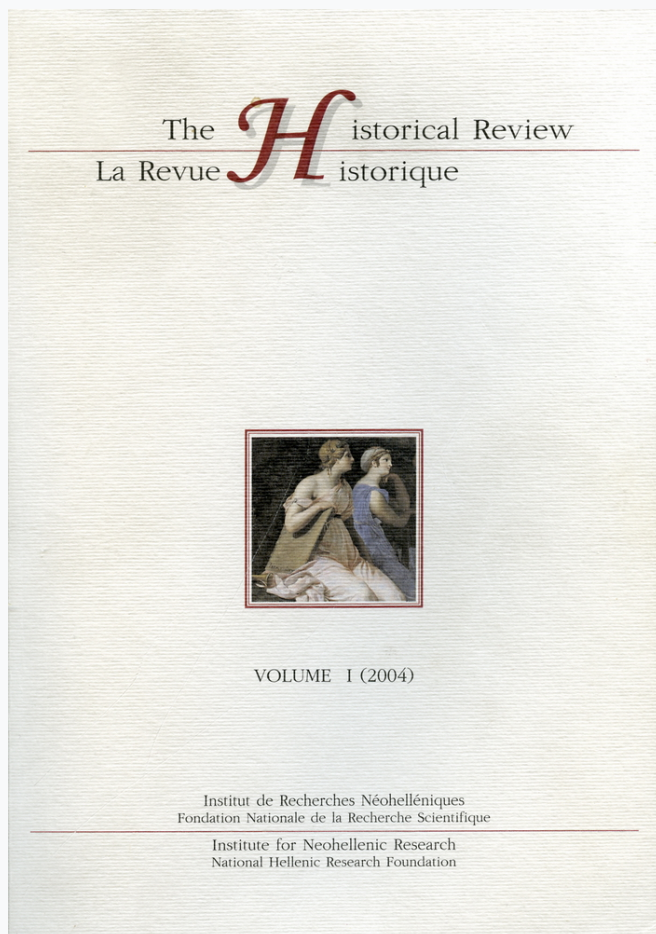


## The Historical Review/La Revue Historique

Vol 1 (2004)

Vol 1, No (2004)



### Towards Modern Greek Consciousness

Loukia Droulia

doi: [10.12681/hr.170](https://doi.org/10.12681/hr.170)

#### To cite this article:

Droulia, L. (2005). Towards Modern Greek Consciousness. *The Historical Review/La Revue Historique*, 1, 51–67.  
<https://doi.org/10.12681/hr.170>

## TOWARDS MODERN GREEK CONSCIOUSNESS

*Loukia Droulia*

---

ABSTRACT: This paper deals with the subject of Modern Greek consciousness which can be said epigrammatically to have its starting point in the Provisional Constitution of Greece ratified by the Assembly of Epidaurus in January 1822. For it was then necessary that two crucial questions be answered, namely who were to be considered as citizens of the new state about to be created and what regions it covered. The attempt to find answers to these questions necessarily led to the re-examination of the Greek nation's historical course over the millenia.

For this purpose the terms that express the concepts which register the self-definition of a human group and their use over time, are here examined as well as the links that formed the connection between the groups of Greek-speaking Orthodox Christians who, as a result of historical circumstances, had until then been geographically scattered. One solid link was the unbroken use of their common language; the "ancestral culture" was the other definitive element which had a continuous though uneven presence throughout the centuries. Finally the "place", having preserved the same geographical name, "Hellas", through the centuries although its borders were certainly unclear, now took on a weighty significance as regards the conscious identification of the historical land with the new state that the Greeks were struggling to create in the nineteenth century. These and other factors contributed to the acceptance by the Greek nation of the nomenclature *Ellines*, *Ellada* which were unanimously adopted during the Greek war of Independence, instead of the terms *Graikoi*, *Romioi*, *Graikia*.

---

Modern Greek consciousness can be said epigrammatically to have had its starting point, in the Provisional Constitution of Greece ratified by the National Assembly of Epidaurus in January 1822. At the time two urgent questions had to be answered, namely who were to be considered as citizens of the new state about to be created and what regions it covered, as applied in article 2 which specified: "All indigenous inhabitants of the Land of Greece (Hellas) believing in Christ are Hellenes and are entitled to an equal enjoyment of every right".<sup>1</sup> It is obvious that this original definition gave rise to many

---

This is an extensively revised version of a text originally published in *Ιστορία του νέου Ελληνισμού* [History of Neohellenism], Athens: Ellinika Grammata, 2003, Vol. II, pp. 39-54.

<sup>1</sup> «Όσοι ἀυτόχθονες κάτοικοι τῆς ἐπικρατείας τῆς Ἑλλάδος πιστεύουσιν εἰς Χριστόν, εἰσὶν Ἕλληγες, καὶ ἀπολαμβάνουσιν ἄνευ τινὸς διαφορᾶς ὅλων τῶν πολιτικῶν δικαιωμάτων». We have translated article two literally. However, in the English translation of it one

reservations, since it excluded the Greek-speaking ethnic community of the areas still under Ottoman rule as well as the Greek diaspora in general, while without being in a position to define what exactly the legislator of 1822 understood by the concept of a “Greek state” and what he meant by the term “Hellenes”, since it identified the Greek-speaking ethnic community with the orthodox “Romaic” community (*genos*) and with Orthodoxy, clearly confusing ecumenical ideology with the new element, the creation of a nation state. The selection of the name “Hellenes” for the Christian citizens of the new Greek state is in direct antithesis to what occurred in Early Christian times, when the name “Hellenes” was attributed only to non-Christians (*ethnikoi*) and signified idolatry, with the result that it fell into disuse and was often prohibited in the Christian Empire. The attempt to find answers to these questions necessarily has led historians to re-examine the historical course of the Greek nation and to try to establish its successive quests for self-awareness.

