

The Scottish Rite in Greece

A concise journey from 1781 to the present

The official establishment date of the Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite (AASR) in Greece is July 1872 when Demetrius Rhodocanakis formed the first Supreme Council by the authority given to him by the Supreme Council of Scotland. Thus it has now a fully documented history of over 140 years.

But the Scottish Rite in the form of Rite of Perfection, AASR, Écossais degrees, or other “higher” degrees has been present in Greece, or at least in what is the present Greece, for an additional almost one hundred years, that is since 1781. This document does not aim to present the complete history of the Rite in Greece, which would necessitate a full-length book, but to present the most important milestones during these 220 years and to comment on the origins and some contentious events of the period and finally to raise a number of implied questions.

The present State of Greece, or Hellenic Republic as is the official title, received international recognition in 1828 at the end of the War of Independence, although the present borders of the country were not settled until after WWII with the annexation of the Dodecanese Islands in the Aegean. In 1864 the Ionian Islands were annexed to the country, and previously, at the beginning of the 20th century, Crete was liberated and after the Balkan Wars the borders of the country were extended to the north following the liberation of Thessaloniki (Salonika) in 1912. The previous four centuries, since 1453 when the Byzantine Empire fell to the Ottomans, the present area was predominantly under the Ottoman yoke, with the exception of the Ionian Islands and parts of the Peloponnese. The former was initially under the Venetians and then the French, then the Russians, the French again and finally under British Protection between 1815 and 1864. Large areas of the Peloponnese were occupied by the Franks.

In 1782 the first Masonic lodge was ceremoniously erected in Corfu, the capital of the seven Ionian Islands, with a pre-dated warrant dating 1781, under the authority of Grand Mother Lodge of Verona at Padua and ultimately under the National Directorate of Lyon of the French Scottish Reformed Rite (Rite Écossais Réunis et Rectifié-RER) and was named *Beneficenza* (Benevolence or Charity). Signing the warrant of the new Lodge was Professor Marco Carburi who was a leading figure in the Strict Observance. Thus some of the Écossais degrees appeared in the area from the beginning. Shortly after additional degrees were adapted and following the establishment of the first Supreme Councils in the USA and France, the degrees of the Rite started not only appeared in the area but they replaced the Rite of Perfection and Memphis-Misraim.

Beneficenza became very soon dormant when the Venetian Republic started persecuting Freemasonry. It was revived in 1797 when the French

occupied the Ionians for a brief period and became again dormant until 1806 when the French came to the Islands for the second time. Then it was revived for the second time and was eventually united with lodge *Filogenia (friend of the genus)* that had been established under the Grand Orient of France, and started working in Corfu, under the joint name *Beneficenza-Filogenia Riunite*. Then in 1811 Count Dionyssios (Denis) de Roma applied to the recently revived Grand Orient of France on 21 November 1811 to place this lodge under its aegis. Following the approval of the Grand Orient, Roma turned the lodge shortly after into a 'Provincial Mother Lodge' that is, a lodge with the authority to create new lodges in the area. Eventually after the beginning of the British Protection in 1816 de Roma and the other Freemasons of the time, decided to declare the lodge as *Serene Grand Orient of Greece* placing it under the United Grand Lodge of England (UGLE).

Roma took another bold initiative; two years after the Ionians were placed under British Protection, by approaching the Grand Master of the newly formed United Grand Lodge of England Augustus Duke of Sussex, offering him the position of Grand Master of the new Grand Orient. Duke of Sussex delayed accepting the position until December 1823 and held this position until his death in April 1843. Then the position was offered to Earl of Zetland who kept it until the Grand Orient of Greece went dormant sometime in 1858, but that is another story.

Despite the fact that this new Grand Orient was effectively placed under the UGLE, all Ionian Freemasons were including in their identity various Écossais degrees. In 1815 a Circular-Tableau was produced with the names and degrees of all Freemasons of Corfu. Thereafter we find them signing all documents, including Craft diplomas, with their various ranks. A large number were S.P.R.+ (18⁰) and Roma and a couple of other leaders were holding the 31⁰.

