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CHANGING THE MAP IN GREECE AND ITALY: PLACE-NAME CHANGES IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

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Francesco Scalora and Dimitris Dimitropoulos*

ABSTRACT: The concern of the newly founded Kingdom of Greece for the reestablishment of old place names dates to 1833 and was due to a clear and deliberate effort to break with the Ottoman past and connect the modern Greek state with ancient and Byzantine Greece. In post-Risorgimento Italy, the fundamental causes of toponymic changes was to lessen the potential for confusion between the numerous homonymous municipalities that, once part of various sovereign states, were now part of a single nation. This article discusses the parallel paths that Greece and Italy followed on the renaming issue, where the internal discourse evolved within similar political and ideological parameters, both at an administrative and public dialogue level. However, despite their similarities, the final decisions in Greece and Italy were dictated by, firstly, the administrative organisation and structure selected by each country and, secondly, the political and ideological priorities, which were set in direct correlation with the domestic political conflicts, as well as the different circumstances each country faced in relation to its borders and the rise of antagonistic neighbouring nationalisms.

This article focuses on the state policies and the public dialogue concerning the official, institutional practice of renaming settlements and changing toponyms in Greece and Italy in the nineteenth century. It is a first attempt to present, in tandem, the political and ideological choices the two newly formed states made in the effort to reshape their map based on their respective pasts: ancient Greek and Byzantine in the case of Greece and Roman in the case of Italy. During the nineteenth century, the two countries followed parallel paths on the issue of renaming, with the internal discourse in each country evolving within similar

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political and ideological parameters, both at an administrative and public dialogue level. However, despite their similarities, the final decisions were dictated by, firstly, the administrative organisation and structure selected by each country and, secondly, the political and ideological priorities, which were set in direct correlation with the domestic political conflicts in Greece and Italy, as well as the different circumstances each country faced in relation to its borders and the formation of antagonistic neighbouring nationalisms.

The concern of the newly founded Kingdom of Greece for the reestablishment of old place names dates to 1833, when the Bavarian Regency selected “euphonious” toponyms from the ancient and Byzantine tradition for the multi-settlement, consolidated municipalities in an effort to connect the new state with ancient Greece and to break with the Ottoman past. In particular, in the organisation of local government, a selective renaming of prefectures, provinces and municipal capitals was implemented. In this way, the toponymic map of the kingdom was modified, at least at an institutional level, without specific organisation and systematic justification.

From the mid-nineteenth century, the issue of toponyms became inextricably linked with the administrative organisation of the state and the reaffirmation of its national characteristics. Even though it would be an exaggeration to refer to a comprehensive public dialogue around the preservation or replacement of toponyms, it was during this period that the general framework which shaped the future management of the issue was established. Its main element consisted of gradually transforming toponyms from “mere geographical terms into political slogans” around the time of the development of Balkan nationalism and the drawing of new borders in the Balkan Peninsula.¹ The annexation of Epirus and Macedonia after 1913 and Thrace after 1919–1920 by the Greek state, along with the Asia Minor Catastrophe, with the subsequent population exchange, constituted the “national time which defined national territory”.²

In Italy, the main cause of toponymic changes was to avoid any possible confusion (fiscal, administrative, postal, etc.) among the numerous homonymous

¹ Pantelis E. Lekkas, *Το παιχνίδι με τον χρόνο: Εθνικισμός και νεοτερικότητα* (Athens: Papazisis, 2001), 219. In the Balkans in general, toponymic change is associated with the rise of nationalism and the establishment of nation-states, since similar practices were employed in a number of countries. The “mix of populations” and conflicting Balkan nationalisms led the newly founded states to take an increasing interest in the place-naming process. On “division”, the “mix of population” and the climate of the time, see Alexis Politis, *Ρομαντικά χρόνια: Ιδεολογίες και νοοτροπίες στην Ελλάδα 1830–1880*, 3rd ed. (Athens: Society for the Study of Modern Hellenism–Mnimon, 2003), 26–27.

² Lekkas, *Το παιχνίδι με τον χρόνο*, 219.

municipalities that once belonged to the smaller sovereign states prior to unification and now suddenly found themselves part of a single nation in 1861. Hence, the highest percentage of name changes occurred in the 1860s. Moreover, during those years, a considerable number of name changes were characterised by specifications not motivated by homonymy, which allows us to reinforce the idea that, even as early as the 1860s, ideological motivations were the underlying reason for toponymic choices.

Renaming the Newly Founded Kingdom of Greece: Numerical Evaluation of the Phenomenon

From the creation of the Greek state to 2011, a total of 4,986 settlement name replacements were implemented and published in the *Εφημερίς της Κυβερνήσεως* (FEK).³ These replacements can be divided into three periods: a) 1833 to 1909, b) 1910 to 1940, and c) 1941 to 2011. In each of these periods, there were common political, administrative and ideological perspectives which influenced the renaming process. In the first period, only 192 settlements (3.8 percent of the total renamings) had their names changed. More specifically, 137 name changes were implemented during the Bavarian Regency and the reign of King Othon (109 during the regency and only 28 during Othon's reign) and 55 during the reign of King George I. However, only 46 of them (23.9 percent) were ratified through autonomous administrative acts. The overwhelming majority (146, or 76.1 percent) was incorporated into decrees on the administrative division of Greek territory into prefectures, provinces and municipalities. It was a covert method of documentation, as these decrees comprised mostly census maps of the settlements belonging to each administrative district. In the case where the settlement had been renamed, the new name was indicated next to the old one without any explanation or clarification.

³ The sum of the name changes in the period 1831–2011 can be found on the research project's website <http://settlement-renames.eie.gr/>. It is worth noting that, according to the most recent count by the Hellenic Statistical Authority, in 2015 the Greek state comprised 13,621 settlements. Obviously this number has always fluctuated, due to the periodic establishment and abolition of settlements, but it can be used indicatively to provide a general overview of the phenomenon (see "Settlements," <https://geodata.gov.gr/en/dataset/oikismoi/>). Finally, it is important to note that Dimitris Lithoksou has amassed a significant amount of diverse material on the issue of renaming on his personal website. See "Μετονομασίες χωριών," https://www.lithoksou.net/2020/11/metonomasies-horion_15.html.

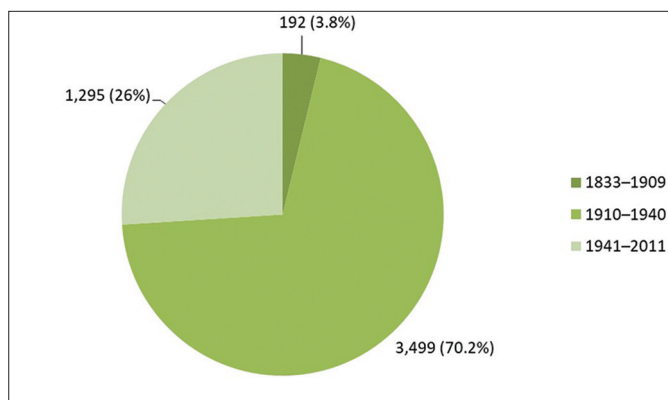


Fig. 1. Settlement renamings per period, 1833–2011. Based on information from the *Εφημερίς της Κυβερνήσεως (FEK)* for the same period.

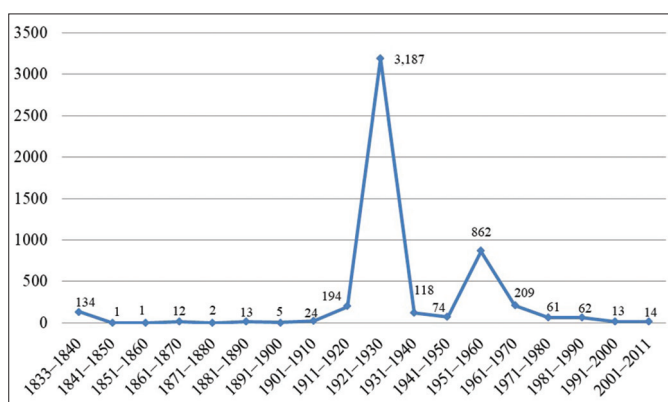


Fig. 2. Settlement renamings per decade, 1833–2011. Based on information from the *Εφημερίς της Κυβερνήσεως (FEK)* for the same period.

During the first period of the regency, there were 109 name changes (57 percent). Most of these changes can be attributed to the central political decision of the new kingdom to change the map at an administrative level. Consequently, the name changes affected mostly the administrative centres and capitals of the newly consolidated, multi-settlement municipalities, and not all the settlements within them. For example, in 1833, the settlement of Zitouni, later the seat of the municipality of Lamia in the prefecture of Fthiotida, was renamed Lamia. At the same time, the rest of the settlements in the same municipality, such as Fourka, Tsoupalata, Beki and Sarmounaskli retained their names, even though they were

cacophonous or of foreign origin. Similarly, in the municipality of Acharnai in the region of Attica, only the capital was renamed from Menidi to Acharnai, while the cacophonous and foreign names of the rest of the settlements, like Varibombi, Liopesi, Maounia, Koukouvaounes, remained the same.⁴

The main concern was the revival of the ancient administrative regime by granting the municipalities names which correlated with antiquity, and secondarily, the Hellenisation or archaisation of the toponymic map in its entirety. German archaeologist Ludwig Ross appears to have been actively involved in this process. In 1833, a year after arriving in Greece, Ross submitted a report of the sum of antiquities in the Greek territory, following a relevant request by Regent Josef Ludwig von Armansperg.⁵ However, renaming the numerous settlements of this territory required a lengthy and particularly systematic process, which was impossible to achieve immediately, and this is probably the reason why renaming was reserved for the main cities and villages. Another factor that should be taken into account is the fluidity of state composition and organisation in general in the early years of the kingdom. For example, only 47 (43.2 percent) of the 109 settlements renamed during the Bavarian Regency ultimately retained their new names while the other 62 (56.8 percent) had already reverted to their old names in official documents from as early as 1836.⁶

Only a few name changes (30 out of 192, or 15.6 percent) did not involve the granting of names from classical antiquity, for reasons that will be analysed later. The exceptions included mainly Roman, Byzantine and Frankish names (such as Apia, Examilion and Santorini), names of saints (Agia Paraskevi, Agios Georgios), as well as archaic variations (for example, Kalamata was renamed Kalamai, and Tripolitsa became Dropolitsa Tripolis). An interesting case is the renaming of Nea Mintzela to Amaliapoli. It constitutes a typical example of the importance of toponymic changes in the study of not only administrative but also ideological and political developments. This settlement in the prefecture of Fthiotida was created after refugees settled there from the village of Mintzela in what is today Magnesia, which had been utterly destroyed during the revolution. In 1839, Nea Mintzela was renamed Amaliapoli, to honour Queen Amalia, who took initiatives concerning the town planning and the construction of infrastructure

⁴ *Εφημερίς της Κυβερνήσεως* (hereafter *FEK*), no. 12, 6/18 April 1833, and no. 17 (new ser.), 11 November 1835.

⁵ Ross later served as professor of archaeology at the University of Athens and as general director of the Greek Archaeological Service. See Vasileios Ch. Petrakos, *Πρόχειρον αρχαιολογικόν 1828–2012*, pt. 1, *Χρονογραφικό* (Athens: Archaeological Society at Athens, 2013), 85–104.

⁶ *FEK*, no. 80 (Appendix), 28 December 1836.

in the settlement. In 1864, two years after Othon's dethronement, the old name was restored as part of an effort to disassociate from the Othonic past, but in 1899 the settlement was renamed Amaliapoli again, for reasons unknown.⁷

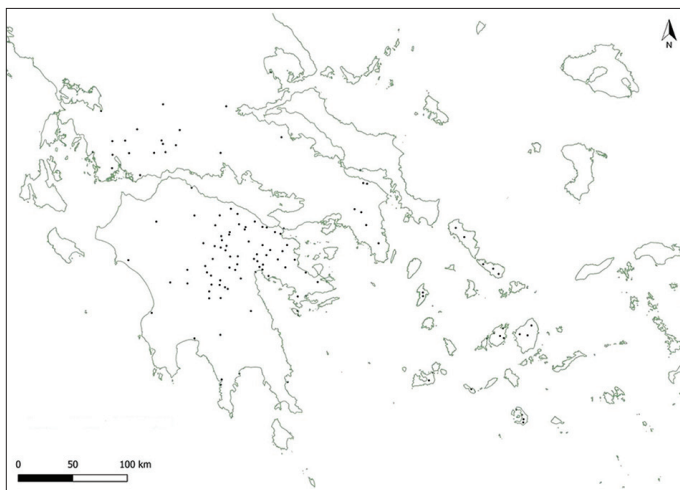


Fig. 3. Renamed settlements in Greece, 1833–1862. Based on information from the *Εφημερίς της Κυβερνήσεως* (FEK) for the same period.

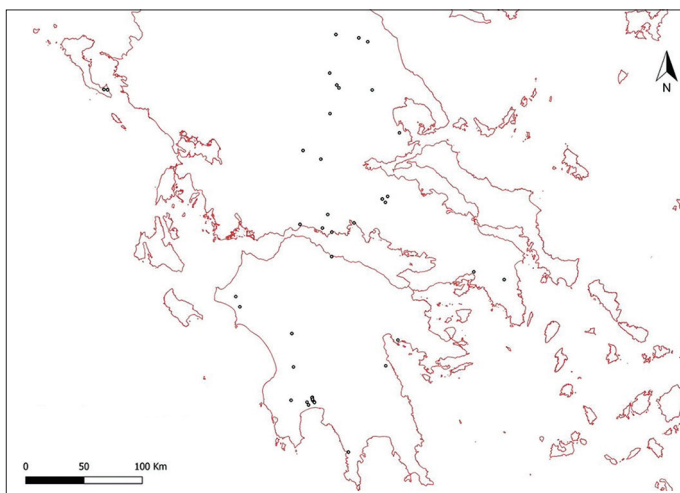


Fig. 4. Renamed settlements in Greece, 1863–1909. Based on information from the *Εφημερίς της Κυβερνήσεως* (FEK) for the same period.

