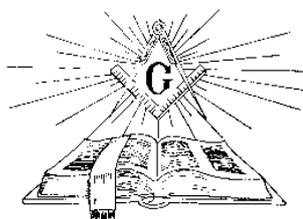




Cuadernos

C I E M

III Certamen de Ensayo Masónico



Centro Ibérico de Estudios Masónicos (CIEM)

Madrid – 2015

C u a d e r n o s

C I E M

ISSN: 2254 - 7711

E s p e c i a l
I I I C e r t a m e n
d e E n s a y o
M a s ó n i c o

Sumario:

Iordanis Poulkouras

The founding of Greek Free Masonry

1º Premio

© 2015 Centro Ibérico de Estudios Masónicos (CIEM)

Apartado 24 28891 – Velilla de San Antonio - Madrid (España)

The founding of Greek Free Masonry

Should we be puzzled by the fact that there are lodges operating in the Helladic area at the beginning of the 18th cent. when it is still under the Ottoman and Venetian rule?

Different Masonic rites are indeed created and coexist in a tiny geographical area, far from the European kernel of developments.

This means that the background was appropriate for new ideas to take root and to survive; these ideas did not arrive as novel on foreign grounds, but they became more complex in a creative way, through a fruitful dialogue with an older local tradition with which they shared many common memories.

The very same Western Esotericism as an academic concept – whose fruit Freemasonry is – has its roots in the Alexandrian period and in the writings of Plotinus and of the Neoplatonists, who were based in Alexandria, as well as in Athens and in Syria, that is to say generally speaking on the Eastern costs of the Mediterranean Sea.

These ideas participated and contributed to the syncretism of the ancient Greek spirit with various worldviews and religious beliefs (Christianity, Arab world, kabala, etc.).

They spread in the East and the West thanks to the Greek language which was then the lingua franca, helped by the fact that, apart from their civilization, the Greeks had already developed, since early times before Alexander the Great, close trade links with the northern coast of Africa, Asia and the Mediterranean coast of Europe.

Thus, the recollection of knowledge that reached out to Medieval Europe from the East, endured beyond the Helladic area.

It is not therefore odd that the recollection and the tolerance toward these ideas, strongly survived among the Greeks in the Byzantine and Ottoman period.

In this way people persecuted for their «heretic» doctrines, found a welcoming haven in these places. Furthermore, the Inquisition in the Knight Templars' trial regards Cyprus as such a place; there Geoffroy de Gonnevile, companion of the last Grand Master de Molay, had found shelter; together with the surviving Knight Templars he would then continue to the East, perpetuating the legend.

Moreover the knowledge originated and rescued in the «East» was the base of a common tradition which – just to quote the best known examples – wanted Christian Rosenkreutz to travel to Cyprus and then to Damascus in order to be taught, the Knight Templars to be initiated to the ancient knowledge in the Holy Land and finally Paracelsus who states that he was taught the secrets of Nature by a Greek priest in Constantinople.

The first Lodges

Information is available about the operation of the first Masonic lodge in the East Mediterranean in 1726, in Constantinople in the Galata area, only nine years after the foundation of the Premier Grand Lodge of England.

There are no data about the Grand Lodge which it depended on nor has its name been preserved, but many Greek scholars mention this Lodge. We can speculate that it comprised European diplomats and merchants, mainly Genoese, who operated at that time in the capital of the Ottoman Empire.

This is confirmed in part by the fact that the first official denunciatory reports by the Church make their appearance in texts dated 1745-1748 and they all refer to a Masonic text written in Italian.

It is the piece by Cesario Daponte contained in his *Book of Kings* (*Βίβλος Βασιλειῶν* in Greek, *Code of the Monastery of Xyropotamos*, ms. 255) and copied from a text by

Patriarch Callinicos III titled *News from the ranks of the Muratori* (Εἰδήσεις τῶν τάξεων τῶν Μουρατόρων). As you know at that time there were no printed Masonic Rituals. In Great Britain there were Masonic “catechisms” with question and answer dialogs, which in Europe are called “exposures”. They derived either from policemen’s reports who were monitoring this new movement or from the odd person who mixed original texts and information with imaginary additions, in order to pass it off to ignorant people, hungry for scandals and conspiracy theories. The text in the hands of the two clergymen is the Italian translations of *Réception d'un Frey-Maçon* written by the French policeman René Hérault in 1737. And because of the Italian language the Patriarch uses the word «*Muratori*» instead of the words “*Mason*” and “*Franc-maçon*” used by the Greeks till the foundation of the first Grand Lodge in 1867, when they adopted the term «*Tekton*» (which in Greek means “*builder*”).

The first official lodges were created in the East Mediterranean by the Scot Alexander Drummond.

Drummond was appointed Consul of Great Britain in Aleppo, Syria, in 1744. At the same time he was authorized by the Grand Lodge of Scotland to found lodges in the Eastern Mediterranean and for this reason he had been given the title of «*Provincial Grand Master for the Mediterranean countries of Europe and Asia*».

In his long journey he passed through various Greek islands, including Zakynthos (or *Zante*), Kythira, Mykonos and Delos. Then he reached Smyrna, where there had been Masonic activity as early as 1738 and, according to his own evidence, he founded a Masonic Lodge. Finally passing through Cyprus he ended up in Aleppo where he founded

another lodge. He used for both of them the name of Kilwinning, the Lodge Mother of Scottish Freemasonry.

