

FROM ORTHODOXY TO GREEKNESS: RUPTURE IN THE “EAST”*

ABSTRACT: This article aims at presenting the idea of change within the collective self-understanding of what we are used to designate as the “Greeks”, primarily focusing on the 19th century. Despite the frequent use of the category “Greek” as a diachronic entity, a more minute examination rapidly shows that a constant change of collective self-perception took place. To put it in a nutshell: a Greek-Orthodox, hence religious, group with fuzzy boundaries in terms of ethnicity was replaced by national groups in the 19th century and fully institutionalized with the creation of Balkan modern nation states and in 1923 the Treaty of Lausanne that expelled all Greek-Orthodox people from Modern Turkey and Muslims from Greece in a compulsory exchange of population (with minor exceptions). Despite this population engineering, the only real success of nationalism in the region, cultural traces among today’s Greek population still bear an ironical or nostalgic testimony for what used to be “Greek”, that is *rómáiiko*, before this lethal ideological rupture.

KEY WORDS: Orthodoxy, Nationalism, Mediterranean, State, Empire, Greeks, Turks, Language, Anatolia.

RESUMEN: Este artículo tiene por objetivo presentar la idea de cambio dentro de la concepción colectiva que de sí mismos han tenido quienes solemos denominar “griegos”, con especial atención al siglo XIX. A pesar del frecuente uso de la categoría “griego” como entidad diacrónica, un análisis más minucioso evidencia al instante que se ha

* This text is dedicated to Alberto Conejero López whose intellectual company in Athens made research refreshingly livelier.

venido produciendo un cambio constante de la propia percepción colectiva. En resumen, un grupo greco-ortodoxo, por tanto religioso, con fronteras confusas en términos étnicos, fue reemplazado en el siglo XIX por comunidades nacionales. Estas comunidades quedaron totalmente institucionalizadas con la creación en los Balcanes de los modernos estados-nación, y finalmente en 1923 con el Tratado de Lausana por el que toda la población greco-ortodoxa fue expulsada de la actual Turquía y todos los musulmanes de Grecia (salvo contadas excepciones) en un intercambio forzoso de población. A pesar de este artificio poblacional –el mayor logro del nacionalismo en la región– algunos vestigios culturales en la población griega actual implican un testimonio nostálgico o irónico de lo que significaba ser “griego”, es decir romeo, antes de esta quiebra ideológica letal.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Ortodoxia, Nacionalismo, Mediterráneo, Estado, Imperio, Griegos, Turcos, Lengua, Anatolia.

This short article aims at introducing the idea of change within the self-collective understanding of what we are used to designating as the Greeks, primarily focusing on the 19th century. Despite the frequent use of the category “Greek” as a diachronic entity, a more minute examination rapidly shows, that –within this population too– a constant change of collective self-understanding took place. Let’s add immediately that the extension of that “Greek” group itself was fluctuating in time, and even in the same time according to the situation in which real people might Orthodox happen to be. However, according to human laziness but also to less unproblematic nationalism, these changes are to remain invisible in order to seem natural¹. Nationalism promotes human groups, the nations, as beings outside of history or whose history aims only at their resurrection or the re-finding of themselves. History is seen as an inescapable quest of the self. But I, along with many others, quite doubt of the natural character of such changes and would question their alleged destination that is the reassertion of a mythic

¹ Michel FERRAND, *Féminin, Masculin*, Paris, La Découverte, 2004, p. 5: «This bi-categorization (between female and male) that claims to be natural is of incontestable power in the representations and the practices of our society». Along with “gender”, but certainly with slightly less success today, I would say that “national identity” is ideologically made natural and essentialised.

unchanged self². The “Greek” case is a marvellous example of such a process³.

