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Articles

THE WAYS OF THE NATION: MESSIANIC AND UNIVERSALIST NATIONALISM IN RENIERIS, ZAMBELIOS AND PAPARRIGOPOULOS

Pericles S. Vallianos

ABSTRACT: The vital cultural project during the nineteenth century was the formation of an authoritative version of the national consciousness that serve to homogenise the disparate populations of newly independent Greece. Three towering intellectuals led the way in this process: Markos Renieris, Spyridon Zambelios and Konstantinos Paparrigopoulos. All three adhered to the since dominant theory of the historical continuity of the Greek nation from prehistoric times to the present but held sharply different views concerning the role of Greece in the modern world. Renieris stressed the European vocation of today's Hellenic culture, given that the foundations of European civilisation were initially Hellenic as well. Zambelios put forward an anti-Western view of the nation's destiny, tinged with theological fanaticism and a mystical historicism. Paparrigopoulos was the consummate historian who emphasised the links between the Greek present and the past, chiefly through the medium of language, but without hiding the sharp discontinuities between historical periods.

I. A Vital Cultural Project

Three Greeks who would become prominent historians were born in 1815 and their life spanned the century: Markos Renieris (1815–1897), Spyridon Zambelios (1815–1881) and Konstantinos Paparrigopoulos (1815–1891). To them fell the lot of shaping the collective consciousness of a newly formed nation-state, the first one in Europe to break out of the rigid order of post-Napoleonic legitimism.¹ The Greek insurrection of 1821 set the tone for an entire century convulsed by the aspirations of peoples considering themselves “captive” and/or “dismembered”, and by their determination to revise the age-old territorial configurations (reimposed after the revolutionary paroxysm had receded) so that the political map might coincide with each one's self-conception of its historical due – an explosive and fraught undertaking. The Greek rising struck a chord, as we know, in the hearts of liberal Europe. But, the more consequential drama

¹ See Roderick Beaton, “Introduction”, in *The Making of Modern Greece: Nationalism, Romanticism and the Uses of the Past (1797–1896)*, ed. Roderick Beaton and David Ricks, London: Ashgate, 2009, pp. 1–18, Beaton lays particular emphasis on this pioneering aspect of the Greek experience.

of Italian and, especially, German unification, together with the long-drawn martyrdom of Poland, eventually eclipsed that Greek prelude.

The field of action of the Greek state was the Ottoman East, where the majority of Orthodox populations, defined by the new “national centre”, that is, Athens, as Hellenes, resided. In an era of militant national pretensions, not least in the immediate north of the Hellenic kingdom, the ailing Turkish Empire (at least in its European component) was an obvious candidate for liquidation. The newly assertive Slavic peoples had designs to that end. It would, thus, have been impossible (and even unnatural, given the passions agitating the human breast) for the Greek political classes, responding to overwhelming popular sentiment, not to have conceived of an “idea”, “great” or otherwise, of eastward territorial expansion. The remnants of the Enlightenment intelligentsia, long sustained by the denunciation of Ottoman despotism in Montesquieu, as well as the devotees of Byzantium of more recent mint, were of one mind on this.

This sowed international instability. The management of the “Eastern Question” was, as we know, the major preoccupation of European diplomacy during this period. No single power could be excessively strengthened from the shambles that southeastern Europe was threatening to become. To Western chanceries, the preservation of the decrepit Turkish state seemed the only means to stem the onrush of tsarist power southwards across the Straits on the back of upstart Slavic nationalisms. This also sat athwart the path of a putative “Greek empire” in the East, which was the truly grand (in truth, megalomaniac) version of the “great” idea. Thus, the fateful conviction arose from a disjunction between the “historical rights of the Greek nation” and the “selfish interests” of Western European powers. In fact, no state was more adamantly opposed to Greek designs on Constantinople than Russia.² But, the surge of anti-Western nationalism, propelled by the religious revival of the 1850s,³ expunged that fact.

One way for Greek irredentism to assert itself was to pursue “historical destiny” by force. This had been tried at the time of the Crimean War. It had

² This sentimental attachment to Russia accounts, for a large part, for the appeal of Stalinism, perceived as a Russian creed, throughout the twentieth century. This irrational devotion was prepared to overlook Russian actions clearly hostile to Greek national interests, such as the Lenin–Ataturk pact of 1921, the uprooting of the Greek communities of the Black Sea littoral under Stalin, and Soviet support for the partition of Cyprus as early as 1965, when the official policy of Greece, vociferously supported by the left, aimed at the union of the island with the Greek state.

³ For the significance of this revival in the routing of the remnants of Enlightenment ideology in the country, see Paschalis M. Kitromilides, *Νεοελληνικός Διαφωτισμός: Οι*

then the support of King Otto and it was also backed by the army and the population, because it awakened the heroic memories of the (unfinished, it was thought) struggle of 1821. But it was countermanded by the might of Britain and France.⁴ This should have taught a lesson, but it did not. Quixotic recklessness was disastrously to be tried again in 1897. This extremism – always combined with a foolish underestimation of the forces arrayed against it, paucity of own means and utter incompetence in managing them – reared its head repeatedly throughout the twentieth century, with ever more catastrophic results.

There were other alternatives. Internationally the legitimacy of Turkish rule in Europe was being challenged. By eschewing the messianic elation of schoolteachers, street orators and journalists, Greece stood a chance to make tangible gains. In 1864 Britain had voluntarily ceded the Ionian Islands to Greece. At the time of the Bulgarian troubles of 1875–76, Gladstone's stentorian condemnation of bashi-bazouk atrocities and his opposition to Disraeli's policy of shoring up the Ottoman state were a boost to Greek aspirations.⁵ As a token of gratitude, his statue stands to this day in the forecourt of the main building of the University of Athens, one of three of prominent Britons who aided decisively Greece's national struggles – the other two being Lord Byron and George Canning. And even Germany, the newcomer among giants, was not averse to the territorial aggrandisement of the Hellenic kingdom. The Congress of Berlin, orchestrated by Bismarck in 1878, set in motion the negotiation through which Greece was awarded the rich territory of Thessaly. It also imposed the Halepa Charter and an Orthodox governor on the island of Crete, with the Iron Chancellor even proposing that the island be ceded to Greece outright.

πολιτικές και κοινωνικές ιδέες [Neohellenic enlightenment: the political and social ideas], Athens: MIET, 1996, pp. 476–478. Translated as *Enlightenment and Revolution: The Making of Modern Greece*, Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2013.

⁴ For the revolt in Epirus, the wretched state of the Greek forces, the suffering of the Greek populations as a result of its failure, and the knee-jerk blaming of the “foreigners” for the outcome, see John S. Koliopoulos, *Ιστορία της Νεωτέρας Ελλάδος* [History of modern Greece], Thessaloniki: Vaniats, 2014, chap. 12. See also John S. Koliopoulos and Thanos M. Veremis, “Statecraft and Irredentism (1831–1862)”, chap. 2 in *Modern Greece: A History Since 1821*, London: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010.

⁵ William Ewart Gladstone, *Bulgarian Horrors and the Question of the East*, London: John Murray, 1876. For Gladstone it was a “black day” when the Turks, the “most antihuman specimen of humanity”, appeared in Europe, because they “represented everywhere government by force, as opposed to government by law” (p. 9). He demands the end of the “ostentatious protection” of Turkey by “our ministry” (p. 22) and the end of Turkish rule in Europe (p. 26), given the fact that “in European Turkey [...] the Christian element is the growing, and the Turkish the decaying one” (p. 33).

Greece was supported by Britain at the time, because the Greater Bulgaria of San Stefano, as a proxy of Russia, threatened the interests of the former in Macedonia and of the latter in the Mediterranean as a whole.⁶ Moreover, popular sympathy for Greek irredentism was widespread in Italy and France. Thousands of Italian volunteers under Ricciotti Garibaldi, the hero's son, fought with the Greeks in the war of 1897, as they were to do so again in 1912. After the defeat of 1897, the territorial integrity of Greece was restored by the European powers, which also secured the withdrawal of Turkish forces from Crete. The autonomy of the island under the Greek Prince George was enforced by their naval fleets.⁷ And so it stood to reason – if reason were to be the guide in these matters – that the country had more to gain by working from within international legality, such as it was at any given historical juncture, and in skilful alignment with the policies of those powers that favoured the claims it could put forward in reasonable terms.

It was these vicissitudes and dilemmas of their era that the three thinkers had to negotiate emotionally and intellectually. It fell to them to transubstantiate the magma of historical and personal experience into a solid collective consciousness capable of guiding the young freedom of their country. Theirs was an inchoate political society, exceedingly unsure of itself. The flush of philhellene enthusiasm had long given way to disenchantment and even hostility, as the classicist visions of the earlier era had been rudely insulted by the rather unwholesome social and intellectual conditions of the free state.⁸ Nationalism as a vision of togetherness

⁶ See Koliopoulos, *Ιστορία* [History], chaps. 13, 16; Koliopoulos and Veremis, *Modern Greece*, chap. 3.

⁷ These facts have never been taught in Greek schools, where the history of the country is presented in surgical detachment from that Europe. Other facts deemed “incompatible” with the “purity” of the nation are also never mentioned, such as the Catholic communities in the Cyclades and the Heptanese, the Slavic-speakers of western Macedonia, the Turkish speakers of Thrace and the Dodecanese. And, of course, there is no reference to the extraordinary history of the Jewish people – Romaniote and Sephardic – in Greece.

⁸ The book that signalled this change by laying out rather mercilessly the pathologies of public and private life in the new kingdom was Edmond About's *La Grèce contemporaine*, Paris: Hachette, 1855. It was by no means an anti-Greek libel. About extolled the courage and love of liberty of the people, whom he considered descendants of the old Hellenes (chaps. 1, 2), but he stressed that these were expressed mainly in the form of self-seeking, lawlessness and banditry (chaps. 2, 5–8). Greece, he continues, has “many courts of law and judges and no justice” (chap. 5, sec. 4), its politics are dominated by murderous violence and its politicians are associates of mountain bandits (chap. 5, sec. 1; this is an association delightfully illustrated in his novel *The King of the Mountains*). Popular religion is superstitious and intolerant, and under the influence of ignorant and hedonistic monks who spread pro-Russian propaganda (chap. 6). His account of state financial corruption (chap. 7: “Greece has lived

and equality in the bosom of a collectivity of transcendent value is a reflex of a society trying to find itself. Their erudition and rhetorical skill managed to provide it with a distinct and militant identity. This was the *sine qua non* for survival in the midst of a quasi-Darwinian tussle of nationalities for possession of the last inch of historical, and by extension territorial, turf.⁹

Apart from their genius, the accidents of personal fate also rendered these thinkers emblematic of the travails and hopes of their community. They were all children of the Hellenic diaspora. They gravitated, intellectually and physically, towards the new “centre”. But their roots were in, and their gaze was directed towards, the wider world beyond. All three saw themselves not exclusively as scholars, but also as men of affairs with the ambition to steer the course of political events. All three assumed important public offices. Their historical work was simultaneously a political manifesto and a call for action. This would prove detrimental, especially in the case of Paparrigopoulos, as the theoretical perspectives became embroiled in the ferocity of the political struggles. They percolated into the common mind in the form of sloganeering that made a mockery of their intellectual seriousness.