⁷ FEK, nos. 14, 7 July 1839, 8, 18 February 1864, and 160, 28 July 1899.

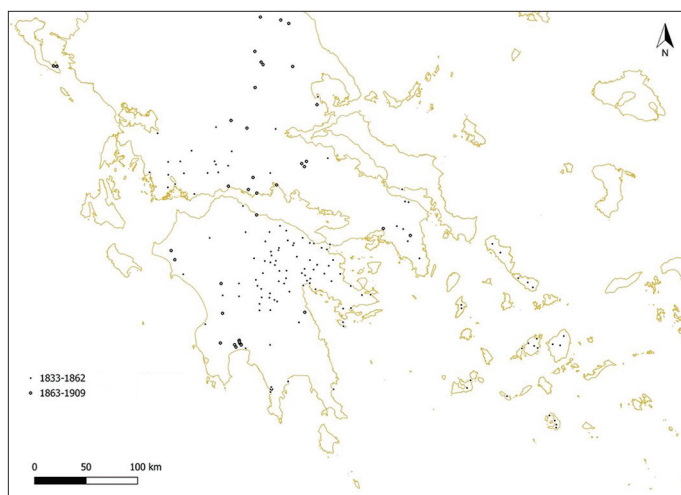


Fig. 5. Renamed settlements in Greece, 1833–1909. Based on information from the *Εφημερίς της Κυβερνήσεως* (FEK) for the same period.

As we can see in figures 1-3,⁸ the areas where most of the name changes occurred were Argolida and Corinthia, which at the time, and for several more years, formed a single administrative entity. Approximately a quarter (that is 46 cases or 24 percent) of the name replacements until 1909 occurred in this region, all between 1833 and 1835. This concentration can be attributed to the fact that the first capital of the Greek state was Nafplion (until 1834), rendering imperative the need to link this particular area with the ancient past. In addition, this link could be easily substantiated since this was an area with known archaeological finds and remains. The same was true for the Cyclades and Arcadia, which followed with 23 (12 percent) and 22 (11.5 percent) name changes, respectively. After the annexation of Thessaly by the Greek state (1881), Larissa became one of the areas with few renamings, despite the Turkish etymology of almost all of the toponyms borne by its settlements. Only eight name changes were implemented until 1909 (4.2 percent), while the rest took place mainly during the interwar period, several years after the area had been integrated into the Greek state. A

⁸ The maps show the settlements that were renamed from 1833 to 1909. The differences observed in the total geographical area are due to the expansion of the national borders, following the acquisition of the Ionian Islands in 1864 and annexation of Thessaly in 1881. It should be noted that there were more changes than are depicted on the map. Many changes are not indicated due to the dissolution of certain settlements, their merger with others or the fact that a small number of them was renamed more than once. We wish to thank our colleague Michael Festas for his help in designing the maps.

few name changes are also encountered in Laconia (7, or 3.7 percent), possibly due to the strained relations between the local leaders and the central authority during the early years of the kingdom, when most of this period's name changes took place. Finally, the lack of name changes in certain prefectures can only be justified in the case of Evia, which, though it belonged to the independent Greek state in essence, in practice it was not integrated until 1833 due to protracted negotiations over the compensation for Ottoman properties.

The second period, which extended from 1910 to 1940, began with the establishment by the Ministry of the Interior of the Committee for the Study of the Toponyms of Greece and the Verification of their Historical Origins (*FEK*, no. 125, 8 June 1909). In this period, 3,499 name replacements were implemented, which amounted to almost three-quarters (70.2 percent) of the total settlement renamings undertaken by the Greek state, essentially transforming the map of the country. The period also witnessed the doubling of Greece's territory after its victories in the Balkan War and World War I, and the annexation of Crete, Epirus, Macedonia and Thrace. A large proportion of these settlements bore mainly Turkish and Slavic names, which made their renaming imperative. To carry out this process, the Ministry of the Interior proceeded also to establish the toponyms committee, even though, in the end, the advice and remarks of the committee were ignored in the majority of name changes. Finally, during the third period, from 1940 to 2011, a total of 1,295 settlement name changes were implemented (26 percent), most of which were associated with the need to make the toponyms in question more euphonious, or to correct inapt previous changes.

It is obvious that the pace of the renaming process was not the same throughout this long period of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Political choices, state priorities and exterior pressures were the main factors which determined toponymic change. Over a period of three years, from 1926 to 1928, a total of 2,579 renamings were carried out, a rather impressive number considering only 192 settlements were renamed between 1833 and 1909. In this way, a Neohellenic toponymic map was created, a far cry from the initial, tentative attempts at renaming settlements based on solely philological and historical criteria during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The political choices of the Greek state on the issue of settlement renaming from 1909 have already been thoroughly investigated.⁹ Instead, we will now

⁹ Eleni Kyramargiou, "Renaming the Balkan Map: The Change of Toponyms in Greek Macedonia (1909–1928)," in *Balkan Nationalism(s) and the Ottoman Empire*, vol. 1, *National Movements and Representations*, ed. Dimitris Stamatopoulos (Istanbul: Isis Press, 2015), 179–90, and Kyramargiou, "Καινούρια ονόματα – καινούριος χάρτης: Οι μετονομασίες των οικισμών της Ελλάδας, 1909–1928," *Τα Ιστορικά* 52 (2010): 3–26.

attempt to examine the issue at the time of birth of the Greek state, in an effort to comprehend the rationales that were developed and the choices that were favoured throughout the nineteenth century, as we assert that it was during this period that the foundation and the initial problematics of this particular issue were established. At the same time, the concurrent presentation of the issue over the same period in the newly founded Italian state will allow us to observe both similar and different approaches at the level of central government as well as the parallel discourse that evolved within Italian academia with references to the Roman past.

Greek Intellectuals and the Formation of the New Map

In 1819, Athanasios Stageiritis, in his book *Ηπειρωτικά ήτοι Ιστορία και Γεωγραφία της Ηπείρου παλαιά και νέα*, which he published in Vienna, posited that the invasions and the “mixes of foreign nations” had altered, from the Roman era onwards, not only the demographic composition of the south Balkan peninsula, but also “the shape of its geography”.¹⁰ “It was this mix, first with the Romans, and then with these barbarians, which transformed both the mores and the language of the Greeks”. The “savage and barbarian nations ... which flowed like torrents from every side ... into Greece, Thrace and Macedonia and altered the names of the cities, the rivers and the like, transforming the shape of the places”.¹¹ “It is for this reason that we see another form of Greece, strange and foreign to Byzantine history. Different rivers, different cities, different nations and different mores.”¹² Stageiritis concludes: “It is imperative that we have another, separate Byzantine geography.”¹³

The Greek scholar’s conclusions about an old and a new history and geography and their representation and evolution through toponyms, as well as his recognition of the need to compose a new geography, a new map which would correspond to the current geohistorical reality, unwittingly constitute an early approach to the toponymic issue, long before the establishment of the Greek state and any substantial attempt at solving the issue at an institutional and ideological level. However, Stageiritis’ remarks, despite being made several years before the founding of the Greek state, were not utilised in the shaping of

¹⁰ Athanasios Stageiritis, *Ηπειρωτικά: ήτοι Ιστορία και Γεωγραφία της Ηπείρου παλαιά και νέα* (Vienna: Ioannis V. Tsvekios [J.B. Zweck], 1819), 5. Stageiritis worked in Vienna as a professor of Greek and published the journal *Καλλιόπη*.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 318.

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ *Ibid.*, 351.

the framework for the administrative and theoretical aspects of the toponymic issue – a dialogue that preoccupied the state apparatus and Greek academia for more than a century. The Greek state apparatus did not take into consideration his studies on the topography of the region, nor did it heed his recommendations for the geographical constitution of the new kingdom.

During the nineteenth century, the whole extent of the effort towards toponym replacement focused on renaming the prefectures, subprefectures, provinces and municipalities of the Greek state, so that the administrative map of the country could have names which were euphonious and Greek, derived mainly from ancient and Byzantine geography and history. In parallel with the administrative action on toponymic change, a theoretical discussion on the same subject developed in scholarly and intellectual circles, with different facets of the issue attracting attention in different periods and various voices and opinions coexisting at any given moment, but mostly with little actual effect on the renaming process itself.

Drawing Greek toponyms from the ancient and the Byzantine period is directly related to the effort to connect the modern Greek state with the ancient past. Besides, the debate developing around “Greek continuity” was not only a Greek affair over the course of the nineteenth century. Antonis Liakos, through the unfinished work by Spyridon Lambros, *Αι ιστορικά μελέται εν Ελλάδι κατά τον πρώτον αιώνα της Ανεξαρτησίας*, attempts to highlight the question of the “continuity” of Greek historiography, making extensive references to the theoretical and ideological discussions developing at the time both in Greece and in Europe about the relationship between modern Greeks and their ancient ancestors.¹⁴ Correspondingly, by presenting the ethnographic and topographic maps for Macedonia created between 1876 and 1878, Spyros Karavas brings to the foreground the unknown “ethnographic adventures of ‘Hellenism’ in its efforts to connect with its ancient and Byzantine past”.¹⁵

As Yannis Hamilakis notes, “the relationship of modern Greeks with their classical heritage was permeated by a sentiment of dual responsibility: to prove to the ancient Greeks that their modern descendants were their equals, and to

¹⁴ Antonis Liakos, “Το ζήτημα της ‘συνέχειας’,” in *Ιστοριογραφία της νεότερης και σύγχρονης Ελλάδας, 1833–2002*, ed. Paschalis M. Kitromilides and Triantafyllos E. Sklavenitis (Athens: NHRF, 2004), 1:53–64. The writer’s reflections on the same issue are also articulated in his “Προς επισκευήν ολομέλειας και ενότητας: η δόμηση του εθνικού χρόνου,” in *Επιστημονική συνάντηση στη μνήμη του Κ. Θ. Δημαρά* (Athens: NHRF/INR, 1994), 171–99.

¹⁵ Spyros Karavas, “Οι εθνογραφικές περιπέτειες του ‘ελληνισμού’,” *Τα Ιστορικά* 36 (2002): 23–74, and *Οι εθνογραφικές περιπέτειες του ‘ελληνισμού’ (1876–1878),* *Τα Ιστορικά* 38 (2003): 49–112.

prove to Western Europeans that they can be worthy and capable custodians of this heritage".¹⁶ The development of this discourse among Greek historians and classical scholars was spurred by the effort to refute Fallmerayer, who, as early as 1830, had asserted the extinction of the Greek race and the "total dehellenisation of the Greek region due to the presence of Slavic and Albanian races".¹⁷ Fallmerayer used toponyms as evidence of the population composition of the Helladic region. Conversely, Greek scholars attempted to present a different toponymic map, indicating that the issue that had arisen was more than a mere philological dispute, but was interconnected with the national composition and organisation of the modern Greek state.¹⁸

If, for Stageiritis, toponyms were a means towards comprehending the area's evolution, and for Fallmerayer evidence of Slavicisation and Albanisation, then for the latter's critics, a return to Strabo became the only way to substantiate the endurance of Hellenism through the centuries. The restoration of the corresponding ancient toponyms, as well as the often unfounded, but scientific-sounding, justification of foreign names as linguistically corrupt versions of ancient Greek toponyms could be employed as incontrovertible testimony to the constant presence of Greek populations in the area. This presence served the ideological schema of the "unity of hellenicity through space and time",¹⁹ as it was later formulated by Konstantinos Paparrigopoulos. It is worth mentioning at this point that a royal decree, issued by Othon on 11 September 1843, according to the bibliography, ordered the creation of a committee composed by Georgios Ainian, Konstantinos Asopios, Alexandros Rizos Ragavis and Ioannis Nikolaidis Levadeas, whose mission was to discover, verify and approve toponyms deriving not only from ancient geography but also from illustrious men of the "older and

¹⁶ Yannis Hamilakis, *Το έθνος και τα ερείπιά του: Αρχαιότητα, αρχαιολογία και εθνικό φαντασιακό στην Ελλάδα* (Athens: Eikostou Protou, 2012), 109.

¹⁷ Giorgos Veloudis, *O Jakob Philipp Fallmerayer και η γένεση του ελληνικού ιστορισμού* (Athens: Society for the Study of Modern Hellenism–Mnimon, 1999) and Elli Skopetea, *Φαλμεράνερ: Τεχνάσματα του αντίπαλου δέους* (Athens: Themelio, 1997).

¹⁸ For example, in 1896 Spyridon Lambros published a lengthy article entitled "The onomatology of Attica and the settlement of Albanians in the country". In it, he refers to the faulty conclusions that can be drawn from a mistaken use of geographical names, citing as an example Fallmerayer's research, who claimed that the slavicisation of the Greek region occurred during the Middle Ages. According to Lambros, Fallmerayer's "error" lay in the fact that his research was conducted without method. See "Η ονοματολογία της Αττικής και εις την χώραν εποίκησης των Αλβανών," *Επετηρίς του Φιλολογικού Συλλόγου Παρνασσός* 1 (1896): 157–65.