Let’s start with a sketch of the “Greek” situation at the beginning of the 19th century. All “Greek” territory up belonged to an obviously non-Greek state. The Ottoman Empire having succeeded to Byzantium in the Eastern Mediterranean, the late Byzantine capital was then the main city of quite a different cultural entity. Alone the Ionian Islands were outside the Islamic state and had belonged to several entities like the Venetian republic, the French Napoleonic Empire and then to the British crown. The most visible expression of the “Greek” people was the vast Orthodox mass, structured around the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople. The institution had benefited from the Ottoman Empire in so far as it could expand its jurisdiction on territories where national churches had once existed. Hence it was the only central authority on the Balkans despite the Bulgarian and Serbian church structures that had existed long ago.

The Ecumenical Patriarchate has never been outside earthly consideration and constraints. For historical reasons of continuity it had –and still has– a “Greek” cultural character. There was a clear dominating position of the “Greek” clerics in the church administration throughout the Ottoman Empire, and the liturgy was most often celebrated –at least in parts– in the church form of the Greek language, an alteration of the *koine* found in the Gospel, used in the church administrative life too. Orthodoxy did not insist on individual confrontation with holy texts, letting its flock outside of compulsory language standardization. As a result, and with the same effect in the Balkan and in Anatolia: the mother-tongue of Orthodox believers and the linguistic form of the religious liturgy could greatly diverge. This divergence was socially and politically irrelevant.

² Anne-Marie THIESSE, *La création des identités nationales, Europe XVIIIe-XXe siècle*, Paris, Seuil, L’univers Historique, 1999, p. 11: «Modern nations have been constructed otherwise than their official histories claim. Their origins do not go back to times immemorial, in those dark and heroic ages that the first chapters of national history handbooks describe».

³ Benjamin BRAUDE and Bernard LEWIS, «Introduction», in: B. BRAUDE-B. LEWIS (EDS.), *Christians and Jews in the Ottoman Empire, The functioning of a plural society*, New York-London, Holmes and Meier Publishers, Inc., vol. I: The Central Lands, p. 19: «The remains of classical Greece were as mysterious to the Greek peasant as were the monuments of Pharaonic Egypt to the fellah; both thought them the work of an ancient race of giants or genies. The claim to these legacies by latter-day Greece and Egypt developed from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries as a consequence of European archaeological discoveries and European concepts of ethnic and territorial nationhood».

To be underlined is the variety of languages spoken by one and the same individual on the Balkan and in many places in Anatolia. Especially, along with the native tongue, a *lingua franca* was likely to be spoken especially by men having to deal with the outside world. This was mostly vernacular Greek and/or vernacular Turkish. Armenians and Jews across the Anatolian and Balkan parts of the Empire experienced the same situation as the Orthodox.

At the beginning of 19th century, the Orthodox Christians in the Ottoman Balkan were experiencing a large array of local situations: Slavic languages with no neatly cut boundaries, constituting a *continuum* from the Slovenian lands up to Constantinople, Albanian, Greek, Arumanian (a variety of Rumanian found outside Rumanian lands) languages were possible mother tongues. In the first half of the 19th century, the Orthodox Christians in Ottoman Anatolia were experiencing too a large variety of local situations with some other elements playing an analogous role in the setting. Under the label “Greek-Orthodox”, one could find a Greek-speaking inhabitant of Smyrna, potentially a migrant or a child of migrants from newly independent but poverty-stricken Greece, a Turkish-speaking believer especially in Cappadocia but anywhere else in the Empire where economic opportunities were attracting such people, an Arabic-speaking Orthodox Christian, probably within the jurisdiction of the Antioch Orthodox See, a Pontic-speaking Orthodox Christian in the Black Sea region and even the incredible –for the contemporary understanding of the layman– cases of a Greek Orthodox speaking Armenian or Kurdish as his or her mother tongue⁴. Despite the length of this catalogue, our readers may accept that it is unlikely to be comprehensive. But it offers them the image of an enlarged human group quite dissimilar from what one usually considers as Greek today: «Ethnic diversity among Christians of the Rum millet had been a fact of life for the Greek Orthodox patriarchate. Until the nineteenth century, however, the church’s ecclesiastical hierarchy effectively spanned these diverse groups, each speaking its own tongue. In doing so the patriarchate was aligned with the symmetry of the other Ottoman imperial institutions that were meant to encompass and bring order to a world of many peoples but few social classes»⁵.