We focus in particular on Greece and for this reason I wish to bring to your attention the fact that in Zakynthos, according to his diary, he discussed about Free Masonry with the residents, among whom he reports there was also a priest.

The orthodox priest was Zakynthos' "*protopapas*" (*bishop*) Antonios Katiforos who in their conversation had claimed he had written a paper against the Papal Bull «In eminenti» issued by Clement XII in 1738, where, as he says, «using common sense he ridiculed himself as he [the Pope] deserved, excommunicating the Free Masons without knowing anything about Free Masonry». The priest, alongside the physician in Zakynthos Nikolaos Athineos and others socialise with Drummond and, in his testimony, they declare themselves enthusiastic and they express their wish to found a lodge in Zakynthos; however there is no evidence in the archives of the Grand Lodge of Scotland and of Drummond's that its foundation took place.

Still, these processes may have contributed to the great development Free Masonry had in the Ionian Islands in the following years.

The first Greek Grand Lodge in the Septinsular Republic of Ionian Islands.

The Ionian Islands (or Heptanese), had a peculiarity for the Helladic area: from the 13th cent. to 1797 they had been under the Italian domination and they did not fall under the Ottoman yoke. In this way they lived the changes occurring in Central Europe, i.e. Renaissance and Enlightenment.

Thus the first regular lodge in the Helladic area was founded in the Ionian Islands and in particular in Corfu.

It is the Beneficenza (Bienfaisance) Lodge in Corfu.

They say it was founded in 1740 with the Provveditore of the Venetian Republic as first Worshipful Master. There are no elements confirming this and it is quite odd that the very same Provveditore would lead a Masonic lodge 2 years after the condemnation of Freemasonry by the Bull of Pope Clement. In any case it soon suspended its operation.

On 13th June 1782 the Grand Mother Scottish Lodge of Verona based in Padua approve and ratifies the request for the foundation of the Beneficenza Lodge, with retroactive effect from the date of the request, i.e. 30th August 1781.

It results that the lodge had been operating since 1771 and it had a Constitution since 1774. The Rite exercised by the Scottish Grand Lodge in Padua and adopted by the Corfu brothers was that of Strict Observance and later the Rectified Scottish Rite. Since then there was also in Corfu a Chapter of Scottish Masters, of the first of the Higher Scottish Degrees who worked according to the Rectified Rite, under the name of Scottish Committee (Comité Ecosaise).

The President of the Mother Grand Lodge of Italy (Grand Master) who granted the founding Charter was the academician and professor at the University of Padua, physician Count Carburi. He was native of another large island in the Ionian Islands, Cephalonia, and his Greek name was Markos Harvouris. I shall add that his brother, Marinos Harvouris was serving in the Russian army and he was collaborating with another important man from Cephalonia, the general of the [*Russian*] Empire Petros Melissinos, or in its Russian version Pyotr Ivanovich Melissino. Melissinos will found the first clearly Russian Masonic Rite which bears his name and encompasses the Knight Templar's tradition. If we think that both Melissinos, who leads the Russian Free Masonry, and Harvouris, who leads the Italian Free Masonry, come from the same island and the same area in the Ionian Islands, we should ponder over what kind of spiritual substructure existed in this area that

gave them the momentum in mid 18th cent., soon after the official foundation of Free Masonry.

It is definitely not the object of this paper to analyse it, yet I have to testify it for other researchers.

We shall rest a while on the Grand Lodge of Verona in order to understand what is happening in that period, when the various Masonic rites are born and their correlation to the political changes.

The Grand Lodge of Verona depended on the Directoire National de Lyon and followed the Rite of Strict Observance; normally the Ionian Islands belonged to the same «Province» too.

In Lyon, Grand Master since 1761 was Jean-Baptiste Willermoz who in 1767 joins the Order of the Elus Cohens of Martines de Pasqually. However this Rite is not accepted by the other Freemasons. Thus Willermoz joins the Rite of Strict Observance and he founds the lodge in Lyon with the same name as the Corfu lodge, i.e. Beneficenza.

In 1778 he organizes the «Convent of Gaul» and he introduces the United and Rectified Scottish Rite, with Lyon as the Central Orient of the Lodges (*Orient central du Rite Ecossais des Loges Reunies et Rectifiees*) initially for the province of Occitanie; after the Congress of Wilhelmsbad, held on 16th July 1782, representatives of all the European lodges decided to follow it as Rectified Scottish Rite.

Thus when founded the Corfu Beneficenza followed the Rite of Strict Obedience, but it received the approval one month before the Congress of Wilhelmsbad, when all the lodges decided to follow the Rectified Scottish Rite.

Not exactly all of them.

Marco Carburi maintained personal relations with members of the German Rite of Strict Observance and in summer 1784 he hosted the representative of the German Illuminati, Friedrich Münter. According to Münter's diary, Harvouris gave him a piece on Freemasonry to read, that Willermoz himself had sent to him for the Congress of Wilhelmsbad. At the same time he talked to him about his trip to Sweden, where he had travelled in order to meet Emanuel Swedenborg in person and clearly, apart from his admiration for the work of the Swedish mystic, he became acquainted with the Masonic rite that had developed in the North.

Finally, the secret policemen who watched him and who are the most reliable source of information, report that he had severed his relations with the French and he has no relation with the Jacobite insurgents.

This information will be useful later on in this paper.