¹⁹ Politis, *Ρομαντικά χρόνια*, 47.

newer history”.²⁰ From the mid-nineteenth century onwards, reflection on the toponymic issue became intertwined with the conversation around the “language issue”, history, the ancient past and how it could be restored to function as a defining feature of the state, without neglecting the preservation of folk tradition and heritage. For example, in 1861 Aristeidis Kyprianos proposed, in the journal *Φιλίστωρ*, to “collect the words and dialects from all over Greece” and compile “dialect dictionaries of the language”, underlining the fact that all toponyms should be salvaged and preserved. He ascertained that

according to those who have researched the issue, most of the geographical names of cities and towns, even rivers and mountains, of the free kingdom are Slavic. According to one researcher, only one-ninth of all names is Greek, according to others, two-tenths, and even the most liberal one finds that no more than half are Greek. Whatever the case, it seems that many are Slavic and foreign-sounding.²¹

Kyprianos suggested that words be documented exactly the way they were pronounced by the population, thus preserving the local dialect of each area. This simple documentation of the word would not be accompanied by an etymological analysis. He considered etymological pursuits useless, and believed that, especially in the case of toponyms, searching for derivations would corrupt the spelling or pronunciation of the word.²²

A year later, in the same journal, Stefanos Koumanoudis, archaeologist, secretary of the Archaeological Society of Athens for many years, and co-publisher of *Φιλίστωρ*, backed Kyprianos’ call. He actually recommended that those responsible for collecting this material should give precedence to phonetic spelling and avoid embellishing or hellenising idiomatic words according to the Attic dialect, so that those “processing” the material could represent the words and toponyms in question more accurately. With regard to these “processors” who would curate the raw material, Koumanoudis insisted that they “speak other languages, Albanian and most of all Slavic, in order to examine our geographical names”.²³ In the mid-nineteenth century, Kyprianos and Koumanoudis, both renowned scientists, suggested keeping or, at least, preserving foreign-language toponyms as part of the

²⁰ Nikolaos A. Veis, “Πρώτες κρατικές φροντίδες για τα τοπωνυμικά της χώρας μας,” *Φιλολογική Πρωτοχρονιά* 55 (1952): 111–12. Unfortunately, more information on this committee and its work could not be located.

²¹ Aristidis Kyprianos, “Προτροπή εις σύνταξιν ιδιωτικών της νέας ελληνικής γλώσσας,” *Φιλίστωρ* 3 (1862): 2–4.

²² *Ibid.*, 7.

²³ Stefanos A. Koumanoudis, “Παρατηρήσεις τινές εις το περί συντάξεως ιδιωτικών της νέας ελληνικής γλώσσας άρθρον του Αριστείδου Κυπριανού,” *Φιλίστωρ* 3 (1862): 138.

history and the topography of the region, defying contemporary attitudes towards the issue. Their positions were similar to those of Stageiritis, but were yet again unable to penetrate the obliviousness of the official Greek state.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, an administrative event, namely the dissolution of the multi-settlement municipalities, brought the issue of cacophonous and foreign-sounding toponyms back to the fore. At the same time, the need to consolidate both the population and the “New Territories”, especially after 1922, led the state to the decision to resolve the toponymic issue immediately and definitively. At this crucial historical juncture, the opinions of Stageiritis, Kyprianos and Koumanidis sounded abstract and impracticable. The issue of foreign-language toponyms needed to be resolved immediately in a way that would ensure the hellenicity of the space, thus preventing any further territorial disputes with neighbouring Balkan states.

State Organisation and the First Name Changes

The Royal Decree on the Division and Administration of the Kingdom, published on 3/15 April 1833, only a few months after King Othon’s ascent to power, contains the first renamings of the provinces and homonymous cities of the newly founded Kingdom of Greece (table 1):

Table 1
First renamings of the provinces and homonymous settlements, 1833

Old toponym	New toponym
Damalas, province of	Troizin, province of
Kalavryta	Kynaitha
Monemvasia	Epidavros Limira
Apokoros, province of	Kouritis, province of
Fanario (capital of the province of Olympia, prefecture of Messenia)	Parrasia
Tripolitsa	Tripoli
Karytaina	Gortyna
Vostitsa	Aigio
Marathonisi	Gytheion
Vatoulon (western Mani)	Oitylo
Dragamesto	Astakos
Vrachori	Agrinio

Karpenisi	Kallidromi
Zitouni	Lamia
Talantion	Atalanti
Salona	Amfissa
Spetses	Tiparinos
Thermia	Kythnos
Polykandros	Folegandros
Pyrgos	Pylos Trifyliaki
Arcadia	Kyparissia
Prastos	Prasiai
Mistra	Sparta
Monemvasia	Epidavros Limira

Source: *FEK*, no. 12, 6/18 April 1833.

Some of these first name changes have endured, others were reversed, and even a few were discarded in favour of new names, illustrating the complexity of the renaming phenomenon. Moreover, the absence of further information on the rationale behind these changes, and the processes through which they were decided, has always been a fundamental problem in the study of this phenomenon. Specifically, the political rationale and the criteria used in toponymic change were neither mentioned in the *FEK* where the decree was published, nor in Othon's records or even in secondary sources. It is indicative that these name changes did not even warrant a separate entry in the *FEK*.

On 15/27 March 1834, the Directive for the Formation of Municipalities of the Kingdom of Greece was issued in the form of a circular and was not published in the *FEK*.²⁴ Its purpose was to clarify the basic principles of the law "on the formation and division of municipalities", in order to prevent misunderstandings and increase expediency. The directives were divided into three parts: a) "On the

²⁴ The directive preserved in the General State Archives (Ministry of the Interior, 1833–1862, folder 6, doc. no. 136) is dated 15/27 March 1834. However, the directive is dated 15/27 April 1834 in two other sources: Michail G. Chouliarakis, *Γεωγραφική, διοικητική και πληθυσμιακή εξέλιξ της Ελλάδος, 1821–1972* (Athens: National Centre for Social Research, 1973), 1:101–3, and Eleftherios G. Skiadas, *Ιστορικό διάγραμμα των δήμων της Ελλάδος, 1833–1912: Σχηματισμός–σύσταση–εξέλιξη–πληθυσμός–εμβλήματα* (Athens: Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Association of Local Authorities of Argolida, 1993), 6n21.

purpose of constituting municipalities”, b) “General principles for the formation of municipalities”, and c) “On the execution of the formation of municipalities”. The second part mandated that the “previous Greek names”, where they existed, had to be taken into account and selected when naming a municipality, while in the case of villages uniting in single municipality, a euphonious name was to be chosen, preferably the name of one of the villages. This insistence on choosing the “previous Greek names” manifests, on the one hand, the effort to connect the new state with ancient Greece and, on the other, the determination to break with the Ottoman past.²⁵ The selection of names and terms from ancient Greek was praised by the press as an attempt to identify ancient and Byzantine geography with the modern one.²⁶ The political decision by the kingdom for the constitution of modern Greek geography did not take into account the fact that not only had the topography of the region changed over the centuries but, more importantly, the settlement network had expanded in comparison with ancient times, thus creating a new and entirely different map.

In the appendix of issue 80 (28 December 1836) of the *FEK*, a table of all the state’s municipalities and settlements per prefecture and subprefecture was published for the first time, documenting the sum total of inhabited spaces and their official name.²⁷ This table contains all the name replacements executed up to that point, without however any information or clarification on the time of the renaming, the process followed or the rationale behind the selection of the new designation. The only information is the old name, noted next to the new one in parentheses. The table reveals an interesting contrast: the prefectures, subprefectures and municipalities now had names which were “euphonious and Greek-sounding”, while the villages and the smaller settlements kept the names they had before the formation of the state, names which in many cases echoed foreign influences.

More specifically, the municipalities of the kingdom, which were created through the consolidation of villages, drew their names from ancient geography, composing an impressive mosaic. In contrast, the villages comprising these municipalities did not have such “euphonious” names.

²⁵ With a letter to the newspaper *Σωτήρ* in June 1834, an anonymous reader congratulated the “invaluable work of the regency” towards the rebirth of Greece, which he tied to the replacement of the barbarous and cacophonous toponyms with Greek ones from the “illustrious antiquity”. See *Σωτήρ*, 21 June 1834.

²⁶ Minoas A. Mathioudakis and Vasileios K. Andronopoulos, *Αποκέντρωση-Αυτοδιοίκησης: Ιστορική εξέλιξις, περιγραφή υφιστάμενης κατάστασης* (Athens: Diokritiki Metarrythmisi, 1974), 11–12.

²⁷ Chouliarakis, *Γεωγραφική, διοικητική και πληθυσμιακή εξέλιξις*, 103–5.

Table 2
The municipalities and settlements in the Prefecture of Lacedaemonia

Prefecture	Municipality	Settlements
Lacedaemonia	Sparti	
	Vryses	
	Amyklai	
	Kydonia	
	Kronio	
	Parnon	
	Oinountas	
	Evrysthena	Vresthena
	Peraia	
	Karyes	
	Vordonia	
	Velamini	
	Kastorio	
	Pellani	
	Faris	
	Therapnai	
	Sellasia	
	Krokeai	Petrina Taratsa Pritsa Rozova Strontza Zechina Asimi Levetsova Alaimpeis Lagiou Kato Palavina
	Melitini	
	Trinassos	
	Geronthrai	

	Fellia	Goranoi Matina Polovitsa Potamia Arna Kourouzouna Kotsatina Tserna
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Source: FEK, no. 80, 28 December 1836, 24–27.

Similar examples can be found in the majority of the new municipalities, simply because it was unfeasible to rename every single settlement in such a short time, especially while establishing a new state apparatus.

While the need to rename settlements had been acknowledged, the process of replacing and hellenising the country's toponyms was hindered by inadequacies in administrative organisation, distractions by a stream of more urgent problems, the exorbitant cost as well as the inability to formulate a complete, comprehensive renaming proposal. Nevertheless, the administrative system of prefectures, subprefectures and multi-settlement municipalities – which became a system of provinces and municipalities after 1836 – allowed for selective name changes at the prefecture and municipal level. This process resulted in adding names to the administrative map of the kingdom without any particular organisation or systematic work by experts (geographers, historians). Selectively renaming prefectures, subprefectures – or, later, provinces – and the capitals of municipalities during this restructuring of local government solved the problem, at least at an institutional level, but without substantial organisation or systematic justification. In the following years, sporadic renamings of provinces and municipalities were published in royal decrees on the division and demarcation of municipalities, thus changing the toponymic map at an administrative level, but these changes were not necessarily published in the *FEK*.²⁸

²⁸ In the Royal Decree on the Reform of Governing Bodies, Karvasaras, the seat of the province of Akarnania, was renamed Amfilochikon Argos (Skiadas, *Ιστορικό διάγραμμα*, 12–13). Until 1840, no settlement renaming decisions were published in the *FEK*, but in the decrees that announced the consolidation of municipalities, there were many instances not exactly of renaming but of tinkering with the pronunciation or inflection of village names. For example, Bogdani became Bogdanon, Drispai became Drouskos, Anadi changed to Agnanton, Regini to Rigon, Xelkios to Xylikos, Kanianos to Kaniani, Brali to Bralo and Gkouritza to

Toponymic Changes during the Reign of George I

Throughout the nineteenth century, the administrative system of the kingdom, as well as the logic and practice of toponymic renaming, remained the same despite the changes precipitated by Othon's dethronement and the acquisition of new territories. When George I assumed the throne in August 1863, he maintained the existing administrative division. The restructuring that had begun under his predecessor continued, mainly through municipal consolidation for financial and administrative reasons. The renaming of municipalities, their capitals and certain individual settlements also continued. These new names came mainly from antiquity and mythology, but an accurate correspondence between ancient and new geography was not always guaranteed. On the Ionian Islands, which had just been integrated into the kingdom, the municipalities initially took the names of the villages that were their capitals. Later, though, the responsible authorities reprocessed the ancient locations on each island, as well as the history and geographical position of the settlements, and proceeded to choose new names.

The first changes were implemented in the municipalities in the province of Zakynthos. The municipality of Volimes was renamed Elaties,²⁹ Katastaria became Yrieis,³⁰ Koiliomenos became Nafthies,³¹ Skoulidakos became Mesogaies,³² Machairades changed to Opitaides,³³ Galara to Artemisies³⁴ and Gerakaria to Arkades.³⁵ Of the ten municipalities in the province, seven were renamed during the second half of 1866. The municipality of Arkades probably

Gouritsa. In the absence of a justification for them, the reasons for these changes remain unknown. They were probably made in an effort to hellenise cacophonous toponyms, but we do not know whether this effort was instigated by the Ministry of the Interior, or if it was the people tasked with composing the catalogues who, either of their own initiative or following instructions, proceeded to transcribe a badly hellenised form of the toponym because they did not understand it. The problem arising from the nonpublication of these changes in the *FEK* is that they remain unregistered and, while the toponym has not been officially changed, it appears in various permutations in a number of documents and catalogues. In December 1840, the Municipality of Oichalia was renamed Karpenisi and the Municipality of Evritanes became Kallidromites (*FEK*, no. 22A, 18 December 1840). The next renaming published in the *FEK* was nine years later, on 13 June 1849, when the settlement of Eretria was renamed Nea Psara, as many refugees from the island of Psara resettled there (*FEK*, no. 22A, 13 July 1849).

²⁹ *FEK*, no. 56, 30 July 1866.

³⁰ *FEK*, no. 60, 29 August 1866.

³¹ *FEK*, no. 61, 6 September 1866.

³² *Ibid.*

³³ *FEK*, no. 66, 7 October 1866.

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ *FEK*, no. 68, 31 October 1866.

drew its new name from the ancient city of the same name, or the Tribe of Arkades, or King Arkas.³⁶ The name of the municipality of Opitaides “referred to Artemis, as we know due to an inscription found in Zakynthos”. Nikolaos G. Politis, in a report to the Ministry of the Interior in 1899, placed this name, along with the name of the municipality of Artemisies, where there is a temple to goddess Artemis, under the category of toponyms deriving from ancient monuments or institutions.³⁷ According to Politis, the municipality of Elaties owed its name to the homonymous mountain,³⁸ while he considered the new name of the municipality of Nafthies, inspired by a naphtha (pitch) spring in the area, “ethnically inappropriate”.

