

The Scottish Rite in Greece

Andreas C. Rizopoulos, 32^o



FFICIALLY, THE ANCIENT AND ACCEPTED SCOTTISH RITE has been present in Greece since July 1872 when the first Supreme Council was established by Demetrius Rhodocanakis under the authority given to him as active member of the Supreme Council of Scotland.

Thus it now has a fully documented history of over 130 years. The Scottish Rite in other forms has been present in Greece, or at least in what is the present Greece for almost an additional one hundred years, that is since 1781. This paper does not aim to present the complete history of the Rite in Greece, which would necessitate a full-length book and most probably would only interest a very limited audience. Instead, I intend to present the most important developments during these 220 years and to comment on the origins and on some contentious events of the period and finally to raise a number of questions.

THE BEGINNING OF GREEK FREEMASONRY

In 1782 the first Masonic lodge was erected in Corfu, the capital of the seven Ionian Islands, under the authority of the Grand Mother Lodge of Verona at Padova and ultimately under the National Directorate of Lyon of the French Rectified Scottish Rite and was named Beneficenza (Benevolence or Charity). This lodge became dormant shortly after the Venetian Republic started persecuting Freemasonry. It was revived in 1797 when the French occupied the Ionian Islands for a brief period and again became dormant until 1806 when

the French came to the islands for the second time. Then it was revived again and united with Lodge Filogenia, which was working in Corfu, under the name Beneficenza-Filogenia Riunite, Filogenia meaning friendship of the nation. On 21 November 1811 Count Dionyssios de Roma applied to the recently revived Grand Orient of France to place this lodge under its aegis. Following the approval of the Grand Orient, Roma turned the lodge 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 Protectorate in 1815 Roma and the other Freemasons of the time, decided to declare the lodge to be the Serene Grand Orient of Greece. That was a very bold move if we are to consider that at the time there was no country existing under the name of “Greece.” It is noteworthy that after the launch of the War of Independence in 1821, Klemens von Metternich, the influential Austrian Foreign Minister, stated that he knew of no country with the name of “Greece” because he could not find it on his maps.

Roma took another bold initiative by approaching the Grand Master of the newly formed United Grand Lodge of England (U.G.L.E.), Augustus Duke of Sussex, offering him the position of Grand Master of the new Grand Orient headquartered in Corfu. Records existing in the French National Archives confirm that the Duke accepted the position, although I have not been able to find any mention in the *Proceedings* of the U.G.L.E. It seems that Roma on the one hand was trying to obtain legitimacy of the new body and on the other hand to serve a political purpose. The kettle of the revolution was already on the fire, and the Ionian Islands were the only part of Greece that was beyond the reach of the Ottomans. This situation was to be exploited during the War, but that is another story.

THE DEMISE OF THE FIRST GRAND ORIENT OF GREECE

Despite the fact that this new Grand Orient was effectively placed under the U.G.L.E., all Ionian Freemasons traced their identity from the Scottish Rite. Thus we find them signing all documents, including Craft diplomas, with their Scottish Rite ranks. A large number were 18°, Sovereign Princes Rose Croix, and Roma and a couple of other leaders held only the 31°. This was not just a local confusion, but signing all Masonic documents with one’s “highest” rank followed the practice in the French Rectified Scottish Rite. One would have expected, though, that after deciding to establish a closer relation with England they would have adapted to the English practice, which did not acknowledge

the “High Degrees.” But this consideration comes out of hindsight, since at that period these distinctions were not really clear-cut in the Continent.

So I believe that it is sound to state that the Scottish Rite was present in Greece from the first beginnings of Freemasonry. The demise of the first Grand Orient of Greece is also indirectly due to the Scottish Rite. Here are the relevant events.

During the War of Independence (1821–1828) it seems that there was no Masonic activity as such in Greece. Greek Freemasons were active in the War and instrumental in its success, but that was not the time for regular Masonic activity. Following the liberation of Greece, the Ionian Islands remained under the British Protectorate, and Freemasons continued with their normal activities. At the same time in the mainland the first Governor, Ioannis Capodistria, although a Freemason himself, in 1828 proscribed all secret societies, including Freemasonry. It was not until the 1850s that Freemasonry was revived.