Let's go back then to Corfu. In 1789 the French Revolution breaks out and in 1797 Corfu passes from the Venetian to the French control. Afterwards we have the foundation of the Septinsular Republic (*Repubblica Settinsulare, the free state of the Ionian Islands*), under the authority of the Ottomans and of the Russians, the first independent Greek area in modern history.

At that time the Corfu Brothers must for obvious reasons limit the communication among themselves and the relations with the Italian Mother Lodge, and at a certain point the lodges on the Ionian Islands become inoperative.

Then is when the great Greek politician and Freemason, Dionysios Romas appears on the scene. Already since 1794 he had succeeded his father as General Consul of Venice in Moria and Roumeli that is to say in the main part of Greece which was subjected to the

Ottomans. He was a member of the Compiling Committee for the passing the Septinsular Constitution, later chancellor of Corfu and then Senator.

In 1806 Romas participates in the revival of the pre-existing lodge Filogenia (*Philogenie*) for which we have no older data.

On 28th March 1809 they submit to France the request for the foundation of a French speaking lodge, which is established on 9th May 1812 by the name St. Napoleon no 1300 under the auspices of the Grand Orient of France. The officers and most members of this lodge are French officials but among them we find Romas too.

In 1811 Dionysios Romas together with two more Brothers, visits Paris with the official aim to hail the birth of Napoleon I's son. There he visits the seat of the Grand Orient of France and he places the two Corfu lodges under its aegis, receiving the permission to operate as Provincial Grand Lodge and to found lodges in the Ionian Islands under the auspices of the French Grand Lodge. At the same time, acting as a politician and Greek patriot, he makes clear that the name of the Lodge Filogenia means «Friend of the Nation (*Amie de la Nation*) of the Greeks who are enslaved to the Ottomans». Should the Great Orient object to it, they are willing to change the name? The French have no objection, on the contrary they fully agree, thus 10 years before the start of the Greek revolution they are the first European institution to acknowledge the enslaved Greek nation, thanks to Romas.

However this is not all he does.

As he himself describes in his report to the Grand Orient of France dated 5/17 November 1843

«...As the older lodge belonged to the Scottish Rite of the United and Rectified Lodges and in order not to offend the habit of the Brothers with innovations which could inspire

in them doubts and suspicions, we reckoned it appropriate to integrate it in the Philosophical Rite for what regarded the higher degrees, always asking for founding Charter for the symbolic works by the Serenissima Grand Orient of France. Our application asked for the acknowledgement of the Lodge of the Orient of Corfu, being the oldest of this Orient, as Local Mother Lodge. By my nomination as Representative of the Ionian Islands at the Imperial Court by the Senate, the Lodge benefitted from it to assign me the Mission of Representative at the Serenissima Grand Orient of France and at the abovementioned Mother Lodge of the Philosophical Scottish Rite, of Saint Alexander of Scotland and of the Social Contract (*Mère Loge du Rite Ec.: Philos.: le St. Alexandre d' Eco.: et le Contrat Social*). »

The operation since the 18th cent. of higher Scottish degrees in Greece is thus confirmed. This pre-existing Chapter was set under the aegis of the Mother Lodge of the then Philosophical Free Masonry of Saint Alexander of Scotland and of the Social Contract.

Returning to the Ionian Islands, Romas develops Free Masonry and the lodges initiate Brothers from the rest of Greece, which is still under the Ottoman yoke. To make an example, Théodore Racke, originating from Thessaly who had been a Master Mason since 1810 at the Bienfaisance et Philogénie Reunites Lodge, arrived at Marseille in 1814 and was adopted by the Lodge Parfaite Sincérité and by the Souverain Chapitre de l'Aimable Sagesse. At that time the same Lodge, Parfaite Sincérité, had also adopted Démétrius Mercati, also from the same Corfu lodge Bienfaisance et Philogénie Reunites, and it had another 10 Greek names in its list.

On 18th May 1815 Romas visits another island in the Ionians Islands, Zakynthos, where he revives the Lodge Fenice Risorta (*Reborn Phoenix*) and he annexes it to the Provincial

Lodge of Corfu whose relative Charter, as he says, is under the auspices «*of the Supreme Powers of the two Philosophical Rites, Scottish and French, based on the agreement of both of them*».

The minutes of that day offer some information about the past of that lodge:

«...*The Dogma you exercised was the one of the United and Rectified Scottish Lodges whose seat was in Lyon. Freemasons, precipitated inside the ideas of the different Dogmas, mixed in your Ritual many strange elements and various Degree ratings, and forgetting that the Rectified Dogma only has four degrees and that it excludes the Elect Master, they though include in their Ritual the degrees of Knight of the Orient, Perfect Master etc., things that are incompatible with the Rectified Scottish Dogma.*

This did not occur in the Orient of Corfu. That Lodge has its Constitution of the Rectified Scottish Rite since 1774 and it operates under its aegis. Still this Dogma is innate to the so called Scottish Philosophical whose Symbolic Lodges have been founded under the Grand Orient of France; But the Chapters of the Higher Degrees up to the 33rd, belong to this Dogma too and they depend solely on it.

