

**Brief History of Early Freemasonry in the Greek Regions**  
**In Particular the Island (Kerkyra), end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century to the first Quarter**  
**of the 19<sup>th</sup> Centuries**

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**Forward**

The article shown below has been compiled by Brother George Kar, who's resides on the island of Corfu and member of Lodge 92 Ioannis Kapodistrias, part of the "Provincial Grand Lodge of Ionian Islands", under the auspice of "National Grand Lodge of Greece"; Br George became a member of the official Lodge of Research 200 (Ireland) on Saturday 16<sup>th</sup> February 2019, Br George also taken the time to fly from Corfu to Dublin, enabling himself to be part of the stated communication and Installation of Officers of Lodge 200.

The basic principles' of Freemasonry is generally universal throughout the world; with this in mind, it is interesting to view how Freemasonry was influence from one country to another and indeed throughout the world; which Brother George, shows how Italy played a major roll influencing Freemasonry within the Greek Regions and in particular the Island (Kerkyra) which is known today as Corfu.

Brother George Kar; is one of the newest members of Lodge of Research 200 (Ireland), am sure that this article will not be the last, our Brother George will be submitting further articles of interest for posting onto Lodge of Research 200 Web-site.

W Br Ian MacIntyre, Treasurer, Lodge of Research 200.

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**Brother George Kar:** - Article

Freemasonry in Greece originated at the end of the 18th century on the Ionian islands, the so called "Heptanese" - Corfu (Kerkyra), Zante (Zakynthos), Ithaka, Cephalonia, Lefkas (Santa Maura), Paxi, Kythira - and more strongly in Corfu island (Kerkyra) (Appendix A). At the time, they were ruled by the "Republic of Venice – La Serenissima" (697-1797)

The main European channels of influence were, Literary and Art Societies, Masonic Lodges (especially from Italy) and Quasi Masonic organizations, like the "Good Cousins", in Vienna, founded 1790 from Rigas Feraios, writer, political thinker and revolutionary, active in the Modern Greek Enlightenment, Greek expression of the Age of Enlightenment.

The importance of Freemasonry in Corfu island (Kerkyra) can become recognizable by size through the organizations established, financed and run by Corfiot Freemasons, and not only, in an attempt to educate and to progress the Corfiot society in time to date. (Appendix B)

In Corfu island (Kerkyra) in 1782, under the authority of Grand Mother Lodge of Verona at Padova and ultimately, under the National Directorate of Lyon of the French Scottish Reformed Rite, the "Loggia Beneficenza" was founded, practicing the "Rectified Scottish Rite".

In 1785, Freemasonry was suppressed in Venice and as a result, this policy would have an impact on the rest of the Venetian Empire, and so on the Ionian Islands. Consequently the "Loggia Beneficenza", in Corfu island (Kerkyra), closed. By the time Napoleon Bonaparte conquered the Venetian Empire, 1797, the Lodge was revived in Corfu island (Kerkyra), but only until 1800, when the Russian & Ottoman Empire, established on the Ionian islands the "Septinsular Republic" and suppressed Freemasonry.

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After the Treaty of Tilsit, (July 1807) the Ionian islands fell under the First French Empire (1804-1814) and thus Freemasonry was revived again. 2 lodges in Corfu were merged as “Beneficenza-Filogenia Riunite” (1813). The leader of this lodge, Count Dionisios Roma, (diplomat, consul general in Moria and Rumeli on behalf of Venice), was keen to establish recognition. In November 21, 1811, applied to the “Grand Orient de France” to make it a Provincial Mother Lodge, as “Most Serene Grand Orient of Greece, Orient of Corfu”.