In Corfu there was now located Anthony Dandolo, a former officer in the army of Napoleon and a 33°, S.G.I.G., from a French lodge. Dandolo for a number of years “created” Masons under the authority of his 33° within the clandestine lodge Phoenix that he reportedly erected in 1818. Dandolo was Francophile, and for many years he engaged in political activity against the British Protectorate. In all those years it seems that the regular Freemasons of the Grand Orient simply avoided Masonic contact with him. When the Duke of Sussex died in 1843, the Grand Orient, together with the English Pythagoras Lodge, working in Corfu since 1837, decided to organize a memorial service. Dandolo, despite his anti-British feelings, demanded to be present and to be received with the honors pertaining to his 33°.

It seems that both Greek and British Freemasons refused his demand, and Dandolo was so incensed that he applied to Grand Orient of France for a charter to place Phoenix Lodge under the French aegis. He received the charter a couple of months later, and from then on, for the next seven years, there was constant warfare between Phoenix and the Grand Orient of Greece. The Grand Orient sent a number of memoranda both to the Grand Orient of France and the U.G.L.E. protesting against the establishment of a “French” lodge in a Masonically occupied territory, but to no avail. Then around 1850 the Grand Orient of Greece ceased to exist. Unfortunately we have not been able to pinpoint the exact time and the potential final stroke. The fact remains, though, that the developments are again flavored by the Scottish Rite, since everything seems to have been initiated from the offense felt by Dandolo when his powers emanating from his 33° were not acknowledged.

Phoenix Lodge remained active and with a strong presence in Corfu, remaining under the Grand Orient of France until 1931 when it decided to join the then Grand Orient of Greece and received the honorary number 1.

THE SECOND GRAND ORIENT OF GREECE

Around 1855 several lodges were working in mainland Greece formed by former members of Phoenix Lodge 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, Chalkis, 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 existence of seven lodges does not infer that there was a large number of active members. At the same time the leading members of the lodges in Athens and those behind the application for independence, were persons highly placed in the society—university professors, military leaders, politicians, and so on—and all of them with very strong personalities. So while there was not a big body from which to draw the leadership of the Grand Orient, nevertheless the leading personalities could not agree on the nomination of the first Grand Master. The founders of the new Grand Orient could only agree to appoint a Deputy Grand Master *pro tempore* until they could find someone acceptable by all for this position.

THE BIRTH OF A “PRINCE”

Among the founders was Mikes Rhodocanakis who sometime in 1868 mentioned that a cousin of his was a very prominent prince living in England named Prince Demetrius Rhodocanakis. So the new Grand Orient of Greece decided to contact him and offer him the position of Grand Master. All of them assumed that a prince would most definitely be a Freemason as well. They were surprised to find out first that Rhodocanakis was not a Mason, and second that 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.

Who was Rhodocanakis? Demetrius Rhodocanakis claimed that he was born on 15 December 1840 on the island of Chios, or Scio, and called himself “Prince,” and as such he is titled in almost all Masonic references. However the records of the island of Syra, or Syros, prove that he was born there, according to the declaration of his father deposited at the Registry of Births on 19 February 1841. As to the title of “prince,” see below. Rhodocanakis went to Manches-

ter, England, from Syra in 1860 and lived there until 1872 when he returned to Greece. He died in Hermoupolis, Syra, in 1902. A more detailed biography of Rhodocanakis has been published in *Ars Quatuor Coronatorum*, the transactions of the Quatuor Coronati Lodge No. 2076 of London.¹

Rhodocanakis went to Manchester in 1860, presumably to work in one of the companies of his uncles. There were two major companies at that time in England with offices in London and Manchester. It is unknown to which one he was attached. One was named "Rodocanachi & Sons Merchants" and the other "Rodocanachi Giovanni & Co." Rhodocanakis, with the expert help of a well-known and talented forger named Simonides published an impressive genealogy of his family, tracing his roots to Emperor Constantine Paleologue, and thus set the foundations to his claim that he was a descendant of a Byzantine Imperial family. Rhodocanakis made the first move to claim his "title" by an ingenious, if not orthodox, way. In 1867 he was registered in England as a naturalized alien under the name "Prince Demetrius Rhodocanakis." In view of the countless princes of European origin who were circulating in Europe at that time no one disputed his claim. His next move was to ask to be erased from the Greek records, on 20 March 1869, as having obtained British citizenship and being a resident of Manchester. Much later, while living in Greece, he embarked on a legal fight with the Mayor of Hermoupolis, Syra, because the latter would not recognize his "title" as prince, since no royal titles were recognized in Greece, save those belonging to the then reigning royal family. Rhodocanakis presented his British passport, with the word "prince" accompanying his name, as proof of his right to the title.