On the other Ionian Islands, there was no similar wave of name replacements. As for the rest of Greece, in July 1867, in the municipality of Thouria of the province of Kalames, the villages of Fourtzala and Kamari were merged and renamed Thouria, the village of Venzami into Antheia, Farmion into Aipeia, Delimimi into Anthaia, Kourtzaousi into Sperchogeia and Aizaga into Antikalamon.³⁹ These renamings are of particular interest since they combined two elements which we encounter for the first time in the nineteenth century: firstly, the sum of the villages in the municipality were renamed, not just the capital, and secondly, the Ministry of the Interior proceeded with the name changes following a request by Thouria Municipal Council, according to the royal decree published in the *FEK*. Up until that point, the decrees had stated that the name changes were proposed by the minister himself, who in turn requested the king’s approval. However, the decree does not clarify whether the municipal council simply asked for the villages to be renamed, or whether it had also proposed the new names.

In tandem with the process of renaming municipalities and their capitals, as published in the *FEK*, the effort to hellenise the names of individual settlements also progressed. This was achieved by changing the gender, the spelling, or slightly modifying the pronunciation of the names. Examples of these practices can be found in the following cases: the villages of the province of Karystia were renamed from Thyma (neuter) to Themí (feminine), from Tzeftiliki (neuter) to Tsiftília (feminine), from Askounasi (feminine) to Askouasi (neuter), from Bafioti (neuter) to Bagiata (feminine), from Stoupasi (neuter) to Stoupaioi (masculine) and from Vatisi to Vatesi. Similarly, in the municipality of Agrafta in the province of Evrytania, Myrisi became Myrion, and in the municipality

³⁶ Skiadas, *Ιστορικό διάγραμμα*, 532.

³⁷ Nikolaos G. Politis, “Τα ονόματα των δήμων,” *Επετηρίς του Φιλολογικού Συλλόγου Παρνασσός* 3 (1899): 61–62.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 61–62.

³⁹ *FEK*, no. 40, 10 July 1867.

of Gavriion in the province of Andros, Vitaki became Vetali and Arnon (or Arnas) became Arni.⁴⁰

With the Law on the Introduction of Greek Legislation in the Newly Annexed Provinces of Thessaly and Epirus of 19 March 1882,⁴¹ the newly acquired territories were divided into the following prefectures: the prefecture of Arta, which included the provinces of Arta and Tsoumerka, the prefecture of Larissa, comprising the provinces of Domokos, Farsala, Agyia, Tyrnavos, Almyros and Volos, and the prefecture of Trikala, with the provinces of Trikala, Kalambaka and Karditsa. Essentially, three new prefectures, comprising 12 provinces, were integrated into the kingdom, while the same law demarcated the borders of the 76 municipalities within these provinces. In subsequent royal decrees, which list the settlements belonging to these newly formed municipalities, we encounter the first renamings, which were, once again, not recorded in the *FEK*.

The Greek Archaeological Service and Renamings

The National Archive of Monuments of the Ministry of Culture also contains the archive of the Greek Archaeological Service, with fragmentary coverage over a 40-year period (1870–1914). Included in the archive are about 50 cases involving the head of the service, the general director of antiquities, concerning the granting of toponyms, along with municipal council decisions and relevant administrative documents.⁴² This material is particularly interesting because it indicates that, at least during the period in question, the renaming of settlements and municipalities was not implemented exclusively on the initiative of the central government, but the process could also be initiated at the local level, through relevant requests by municipal councils. These requests ended up at the Ministry of the Interior, which in turn passed them on to the Archaeological Service as the primary entity responsible for the examination of the historical accuracy of the proposed names and, generally, the selection of appropriate names based on the history, ancient or more recent, and topography of each area.⁴³

⁴⁰ Chouliarakis, *Γεωγραφική, διοικητική και πληθυσμιακή εξέλιξις*, 177–78.

⁴¹ *FEK*, no. 16, 20 March 1882.

⁴² The Greek Archaeological Service was founded in 1833, with the principal aim of protecting and preserving the antiquities of the Greek state. Consulting on renaming requests was also included in its responsibilities. See also Petrakos, *Πρόχειρον αρχαιολογικόν*.

⁴³ See also Alexandra Alexandri, “Names and Emblems: Greek Archaeology, Regional Identities and National Narratives at the Turn of the 20th Century,” *Antiquity* 76 (2002): 191–99.

There were various reasons which precipitated the filing of a renaming request. The main reason was the “barbarian” origin of a toponym (usually Turkish, Albanian or Slavic), but other reasons included disparities between the name and the history or topography of the area, homonymy between settlements, whether in the same region or another, and toponyms bearing an etymological relation to common words or concepts with a negative or even satirical meaning. The following examples illustrate the point. In 1870, Aristomenis Municipal Council in the prefecture of Messenia requested the renaming of the village of Mustafa Pasha, which was the capital of the municipality. The name was of Turkish origin and had been in use since Ottoman times.⁴⁴

In 1893, the municipality of Lissa asked to be renamed, as the ancient town of Lissa, from which the most recent name of the municipality derived, was located outside the municipal borders.⁴⁵ In 1898, Krathis Municipal Council, in the prefecture of Achaia, requested that the village of Platanos (“Plane tree”) be renamed, as it was such a common name for towns and villages across the country that its residents were having difficulty getting their post delivered.⁴⁶ Finally, in 1903, the residents of the village of Vlaka (“Idiot”) in Messenia requested a name change, due to the teasing and insults they received from other residents of the prefecture.⁴⁷

In seeking renaming, the municipal councils either requested the relevant authorities to find appropriate names or they made their own specific suggestions. These usually included names inspired by classic antiquity and aligned with descriptions of the area by ancient geographers, such as Pausanias, foreign explorers, like William Martin Leake, or local scholars. For example, in place of the aforementioned Mustafa Pasha, the council proposed the name already borne by the municipality, Aristomenis, in honour of the leader of the ancient Messenians during the Second Messenian War (685–668 BC). Similarly, for the village of Platanos, the council suggested the name Krathis, due to its proximity

⁴⁴ Ministry of Culture and Sports/Managing Directorate of the National Archive of Monuments/Historical Antiquity and Restoration Archive, Box 193, Letter from the General Director of Antiquities to the Ministry of Church Issues and Public Education about the renaming of the village of Mustafa Pasha, 16 September 1870.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, Box 118, Letter by the General Director of Antiquities to the Ministry of Church Issues and Public Education about the renaming of the Municipality of Lissa, 30 September 1893.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, Box 118, Resolution of Krathis Municipal Council on the renaming of the village of Platanos, 30 May 1898.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, Box 118, Request by the mayor of Dorio to the prefect of Messinia for the renaming of the village of Vlaka, 16 August 1903; Alexandri, “Names and Emblems,” 193.

to the homonymous river which had already reverted to its ancient name. In another case, for the villages of Bouga and Bisbardi in Messenia, which bore names of foreign origin, Triopaio and Pasiphae were proposed, the names of two mythological heroes linked with the wider area.⁴⁸

This particular preference for classic antiquity in the composition of the new toponymic map comes as no surprise, as it had been the focal point of the national imaginary of the Greek state since its inception. This was the result of a complex process which had begun at the end of the eighteenth century, through which the Greek element came in contact with the dominant ideological trends of Western Europe, such as classicism, which sought to appropriate classical heritage. Within this context, there was an attempt to participate in Western modernism in accordance with the notion that modern Greeks were, after all, the genuine descendants and legitimate beneficiaries of the classical past.⁴⁹ In the decisions and the resolutions of municipal councils, the eradication of foreign toponyms is often characterised as a national necessity and a duty to the ancient ancestors. The foreign names were reminders of the years of “slavery” and “tyranny”, namely the era of Ottoman rule, and offended Christian religion and the dignity of the Greek nation in general.

In addition, maintaining names of foreign origin gave ground to those who denied that modern Greeks were direct descendants of ancient Greeks.⁵⁰ These were none other than the supporters of Fallmerayer’s theory, which had indeed been based on the etymology of the toponyms in the Helladic region. The desire to refute this theory obviously forced a revision of government practices, since any doubt cast on the origin and the continuity of modern Greeks undermined the existence of the Greek state itself as well as its convergence course towards Europe.⁵¹ However, a question that arises is to what extent the changes brought on by these practices, in this instance the replacement of toponyms, were integrated into the everyday life of the people in a meaningful or impactful way. In 1892, for example, the mayor of Eidyllia in Western Attica wrote to the prefecture requesting that the appropriate authorities clarify the name of

⁴⁸ Ibid., Box 118, Resolution of Arios Municipal Council on the renaming of various villages in the municipality, 18 June 1905.

⁴⁹ Hamilakis, *Το έθνος και τα ερείπιά του*, 83–151; Politis, *Ρομαντικά χρόνια*, 107–11; Elli Skopetea, *Το “πρότυπο βασίλειο” και η Μεγάλη Ιδέα: Όψεις του εθνικού προβλήματος στην Ελλάδα* (Athens: Polytypo, 1988): 159–239.

⁵⁰ Indicatively, see National Archive of Monuments, Box 118, Resolution of Arios Municipal Council on the renaming of various villages in the municipality, 18 June 1905; Alexandri, “Names and Emblems,” 193.

⁵¹ Skopetea, *Το “πρότυπο βασίλειο” και η Μεγάλη Ιδέα*, 172.

the municipality, as he had not been properly informed and could not answer relevant questions from the locals or the foreign visitors to the area.⁵²

The National Archive of Monuments shows that the directors of the Archaeological Service could reject the ancient-sounding names suggested by municipal councils on the grounds of insufficient evidence. Returning to the above-mentioned example of the village of Mustafa Pasha, the proposed name (Aristomenis) was rejected because this particular historical personality originated from and operated in a different area of Messenia. In 1889, the proposed renaming of the village of Kalyvia Velitsis in Fokida was also rejected, since the two suggested replacements, Ava or Amfikleia, referred to ancient cities in another, distant location.⁵³ These examples possibly explain why no other scientific bodies besides the Archaeological Service participated in the renaming process. Philologists and historians might have been familiar with the sources and the appropriate historical information, but they were not acquainted with ancient topography, neither were they up-to-date with the most recent archaeological research. As a consequence, the role of the Archaeological Service and Greek archaeologists was particularly crucial, since they were the ones who, with their scientific authority, could substantiate and safeguard the connection with ancient topography and, by extension, the classical past.

Even though the renaming process was furbished with the proper scientific prestige its actual results were meagre. The comparison of the archival material with the official data of the Ministry of the Interior reveals that most municipal council requests during this period were rejected, even in cases where the general director of antiquities had submitted an affirmative motion. Indeed, in certain cases, the exact opposite may be observed: a name replacement was implemented despite the negative verdict of the Archaeological Service. This evidence further illustrates the fact that the process for renaming a municipality or a settlement was decidedly complex and probably required a broad consensus among all implicated entities.⁵⁴ In 1909, the Ministry of the Interior proceeded to establish

⁵² Ministry of Culture and Sports/Managing Directorate of the National Archive of Monuments/Historical Antiquity and Restoration Archive, Box 118, letter from the mayor of Eidyllia to the prefecture of Attikovoiotia, 19 July 1892.

⁵³ Ibid., Box 118, letter from the General Director of Antiquities to the Ministry of the Interior on the renaming of the village of Kalyvia Velitsis, 13 March 1889.

⁵⁴ A renaming request had to follow a bureaucratically complex route. The municipality forwarded the request to the prefecture, which, in turn, sent it to the Ministry of the Interior. Then, the Ministry of the Interior forwarded it to the Ministry of Church Issues and Public Education, from where it eventually reached the Archaeological Service, to return via the same route to the Ministry of the Interior, which had the final word.

the Committee for the Study of Greek Toponyms and the Verification of their Historical Origins, in order to systematically address the toponymic issue at a central level. This committee consisted of archaeologists and directors of antiquities. It is worth pointing out that for certain settlements, the committee adopted names which had already been suggested by the Archaeological Service previously. In 1915, the village of Piali in Arcadia was renamed Tegea, a name proposed by the local director of antiquities four years earlier.⁵⁵ The same happened in the case of the villages of Vasiliko and Voivonda in Corinthia, albeit a little later; in 1930, they were renamed Sikyon and Titani, respectively, names proposed by the Archaeological Service as early as 1913.⁵⁶

The Toponymic Issue in Contemporary Public Discourse

The Great Eastern Crisis of the 1870s, the resulting rise of nationalism in the Balkans and the expansion of the borders of the Greek state required the Greek authorities to maintain their policies on the issue of toponyms and territorial acquisitions. However, contemporary intellectuals persistently disagreed with these choices and asserted that only through a substantial and systematic study of history and geography could toponymic changes be implemented. In 1886, Antonios Miliarakis, a major personality in the field of geography in Greece in the nineteenth century, noted in the introduction to his work *Γεωγραφία πολιτική νέα και αρχαία του νομού Αργολίδος και Κορινθίας* that “if these names are marks of the passage of foreign races over Greek territory, who has the right to erase the marks of history? If someone considers these marks barbarous, let them erect right now the glorious monuments of their own modern civilisation”.⁵⁷

A few years later, in 1892, in an article in the newspaper *Το Άστυ*, Miliarakis warned against toponymic change: “The current onomatology of Greek municipalities, when examined from a philological standpoint according to

⁵⁵ Ministry of Culture and Sports/Managing Directorate of the National Archive of Monuments/Historical Antiquity and Restoration Archive, Box 118, Letter of the Directorate of Antiquities for Argolida, Corinthia and Arcadia on the renaming of villages in the Municipality of Tegeatides; *FEK*, no. 294, 28 August 1915.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, Box 118, Letter from the Directorate of Antiquities on the renaming of villages in the Municipality of Sikyonies; *FEK*, nos. 48, 20 August 1920, and 206, 28 September 1927.