A term deriving *par excellence* from psychology, consciousness as shaped along the projectory of a historical people can be traced in many ways and through a

---

may observe slight differences which could be attributed to the need for a more diplomatic rendering, quite probably dictated by Greeks living abroad who became more rapidly aware of the international climate as regards the Greek struggle for liberation. Thus in the translation made by Richard Brinsley Sheridan from Michael Schinas’ hand-written French translation and published in London in 1823 under his brother Dimitrios’ editorial supervision, this article is rendered as: “Every individual of the Christian faith, whether a native or definitively settled in Greece, is a Greek, and entitled to an equal enjoyment of every right”. (The emphasis is our own.) In the English text there is a footnote to the first two articles of the Provisional Constitution which clarifies that: “These two articles suffice to refute the common-place *declamations* of those who contend that the Greeks *persecute* the Roman Catholics”. Article 1 states that: “The established religion in Greece is that of the Orthodox Church of the East. All other forms of worship are however tolerated...”, see *The Provisional Constitution of Greece, translated from the second edition of Corinth, accompanied by the original Greek...*, London 1823 (facsimile published by the Istoriki kai Ethnologiki Etaireia tis Ellados, Athens 1975). For the whole question of translations of the Provisional Constitution into foreign languages made with the aim of proving the legitimacy of the Greek Revolution, see Charikleia Dimakopoulou, «Αι πρώται μεταφράσεις του Προσωρινού Πολιτεύματος της Ελλάδος (Επίδαυρος 1 Ιανουαρίου 1822). Οι μεταφρασταί – οι εκδόται» [The First Translations of the Provisional Constitution of Greece (Epidaurus 1 January 1822) Translators – Publishers], *Επετηρίς Ιδρύματος Νεοελληνικών Σπουδών* 5 (1987-1988), pp. 373-390 (+ p. 2 Addendum) and by the same author, «Νεώτεροι μεταφράσεις του Προσωρινού Πολιτεύματος. Οι μεταφρασταί – οι εκδόται 1823-1825» [Later Translations of the Provisional Constitution. Translators – Publishers 1823-1825], *Δελτίον της Ιστορικής και Εθνολογικής Εταιρείας της Ελλάδος* 31 (1988), pp. 19-60, and particularly pp. 22-24.

variety of interactions. In parallel, one should examine with particular care the use of terms that express the concepts which depict the collective consciousness of a human group as a distinct entity, since the shifts in what these concepts signify over time can be dramatic. Indeed, terms such as cultural community (*genos*), nation (*ethnos*), ethnic community, nationality, homeland, patriots and people have often constituted the subject of discussions and varied interpretations, since the same words do not always possess exactly the same meanings. This is because social meanings change over time: they contract or expand or acquire emotional baggage which gives them particular weight. In the case of the Greeks this historical problem is illustrated by multiple appellations: *Romaioi*, *Romioi*, *Romelitai*, *Romaioellines*, *Romellines*, *Graikoi*, *Graikoi*, *NeoGraikoi* and other similar names, in various combinations, ending finally with *Hellenes* and *NeoHellenes*, the latter a neologism which Panayotis Sophianopoulos appears to have introduced into the language for the first time in 1815.<sup>2</sup>

It is interesting to observe the successive changes in nomenclature, from as early as Byzantine times, and the purposes for which they were used –as claim, as rejection, as acceptance– and how each time these various names reflected the evolving (Modern) Greek consciousness. A decisive factor in these changes was the spread of Christianity with its spirit of supranational ecumenicism and mainly the religious and political battles fought in the bosom of Christianity. The Byzantines insisted on referring to Constantinople as “New Rome”, laying in this way the foundations for the legitimacy of its succession; the Byzantine Emperors maintained the title of “King and Emperor of the Romans” (*Romaioi*), ignoring the appellation “Emperor of the Greeks” (*Graikoi*) which the popes tried to introduce into their addresses,<sup>3</sup> and the Patriarch of

<sup>2</sup> Cited in Leandros Vranoussis, «Ἕλληνες, Ῥωμιοί, ΝεοἝλληνες» [Hellenes, Romioi, Neohellenes], *History of the Greek Nation*, Athens 1975, Vol. V, p. 442, apparently based on P. Sophianopoulos' letter to I. Vilaras, written from Sopoto, Kalavryta on 3 May 1815, see Ioannou Oikonomou Larissaiou, *Ἐπιστολαὶ Διαφόρων, 1759-1825* [Letters of Various People, 1759-1825], philological presentation-study-illustrations by M. M. Papaioannou, Athens 1964, pp. 220-227. I would like to thank my colleague Costas Lappas for drawing my attention to L. Vranoussis' source. Sophianopoulos, disagreeing with Vilaras as to the use of the terms “Romeoi” and “Romaic” language, uses the terms “Neohellenes”, “Neohellenic cultural community”, “Neohellenic biographies”.

<sup>3</sup> St. G. Xydis, *Ψυχολογικοί παράγοντες εις την προπαρασκευὴν του Εικοσιένα. Νεοελληνικός πρωτοεθνικισμός και εθνικισμός* [Psychological Factors in the Preparation of 1821 Revolution. Modern Greek Pre-Nationalism and nationalism], Thessaloniki 1972, pp. 11-12. This work is a composite version of two studies published by the same author in English: “Modern Greek Nationalism”, in I. Lederer and P. Sugar, eds., *Nationalism in Eastern Europe*, Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1969, pp. 207-258 and “The Medieval Origins of Modern Greek Nationalism”, *Balkan Studies* 9 (1968), pp. 1-20.

