

The Historical Review/La Revue Historique

Vol 16 (2019)

The *H*istorical Review
La Revue *H*istorique



VOLUME XVI (2019)

Section de Recherches Néohelléniques
Institut de Recherches Historiques / FNRS

Section of Neohellenic Research
Institute of Historical Research / NHRF

Review of: Dimitris Dimitropoulos, Christos Loukos and Panagiotis Michailaris (eds.), ΟΨΕΙΣ ΤΗΣ ΕΠΑΝΑΣΤΑΣΗΣ ΤΟΥ 1821: ΠΡΑΚΤΙΚΑ ΣΥΝΕΔΡΙΟΥ, ΑΘΗΝΑ 12 ΚΑΙ 13 ΙΟΥΝΙΟΥ 2015 [Facets of the 1821 Revolution: Conference Proceedings, Athens, 12–13 June 2015], Athens: Society for the Study of Modern Hellenism–Mnimon, 2018, 404 pages.

Vangelis Sarafis

doi: [10.12681/hr.22807](https://doi.org/10.12681/hr.22807)

Copyright © 2020, Vangelis Sarafis



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/).

To cite this article:

Sarafis, V. (2020). Review of: Dimitris Dimitropoulos, Christos Loukos and Panagiotis Michailaris (eds.), ΟΨΕΙΣ ΤΗΣ ΕΠΑΝΑΣΤΑΣΗΣ ΤΟΥ 1821: ΠΡΑΚΤΙΚΑ ΣΥΝΕΔΡΙΟΥ, ΑΘΗΝΑ 12 ΚΑΙ 13 ΙΟΥΝΙΟΥ 2015 [Facets of the 1821 Revolution: Conference Proceedings, Athens, 12–13 June 2015], Athens: Society for the Study of Modern Hellenism–Mnimon, 2018, 404 pages. *The Historical Review/La Revue Historique*, 16, 268–274.
<https://doi.org/10.12681/hr.22807>

Dimitris Dimitropoulos, Christos Loukos and Panagiotis Michailaris (eds.),
ΟΥΕΙΣ ΤΗΣ ΕΠΑΝΑΣΤΑΣΗΣ ΤΟΥ 1821: ΠΡΑΚΤΙΚΑ ΣΥΝΕΔΡΙΟΥ,
ΑΘΗΝΑ 12 ΚΑΙ 13 ΙΟΥΝΙΟΥ 2015
[Facets of the 1821 Revolution: Conference Proceedings,
Athens, 12–13 June 2015],
Athens: Society for the Study of Modern Hellenism–Mnimon,
2018, 404 pages.

In 2015, the Society for the Study of Modern Hellenism (SSMH) organised a conference in preparation for the bicentennial of the 1821 Greek Revolution. This conference, one of the first to take place on the occasion of the anniversary, resulted in a comprehensive volume, which I will attempt to place in the broader historiographical discussion on the course of studies on 1821.

Let us begin from a slightly earlier point in time: in 1981, the Centre for Marxist Research organised a conference marking the 160th anniversary of the Greek Revolution. During the conference, Eleni Antoniadou-Bibikou spoke of her optimism concerning the progress of studies on the revolution, based on three observations: a) the new perspectives for historical research as the result of groundwork research, the publication of bodies of evidence, research resources, etc.; b) the continuous development of Marxist studies; and c) the potential for richer and safer documentation offered by technological advancement.¹ Two decades

later, at the dawn of our century, there was, one could argue, a certain disappointment amid the historian community in regards to the course of historiography on the revolution. Two texts by Spyros Asdrachas and Christos Loukos, respectively, are indicative, the first referring to “the ‘paradox’ of an absence”² and the second attempting an incisive interpretation of

volume, on 28 March 2018. The text was published, along with Kostas Lappas’ and Triantafyllos Sklavenitis’ texts in the Chronicle section of *Μνήμων* 36 (2017–2018), pp. 462–477.

¹ Eleni Antoniadou-Bibikou, “Μεθοδολογικά προβλήματα της ιστορικής έρευνας για τον Αγώνα της Ελληνικής Ανεξαρτησίας” [Methodological problems of historical research on the struggle for Greek Independence], in *Η Επανάσταση του Εικοσιένα: Επιστημονικό Συμπόσιο, 21–23 Μάρτη 1981* [The revolution of ’21: scientific colloquium, 21–23 March 1981], Athens: Centre for Marxist Research–Synchroni Epochi, 1986⁴, pp. 297–298.

² Spyros Asdrachas, “Το ‘παράδοξο’ μιας απουσίας” [The “paradox” of an absence], *Η Αυγή*, 24 March 2001.