⁴ Hervé GEORGELIN, «On the margins of Ottoman *rōmiosyni*: the case of the Hay-Horoums», paper presented at the international conference *Greeks of Anatolia and Istanbul*, held on 23rd, 24th and 25th February 2005, at the École française d’Athènes.

⁵ Gerasimos AUGUSTINOS, *The Greeks of Asia Minor, Confession, Community, and Ethnicity in the Nineteenth Century*, Kent, The Kent State University Press, 1992, p. 113.

This diversity was experienced until late in the Ottoman history. Here is the brief biographical notes about Zôi Chalkopoulou, an informant from Smyrna, interviewed in November 1967, as can be found in the Archives of the Oral Tradition at the Centre for Asia Minor Studies in Athens:

«Her father was from Philippoupolis [today’s Plovdiv, Bulgaria], a notable, trader in textiles from England, sheets from France and flannel from Germany. He was a member of the school committee and of the community council. Her mother had Bulgarian relatives who had worked at the Bulgarian Exarchate. The grand-father had a sister who was married to a Bulgarian, their children had studied in Russia. They distinguished themselves because they had Greek blood»⁶.

As this fragment clearly shows, the Orthodox population could intermarry and was mobile in the Balkans and in the Eastern Mediterranean. The informant underlines the distinctive character of being of Greek stock in other Orthodox countries. This informs us more about her opinions than about the social value of being Greek abroad. But certainly, among Greek Orthodox people a new play of social distinctions was initiated, human beings creating differences if none pre-exists. The informant ended up in Ottoman Smyrna as the wife of a medical doctor, subject of the Hellenic Kingdom, after years in Egypt and Constantinople. Other such examples can be easily found in these archives.

The mother-tongue had not much in common with the religious ascription of the individuals in the Ottoman context. By contrast, this second one was of major social relevance. The religious factor was a major given, it defined the fiscal status of the Ottoman subjects, their military status (draftable or not), judicial status (each religious group solving private affairs for its own members). The collective ascription of the individual to the Greek orthodox group determined his or her anthropological status, one of symbolic and social inferiority: «Unbelievers, [...], were such entirely by their own choice. Their status of inferiority was voluntary –Muslims might say wilful– and they themselves could easily end it at any time by an act of will. From the point of view of the Muslim, unbelievers were people to whom the truth had been offered in the final and perfect form of God’s revelation, which they had wilfully and foolishly refused»⁷.

⁶ Centre for Asia Minor Studies [CAMS], Archives of the Oral Tradition [AOT], file: IÔN1, Smyrna.

⁷ Benjamin BRAUDE and Bernard LEWIS, *art. cit.*, p. 4.

In this imperial system, how did nationalism emerge, and has in our case would it dismantle or reshuffle the Greek-Orthodox community? Quite obviously, the imperial system lost some of its credibility when the Empire itself started losing ground in front of Western Europe. The techniques and the ideas of this region established themselves within the Empire. Greek-Orthodox would be among the first receivers of these imports, the French Revolution and the Napoleonic Wars were not remote events but a real presence in Italy, Dalmatia and the Ionian islands. Quite rightly the Orthodox clerics and those of other Eastern Churches expressed their defiance towards the Enlightenments brutally exported to the rest of the world. The Armenian prelate did not favour in Smyrna the study of French for instance. As Braude and Lewis put it: «The ideas of the Revolution –liberty and equality– were clearly disruptive of the traditional»⁸. But despite the first resistance to national ideals by the Ottoman Eastern Christian political elite, one has to admit that nationalism has its own force that of, by rearranging the past, making a perspective for the future: establishment of the national State and giving some meaning to the existence of each human group, once elected, that is self-defined as a nation. Such a discourse is made of ideological patterns lethal for imperial structures.