Constantinople to this day signs his name and thus expresses his identity, as “Archbishop of Constantinople, New Rome, and Ecumenical Patriarch”. Thus the prevailing name for the inhabitants of the Eastern Roman Empire was Romans, a name that took on an ethnic significance, as distinct from the national names given to other peoples who lived outside the borders of the empire. The term signified an Orthodox Christian individual and specifically, when the Greek language had become dominant and the population had gradually acquired cultural homogeneity, a Greek Orthodox Christian. Because of this identification, the name *Romaïos* or *Romios* was preserved during the entire period of Turkish rule and is still in use today, mainly by Greeks living in Turkey;<sup>4</sup> from it derives the collective term *romiosyni*, in other words the entirety of *Romioi*, which over time took on the weight of the lofty beliefs and ideals of the hellenism which intellectuals of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries attempted to project through their conflicting views on what, in their opinion, the national appellation of the Greeks should be. This whole question has been the subject of an extensive literature.<sup>5</sup>

We may also follow the use of this term by studying the Ottoman administrative documents related to the Ecumenical Patriarchate. At the beginning the Patriarch is addressed as “Patriarch of the ‘infidels’ of Constantinople and its dependencies”, since the Orthodox Christians formed the largest non-Muslim group in the new empire. In the early years of the eighteenth century a significant change appears in the form used in the Ottoman orders: the Patriarch is now called “Patriarch of the Romans” (Rum), in other words of the Orthodox, and the Orthodox religious community under the Patriarch is called *Rum mileti*.<sup>6</sup>

During the eighteenth century the identification of the term “Orthodox” with the term “Hellene” followed. And it is clear that this identification was deeply rooted in the Modern Greek consciousness, in spite of the fact that it did not automatically meet with complete acceptance. As late as about 1790 the

<sup>4</sup> Cf. the recent publication *Ρωμιοί στην υπηρεσία της Υψηλής Πύλης* [Romioi in the service of the Sublime Porte], Athens 2002.

<sup>5</sup> See Steven Runciman, “Byzantine and Hellene in the Fourteenth Century”, *Τόμος Κωνσταντίνου Αρμενόπουλου...*, Thessaloniki 1952; Maria Mantouvalou, “Romaïos – Romios and Romiosyni. A Critical Bibliography” (in Greek) *Μαντατοφόρος* 22 (1983), pp. 34-72; by the same author, «Romaïos – Romios – Romiossyni. La notion de ‘Romain’ avant et après la chute de Constantinople», *Επιστημονική Επετηρίς της Φιλοσοφικής Σχολής του Πανεπιστημίου Αθηνών*, Vol. II, 28 (1979-1985), pp. 169-198.

<sup>6</sup> P. Konortas, *Οθωμανικές θεωρήσεις για το Οικουμενικό πατριαρχείο, 17ος - αρχές του 20ού αιώνα* [Ottoman Attestations for the Ecumenical Patriarchate, 17th to early 20th centuries], Athens 1998, p. 302.

enlightened Phanariot intellectual D. Katartzis, despite the renovative plan he proposed for the modernisation of Greek society, believed that: “it is a thing unworthy of a Romios Christian” to be called a “Hellene”. Katartzis accepted that, seen from the historical perspective, contemporary Greeks were the descendants of the ancients, yet considered that the two peoples were nevertheless distinct national groups, “nations” as he expressed it.<sup>7</sup>

In the historical course of the Greek Christian population, the last decades of the eighteenth century and the first decades of the nineteenth century can be seen from a double perspective: as the natural conclusion of a centuries-long course of hopes and ambitions –where lamentations and oracular literature nourished and stirred the ambitions of the *Romioi*– and as a course of contradictions and revolutionary fermentations, of inertia and of developments in all aspects of life and consequently as the beginning of a period in which the outward signs of the “reception” of modernity and of a change in thought and mentality became more frequent. The new orientations sought by the enslaved community and the consequent modernisation of its aspirations have been the subject of systematic studies and successive interpretations by academic researchers of the Enlightenment, as this phenomenon took shape in the West and as it was transmitted to Greek environments. The peak of the whole process was “the tragedy *par excellence* known as the *Struggle*” [of 1821]<sup>8</sup> and the pursuit of every kind of liberty; its goals were the creation of a nation state and its ambitions to bring about the establishment of political liberalism, necessary social changes and cultural renewal.

What, however, were the links that formed the connection between the groups of Greek-speaking Orthodox Christians who, as a result of historical circumstances, had until now been geographically dispersed over a vast geographical space? One solid link was indeed the unbroken use of their common language, first and foremost the written language with whatever modifications or deteriorations a language shows when it has been in use for a long period of time by “a large speaking population of unequal culture and varied origin”.<sup>9</sup> Already, the linguistic coefficient of the Greekness of the *genos* had been

---

<sup>7</sup> P. Kitromilides, *Νεοελληνικός Διαφωτισμός, Οι πολιτικές και κοινωνικές ιδέες* [Modern Greek Enlightenment. The Political and Social Ideas], tr. Stella Nikoloudi, Athens 32000, p. 215 [Original title: *Tradition, Enlightenment and Revolution*, Harvard University, Ph.D. Diss., 1978].

<sup>8</sup> Cf. N. Dragoumis, *Ιστορικά Αναμνήσεις* [Historical Memories], Athens: Ermis, 1973, Vol. I, p. 11 (1st edition 1874).

<sup>9</sup> C.Th. Dimaras, “Greece 1750-1850”, in K. J. Dover, ed., *Perceptions of the Ancient Greeks*, Oxford 1992, p. 204.

noted as early as 1418, in a circumscription of Hellenism, by the Neo-Platonic philosopher of Mystra, George Gemistos Plethon in a memorandum addressed to Manuel II Paleologus: “For we are Hellenes by descent, as our speech and our ancestral culture testify”. It was this medium of communication that, for reasons of doctrine, was used unchanged by the Orthodox church, preserving throughout the years of captivity the sacred texts in their original form even if it used the simpler common spoken language of the people for its sermons.