It is a commonplace that the three furnished the foundations of Greek national consciousness by utilising the tools of romanticism. This is true as far as it goes – but it does not go very far. Their names are usually lumped together, the one (Renieris) as the precursor and the other two, the so-called Dioscuri (Zambelios and Paparrigopoulos), as the executors of the historicist project of importing the medieval era into the modern Greek’s self-image. This obscures and misleads. In truth, if read side by side they emerge as distinct, and even incompatible, thinkers. One can indeed perceive a common goal in their discourse, namely the apportionment to the Greek nation of a place of pride in

since independence in a state of continuous bankruptcy”) could easily be a description of the present crisis. The book was denounced by politicians and journalists as the expression of an anti-Greek conspiracy; see Koliopoulos, *Ιστορία* [History], pp. 349ff.

⁹ For the function of nationalism as a project of social cohesion and liberation that ought to be understood historically, rather than ideologically “denounced”, see Paschalis M. Kitromilides, “Relevance or Irrelevance of Nationalism? A Perspective from the Eastern Mediterranean”, *International Journal of Politics, Culture and Society* 24 (2011), pp. 57–63. For the “Great Idea” as an expression of the “deep and very real needs of Greek society” and its impact on Greek-speaking communities outside the free kingdom, see Paschalis M. Kitromilides, “The Dialectic of Intolerance: Ideological Dimensions of Ethnic Conflict”, *Journal of the Hellenic Diaspora* 6, no. 4 (1979), pp. 5–30. Kitromilides stresses both the roots of Greek nationalism in the cosmopolitan Enlightenment of Korais, but also its degeneration into a doctrine of ethnic hatred after the victory of “religious conservatism” (as evinced in the case of Cyprus). On the popular appeal of the Great Idea, see also Kitromilides, *Νεοελληνικός Διαφωτισμός* [Neohellenic enlightenment], p. 491.

a teleological scheme of European civilisation. Equally similar are the political effects that all of them expected from this restoration, namely the realisation of the hegemonic claims of the Greeks in the Near East. But it is the way that they fill the abstract scheme with historical matter that makes all the difference. Ever since Arthur O. Lovejoy, we know that romanticism is not a unitary thing, but rather a bundle of perspectives.¹⁰ A close and parallel reading of their texts reveals each one's unique style of thought and distinct purpose.

Renieris is the most *European* Greek of the three. His interprets Greek history in all its phases as an integral aspect of European civilisation, in vital interplay with all the other national and institutional components thereof. As for the future prospects of the Hellenic nation, he thinks that it is poised to act once again as the spearhead of the European spirit among the peoples of the East.

Zambelios' philosophy of Greek (medieval) history has the opposite aim. His is a mystical theosophy aiming to assert the ontological separateness and self-sufficiency of the Greek "nation". In this light, the European West – and the Western Church in particular – are denounced as the embodiment of ungodly impulses and values, materialistic self-seeking, hunger for worldly power and denial of the spiritual destiny of the human being.

Of the three, Paparrigopoulos is the only true historian – the other two are *philosophers* of history. He shares Zambelios' belief that the essence of Greek identity, at least in medieval times, was language and religion. However, Paparrigopoulos is not sparing in his condemnation of the monkish tribe, and he is not consumed by anti-Westernism. But maybe that was the reason, besides the sheer bulk of his oeuvre, that he was not actually read. As the bloody battles of early twentieth century began to loom, what the populace craved was a Tyrtæan war song, rather than balanced historical judgements.

And so it came to pass that Renieris and his work were unjustly eclipsed, while Paparrigopoulos, in the truncated and bowdlerised versions taught in the schools and popularised in the press, came to be seen as a purveyor of the same national theology as Zambelios. Historical debate was hijacked by party-political priorities, a curse that still vitiates it to this day. And this is the deeper reason why the study of modern Greece has not been "canonised" (in the telling expression of Paschalis Kitromilides) in the international academe, but is largely treated as a rather inconsequential branch of "ethnic" studies.¹¹ For, it was this "ethnic" element that was wrong-headedly privileged in Greek intellectual and political

¹⁰ Arthur O. Lovejoy, "On the Discrimination of Romanticisms", *PMLA* 39, no. 2 (1924), pp. 229–253.

¹¹ See Paschalis M. Kitromilides, "Paradigm Nation: The Study of Nationalism and the 'Canonization' of Greece", in Beaton and Ricks, *The Making of Modern Greece*, pp. 21–32.

life, thus increasingly severing it from internationally valid methodological and theoretic norms.¹²

To begin to reverse this requires rediscovering the texts themselves. We must hack through the thickets of ideological declamation that hide them from view in order to reconstruct their conceptual backbone through a close reading.

II. Renieris: The Ideal of a European Hellenism

Renieris was born in Trieste and brought up in Venice. He descended from a family of Hellenised Cretan Venetians. His mother tongue was Italian. His religion was Orthodox but embedded within a humanist Christianity. He paid homage to his “two fatherlands”, Italy and Greece.¹³ And when at the age of 20 he settled in Athens, he wrote universal history in Greek. He championed the cause of the Greek state as a thinker and statesman,¹⁴ without ever losing his anchor in the European ferment of ideas that had nurtured the Italian phase of his education. His first, and most theoretically pregnant, work, *Essay in the Philosophy of History*, he published as a young man of 26.¹⁵ This was a rendering in Greek of a philosophical sketch that he had already written in Italian two years earlier. The Italian title, *Armonie della storia dell’umanita*, is more felicitous than its formal Greek counterpart, because it brings out the purpose of his intellectual quest, one that remained steady throughout his illustrious career.

Renieris’ vision is of humanity striving to establish a harmonious frame of existence. This is realised in a universal civilisation articulated in institutions that give full vent to the God-given creative propensities of the human race. Chief among these are religious and political forms of collective life. This historical drama unfolds through explosive confrontations of values and beliefs. These, however, are destined to be reconciled in a functioning totality that encompasses, empowers and justifies within it all the partial worldviews and modes of life that

¹² Beaton has traced this gradual distancing as reflected in literature. See Roderick Beaton, “Versions of Europe in the Greek Literary Imagination (1929–1961)”, in *Europe in Modern Greek History*, ed. Kevin Featherstone, London: Hurst, 2014, pp. 27–42.

¹³ Roxane D. Argyropoulos, *Εισαγωγική μελέτη: Η ιταλική παιδεία του Μάρκου Ρενιέρη* [Introductory essay: the Italian education of Markos Renieris], in Marco Renieri, *Armonie della storia dell’umanità*, ed. Roxane D. Argyropoulos, Athens: Academy of Athens, 2014.

¹⁴ He was ambassador to Constantinople, governor of the National Bank of Greece, chairman of the Greek Red Cross and head of societies agitating for the union of the Ionian Islands with Greece and in support of the Cretan Revolution of 1866–69.

¹⁵ Markos Renieris, *Φιλοσοφία τῆς Ἱστορίας: Δοκίμιον* [Philosophy of history: an essay], Athens: Philolaos, 1841. A facsimile edition of the text was brought out in 1999 by the Cultural Foundation of the National Bank (MIET) with an Introduction by Panagiotis Noutsos, in which emphasis is placed upon Renieris’ “anti-socialist” understanding of the concept of the people.

had hitherto asserted themselves as antithetical elements. This is “providence” as manifested in and through humanity’s social deeds.¹⁶

In this teleological scheme, the “romantic” component is the integration of the medieval period as an organic stage in the ascent of civilisation. Renieris is categorical that the “new” philosophy of history must overcome the anti-medieval bias of Enlightenment rationalism. “Faith”, he intones, has once again been recognised as a vital psychological and cultural wellspring. The Schlegel brothers and Madame de Staël are invoked as the thinkers who restored intuition and imagination calumniated by the arid logicism of the eighteenth century. Faith has thus far been the ground of religion. But it is also the foundation of secular life, since all social relations (promises, exchanges, contracts) presuppose it. For, as he strikingly claims, it is the precondition for the functioning of modern representative institutions (this is his rendition of Locke’s “trust”) as well as of the free economy in the guise of “credit” (this is the future governor of the National Bank of Greece speaking).¹⁷

All this echoes Vico, to whom the *Essay* is dedicated and to whom tribute is paid as the founder of modern historical consciousness. Renieris’ treatment of “faith” also recalls the early Hegel, who also assails the short-sighted rejection of religious feeling by the Enlightenment. It was Hegel too who, for all his anti-romantic instincts, had proclaimed that nothing in history is effected without “passion”. Historical progress as visualised by Renieris is the realisation of a thoroughly Hegelian “identity in difference”, the binding together of oppositions in ever higher syntheses. Echoing a Hegelian notion, Renieris concludes that the figure of the Christian Trinity, of the infinite godhead becoming a particular being of flesh, signifies universal humanity realising itself through the variety of historical peoples.¹⁸

The conflict that fuels the ascent of culture is that between the Ego and the non-Ego, the individual and the collectivity. Its various stages are alternatively dominated by the passions and strivings of one or the other. The maligned medieval world was a period in which a communal intent and purpose, sanctified in the form of a metaphysically ordained institution, the Ecclesia, subsumed and neutralised the disruptive ambitions of individuals. Catholic Christianity, with Rome as its centre, was at that time the worldly simulacrum of the divine government of the universe. It contained the Latin and the Greek churches as its two inseparable but distinct manifestations. This idealisation incorporates the stock romantic view as expressed

¹⁶ Ibid., “Εἰσαγωγή” [Introduction].

¹⁷ Ibid., pp. 28ff.