THE BEGINNING OF THE SUPREME COUNCIL OF GREECE

Rhodocanakis described developments following the invitation from the Grand Orient of Greece. His own version of the events is presented in an elaborate publication titled *Official Report of the Proceedings Relative to the Foundation of the Grand Lodge of Freemasons of Greece and Election of its First Grand Master*, which Rhodocanakis produced in 1872 and sent to all Grand Lodges. There Rhodocanakis writes:

About this period a confidential correspondence took place between certain delegates of the fraternity in Greece and myself relative to my candidature for the vacant post. At that time my answer was an unqualified refusal; first, because I was not myself a Mason; and, secondly, because I was then of opinion that the dignity, although highly to be coveted, was

too onerous to permit me to accept it with satisfaction to myself, or to those brethren over whom I was thus flatteringly called to preside. Eventually, however, my conscientious scruples were overcome, and, taking counsel of sundry brethren well qualified to advise me in this somewhat difficult position, I at length permitted myself to be proposed as a candidate for initiation.²

Rhodocanakis, through his contacts and endowed with the title of “prince,” somehow contacted the Grand Lodge of Scotland. 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 admitted to the Order of the Temple. Then on 29 November he was advanced to the Royal Order of Scotland by the Grand Chapter of H.R.D.M. A few months later Rhodocanakis is reported to have been present as a visitor to St. Andrew’s Lodge of Mark Masters No. 28 S.C. in Manchester and recorded as “Prince Rhodocanakis, 30°.”³

Rhodocanakis had accepted the offer of the Grand Orient of Greece and was preparing himself for the position by trying to collect all degrees available to him. But at the same time he seems to have had his sights on other schemes. While still a 30° he contacted the Supreme Council of England and Wales in order to obtain a Warrant to establish a Supreme Council in Greece. C. John Mandleberg refers to this incident in *Ancient and Accepted*:


In Europe, Supreme Council found itself involved with the establishment of a Supreme Council in Greece which was eventually set up by Prince Demetrias [*sic*] Rhodocanakis, a Freemason who seems to have been endowed with both influence and considerable ambition. Prince Rhodocanakis 30° had his first interview with Supreme Council on 7th February 1870. On the following day the Council resolved that a Warrant could be granted to him to establish a Supreme Grand Council “for the Kingdom of Greece, or other political government which he may decide upon.” However Supreme Council made the proviso that it should be assured that “the leading Members of such Kingdom or Government, as well as the Clergy of that Country, are in favour of such proceeding, and further that no politics be mixed up with Masonry”; this is the first time that Supreme Council made any reference to “the leading Members of such Kingdom,” and more specifically to “the Clergy of that Country,” in considering any request for the establishment or recognition of a Supreme Grand Council. Supreme Council attached the further conditions to the grant of a Warrant “that the proposed Council should be stationary in Athens or the Capital of the Country decided on,” and that the other Supreme Grand Councils with which it was in amity should give

their assent. Supreme Council went on to resolve that when it received these assurances “the degree of S.G.I. 33° will be conferred on Prince Rhodocanakis with full power to establish a Supreme Council in the Country agreed to.”

However in the following May Rhodocanakis wrote to Supreme Council to withdraw his request for a Warrant and said that he had been elected to fill a vacancy in the Scottish Supreme Council. At the same time [Nathaniel] Philips, the Grand Treasurer General, told the Council that he had met the Archbishop of Lyra who had told him that there was no objection to a Supreme Council being formed in Greece.⁴

The reason why Rhodocanakis withdrew his request was that on 28 April 1870 he was coroneted Sovereign Grand Inspector General, 33°, by the Supreme Council of Scotland, and he received the required Warrant to establish a Supreme Council in Greece from this body.

But the above was not the last time Rhodocanakis approached the Supreme Council of England and Wales. Next year Rhodocanakis approached them on the potential establishment of a Supreme Council on the Isle of Man.

In May 1870 he also sent a query to Supreme Council about “The Red  of Rome and Constantine,” and then in February 1871 he asked if it would take “The Order of Justinian” under its Banner. The latter offer Supreme Council resolved to decline with thanks. Then at the Council Meeting on 10th May “Br. Prince Rhodocanakis a 33° of Scotland was admitted.” The Prince told the Council that Yarker had asked him to be the first Sovereign Grand Commander of a new Supreme Council which Yarker proposed to form in the Isle of Man. Although Rhodocanakis said that “he never had any intention of accepting the post offered to him,” Supreme Council considered it prudent formally to resolve “that as the Isle of Man is part of the Kingdom of England there cannot be another Supreme Council within its jurisdiction according to the ancient statutes,” and to send a copy of the Resolution to the Prince so that he would be in no doubt of its position.⁵