At the beginning of the nineteenth century the question of the appropriate form of Greek as a spoken language was an urgent preoccupation of Greek intellectuals both within Greece and in the diaspora. A. Korais, for example, blamed the inhabitants of the Ionian islands for using the Italian language,<sup>10</sup> while later he was to urge the Chiots who had settled abroad to return to their island so that their children might not lose their Greekness.<sup>11</sup> J. Capodistrias, in turn, made great efforts to ensure that the orphans scattered throughout Europe should learn their mother tongue and the Orthodox faith, worrying that without Greeks, Greece could not be founded. The fact that they partook in the community of the Greek language would later constitute the basis of the political right of the Greeks of the diaspora to be included in the body of the nation, as expressed in the revision of the Law of Epidaurus at the Second National Assembly held at Astros in March-April 1823 (article 2): “Similarly, those people are Hellenes, and enjoy the same rights, who having come from abroad and possessing the ancestral Greek language approach a local Greek Regional Authority and seek to be numbered by it among the Greek citizens”.<sup>12</sup>

---

<sup>10</sup> In a letter (26 October 1808) to the secretary of the Ionian Academy, Giuseppe Agrati, Korais pointed out the negative effects for Hellenism if the Greek language was not used: “If for another hundred years you remain subject to it [i.e. the Venetian yoke]... you will completely lose the Greek language and consequently you will cease to be or to be called Greeks”, Adamantios Korais, *Αλληλογραφία* [Correspondence], Athens 1966, Vol. II: 1799-1809, pp. 480-481. On the question of Greek-speaking in the Heptanese more generally, see E. N. Frangiskos, «Ο Κοραΐς και η Ιόνιος Ακαδημία (1808-1814)» [Korais and the Ionian Academy (1808-1814)], *Ο Ερρανιστής* 17 (1965), pp. 177-198.

<sup>11</sup> “[...] of all those who live among foreigners, the majority will lose the customs and language of their forebears and in a few years will be transformed from Greeks (and Greek Chiots) into Italians, Frenchmen, Germans, Englishmen [...]”, letter from Korais to the Chiots of Marseilles, Trieste and London, 20 October 1823, *Αλληλογραφία*, Vol. XV: 1823-1826, p. 85.

<sup>12</sup> A. Mamoukas, *Τὰ κατὰ τὴν Ἀναγέννησιν τῆς Ἑλλάδος* [Events during the Regeneration of Greece], Piraeus 1839, Vol. II, p. 128.

The “ancestral culture” is the other definitive element which had a continuous though uneven presence throughout the centuries. Sometimes more obvious, sometimes less visible, it was natural enough that it did not always remain in the collective memory at the same level of intensity. It was fostered both by the Renaissance humanism, with the Greek scholars who lived in foreign lands reminding the world during the following centuries that the enslaved Greeks were the descendants of the ancient Greeks, and later by the exponents of seventeenth-century religious humanism in Greek culture within the framework of the systematic ecclesiastical effort to promote education. Thus the connections to antiquity fluctuated according to the degree of education that each group possessed: in the popular consciousness the ancient Greeks passed into the realm of legend, where Alexander the Great continued to live on as a hero, while in intellectual circles references to ancient Greek “forebears” and “illustrious” ancestors did not cease to be made, with greater or lesser frequency.

Finally the “place”, having preserved the same geographical name, “Hellas”, through the centuries although its borders were certainly unclear, took on a weighty significance as regards the conscious identification of the historical land with the new state that the Greeks were struggling to create in the nineteenth century. Closely connected with the cosmopolitanism associated with the European Enlightenment of the eighteenth-century efforts to liberate the individual from pressures and oppressions of all kinds and to affirm its right to self-determination would also be expressed as patriotism; thus for a period the concepts of cosmopolitan and patriot became synonymous in their usage.<sup>13</sup> The cosmopolitan thought of the liberal intellectual cleric Evgenios Voulgaris –“the whole Earth is the wise man’s native land, his city the World”–<sup>14</sup> do not conflict with his passion for the liberation of the Greeks.

Territoriality, their relationship with the historical place, would moreover constitute the principal criterion defining the Greeks: the phrase “All indigenous inhabitants of the Land of Greece believing in Christ are Hellenes” provides a definition, as we have already seen, in the Provisional Constitution of Greece. Except that the extent of the regions it covered had not yet been

---

<sup>13</sup> P. Coulmas, *Les citoyens du monde. Histoire du cosmopolitisme*, tr. from German Jeanne Etoré, Paris: Édition Albin Michel, 1995, p. 221. Cf. also Catherine Coumariou, «Cosmopolitisme et Hellénisme dans le *Mercure Savant*, première revue grecque, 1811-1821», *Proceedings of the IVth Congress of the International Comparative Literature Association*, The Hague-Paris: Mouton & Co, 1966, pp. 601-608.

<sup>14</sup> E. Voulgaris, *Ἡ Λογική* [Logic], Leipzig 1766, p. 12.



adequately defined; this was a question that was to give rise to a great many problems—in terms of both practical matters and consciousness—in the future. Nevertheless, Westerners had also long since made the same identification; although from the start they had adopted names deriving from the word Graikos (Grèce, Greece, etc.) they always accepted that it was the same historical Hellenic land, the “classical land” as they called it, by which they meant mainland Greece, the islands of the Aegean and the Western coast of Asia Minor. These differentiations in the name given to the specific Greek geographical entity, with all the emotional and political weight that they expressed at different times, was noted as early as the end of the seventeenth century by the geographer Bishop of Athens Meletios [Mitrou]: “Hellas,” he remarks, “great and legendary name in ancient times, small and wretched now, is called Grecia by the non-Greek Europeans, this name being taken from that of Graikos who once ruled over this country, just as Hellas is taken from Hellen, the son of Deucalion and Pyrrha, while by the Turks and others it is called Roumeli, from the Romans of New Rome...”<sup>15</sup>

From a certain moment onwards antiquity began to enter into the life of modern Hellenism. Thought was secularised, education, no longer solely the work of clerics, gradually acquired autonomy, and the visible remains of classical civilisation started to provoke curiosity. The “ancient ancestors” moved to centre stage once more just as had occurred during the late Byzantine period, when the Greek element of the population, sensing that it was under threat and being isolated by a variety of exogenous factors, had begun to realise that they formed a particular, distinct ethnological entity.<sup>16</sup> An entity which with time acquired a

<sup>15</sup> Meletios, *Γεωγραφία Παλαιά και Νέα* [Old and New Geography], Venice 1728, p. 304. For the question of the geographical definition of the Hellenic lands, see the following recent works: George Toliás, «‘Της ευρυχώρου Ελλάδος’: Η Χάρτα του Ρίγα και τα όρια του ελληνισμού» [‘Of wider Greece’: The ‘Charta’ of Rigas and the limits of ‘hellenism’], *Historica*, Vol. XV, nos. 28-29 (1998), pp. 3-30; by the same author, “Totius Graeciae; N. Sophianos’ Map of Greece and the transformation of Hellenism”, *Journal of Modern Greek Studies* 19 (2000), pp. 1-22; J. Yves Guiomar–Marie Thérèse Lorain, «La Carte de Rigas et le nom de la Grèce», *Annales historiques de la Révolution française*, N° 1 (2000), pp. 101-125.