¹⁸ Ibid., pp. 2ff.

by Novalis, and simultaneously announces the historical research programme that Renieris would later pursue. It is premised on papal supremacy understood in strictly spiritual terms while also vindicating the resistance of the Greek Church to any administrative subordination to the pope. It also keeps open the prospect of renewed union of the Christian East and West, provided the political debris of previous ages has been cleared away. In existential terms, it provides Renieris with the opportunity on the religious plane to affirm his allegiance to his *due patrie* in tandem. This is an extraordinary picture of a Greek nationalist integrating the Greek-speaking world within the European cultural configuration of the Middle Ages. Any claim as to the ontological uniqueness or superiority of Byzantium is conspicuously absent here. Renieris' evocation of the "venerable holiness" of the pope symbolically expressing from the altar of St Peter's the spiritual harmony of Europe before a kneeling multilingual congregation is moving – and sure to raise hackles amid the hatemongers of today's Greek and Slavic "Orthodoxy".¹⁹

But the communal togetherness of the medieval world was splintered through the irruption of the Ego-principle. The instigators of this overthrow were Luther and Descartes.²⁰ Through them, individual reason asserted a sovereign right to define truth in defiance of the accumulated wisdom of tradition. This was justified as a reaction against the excesses of the medieval spirit, which in its degenerate mode had extinguished the autonomy of human subjectivity and shackled it to ossified rite and dogma. This rebellion of self-consciousness inaugurated a fruitful phase of free thought and political renovation. Theocratic despotism was swept away and the doctrine of constitutional rights illuminated the political world. The culmination of this was the French Revolution. But this historical movement also had its dark side. The absolute state now emerged as the new secular deity. The modernising monarchs, in alliance with the philosophy of "reason", streamlined their societies administratively. They imposed by force a uniform frame of action that allowed for the unfettered expression of private interest.

In economic terms, this resulted in sharp material inequalities. For Renieris, the "wealth of nations" was the misnomer of the new age, for it hid the reality of the wealth of the few in the midst of the impoverished community. As opposed to that, medieval society had allegedly solved the problem of economic well-being in a truly ethical manner, by condemning material enjoyment as an end in itself and imposing a duty of communal solidarity ("philanthropy") – even though, like the duty of "peace", it was rather honoured in the breach. Renieris' argument here telescopes into one the guild system and the new commerce and banking

¹⁹ Ibid., pp. 22–26.

²⁰ Ibid., pp. 38ff.

that arose in the Italian cities of the fifteenth century, which, in fact, tore apart the fabric of medieval life. The motif of economic individualism disrupting the natural harmonies of traditional society, together with the demand for a centrally directed welfare economy, was one of the central planks of romantic political economy, and the argument of the *Essay* is affected by these concerns.

The personage that embodies the negative trends of individualistic modernity was Napoleon, the Absolute Ego in the seat of power trying to bend the world to his will.²¹ But his rule was broken by the nations of Europe unwilling to forfeit their cultural identity under a universal despotism. This inaugurated the new and final era in world history, the era of reconciliation of the two rival principles, the Ego and the Community, which had hitherto fought each other. This consummation involves the validation of the popular principle of solidarity and equality in unison with the legitimate claims of individuality for untrammelled freedom of thought and action. The reconstituted Greek nation, historically on the borderline between Europe and Asia, is seen as uniquely situated to propagate this ethical idea eastwards through its cultural and political activity (“the university and the press”).

The invocation of “nations” activates a cardinal theme of romantic historical understanding, while Renieris’ intimations as to the proper mission of the Greek nation reveal a unique feature of his thought, namely his persistent classicism.²² Roughly a third of the *Essay* is an examination of the Hellenes of antiquity as a “world-historical” entity. Renieris remained a classical “Greco-Roman” throughout, and this trumped any mystical Byzantinism. In this respect, his thought, despite the Christian overtones, remains in essential touch with the older republican nationalism of Adamantios Korais. In his investigation of ancient Hellenic culture, Renieris utilises the tribal model of Karl Otfried Müller. The Dorians embody the Ego-principle while the Ionians the egalitarian values of communal life. The clash of these divergent worldviews led to the demise of the Hellenic world and its assumption into the cultural frame of Christianity.²³

Renieris understands the continuity of the Greek nation not in terms of some divinely ordained separateness of its “soul”, but rather in terms of its participation in the universal culture of humanity where all nations are to be awarded their deserved place. In this respect, his nationalism is akin to Herder’s “garden” model, in which a spectacular variety of cultures bloom, each contributing a particular hue to the overall picture of universal civilisation.

²¹ Ibid., p. 87.

²² See Kitromilides, *Νεοελληνικός Διαφωτισμός* [Neohellenic enlightenment], pp. 485–486.

²³ Renieris, *Φιλοσοφία τῆς Ἱστορίας* [Philosophy of history], pp. 105ff.

In order to make explicit the political implications of the *Essay*, Renieris published in 1842 an unsigned piece²⁴ with the rather abrasive title *What is Greece: East or West?* His answer is unequivocal. The Greek national identity (έθνισμός) is rooted in the civilisation of Western Europe, which in turn is founded on classical Hellenism. Those who see Greece as an “Eastern” nation wish to cut it off from its natural allies and turn it into an appendage of Russia, where the degenerate aspects of medievalism, namely the suppression of individual freedom, are still dominant. This was a courageous intervention at a time of mounting religious fanaticism instigated by Russophile ecclesiastical circles.²⁵

This is the orientation that guides Renieris’ subsequent historical investigations. These are concerned with specific episodes illustrating the inextricable embeddedness of Greek affairs in the European context. His first monograph on this theme was published in 1859 and assesses the career of Patriarch Kyrillos Loukaris, who was executed by the Ottomans in 1638.²⁶ This was a dark period for the Greeks and Renieris is not charitable in describing the degradation of the people and clergy. Ottoman rule had also sunk to egregious brutishness and foreign ambassadors in Constantinople, the French and Austrian on one side and the English, Dutch and Venetian on the other, conspired to buy the office of patriarch on behalf of someone who favoured either the Catholic or the Protestant side in the fierce religious dispute then raging in Europe. In this rather hellish environment, Loukaris decided to align himself with the Protestant

²⁴ In the journal *Έρανιστής* [Eranistis]. See Constantinos Th. Dimaras, *Κωνσταντίνος Παπαρρηγόπουλος: Η εποχή του-Η ζωή του-Το έργο του* [Konstantinos Paparrigopoulos: his era, his life, his work], Athens: MIET, 2006, pp. 64–65.

²⁵ Renieris resorts to the language of “Helleno-Christianity” and the stock arguments of romantic historicism concerning the continuity of the nation in the popular pieces he wrote for the French-language journal *Le spectateur de l’orient*, founded by himself and Paparrigopoulos among others in 1853. The purpose of this journal was to make known to official Europe the Greek nationalist position on eastern affairs and to combat the policy of shoring up the Ottoman Empire followed by Britain and France. In a piece Renieris wrote in 1855 on the historical destiny of liberated Greece, he stresses her return to the bosom of civilised Europe, but also her duty to contribute an original element to present-day European culture. This is her language, which could once again become the common medium of the educated classes, given that it has already influenced decisively all European tongues. This suggestion was taken up by Gustave d’Eichthal, who published it in 1864 in a Greek-language pamphlet translated by Renieris which also included the latter’s piece from *Le spectateur*. See Gustave d’Eichthal, *Περί τής πρακτικής χρήσεως τής ελληνικής γλώσσης* [On the practical use of the Greek language], Paris: Hachette, 1864.

²⁶ Markos Renieris, *Κύριλλος Λούκαρις, ό οικουμενικός πατριάρχης* [Kyrillos Loukaris, the ecumenical patriarch], Athens: Mavrommatis, 1859.

powers, with whose help he ascended the patriarchal throne. He penned a “confession of faith” that adopted the tenets of reformed theology and imported a printing press for the dissemination of the new doctrines. Renieris comments that his misguided conversion to “heresy” was nevertheless motivated by a genuine patriotic concern, namely to secure strong European allies in defending the Greek-speaking communities he led from the arbitrariness of Turkish rule. His policies led to the expulsion of the Jesuits from Constantinople. But then both his protectors, James I of England and Gustav II Adolf of Sweden, died, and the French successfully slandered Loukaris to the Porte as the instigator of Russian military attacks. He was dethroned and decapitated, and the French were able to secure the patriarchal office for a stooge of the Jesuits. As a consequence of this tragedy, the Greek community in Constantinople (the Phanariots) decided to pursue their interests from within Ottoman institutions, with the result that the administration of the state eventually passed into their hands. Of all the players in this unedifying story, it is the murdered patriarch that stands out as a man of decency. Still even in its darkest phases, Renieris is determined to view Greek history as an integral aspect of wider European entanglements.

His next historical work, entitled *On Blossius and Diophanes*, was published in Leipzig in 1873.²⁷ It deals with another twilight era of the Hellenic world, namely the eve of the Roman conquest. This was a critical moment in the evolution of the Roman Republic, the one marked by the confrontation between the *optimates* led by Scipio Africanus and the *populares* championed by Tiberius Gracchus. Renieris’ sympathies lie clearly with the latter. But his aim is to bring out the role played by Greek thought in shaping the political positions of the opposing parties. The chief advisor of the Scipionic party was, of course, the historian Polybius. Renieris’ criticism of this illustrious figure in the history of political thought is truly eye-opening. The idealisation by Polybius, he insists, of the Roman system as a perfect blend of the monarchic, aristocratic and democratic principle is an ideological smokescreen. It hides the fact that by the second century BCE effective power had passed completely into the hands of the *optimates* who, in addition, had amassed stupendous wealth by illegitimately keeping for themselves the vast lands that the republic had conquered in Italy. The reform attempted by the Gracchi was, thus, the restoration to the people of their rightful share of power and wealth. Renieris glosses it as an attempt to steer the Roman Republic towards a democratic system patterned on Periclean Athens. And those that inspired this momentous undertaking were the two

²⁷ Markos Renieris, *Περὶ Βλοσσίου καὶ Διοφάνου; ἔρευναὶ καὶ εἰκασίαι* [On Blossius and Diophanes: researches and speculations], Leipzig: Metzger und Wittig, 1873.

philosophic companions of Tiberius Gracchus, the Stoic Caius Blossius and the orator Diophanes. Blossius was a Hellenised Roman Stoic from Cumae and Diophanes a Greek from Mitylene. Renieris describes with gripping vividness the momentous events and their tragic dénouement, the murders of Tiberius and Diophanes and the defiant last stand of Blossius as the leader of an anti-Roman rebellion in Asia Minor which aimed to found a Platonic ideal city named Heliopolis. Here again the interconnectedness of Greek and Roman history, the mark of Hellenism on European civilisation, is fully illumined.