⁵⁷ Antonios Miliarakis, *Γεωγραφία πολιτική νέα και αρχαία του νομού Αργολίδος και Κορινθίας* (Athens: Estia, 1886). It is worth pointing out that Dikaïos Vagiakakos, in an article several years later, equated this opinion by Miliarakis to Isocrates calling for the temples burned and desecrated by the barbarians not to be restored. See Dikaïos V. Vagiakakos, *Σχεδιάσμα περί των τοπωνυμικών και ανθρωπωνυμικών σπουδών εν Ελλάδι 1833–1962* (Athens: Syllogos pros Diadosin Ofelimon Vivlion, 2005), 19–20. Vagiakakos’ article was

both ancient geography and history, is mostly ungrammatical, a travesty; not one single system governs it, ancient and new names were thrown together, a true tragicomedy.”⁵⁸ Miliarakis believed that the municipalities should have the name of their capital, not the ancient names they had been given. He considered this to be the best and simplest solution, because not only would the people learn the names more easily, but any mismatches between newer and ancient geography would be avoided. Moreover, he claimed that the renaming of the municipalities was carried out in the absence of any sort of system, allowing ignorance, confusion and impracticalities to prevail. He also believed that no one, not even the country’s rulers, had the right to replace geographical names which had endured for centuries and were associated with the medieval and modern history of the country, disrupting the relationship between people and space for no other reason than these names were considered barbarous: Slavic, Venetian or Turkish.

As geographical names were being replaced, an effort to record, collect and study toponyms was also developing, through various journals, including *Εφημερίς των Φιλομαθών*, *Πανδώρα*, *Παρνασσός*, *Επετηρίς του Φιλολογικού Συλλόγου Παρνασσός*, *Εστία*, *Φιλίστωρ*, *Εβδομάς*, *Ο εν Κωνσταντινουπόλει Ελληνικός Φιλολογικός Σύλλογος*, *Σύγγραμμα Περιοδικόν*, *Ζωγράφειος Αγών*, *Αθηνά* and *Δελτίον της Ιστορικής και Εθνολογικής Εταιρείας της Ελλάδος*. Through relevant articles in these journals, not only were toponyms collected, but “an interpretation of their form and an examination of their meaning was attempted”.⁵⁹ For example, in Attica, several toponyms derived either from landowners’ names, or adjectives and features that defined them. The settlement names of Pikerni, Triklini, Logotheti (an area in present-day Marousi), but also Skaramagkas, Kapandriti and Chalkoutsi, all stem from family names.⁶⁰ Kouvaras in the municipality of Lavrio, Varnavas in Marathonas, Kamatero in

published in *Αθηνά* 66 (1962): 301–424, and 67 (1963–64): 145–369 and was republished in 2005. Here we use the 2005 edition.

⁵⁸ Antonios Miliarakis, “Τα γεωγραφικά ονόματα,” *Το Άστυ*, 6 and 8 January 1892.

⁵⁹ Vagiakakos, *Σχεδιάσμα περί των τοπωνυμικών και ανθρωπωνυμικών*, 20. According to Vagiakakos, the documentation of toponyms began in the seventeenth century in texts like Meletios (Bishop of Athens), *Γεωγραφία παλαιά και νέα, συλλεχθείσα εκ διαφόρων συγγραφέων παλαιών τε και νέων, και εκ διαφόρων επιγραφών, των εν λίθοις, και εις κοινήν διάλεκτον εκτεθείσα χάριν των πολλών του ημετέρου γένους* (Venice, 1728), Daniel Philippidis and Grigorios Konstantas, *Γεωγραφία νεωτερική* (Vienna, 1791), Adamantios Korais, *Ανέκδοτοι λεξιλογικά σημειώσεις και επιστολαί*, and Ioannis Anastasiou Leonardos, *Νεωτάτη της Θεσσαλίας χωρογραφία, συνταχθείσα κατ’ ιδιαιτέραν τινα μέθοδον γεωγραφικώς και περιηγητικώς υπό Ιωάννου Αναστασίου Λεονάρδου* (Budapest, 1836) and others.

⁶⁰ Lambros, “Η ονοματολογία της Αττικής,” 158–61.

Acharnes and Filiati in Koropi all owe their names to illustrious personalities of the Byzantine Empire.⁶¹ The toponymic composition of Attica also included names of Turkish families, such as Brachami, Chasani, Dervenaga, Tourali and Chaidari, or families of Albanian descent, like Liosa, Spata, Vrana, Bougiati, Malakasa, Liopesi, Salesi, Tatoi and Koropi.⁶²

In 1899, Politis published an article in the *Επετηρίς του Φιλολογικού Συλλόγου Παρνασσός* entitled “Municipal Names”, in which he makes reference to the committee established in 1897 by the Ministry of the Interior due to the upcoming census, and to the conclusions the committee reached after completing its task. The ministry formed this committee, composed by Georgios Chatzidakis, Antonios Miliarakis and Politis himself, in an effort to rid the municipal names published on the census tables of any mistakes in spelling or pronunciation.

The committee, after studying the sum of municipal names in the Greek region, settled on the following categorisation of toponyms according to their origins: a) names derived from an ancient city located within the borders of the current municipality, b) names inspired by events of the newer history of the area, c) names stemming from locations within the borders of the current municipality, including names related to mountains, rivers or ancient monuments, d) “names formed in accordance with the form of national names, to connote the relationship of the residents with a place within the municipality”, and e) names given to honour illustrious men of the region.⁶³

Although Politis appears to be primarily concerned with the orthographic and grammatical accuracy of the toponyms, in essence he reveals the unease among the members of the committee about the hasty selection of names for the municipalities. In his study, he pointed out the need to implement the basic rules of name-granting, even at that late stage. Despite the fact that the toponyms were used in a grammatical number and case which would make them sound more ancient Greek – even the ones which did not stem from ancient cities or monuments – this was not always feasible. Politis believed that, on the one hand, “modern” language should be used instead of archaisms, and, on the other, ancient toponyms should be maintained in their original forms.

For this advice to be put into effect, the names given should have corresponded with the ancient geography of the region, which was not the case. In his study, he presents a number of ancient-sounding names given to municipalities, such as Apodotia, Aroaneia, Makryneia, Nymfasia and Ofonia, which, however,

⁶¹ Ibid., 163.

⁶² Ibid., 164 and 184–87.

⁶³ Politis, “Τα ονόματα των δήμων,” 54.

did not come from ancient cities, but had been generated due to incomplete knowledge of ancient geography. In the conclusion of his article, he asserted that the practice of inventing names out of nonexistent ancient cities was inexcusable, and not only should it be terminated, but it was urgent that all these toponyms be immediately replaced with terms which are correct orthographically, grammatically and “geographically” and which he listed in detail at the end of the article.⁶⁴ Although Politis’ article was particularly concise and had as its main topic the names of the municipalities and their proper spelling on the new census tables, it constitutes, at the same time, a first presentation of the toponymic issue and the form it had taken at the end of the nineteenth century.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, the toponymic issue would resurface due to the dissolution of the consolidated municipalities, which returned to the administrative map a mosaic of cacophonous and foreign-sounding toponyms. Moreover, the annexation into Greek territory of Macedonia and Thrace, where foreign toponyms were prevalent, added a fresh imperative and sense of urgency to the renaming process. In 1909, the systematisation of the national policy on the issue of toponyms began, with the Royal Decree on the Establishment of a Committee for the Study of the Toponyms of Greece and the Verification of their Historical Origins.⁶⁵ The aims of the committee are stated clearly in its name; the, as yet unformed, body would deliberate on the replacement of not only “foreign” or “cacophonous” names with no “historical value”, but also of those which had been granted since the founding of the state but had meanwhile been deemed inappropriate for various reasons. According to the introductory report by the Minister of the Interior, a single, cohesive set of criteria for the selection of new names would be implemented, the main characteristic of which would be systematic and rigorous “scientific” research.

The minister, Nikolaos D. Levidis, considered the establishment of this committee and the replacement of toponyms urgent and imperative, since the “foreign elements” which had infiltrated the toponymic map had displaced the “older Greek names”.⁶⁶ This perspective was also evident in the composition of the committee, which was appointed at the end of May 1909. Chaired by Politis, it comprised prominent university professors, along with senior members of the public administration tasked with census-related and cartographic duties, who undertook the work of finding “euphonious and beautiful” toponyms.⁶⁷ The royal decree summarises not only the entirety of the problem, but also its solution,

⁶⁴ Ibid., 57–60.

⁶⁵ *FEK*, no. 125, 8 June 1909.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Ibid. The royal decree dictated the details of the committee’s operation.

according to the prevailing sentiment: “foreign-sounding and cacophonous” toponyms had to be replaced with “Greek and euphonious” names, so that the residents could get accustomed to them and use them in order to refute any insinuations about the ethnic composition of the population. In this way, the years of Ottoman rule would fade into oblivion along with the “barbarous” toponyms, and the Kingdom of Greece would be protected from “exterior threats”. In conclusion, the purpose of the renaming process was none other than the hellenisation of the map and the invigoration of national morale.

Renaming the Newly Founded Kingdom of Italy

In Italy, “the fundamental causes of toponymic changes can be identified in the undoubtedly relevant issue for the young unitary state, established in 1861, of avoiding the many possible confusions (fiscal, administrative, postal, etc.) that could have occurred among the many homonymous municipalities that used to belong to the sovereign states prior to unification and suddenly found themselves within a single nation”.⁶⁸ From the recent systematic analysis of the 2,777 changes in the names of 2,428 Italian municipalities renamed between 1861 and 2014,⁶⁹ conducted by Emidio De Albentis, it clearly emerges that the majority of toponymic changes took place precisely in the 1860s, and more specifically in 1862 (which accounts for 9.83 percent of the total changes), 1863 (35.22 percent), 1864 (5.65 percent), 1867 (4.97 percent), 1868 (1.87 percent), and continuing at a less remarkable pace in the 1870s.⁷⁰

It is clear, therefore, that during the second half of the nineteenth century, from 1861 to 1900, about two-thirds (66.83 percent) of the overall municipality name changes occurred,⁷¹ with significant peaks in the 1860s, a decade which, following the proclamation of the Kingdom of Italy, saw, among other things, further political-military victories: the conclusion of the Third War of Independence (1866), with the annexation of the Porto Mantovano, Veneto and Friuli areas, and the capture of Rome (1870), with the annexation of what had remained under papal rule.

⁶⁸ Emidio De Albentis, *I cambi di nome dei Comuni italiani (1861-2014)* (Rome: Società Editrice Romana, 2017), 6.

⁶⁹ This analysis, alone, reveals that “in the great majority of cases (2,128 out of 2,428 [municipalities], that is, in 87.65 percent of cases) the name changes happened once and they were permanent”. Ibid., 6. The remaining cases concern municipalities subjected to two, three and, sporadically, four name changes.

⁷⁰ The years 1872 and 1873 accounted for 1.62 percent 1.08 percent of the general total, respectively. Ibid., 6.

⁷¹ Ibid., 10–11.

The ways in which the Savoyard monarchy set in motion this powerful organisational machine since the dawn of unification and in the immediately following years, demonstrate, mainly according to the data obtained from the *Gazzetta Ufficiale del Regno d'Italia*, the official gazette of the kingdom,⁷² that the toponymic changes in that period

were advocated by the central government through the direct involvement of the municipal councils; not so much from a democratic drive, which was nonexistent at the time, but in a pursuit, both shrewd and understandable, to involve the local ruling classes ... in the concrete government of the country, without obviously granting them too much freedom or real operational autonomy, but allowing a significant appearance of it.⁷³

As for the causes that guided the choices for the name changes of the numerous Italian municipalities deemed homonymous, the so-called “toponyms of

⁷² The purely political-administrative data, obtainable from the publications of the royal decrees with which the “change measure” (*provvedimento di variazione*) was implemented, should in reality be integrated with those stored in the archives of the Ministry of the Interior, the prefectures and individual municipalities, to help investigate, with greater awareness, the discussions and decisions underlying the maturation of individual name changes. There is no lack of tools and secondary sources. Beyond a series of essays, mostly of local scope, it is sufficient to mention, among the general, wide-ranging studies, cursory and often not systematic: Teresa Cappello and Carlo Tagliavini, *Dizionario degli etnici e dei toponimi italiani* (1981; repr., Bologna: Pàtron; In riga, 2017); Giuliano Gasca Queirazza, Carla Marcato, Giovan B. Pellegrini, Giulia Petracco Sicardi and Alda Rossebastano, eds., *Dizionario di toponomastica: storia e significato dei nomi geografici italiani* (1990; repr., Turin: UTET, 2003), and Giovan B. Pellegrini, *Toponomastica italiana: 10000 nomi di città, paesi, frazioni, regioni, contrade, fiumi, monti spiegati nella loro origine e storia* (Milan: Hoepli, 1990). The bibliography on the topic in the last few years has grown considerably. In this sense, the contributions published in the *Rivista italiana di onomastica*, founded in 1995, should be taken into consideration. In addition to the contributions, the journal includes material and bibliographic reviews in the “Rubriche” (Headings) section, information on books and articles, reports on monographs and miscellaneous publications, conference proceedings, dictionaries, activities and scientific meetings on onomastics in general. Finally, an invaluable online data repository is Storia dei Comuni: Variazioni Amministrative dall’Unità d’Italia (History of Municipalities: Administrative Variations from the Unification of Italy), an essential tool designed and administered anonymously (“Elesh,” henceforth Elesh Repository), which has collated all the political-administrative data relating to municipality name changes since 1861: Storia dei Comuni, accessed 2 June 2019, <http://www.elesh.it/storiacomuni/accedi.asp>.

⁷³ De Albentis, *I cambi di nome*, 7. See also Enzo Caffarelli and Sergio Raffaelli, “Il cambiamento di nome dei comuni italiani (dall’Unità d’Italia a oggi),” *Rivista italiana di onomastica* 5 (1999): 119–20.

necessity”,⁷⁴ the most represented categories in absolute terms are the hydronyms and name changes made according to “contiguity” criteria. These are followed by, to mention only a few, name changes centred on geographical aspects, such as those of an oronymic, limnonymic, geonymic type, changes linked to the territorial characteristics or to the geographical position of the municipality.⁷⁵ Name changes according to “contiguity” criteria are of greater interest in this context since the historical orientation guiding the choices for the toponymic modifications in question often seem to assume clear ideological nuances, which deserve to be examined in more depth.