* The present review first appeared, in an earlier version, at the launch of the

this low research interest.³ These texts echo, partly at least, the disappointed historiographical expectations of those generations of Greek historians who renewed Greek historiography after 1974, and in any case capture a certain reality.⁴ Recently, Panagiotis Stathis resumed this discussion in a review article on Nikos Theotokas' *Makrygiannis*,⁵ highlighting, among others, the significance of the Panteion school of historiography in the resurgence of interest since the early 1990s.

³ Christos Loukos, "Η Επανάσταση του 1821: από κυρίαρχο αντικείμενο έρευνας και διδασκαλίας στην υποβάθμιση και στη σιωπή" [The revolution of 1821: from the dominant subject of research and teaching to degradation and silence], in *Ιστοριογραφία της νεότερης και σύγχρονης Ελλάδας, 1833–2002: Πρακτικά* [Historiography of modern and contemporary Greece, 1832–2002: proceedings], ed. Paschalis M. Kitromilides and Triantafyllos E. Sklavenitis, vol. 1, Athens: Centre for Neohellenic Research, 2002, pp. 579–594.

⁴ At this point, I would like to make a digressive remark: similar concerns in this regard have already been expressed: "Greek students confess that the study of the greatest event in their national history – the war of independence which began in 1821 – is the 'terrible lacuna' of modern Greek historiography", in Peter Topping, "Greek Historical Writing on the Period, 1453–1914", *The Journal of Modern History* 33/2 (1961), p. 170.

⁵ Panagiotis Stathis, "Ανανεώνοντας τη ματιά μας για το Εικοσιένα: Με αφορμή τον *Μακρυγιάννη* του Νίκου Θεοτοκά" [Renewing our view on '21: On the occasion of *Makrygiannis* by Nikos Theotokas], *Μνήμων* 33 (2014), pp. 233–256.

The SSMH conference arrived in the wake of this historiographical discussion. Today, in anticipation of the bicentenary, we find ourselves facing the opposite; from the absence or silence referred to by Asdrachas and Loukos a decade-and-a-half ago to what appears to be an inflation of research interest. The orientation of the historical research has been influenced by the forthcoming anniversary: conferences have been held (such as the SSMH conference), while many more are expected in the coming years, research programmes are ongoing and relevant funding has been announced, and, finally, a series of specialised editions on the Greek Revolution are scheduled. And like any phenomenon of inflation, alongside the gains – in this case, the anticipated renewal of historiography – there are pitfalls, most notably that of the appearance or, better yet, the amplification, of "extra-scientific undercurrents".⁶

This circumstance renders the present volume an indicator, since the studies it contains, concluded for the most part before the appearance of the inflation phenomenon, capture in a way the general renewal of Greek historiography and its application to the investigation of 1821. New questions thus arise, due to relevant debates that have occupied Greek historians in the reviewing of other periods and the progress of the according historiographical fields. In this regard, it converses with interesting

⁶ Giorgos Kournoutos' unconventional phrase ("εξωεπιστημονικοί άνεμοι"), which was later adopted by Spyros Asdrachas while commenting on how the 1821 fighters' memoirs had been approached up to the 1950s.

and recent studies, be they collective, as in the case of the Ionian University's conference on the revolution,⁷ or historical monographs, which posit new questions and introduce new perspectives. Additionally, the studies in this volume make use of the available evidence, be it hitherto unknown or known but largely unused.

Two studies bring into the discussion one of the great absentees, Ottoman sources. Eirini Kalogeropoulou approaches the reports that the Ottoman commander of the besieged city of Patras addressed to the Sublime Porte. These reports pertained to the supply needs of the besieged Ottomans and also comprised information on other war fronts. Mainly though, they help us understand how the events were interpreted by the Ottoman commander. Also, Kalogeropoulou strives to explore issues of the mentality of a provincial ayn, placing her problematisation in a broader discussion on the role of the Ottoman ayan and the general modernising tendencies inside the empire at the dawn of the nineteenth century.

The second article utilising Ottoman sources is that by Yannis Spyropoulos, who points out the climax of inter-Christian violence between the captains of Sfakia on the eve of the revolution. He converses critically with national historiography, examines incisively the Ottoman decisions regarding the inter-Christian antagonisms and redefines the environment in which the Cretan uprising broke out. Simultaneously, the

study takes place within the discussion concerning the "tougher" politics of Sultan Mahmud II and its effects inside the empire.

Other studies feature interesting and very important historical evidence that remains unused. Yannis Kokkonas examines the unpublished diary of the fighter Panagiotis Anagnostopoulos, which was compiled during the last days of the siege of Tripolitsa and thus reflects the immediate reception of those events by one of the besiegers. Such contemporary diaries – not compiled later and, therefore, not memoirs – are rare. The diary is located in the Ioannis Philimon archive, which is housed in the National Library of Greece, and was used by him in the writing of his historical essay on the revolution.⁸ Furthermore, through the comparison of the diary's text and Philimon's first and second writings, the writing strategies of the latter and his deliberate omissions unfold.