Renieris' last monograph, published in 1881 under the title *Historical Studies*, deals with the elevation to the papacy in 1409 of the Greek Alexander V.²⁸ This led to the ending of the schism in the Western Church and to the councils of Basel and, then, Ferrara/Florence, which agreed the union of the Greek and Latin churches. Alexander was a Cretan by the name of Petros Philarges, who became a Franciscan monk, studied at the University of Paris, became a cardinal and acted as an advisor to the rulers of Venice. He was elected pope as an exponent of the theological spirit of the Sorbonne, which aimed to subordinate the pope to the collective will of the ecclesiastical hierarchy. This "conciliar movement" peaked at the Council of Basel, by which time Alexander was dead. Renieris expresses his approbation of conciliarism, which he interprets as an attempt to transform the church from an absolute into a constitutional monarchy. Renieris cites extensively the oration delivered in the presence of the French king by the renowned chancellor of the University of Paris, Jean Gerson, on the occasion of Alexander's election.²⁹ Gerson praises the theological erudition of the new pope and his commitment to the reform of the church in the spirit of collegiality. And he extols his "Greek nationality", which promises the healing of the last wound afflicting the catholic church, namely the Greek schism, so that the two fraternal components of Christian Europe might again be as one. Renieris comments that, as at the time of the 1821 Revolution, Europe rallied in order to admit a free Greece back to the comity of civilised nations, so at the close of the Middle Ages it was rejoicing to see a Greek on the throne of Rome ready to preside over a similar enterprise. In the rest of the work, Renieris follows the convoluted wrangling which led to the Council of Ferrara in 1438. He firmly approves of the goal of ecclesiastical union which was the policy of the Palaiologian rulers.

²⁸ Markos Renieris, *Ιστορικά μελέται* [Historical studies], Athens: Koromilas, 1881. It was reissued in facsimile in 2004 as Markos Renieris, *Ο Έλλην Πάπας Άλέξανδρος Ε΄: Τò Βυζάντιον και ή έν Βασιλεία Σύνοδος* [The Greek Pope Alexander V: Byzantium and the Council of Basel], ed. Christos Baloglou and Roxane D. Argyropoulos, Athens: Eleftheri Skepsis, 2004.

²⁹ Renieris, *Ιστορικά μελέται* [Historical studies], pp. 62–67.

He criticises Emperor John VIII, however, for choosing to throw in his lot with the pope, who was trying at that time to neutralise the Council of Basel and restore his absolute control of the church. The union, according to Renieris, should have been concluded with the council, thus affirming the principle of collective leadership, which was after all the chief demand of the Orthodox Church itself. As it turned out, bowing to the pope dealt a death blow to the conciliar insurgency and restored rigid absolutism in ecclesiastical affairs.³⁰

Historical Studies completes the circle in Renieris' historical thought by returning to his "Greco-Roman" roots, the philosophical foundation of which had been elaborated in the great *Essay* of 1841. Renieris was a great Greek patriot, a convinced European and a scholar of high calibre. The future course of Greek intellectual life should have flowed from the principles which he had so eloquently elaborated. But it didn't.

III. Zambelios: Reactionary Romanticism

Zambelios was a wealthy aristocrat from Lefkada and, for a short period, a member of the parliament of the Ionian Islands under British rule.³¹ He is given prime of place in the accounts of Greek romantic historicism. But as opposed to the liberal and cosmopolitan romanticism of Renieris, his is a mystical and reactionary version of the kind excoriated by Heinrich Heine. It was, nevertheless, his understanding that stamped the nationalist ideology that triumphed in Greece from the end of the nineteenth century onwards.

Reputable historians, including those of a left-wing persuasion, have been kind with Zambelios.³² It is as if they are determined not to pay heed to the enormities that he spouts with such highfalutin pomposity. Warmly appreciated is his insistence that "history is governed by laws" – as if the statement is self-evident, and as if it is of no import what sorts of laws these might be. For there is a world of difference between a notion of historical teleology derived from Vico and Hegel (such as the one Renieris is working with) and the brazenly theological providence preferred by Zambelios, according to which specially equipped seers can immediately perceive the hand of God directing the destinies of the chosen nation. The "Greek race," he insists, is "the most excellent race of civilisation

³⁰ Ibid., pp. 181ff.

³¹ Ioannis Koubourlis, *La formation de l'histoire nationale grecque: L'apport de Spyridon Zambelios (1815–1881)*, Athens: Institute of Neohellenic Research, 2005. This is the most thorough and penetrating analysis of the thought of Zambelios in its intellectual context.

³² See Nikos Svoronos, "Ο Σπυρίδων Ζαμπέλιος" [Spyridon Zambelios], *Μνήμων* 14 (1992), pp. 11–20.

[...] by divine decree [...] the chosen people, a royal and sacred institution, a holy nation.”³³ What guides its historical actions is “the desire for national unmixedness, which without any let-up blocks the entrance to racial foreigners from Asia and Europe.”³⁴ One cannot read this without wincing.

What are the reasons for this indulgence? One is to be sought in the exigencies of the historical situation as explained above. A deeper one is that his messianic-eschatological scheme is eminently suited to subserve a variety of ideological projects. His strident anti-Westernism, his notion that the “Greek race” has been throughout its history surrounded by foes intent on expunging its “national essence”, that it has been the exclusive repository of all that is noble in humanity as opposed to the “barbarians” trying to “rob” it of these treasures: all this can be easily fitted both into a right-wing and a left-wing view. If you substitute “Franks” for “imperialism” and “nation” for “people”, the magic has been accomplished.³⁵

Zambelios’ starting point is the threat against the historical standing of the Greek nation represented by the change of opinion about it in Europe. The spearhead of this slighting was, of course, Fallmerayer’s theory concerning the extinction of the Hellenic race in the Balkans. Zambelios felt that Fallmerayer’s strong biological argument (“not a drop of blood”, etc.) could only be countered by a blast of theological profundity, exalting the Greeks as God’s chosen vessel through the Christian centuries. But Fallmerayer was, for Zambelios, just the latest manifestation of a general assault against the Greeks’ historical birthright that

³³ “ἡ ἐκλεκτοτέρα τοῦ πολιτισμοῦ φυλή [...] κατὰ βούλευμα Θεῖον [...] λαὸς περιούσιος, βασιλείων ἱεράτευμα, ἔθνος ἅγιον”. See Spyridon Zambelios, *Ἄσματα δημοτικὰ τῆς Ἑλλάδος, ἐκδοθέντα μετὰ μελέτης ἱστορικῆς περὶ μεσαιωνικοῦ Ἑλληνισμοῦ* [Folk songs of Greece, issued together with a historical study of medieval Hellenism], Corfu: Ermis, 1852, p. 296.

³⁴ “ὁ πρὸς τὴν ἐθνικὴν ἀμιξίαν πόθος, ὅστις ἀγρύπνως διατελεῖ φράττων τὴν εἴσοδον πρὸς τοὺς ἀλλοφύλους Ἀσίας καὶ Εὐρώπης.” See Spyridon Zambelios, *Βυζαντιναὶ μελέται: Περὶ πηγῶν νεοελληνικῆς ἐθνότητος* [Byzantine studies: on the sources of modern Greek nationality], Athens: Philadelphus, 1857, p. 91.

³⁵ The case in point is once again Nikos Svoronos, *Ἐπισκόπηση τῆς ἑλληνικῆς ἱστορίας* [An outline of Greek history], Athens: Themelio, 1976. Svoronos claims (pp. 38–40) that the emergent national consciousness, united with the Christian idea, fuelled the “resistance of Hellenism” against foreign domination from 1204 onwards. The tripartite scheme of a unitary Greek history derived from the nationalist historians had been earlier adopted by the communist historian Giannis Kordatos. See Giannis Kordatos, *Ἱστορία τῆς Βυζαντινῆς Αὐτοκρατορίας* [History of the Byzantine Empire], vols. 1 and 2, Athens: Ekdoseis 20os Aionas, 1959 and 1960. In his refutation of Fallmerayer, Kordatos cautions against “chauvinism” in the employment of the scheme (see *ibid.*, vol. 1, pp. 238–255, 628–643), and to this end he employs a “class analysis” of events. For example, in discussing the Zealot uprising he refers to the “People’s Republic of Thessalonica (1342–1349)” (*Ibid.*, vol. 2, pp. 255–277).

had begun in the eighteenth century. Western historiography had slandered the “lower empire” (the Constantinopolitan tail end of the Roman state) as a repulsive tale “of religion and barbarism”, in Gibbon’s biting phrase. The reason for this misrepresentation was that the only sources for the historians of the Enlightenment were the Byzantine chroniclers. But these were the mouthpiece of the imperial elite, and in no way depicted the “popular soul” seething beneath the official crust of society, the *fons et origo* of “sacred” Hellenism.³⁶ The misdeeds accurately depicted by Gibbon et al. were perpetrated by an aristocracy with Latin roots. But this was a foreign element transplanted in the midst of a pure Greek world.

So Zambelios resolved that “historionomy”, as he called it, in other words a Hellenocentric philosophy of the history of the Christian world,³⁷ would discard Eastern Roman historical writing altogether and extract its truth from testimonies, written and otherwise, that genuinely reflected the “spirit of the people”. His account of the Middle Ages is actually an introduction to his edition of Greek demotic songs, in which the religiosity of vernacular literature is praised in a hyper-purist linguistic medium. This was going to be a “psychological” interpretation of medieval society,³⁸ in which the paucity of material evidence would be made good by the copious infusions of declamatory fervour and eschatological rupture. Zambelios has no interest in classical antiquity. To him, the roots of modern Greece lie in its medieval past, and specifically in its religious attitudes (or those that he privileges, namely monkish fanaticism). It does not occur to him that this vindicates both Gibbon and Fallmerayer...

The correct historical method, Zambelios continues, evaluates the past from the point of view of the present.³⁹ The failure of Western historiography was that it did not take as its hermeneutic guide the “miracle” which illumined the nineteenth century, namely the Greek insurrection of 1821. The reestablishment of Greece was a unique, self-caused event, in no way influenced by external factors. It was an outburst of the “sanctified nation’s” soul, which had languished under the oppression of the unbeliever. The year 1821 is the proof of the continuity of the national essence, which foreign enemies had tried to contaminate, but which divine providence had preserved because the Greeks were the only people who had stuck to the true faith, that is, Orthodoxy. The claim that the past can only be assessed from the vantage point of present-day value choices sanctions the ideological manipulation of history, and this

³⁶ Zambelios, *Βυζαντινὰ μελέται* [Byzantine studies], pp. 10–15.