<sup>16</sup> N. Svoronos, «Η έννοια του λαού στη νεοελληνική ιστοριογραφία: διάρκεια και τομές» [The Concept of People in Modern Greek Historiography: Duration and Sectors], *Ανάλεκτα νεοελληνικής Ιστορίας και ιστοριογραφίας* [Miscellanies of Modern Greek History and Historiography], Athens: Themelio, 1982, p. 87, reprinted from the *Δελτίο της Εταιρείας Σπουδών, Νεοελληνικού Πολιτισμού και Γενικής Παιδείας της Σχολής Μωραΐτη* 4β (1980), pp. 76-98. Cf. now the recent posthumous publication, N. Svoronos,

dominant position since as the empire shrunk its population became more homogenous and identified itself more and more with the Helladic land. It was once again Plethon who had a vision of creating a Greek-nation state modelled on the Platonic society, in the geographical area that in his view had always been inhabited by Greeks (*Elladikoí* according to the name used by the Byzantines), namely the Peloponnese and its surrounding regions.

In the eighteenth century a new dynamic of drawing together made its appearance. If in earlier years this process had been related more to a feeling of insecurity, and hence to a need for redefinition, now the motive force could be attributed to the inclination to lay claim to a living space. This inclination flowed from the fact that various factors which had a positive effect in this direction had reached saturation point, first and foremost among which was the declining state of the internal administration of the Ottoman Empire and the international conditions that paralleled it. We have already mentioned the context of the Enlightenment; we should add the resulting increasingly urgent demand for liberty, the right and power to decide for oneself, as well as the increase in the number of liberation movements. Gradually the Greeks shaped a new perception and mentality, a self-confidence, that clearly resulted from a rise on many levels: economically, culturally and in their socio-political evolution; many Greeks played a part in the state or community administration, even holding high positions.

Thus we may observe an essential change in their way of looking at things, which created more and more the sense among the ethnic Greeks that they were a distinct entity and that it was possible for them to achieve autonomy from the extremely mixed overall population of the Ottoman Empire. The traditional Christian values which for centuries had kept the Christians –and the Greek cultural community among them– under the protective roof of the Orthodox Church, and naturally in opposition to the “Frankish schismatics”, began to be questioned; other values were sought, which would correspond and be useful to the individual in his earthly life, his education and his political organisation.

In spite of the reactions of the Church, these quests led to the “heretical” West, to “wise” Europe, and ultimately to “enlightened” Europe with its classical ideals.<sup>17</sup> The mobility of the Greeks and by the nature of things the cosmopolitan condition of the diaspora Greeks favoured this communication.

---

*Το ελληνικό έθνος. Γένεση και διαμόρφωση του Νέου Ελληνισμού* [The Greek Nation. Birth and formation of Modern Hellenism], preface by Sp. Asdrachas, Athens: Polis, 2004.

<sup>17</sup> Nassia Yakovaki, *Προς την Ελλάδα: ένα ευρωπαϊκό δρομολόγιο. Η ανάδυση της Ελλάδας στην ευρωπαϊκή συνείδηση, 17ος-18ος αιώνας* [Towards Greece: a European

It gave them the possibility of coming into contact with all those who were striving, based on the classical model, to reformulate aesthetic, educational and scientific theories according to the social needs of the epoch.<sup>18</sup> Even the “revolutionary archaeomania” of the West came into play here, which sought to use the political experience of the ancients to shape its own political thought, in accordance with the various views that prevailed, to draw its models from the political systems of Athenian democracy, Sparta and Rome and to adopt the new symbols of values, liberty, individual dignity, equality, and ultimately the concept of the citizen.<sup>19</sup>

That the Modern Greek Enlightenment had a direct bearing on the formulation of the Modern Greek national consciousness is by now clear. Nevertheless, no matter how much contacts between Modern Greeks and the West were multiplying –merchants who travelled or settled in European countries and students who pursued knowledge in foreign universities became familiar with the outside world and learnt Western languages–, this was not enough to shape a common consciousness at all levels of Greek society, which was *par excellence* an agricultural one. The links in the chain of memory were brought to life by movement in the opposite direction: that of Europeans towards the East. The increasingly close diplomatic relations of the West with the Ottoman Empire, the development of commercial and financial dealings, the beneficial consequences of the Pax Ottomanica which made movement and travel possible, as well as the increased interest in the classical heritage brought more and more Europeans to the Helladic lands. From this meeting was shaped the way in which the West saw and understood the East. We should note, however, that the descriptions and accounts of these travellers worked in both directions, since their writings allowed the peoples of the East –and among them the Greeks– to learn of their own history and preserve it in their memory, something that surely had an effect on their self-knowledge. This reflection was of course not the only factor, yet it was an important one.

To what extent this contributed to the self-determination of the Greeks and to the speeding up of their national consciousness is a subject that cannot be settled with accuracy. Nevertheless there are many pieces of evidence which

---

Journey. The Emergence of Greece in the European Consciousness, 17th-18th centuries], University of Thessaloniki Ph.D. Diss., 2001.

<sup>18</sup> Suzanne L. Marchand, *Down from Olympus. Archaeology and Philhellenism in Germany, 1750-1970*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996, pp. 3-35.

