me to the Commission, for allowing me to serve as Chairmen for three years and Secretary/Treasurer for the last 10+ years. I want to thank the foreign grand lodges and grand officers around the world who provided unlimited research assistance to the Commission, as well as the grand secretaries and fraternal relations committees in our Conference who were most helpful. I also thank my Grand Master, M.W. Brother Charlie Mixon for his service to Masonry and to the Commission. You have elected an excellent

replacement to fill the office of Secretary/Treasurer. You have a strong Commission which will be of great service to the Conference for many years. I pray God's blessings on each Grand Lodge represented by our Conference, their officers and members, and all true Masons everywhere.

Thank you for 20 wonderful years.

Best wishes,

Joe C. Harrison, PGM
Tennessee

Since the delegates to this Conference change each year, I will repeat the Standards for Recognition adopted for our guidance. These are the guidelines used to evaluate the regularity of a grand lodge, and to thereby determine whether it is worthy of consideration for recognition by our member Grand Lodges. This Commission provides this data for use by our Grand Lodges, and does not attempt to influence or recommend what action should be taken. The Commission serves you in an investigative and advisory capacity only.

The standards for recognition are summarized as follows:

1. Legitimacy of origin.
2. Exclusive territorial jurisdiction, except by mutual consent and/or treaty.
3. Adherence to the Ancient Landmarks - specifically, a Belief in God, the Volume of the Sacred Law as an indispensable part of the Furniture of the Lodge, and the prohibition of the discussion of politics and religion.

I will also take the opportunity to note some factors that are not helpful in our deliberations. I will be blunt, which will not surprise members of my Grand Lodge, but I don't mean this unkindly, rather, as guidance for those who make presentations to the Commission:

Your charitable acts, while absolutely a laudable endeavour, do not reflect on regularity.

Pictures of members of your grand lodge standing with a prominent mason at a meeting are not helpful.

Attending the World Conference of Regular Masonic Grand Lodges, while useful to you as a grand lodge, does not impact our findings.

The number of grand lodges with whom you are in amity is not by itself persuasive, particularly if the grand lodges, even if regular, are relatively unknown and have only limited recognition. It is not a numbers game.

Applying these standards to the requests of several Grand Lodges during our deliberations, we now share the following information:

Dominican Republic

On February 8, your Commission received a request to make a presentation to the Commission from Lodges that had withdrawn from the Grand Lodge of the Dominican Republic. Inasmuch as a new grand lodge has not yet been formed by these lodges, it was deemed inappropriate for the Commission to hear the matter. We make findings as to regularity for grand lodges that have already been formed. It is not within our remit to give advisory opinions.

Further, there is a requirement that requests to be heard must be made by December 1. Fairness requires the existing Grand Lodge be given notice and an opportunity to be heard. The time was insufficient to do so. That is one reason for the requirement to submit requests to be heard by December 1.

The Grand Lodge of Lebanon

There has come before your Commission a request that a finding be made that this Grand Lodge meets the Standards of Recognition adopted by this Conference. A presentation was made to the Commission by the Grand Lodge of Lebanon and the Grand Lodge of New York who spoke in favor of the request. Presentations were also made by the Grand Lodge of Scotland, the Grand Lodge of Washington D.C. and the Grande Loge Nationale Francaise, all of whom stood in opposition to a finding that the Grand Lodge of Lebanon met those Standards.

We decline to make findings at this time. An explanation is in order.

The Grand Lodge of New York constituted the new Grand Lodge of Lebanon from at least three regular lodges in 2018. No grand lodge had been constituted in and for that nation before that time.

At the time this new Grand Lodge was formed by the Grand Lodge of New York, there were lodges working in Lebanon under the Grand Lodges of Scotland, New York, and Washington, D.C. It appears the Grande Loge National Francaise allowed a lodge to work there after the formation of the Grand Lodge of Lebanon.