As a consequence, the Corfu Lodge follows the destiny of the majority of those which comprise the Rectified Dogma and keep their Constitutions, Operating Charters and Rituals under the Grand Orient of France and the Sovereign Metropolitan Chapter (Souverain Chapitre Métropolitain) of the Scottish Philosophical dogma; all this makes it part of the Mother Grand Lodge of the Regimen of the so-called «Saint Alexander of Scotland and of the Social Contract». The latter acknowledges it as Ancient and Provincial Mother Lodge and it allows it to confer Degrees up to the Grand Scot. This Lodge wishes that all the Freemasons of its Province, who are worth of its attention, may benefit of these advantages. Therefore I suggest: the Lodge shall now decide to adhere to the Scottish Philosophical Dogma. It shall appoint a representative at the Mother Lodge

in Corfu in order to request the authorization for the Lodge to operate the Ritual of the above mentioned Constitution, and its mediation for this Lodge to receive its Constitutions and it's Operating Charters under the Sovereign Metropolitan Chapter of Paris and the Grand Orient of France.»

Through Romas' carefully expressed words, we elicit the past of the Lodge. Romas in his speech to the Brothers refers, once again according to the minutes, «...you belonged to a Lodge founded by a brother Cassini, Grand Inspector of the Rectified Rite...». This «*Grand Inspector*» Cassini who had founded it, was no random person and Romas knew it very well.

He was the astronomer and cartographer César-François Cassini, grand-son of the famous Gian Domenico Cassini who founded and directed as he did, the Observatory in Paris; he was a member of the French Academy of Science, of the Royal Society in London and among others of the entourage of Queen Christina of Sweden.

He is the one whose statue at the Louvre holds a setsquare on his heart.



In 1781 Cassini founded the Lodge Philantropy in Zakynthos. It is the very same year when the Lodge Beneficenza in Corfu requested to be affiliated to the Scottish Grand Lodge of Verona.

The Zakynthos Lodge is therefore founded by Cassini who was provenly a member of the Lodge La Philosophie of the Orient of Paris: he therefore represented French and not Italian authority and he stayed in contact with the Lodge till his death in 1784.

Since then the Lodge was left without a Charter, maintaining probably the intermediate type (between the Strict Observance Rite and the Rectified Scottish Rite) which had been proposed for a period of time by Willermoz. The reason for this is that, as it results from the minutes of the lodge, Romas mentions that they were working at higher Scottish degrees of Elu and of the Knight of the Orient, thing that was irreconcilable to the Rectified Scottish Rite.

As known, these degrees had been barred from the Rectified Scottish Rite and the Grand Orient of France, and among them the Knight of the Orient returned as part of the Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite as it is included in both the first Constitution in 1762 and the Constitution by Frederick the Great in 1786, where the old original degrees were merged as «the main branches of one and this tree...» in the 33-degree Rite.

Thus the Zakynthos lodge has no official contacts with the Corfu one till Romas decides to revive it.

It is worth underlining that from Zakynthos, and clearly coming from this lodge, Marc Bédarride took to Italy and France the first Rituals which created the Rite of Misraim.

For what reason did Romas decide to revive them? As we said he was not only a very active Free Mason but also a farsighted politician. A few months earlier the Ionian

Islands had passed under the English rule. Seeing the decline of the French, Romas wants to set up relations with England with a great final purpose: to achieve the upgrade of the Masonic Province of the Ionian Islands to a National Grand Lodge of Greece.

On 1st March 1815 they hold a meeting in Corfu in order to discuss the possibility to link up with England. The works do not open at symbolic level, namely under the aegis of the Grand Orient of France, but in the name and under the auspices of the Respectable Grand Lodge of Scottish Philosophical Freemasonry, called Social Contract and Saint Alexander of Scotland in Paris.

That is to say that they operate the Sublime Chapter as highest Masonic authority.

The annexation of Zakynthos, that takes place after a few days, is necessary in Romas' plans because, in order for a Grand Lodge to be acknowledged, it has to have at least three pre-existing lodges as founding members.

The request is sent to the United Grand Lodge of England and the answer is positive.

The acceptance of the link and the conversion of the Provincial Grand Lodge into an independent lodge under the name Most Serene Grand Orient of Greece (*Γαληνοτάτη Μεγάλη Ανατολή της Ελλάδος*) is decided on the 26th day of the 2nd month (*April*) of the A.L. 5816 (*Anno Lucis 5816 / 1816*) by the «*Sublime Provincial Chapter attached to the Scottish Grand Provincial Lodge of the Scottish Philosophical Rite of Saint John of Scotland under the title Beneficenza e Filogenia United in the Orient of Corfu*».

Moreover they decide to offer the title of First Grand Master to the Duke of Sussex, the Grand Master who three years earlier had united the English lodges in the United Grand Lodge of England. The Duke accepted the post eight years later, on 9th December 1823. He kept the post till his death and he was succeeded by the next Grand Master of the United Grand Lodge of England, the Earl of Zetland who kept this title too, till the Ionian

Islands lodges ceased to operate in 1857. A few years later in 1864 the Ionian Islands were reunited to Greece.

The date of 26th April 1816 can safely be defined as the date the first Greek Grand Lodge, the Most Serene Grand Orient of Greece was founded. This takes place 5 years before the onset of the Greek Revolution, which led to the establishment of the Modern Greek State.

In this period of time the Septinsular Most Serene Grand Orient founded more lodges on Cephalonia, Lefkada (which was then also called *Saint Maura*), and in Patras.

Freemasonry and these lodges will form a mould, a sanctuary for the Greek revolution and the revolution of the whole Balkans against the Ottomans and at the same time a communication network with the philhellenes who will actively support the revolutionary struggle of the Greeks.