Rhodocanakis remained in England most of the next year and on 14 September 1871 departed for Greece where, after traveling through France and Italy, arrived in Athens on 20 October. The reason for the delay for his departure (almost three years after he was first approached to accept the position of Grand Master) is not clear. His explanation in the report mentioned above is that he was delayed due to the war between France and Germany. He writes:

... political convulsions of an abnormal and sanguinary nature rendered my projected visit to Greece inadvisable, inasmuch as I did not wish that

this visit should be confounded with designs of equivocal character. This delay was criticized by friends both in Great Britain, America and Greece, and the causes that had hitherto retarded my long projected departure, having been removed by the Franco-Prussian truce, I had no longer any reason for inaction.⁶

This rather feeble explanation, as if the position of the Grand Master of the Grand Lodge of Greece could be brought into the French-German conflict, has been accepted by some Greek historians at face value. But it is these same historians who had claimed, although the dates of his trip are mentioned in the publication of 1872, that he had “visited all European countries in order to contact the Masonic authorities traveling for months before arriving in Greece” regardless of the fact that Rhodocanakis does not make such claim.

A possible explanation is that he nourished the hope that he could be involved with a grander project either through the Grand Lodge of Scotland, or the Supreme Council of England and Wales.

According to the *Report*⁷ 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 22 July 1872 Rhodocanakis was elected Grand Master, and two days later on 24 July he established a Supreme Grand Council 33° 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.

RESPECTABILITY AND RECOGNITION

After Rhodocanakis had returned to Greece and before the establishment of the Greek Supreme Council, we find Rhodocanakis mentioned again in the minutes of the Supreme Council for England. Mandelberg refers again to this:

In a letter which Philips wrote to [Albert G.] Goodall at the N.J. U.S.A., on 2nd February 1872, he was very scathing about Rhodocanakis and his ambition to form a Supreme Council in Greece. He added, “Prince Rhodocanakis was made from an E.A. to a 33° in three or four days in Scotland and has never occupied the Chair of a Lodge or other Masonic body.” This can hardly have been true as the Prince was a 30° when he first appeared before Supreme Council in February 1870, and does not appear to have been advanced to the 33° until some time later. However, as is evident in his dealings with Dr. [Henry B.] Leeson, charitable feelings to those he disliked was never one of Philip’s characteristics. Furthermore, as can be seen from contemporary articles and correspondence in the

Masonic journals, doubt had been cast upon the credentials of Rhodocanakis; in some of these he was virtually accused of being a charlatan. These doubts appear eventually to have been dispelled, but unwholesome publicity of this type would undoubtedly have offended Philips who had the highest standards of conduct and social propriety.⁸

In October 1872 Rhodocanakis approached the Supreme Council of England asking for its recognition:⁹

Supreme Council reacted to this request with the same strict caution as it had displayed when Rhodocanakis had sought a Warrant from it. It resolved first to ask the Scottish Council if it had recognised the new Council and then to send four questions to Rhodocanakis himself:

1. If there was any Member of the 33° in Greece when he founded the Council?
2. Whether any R.C. Chapter or other Body of the A. & A. Rite was already working there?
3. Whether the new Council had been recognised by the Supreme Council of Scotland?
4. Whether it has the approbation of the Grecian authorities?"

There was some confusion about the recognition of the Greek Supreme Council. Writing to Albert Pike of the S.J., U.S.A., Philips quoted Stewart, the Grand Secretary General of the Scottish Supreme Council, as saying "the Supreme Council for Scotland has not as yet recognised a Supreme Council for Greece," although, Philips continues, the latter was, according to Rhodocanakis, established under the authority of the S.C. for Scotland. However Rhodocanakis then wrote to say that he had no doubt that the Scottish Council of which he was presumably still a Member, would give its recognition as soon as it met. In respect of the other assurances which Supreme Council had required, he said that there were no members of the A. & A. Rite in Greece when he opened the Council there and that his action was approved by both the Civil and Ecclesiastical authorities. Moreover he added that there was a belief that the King of Greece will eventually become the M. P. S. G. Cr. of the new Council.¹⁰

By May 1873 the Supreme Grand Council of Greece had been recognized both by the Supreme Council of the S.J., U.S.A. and also by that of Scotland. When the Prince again wrote seeking recognition, resigning from the 30° in England and nominating Ill. Bro. Mavrokordato of Greece as the Representative of the English Council near his own, on 13th May 1873 Supreme Council resolved to accept his Resignation and to recognize the Supreme Council for Greece. Mavrokordato (his name is variously spelled in the

records) died later in the year, and [Robert] Hamilton sent Rhodocanakis a Diploma appointing Major S. Karaiskakes as his successor.