³⁷ Zambelios, *Ἄσματα δημοτικὰ* [Folk songs], p. 19: “historionomy” investigates the “secret causes of events” (“τὰς ἀπορρήτους αἰτίας τῶν συμβεβηκότων”).

³⁸ Ζαμπέλιος, *Βυζαντινὰ μελέται* [Byzantine studies], pp. 69, 298.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 133. Zambelios, *Ἄσματα δημοτικὰ* [Folk songs], pp. 26ff.

was another reason why Zambelios' "historionomy" was congenial to various political standpoints. It is self-evident, of course, that his claim that the Greek Revolution was an event *sui generis* "unsullied" by foreign influences and issuing directly from God's deepest counsels is devoid of scientific standing.

His psychological plumbing of the medieval soul yields two basic conclusions. Firstly, that the moral core of the Greek nation is stamped by egalitarianism (*ισονομία*).⁴⁰ And, as a pendant to the above, that it is by nature uniquely theological and powered by a fierce aversion to heresy. The alleged egalitarian instincts of the Greeks are metaphysically tied to the collectivism of the early Christian church, which was the realisation, by Greeks, for Greeks and in Greece, of God's eternal purpose. For Zambelios, Christianity was a Greek phenomenon. That the language of the Gospels was Greek; that some of the apostles were Greek (or at least had Greek names); that Jesus upon hearing that "some Greeks" were asking to meet him proclaims that the time "had come for the glorification of the son of man"; that Paul's mission was in Greek-speaking lands – all this supposedly seals the verdict that the Greek "nation" is the *exclusive owner*, as it were, of the only true religion.⁴¹

This is not some empirical claim that Christianity utilised aspects of the Hellenic legacy in order to establish itself in the Greco-Roman oecumene – of which any Greek-speaking Christian might be justly proud. This is a strong metaphysical theory as to the *ontological identity* of Christianity and Greece.⁴² It is the theological pretence that after God had rejected the Jews, the Greeks assumed the sacred status of His chosen people. With characteristic recklessness, Zambelios proposes that the Virgin Mary is the symbolic embodiment of the Greek nation (tell that to the Irish or the Poles...), that in worshipping Her the Greeks worship themselves as the hegemonic race of the Christian era.⁴³ All this is false theology wrapped around twisted history. It does violence, for one, to the Pauline doctrine that in Christ there is no Jew or Greek. As for the egalitarian ethos of the Christian church such as it was, it was quickly overcome by the clerical hierarchy established very early on and altogether extinguished when "Orthodoxy" became an imperial cult imposed by force. Not a scintilla of *ισονομία* can be detected under the despotic Caesaropapism of Byzantium.

⁴⁰ Zambelios, *Ἄσματα δημοτικά* [Folk songs], pp. 31ff.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 63; Paul supposedly declares in the name of Christ: "Ἑλλάς, Ἑλλάς, σὺ εἶ ἡ πρωτότοκος θυγάτηρ, σὺ σκευὸς ἐκλογῆς, σφραγὶς τῆς ἀποστολῆς μου" (Greece, Greece, you are the first-born daughter, you the vessel of choice, the seal of my mission).

⁴² *Ibid.*, pp. 61ff.

⁴³ Zambelios, *Βυζαντιναὶ μελέται* [Byzantine studies], pp. 142–143.

The second hallmark of the “Greek soul” that Zambelios identifies is its theological fervour and its “abhorrence of heresy”. Western historians, he tells us, chastise the Byzantines for their obsession with dogmatic hair-splitting. But this is because they fail to understand the Greek national idea, which is anchored in the purity of faith and nothing besides. It is for this reason that the medieval “nation” put up the rejection of the filioque as a doctrinal shield to ward off the Frankish infection.

All this, again, wreaks havoc with all sorts of historical facts. To begin with, the “heresies” which challenged official Christian dogma in the early centuries were all a Greek phenomenon. As Tertullian emphasised, they all stemmed from the continuing influence of Hellenic philosophy. In the apt phrase of Niketas Siniosoglou, they amounted to the “intellectual resistance” of Hellenism against the mystical irrationalism and theocratic violence engulfing society.⁴⁴ Furthermore, it was the Western Church that assumed the leading role in fighting heresy. The theological chairman of the Council of Nicaea was Hosius, bishop of Cordoba. During his frequent exiles from his city, Athanasius of Alexandria, the virulent chastiser of the Hellenes and champion of “orthodoxy”, found refuge in the West, in Trier and Rome. The Constantinopolitan emperor and church, for sound political reasons, were rather eager to establish a *modus vivendi* with the monophysite heretics, who dominated the Eastern provinces, a policy sharply opposed by the popes. The filioque itself was introduced in Spain at the end of the sixth century against the Arianism of the Vandals and it caused no dogmatic bellyaches in the East until the ninth century, when Photius decided to brandish it as a weapon in his territorial disputes with the bishop of Rome. Besides it was not incorporated into “divine dogma” by the Western Church until the twelfth century. And in the case of one particular heresy, which tore apart the Byzantine state for a century and a half, namely the iconoclastic reform, it was again the pope who led the struggle against the innovations of the Asian emperors in Constantinople. In doing so, he took the whole of Byzantine Greece with him. Zambelios acknowledges the championing of Orthodoxy (that is, the received faith of the whole church) by the pope in this case. But, he accuses him of being “guileful and insincere”, because he did not really mean it and simply used it as a pretext in order to acquire control of the churches in Italy and Greece.⁴⁵ Zambelios forgets here his animus towards the transplanted “Roman” institution of empire.

⁴⁴ Niketas Siniosoglou, *Plato and Theodoret: The Christian Appropriation of Platonic Philosophy and the Hellenic Intellectual Resistance*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2008, pp. 44–54.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 274ff. See p. 257: “τὸ δὲ βουλον ἦθος τῆς Παπικῆς διαγωγῆς” (the devious habit of papal behaviour).

The Syrian emperors were benefactors of Hellenism because they fought Rome. Whoever opposes the pope for whatever reason is worthy of praise. The hordes of iconophile Greeks who sought religious refuge in Italy he dismisses as traitors. The Syrian dynasty strengthened the Greek nation internally as well, because they closed the university in Constantinople and destroyed its library, thus dealing a blow to the artificial Atticism of the aristocracy. This enabled the illiterate strata of society to express the popular soul in the spoken (demotic) language. All this, of course, does not prevent him from hailing the restoration of the holy images after the overthrow of the Syrians as the triumph of the ancestral faith of Hellenism.

This is sophistry of the highest quality. In the Zambelian understanding, even if the “Franks” do the right thing, they do it for the wrong reasons, namely in the attempt to enslave “the Greeks”. Whereas, all actions of the latter, even when rankly heretical from an official Christian point of view, are *a priori* justified, for they aim to protect the only sacred nation on earth. The upshot is that what Zambelios means by “heresy” is not Arianism, monophysitism, iconoclasm, etc., but the papacy *tout court*. Whatever the Latin barbarians believe and do is by definition heretical, whether it is in accord with ecclesiastical dogma and traditions, whether it has the support of significant segments of the Greek church and state establishment itself (as was indeed often the case). By the “innate aversion of the Greek soul to heresy”, he means the “innate hatred of the Greeks for the West”. And this is the message that his historiography ingrained in the Greek popular mind for generations to come, a message once again incorporated in both right- and left-wing extremism to this day.

After the defeat of iconoclasm, the monasteries were restored. Zambelios rejoices in this, because for him the repository of “Greekness” is the faithful people. And throughout the medieval centuries, as well as under Ottoman rule, it was the monks that preserved the mystical spirit of Orthodoxy and hence acted as the genuine leaders of the national community.⁴⁶ This, he claims, became especially evident during the waning period of Byzantium, when both the ecclesiastical and the imperial establishment succumbed to the poison of Westernism, reckoning to save their worldly skin by selling their soul to the popish devil. This culminated in the accursed Council of Ferrara/Florence, which renounced the purity of faith and hence signed the death warrant of “the nation”. The Greek churchmen who supported the union of 1438, Bessarion, Isidore, etc. (and even George Scholarius did not oppose it at the time) he denounces as venal “traitors” who received rich material rewards in exchange for their treachery. The true “national party” was led by Bishop Mark of Ephesus, who fought the union. Zambelios mentions, with

⁴⁶ For his paean to monkishness, a recurring motif, see *ibid.*, pp. 134ff.

ardent approbation, the notorious saying of Grand Duke Loukas Notaras that it is preferable to see the Turkish turban ruling in Constantinople rather than the Latin tiara. He also cites with glee the graphic accounts of (pro-union) historian Michael Doukas of drunken crowds running riot in the streets under incitement of the monks denouncing the “azymites” (Western Christians) and scoffing at their expected aid against the Turks if the price for it had to be ecclesiastical union. The failure of Constantine Palaiologos to enforce the union is interpreted as the will of God working its way in the Greek nation.⁴⁷

That the severance of Byzantium from the West would surely be its destruction Zambelios not just admits, but also welcomes. His “history” (such as it is) of medieval Hellenism closes with the oracular utterances of the monk Gennadius (the selfsame Scholarius mentioned above), who declares the fall of the Constantinopolitan monarchy inevitable and justified because of the “sins” of its rulers and clergy who embraced the Roman antichrist.⁴⁸ Besides, as the monk Iosif Bryennius proclaimed, in the lands already occupied by the Turks, (anti-Western) Orthodoxy continued to function as before, so that a free Byzantium was not even necessary for salvation. This was going to be the official ideology of the Greek Church under the Ottomans, a doctrine that not only legitimised, but also gave divine sanction to Turkish rule over the Orthodox populations of the East. No wonder that Mehmet the Conqueror appointed Gennadius as the first patriarch of the Orthodox Church in captivity. Passing over in silence Gennadius’ well-known statement that he was not a Greek but a Christian, Zambelios concludes that the “true Greek” faced in 1453 with the choice of either losing the state or his soul would much prefer, with Gennadius, to forfeit the earthly imperium! So, if we follow Zambelios’ rather imaginative explanation, the genuine nationalist is the one who does not give a farthing about the political existence of his nation in the here and now!

For all their scientific uselessness, these feverish outpourings do evoke the genuine core of Byzantine ideology. This was, as Cyril Mango has shown, an eschatological expectation of the Second Coming (slated for the year 1492!) which would redeem the *γένος* of Orthodox believers (and only them, to be sure).⁴⁹ From this perspective *history is sacred, not political time*, and hence its empirical contents (whether, for instance, Constantinople is to be captured by

⁴⁷ Zambelios, *Ἄσματα δημοτικά* [Folk songs], pp. 519ff.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 542ff.