THE DYNAMICS OF CHANGE

The creation of the nation state Greece was a watershed in the history of the Eastern Mediterranean and Anatolia. The conjunction of liberal ideas of the French revolution, not much appreciated by the Orthodox hierarchy as one may easily understand but influencing some educated circles, the interest and sympathy nourished in the West for Ancient Greece, the assimilation of the Greek Orthodox with this past, using arguments partly acceptable, like the continuity in space and language of the given population playing a major part, with a long-lasting local uprising werw elements of this secession. The acceptance of the new state by the conservative Europe of the Triple Alliance was a half-hearted one. The new state was granted minimal territorial extension and a monarchy with a German king to ensure its political weakness.

Despite the objective weakness of Greece, its symbolic empowerment by its very official name “Hellas” and the choice of Athens as its capital

⁸ Benjamin BRAUDE and Bernard LEWIS, *art. cit.*, p. 19.

provided it with a disturbing ideological role for the region. Little by little, Athens and Hellas acquired institutions and an effective administrative power and developed a national discourse with irredentist pretensions aimed at the Ottoman Empire. The small and weak state aimed at gathering all Greek Orthodox of the region on its territory which was supposed to be enlarged as quickly as possible, but was in fact dependent on the good will of Western Powers, that would grant Greece new territories or not⁹. King Othôn travelled incognito to Smyrna in 1833, expressing by so doing his interest for the Eastern shore of the Aegean, though any annexation was out of reach for the weak nation state¹⁰. Progressively, the Kingdom openly adopted as main ideological discourse that of irredentism, the so-called the *Megali Idea*¹¹.

Many historians and theorists of nationalism have underlined the importance of formal schooling in the making of nationalist ideologies. Modern Greece makes no exception. As far as its role on the still Ottoman lands is concerned, its main tool of influence was the University of Athens and several pedagogical schools training teachers for the Ottoman Greek Orthodox, considered as unredeemed Greeks. The Consuls of Greece controlled the curricula adopted and the level reached by the local Greek orthodox schools¹². A bunch of associations, the *sylogoi*, aimed at promoting national ideals among the Greek orthodox Ottoman subjects¹³. Benefiting from the educational autonomy of the Ottoman communities, the Greek orthodox school system developed on such lines. I have thoroughly

⁹ Th. VEREMIS, «State and Nation in Greece, 1821-1912», pp. 59-67, in: D. G. TSAOUSIS (ED.), *Hellenism-Greekness* (in Greek), Athens, Hestia, 1983 (2003⁴), p. 62: «However the ‘grandeur’ of the Great Idea came in sharp contradiction with the weakness of the Greek state».

¹⁰ Elli SKOPETEA, *The Model Kingdom and the Grand Idea, Views on the National Problem in Greece, (1830-1880)* (in Greek), Athens, Polytypo, 1988, p. 274: «In June 1833, a few months after his arrival in Greece, Othôn departed for a tour in Smyrna, triggering off enthusiastic demonstrations among the Greeks of this city».

¹¹ Hervé GEORGELIN, «Réunir tous les ‘Grecs’ dans un État-nation, une ‘Grande Idée’ catastrophique», in: *Romantisme*, n° 131, 2006 (1), pp. 29-39.

¹² Gerasimos AUGUSTINOS, *op. cit.*, p. 152: «Community schools in the Ottoman lands directly felt the kingdom’s tutelary hand. Greek consuls stationed in the major urban centers of the empire performed as national educational missionaries. They were instructed to provide funds for the establishment of schools, to help in recruiting teachers, and to acquaint communities with the various school programs. The activities benefited both the communities and the kingdom, with its limited opportunities for job seekers».