The election of Rhodocanakis to the two exalted positions solved the problems caused by the clashes of personalities but did not have other immediate effects on the development of Freemasonry in Greece. For another ten years practically all Masonic activity was limited to Athens. Rhodocanakis was treating the two councils as his fiefdom. Following the consecration of the two Councils he moved to Syra where he continued his writing career and devoted himself to family life, marrying twice.

Over a period of almost thirty years he was present at just eleven meetings of the Councils. Between his first and the second meeting, six years elapsed. Between the second and the third, five years, and so on. In between the meetings it is assumed that he kept in contact with them, but not necessarily informing them of his actions.

UNANSWERED QUESTIONS

Before proceeding with the history of the first official Supreme Council of the Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite in Greece, I find it necessary to present some, so far, unanswered questions.

Considering that the leaders of the Grand Orient of Greece were hailing mainly from French and Italian lodges, it is understandable that they should consider that the “proper” structure of Freemasonry included the Ecossais degrees. Rhodocanakis was living in Manchester, an area under the jurisdiction of the U.G.L.E., and thus it should seem that he should have approached the U.G.L.E. to be initiated. Instead he traveled to Scotland. An easy, and probably reasonable, explanation could be that he was told from Athens that they were following the Ecossais Freemasonry and in view of the lack of knowledge, which is present even in our days, he and they thought that Scotland is the “source” of Scottish Freemasonry.

We have seen that Rhodocanakis “collected” several degrees in Scotland, but when he came to Greece he chose only to establish a Supreme Council, and nothing was ever mentioned about other Orders. The answer to this is probably very simple. Rhodocanakis had great difficulty finding enough freemasons in order to call an assembly, and the officers of both the Grand Orient and the Supreme Council were practically the same, because there were no others available. Thus, he wisely assumed that they could be spread too thin if they tried to set up other Orders.

Another intriguing question concerns the delay of the Supreme Council of Scotland to recognize the new Supreme Council for Greece. Despite the fact that Rhodocanakis was elected an active member of the Supreme Council of Scotland with the mission to establish the Greek Supreme Council, the recognition from Scotland came almost one year later, after the recognition by the Southern Jurisdiction.

SCHISM IN THE SUPREME COUNCIL

During the first decade of the new Supreme Council there was practically no activity either in the Scottish Rite or the Craft. Lodges numbered only a few members who met at one office or another. New members were effectively “elected,” and the degrees were “communicated.” The first Chapter was formed almost twenty years after the establishment of the Supreme Council. The conditions were very loose, Rhodocanakis was absent most of the time and then a momentous event took place: the notorious Lausanne Congress of 1875.¹¹ The Supreme Council of Greece was represented at the Conference by Ill. Bro. Lindsay Mackersey, a member of the Supreme Council of Scotland. The results of the Conference and the repercussions are very well known so I will not expand here.

Several members of the Greek Supreme Council and of the Grand Orient, under the leadership of Prof. N. Damaskinos, Deputy Grand Master and Deputy Grand Commander, selected to side with the French, creating thus the first schism in Greek Freemasonry. Damaskinos and his followers established a new body named “Supreme Council-Grand Orient of Greece.” The schism is mentioned in the archives of the Supreme Council of England.

In April 1896 a report of a schism among the members of the A. and A. Rite in Greece was discussed at the meeting of the representatives of the three British Councils in Dublin. It was said that some brethren had seceded from the allegiance to the recognised Supreme Council and to have formed both a Grand Orient and a Grand Council:

It was unanimously resolved that the Delegates should recommend to their respective Sup.: Councils only to recognize the original Sup.: Council presided over by Prince Rhodocanakis and not to recognise any other.

In spite of this resolution the matter then became somewhat confused. On 17th December 1896 the Grand Orient of Greece wrote to Supreme Council “Re Conferring the Title of Honorary Grand Master Sov.: Grd.: Commander for Greece upon H.R.H. the Prince of Wales.” At its Meeting on 9th February 1897 Supreme Council was informed that the Prince of Wales had accepted this honour and that his Diploma as such had been

received. Shortly after this Supreme Council received from the Grand Orient Sup.: Co.: 33° Greece a "Circular letter relative to the Cretan Insurrection. Ordered to lie on the Table."