Two important figures of insurgent Greece and of the Balkans were initiated in these lodges.

One of the three leaders of the Filiki Eteria, the organization which prepared the Greek Revolution planning to spread it throughout the Balkans, Emmanouil Xanthos in the Lodge Union of Lefkada («*Society of Free Masons*», of *Saint Maura*)

The General of the Army of the Greek Revolution, Theodoros Kolokotronis in 1818 in the Lodge Reborn Phoenix in Zakynthos.

Rest of Greece and the Balkans. From Rigas Fereos to the birth of the Greek State

Mainland Greece with the islands in the Aegean Sea and the Balkans had been part of the Ottoman Empire since the 15th cent. Its northern end was the two Danubian principalities of Wallachia and of Moldova, part of present day Romania.

These two principalities controlled the trade routes which linked the East to the Holy Roman Empire (Austria) and the rest of northern Europe and Russia. Since the beginning of the 18th cent. the Ottoman Sultans decided to appoint Greeks from Constantinople, among the so called Phanariotes, as potentates of the two principalities as well as in other diplomatic posts. Among them we also find some of the first Freemasons of that period. Konstantinos Mavrokordatos, Prince of Moldavia and Wallachia under whose rule the first lodges in Galati and Iasi were founded where he himself was a member. Iordache Cantacuzino was affiliated to it, while his brother Matei Cantacuzino appears in 1776 as member of the Lodge Moldova. We also find the interpreter Constantinos Karatzas, initiated in 1791 in the Lodge Zur siegenden Wahrheit in Berlin, Alexandros Mourouzis, Prince Constantinos Mourouzis' brother initiated at the Lodge St. Andreas zu den drei Seeblattern in Sibiu (or Hermannstadt) in 1776. Finally and in particular we have to mention Constantinos Ypsilantis, son of the Prince of Wallachia Alexandros Ypsilantis, who became prince of Moldavia and Wallachia and was initiated in 1784 at the Lodge Zu den drei Saulen in Braşov (or Kronstadt).

Alexandros Ypsilantis, Freemason's son and a Prince too, will be the leader of the Filiki Eteria that will declare the Revolution against the Ottomans.

At the end of the 18th cent. we find 46 Greek Freemasons in this region between present day Romania and Germany. 33 of them were merchants, one was an interpreter, two were

physicians, five were medical students and one was a clergyman, archimandrite Ioannis Polykalas initiated at one of Cephalonia's lodges.

The Greek Freemasons are particularly active and apart from their participation to the foundation of lodges, they prepare and found lodges in their mother country too. In the Lodge Balduin in Leipzig there are at least 6 Greek merchants who come from the same town in Thessaly, Ampelakia, where the first cooperative in Europe operated. In 1802 Ioannis Papatheodorou, Master of the Lodge Balduin in Leipzig, founded a Masonic lodge in his mother town of Ampelakia. (*Reported by Jacob Ludwig Bartholdy and reference to the work Leukothea by Carl Jakob Ludwig Iken, 1825*)

In these Balkan and European lodges the spirit of Masonic freedom, equality and brotherhood develops exchanges of ideas, relations and cooperation among the merchants and the young local and foreign scientists who all form part of the bourgeoisie, which is beginning to set in.

Part of that Bourgeoisie which, inspired by the Enlightenment, organized the French Revolution.

Many of the Freemasons from these Lodges embracing the ideas of the Enlightenment seek ways to implement them within the Ottoman Empire. Among the above mentioned Freemasons there were many supporters and collaborators of Rigas Fereos.

Rigas Fereos

The reference to Rigas is necessary to explain that those Greek Illuminists and Freemasons, who first dreamed and planned the revolution against the Ottoman Empire, envisaged the liberation of all the Balkan nations from the Turks.

Rigas (1757-1798) used as his surname the name of the town where he was born, Velestino in Thessaly, the ancient Feres near Ampelakia. Many Wallachian traders who traded among Greece, Moldova and Wallachia lived there and probably this is the base for the relationship, the familiarity and the action he developed in the areas of present day Romania.

He left very young to study in Constantinople and there he made acquaintance with the Prince of Wallachia, Alexandros Ypsilantis, the father and grand-father of the Ypsilantis we mentioned above. He stayed in his service as secretary and afterwards he left for Wallachia where he became secretary to Prince Nikolaos Mavrogenis.

There in Bucharest he writes most of his works and fascinated by the spirit of Enlightenment and of the French Revolution he conceives the idea of the insurrection all the peoples of the Ottoman Empire. He envisages a revolution which would liberate and unite all Balkan peoples in a federal republic and in his poem "Thourio" (*Θούριος, Battle Hymn*) he sings

«Bulgarians and Albanians and Serbs and Greeks

People from the islands and from the mainland in a common momentum

For freedom we shall wear the sword...».

In 1790 he arrives in Vienna and he prints the "Thourio", the Chart (*Χάρτα*) which includes the map of free Balkans and the proclamation «New political administration of the peoples of Roumeli, of Asia Minor, of the Mediterranean islands and of Bogdania-Wallachia». He prints thousands of copies in order to distribute his revolutionary manifestos everywhere to all the oppressed, regardless of their origin and religion.

There he appears to be member of a secret organization called «The good cousins". The name points to the 16th cent. guild of «Bons Cousins» and to the Carbonari. We know that this society followed Masonic rites and had as a scope – the same as Rigas' - the union of all Balkan peoples for their liberation from the Turks.