This was accepted but by that time a new political reality emerged in 1815, when the “United States of the Ionian Islands” (1815-1864) was established, as a result of the Vienna Congress (1814), under the protection of the British Empire. Thereinafter, Count Dionisios Romas decided to ask his friend, Augustus, Duke of Sussex, who was then the Grand Master of the “United Grand Lodge of England”, if he would become the Grand Master of the “Serene Grand Lodge of Greece”. At this time, Count Dionisios Romas renamed the lodge the “National Grand Lodge of Greece” and eventually lodges were formed all over the Ionian islands, at Zante (Zakynthos), Cephalonia, Lefkas (Santa Maura).

Today, there are 8 Symbolic Lodges in Corfu, among them “Phoenix Kerkyra”, (Kerkyra=Corfu), the oldest Lodge in Greece, and because of this honorific has no number and 1 Lodge in Lefkas island, organized in the Provincial Grand Lodge of Ionian Islands, under the auspice of National Grand Lodge of Greece (Appendix C) Along with them, in Corfu there are 2 Lodges, organized together with some others Lodges outside Corfu island, as “Lodges of Western Greece”, under the direct administration of National Grand Lodge of Greece, “Lodge Ariti”, No. 48 and “Lodge Beneficenza”, No. 53. Also, Corfu island, operates “Appendant Bodies”, 2 Mark Lodges, 1 Mariner Lodge, 1 Royal Arch Chapter and 1 Scottish Rite Valley.

#### **Appendix A “Early Corfu Lodges”**

- Beneficenza (Italian) 1782
- Philogenie (French) 1807
- St Napoleon (French) 1809
- La – Paix (French) 1807-1818
- Beneficenza-Filogenia Riunite (Greek) 1813
- Pythagoras (English) 1815
- Most Serene Grand Orient of Greece, Orient of Corfu 1811
- National Grand Lodge of Greece 1815
- St John and the Phoenix 1818 [ in operation, as “Phoenix Kerkyras”, (Kerkyra=Corfu) ]

#### **Appendix B “Organizations”**

- Public Academy of Fine Arts 1805
- Ionian Academy (University) 1807
- Society for the promotion and cultivation of the Greek Language 1816
- Biblical Society 1819
- Corfu Reading Society 1834 (in operation)
- Philharmonic Society 1840 (in operation)
- Friends of Learning 1845
- Panhellenic Society 1849
- Theosophical Society in Greece 1877

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**Appendix B** *cont'd*

- Night School for illiterate children 1881 (in operation)
- Mantzaros Philharmonic Society 1890 (in operation)
- Astronomical Society of Corfu 1927 (in operation)
- Society for Corfu Studies 1952 (in operation)

**Appendix C** List of Symbolic (Blue) Lodges today to the Ionian Islands, under the auspice of “National Grand Lodge of Greece”.

- “Phoenix Kerkyras” (Corfu island - organized in the “Provincial Grand Lodge of Ionian Islands”)
- Union, No. 16 (Lefkas island - organized in the “Provincial Grand Lodge of Ionian Islands”)
- Ariti, No. 48 (Corfu island - “Lodges of Western Greece”, under the direct administration of National Grand Lodge of Greece,)
- Beneficenza, No. 53 (Corfu island - “Lodges of Western Greece”, under the direct administration of National Grand Lodge of Greece)
- Antonios Benakis, No. 61 (Corfu island - organized in the “Provincial Grand Lodge of Ionian Islands”)
- Rudyard Kipling, No. 85 (English speaking – Corfu island - organized in the “Provincial Grand Lodge of Ionian Islands”)
- Fratelli Bandiera, No. 86 (Italian speaking – Corfu island - organized in the “Provincial Grand Lodge of Ionian Islands”)
- Ioannis Kapodistrias, No. 92 (Corfu island -organized in the “Provincial Grand Lodge of Ionian Islands”)
- Filogenia, No. 93 (Corfu island - organized in the “Provincial Grand Lodge of Ionian Islands” )
- Dionisios Romas, No. 94 (Corfu island - organized in the “Provincial Grand Lodge of Ionian Islands”)
- La Paix, No. 95 (French speaking – Corfu island - organized in the “Provincial Grand Lodge of Ionian Islands”)

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