On 28th February the Supreme Council of Greece wrote to Supreme Council "Re acceptance by H.R.H. the Prince of Wales of Title conferred upon him by the Grand Orient Sup.: Co.: of Greece and sent by Ill. Br. N. Damaschino 33°." Instructed to reply that the letter would be laid before the Sup. Council at their next Meeting." On 2nd April a Telegram was received from the "Grand Orient Sup. Co. 33° Greece," "requesting that no action be taken in the question of the Irregular Greek Sup. Council until receipt of his letter." Four days later there was a letter from the same source "Re Conferment of Title on H.R.H. the Prince of Wales. Consideration ordered to stand over." There is no record of the "consideration" of any of these matters in the Minutes of the next Meeting of Supreme Council on 13th July 1897. At the following Meeting the only record is of a "Circular of 21st August 1897 from Ill.: Bro.: N. Damaschino 33°." Ordered to lie on the Table. There, tantalisingly, the matter seems to have ended.¹²

For a number of years the three bodies (Supreme Council, Grand Orient and the new body of Damaskinos) were working in Athens and it was not until some years after the death of Rhodocanakis, in 1902, and the withdrawal of Damaskinos, that they managed to resolve their differences and set up to independent bodies, one for the Craft and the other for the Scottish Rite.

In December 1906 representatives of the three bodies met and started negotiations to end the schism and resume regularity. The situation was harming everyone both locally, due to the limited number of Freemasons, and internationally with the confusion concerning recognition by the various bodies in Europe and the United States. The negotiations carried on for about two months and an agreement was signed. The combined Grand Orient/Supreme Council would restrict itself only to the Craft and would recognize the Supreme Council set up by Rhodocanakis as the only legitimate Scottish Rite body in Greece. At the same time the Supreme Council agreed to recognize all degrees and offices that had been granted by the joint body during the years of the parallel operation. Although all problems seemed to have been resolved there remained some procedural problems, which were to afflict Freemasonry in Greece almost seventy years later.

Meanwhile the two distinct bodies started thriving and expanding despite the political problems of Europe and the region, which developed in the next decades, including the two Balkan Wars, World War I, and later World War II.

Part of the expansion included Cyprus, which at the time was under British rule. Since 1893 the Grand Orient had set up a Craft lodge name Zenon in Limas-

sol for Greek-speaking Cypriots. The history of Freemasonry in Cyprus is beyond the scope of this paper, but suffice to state that the conditions in Cyprus were very delicate. Technically the island, being under British rule, could be considered to be Masonically British territory. There was already a lodge under English Constitution working in the island, which was established mainly to cover the needs of the British military and local government employees who were living on the island. Almost from the first months, Greek-speaking Cypriots joined this lodge, and before long they formed almost the majority of the membership. The majority of the population spoke English, but their preferred language was Greek. The next move was to ask U.G.L.E. to form a Greek-speaking lodge. This request was denied and they turned to Greece, which was happy to expand to Cyprus, not only for the sake of expansion, but also in view of the latent desire to consider Cyprus as part of the country. When the internal problems of Freemasonry were resolved in Greece, the next logical move was to demand the creation of a Consistory, 30°, for those who wished to progress to the degrees of the Scottish Rite.

I refer again to Mandleberg and the records of the Supreme Council of England and Wales.

Although at that time there were no formal friendly relations between the two Supreme Councils, in October 1918 the Greek Council very courteously wrote to the English Council asking whether it had “any objection to their starting a 30° Consistory at Limassol, Cyprus.” Supreme Council approved Tower’s reply:

My Supreme Council greatly appreciate the kind courtesy which has prompted you to address this Supreme Council and they do not desire to raise opposition to your desire to inaugurate a 30° Consistory under your Constitution in Limassol.

You will of course understand that my Supreme Council do this without prejudice to their own right of establishing the Ancient and Accepted Rite in the island of Cyprus in the future. [Note 144: LB 31,728 (21st Oct. 1918)]¹³

An immediate interpretation of the move of the Greek Supreme Council would be that it was plainly an act of courtesy because England did not have a Consistory in the island and since there was already a Greek lodge there, the Consistory would be serving only Greeks in an otherwise “open territory.”

AN UNEASY RELATIONSHIP

The new independent Grand Orient of Greece for traditional reasons decided on the one hand to continue using the rituals of the Scottish Rite (adapted from

the French texts) and to sign a Concordat with the Supreme Council. The Concordat of 1908 was the first of similar texts to be signed until the last one in the middle 1980s and was finally revoked in 1993.