¹³ Charis EKERTZOGLOU, *National Identity in Constantinople in the 19th century, the Greek Philological Association at Constantinople, 1861-1912* (in Greek), Athens, Nepheli, 1996.

examined elsewhere the case of Smyrna where Greek orthodox schools were functioning as national and no more as communal institutions as far as their curricula were concerned. The top level secondary schools in the Ottoman Empire permitted an easy access to the Athens University if they complied with requirements defined in Athens¹⁴. A whole network of distinguished Greek-Orthodox highschoools: The *Phrontistirio* at Trebizond, the *Evangeliki Scholi* at Smyrna, the *Academia* at Ayvalık, the *Megali tou Yenous Scholi* as well as the *Zappio* at Constantinople and some others could secure access to the University of Athens for their alumni, who were not submitted to admission exams¹⁵.

The Orthodox church was not indifferent nor passive towards the national developments on the Balkan peninsula: «The foundation of the Greek national state [in 1830] was a blow for the Ecumenical Patriarchate since it entailed the setting of a separated national Greek church and a loss of direct administrative and financial power for the Patriarchate. On a further reaching level, the very creation of a Modern Greek state meant that a new ideology, nationalism, was embodied and empowered and put *de facto* in the position of a competitor for the Patriarchate, until then the sole institution that encompassed all Greek Orthodox»¹⁶. In fact, after its opposition to the nationalist uprising and its refusal to accept in 1850 a separate church of Greece, the Ecumenical Patriarchate had to tolerate and finally ratify the *de facto* situation, granting autocephaly to the new church organization in the recently established state. «The 1850 reconciliation, that is, the acceptance of the *de facto* situation means that the culture of the Orthodox institutions was altered to the point of abandoning some of their universalistic discourses. But the contradiction between the century-old institution, defending the *yenos*, and the national state creating the Modern Greek ethnos was still there»¹⁷.

¹⁴ Hervé GEORGIN, *La fin de Smyrne: du cosmopolitisme au nationalisme*, Paris, CNRS Éditions, 2005.

¹⁵ Paschalis KITROMILIDIS, «The Greek State as National Centre», pp. 143-164, in D. G. TSAOUSIS (ED.), *Hellenism-Greekness* (in Greek), Athens, Hestia, 1983 (2003⁴), p. 152: «Fundamental vector of the transmission of the values of the Modern Greek irredentism towards the Greek populations in the Orient was the National University. From its foundation in 1837 onward, the mission of the university included the irradiation of Hellenism towards the East».

¹⁶ R. J. CRAMPTON, *A Short History of Modern Bulgaria*, Cambridge, C.U.P., 1987, p. 14.

¹⁷ R. J. CRAMPTON, *op. cit.*, p. 14.

One of the most interesting phenomena is the slow –and certainly never complete– ideological Hellenization of the Patriarchate. Even Orthodox clerics became more and more loyal to national ideals. The open questioning of the Patriarchate’s ecumenicity was formulated by Bulgarian nationalism. A Modern Bulgaria was in the making as soon as the Bulgarian Exarchate was officially recognized by the Ottoman Empire in 1870. The Patriarchate opposed the Ottoman step: «The Bulgarian exarchate was proclaimed schismatic because it was guilty of the heresy of extreme nationalism [*phyletism*, from Greek *phylos* = race, people]. The Phanar refused to acknowledge it and links between the church in Bulgaria and the Phanar were severed for seven years»¹⁸. By so doing, the Orthodox Patriarchate opposed the expansion of the Bulgarian church hierarchy in Macedonia, a territory coveted both by Modern Greek and Bulgarian nationalism. The hostility of the Patriarchate smoothed as late as in 1945 when the schism was relieved. The Bulgarian principality recognized at the Berlin Congress in 1878, harshly reduced in its territorial extension, ambioned rapid annexations after its virtual international debut at San Stefano, where it was granted most of Ottoman Macedonia and large portions of Thrace. After 1878, a frustrated competitor was created in the North for more lands and its appetites were focused on territories which “Hellenism” considered as its own. In this context, one can quote the example of Chrysostomos, who was to be the last Greek Orthodox archbishop of Smyrna, especially active in Macedonia, as metropolitane at Drama from May 1902 onward, who literally fought against the Bulgarian influence and the policy applied by the Sublime Porte, that intended to ease the division of Orthodox Christians along national lines¹⁹. This man embodies the link between the European and the Asian policies of the Patriarchate, gained itself by the ideology of Hellenism.