The "Good Cousins" were expelled from Vienna and they apparently found shelter in the Septinsular Republic.

Rigas uses Masonic methodology but it is not certain that he was initiated in any lodge. However there are many Free Masons among his collaborators and supporters. Just to name a few, and skipping all the Greeks, I will mention Johan Peter Frank, the physician who first promoted the idea of public health, member of the Austrian Lodge Zur wahren Eintracht (The True Concord) and Osman Pazvantoğlu who rebelled against the Sultan and in 1793 liberated the area from Belgrade to Varna, founding at the same time the first lodge in Bulgaria, at Vidin.

The Austrian reckoned that Rigas was dangerous for the security of Europe and they had him arrested in Trieste. He was sent to Beograd, part of which was still under Austrian control where they handed him over to the Turks. He was imprisoned in the Nebojsa Tower where he was strangled and his corpse thrown into the Danube.

One of the most famous 20th cent. Romanian historians who also served as Prime Minister in his country, Nicolae Iorga (1871-1940) wrote about Rigas: «we talk, not about a European but about a man from the East who became European, not about a Frenchman or a German, but about a Greek who spoke and wrote French and German. This frontrunner of modernism is a famous personality in the history of Greek Reinassance. He is none other than Rigas»

Rigas died but his work did not die out. As the French historian François Pouqueville wrote: «...The Greeks fought having the mighty lines by Rigas on their lips...»

Filiki Eteria and Alexandros Ypsilantis

In 1811 according to the tradition and at the suggestion of Napoleon III, a Masonic secret society for the liberation of Greece is founded in Paris, by the name «Greek-speaking Hotel» (*Ελληνόγλωσσο Ξενοδοχείο*).

Not only Greek but also European philhellene Freemasons were initiated there. Important figure among its first members is Athanasios Tsakalof, who travelling to Moscow initiated Nikolaos Skoufas too. These two along with Xanthos were the future leaders of Filiki Eteria (*Φιλική Εταιρεία*).

Following Napoleon's defeat, the Holy Alliance (Russia, Austria and Prussia and afterwards England) moves systematically against the liberal trends that had started to manifest themselves after the French revolution. Paris will no longer be the place for this kind of planning. In 1814 Emmanouil Xanthos travels from Lefkada to Odessa; there he meets Tsakalof and Skoufas and they decide to found the «Filiki Eteria», an organization based on Masonic principles aiming at delivering Rigas' dream. The first ones to be initiated to higher degrees were active Freemasons.

Emmanouil Xanthos had been initiated at the Lodge Union in Lefkada, according to his writings in 1813. In 1820 he is accepted in this capacity as Masonic Master and he receives Masonic certificate by the Russian Lodge Les Amis Reunis no 8 in Saint Petersburg, which belonged to the Grand Lodge Astrea.

The peculiarity of the Lodges of this Masonic obedience is that they worked in various languages, Russian, French, Polish and German and that among the members there were important names from the political, military and economical authorities of the country.

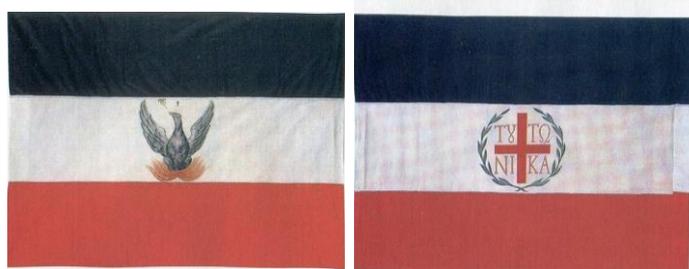
Among the members of this Grand Lodge we can name Prince Alexandros Ypsilantis and his brother Nikolaos, sons and grand-sons of the Prince of Moldova and Wallachia and Freemasons as their father.

Xanthos offered the leadership of the Filiki Eteria to Ypsilantis, lieutenant general of the imperial Russian army, who accepted.

Together with his brother Nikolaos they proceeded to gather an army of volunteers, which they named Sacred Company (*Ιερός Λόχος*).

Its symbols, starting from skulls and crossbones which as reminder of the memento mori symbolized the volunteers' decision to be free or to die, were also Knight Templars and Masonic emblems pointing to secret societies. The French nobleman Augustin de Lagarde describes it better, when in his memoires about the Congress of Vienna (Paris 1843), he refers to Rigas' «Society» and afterwards to the Filiki Eteria