Among some innocent and customary articles in these Concordats, which proclaimed the independence of the two bodies and the power of the Grand Orient over Craft degrees and of the Supreme Council of the Higher Degrees, there have been a number of articles that have created problems and wrong impressions during the following decades and until the early 1990s.

In the first Concordat there was an article that gave the power to the Supreme Council to Initiate, Pass, and Raise Freemasons and then to demand the Grand Orient to accept them in one of its lodges. This was clearly a usurpation of power since according to accepted practices the Supreme Council cannot have any power in Craft degrees. This article was not included in later Concordats.

Two other articles remained in all texts, until the final one, and they have been considered an abrogation of power by the Grand Orient. According to the first, members of the Supreme Council visiting Craft lodges should be given the same honors as the members of the Council of the Grand Orient. In addition holders of the 33° were allowed to visit lodges wearing only the "eagle" and not an apron. For a number of years it was a customary sight in Craft lodges of the Grand Master entering the lodge side-by-side with the Grand Commander receiving the same honors.

While this provision could be considered as an over-zealous courtesy, another article was certainly stressing traditions and considerations of independence. An article stated that any Masonic offence of a member of the Supreme Council within the Grand Lodge, or any individual lodge, could only be tried by the Supreme Council itself.

These articles of the Concordats were part of the initial accusations of the U.G.L.E. when in 1993 it decided to withdraw recognition from the Grand Lodge of Greece. I say "initial" because as soon as the subject was raised the Grand Lodge denounced the Concordat, and the accusation became moot.

But let us return to the 1920s. The two bodies were working independently, and they thrived. There were no other Orders in Greece, and most members of Craft lodges felt that joining the Scottish Rite was a natural and expected step. The two bodies were jointly publishing a monthly Masonic magazine, and they were sharing the same building. As the numbers grew it was decided to obtain a permanent building, and a property was jointly bought. The Grand Orient held 80 per cent and the Supreme Council 20 per cent of the property. Then in 1928

the Grand Orient managed to be recognized as a State-recognized Foundation, while the Supreme Council formed a private association under the Civil Law.

There was no friction between the two bodies until 1976. The only change had been the change of the name of the governing authority of the Craft which initially in the 1930s was renamed Grand Orient/Grand Lodge of Greece and finally, after World War II, was named Grand Lodge of Greece.

THE YORK RITE AND RECOGNITION ISSUES

Then in 1976 several Greek Freemasons decided to import to Greece the degrees of the American York Rite with the help and instigation of several Greek-origin Freemasons, members of the Rite, from Germany. Initially there seemed not to exist any problem. It is noteworthy that at the Consecration of the first royal Arch Chapters there were present several members of the Supreme Council and the Council of the Grand Lodge. Problems came to surface when the leaders of this York Rite body requested recognition from the Grand Lodge. We are very close to the events and the ground is very delicate, so I can only assume that the Grand Lodge of Greece must have felt that there would be a new body that could not and would not be controlled by it. Also the Supreme Council must have felt the danger of losing the monopoly of the progression beyond the Craft.

Both established bodies proscribed the newcomer and threatened with expulsion their members who remained there. This attitude and several other events eventually led to the establishment of the National Grand Lodge of Greece in 1986. Practically all the founders of this new body were regulars of the York Rite Chapters, Councils, and Commanderies. The leaders of the National Grand Lodge decided to strictly follow the British practice in their rituals and the minutiae of their operation. So curiously they decided to abandon the American-style York Rite and adopt the British Holy Royal Arch and the other degrees beyond the Craft (Mark, Royal Mariner, Cryptic Degrees, and so on) as practiced in England. The National embarked also on a concerted effort to obtain recognition initially from the U.G.L.E. and then from other foreign Grand Lodges.

So we come to 1993 when U.G.L.E. threatened the Grand Lodge of Greece with withdrawal of recognition mainly with three charges. First that the Grand Lodge was involved in politics, by allowing the discussion of the issue of Macedonia in Masonic meetings, second that it had removed the necessity of the Oath from the Obligations and third that it was subservient to the Supreme Council. The presentation of the pros and cons on the first two accusations is beyond my scope, while the third led to historically interesting developments.