All Lodges were working in addition to the blue degrees, higher degrees normally up to the 18^o working as Chapters. Some of the Lodges, e.g. *Fenice Risorta* had a Chapter keeping separate minutes. Higher degrees, from the 18^o and of the French Rite, were usually Communicated, with or without a specific ceremony by de Roma mainly in Zante and Corfu and by Dandolo in Corfu to the members of his clandestine (until 1843) Lodge *Phoenix*.

Specifically we find listed G.:I.:I.: C.:, Cavaliere dell A.: B.: e N.:, Grand Écossais, Parf.: Elu and Maître Parfait. In the same Tableau under the heading Sovereign Scottish Chapter are listed eleven members. The separate Chapters and the fact that there was the governing body of Supreme Grand Chapter, even if they do not appear to be in the form of Supreme Council, definitely are at least equivalent. One would have expected, though, that after deciding to establish a closer relation with England they would have been likely to adapt to the English practice,

which did not acknowledge the Higher Degrees. But this consideration comes out of hindsight since at that period these distinctions were not really very clear-cut in the Continent.

So we believe that it is sound to state that the Scottish Rite was present in Greece from the first beginning of the history of Freemasonry. This was initially either in the form of Rite of Perfection or the French seven degree Rite. Shortly afterwards comes strongly into the picture the A.:A.:S.:R.: This emanates from existent documents and it is re-enforced by documents and information connected with Anthony Dandolo. Anthony Dandolo, a former officer in the army of Napoleon and a 33^o Mason from the French lodge Trinosophes¹ returned to Corfu in 1817. Dandolo for a number of years afterwards was 'creating' masons with Communication under the authority of his 33^o from Entered Apprentice to the 33^o. So we have scant, but clear, evidence that at least two more 33^o masons were created in addition to others being given degrees between 18^o and 32^o. This evidence is culled from existing diplomas/certificates and from indirect mentions in the minutes of the Lodge *Fenice Risorta* of Zante.

¹ The original diploma rests in the Fond Maçonnique at the French National Archives:

FIAT LUX
A.:I.:G.:d.:G.:A.:d.:P'U.:¹
Au Nom et sous les Auspices du G.:O.: de France
La R.: □.: Chapitrale Française et Écossaise,
Régulièrement constituée aux deux Rites, à l' O.: de Paris,
à toutes les ☞.: régulières de France et des Pays Étrangères.
Salut, Force,
TTT.: CCC.: et TTT.: RRR.: FFF.:

Séparés par la distance, distingués par d'autres mœurs, vivant sans doute sous d'autres lois, peut être observant un culte différent, nous composons la même famille, Nous Sommes FF.: ! Dans les intérêts qui nous environnent, qui nous pressent, qui nous divisent quelquefois, il en est un que tous nous poursuivons avec la même ardeur, L'union des hommes. L'union des hommes est un précepte de toutes les religions, elle est le Chef d'œuvre de la philosophie, elle est l'objet et la base de notre institution. C'est pour concourir à ce but sublime, C'est pour cimenter les doux liens de la fraternité, Ce Charme de la Maç.: C'est pour chercher cet heureux concert qui doit exister entre tous les Ouvriers du G.:O.:que, sur la demande qui nous a été faite d'un Congé illimité par N.:T.:C.: et T.:R.:F.: **Dandolo** membre et premier Orateur Adjoint de N.:R.:At.:, F.: aussi distingué par Ses vertus maç.: que par Ses qualités civiles. Nous lui avons, en lui accordant ce Congé, donné ce Somme Pouvoir de visiter en Notre Nom tous At.:réguliers de l'O.: de France et des Pays Étrangers, de partager leurs travaux, de S'enrichir de leurs lumières pour en accroître les Nôtres et de les assurer de la vive affection que nous portons à tous les maç.:.