<sup>19</sup> Claude Mossé, *L'Antiquité dans la Révolution française*, Paris: Édition Albin Michel, 1989.

serve as tesserae in the mosaic of the overall picture. Naturally, this does not refer only to intellectuals and in general those Greeks who were literate and knew other languages, for whom knowledge and the acquisition of information were very much more easy and direct. It refers mainly to the overwhelming majority of the population at this time, particularly that of agricultural areas, who without doubt had limited access to knowledge. Yet in spite of this, other details were coming to their attention that signalled what educated people had realised earlier and more rapidly. The sole fact of the increasing number of visitors, who searched for traces of antiquity and wandered throughout the country,<sup>20</sup> who sought help with excavations and were full of admiration for the remains of the ancient civilisation, aroused curiosity, fed imaginations and in time informed the countryfolk about the importance of the ancient ruins that were increasingly emerging from their soil.

The myth-making tendency of collective memory began to fade; gradually fantasy and superstition approached reality more closely and were finally linked with it. The remains of monuments, for instance, now took on their true dimensions; they were no longer fraught with magic or healing properties. And something else too: the local people were becoming more and more concerned with the lively interest of the “Franks” in things that in their collective memory were attributed to the “old Greeks”, the *Hellenides* (*Ελλένιδες*), the *Hellenades* (*Ελληνάδες*) or whatever other name was used for them in the Greek lands, according to the studies by Nikolaos Politis and I. Th. Kakridis.<sup>21</sup> “...One man, a papa or priest”, noted the English architect C. R. Cockerell, “asked me whether I thought the ancients, whom they revere, can have been Franks or Romaics”.<sup>22</sup>

It was natural that all this mobility with regard to excavation work should reinforce remembrance of the Greeks’ forebears and lead to the realisation that memory of them should be preserved and passed on to future generations; a relevant example is documented in the Peloponnese before the middle of the

---

<sup>20</sup> “Curious travellers, scorning the difficulties of their long marches, wandering ceaselessly through the famed Greek landscapes and seeing with an inexpressible feeling of joy, though mixed with sadness, the cities that produced outstanding men whose memory remains immortal through the centuries”, as G. Sakellarios was to note in his Introduction to the Greek translation of Vol. I of *Le Voyage du jeune Anacharsis* by the abbé Barthelémy, Vienna 1797. The Introduction was dedicated “To the Philhellene Readers”.

<sup>21</sup> I. Th. Kakridis, *Αρχαίοι Έλληνες και Έλληνες του Εικοσιένα* [Ancient Greeks and Greeks of 1821], Thessaloniki 1956, p. 9.

<sup>22</sup> *Travels in Southern Europe and the Levant, 1810-1817: the Journal of C. R. Cockerell* R. A. edited by his son, Samuel Pepys Cockerell, London 1903, p. 62, cited in G. Tolia, *Ο πυρετός των μαρμάρων* [The Marble Fever], Athens 1996, p. 110.

eighteenth century in the case of the early collector of antiquities, Abbé Fourmont. The local people hastened to help him in his quest; their leaders expressed their gratitude to him for having offered them the possibility of seeing “the beauty and decoration of the old fatherland”.<sup>23</sup> However, a little later the same people were unhappy when they became aware in one way or another of the damage done by Fourmont to the marbles of Sparta. The French Abbé’s vandalism was etched deep in the collective memory.

At the beginning of the nineteenth century examples of antiquity hunters multiplied as the number of foreign visitors increased. When, however, their welcome curiosity was transformed more and more into systematic looting, they gave rise, albeit imperceptibly, to negative impressions even in the wider levels of society. An example of the popular sensitivity to the above-mentioned event that had taken place about a century earlier is recorded, for instance, by the English traveller Edward Dodwell when he travelled to Sparta where he took copies of several inscriptions found amongst the ruins: “After I had taken copies of some of these inscriptions,” he notes, “I observed Manussaki turning them over and concealing them under stones and bushes. When I inquired his motive for such unusual caution, he informed me that he did it in order to preserve them, because many years ago a French *milordos* who visited Sparta, after having copied a great number of inscriptions, had the letters ciselled out and defaced... The fact is generally known at Misithra, and it was mentioned to me by several persons as a tradition”.<sup>24</sup> Thus the attitude of the population towards the foreign “archaeologising” travellers did not always remain favourable, particularly when their intense preoccupation with uncovering antiquities brought many negative consequences for the population itself. Indeed, in the sharp competition between European countries to acquire masterpieces of classical antiquity in order to enrich their museums and collections, a rivalry developed which often led to pressures being exerted on the local notables and to the bribing of Turkish administrative employees, even to the point of open profiteering.

The looting of the ancestral heritage by “travellers” was subsequently viewed highly critically, with the result that, through the workings of popular

---

<sup>23</sup> K. Simopoulos, *Ξένοι ταξιδιώτες στην Ελλάδα, 1700-1800* [Foreign Travellers in Greece, 1700-1800], Athens 1973, Vol. II, p. 140, note 3.

<sup>24</sup> Ed. Dodwell, *A Classical and Topographical Tour through Greece, during the Years 1801, 1805 and 1806*, London 1819, Vol. II, p. 404. Demetrio Manussaki, according to Dodwell, was “a man of some consequence and large property [who] professed to feel a lively interest in the history of his Spartan ancestors, as a proof of which he names one of his sons Lycurgus, and the other Leonidas, while he teaches them the Hellenic language”, *ibid.*, p. 402.

sensitivities, it now became a factor contributing to the forging a link between the popular element and the ancient forebears: a cultural link fostered systematically by the intellectuals of the Enlightenment which was in the end to form the common nucleus of Modern Greek consciousness on the eve of the Great Uprising, when the transition from “genos” to “nation” was made. After 1805, according to Edward Dodwell, the Ecumenical Patriarch, probably Cyril VI, forbade the destruction or removal of antiquities in one of his encyclicals.<sup>25</sup> And a little later, in 1815, “a learned Greek of Ioannina”, Athanasios Psalidas, sharing the common consciousness of the epoch, did not hesitate, according to the travel account of Lord Byron’s companion Hobhouse, to place a mortgage for the future on the evidence of Greek history: “You English”, he said, “are carrying off the works of *the Greeks* our forefathers –preserve them well– we Greeks will come and re-demand them”.<sup>26</sup>