The Grand Lodge of Greece, in order to nullify the accusations concerning the Supreme Council, took three very important actions. First, it gave notice of revocation of the then Concordat. Second, it amended its Constitution by removing all mentions of the Scottish Rite and the Constitutions of 1762 and 1786, changing its title to “Grand Lodge of Greece, A.F.& A.M.” Third, it introduced the Holy Royal Arch into Greek Craft Freemasonry using the terminology of the U.G.L.E., that is “Craft Freemasonry in Greece consists of the degrees of Entered Apprentice, Fellow Craft and Master Mason including the order of Royal Arch.”

That seemed a very reasonable and wise move since the intention was to nullify all potential objections of the U.G.L.E.. There was a small “technicality” though. The Royal Arch that was introduced and placed under the aegis of the Grand Lodge of Greece was in reality the American York Rite. The same Rite that was treated, at least, with suspicion and at most, with hostility, some years before. And to add an interesting note, the brethren who were invited to set up the first Chapters, etc. were the ones who had been exalted at the York Rite bodies which were working since 1976 and had become half-dormant after the National Grand Lodge had decided that the York Rite did not quite fit with its grander plan.

At first the Supreme Council reportedly considered severing its relations with the Grand Lodge and establishing relations with the National, but very soon wiser and calmer thoughts prevailed. After all the Supreme Council was sharing the same five-story building in the center of Athens and also had joint properties in other cities. The Grand Lodge of Greece was much larger than the National, thus providing a potentially bigger source of new members. Also, since the then members were coming mostly from the Grand Lodge, if the Grand Lodge were to ask them to resign from the Scottish Rite in order to avoid communicating with unrecognized Freemasons, then the Supreme Council would very soon find its Chapters empty.

So since then there is a happy cohabitation in the same buildings throughout Greece of the Grand Lodge of Greece, the Supreme Council of Greece and the Supreme Grand Chapter which is semi-independent since it is under the aegis of the Grand Lodge of Greece and has practically the same leadership as the Grand Lodge of Greece.

As a historical endnote I must remind the readers that U.G.L.E. withdrew the recognition of the Grand Lodge of Greece in 1993 and gave it to the National Grand Lodge a year later. Then recognition was withdrawn from the National in 1999 in an effort of the U.G.L.E. to push the two Grand Lodges towards

mutual recognition, stating that U.G.L.E. now considered them both to be regular. This approach did not work and in 2000 the recognition was restored to the Grand Lodge of Greece. Throughout this period, it must be noted, most of the Grand Lodges of other countries, including the USA and Australia, never withdrew their recognition to the Grand Lodge of Greece.

NOTES

1. Andreas C. Rizopoulos, "The Three Mancunians," *Ars Quatuor Coronati*, vol. 113 (2000), pp. 166–84.
2. *Official Report of the Proceedings Relative to the Foundation of the Grand Lodge of Freemasons of Greece and Election of its First Grand Master* (Athens: Freemasons' Hall, 1872), p. 5.
3. *Freemasons' Magazine and Masonic Mirror*, 19 Mar. 1870, p. 236.
4. John Mandleberg, *Ancient and Accepted* (London: Quatuor Coronati Correspondence Circle, 1995), pp. 254–55.
5. Mandleberg, p. 255.
6. *Official Report*, p. 6.
7. *Official Report*, p. 6.
8. Mandleberg, pp. 255–56. The dates of the degrees, of course, cannot be not correct in view of the dates presented above. His rise through the ranks was rapid, but not unheard of. There was a period of almost five months between his initiation and his appointment as an S.G.I.G.
9. Mandleberg, pp. 256–57
10. It must be stated that this never materialized. Many years later, in 1917, the Supreme Council of Greece made Honorary S.G.I.G.s of two princes of the Greek Royal family, Andreas and Christophoros. The only other Royal with tangible Masonic connection was King George II who had been initiated in England while he lived there during one of the historic intervals when royals were in exile. George was also given the 32° in 1942. Here is the relevant extract from *Ancient and Accepted* by Mandleberg, pp. 911–1: "King George II of the Hellenes was a PMWS of Conjuncta Chapter No. 212. On 16th December 1937 Supreme Council received a letter from him 'accepting the invitation to advance to the 30° on his return to England,' and it was conferred upon him at the conclusion of the Meeting of Supreme Council on 15th December 1938. In February 1942 he was elected to the 32° to which he was Advanced on 5th March. On 1st December 1942 he wrote to Supreme Council 'conveying his thanks for regalia presented to him.'"

11. For more information on the Lasuaanne Congress, see C. John Mandelberg, "The Lausanne Congress of 1875," *Heredom*, vol. 5 (1997), pp. 83–111.

12. Mandelberg, pp. 486–87.

13. Mandelberg, pp. 766–67.