⁴⁹ Cyril Mango, “Byzantinism and Romantic Hellenism”, *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 28 (1965), pp. 29–43.

the Turks) metaphysically irrelevant.⁵⁰ These beliefs, as Mango also underlines, have absolutely nothing to do with Hellenism and nationalism. Zambelios has preposterously foisted on them an ideology utterly incompatible with them. As if to make this incompatibility as obvious as possible, Zambelios appends to his text the declaration to the peoples of Europe of the Greek National Assembly of Epidaurus in 1822, according to which the aim of the revolution was to make Greece once again an integral part of civilised Europe. In fact, there could not be a more categorical rejection of his rabid anti-Westernism than this appeal.⁵¹

This travesty of nationalism, and Hellenism, is not a political stance; it is psychopathology. And yet, Greek collective consciousness from the nineteenth into the twenty-first centuries was suffused with this mystical populism. Lurching from crisis to crisis, Greek society became inured to the odious connotations of “race”, to the shame of xenophobic nationalism, to the preposterousness of accounting for historical outcomes by means of gods and demons. And, thus, the mystical populism concocted by the inflamed imagination of a Lefkadian aristocrat became the preferred discourse for elites and people.

IV. Paparrigopoulos: The Antinomies of Historical Judgement

Konstantinos Paparrigopoulos was born in Constantinople. His father and brother were murdered by the Turks in the reprisals that followed the outbreak of the revolution in 1821. Decades later, he was dismissed from his position in the university as being “foreign born” (*heterochthone*). The chief architect of the modern Greek national idea felt outraged by this injustice.⁵²

Paparrigopoulos’ work is also a response to the European disenchantment with matters Greek, which culminated in Fallmerayer. But he refutes him, in the most important of his early works, whose conclusions were incorporated in his *History*, neither by asserting an untenable biological continuity of the race, nor by seeking refuge in theological mysticism. His counterargument is thoroughly historical. He shows that the record does not bear out the Fallmerayer claim that there were mass Slavic invasions of the Greek peninsula in the sixth century CE.

⁵⁰ The thanatophilia of this view of history finds its worthy complement in Zambelios’ speculative philology which identifies as the essential characteristics of Greek poetry (since Mimnermus!) mournfulness, lamentation and a hedonic obsession with death. See Spyridon Zambelios, *Πόθεν ή κοινή λέξις τραγουδῶ: Σκέψεις περι ελληνικῆς ποιήσεως* [On the origins of the common word “I sing”: thoughts on Greek poetry], Athens: Soutsa and Ktena, 1859.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 586–587. On the Enlightenment ideology permeating the Assembly of Epidaurus, see Kitromilides, *Νεοελληνικός Διαφωτισμός* [Neohellenic enlightenment], p. 468.

⁵² The most exhaustive biography of Paparrigopoulos in the context of his time is the aforementioned Dimaras, *Παπαρρηγόπουλος* [Paparrigopoulos].

There were indeed Slavic settlements, but these were assimilated linguistically and culturally.⁵³ In matters of historical chronology, Paparrigopoulos was a recognised expert. He had proven that the sack of Corinth by Mommius occurred one year later, in 145 BCE, than customarily dated, and this revision earned the praise of eminent German historians like Ernst Curtius.⁵⁴ An outstanding feature of Paparrigopoulos' historical writing in general is that he eschews racist arguments. With respect to the ancient Greeks, for instance, he has no use for Müller's Dorian thesis (which as we saw influenced Renieris). The cultural differences between the Ionians and the Dorians he attributes to the freedom to develop divergent inclinations and social habits, which the geographic configuration of Hellas together with its political fragmentation allowed.⁵⁵

Nevertheless, the overall purpose of the monumental *History of the Greek Nation*, completed between 1861 and 1874, was to establish the historical continuity of the "nation" through successive periods, despite what he himself describes as sharp cleavages and mutations in mentality and way of life. He thus fashions a detailed narrative, from mythical times down to the Revolution of 1821, divided into five consecutive stages: Classical, Macedonian, Hellenistic, Medieval and Modern "Hellenism". In doing so he utilises all the sources available at the time.⁵⁶ This includes Western, and specifically Catholic, writers on the crucial medieval period, whose views are given a fair hearing. Nor does he refrain from severely castigating the multifarious pathologies of "Greek" institutions, leaderships and policies of all ages.

The wealth of facts he adduces is stupendous, so that anyone who bothers to read attentively can easily marshal evidence that works against the grain of his imposed scheme. His material is so variegated that often the only thing holding it together is, firstly, his axiomatic assertion that it does in fact belong to one unitary Greek history; and, secondly, his manner of referring to whomever spoke

⁵³ Konstantinos Paparrigopoulos, *Περὶ ἐποικίσεως σλαβικῶν τινῶν φύλων εἰς Πελοπόννησον* [On the migration of some Slavic tribes in the Peloponnese], Athens: Antoniades, 1843.

⁵⁴ Konstantinos Paparrigopoulos, "Κορίνθου ἄλωσις ὑπὸ Μομμίου" [The capture of Corinth by Mommius], in *Ἱστορικαὶ πραγματεῖαι* [Historical treatises], pt. 1, Athens: Vidara, 1858, pp. 145–187.

⁵⁵ Konstantinos Paparrigopoulos, "Περὶ τῆς ἀρχῆς καὶ τῆς διαμορφώσεως τῶν φυλῶν τοῦ ἀρχαίου ἑλληνικοῦ ἔθνους" [On the beginning and the formation of the tribes of the ancient Greek nation], in *Ἱστορικαὶ πραγματεῖαι* [Historical treatises], pt. 1, pp. 20–93.

⁵⁶ The most detailed analysis of the historiographical influences on Paparrigopoulos is I. Koumbourlis, *Οἱ ἱστοριογραφικὲς ὀφειλὲς τῶν Σπ. Ζαμπέλιου καὶ Κ. Παπαρρηγόπουλου* [The historiographical debts of S. Zambelios and K. Paparrigopoulos], Athens: National Hellenic Research Foundation, 2012.

Greek (from Agamemnon down to the last navel-gazing monk of Athos) as “our own” (*οἱ ἡμέτεροι*). This linguistic device is irritatingly artificial and in fact achieves the opposite of what it intends.⁵⁷ His doggedness in fitting everything into the mould of a unitary Greek history actually forces one to become aware of its inherent *discontinuities*. But Paparrigopoulos does not exclude and does not hide anything, and this alone makes him an exponent of the *critical method* in history. Besides, his cultural understanding of the “nation” makes it a much more attractive affair compared to the mob of religious zealots spouting anathemas for all things “foreign” that we encounter in Zambelios.⁵⁸

The term “Greek nation” appears in the very first sentence of the *History*, but it is never defined. It is clear, nevertheless, that Paparrigopoulos’ understanding of it is centred on an “objectivist” criterion. This is language, through which the allegedly “original genius” of the collectivity is expressed. But, much more is needed to constitute the strong concept of nationality stamping nineteenth-century life. What must also be included are uniform mores and institutions, the aspiration, if not reality, of a common political frame of existence, and a shared consciousness of historical roots and destiny. These do not emerge in his vast panorama.

His account of antiquity begins with a comparison of the achievement of its two leading “nations”, namely the Greeks and the Romans. His conclusion is that the latter managed to mould themselves into an effective political agent, whereas “our own” failed.⁵⁹ The reason is that the Romans incorporated into their polity the peoples that they conquered and also because they developed a constitution in which the senate effectively checked the excesses of the populace. The Greeks, on the contrary, remained divided against themselves throughout, and inside the poleis the demos ran amuck. In the earliest period there was not even a common name for the “nation”. There was, of course, a sense of cultural similarity, but the

⁵⁷ Kitromilides justifies this turn of phrase as a way of making the reader feel intimate with the Byzantines. If it ever succeeded in doing this, the effect has long worn off. See Paschalis M. Kitromilides, “On the Intellectual Content of Greek Nationalism: Paparrigopoulos, Byzantium and the Great Idea”, in *Byzantium and the Modern Greek Identity*, ed. David Ricks and Paul Magdalino, London: Ashgate, 1998, pp. 25–33.

⁵⁸ In an anonymous review, which Dimaras attributes to Paparrigopoulos, the latter criticises Zambelios for the “hyperbolic” emphasis on religion at the expense of the political dimension of the life of the nation. See Dimaras, *Παπαρρηγόπουλος* [Paparrigopoulos], pp. 180–181.

⁵⁹ Konstantinos Paparrigopoulos, *Ιστορία τοῦ Ἑλληνικοῦ Ἔθνους* [History of the Greek nation], 6th ed., Athens, 1930, vol. 1, pt. 1, “Πρόλογος” [Preface]. This is the “centennial” edition of the *History*, edited, annotated and completed by Pavlos Karolidis, Paparrigopoulos’ successor at the University of Athens. Karolidis’ critical comments, interspersed in the text itself, illustrate the lively debate even within the nationalist interpretative paradigm.

political interests and the distinct identity of each separate city took precedence. The distinction between Greek and barbarian denoted simply a linguistic difference, until it was loaded with significations of enmity and cultural inferiority as a result of the Persian invasions. The relations between the Greek states and the oriental kingdoms were extensive and intimate.⁶⁰ In his reference to the famous statement in Herodotus, the cornerstone of the nationalist reading of Hellenic antiquity, that the Greeks shared common blood, language, religious shrines and customs, Paparrigopoulos disregards the “blood component” and interprets it as expressing a “moral unity”. Even this loose sense, however, is a flimsy curtain over the picture of shearing enmities tearing the Hellenic world apart that he also vividly paints.⁶¹

The Greeks did not undertake any common enterprise between the Trojan War and the Persian invasions. But the Trojans themselves spoke Greek and worshipped the same gods. In the fifth century, Paparrigopoulos reminds us, half of Greece from Thebes northwards was allied with the Persians, while the most effective constituents of Xerxes’ army and navy were Greek. Soon afterwards Persia was once again the arbiter of Hellenic affairs in collusion with various Greek cities. The Macedonians are described as a northern outcrop of the “nation”, on account of the Hellenic self-image of the Argead dynasty. Their subjugation of southern Greece put an end to its fratricidal fragmentation, although it imposed military rule that was foreign to it. But, the Spartans did not follow Alexander. In his battles in Asia, Alexander fought against masses of Greeks as well, who formed the most effective military detachments of Darius. On his death, the whole of Greece rose against Macedonian domination.⁶²

Paparrigopoulos acknowledges that Alexander’s empire could be seen as the Asianisation of Hellenism.⁶³ But, relying on the interpretation of Plutarch, he explains the theocratic posturing of the Macedonian as a tool for the foundation of an ecumenical civilisation. Alexander’s purpose was to Hellenise the East. This claim of Paparrigopoulos is sharply disputed by the editor of the *History*, and his successor in the chair of history at the University of Athens, Pavlos Karolidis.⁶⁴ The Hellenic component of Alexander’s ideology, Karolidis argues, was instrumental: he presented the Persian campaign as “revenge” for Xerxes’ invasion in the previous century in order to rally the southern Greeks to his

⁶⁰ Paparrigopoulos, *Ιστορία* [History], vol. 1, pt. 1, pp. 97ff.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 310ff.