Pointing to the archival scarcity regarding the events that took place on Samothrace during 1821, George Koutzakiotis seeks and identifies more valid sources of information. He uses the correspondence of the French vice-consul in the Dardanelles, which he located in the French archives, to re-examine the issue. At the end of his article, he publishes the letters, thus facilitating further research. Moreover, the study offers an exhaustive account

⁷ Petros Pizaniyas (ed.), *The Greek Revolution of 1821: A European Event*, Istanbul: Isis, 2011.

⁸ Ioannis Philimon, *Δοκίμιον ιστορικόν περί της ελληνικής Επανάστασεως* [Historical essay on the Greek Revolution], vol. 4, Athens: Typois P. Soutsas kai A. Ktena 1861, pp. 209–212.

of the historiographical approaches to the event: its reception by philhellenes and, later, by Greek intellectuals and supporters of the national idea as well as the course of its reproduction to the present.

Panagiotis Michailaris discusses the action of one of the Greek Revolution's main protagonists, Bishop Germanos of Old Patras, during a period of his life that has not been studied in detail. He focuses on the actions he undertook as a delegate of the Provisional Government of Greece in Italy, from 1822 to 1824, in an attempt to create diplomatic ties with the Vatican. Michailaris makes use of a section of Germanos' archive, which, while not unknown, has not been sufficiently exploited. The archive comprises copies of his letters, compiled in Ancona, where he was stranded for approximately a year-and-a-half. In these letters, we find a series of interventions by Germanos regarding the political developments of the struggle while, at the same time, through the study of his correspondence, a network of people surfaces, beyond the well-known Pisa circle, which lived in Italy and was in contact with the revolutionaries.

In his text, Dionisis Tzakis surveys the first months following the eruption of the revolution in the Peloponnese, revolutionary readiness on the level of enlistment and the redistribution of power in the new context produced by the war. Focusing on the examination of these processes especially in the areas of Karytaina and Mystras, the mechanism of enlistment is approached incisively, first on the basis of the local headmen's networks (*proestoi*) and later unveiling the role of the new military leadership

and the redeployment of power relations on a local level. This perspective places the contribution within the framework of the discussion on the transition from tradition to modernity, exploring at the same time the dynamics of the incorporation of the *proestoi* as bearers of tradition.

Dionysis Moschopoulos studies the efforts to establish a modern rule of law. His problematisation is based on a genealogy of history of legal studies, revealing the significance of pre-revolutionary customary law. He attempts to examine this customary legal tradition and the efforts to adopt a Western legal tradition as well as the imprint of this process on the institutional constitution of the revolutionary state.

Two texts in the volume refer to issues of transportation and population relocation during the revolution. These are matters which we know very little about, considering that the most comprehensive study to date is that of Apostolos Vakalopoulos from 1939.⁹ Dimitris Dimitropoulos examines the case of the settlement of Cretan refugees on Karpathos, a series of consequences locally brought about by this settlement and discusses mainly the plundering behaviour of the incomers, the efforts of the natives to cope with it and the – ultimately unsuccessful – mobilisation of the revolutionary authority. The article also converses with the research

⁹ Apostolos E. Vakalopoulos, *Πρόσφυγες και προσφυγικόν ζήτημα κατά την Επανάστασιν του 1821: Ιστορική μελέτη* [Refugees and the refugee problem during the 1821 Revolution: a historical study], Thessaloniki: s.n., 1939.

pertaining to the fight against piracy during that same period.

Antonis Diakakis reviews extensively the population changes in Messolonghi, a city twice besieged during the revolution. At times the flight of civilians and at others the arrival of refugees constantly changed the composition of the city's inhabitants; a continuous alteration which is also related to the stance of the British authorities in the Heptanese. What is more, the study underlines the effect these population changes had on the relations between social groups in the city, with an emphasis on the presence and action of armed Souliotes.

Sophia Matthaïou offers us a portrait of a "minor" intellectual and ideologist, Liverios Liveropoulou. The study approaches him as a typical specimen of a Western-raised intellectual, who moved in Greek diaspora circles, shaped liberal ideas and took on political action during the revolution. His course is also related to his subsistence needs, which were covered by his professional rehabilitation as a public servant of the newly created state. The survey of such a personal course highlights the significance of the revolution as lived experience and allows us to detect and understand personal choices in the face of new and ever-shifting circumstances.