Et pour témoigner à N.:C.:F.: **Dandolo**, par une marque non équivoque, notre estime pour Sa personne, ainsi que notre Confiance en Ses lum.: et encore dans le désir de seconder les travaux Maçonniques des O.: auxquels il pourra Se livrer pendant son absence, de cet O.: en usant de la faculté et des pouvoirs dont l'investit Le Subl.:G.:de Gnd.: Insp'.:G^{al}.:33e.: et d'.:Dé.:du Rite Écoss.:qui possède cet Ill.:F.: Nous lui offrons de régulariser, jusque et compris le Subl.:G.:de Souv.:Pr.:R.:†.:, 7e.: et der.:G.:de la maç.: Française, 18e.: Degré de l'Écossisme les FF.: qu'il jugera convenable pour l'ordre d'Élever à ces hauts degrés, à la charge pour lui de nous transmettre leur obligation à ces degrés, visée par Notre dit F.:, laquelle devra contenir les Noms, Prénoms ; lieu, jour et an de la naissance, profession et domicile, les Élévations, de payer l' affiliation, le trimestre et le Coût du Diplôme qui leur sera délivré en retour. Veuillez dans l'accolade de N.:T.:C.:F.: et dans Ses religieuses batteries trouver le gage des sentiments inaltérables dont il aura la faveur de vous offrir en Notre Nom l'Expression la plus fraternelle.

Délivré en Séance au local ordinaire, le 16e.: Jour du 6e.: ms.: 5817, en la présence a été Timbré et Signé par Nous Dignitaires et membres de la R.:□.:†.: Soussignés, régulièrement constitués Sous le Titre distinctif des **Trinosophes**.

1^{er} G.: Surv.:

Ven.:^{ble}

Ragon
T.:S.: du Souv.: Chap.:

So it is certain to state that between the beginning of the century until 1817 there were individual members of the Rite, who in most cases were possessing degrees in other Rites as well, like the French seven-degree, Memphis Misraim etc. At the same time it is safe to state, without specific existing proof, due to the Nazi destruction of the archives, that a Supreme Council was operating. What is certain that after 1810 a Sovereign Grand Chapter was formed in Corfu, which was governing all higher degrees and not only Royal Arch. Taking into consideration that questions of nomenclature were not very clear to Masons of that period, it is almost logical to take a careful next step and claim that when they were referring to “Sovereign Scottish Chapter” they were probably meaning “Sovereign Supreme Council”. But at this stage we leave it at that.

Later in the 1830s until 1858 we find mentions of Corfu and Zante Freemasons holding degrees between 18° and 32°, at least two of which are signed by Greek Freemason Constantine Dragonas 32°. In the diplomas it is explained that he signs under authority granted to him by Italian Freemason General Rosaroll 33° who was living in Zante in the early 1820s participating in the Independence war². The same Rosaroll in a letter available in British Archives states “I, as you know am a 33 and my friend Count Dionisio Roma is a 31”³.

Due to various events, which climaxed in April 1843, around 1858 the Serene Grand Orient of Greece in Corfu and most Masonic activities in this island were suspended with two exceptions Lodge *Phoenix* of Dandolo and Lodge *Pythagoras* under the UGLE. One of the reasons is directly

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A.: G.: D.: G.: A.: D.: U.:
 In nome del Serenissimo G.: M.: dell' Or.:
 e sotto gli auspici del Serenissima Gr.: Or.: di Grecia
 A tutte le ☩ Regolari, ed a tutti i MM.: sparsi sopra I due Emisferi
 Salute.: Forza.: Unione.:

Noi Costantino Dragona S.: P.: R.: ☩ libero Muratore di Heredom **in virtù de' poteri e prerogative che ci furono accordati dal Sublime e perfetto Mas.: Giuseppe Rosaroll al Gr.: 32 del Rito Scoz.: antico e accet.:** col diploma da Esso confidatoci nel giorno quinto del XI mese dell' anno di V.:L.: 5825 dopo aver preso regolarmente conoscenza della condotta pubblica e private e di costume del Caris.:mo Fr.: Dionisio Steffanos del Dr. Marino di anni 22 Possidente di Zante sua Patria ed avendolo trovato fornito di cognizioni Mas.:concedategli da varj Fr.: lo abbiamo regolarizzato nelle tre gradi simbolici di Appr.: Comp.: e Maes.: e lo abbiamo sottomesso nella nostra confidenza; E siccome **in questo Or.: non vi sono ☩ Regol.:** così riconoscendolo suscettibile di render utilissimi servicj al sacro Or.: nostro, lo abbiamo reso degno della riconoscenza della V.:L.: avendolo fatto prestare nelle dovute forme il giuramento nelle nostre mani e datagli la corrispondente istruzione **sotto l' obbligo che Noi gli abbiamo composto ed al quale lui si é sottomesso di farsi affiliare alla prima ☐ quando il potrà.** In conseguenza preghiamo tutti i Mass.:Reg.:ripartiti sul Globo di riconoscere il ditto Fr.: Dionisio Steffanos nelle qualità sopraenunziate, e di accordargli tutte le considerazioni che gli sono dovute, dopo il confronto di sua firma posta sotto il *Ne Varietur*, come Noi avremo la soddisfazione di fare a tutti i FF.: Mass.: che ci si presenteranno. In fede di che Noi gli abbiamo rilasciato il presente diploma corredato dalli stemmi Mass.: e dal sigillo custodito di Noi.

Fatto sotto il punto geometrico noto ai soli figli della Vedova all' Or.: di Zante il XX giorno del VII mese dell' anno di V.:L.: 5857 mezzo giorno pieno.

C: Dragona S.: P.: R.: ☩.:
 di Heredom de Kilwinning

³ Letter dated 28 March 1825 (O.S.) translated from the Italian in Douglas Dakin “British Intelligence of events in Greece 1824-1827”, *Historical and Ethnological Society of Greece* 1959 p. 82.

connected with Dandolo and indirectly with the Scottish Rite. The Serene Grand Orient of Greece in Corfu resented the making of Masons and the elevation to higher degrees of the Scottish Rite by him. And although he was belonging to this Body, the official attitude was to keep distance from him. Then in April 1843, when the Duke of Sussex died, the Grand Orient decided to hold a memorial service. Dandolo, despite his anti-British feelings, demanded to be present and in a prominent position at the memorial service in view of his 33. They refused him and officially expelled him. Then Dandolo applied to the Grand Orient of France for recognition of his clandestine Lodge *Phoenix*. This was granted to him despite fiery complaints by the members of the Grand Orient addressed both to the Grand Orient of France and the UGLE.

We lack information on what other events took place, but the fact is that Greek Freemasonry was dormant in Corfu sometime after 1855. It continued working though in Zante and also *Pythagoras* Lodge was working until 1877 at least. *Phoenix* is remained under the Grand Orient of France even after the annexation of the Ionian Island to Greece and since 1930 is working under the Grand Lodge of Greece

Around 1855 several lodges were working in mainland Greece formed by former members of *Phoenix* and others who had been initiated in France and Italy, under the Grand Orient of Italy located in Florence. On 16 February 1867 seven lodges that were working in Athens, Piraeus, Halkis, Patras, Syros, Lamia and Argos, demanded their independence from the Grand Orient of Italy. This was given to them two months later and the newly formed Grand Orient of Greece started to get organized by drafting its Constitution. The founders of the new Grand Orient could not agree on anyone of them holding the position of Grand Master and they could only agree to appoint a Deputy Grand Master Pro Tempore until they could find someone acceptable by all for this position.

Among the founders was Mikes Rhodocanakis who at one stage, sometime in 1868, mentioned that a cousin of his was living in England, named Prince Demetrius Rhodocanakis. So they decided to contact him and offer him the position of Grand Master. All of them were assuming that a prince would most definitely be a Freemason as well. They were surprised to find out that Rhodocanakis first was not a Mason and second he was not interested in their proposal. It is not clear what happened next but it seems that Rhodocanakis must have changed his mind and decided to accept the offer.