This was the Ancient Greece from which the first elaborators of the sociopolitical changes in the West drew their models and which foreign powers such as Catherine II and Napoleon Bonaparte cited when referring to the Greek problem, in the context of their own political goals; Citizen Monge makes mention of “the infants of Sparta and of Athens” in his speech to the Directorate, which was published in Greek translation in the *Ephemeris* of Vienna (1797).<sup>27</sup> Subsequently, the philhellenic demonstrations of the time, with their spirit of love for all things ancient which sought to know the world of classical antiquity through the study of the life and customs of their contemporary “descendants”, were succeeded by a warmly enthusiastic philhellene movement. The contribution of the West to the connection of the Modern Greek consciousness with the ancient ancestors was definitive; the same thing occurred with the few critical dissenting views that were expressed, since they provoked annoyance and reactions that in the end served to strengthen the belief in continuity.

---

<sup>25</sup> Ed. Dodwell, *ibid.*, pp. 338-339: “The Constantinopolitan patriarch has been induced by the Greeks, who are fondly anticipating the regeneration of their country, to issue circulate orders to all the Greeks not to disturb any ancient remains; and neither to assist nor connive at their destruction nor removal, under pain of excommunication. The plunder of the Athenian temples was the cause of this necessary measure”.

<sup>26</sup> J. C. Hobhouse, *A Journey through Albania and other Provinces of Turkey in Europe and Asia to Constantinople during the Years 1809 and 1810*, London 1813, pp. 347-348, note; cf. L. Vranoussis, *Αθανάσιος Ψαλίδας, ο διδάσκαλος του Γένους* [Athanasios Psalidas, the teacher of the ‘genos’], Ioannina 1952, p. 36.

<sup>27</sup> *Ephemeris*, (Vienna), 10 November 1797, p. 971. See the facsimile edition, edited and with commentary by L. Vranoussis, Athens: Athens Academy, 1995, Vol. VI.

The observed shift in collective mentalities can be detected in a variety of ways. It was recorded in travellers' accounts, which betray an increased interest in the everyday life of the local people, but also in these people's behaviour each time *vis-à-vis* the foreigners' "unauthorised" archaeological initiatives. The reality of Modern Greece is also recorded in its various manifestations. This shift becomes more lively at the beginning of the nineteenth century, when new choices can be seen, e.g. in naming: owners of ships began to give their vessels ancient Greek names, many family surnames were recast in classicizing forms, teachers replaced children's Christian names with others of greater ancient dignity, some parents even chose them at their children's baptism. Names taken from mythology and history clearly acquired a particular weight, giving rise to reactions that are both varied and interesting as regards the question of consciousness: the Church was worried by these indications of liberation and "impiety"; various intellectuals were uncomfortable at the thought that a simple –uneducated– person might bear the name of an ancient sage. Ioannis Vilaras, although accepting that "the name does not make the thing", notes that such a great disparity is somewhat shocking.<sup>28</sup> The freedom fighters, moreover, were unhappy at the disparity between the ancient name and the unfitting behaviour of the man who bore it: "You placed a new leader in the fortress of Korthou [= Corinth], he was called Achilles, a most scholarly name; and hearing the name Achilles you rejoice that he is the famous Achilles. And [you might think] the name fought the Turks. It was not the name that ever fought but the courage and patriotism and virtue...", the man who departed and left the fortress "without fighting, [it was] he [who] was called Achilles", commented Makrygiannis.<sup>29</sup> Finally, this change, and what it signified, became more widely recognised: Ali Pasha felt it when he remarked that the Greeks no longer give Christian first names to their children.<sup>30</sup> The common consciousness was by now receptive to

---

<sup>28</sup> "These names are as unaccustomed to the ears of the people as unaccustomed clothes are to the eye. How strange it would seem to us to see a Socrates walking barefoot in the mud, wearing a garment like that of the Arabs, and hearing for the first time that he is called Socrates. I don't believe that we wouldn't at once say that he is some Indian beggar, and that we wouldn't burst out laughing!", see *Ἐπιστολαὶ Διαφόρων, 1759-1825*, p. 20.

<sup>29</sup> Στρατηγού Μακρυγιάννη, *Απομνημονεύματα*. Κείμενο, εισαγωγή-σημειώσεις Γιάννη Βλάχογιάννη [General Makrygiannis' *Memoirs*. Text, introduction, notes by Giannis Vlachogiannis], Athens 21947, Vol. I, p. 155.

<sup>30</sup> According to the account of L. Palaskas (D. G. Phokas, *Ὁ Πλοίαρχος Λεωνίδας Παλάσκας*, Athens 1950, p. 4), Ali Pasha, speaking to Greeks, noted that: "You Greeks have something grand in your heads. You no longer baptise your children Yannis, Petros and Kostas but Leonidas, Themistocles and Aristides! You must be cooking up something". See

these ideas. The adoption of the national name “Hellenes” comes as a natural consequence, although not without resistance of various kinds, both conscious and unconscious.

These problems were readily seen when the decision was taken to initiate the liberation process with the aim of “the betterment of the nation and, if God forgives it, its liberty”, as we read in the text of the Philiki Etaireia.<sup>31</sup> Nation and liberty – goals that presuppose the definition of the unit of people who compose the nation, the setting of its territorial limits and the establishment of how this new power will be organised. We may easily follow how Modern Greek consciousness gradually arrived at its crystallisation, that is, at the peak moment in 1821, from the revolutionary pamphlets that circulated with their strong references to the concepts of fatherland and patriotism<sup>32</sup>, as well as from the proclamations of the Philiki Etaireia, drawn up by intellectuals belonging to the highest circles. We may, in other words, see what were the components of the self-determined national identity that the Greeks projected when they decided to bring about the great “change” – components which nevertheless did not remain unaltered in the years to come.