Alexandra Sfoini approaches the history of the very word "revolution" through its use in texts contemporary with the revolution. Her contribution is part of a series of studies in conceptual history and utilises a multitude of different types of historical evidence, such as revolutionary tracts, texts by intellectuals of the diaspora and public documents of the revolutionary

authorities. In the article, the new meaning acquired by the term during our period of interest is differentiated from a prior, more traditional use, highlighting another one of the French Revolution's influences and effects. Along with the word "revolution", it reviews other, similar terms used by the contemporaries of the Greek Revolution (such as "war", "struggle", "apostasy"), thus tracking the trajectory through which the word was established.

In her study, Eleni Kovaïou examines the attempts to write a history of Neohellenic literature in German-speaking areas and the reactions the representatives of the Greek Enlightenment movement had to face following the outbreak of the revolution. The article is linked to research on the Greek Enlightenment while, at the same time, it features the reception of Neohellenic literature by the Germanophone philhellenes as well as the limits of this reception.

Vallia Rapti discusses the development of matrimonial practices and intermarriages between chieftains during the Greek Revolution, through a case study of the Stornaris family. Her research is based on a genealogy of studies approaching the social significance of kinship relations in pre-revolutionary times, articulating their purpose in the constitution and reproduction of the *armatoles* (men-in-arms) networks. The article's inquiry is placed within the timespan of the revolution, therefore highlighting continuities on the level of matrimonial practices, but mainly locating the new strategies pursued by the Stornaris family. Thus, the old practices are construed within a radically new context, underlining the way that the "old" exists in the "new".

Finally, Christos Loukos examines the amorous relations and sexual practices of 1821 fighters, in an effort to further the understanding and problematisation of everyday life during the revolution and the changes in daily experiences as a result of it. The article gathers and treats sparsely recorded, and still very much inconspicuous or neglected, relevant information: cases of romantic relationships that did not always end in bliss, information regarding the rise in prostitution due to the increase of vulnerable women as well as information regarding the treatment of female Ottoman captives. It also features information on homosexual relationships (which contemporary evidence is generally silent on) and offers an exhaustive account of the fighter Chistidis' amorous exploits.

The volume, in spite of its thematic variety, is permeated by a thread which could be condensed in the following statement: "the Greek Revolution was a revolution". Although the phrase may seem tautological, it is not; the conference and the volume approach the "Greek Revolution" not only as a struggle for freedom but as an essential break, despite the continuities that can be identified in it. This problematisation is outlined in the prologue by Christos Loukos.

Also, the thematic variety leads us to another point: the need for a total history of 1821. Understandably so, given that *Mnimon* – especially since the late 1970s and its transformation from the Greek Palaeographical Society to the Society for the Study of Modern Hellenism – is a scholarly association promoting historical research in this

very direction. The SSMH, of course, did not aspire to cover this need with the present volume, but simply to contribute to such a perspective; even if the choice of title, I would say, is not accidental. Thus, based on the scientific dispositions of the people involved, a certain example of historical writing is put forward in this volume that attempts to approach, in a responsible way, as many facets of historical reality as possible.

On this concluding note, I would like to point out two absences. They are not the only ones; besides, the volume's introductory text presents a lengthy catalogue with the research desiderata. The first absence has to do with the various receptions of 1821, by the arts, public discourse – political, journalistic or other – historiography, etc. This absence was the choice of the conference's organising committee; however, I highlight it here since matters of reception will need to be addressed, alongside various other topics, at the next opportunity. Importantly, two collective works, including very interesting contributions, have recently been published.¹⁰

¹⁰ Katerina Dede and Dimitris Dimitropoulos (eds.), *“Ηματιά των άλλων”*: Προσλήψεις προσώπων που σφράγισαν τρεις αιώνες [“The look of others”: Reception of faces that marked three centuries], Athens: Centre for Neohellenic Research, 2012; Dimitris Dimitropoulos and Vangelis Karamanolakis (eds.), *Οι αναγνώσεις του 1821 και η Αριστερά* [The readings of 1821 and the left], Athens: Contemporary Social History Archives–I Avgi, 2014.

The second absence does not weigh on the organising committee but instead marks a general absence within Greek historiography, especially that regarding 1821. This gap concerns the absence of studies on the subject matter of the history of institutions, but not in the sense that the history of law and constitutional history approach them but rather in a way that converses with social and political history. This absence

is, in my opinion, significant; especially as regards the Greek Revolution I can only recall scarce works, mainly that of Despina Themeli-Katifori on the maritime court during the Capodistrian period.¹¹

Vangelis Sarafis

*National and Kapodistrian
University of Athens*

¹¹ Despina Themeli-Katifori, *Η δίωξις της πειρατείας και το Θαλάσσιον Δικαστήριον κατά την Καποδιστριακήν περίοδον 1828–1829* [The persecution of piracy and the maritime court during the first Capodistrian period, 1828–1829], Athens: University of Athens, 1973.