⁶² *Ibid.*, vol. 2, “Πρόλογος” [Preface].

⁶³ *Ibid.*, vol. 2, pt. 2, pp. 118–121.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 121–129. On Karolidis, see George Huxley, “Aspects of Modern Greek Historiography of Byzantium”, in Ricks and Magdalino, *Byzantium and the Modern Greek Identity*, pp. 15–23.

cause. For the rest, he was following the pragmatic programme of Isocrates, aiming to take over the vast wealth of the East. The spread of the Greek language was a byproduct of the need to streamline the military takeover. Paparrigopoulos, however, following Droysen, ascribes supreme importance to the cultural consequences. In his view, the flowering of Hellenistic literature and science was, *pace* Grote, a renewed burst of the Hellenic “genius” under Asian conditions, even though it did not rival in originality the achievements of the classical age. Its protagonists, such as Lucian of Samosata, whom he calls “the Voltaire of antiquity”, were not ethnic Greeks; but their use of the language and the classical heritage qualifies them as members of “the nation”. However, his description of the ferocious savagery of the wars among the Epigoni is enough to dispel whatever semblance of “national unity” one might have inferred from his account. He further describes unsparingly the civil and moral dissolution of Hellas on the eve of the Roman conquest, citing with melancholy approbation the famous saying of Polybius, “If we are not soon lost, we could not be saved”.⁶⁵

Once again, an outside factor imposes on “the nation” the historical community it cannot achieve by its own means, and the Christianisation of the empire sets the stage for the next flowering of its “spirit”. For Paparrigopoulos, Christianity is an Asian form of religion. It is, to be sure, the “true religion”, yet incompatible with the metaphysical and ethical assumptions of Greek paganism.⁶⁶ It is rather a mutation of the “religious syncretism” of Alexandria. Still it made use of the language and the dialectic of classical Hellenism to become a universal cult.⁶⁷ Paparrigopoulos describes this cultural osmosis without the providential mysticism of Zambelios. Fully realising that this works against the construct of “Helleno-Christianity”, he stresses “the reaction of Hellenism”,⁶⁸ within Christianity through the “heresies” and the various Platonising versions of its doctrines, and later by means of the last flourishing of Platonism in Proclus. In his telling, the outrages of the Christian mobs under Theodosius, as well as the closing of the schools of Athens by Justinian, are clearly cultural atrocities, yet necessary for the political consolidation of the state.⁶⁹

The Eastern Empire was Hellenised, by which Paparrigopoulos means the gradual adoption of the Greek language by the administration to complement its long-standing use in the church. In this way “Byzantium” emerges as the state

⁶⁵ “εἰ μὴ ταχέως ἀπωλόμεθα, οὐκ ἂν ἐσώθημεν.” Paparrigopoulos, *Ἱστορία* [History], vol. 2, pt. 1, pp. 303ff.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, vol. 3, pt. 1, pp. 13ff.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, vol. 2, pt. 2, pp. 86ff.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 111ff.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 197ff.

of the Greek “nation” during the medieval period. He does not claim that the population, let alone the political and ecclesiastical elites, was ethnically Greek. In fact, he describes them as a composite of various races and cultures that never acquired true unity:

[The reader] knows above all that this vast state never acquired one of the bases of real power for any state, that is, national unity. Our medieval monarchy had always been composed of a mixture of various other races, in which the Greek race in time predominated, politically and socially, but never managed to assimilate the others.⁷⁰

However, the general use of Greek and the common religion is, to his mind, enough. In a famous apostrophe, he declares that the Byzantines are the “forefathers” of today’s Greeks, and that to deny this lineage amounts to “parricide”. It is thus of the essence to study and appreciate their political and cultural achievements.⁷¹ He notes that even Western historiography has left behind the contempt of Gibbon et al. for the “Bas Empire”, realising that at the very least the Byzantines were the “armed librarians of Europe”. But, they did more than passively preserve the Hellenic legacy for the sake of the West. Theirs was a historical experiment in creating an earthly realm of justice based on Christian principles. This was a protracted drama marked by egregious brutality, corruption and ignorance, which Paparrigopoulos by no means passes over in silence. Still he insists – and in this he is absolutely right – the history of Western Christianity was equally marked by abominable evil-doing. His description of the period of “pornocracy” in Rome, in which the church was ruled by the cardinals’ concubines, who vied to put their sons on the papal throne, is indeed shocking.⁷² No segment of the human species has the monopoly on virtue or vice.

Paparrigopoulos credits Byzantium with the defence of the “borders of Christianity” to the East, with the Christianisation of the Slavic nations and the transmission of Hellenic learning to the West in the Renaissance – all stock arguments of Greek nationalism ever since. But he also lays stress upon the efforts of internal reform in the Eastern Roman state. The most original aspect of his account of “medieval Hellenism” is his analysis of iconoclasm as an enterprise of radical social change. He describes the degeneration of monasticism into a life of sloth and carnal indulgence, as the monasteries became fabulously rich through the donations of the faithful, particularly bequests of land.⁷³ This inert

⁷⁰ Ibid., vol. 4, pt. 2, p. 150.

⁷¹ Ibid., vol. 3, pt. 1, “Πρόλογος” [Preface].

⁷² Ibid., vol. 4, pt. 1, p. 273.

⁷³ Ibid., vol. 3, pt. 2, pp. 16–24.

and unproductive segment of the population increased dramatically. They were exempt from taxes and military service; hence their augmentation was to the detriment of state interests. The iconoclastic emperors dissolved and taxed monasteries, thus strengthening the imperial army and finances. Iconoclasm was also an attempt to reform the mentality of the people, by prohibiting the crass materialism and obscurantism of image and relic worship and emphasising the spiritual core of faith. Iconoclasm failed, but its legacy was not altogether uprooted. Paparrigopoulos cites at length the law of Nicephorus Phocas more than a century after the restoration of the icons, in which the prohibition on bequeathing property to the monasteries is reaffirmed. In another respect, he claims, iconoclasm proved of great significance for the cultural evolution of Europe as a whole. Given that the western provinces under the direction of the See of Rome were opposed to the prohibition of holy images, the Syrian emperors enlisted the support of the Eastern community of the Paulicians, later called Bogomils, who were resettled in Thrace. After the defeat of iconoclasm, these “heretics” dispersed westwards and settled in the south of France. There, known as Albigensians, they kept alive the spirit of Christian egalitarianism and church reform, which was to blossom at the beginning of the sixteenth century in the form of the Lutheran Reformation.⁷⁴

In the critical question of the estrangement and final split between the Latin and Greek churches, Paparrigopoulos also strikes new tones. He elucidates the conflict primarily in political terms. He explains the assumption by the Latin Church of social and political functions as a natural evolution after the destruction of Roman institutions in the West. Then, he describes how under the Isaurians the iconodule churches of Greece and southern Italy placed themselves under the authority of the pope, something which fuelled the resentment of Constantinople. By the beginning of the ninth century, the Eastern emperor could no longer militarily defend Rome against northern barbarians, so it was unavoidable that its bishop would seek the alliance of the Frankish ruler who had managed to unite the West by his sword. The fact that Charlemagne received his imperial crown from the hands of the pope certainly strengthened the latter’s absolutist ambitions in a (united) church that had always recognised, in both its Latin and Greek components, his spiritual primacy. Paparrigopoulos describes vividly the depravity of the Eastern empress at the time, Irene the Athenian, a woman who murdered her own son and hence was “capable of every crime” for the sake of power.⁷⁵ This provided moral legitimacy for the revival of the western

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 266

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, “Αφροσύνη και κακοβουλία της Ειρήνης” [Thoughtlessness and evil-mindedness of Irene], pp. 110ff.

imperial office. Paparrigopoulos strikingly insists that Constantinople should have recognised Charlemagne as emperor rather than clinging to a phantom of political authority in the West that could not be enforced.⁷⁶ This would have proven highly beneficial, given the conflict between the German emperors and the pope which would eventually erupt. The German alliance (fleetingly attempted anyway under Tzimiskes through the marriage of Theophano and Otto II) would have strengthened the Greek empire in its resistance against the pope's designs to dominate the Eastern churches.

The Greek–Latin dispute was, thus, about political *domination*. It flared again under Patriarch Photius, and this time the bone of contention was ecclesiastical jurisdiction over the Bulgarian Church. Paparrigopoulos praises Photius as the most learned man of his age and an enemy of superstition. He recognises the uncanonical nature of his ascent to the patriarchal dignity, although he rightly stresses that this was common in East and West. But he also criticises Photius for his inordinate ambition and servility to imperial authority when it suited him. And, much more significantly, he lambasts him for his decision to frame the quarrel in dogmatic terms and excommunicate the pope as a “heretic”. Photius performed valuable “national service” in defending the independence of the Greek Church, but his theological attack skirted the real issue and infused it with fanaticism.⁷⁷ For Paparrigopoulos, the Latin Church *is not* heretical. The filioque had been around, as noted above, for a long time without causing ructions. In a letter to the Pope in 861, when he was still eager to solicit Rome's support, Photius himself admits that there are matters in faith that belong to its dogmatic core and others that permit diverging interpretations.⁷⁸ Paparrigopoulos insists that this was a sound basis for the reconciliation of the two halves of Christianity – then, and also at the present time. He affirms his support of what he calls an “external union” between Catholicism and Orthodoxy, by which he means an ecclesiastical communion which would not demand of the Greeks to jettison their traditional beliefs, customs and practices.⁷⁹

By the eleventh century, though, the positions had mutually hardened, and this led to the anathema against Patriarch Cerularius being deposited by Cardinal Humbert on the altar of Hagia Sophia. Still, soon afterwards Cerularius was dethroned and under the great Pope Gregory VII (Hildebrand) Greek–Latin relations were amicable again. The Komneni followed a similar policy of

⁷⁶ Ibid., vol. 4, pt. 1, p. 267.