NUMBER OF PEOPLE, PROVENIENCE AND COLLECTIVE SELF

The late Ottoman years experienced flows of migration from Greece proper to the Ottoman Empire, especially to the large metropolises as

¹⁸ Friedrich-Wilhelm FERNAU, *Patriarchen am Goldenen Horn, Gegenwart und Tradition des orthodoxen Orients*, Opladen, C.W. Leske Verlag, Schriften des Deutschen Orient-Instituts, Monographien, 1967, p. 81.

¹⁹ Christos SOLOMÓNIDIS, *Chrysostomos of Smyrna* (in Greek), 2 Volumes, Athens, 1971, p. 30.

Smyrna, Constantinople, Salonica and to a lesser extent: Mersin, Broussa or Trebizond. They were to continue until the Young Turkish revolution in 1908. The Greek Orthodox population was hence composed of two legal categories: Ottoman subjects and Hellenic subjects. The Hellenic subjects enjoyed a higher prestige than the Ottoman ones. They also had objective privileges in terms of taxes. As *Hellines*, they were protected by the Capitulations within the Ottoman territory. A comparatively high level of general knowledge and access to medical care insured the Greek Orthodox population a sensible rise in population: «Around 1881 approximately, non-Muslims, Greeks and Armenians reached in Turkish history their demographic apogee. They accounted for 21% of the population on the territory of today’s Turkey»²⁰. Their natural demographic growth and their migration ratio made the Greek Orthodox community a self-conscious vigorous human group.

After 1908, *Hellines* were not concerned by the universal conscription established by the new Ottoman regime. As a result, at short term, they had an enviable status. The general conscription of young Christians, Jews like Muslims, was a major factor in breaking the hitherto Ottoman social and demographic *status quo*. In order to escape conscription, Greek Orthodox subjects would seek refuge to the Kingdom where they would undergo a thorough process of Hellenization, because of the Modern Greek state administration: fiscality, conscription, state-run judicial and educational systems that still had until then no similar counterpart in the Ottoman Empire²¹. In the Ottoman Empire, fiscal arrangements made the relatives of those who had defected to Greece liable for the unpaid taxes. As a result, the emigration to Greece was reinforced. After 1912 and the loss of most European Turkey to Modern Christian states, ethnic cleansing was centrally engineered by the CUP government and carried out so that Muslim refugees from the Balkans could be settled in areas with former dense Greek-

²⁰ Youssef COURBAGE-Philippe FARGUES, *Chrétiens et Juifs dans l’Islam arabe et turc*, Paris, Fayard, 1992 (Payot, 1997²), p. 215.

²¹ D. G. TSAOUSIS, «Hellenism and Greekness, the problem of Modern Greek identity», in: D. G. TSAOUSIS (ED.), *Hellenism Greekness* (in Greek), Athens, Hestia, 1983 (2003⁴) [15-25], p. 21: «The Greek orthodox identity, as it appeared within the historical frames of Byzantium and the Turkish domination, was a cultural identity that determined the social organization of Hellenism in the limits of a united but ethnically kaleidoscopic political organization. The new identity, the national one, is political and aims at transforming Hellenism in a self-sufficient and independent state and at integrating this state in an international system of isolated political entities».