It has been pointed out to the Commission that there was no consultation with the other Grand Lodges working in Lebanon before the Grand Lodge of Lebanon was formed. We agree that the well established custom and practice in Europe is to consult with other grand lodges working in a jurisdiction. This is the fraternal course that would be expected. Indeed, the failure to do so in this case has led to discontent between brother masons and actions that are inappropriate amongst masons. It is most disappointing that the consultation failed to occur. However, that need for consultation, while a custom, and even a well recommended custom, is not a requirement for forming a grand lodge.

More particularly, it has been argued that because lodges of other jurisdictions continue to work in the country, a grand lodge cannot be formed without a treaty between the various chartering grand lodges, as there would be a lack of exclusive territorial jurisdiction.

As a source to resolve the dispute, we would draw your attention to Grand Lodge Recognition, The Commission on Information for Recognition (Macoy, 1956). The inestimable Roscoe Pound, a Deputy Grand Master of Massachusetts and a legal scholar still studied by U.S. law students, cited with approval Dr. Mackey's statement:

[I]t is competent for any Grand Lodge to grant a warrant of constitution and establish a Lodge in such unoccupied territory....And this right of granting warrants inures to every Grand Lodge in the World and may be exercised by as many as choose to do so, as long as no Grand Lodge is organized in the territory. 19-20, citations omitted.

There is no other *grand lodge* organized in Lebanon. The doctrine often expressed as exclusive territorial jurisdiction has been fulfilled: there is only one grand lodge formed for this jurisdiction. Those who have a policy of only recognizing one grand lodge in a jurisdiction have not seen a departure from that policy.

Grand Lodges for whom we hold the greatest respect are in sharp disagreement regarding the activities and other conduct that have occurred in Lebanon. We are informed that action is being taken to remedy some of the mis-steps that have occurred. We urge that for the sake of Freemasonry Universal that the regular grand lodges in Lebanon and the Grand Lodge of Lebanon consult, allowing Freemasonry to flourish in that country.

The United Grand Lodge of Georgia

The United Grand Lodge of Georgia has requested the Commission find that it meets the Standards of Recognition.

It has failed to demonstrate that it meets those Standards.

We will refer to two different grand lodges in this report: the Grand Lodge of Georgia constituted in 2015, and the *United* Grand Lodge of Georgia, constituted in 2018.

The original Grand Lodge of Georgia was constituted in 2015 by three regular lodges chartered by the Grand Lodge of Russia. At that time, there were other Grand Lodges working in that country. It does not appear there was consultation in forming the new Grand Lodge. The Grand Lodge of Russia issued a document stating (in the English translation) that it "approved" of the new Grand Lodge of Georgia, naming the three founding lodges. It does not appear this was a charter. Rather, it appears to demonstrate their consent to the formation of the new Grand Lodge by their lodges.

In 2018, the Grand Lodge of Russia and other Grand Lodges working in Georgia formed a new United Grand Lodge of Georgia. Importantly, in a document which states twice that it is a charter, it is first claimed that the "Charter of the Grand Lodge of Georgia, issued by the Grand

Lodge of Russia... is hereby canceled.” An individual was directed to turn that 2015 charter over to the new grand lodge. The Commission was informed without contradiction that the individual directed to deliver the 2015 document had previously been expelled from the original Grand Lodge of Georgia.

It is also stated in the 2018 charter that if the new United Grand Lodge of Georgia did not adhere to the landmarks of freemasonry, the charter “will become void and of no value.”

This leads us to a number of points:

First, it does not appear the document issued in 2015 to the first Grand Lodge of Georgia was a charter.

Secondly, even if it was a charter, your Commission is unaware of any principle of Masonic law that allows one grand lodge to “cancel” the charter of another sovereign grand lodge. Indeed, such a power would be indicative of a lack of sovereignty by the chartered grand lodge.

Consequently, even if the 2015 document was a charter, the 2018 charter could not act to cancel that 2015 charter. Further, reserving the power to declare the 2018 charter void, leads one to believe the 2018 United Grand Lodge of Georgia was not truly a self-governing, independent grand lodge.

Additionally, if the 2015 Grand Lodge of Georgia continued to exist and work, as we were informed it has, the 2018 United Grand of Lodge did not have exclusive territorial jurisdiction.