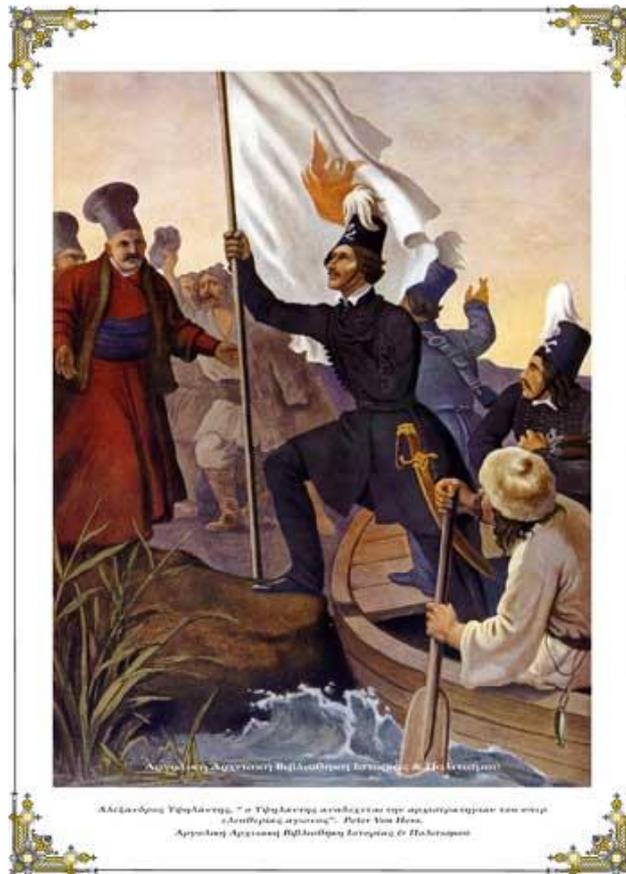
and to the army Ypilantis was gathering: « ... The uniform of the members is all black and is accompanied by a cap on which a skull and below it two crossbones appear. The colours of the society were white-black-red. This society counted up to 60.000 members. It had four secret ranks. A shroud of deep mystery covered its nature...Among its most passionate supporters was Ignatius, Metropolit of Hungary and Wallachia. »



Ypsilantis' revolutionary flag

The Greek flag of the Insurgents would bear the colours of the Society, adopted from Rigas' flag: white, black and red. On one side it had the mythical phoenix arising from the flames and the "radiant all-seeing eye" with the phrase «from the ashes I will rise»; on the other, the ancient Greek cross inside a laurel crown and below the phrase «In hoc signo vinces» (*with this you will win*).

Ypsilantis crosses the river Pruth on 22nd February 1821 and he raises the banner of the Revolution in the Danubian Principates at Iasi, the capital of Moldovia, where both his father and his grand-father had been potentates; the latter founded the first lodge in Bucharest in 1796 and the former was friend and collaborator of Rigas Fereos.



Alexandros Ypsilantis crosses the river Pruth, painting by Peter von Hess.

On their hat we can see the skull and crossbones.

Almost simultaneously there are revolutionary outbreaks prepared by the Filiki Eteria in various places, reaching the climax on 25th March 1821 when Bishop Germanos of Old Patras swears in the insurgents at the Monastery of Agia Lavra.

Leader and supreme commander of the Greek Insurgents was Theodoros Kolokotronis, initiated at the Lodge Reborn Phoenix in Zakynthos.

Foundation of the Greek State and of Greek Freemasonry

Ypsilantis' uprising in the Danubian area failed and it was then limited to the Greek area where the Greeks continued on their own, excommunicated even by their own Patriarch who was trapped in Constantinople, his seat as well as the Sultan's.

The Greeks had to find allies or at least to request the tolerance of the Great Powers. The Holy Alliance guided by the powerful diplomat von Metternich did not want any liberal revolutionary movement that might blow up the balance in the whole of the Balkans and he did not accept anything associated with the French revolution and secret societies. This is probably the reason why, when on 20th December 1822 they passed their provisional Constitution, the Greek Insurgents ignore and abolish the flag and the symbols of the Filiki Eteria and they set Ypsilantis aside, wishing to show Europe and the Holy Alliance that the Revolution had no ties with secret societies.

Despite all this, the Revolution would not have succeeded was it not for the huge surge of philhellene volunteers. And most of them were Freemasons.

An example is the merchant Theoharis Kefalas who in 1799 is among the founding members of the Lodge Zum Morgenstern in Hof, Bavaria, and in 1804 participates in the foundation of another lodge, the Lodge Zur goldenen Wage. In October 1822 he is set at the head of the so called «German Legion», a group of 115 German and Swiss Freemason volunteers and he leads them to Marseille and from there to Greece, using the French Masonic network.

We have to mention the network created within the French lodges in more detail.

In Marseille specific lodges organize and coordinate the network of volunteers and provisions towards the Greek insurgents.

Thus a military lodge of volunteers was created under the name of «The adopted children of Athens and Sparta - Les Enfants Adoptifs de Sparte et d'Athènes».

The most important involvement of the members of this lodge is the siege and the rescue of the holiest monument of western civilization, the Acropolis of Athens. In 1826 The

Turks had occupied the whole of Athens, but the Acropolis. The defenders refused to surrender determined to follow the example of Missolonghi and the way to sacrifice.

They were in a dire situation without food and ammunitions when the French general and philhellene Charles Favier along with 480 soldiers and 40 philhellene volunteers broke the siege bringing back provisions and salvation for the besieged. The 40 volunteers were mainly members of the Lodge «The Adopted Children of Athens and Sparta - Les Enfants Adoptifs de Sparte et d'Athènes». According to the minutes of the lodge saved in Fonds Maconnique of the National Library of France, the lodge met twice in the warlike conditions of the siege. On 2nd January 1827 and after two days on 4th January when they initiated 2 Freemasons and afterwards they celebrated the winter solstice.

In France the historic Lodge of Trinosophes enclosed in its agenda of 3rd August 1824 «Mournful applause for 70 Brothers who died all together» in the slaughter of the inhabitants of the Greek island of Psara.

Afterwards they invited the Brothers to give a triple cheerful applause for those who had the «most beautiful and enviable fortune» to die for their homeland.