Orthodox settlements²². Fiscal measures and brutal deportation or expulsion weakened the Greek orthodox presence on these lands.

To put it short both migration flows: the one from the Kingdom towards the main urban centres of the Ottoman Empire, the agricultural lands along the railway system being improved and constantly prolonged from Smyrna inland and then in a second time from Constantinople to the Taurus mountains and Baghdad speeded up the cultural and social Hellenization of the local Greek Orthodox population. When the migration flux was reversed, first because of the generalization of conscription, Ottoman Greek Orthodox were made to feel that Greece were their normal destination²³. We may here open a parenthesis: some preferred to migrate to the New World. Elia Kazan's family is an example, they were part of the first Greek Orthodox settlements in the US²⁴. Interestingly enough, the process of Hellenization was not to take place there along the same line, for obvious reasons: the institutional framework of the Modern Greek state was mostly absent. A cultural life, uniting Armenians and Greek Orthodox alike, including Turkish songs and obviously “Oriental” tunes would continue to exist for tens of years to come²⁵.

SOCIALIZING AND VISUAL CULTURE

As places of social gathering among Greek Orthodox Christians developed, be it sport clubs, reading parlours, hunting associations or freemasonic lodges, the reference to classical Greece and the newly founded Kingdom of Greece was reinforced in their social life. Beyond formal education, Greek Orthodox Ottomans were trained to think in national terms. Sports were among the modern activities reinforcing the national affiliation towards the Kingdom. The link between sports and nationalism in different national contexts has been evidenced by many authors²⁶. The late

²² Fuat DÜNDAR, «Les Grecs anatoliens et la politique d'installation des populations du CUP (1913-1918)», paper presented at the international conference *Greeks of Anatolia and Istanbul*, held on 23rd, 24th and 25th February 2005, at the École française d'Athènes.

²³ For more details, see Paschalis M. KITROMILIDES-ALEXIS ALEXANDRIS, «Ethnic Survival, Nationalism and Forced Migration. The historical demography of the Greek community of Asia Minor at the close of the Ottoman era», in: *Deltio of the Centre for Asia Minor Studies*, vol. 5, Athens, 1984-1985, pp. 9-44.

²⁴ For more details see Elia KAZAN, *A Life*, New York, Alfred A. Knopf, 1988, or *Elia Kazan by Elia Kazan*, CD.

²⁵ *Armenians on 8th Avenue* (CD), New York, Traditional Crossroads, 1996.

²⁶ Christina KOULOURI, *Sports and Aspects of Bougeois sociability, Gyknasstics and Sports Clubs 1870-1922*, Athens, Kentuo Niohellenikôn Erevmôn, 1937 (in Greek).

Ottoman Empire was a place where icons of a new sort were coveted. Constant references to the Kingdom were made. Portraits of the King and the Queen of Greece were to be found in cafés owned by Greek Orthodox Ottomans far away within Anatolia. In the late Ottoman empire, the self staging of one’s own communal/national belonging was a major preoccupation that influenced the aspect of all cities. The Greek flag, *bi galazolefski*, was displayed on festivals be they Greek, Orthodox or even Ottoman making the Greek flag an emblem within the semiotic Ottoman space for the Greek Orthodox community²⁷. Even the Young Turkish revolution was greeted by Greek banners displayed together with the Ottoman ones.

All these processes of national standardization among the Greek Orthodox Ottoman subjects went almost unopposed. As Richard Clogg expressed it: «Greek attempts at “re-Hellenization” met with relative little opposition from the Ottoman authorities»²⁸.

THE TRACES OF ANOTHER GREEK PAST

Ironically enough the changes just evoked above were not thorough phenomena. Other voices could be heard until recently and other ways history could have gone become visible when one pays attention to them.