In sum, the documentation fails to demonstrate that the United Grand Lodge of Georgia meets the Standards of Recognition adopted by this Conference.

The Grand Lodge of Tahiti

In 2012, the Grand Lodge of Tahiti requested that the Commission find that they met the Standards of Recognition. The new Grand Lodge was composed of regular lodges chartered by The Grande Loge Nationale Francais (GLNF). The Commission report stated that information was “presented that this new Grand Lodge practices regular Masonry and is a sovereign territory. The Commission is of the opinion that the Grand Lodge of Tahiti meets the standards for recognition.”

Based on additional information presented to it, the Commission today is not persuaded that the 2012 finding was correct.

The GLNF asked to be heard on this matter at our meeting on Monday, February 21, 2022. We are informed that GLNF was not present at our proceedings. We note they were going through a disruption in the governance of their Grand Lodge at that time, and many of our Grand Lodges had suspended recognition of GLNF.

In 2012, the Commission proceeded on the uncontradicted information presented to it: that Tahiti was sovereign territory. We are no longer persuaded this is the case. While it is correct that Tahiti has since 2004 enjoyed a unique status under French law, that of “an overseas country,” we are not persuaded it is a sovereign country. It is more accurate to describe it as semi-autonomous. Tahitians carry French passports. Tahiti possesses many devolved powers, but does not control its education system or national security. It is notable that for eight years, from 2004 to 2012, Tahitian masons did not seek to declare themselves independent from the GLNF, only doing so in 2012, when they were dissatisfied with the governance by GLNF.

This brings us to the question of “what to do?” Many Grand Lodges of this Conference, in reliance on the 2012 findings, findings entered ten years ago, have entered into amity with the Grand Lodge of Tahiti. We must ask at what point do we reach finality in our findings as a Commission and our acts of recognition as grand lodges? Can we still cast doubt on findings made twenty years ago; fifty years ago?

The Commission has received no information that the Grand Lodge of Tahiti has practiced other than regular Freemasonry in the intervening ten years.

As in all cases of the findings of this Commission, it must be left to each individual grand lodge to decide how they act on the findings.

A separate note

We wish to acknowledge at this juncture that many Grand Lodges have a policy to wait a period of years, as much as ten years, from the formation of a new Grand Lodge before agreeing to recognition. This policy certainly has merits as we have seen in the consideration of the three matters just discussed.

Gran Logia Equinoccial del Ecuador

The Gran Logia Equinoccial del Ecuador has requested findings that they meet the Standards of Recognition of this Conference.

The majority of Grand Lodges of this Conference recognize the Grand Lodge of Ecuador, AF&AM, founded in 1921. As we understand the present situation, the two Grand Lodges are in discussions regarding the sharing of the territory by treaty. We encourage such discussions and hope they are fruitful. However, it would be premature for us to make findings that they meet the Standards of Recognition.

Grand Lodge of Mozambique

The Grand Lodge of Mozambique was constituted by the Regular (Legal) Grand Lodge of Portugal in 2009. The founding grand lodge supports their request for a finding that they meet the Standards of Recognition. We find that they do appear to meet the Standards of Recognition.

Grand Lodge Cuscatlan of El Salvador

The Grand Lodge Cuscatlan of El Salvador was established in 1912. It enjoys amity with many of the South American and Central American Grand Lodges, a number of the Grand Lodges of this Conference, and in Europe. It appears to meet the Standards of Recognition.

The National Grand Lodge of Togo

The National Grand Lodge of Togo had requested to make a presentation to the Commission, but due to a bereavement, they were unable to travel at this time.

Valle de Mexico

In 2014, the Commission noted that “Over the last decade, it has been reported that [Valle de Mexico] have invaded the territory of a number of neighboring grand lodges.”

We are advised that they have continued this pattern of conduct in an unrepentant manner. We do not find that they meet the Standards of Recognition.

Standing Rules of the Commission on Information for Recognition

These are attached for the information of the Conference and those appearing before the Commission.