In the context of name changes performed according to “contiguity” criteria, geographical “contiguity” to historical monuments (and antiquities in general) within or in the immediate vicinity of the municipal territory subject to a name change is relevant. Criteria of historical “contiguity” are also significant. This latter subcategory includes name changes based on historical-cultural motivations related to specific religious events (such as in the case of religious toponymy),⁷⁶ military events associated with the municipality or more generally with the territory, and name changes performed on the basis of historical-cultural motivations associated with the specific ethnic identity of the region where the municipality is located.⁷⁷ This latter criterion was implemented mainly for toponyms linked to the peoples of ancient Italy and, more generally, to the heritage of ancient Rome, and it is the one on which we will focus.

It is clear that the direct relation – presumed or authentic – with history based on the reference to antiquity was widely utilised in the toponymic policies promoted by the Savoyard monarchy (and indeed also by liberal Italy and the Fascist regime, albeit with different motivations),⁷⁸ as it constituted a precious element of identity for a very young nation inhabited by so many people who could hardly identify themselves in a unitary national scheme. The recourse to antiquity did not so much reflect the moral need to repopulate with great examples a memory that had partially been emptied, but rather the need for the

⁷⁴ On the distinction between luxury toponyms and toponyms of necessity, see Caffarelli and Raffaelli, “Il cambiamento di nome dei comuni italiani,” 118, which retraces Pellegrini, *Toponomastica italiana*, 425–29.

⁷⁵ For a complete review of the reasons that guided the choice of name changes, see De Albeniis, *I cambi di nome*, 16–22, and Pellegrini, *Toponomastica italiana*, 425–29.

⁷⁶ See Pellegrini, *Toponomastica italiana*, 398–402.

⁷⁷ Pellegrini (ibid., 33–147) offers a greater focus on this category of toponyms linked to pre-Latin substrate languages, also giving account of the relative areas of geographical distribution.

⁷⁸ See n. 82 below.

sacredness of antiquity, the history and tradition of which people could identify themselves and a specific community, without forgetting at the same time “to consolidate the spirit of municipal and regional identity”.⁷⁹ It is therefore no coincidence, as De Albentis states, that “since the 1860s, a considerable number of toponyms were determined by specifications not motivated by homonymic reasons, an observation that allows us to reinforce the idea that the underlying motivations for toponymic choices were ideological, which is also true even in cases of name changes involving homonymous municipalities.”⁸⁰ The myth of Rome, for example, with its unitary appeal, together with

the tendency to perceive the history of Roman Italy as the formative process of a national entity ... saw its most intense phase in the period between the Risorgimento and the end of World War II. We encounter it, from time to time, in the heroic phase of the struggle for independence, in the propaganda aimed at bestowing unity and prestige to the new kingdom, in the claims to a role as a colonial power, in World War I and during the entire Fascist period.⁸¹

The Role of Antiquity and the Toponymic Policy in Pre- and Post-unification Italy: The Search for Pre-classical Antiquity

Indeed, the myth of Rome, which at first glance seems to have influenced the orientation of those involved in coordinating this massive organisational machine linked to toponymic modifications since the early 1860s, did not appear to be particularly dominant in the choices that led to the numerous toponymic changes of the time; certainly not as much as in liberal and, later, Fascist Italy, when it was reaffirmed with ideological force for clearly propagandistic needs.⁸²

⁷⁹ Caffarelli and Raffaelli, “Il cambiamento di nome dei comuni italiani,” 120.

⁸⁰ De Albentis, *I cambi di nome*, 6.

⁸¹ Andrea Giardina and André Vauchez, *Il mito di Roma: Da Carlo Magno a Mussolini* (Rome: Laterza, 2000), 181.

⁸² The bibliography on the toponymic policy of the Fascist period is particularly rich. Among other things, it also accounts for the “foundation” policy during the 20-year period of Fascist rule. An overall picture is offered by Caffarelli and Raffaelli, “Il cambiamento di nome dei comuni italiani,” 115–47. On the “foundation” policy of the Fascist period, among many works it is sufficient to refer to Riccardo Mariani, *Fascismo e “città nuove”* (Milan: Feltrinelli, 1976); Lucia Nuti and Roberta Martinelli, *Le città di strapaese: La politica di “fondazione” nel ventennio* (Milan: Franco Angeli, 1981) and Diane Y. Ghirardo, *Building New Communities: New Deal America and Fascist Italy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989). Particularly useful, also due to the rich bibliography, are the works of Sergio Raffaelli, *Le parole proibite: Purismo di Stato e regolamentazione della pubblicità in Italia (1812–1945)* (Bologna: Il Mulino,

In the full Fascist exaltation of the reborn Roman power, these interpretations of the Italian past and the deriving series of ideological constructions, mainly linked with claims to a rediscovered national and imperial unity, would in fact find expression in all their pathological character.⁸³ Reference to personalities and events of ancient Rome had, already in liberal and later in Fascist Italy, an identitary sense: the aim was to constitute a reminder of the origins of the Italian nation, which was rooted in such an extraordinarily glorious past.

In the years immediately after the unification of Italy, the Roman model, however impressive and suggestive, was not yet sufficient to be presented, and therefore perceived, automatically and independently, as a unitary appeal.⁸⁴

In the Italian case ... the passionate power of will, typical of any claim of origin, would ... come to confront, sooner or later, historical fact. These facts made it certainly possible to identify ancient history as the motif of a unitary Italy under the guidance of Rome, and thus to present the birth of the Kingdom of Italy as a reunification, the reparation of a wrong that had lasted about 15 centuries. At the same time, however, the same facts allowed for the opposite interpretation, exhibiting the irreducible vitality of local cultures, regional and civic patriotisms, "Italian" and yet different lineages.⁸⁵

In the shadow of the triumphs of the Italian Risorgimento canon, which recognised the myth of Rome as a reference to the origins of the Italian nation, other parallel discourses grew, some even antithetical to that of ancient Rome. These, in addition to moulding the thoughts and writings of the protagonists, had clear effects on the effort to legitimise the new Italian state order, leaving, as far as we are concerned, also significant traces in the toponymic policies of the time.

1983), esp. 163–229; Gabriella Klein, *La politica linguistica del fascismo* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1986), esp. 113–37; Alberto Raffaelli, *Le parole straniere sostituite dall'Accademia d'Italia (1941–43)* (Rome: Aracne, 2010), and Raffaelli, "La commissione per la toponomastica della Reale Accademia d'Italia," in *Lo spettacolo delle parole: Studi di storia linguistica e di onomastica in ricordo di Sergio Raffaelli*, ed. Enzo Caffarelli and Massimo Fanfani (Rome: Società Editrice Romana, 2011), 255–68. The essays in question give an account of the regime's linguistic autarchy campaign, with particular reference to the work of the Commissione per l'Italianità della Lingua (Italian Language Commission), active within the Reale Accademia d'Italia (Royal Academy of Italy) from 1940 to 1943 (see n. 133 below).

⁸³ The bibliography on this matter is endless. We once again limit ourselves to Giardina and Vauchez, *Il mito di Roma*, 212–96.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 177–81.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 181.

Before moving on to an analysis of a representative sample of name changes that shows the particularity of this phenomenon, it would be appropriate to focus on the historical-ideological coordinates that accompanied such choices. The origin of the Italian people was a confidently repeated argument in the construction of the new cultural (and soon political) sensibilities of early nineteenth-century Italy. After all, “the development of nationality, enhanced by the impact of the French revolutionary discourse, had somewhat favoured throughout Europe a prompt recovery of the theme of antiquity in a way quite different from the antiquarian tradition, but rather as a certain point of reference for those who were looking for confirmation of a sort of perennality of the nation.”⁸⁶ Turning to antiquity was therefore inevitable: “Without the classical example ... none of the men of the revolutions on either side of the Atlantic would have possessed the courage for what then turned out to be unprecedented action.”⁸⁷

The references to antiquity in pre- and post-unification Italy were alternately stimulated by the association and fusion of Roman and Italic images – the latter drawn from the plurality of the ancient Italic peoples, therefore pre-Roman people – and they represented the different approaches to nationality, with attempts that sometimes manifested themselves as contradictory. These were “the many ways of thinking about unity and to imagine, even after 1861, a national state that took into account the many pieces that would compose the mosaic of nationality”.⁸⁸ This represented no intention of breaking with the unitarian patriotic camp, given that these elements of plurality appeared to be fully compatible with the individual territorial contexts, which, despite having their own political and cultural tradition, were preparing to sacrifice their peculiarity on the altar of unity. Not least, in fact, “pre-Roman antiquity, namely

⁸⁶ Antonino De Francesco, “La nazione impossibile: Antiquaria e preromanità nella politica culturale delle due Sicilie,” *Mediterranea: Ricerche storiche* 41 (2017): 479–80. The studies of De Francesco shine in this area for clarity and completeness. Two texts in particular should be mentioned: *The Antiquity of the Italian Nation: The Cultural Origins of a Political Myth in Modern Italy, 1796–1943* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 29–180, and “La prima Europa: Qualche nota sul mito dell’autoctonia dei popoli del Mediterraneo tra antiquaria, storia e nazionalismo,” *Italian Review of Legal History* 3 (2017): 1–23. More general are the considerations made by Joep Leerssen, *National Thought in Europe: A Cultural History* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2006), and the observations of Giardina and Vauchez, *Il mito di Roma*, 117–211.

⁸⁷ Hannah Arendt, *On Revolution* (New York: Viking, 1963), 196.

⁸⁸ De Francesco, “La nazione impossibile,” 482. See also Alberto M. Banti, *La nazione del Risorgimento: Parentela, santità e onore alle origini dell’Italia unita* (Turin: Einaudi, 2000), and Banti, *Sublime madre nostra: la nazione italiana dal Risorgimento al Fascismo* (Rome: Laterza, 2011).

the myth of a land originally inhabited by proud native peoples – such as the Samnites, the Etruscans, the Osci, the Sicels and the Ligurians – all animated by an overwhelming love of their motherland, in turn played an important role in the years of formation of the national movement.”⁸⁹

Developed in the shadow of the parallel triumphs of the Italian Risorgimento canon, references to the ancient world, understood in its plurality, were useful for thinking and then legitimising the new Italian state order in terms of a specific nationality. In addition to contributing to the construction of the new cultural and later political sensibility of a united Italy, guiding it to find its own language in the places, personalities and events of the ancient world, these references aimed to strengthen national identity, offering a significant example of moral and ethnic belonging. It was not just a trend that accompanied the diverse people of the Italian Risorgimento culture. The references to Italic antiquities, prompted by this specific political and ideological intent of pre- and post-unification Italy, came to reinforce the weak national cohesion by means of an alleged common identity, centred on the role played by Italy in the ancient world. These references somehow gave the illusion that the uncomfortable distance between the reality of the present and the glory of the past was slowly being covered, and that the past was being reconciled with the present.

In the Risorgimento, as well as in the immediately subsequent phase of its revision, the myth of Rome and the references to Italic antiquities set in motion an irreversible process of political, cultural and sentimental unification, favouring “a path of profound popular self-awareness by virtue of which a community reveals itself by retracing the signs of its past”.⁹⁰ This patient search for origins, centred on the theme of autochthony as a profound root of national identity, accompanied by the study of history and the appropriation of tradition,⁹¹ and sometimes extending to the identification of a specific national antiquity even in the protohistoric periods,⁹² facilitated the “construction of a historical identity, both individual and

⁸⁹ De Francesco, “La nazione impossibile,” 481.

⁹⁰ Giuseppe Galasso and Luigi Mascilli Migliorini, *L'Italia moderna e l'unità nazionale* (Turin: UTET, 1998), 548.

⁹¹ A general picture of the relationship between the study of classical heritage and national culture is offered by the contributions to Salvatore Cerasuolo, Maria L. Chirico, Serena Cannavale, Cristina Pepe and Natale Rampazzo, eds., *La tradizione classica e l'Unità d'Italia*, 2 vols. (Naples: Satura, 2014). A constant reference remains the study of Piero Treves, *Lo studio dell'antichità nell'Ottocento* (Milan: Ricciardi, 1962).

⁹² See Antonino De Francesco, ed., *In Search of Pre-Classical Antiquity: Rediscovering Ancient Peoples in Mediterranean Europe (19th and 20th C.)* (Boston: Brill, 2017).

collective at the same time”.⁹³ “In other words, it was a matter of finding a centre for that great and fragmented national history, which, without impoverishing particular contributions, arranged them, so to speak, around a common inspiring principle”,⁹⁴ and which would give birth to the idea of a unique statehood.

Within this scenario – it is true – Rome played a significant role and was understood as a “pillar”,⁹⁵ capable of strengthening the most shining and true features of the national character. Roman Italy was the only historical precedent of a united Italy to refer to, but the Romans “represent only one of the peoples participating in the confluence of bloodlines that produced unification in a single ‘state’”.⁹⁶ In these terms, Theodor Mommsen, in the introductory chapter of the first volume of *The History of Rome*, published in 1854, before the unification of Italy, stated:

We intend here to relate the history of Italy, not simply the history of the city of Rome. Although, in the formal sense of political law, it was the civic community of Rome which gained the sovereignty first of Italy, then of the world, such a view cannot be held to express the higher and real meaning of history. What has been called the subjugation of Italy by the Romans appears rather, when viewed in its true light, as the consolidation into a united state of the whole Italian stock – a stock of which the Romans were the most powerful branch, but still were only a branch.⁹⁷

It therefore becomes clear, as De Francesco points out, that

until the turn of the twentieth century, Italian nationality refused to limit its national past to the experience of the Romans, and national pedagogy held firm on an Italian federal past, in the conviction that

⁹³ Galasso and Mascilli Migliorini, *L'Italia moderna*, 548.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 552.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 554.