⁷⁷ Ibid., vol. 3, pt. 2, pp. 300–302.

⁷⁸ Ibid., pp. 295–296.

⁷⁹ This was a legitimate caveat around the time of Vatican I, but after Vatican II and the annulment of the East–West anathemas in 1964 it is a moot point.

ecclesiastical reconciliation.⁸⁰ Under Manuel II Komnenos, in particular, the court and high society in Constantinople had been completely permeated by the knightly ethos of the West.⁸¹ This ultimately led to the massacre of the Latins in the city in 1182 and the Norman sacking of Thessalonica in 1185, which inflamed political hatreds once again. Thus, the Schism of 1054 might have been forgotten as similar episodes in the past. But the brutal dissolution of the Eastern Roman Empire by the Crusaders in 1204 fixed it retrospectively in the Eastern mind as a world-historical landmark.

In the matter of the Crusades, Paparrigopoulos disputes the authenticity of the letter of Alexius I Komnenos to Count Robert of Flanders, in which he supposedly invited an expedition of the Western Christians to aid their Eastern brethren against the advancing Muslims.⁸² But he does not deny that in the mix of motives animating the Crusades there was also a component of Christian faith and solidarity. In the period after the Latin conquest of Constantinople, Paparrigopoulos describes the crystallisation of the modern Greek spoken idiom as evinced in the *Chronicle of Morea* written by a Hellenised Frank. He also claims the emergence of a new-fangled Hellenic consciousness among the imperial elite that fled to Nicaea.⁸³ But what stands out in his account are the hatreds continuing to tear apart the remaining fragments of the “nation” even after the recovery of the imperial capital by Michael Palaiologos in 1261. It was this internal discord that doomed the rump of the Eastern Empire. Paparrigopoulos refers with exasperation to the “inane theological disputes” (that is, the Hesychast

⁸⁰ Paparrigopoulos, *Ιστορία* [History], vol. 4, pt. 2, pp. 34–36.

⁸¹ Throughout its existence, Byzantium, despite the periodically acute tensions, pursued privileged ties to the Latin West which culminated with the infusion of the feudal ethos under the Komneni. See Angeliki E. Laiou, “Byzantium and the West”, in *Byzantium: A World Civilization*, ed. Angeliki E. Laiou and Henry Maguire, Washington D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks, 1992, pp. 61–78.

⁸² Paparrigopoulos, *Ιστορία* [History], vol. 4, pt. 2, pp. 61–66.

⁸³ This has been since the standard view concerning the emergence of “Neohellenism” in nationalist historiography. For a denial of this, see Cyril Mango’s review of A. E. Vakalopoulos, *Ιστορία του Νέου Ελληνισμού* [History of modern Hellenism], *The Journal of Hellenic Studies* 88 (1968), pp. 256–258. Under the impact of the work of scholars like Kitromilides, the consensus has now shifted in the direction of understanding the modern Greek national idea as an achievement of the thinkers of the enlightenment. See Koliopoulos, *Ιστορία* [History], “Εισαγωγή” [Introduction]. Also, Roderick Beaton, “Antique Nation? ‘Hellenes’ on the Eve of Greek Independence and in Twelfth-century Byzantium”, *Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies* 31, no. 1 (2007), pp. 76–95, which shows that the tentative and ambiguous use of “Hellene” in Byzantium does not allow for a direct connection with nineteenth-century nationalism.

controversy)⁸⁴ which wracked Byzantine society in the fourteenth century as the Ottomans were surrounding its capital, at the invitation of Emperor John Kantakouzenos in the civil war which pitted him against the rival imperial clan of the Palaiologoi.

In this state of terminal dissolution, the Council of Ferrara/Florence was a desperate solicitation of help from the West from a position of utter weakness. These expectations were not realistic because the Western rulers were warring among themselves. Paparrigopoulos describes with distress the miserable living conditions of the Greek delegation and the sordid bickering among its members on how to share the meagre sum dispensed by the pope for their upkeep.⁸⁵ His account of the end of the medieval “nation” concludes with a moving description of the last liturgy in Hagia Sophia on the eve of the Ottomans’ capture of the imperial capital. He cites at length the oration of the emperor, in which the “last Constantine” addresses in turn the Greeks, the Venetians and the Genoese congregated around him as brothers in Christ united in the noble enterprise of defending the chief “city of the Hellenes”.⁸⁶ And he stresses that the oracles of Scholarius as to the inevitability of the fall of the Christian imperium demoralised the population. There could not be a sharper contrast with Zambelios’ account of the same historical moment.

Paparrigopoulos’ account of the *Turkokratia* is introduced with a reflection on the benefits that would have accrued to Western Europe if an expedition had been undertaken to reverse the triumph of the Turks in the East.⁸⁷ He then explains that the Greek nation sank into degradation not only because of the viciousness of Ottoman rule, but also because of the worthlessness and venality of its own leaders. The patriarchal office was sold to the highest bidder, and in the process aspiring patriarchs, in order to curry favour with the sultans, willingly forfeited many of the privileges initially proffered by Mehmet the Conqueror.⁸⁸ He acknowledges the influence of Western prototypes in the flourishing of literature in the Greek lands under Venetian control. He describes in glowing terms the emergence of self-governing communities in Ottoman Greece, which he explains rather fancifully as the resuscitation of the “demotic” habits of antiquity.⁸⁹ His description of the life and deeds of the klephts is equally laudatory. But he significantly attributes them primarily to the “automatism” of

⁸⁴ Paparrigopoulos, *Ιστορία* [History], vol. 5, pt. 1, pp. 191–194.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 264–278.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 346–347.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, vol. 5, pt. 2, pp. 6–11.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 73–76.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 114ff.

self-defence against the depredations of Ottoman government, rather than to any sentiment of nationality.⁹⁰ He extols the revival of learning in the eighteenth century on the initiative of scholars educated in the West. But he does not credit “European lights” with the creation of the idea of “the nation”, which presumably had always been dormant in the collective mind. Once again, his “proof” is the predominance of the Greek language among the Christian populations of the Ottoman Empire, although he faults the Greek Church for not doing quite enough to Hellenise the non-Greek Christians. He praises Korais for his outstanding contribution in strengthening the “national feeling” of the people. But, he lays exclusive emphasis on the great scholar’s views of language, with which he is in full agreement.⁹¹ He does not refer to Korais’ political programme.

V: *Two Nations*

Space does not allow a more detailed examination of the texts. But some significant conclusions can be drawn from this brief sketch. In developing the modern Greek national idea, Paparrigopoulos stands between Renieris and Zambelios, but much closer to the former.⁹² He is a classicist, employs a cultural definition of “the nation”, is conscious of the vital links between Byzantium and the Latin West and favours their full reestablishment. His “Helleno-Christianity”, it bears repeating, is devoid of theological zeal and anti-Western fanaticism. In his explanation of why he did not write the history of the free Greek state, he declares that after 1830 the Greeks governed themselves very badly “or not at all”, thus failing to acquire a proper place among the nations of Europe.⁹³ For all his nationalist *parti pris*, Paparrigopoulos’ *History* lays bare all the essential problems of historical interpretation and provides ample material for reflective judgements that even contradict his own.

His scheme of tripartite division (ancient–medieval–modern) of a unitary history of the nation did not go unchallenged. One of his most prominent opponents was the distinguished professor of Latin literature at the University of Athens, Stephanos Koumanoudis. In Koumanoudis’ reading, the history of ancient Greece is a tale of internecine strife, in which the cultural affinity was

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, p 144: “ἐλαυνόμενοι μᾶλλον ὑπὸ σφοδροτάτου αὐτοματισμοῦ τῆς ἀτομικῆς ἐλευθερίας” (“motivated by the most intense automatism of individual freedom”).

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 169–171.

⁹² Renieris is the only contemporary Greek historian cited by Paparrigopoulos in his text. He calls him “ὁ ἡμέτερος Πενιέρης” (“our Renieris”).

⁹³ Paparrigopoulos, *Ἱστορία* [History], vol. 5, pt. 1, “Πρόλογος” [Preface].

as a rule trumped by particular political interests.⁹⁴ Alliances of various poleis with foreign powers to the detriment of the interests of the rest of the Greek world was all too common. Roman rule was actually welcomed by wise Greeks at the time, because it put an end to the bloodletting of the endless civil wars. The Byzantine centuries were a long tale of “Caesarean despotism” in which learning was extinguished and the people vegetated. The Hellenic legacy took refuge among the Western nations which lovingly nurtured it and based their civilised existence on it. The idea of a free and unified Greek nation arose in the eighteenth century, when the “merchants and the teachers” of the nation, chief among them Korais, came in contact with enlightened Europe and set in motion the revival of letters in the country. It was they who inspired the fighters of 1821. Koumanoudis concludes that the recent historiography tying the Greek present to the Byzantine past has patriotic motives, but it is misguided because obscurantism cannot be the basis of the culture and education of a free nation. Most of these conclusions could be reached by reading Paparrigopoulos’ text.

But even within the unitary paradigm itself there was scope for diverging evaluations. One of the most respected nationalist historians of the twentieth century was Dionysios Zakythinis. Writing about “ideological divisions” in Constantinople on the eve of the Ottoman conquest, he stresses that the rift between the unionists and the anti-Catholics was premised on different assessments of the historical prospects of the nation.⁹⁵ On both sides there were persons of faith, learning and honesty. This differs sharply from Zambelios’ slandering of the unionists as traitors who had sold their soul to Mammon. But, as Zakythinis also makes clear, the two sides had precious little in common. In fact, the internal split on the eve of destruction signifies the formation of *two nations* whose mentalities and value choices were incompatible. Language is, after all, too thin a thread on which to hang a thick and heavy concept of national oneness.

This legacy of the “two Greeces”, one inspired by the mystical zealotry of Zambelios and the other by the liberal nationalism of Korais and Renieris and, yes, Paparrigopoulos himself, is still with us today.

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⁹⁴ Stephanos Koumanoudis, *Λόγος περι ἑλληνικοῦ ἔθνους* [Discourse on the Greek nation], Athens: Royal Printing Office, 1853.

⁹⁵ Dionysios A. Zakythinis, “Ιδεολογικαὶ συγκρούσεις εἰς τὴν πολιορκουμένην Κωνσταντινούπολιν” [Ideological confrontations in besieged Constantinople], in *Ἡ ἄλωσις τῆς Κωνσταντινουπόλεως καὶ ἡ Τουρκοκρατία* [The conquest of Constantinople and the Turkokratia], Athens: s.n., 1954, pp. 20–33.