Demetrius Rhodocanakis was born on 3/15 December 1840 on the island of Syra (or Syros). Rhodocanakis went to Manchester from Syra in 1860 and lived there until 1872 when he returned to Greece. He died in Hermoupolis, Syra on 2/15 September 1902.

Following the invitation from the Grand Orient of Greece Rhodocanakis contacted the Grand Lodge of Scotland and on 18 October 1869 he was

Initiated, Passed and Raised at St. Andrew Lodge No. 48 in Edinburgh. The next day he was exalted to the Royal Arch and on the 20th was installed to the Order of the Temple. He was then coroneted Sovereign Grand Inspector General 33⁰ by the Supreme Council of Scotland and he received the required Warrant to establish a Supreme Council in Greece from this body. The fact that he applied to Scotland and not the UGLE since he was living in Manchester, can only be understood by the assumption that Greek Masons informed him that they were following the Scottish Rite and thus felt necessary to apply to Scotland.

Rhodocanakis on 14 September 1871 departed for Greece where, after traveling through France and Italy, arrived in Athens on 20 October. According to a *Report* sent to all Grand Lodges following his election as Grand Master and the establishment of the Supreme Council, he traveled throughout Greece visiting the various Lodges in order to smooth out all friction and to invite delegates to form a Convention for the election of a Council. On 10/22 July 1872 Rhodocanakis was elected Grand Master and two days later on 12/24 July he established according to the procedure describer in the Grand Constitutions of 1786, a Supreme Grand Council 33⁰ for Greece with himself as Sovereign Grand Commander. Most of the members of the Council of the Grand Orient were also members of the Supreme Council.

Following the establishment of the Supreme Council in the years between 1894 and 1911 there was a period of turbulence, which resulted to three Supreme Councils working in Greece. However in 1911 the Councils merged. After 1911 to our days the Supreme Council for Greece is regularly working, There has been only a forced closure during the Nazi occupation of Greece in 1941. The occupiers ordered all Masonic activity illegal, closed and ransacked the buildings and destroyed all papers and furniture and installed some of their services there. Following Liberation of the country Freemasonry in general and the Supreme Council in particular, became active again on 3rd March 1945. The re-opening and the refurbishing of the main building were supported by the generous donations and moral support of members of the Mother Council of the Southern Jurisdiction.

Presently the Supreme Council for Greece is in Amity with 59 Supreme Council around the World. In its roster are 4,850 members working in 20 Lodges of Perfection (4^o to 14^o), 19 Chapters of Rose Croix (15^o to 18^o), 9 Chapters of Rose Croix (4^o-18^o), 16 Councils of Kadosh (Areopagi) (19^o to 30^o) and one Consistory (31^o and 32^o).

We must mention that a small number of members either differing with Supreme Council or due to private ambitions have resigned and created separate clandestine bodies. Presently there are about five such bodies with few members, usually cooperating with similar clandestine bodies in other countries.

To present the well-documented history of the Supreme Council is prohibitive due to space limitations of the present document. However, for the period after WWII the history of Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite in Greece is very well-documented and the Sovereign Grand Commander or members of the Supreme Council are regularly visiting other Supreme Councils holding their Communication or organizing Conferences or other major events.

Conclusion

We have seen that at first, starting in 1782, we see the first holders of Écossais degrees in from various Rites, some with the French seven-degree rite, or the Perfection Rite. Then starting 1818 with the arrival of Dandolo we have the first 33° in Corfu and soon after at least two more 33° and many 18° and others up to 32°. While we are unable to produce any documents referring to a Supreme Council, but only to Supreme Grand Chapter, it is evident that the Ancient and Accepted Rite was present and active in Greece.

Then in 1872 the first official Supreme Council was established which almost immediately established Amity relations with most of the regular Supreme Councils of the World.

The above has not be prepared in order to claim seniority but to proudly inform that our country has been among the first which welcomed our Rite and, depending on local circumstances, has been nourishing it for more than 200 years and that presently our Supreme Council for Greece is flourishing.

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