⁹⁶ Natale Rampazzo, “Theodor Mommsen e il concetto di Italia,” in Cerasuolo et al., *La tradizione classica e l'Unità d'Italia*, 1:197.

⁹⁷ For convenience, we quote Mommsen's text from the second English edition (1st ed., 1862–1866) translated by William P. Dickson: *The History of Rome by Theodor Mommsen*, 2nd ed. (London: Richard Bentley, 1864), 1:6–7. Original edition: *Römische Geschichte* (Leipzig: Weidmann, 1854), 1:5. The first three volumes (1854–1856) of the multivolume *Römische Geschichte* were received to widespread acclaim by the scholarly community and were immediately translated into Italian, English as well as French. Not being able to follow the whole editorial question here, it is sufficient to recall that an early Italian translation of the work was already circulating in 1857: Theodor Mommsen, *Storia Romana di Teodoro Mommsen: Prima traduzione dal tedesco di Giuseppe Sandrini con note e discorsi illustrativi di insigni scrittori italiani* (Turin: Guigoni, 1857). The abovementioned citation is in vol. 1,

the theme of small homelands, all called to contribute to the greater unity, was the centre around which to re-establish the different past of the various parts of Italy.⁹⁸

To this must also be added the polemics of anti-Roman patriotism, particularly acute in the years of Umbertine Italy. Rome, in fact, became the capital of Italy only in 1871. In the following years, the image of the capital, even if mainly widespread among anarchist and socialist circles, was that of a parasitic and corrupt city. The type of centralised state and the class privileges it protected was condemned.⁹⁹ In the years in question,

the myth, an exquisitely literary one, of “Byzantine” Rome was born, whereby the emblematic name of Byzantium evoked two values, which at times converged: on the one hand, it is the Levantine city teeming with activity and shady dealings, on the other, it is the city already known to European Decadentism, the sacred city of vices and pleasures, of a refined and corrupt society.¹⁰⁰

The expression by intellectuals of intolerance and opposition to the moral decadence of the capital also constituted a means of exerting pressure and influence on the political scene and Roman institutions of the time.

The relevant role of antiquity, in its plurality, in strengthening and defining Italian national identity appears therefore more than clear in its general outline. Among the operations inspired by this historical-ideological trend is also the strategic toponymic policy implemented in post-unification Italy. Quantitatively few, but no less significant, the name changes inspired by antiquity, which were performed immediately after unification and are characterised by this approach, deserve attention.

The data of the toponymic rearrangement

appear ... to lead to a fairly clear idea: wherever given the opportunity for historical memories (true or alleged, glorious or minor), the reference to antiquity – with its mystically sacred aura – found ample space, in the hope, perhaps illusory but certainly tied to a common feeling (or desire), that belonging to the new Italy would be combined with the awareness of being part of municipal and territorial realities

14. On the subject, see Mario Talamanca, “Theodor Mommsen, Roma e l’Italia,” *Studi romani* 52 (2004): 140–67, and Rampazzo, “Theodor Mommsen,” 197–217.

⁹⁸ De Francesco, “La prima Europa,” 13–14.

⁹⁹ Giardina and Vauchez, *Il mito di Roma*, 213.

¹⁰⁰ Elsa Sormani, *Bizantini e decadenti nell’Italia umbertina* (Rome: Laterza, 1981), 26.

See also Giuseppe Squarciapino, *Roma bizantina: società e letteratura ai tempi di Angelo Sommaruga* (Turin: Einaudi, 1950).

with which to identify. Ultimately ... they tried to “make the Italians”, as Massimo d’Azeglio had hoped, also by means of the toponymic reorganisation.¹⁰¹

Name Changes Inspired by Antiquity: Some Examples

According to De Albentis, the most significant name changes inspired by antiquity fall within the following categories: a) names belonging to an ancient ethnicity between homonymous and non-homonymous municipalities, b) names belonging to the Italic (pre-Roman) peoples, and c) classical toponymic restoration and recovery.¹⁰² To these must be added, however, the name changes performed according to the already reported criteria of geographical and historical “contiguity”.

The majority of the name changes referring to antiquity implemented during the second half of the nineteenth century fall into the first (belonging to an ancient ethnicity) and second (belonging to the Italic region) categories. The changes were performed through the addition (“toponymic modifier”)¹⁰³ of a specification (or “qualifier”)¹⁰⁴ of ethnicity that characterised their attributes.¹⁰⁵ For example, Alà, in the province of Sassari (Sardinia), was renamed Alà dei Sardi in 1864, through the use of a qualifier indicating the ancient native ethnicity of the island,¹⁰⁶ which was deemed necessary due to the existence of the

¹⁰¹ Emidio De Albentis, “La (presunta) sacralità dell’antico: Alcuni esempi comparati nei mutamenti toponomastici dell’Italia post-unitaria e fascista,” in *Vestigia: Miscellanea di studi storico-religiosi in onore di Filippo Coarelli nel suo 80° anniversario*, ed. Valentino Gasparini (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner, 2016), 709.

¹⁰² The difference between the two categories is also explained by De Albentis, to whom we are indebted for the differentiation described above: “the difference between ‘classical toponym restoration’ and ‘classical toponym recovery’ consists in the structure assumed by the new toponym: when the new name assumes in its entirety ancient characters (as in the case of Ercolano, which, in 1969, completely replaced the previous Resina ...), there is a ‘classical toponym restoration’; when in the new name the classical toponym joins what remains, in whole or in part, of the previous denomination (see the case of Abruzzo Cagnano Amiterno, formerly Cagnano ...), it is a ‘classical toponym recovery’.” Ibid., 709n35.

¹⁰³ Cornelio C. Desinan, *Le varianti dei nomi di luogo* (Udine: Società Filologica Friulana, 1998), 230.

¹⁰⁴ Pellegrini, *Toponomastica italiana*, 425.

¹⁰⁵ On the diffusion areas of the ethnic subregion and on toponyms coming from the relative substrate languages, see *ibid.*, 33–147.

¹⁰⁶ De Albentis, *I cambi di nome*, 296 and [2418]. The square brackets indicates the number of analytical sheets edited by the author; also useful, in these cases, is the Elesh Repository, where, in addition to the notification of the *provvedimento di variazione* and the description

almost homonymous municipality of Ala in the province of Turin (Piedmont), renamed Ala di Stura with the addition of a qualifier in the same year.¹⁰⁷ Other examples of toponymic changes to avoid confusion due to homonymity are Marano, in the province of Rome, which in 1873 was changed to Marano Equo;¹⁰⁸ Oppido, in the province of Reggio Calabria, which became Oppido Mamertino in 1863;¹⁰⁹ Roccaforte, in the province of Alessandria (Piedmont), which became Roccaforte Ligure in 1863 to differentiate it from Roccaforte del Greco (province of Reggio Calabria) and Roccaforte Mondovì (province of Cuneo);¹¹⁰ Albera, in the province of Alessandria (Piedmont), which became Albera Ligure in 1863 to differentiate it from Albera (province of Cremona);¹¹¹ Belmonte, in the province of Rieti (Lazio), which became in 1863 Belmonte in Sabina;¹¹² Roccasecca, in the province of Latina (Lazio), which in 1872 became Roccasecca dei Volsci;¹¹³ Magliano, in the province of Aquila (Abruzzo), which was changed in 1863 to Magliano de' Marsi;¹¹⁴ Prata, in the province of Caserta (Campania), which was changed in 1862 to Prata Sannita;¹¹⁵ Casole, in the province of Cosenza (Calabria), which became Casole Bruzio in 1864;¹¹⁶ Civitanova, in the province of Isernia (Molise), which was changed in 1864 to Civitanova del Sannio. However, Taranta, in the province of Chieti (Abruzzo), which became Taranta Peligna in 1881, constitutes a name change not motivated by reasons of homonymy, and is therefore attributable to the so-called "luxury toponyms".¹¹⁷

What follows are some examples of name changes referring to antiquity that fall into the remaining categories described above (restoration and recovery of the classical toponym), as in the case of San Germano, in Lazio, modified in 1863 into the ancient Italianised name Cassino (Casinum), a restoration of a classical toponym carried out for reasons of homonymy.¹¹⁸ Among the classical

of the same, a copy of the corresponding decree published in the *Gazzetta Ufficiale del Regno d'Italia* (from 1946 *Gazzetta Ufficiale della Repubblica Italiana*) is attached.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., 296, No. 1216 and [55].

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., [1750].

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., [2265]. Also useful are the considerations on the subject by Pellegrini, *Toponomastica italiana*, 161, 383.

¹¹⁰ De Albentis, *I cambi di nome*, 279.

¹¹¹ Ibid., [331].

¹¹² Ibid., [1696].

¹¹³ Ibid., [1772].

¹¹⁴ Ibid., [1818].

¹¹⁵ Ibid., [1942].

¹¹⁶ Ibid., [2197].

¹¹⁷ Caffarelli and Raffaelli, "Il cambiamento di nome dei comuni italiani," 118.

¹¹⁸ De Albentis, *I cambi di nome*, [1781].

toponymic recoveries are Pignataro, in the province of Frosinone (Lazio), which for reasons of homonymy was modified, in 1862, into Pignataro Interamna,¹¹⁹ as it is situated near the ancient Interamna Lirenas, perhaps originally a Volscian city; Termini, in the province of Palermo (Sicily), modified in 1863, not for reasons of homonymy, into Termini Imerese (Thermae Himeraeae) by adding an adjectival form, thus recovering the name of the ancient colony of Calcidese and Doric origin of Himera.¹²⁰ Also, the name change, in 1874, of Cattolica, in the province of Agrigento (Sicily), into Cattolica Eraclea,¹²¹ with the addition of the name of the ancient Greek colony of Eraclea, was not motivated by homonymy. According to the same criterion, the name of the municipality of Scaletta, in the province of Messina (Sicily), was modified in 1863 into Scaletta Zanglea for reasons of homonymy, with the addition of a qualifier with a clear reference to the ancient Calcidese colony of Zancle, but with a transcription error solved only in 1988, when the name of the municipality was definitively corrected, becoming Scaletta Zanclea.¹²²

In addition to “true” restorations and recoveries, we must also consider the presumed ones. An example of a supposed restoration is the case of Fratte (or Le Fratte), in Frusinate area (Lazio), renamed in 1862, for reasons of homonymy, to Ausonia, thus restoring the name of the ancient pre-Roman city of Ausona, destroyed during the Second Samnite War (314 BC), but losing its Latin name which derived from the term *fractus*.¹²³ Among the alleged recoveries we can point

¹¹⁹ Ibid., [1793].

¹²⁰ Ibid., [2313] and Pellegrini, *Toponomastica italiana*, 80, 164, 292. On the attempts of the nationalisation of the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies and on the insistence on the specific Greek origin of the southern populations, see Giuseppe Galasso, “La Magna Grecia: mito e realtà nella tradizione culturale del Mezzogiorno d’Italia,” in *Un secolo di ricerche in Magna Grecia* (Taranto: Istituto per la storia e l’archeologia della Magna Grecia, 1989), 11–29, and De Francesco, “La nazione impossibile,” 479–98. On the philological orientations, the historical research and the publishing activity of the Sicilian scholars engaged in this remarkable enterprise, see Enzo Degani, “Domenico Scinà (1765–1837) e gli studi classici,” *Eikasmòs* 5 (1994): 335–65, and Francesco Scalora, *Sicilia e Grecia: La presenza della Grecia moderna nella cultura siciliana del XIX secolo* (Palermo: Istituto Siciliano di Studi Bizantini e Neoellenici “Bruno Lavagnini”, 2018), 135–39.

¹²¹ De Albentis, *I cambi di nome*, [2350].

¹²² Ibid., [2347].

¹²³ Ibid., [1766]. A frequent toponym in Italy, whose debated meaning would be, approximately, “defence trench”, “fence” but also “uncultivated place” or “woody”, “dense defensive undergrowth forest”, with the aim, anyway, to enhance the effectiveness of defence fortifications. See Pellegrini, *Toponomastica italiana*, 245. The case of Fratte, as Caffarelli and Raffaelli point out, beyond an alleged recovery, constitutes a sort of luxury toponym, not out of necessity, since the substituted name is considered less noble. The municipal resolution

out, instead, the case of Pago, in the province of Benevento (Campania), renamed in 1863 to Pago Veiano for reasons of homonymy,¹²⁴ thus recovering the ancient name of Pago Vetano (erroneously and by inveterate use called Pago Veiano).

A special case of a name change performed according to geographical and historical-religious “contiguity” criteria is that of Marano, in the province of Ascoli Piceno (Marche), which became Cupra Marittima in 1862,¹²⁵ with the evident intention of emphasising the worship of the Italic divinity Cupra in the area. This change was favoured by a fierce historical-philological diatribe – already underway in the eighteenth-century and aimed at identifying the exact place of worship of the divinity – which led to the toponymic modification in question in the second half of the nineteenth century.¹²⁶ Paderno, in the province of Treviso (Veneto), according to geographical continuity criteria and to differentiate it from homonymous municipalities, was renamed Paderno d’Asolo in 1868, recalling its proximity to ancient Acelum (present-day Asolo), mentioned by Pliny the Elder among the *oppida* of the Veneto area. Finally, the name of the municipality was remodified in 1920, becoming Paderno del Grappa.¹²⁷ The oronym, with the clear value of celebrating the memory of a military event, refers to the Battle of Monte Grappa, fought between the Italian and Austro-Hungarian armies, in 1918: in liberal Italy, when it became evident that the national construct remained fragile and showed signs of collapse, it was deemed appropriate to return to investing in the subject of identity.