Thus, if Rigas in his *Martial Anthem (Thourios)* addressed himself to the peoples of the Balkan peninsula, and among them the “Romioi”, if Korais in his *Warrior Song (Asma Polemistirion)* had tried to spur on the brave “Graikoi”, the *Organisation of the Philiki Etaireia and the doctrine of its members* was to speak specifically of “a Hellene who loves his country” – and, in another manuscript of the same text that has been preserved, of “Graikoi” and “those outside Graikia”.<sup>33</sup> At the same period a “Musophile and Philanthropic Greek [Graikiki] Commercial Society” was founded, which considered it “a sacred and inviolable duty, an obligation of the “Genos” to collect funds for “the liberty of our dearly-loved Country”. There was neither the time nor the inclination for anyone among the “descendants of Miltiades, of Leonidas, of Themistocles [...] and of thousands of others of our glorious ancestors to doubt for even a single moment the inevitability and happy outcome of our great purpose”.<sup>34</sup> Finally,

---

C. Th. Dimaras, *Ιστορικά Φροντίσματα. Α. Ο Διαφωτισμός και το κορύφωμά του* [Historical reflections. A. The Enlightenment at its apex], Athens 1992, pp. 203, 218.

<sup>31</sup> Ap. Daskalakis, *Κείμενα – Πηγές της Ιστορίας της Ελληνικής Επανάστασης* [Source texts for the History of the Greek Revolution], Athens 1996, Vol. I, p. 49.

<sup>32</sup> Roxane D. Argyropoulos, «Patriotisme et sentiment national en Grèce au temps des Lumières», *Folia Neohellenica* VI (1984), p. 10.

<sup>33</sup> Al. Hypsilantis is said to have written a war song (*Graikoi, Graikoi, Graikoi*) which was often sung during the Greek war of Independence, cf. C. Th. Dimaras, *Ιστορία της Νεοελληνικής Λογοτεχνίας* [History of Modern Greek Literature], Athens 2001, p. 319.

<sup>34</sup> Ap. Daskalakis, *op. cit.*, p. 97.



the proclamation of Alexandros Ypsilantis “Fight for your faith and your fatherland” spurred the “manly and brave Hellenes [to invoke] liberty on the classical soil of Greece” in the name, once more, of their ancient forebears.

In the same circulars of Alexandros Ypsilantis the central idea formulated at that time was clearly expressed, i.e. the claim and demand for age-old rights to be restored. Rights that bring to mind “the venerable monuments of our ancestors that we see before us”. And even: “Let us recall of which heroes we are the descendants... We have a second great Alexander [the Tsar of Russia] who is waiting impatiently to see us demand our rights, sword in hand, in order to stretch forth his powerful arm in our defence...” *Rights, ancient forebears, fatherland*: frequently repeated words that were by now understood and accepted by the collective body of Greeks. Through these first proclamations runs, it is clear, the whole revolutionary argument, in which the intellectual tradition is intertwined with myth.

Even during the first months of the Revolution when Greek consciousness had not yet crystallised, the great changes that had been accomplished in the Struggle were already appearing –albeit somewhat faintly at the beginning– through the revolutionaries’ definition of themselves in their early actions and their first institutional texts; a shift then appeared from the defining term “Christian” which had been in use in Greek lands to the entirely accepted title of “Hellenes”; on the symbolic level, Athena, goddess of wisdom and rationality, replaced the cross as the national emblem throughout the administrative hierarchy, on seals, etc.<sup>35</sup> The steps that followed completed the picture: in the General Assembly at Epidaurus on 15 January 1822 a direct link with the Greeks’ ancient forebears was proclaimed –“Descendants of the wise and humane Nation of the Greeks”– as well as a desire to resemble their other European Christian brothers. All these ideas were introduced by the Greek intellectuals who had arrived from abroad and were now hastening to take part in the liberation struggle, and were specifically expressed by the first men to undertake the political organisation of the new state, the Phanariots Alexandros Mavrocordatos and Theodoros Negris, the liberal Italian lawyer Vincenzo Gallina –with the figure of Korais in the background– in the first Constitution, signed by all those deputed to do so, literate or illiterate, in the name of the Greek people.

---

<sup>35</sup> Loukia Droulia, «Η θεά Αθηνά θεότητα έμβλημα του Νέου Ελληνισμού» [The goddess Athena, emblematic divinity of New Hellenism], *Χρήσεις της Αρχαιότητας από τον Νέο Ελληνισμό* [The Uses of Antiquity by New Hellenism], *Δελτίο της Εταιρείας Σπουδών, Νεοελληνικού Πολιτισμού και Γενικής Παιδείας της Σχολής Μωραΐτη*, Athens 2002, pp. 223-240.

The name “Hellenes” was adopted immediately, putting an end to whatever differences the question of the name had provoked and whatever this signified in the area of self-definition. Thus in 1821, when the Greek nation changed its course of its own free will, it adopted the ancestral name fraught with emotional resonance which was henceforth used spontaneously by everyone. “Hellenes, he calls them when he makes rousing speeches”, notes N. Spiliadis about Kolokotronis addressing his soldiers, “and he reminds them that they are the descendants of heroes and immediately the descendants of the Hellenes boast of their ancestry, and one no longer hears the word Romaioi anywhere in the Peloponnese unless it is spoken by the Turks; and the Greeks call each other Hellenes”<sup>36</sup>. This new name, with its “heroic” connotations, was not seen in many people’s minds as being in opposition to Christianity; for them it did not mean an idol-worshipper. On the contrary, the two characterisations proceeded in tandem. And their common progress attracted and incorporated into the national body other Christian groups who accepted the “Greek” cultural identity and acquired a Greek national consciousness. This is envisaged even from the first text of the Constitution (article 5): “The Administration will take care shortly to issue a law on naturalization of any foreigners who desire to become Hellenes”.<sup>37</sup>

*Institute for Neohellenic Research / NHRF*

---

<sup>36</sup> Kakridis, *op. cit.*, p. 6.

<sup>37</sup> A. Mamoukas, *op. cit.*, p. 16. In the English translation of the Provisional Constitution mentioned above the wording is as follows: “The government will speedily promulgate a law concerning naturalization”.