In the same year the same lodge mourned the death of the philhellene poet and Freemason Lord Byron, nephew of the Grand Master of the Grand Lodge of England, Baron William Byron.

When the Greeks attain a free State, the grand-son of the supreme commander of the Revolution Theodoros Kolokotronis, who bore his grand-father's name and the nickname Falez, writes a book titled Priest of the Eleusis Mysteries. It includes the line:

"Blessed be the Masonic lodges

which baptized you

in the baptismal font of freedom"

As we already mentioned, the Grand Lodge that had been founded in the Ionian Islands ceased its operation in 1857. In 1861, three years before the union of the Ionian Islands to Greece, English militaries who were in Zakynthos founded the Star of the East Lodge 880. This lodge has been operating till the present day under the auspices of the United Grand Lodge of England.

In the Greek state the first lodges appear to be operating under the auspices of the Grand Orient of Italy. In 1863 they win semi-autonomy in the form of the Directorate and in 1868 by Charter of the Grand Master of the Grand Orient of Italy, the Grand Orient of Greece (afterwards Grand Lodge of Greece) is founded. Despite all this, they continue to operate with a directorate presided over by Nikolaos Damaskinos as Deputy Grand Master.

Owing to want of unanimity of votes at an attempted election for the office of Grand Master, he was authorized ad interim to exercise the functions of the Grand Master.

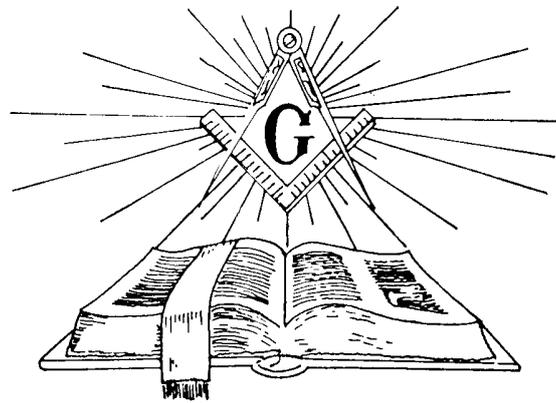
The General Assembly that will appoint the first Grand Master, Prince Dimitrios Rodokanakis, is convened on 10th July 1872. Two days later, on 12th July 1872, pursuant to the power bestowed to him by the Supreme Council of the 33rd degree of Scotland, Dimitrios Rodokanakis founds the Supreme Council of the Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite of Greece.

And so, in those three days of June 1872 was completed the official beginning of Freemasonry in the newly founded Greek state.

Bibliography

- About the Free Masons, Free Masonry and their contribution to the Nation's struggle. Panayiotis G. Kritikos, Masonic Foundation of Greece Press
- Alexander Drummond First Provincial Grand Master (1739 – 1747). An Historical Sketch by Brother William C. Shepherdson
- The Brothers Carburi Petrie Harbouri, **Publisher:** Bloomsbury Publishing PLC
- Cristina di Svezia, J.D. Cassini, la sua famiglia e la proto-massoneria italo-francese, Giustino Languasco.
- Emanuel Swedenborg, Secret Agent on Earth and in Heaven, Jacobites, Jews and Freemasons in Early Modern Sweden, Marsha Keith Schuchard
- Freemasonry in Eighteenth- Century Izmir? A Critical Analysis of Alexander Drummond's Travels (1754), Maurits H. van den Boogert
- The Foundation of Freemasonry in new Hellenism. Aggelou, Alkis. "O Eranistis" (Study Group on Greek Enlightenment)
- Freemasonry in Greek society and letters in the 18th century, Evidence from the German-speaking Lodges. Iliia Hatzipanayioti-Sangmeister, Periplous Press.
- Free Masonry (Contribution to the Revolution of 1821).
<http://argolikivivliothiki.gr/tag/μασονική-στοά/>
- History of Greek Free Masonry and Greek History. Loukas Ioannis, Athens, Papazisis Press.

- The History of Masonry in Moldova (1733-1812), reprinted from MASONIC ATHENAEUM, the official journal of the Grand Lodge of Moldova (No.1, November 2014, pp. 10-15)
- History of freemasonry in Moldova <http://mlm.md/en/istoricul.htm>
- IEREDOM, From the medieval Masonic Myth to the Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite. Iordanis Poulkouras, Archetypo Press.
- La loge et l'étranger : les Grecs dans la Franc-maçonnerie marseillaise au début du XIX^e siècle, Mathieu Grenet
- IEREDOM, From the medieval Masonic Myth ... In the Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite. Iordanis Poulkouras, Archetypo Press.
- Locke's Philosophy: Content and Context G. A. J. Roger
- Masonic analects, Andreas H. Rizopoulos, Archetypo Press.
- «NEWS FROM THE RANKS OF THE MURATORI » and the Adoption of Free Masonry by the Ecumenical Patriarch Callinicos III. Yiorgos Kouzakiotis
- Philhellenes and Greek Freemasons in 1821, Andreas H. Rizopoulos, Tetraktys Press.
- The Secret Revolutionary , Spyridonas Hatzaras
- Romanians about Rigas. Elena Lazar, President of Omonia Press, Bucharest
- Réseaux maçonniques et paramaçonniques des officiers de la Grande Armée engagés dans les mouvements nationaux et libéraux, Walter Bruyère-Ostells



© CIEM - 2015