The first two decades of the twentieth century (1901–1922) saw another relevant percentage (3.06 percent) of name changes.¹²⁸ The timing is a significant fact as they were the first recorded toponymic changes since 1873; otherwise, the

of 23 August 1862 reads: “Chiunque pronuncia l’espressione Fratte non può non sentire la durezza del lugubre concetto che vi si annette facendo rimontare il pensiero alla boscosità del paese, ed alla ferocia degli abitanti, boschi e ferocia che affatto oggi non vi albergano” [Anyone who pronounces the expression Fratte cannot but feel the harshness of the lugubrious concept that is annexed to it by thinking of the woodland of the country, and the ferocity of the inhabitants, woods and ferocity that today are no longer harboured there]. Caffarelli and Raffaelli, “Il cambiamento di nome dei comuni italiani,” 128.

¹²⁴ De Albentis, *I cambi di nome*, [1973].

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, [1634]. On the subject, see De Albentis, “La (presunta) sacralità dell’antico,” 706–8.

¹²⁶ On the issue of toponymy and archaeology, see indicatively Stefano Del Lungo, “Toponomastica e archeologia: L’esempio del territorio di Aprilia (Latina),” *Rivista italiana di onomastica* 5 (1999): 49–78, and Del Lungo, *La Toponomastica archeologica della provincia di Roma* (Rome: Regione Lazio, 1996).

¹²⁷ De Albentis, *I cambi di nome*, [1215].

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, 11.

changes made in the period in question, if evaluated in relation to the general total of name changes implemented between 1861 and 2014, can be considered as part of ordinary administrative practices.

The situation changed radically during the Fascist period. The impressive toponymic operation carried out during the Fascist dictatorship contributes, in fact, a relevant percentage (17.97 percent) of name changes to the general total. Indeed – and it should be pointed out – the first toponymic changes put into effect with Royal Decree 800/1923 (5.4 percent compared to the general total or 30.06 percent with respect to the total name changes made in the Fascist period),¹²⁹ as well as the multiple initiatives under Fascism in the field of onomastics, “follow a tradition of nationalistic assertions which had already emerged during the previous decades”,¹³⁰ when the issues concerning the territories acquired after the victory of World War I had to be faced: *new maps, new names*. The regime gave new impetus to this cultural policy, devoting increasing attention to it over the years.

Indeed, during the 20 years of the Fascist period, as far as we are concerned, even if only briefly in this conclusion to this section focusing on Italy, the numerous name changes with references to ancient Rome (republican and imperial together) take on a significant relevance¹³¹ as do the many cases of forced Italianisation. If the reference to the greatness of ancient Rome reveals the regime’s rhetorically ideological intention to measure itself, from the perspective of continuity, against the Roman imperial model, the many cases of forced Italianisation, involving mostly the territories of Piedmont or Valle d’Aosta, as well as other border territories, had a clear anti-French connotation (among others): a true linguistic cleansing, a *onomasticidio* (“onomasticide”) by the state,¹³² which was not limited to toponymy alone.¹³³ Also in this case, “the past, with its myths and its symbolic heritage, was used as a factor of legitimisation of the political and cultural situation of the present”,¹³⁴ with a view

¹²⁹ Ibid.

¹³⁰ Raffaelli, *La commissione per la toponomastica*, 255.

¹³¹ See Giardina and Vauchez, *Il mito di Roma*, 248–49.

¹³² Here we borrow the title of the work published by Miro Tasso, *Un onomasticidio di Stato*, intro. Boris Pahor (Trieste, 2010).

¹³³ See Alberto Raffaelli, “La deonomastica francese negli elenchi della Commissione per l’italianità della lingua (1941–1943),” in *Lessicografia e onomastica* 2, ed. Paolo D’Achille and Enzo Caffarelli (Rome: Società Editrice Romana, 2008), 337–48, and Raffaelli, “Forestierismi e italianizzazioni di ambito gastronomico della Reale Accademia d’Italia,” in *Storia della lingua e storia della cucina*, ed. Cecilia Robustelli and Giovanna Frosini (Florence: F. Cesati, 2009), 349–63.

¹³⁴ Claudio Mancuso, “Palermo in camicia nera: Le trasformazioni dell’identità urbana (1922–1943),” *Mediterranea: Ricerche storiche* 14 (2008): 614.

to strengthening a new political project based on the Roman model.¹³⁵ These were facets of a policy of linguistic *dirigisme* in the period of the maximum autarchy of Fascism, involving (with varying degrees of success) also the areas of new external colonisation (in particular the Dodecanese, the colonies of East Africa and Albania);¹³⁶ propaganda strategies that, on the back of the new ideological-pedagogical undercurrent, were part of the regime's powerful cultural machine.

In Lieu of a Conclusion

For Greece and Italy, the nineteenth century was replete with ideological and political reflections, which to a large extent defined the constitution and the evolution of both states. Halfway through the century, Greece and Italy found themselves on parallel historical courses with several similarities. The Megali Idea ("Great Idea") and the Risorgimento infused and influenced the formation of the two states. The changes in the institutions, ideas and political life in general of the two countries were dictated by these national movements.¹³⁷

The reference to antiquity (primitive and classical) and to its rich symbolic repertoire was a constant practice in the political and cultural ideology of Greece and Italy, confirming that in southern Europe different and autonomous perspectives of nationalisation took shape than in northern Europe. In the field of antiquity, the Greek and Italian national thought remained indelibly marked by the French example of revolutionary ancestry; however, in the political and ideological consciousness of the two countries, this discourse would favour the development of an idea of nationality within a specific geopolitical and cultural

¹³⁵ The bibliography on the subject is particularly rich. Here we limit ourselves once again to Giardina and Vauchez, *Il mito di Roma*, 212–96, with reference to the relative bibliography (316–21).

¹³⁶ Here we limit ourselves only to the Greek case. On the issue of name changes in the Dodecanese – these are mostly attempts to Italianise the names of the Greek islands – see Zacharias N. Tsirpanlis, *Ιταλοκρατία στα Δωδεκάνησα 1912–1943: Αλλοτρίωση του ανθρώπου και του περιβάλλοντος* (Rhodes: Edition of the Office of Medieval City of Rhodes, 1998), 140–42 (and related appendices), and Francesco Scalora, "Ζητήματα εξιταλισμού των γεωγραφικών ονομάτων στα ιταλοκρατούμενα Δωδεκάνησα," in *Αλλάζοντας τον χάρτη: Ζητήματα μετονομασιών οικισμών στην Ανατολική Μεσόγειο, 19ος–20ός αιώνας*, ed. Dimitris Dimitropoulos and Eleni Kyramargiou (Athens: Institute of Historical Research/NHRF, 2020), 197–242.

¹³⁷ In his work *The Italian Unification and the Megali Idea*, Antonis Liakos examined in parallel these national movements, which belong to the same overall process for the formation of nation-states, and attempted, among other things, to monitor how the construction of a national ideology influenced the perception and the organisation of political action. See Antonis Liakos, *Η ιταλική Ενοποίηση και η Μεγάλη Ιδέα* (Athens: Themelio, 1985).

space, characterised by moments of original political reflection and elements of remarkable affinity.¹³⁸

The recourse to the theories on the autochthony of peoples, besides being considered a legacy of the French and German Romantic movement, was destined to assign different nuances to the political moments and the ideological trajectories that would follow the resurgence of the two countries. Regarding the particular Italian-Greek case, these moments deserve to be studied using comparative forms of investigation. The need to ensure the historical continuity of the nation in order to address doubts about international diplomatic recognition led to the use of references to ancient Greece and ancient Italy as a model for the construction of a precise political and national identity. In line with this ideological perspective, Italy and Greece developed a national discourse capable of summarising the role of the two countries in the Mediterranean context; a role decisive in the development of the Mediterranean civilisation prior and subsequently to the Western one. Not always linear and full of contradictions, it was a tortuous path indeed.

In this regard, it is indicative that the first capital of the Kingdom of Greece was Nafplion and not Athens (Constantinople remained a distant mirage) and that the first capital of the Kingdom of Italy was Turin, followed by Florence and, lastly, Rome. These elements, along with other factors, contributed over time to strengthening the logical transmutation of nationalism into irredentism, affirming the political profile of the two new states in the Mediterranean area and strongly opposing all forms of new nationalisms.¹³⁹ The toponymic policy of Greece and Italy, which we have examined from a comparative perspective, is one of the many strategies adopted by the two countries in the implementation of a political programme that responded to their necessity to achieve a preliminary perfect equivalence between national and state borders.

In the Greek state of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the political as well as the intellectual spheres supported the dominant narrative on the historical continuity and identity of the Greek lands and their inhabitants.¹⁴⁰ Within this

¹³⁸ See Leerssen, *National Thought in Europe*, and the considerations of De Francesco, "La prima Europa," 11–15.

¹³⁹ Leerssen, *National Thought in Europe*, 173.

¹⁴⁰ Liakos argues that through the consolidation of the concepts of national identity and memory, national narrative and historical continuity, "a language was shaped during the nineteenth century which produces the past and transforms it into national time". See "Προς επισκευήν ολομέλειας και ενόπτητος," 173–75. Moreover, Efi Gazi, in her commentary on the work of Spyridon Lambros, notes that "the 'science' of history that Lambros promoted was functioning within a wider intellectual context of national 'disciplines'; namely consolidated cognitive and research fields with strictly prescribed principles". Later, when she refers to

context, the toponymic issue was presented at times as a “mere accident” which had befallen the region over its centuries-long history, yet had no effect on its “racial character”,¹⁴¹ or, in those “fortunate” occasions of the preservation or restoration of a Greek name, as the definitive proof of the hellenicity of the space and its people in defiance of their misadventures. Consequently, whichever linguistic form the toponymic issue manifested in, it merged with Greek nationalism and was manipulated accordingly in order to serve the same objective, thus mirroring the choices and the contradictions of the national question.

During the nineteenth century, the discourse around the ancient Greek and Byzantine past was mostly an ideological conversation in the effort to construct the unified national narrative of the new state. In contrast, in the 1920s, when the Megali Idea had already been defeated at both the political and the military levels, the replacement of foreign-sounding and cacophonous toponyms would become imperative in order for the Greek state to continue its course towards national integration. The aim now became to homogenise and delimit its space, eradicating any traces left by the presence of population groups discordant with the historical and geographical continuity of the unified Greek nation-state. The renaming of the map was followed by the completion of the population exchange, which meant that the majority of the inhabited space was now inhabited by Greek-speaking populations. Through these two complimentary processes, the sovereignty of the Greek state over Macedonia and Thrace was ascertained.

In 1929, more than a century after Stageiritis’ admonitions, the new map of Greece was ready; a map vastly different from the one Stageiritis had envisioned, but also from the one in effect when the Greek state was created. The toponyms were replaced in a manner that was both hasty and fragmentary, most of the time without comprehensive historical and linguistic research, under the pressure of the new territorial acquisitions of the twentieth century when the principle of nationalities was deemed to have been conclusively vindicated at the diplomatic level. The whole effort inevitably acquired the characteristics of a nation-building process, within the context of the homogenisation and integration of the new

the common trajectory and the similar choices made by Lambros, Nikolaos G. Politis and Giorgios Chatzidakis, one of which was their participation in the Committee for the Study of the Toponyms of Greece and the Verification of their Historical Origins, she points out that “their activities correlate with the machinations of power and the politics of the nation-state”. See Effi Gazi, “Μια ρομαντική ιστορική επιστήμη: η περίπτωση του Σπυρίδωνος Π. Λάμπρου (1851–1919),” in Kitromilides and Sklavenitis, *Ιστοριογραφία της νεότερης και σύγχρονης Ελλάδας*, 1:205–9.

¹⁴¹ Dimitrios G. Kabouroglou, *Τοπωνυμικά παράδοξα* (1920; repr., Athens: D.N. Karavias: 1990), 6.

territories into the nation-state. In the end, the various “moments” of the prevailing national integration strategies were represented through the name changes. This reorientation was related to the political decision to immediately hellenise the toponymic map, and was accompanied by the conviction that even an “inapt” Greek name was preferable to maintaining the existent Turkish or Slavic one.

In the new Italian state, the fundamental causes of toponymic changes was to lessen the potential for confusion between the numerous homonymous municipalities that, once part of various sovereign states, now comprised a single nation. The highest percentage of name changes occurred during the 1860s. However, even at that time, a considerable number of toponymic changes did not stem from a concern about homonymity, an observation that reinforces the idea that ideological motivations were the underlying reasons for toponymic choices.

The references to antiquity in pre- and post-unification Italy, alternately stimulated by the association and fusion of Roman and Italic images, constituted the different approaches to nationality, with attempts that sometimes manifested themselves as contradictory. Repeating once again the words of De Francesco, these were “the many ways of thinking about unity and to imagine, even after 1861, a national state that took into account the many pieces that would compose the mosaic of nationality”.¹⁴² This perspective represented no intention of breaking with the unitarian patriotic camp, since these elements of plurality appeared to be fully compatible with the individual territorial contexts, which, despite having their own political and cultural tradition, were willing to sacrifice their peculiarity on the altar of unity.

The data on the toponymic rearrangement during this period suggests a clear pattern: wherever given the opportunity for historical memories, the reference to antiquity and to the classical example came to reinforce the weak national cohesion by means of an alleged common identity, centred on the role played by Italy in the ancient world. These references somehow gave the illusion that the uncomfortable distance between the reality of the present and the glory of the past was slowly being covered, and that the past was being reconciled with the present.

This ideological approach to the effort towards constructing a unified national narrative for the Italian state sealed the conscience and the orientation of Italian politics well beyond the years of the Risorgimento. It was in the Fascist exaltation of the reborn Roman-Italic power that these interpretations of the Italian past and the deriving series of ideological constructions, linked as they were with

¹⁴² De Francesco, “La nazione impossibile,” 482.

claims to a rediscovered national and imperial unity, would find full expression in all their pathological character. Reference to the personalities and events of ancient Rome had, already in liberal and later in Fascist Italy, an identitary sense: the aim was to constitute a reminder of the origins of the Italian nation, which was rooted in such an extraordinarily glorious past.

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