As far as literature is concerned, Ilias Venezis’ *The Number 31 328* and its more recent film adaptation, staged an incredulous family-head, when in August 1922 the Greek army is about to leave the Asian shore of the Aegean, believing in the possibility of a new coexistence between Turks and Greek Orthodox populations²⁹. Trying to convince his family, who seems to be in lower spirits than him, he refers to “centuries of peaceful neighbourhood”. Didô Sôtiriou in her *Matômena Chômata* advocates the opinion that simple and modest people could have lived together forever, on the condition that the Great Powers and the political leaders had not

²⁷ Hervé GEORGELIN, «Smyrne à la fin de l’Empire ottoman, un cosmopolitisme si voyant», pp. 125-147 in *Cahiers de la Méditerranée*, Centre de la Méditerranée Moderne et Contemporaine, n° 67, décembre 2003.

²⁸ Richard CLOGG, «The Greek *Millet* in the Ottoman Empire», in: B. BRAUDE-B. LEWIS (ED.) *Christians and Jews in the Ottoman Empire, The functioning of a plural society*, New York-London, Holmes and Meier Publishers, Inc., vol. I: The Central Lands, p. 198.

²⁹ Ilias VENEZIS, *The Number 31328* (in Greek), Mytilini 1931, and Nikos KOUNDOUROUS (director), *1922*, Athens, Greek production, 1978.

decided on the contrary³⁰. (Former) Locals, the two authors under scrutiny instantly thought of possibilities brutally ignored.

Even the vocabulary used by former Greek Orthodox inhabitants of Anatolia as shown in the transcripts of the Archives of the Oral Tradition at the Centre for Asia Minor Studies clearly proves the relative irrelevance of distinction between the categories of ethnicity (Greekness) and religion (Orthodoxy) among the population under survey. As far as the interviewers themselves did not interfere in the wording of the answers given by informants –which is questionable–, one often finds the self-designation “Christians” (*Christianoí*) meaning the Greek-Orthodox in opposition to all neighbouring groups. Other Christian groups (Armenians, Syrian Christians) were not spontaneously considered as such. The only true Christians were the Greek-Orthodox. Even refugees from Asia Minor, having undergone the influence of Hellenic education (*hellinomatheia*) and forms of sociability (so-called Hellenic clubs, sports associations, reading circles, etc.) could still consider themselves as Christians, true Christians first, even after their establishment in Greece.

I suppose that some of the interviewers did influence the wording of their informants’ answers. To what extent. This was certainly the case when interviewees expressed their thoughts in Turkish and the only transcripts stored in the archives are in Standard Modern Greek³¹. In Turkish, the self-designation could hardly have been “Greek” (*Hellin*) as the reader finds it, which would be equivalent to *Yunan*, the ethnonym clearly bound with the country Greece or *Yunanistan*. It is very unlikely that Turkish speaking former Ottoman subjects would refer to themselves as *Yunan* while most of them had never seen the national state *Yunanistan*. I suppose that the term *Rum* as spontaneously used in Constantinople until today by the vanishing local Greek Orthodox community was the word most used in interviews conducted in Turkish³². In fact, in many transcripts of interviews the equivalent word *Rômios* appears too as self-designation. In fact, this word epitomizes an other Greekness than that defined by the National State

³⁰ Didó SÓTRIΟΥ, *Blood-stained Lands* (in Greek), Athens 1962, and translated as *Farewell Anatolia*, (trans. from Greek by Fred A. Reed) Athens, Kedros, 1991.

³¹ Such interviews immediately translated were conducted by Hermolaos Andreadis until the seventies of the 20th century.

³² As a principle, I always attempt at combining historiographical work with field observations among the heir populations, as far as possible, asking what could have changed and what is likely to have remained unchanged in the cultural habits of the population under scrutiny.

Greece. The continuity it suggests is that with Byzantium and not with the Ancient classic ages, so much cherished by the Kingdom created by the Western Powers in 1832, with the support of Western European philhellenism³³.

The linguistic level clearly indicates the persistence, despite all attempts made by the Greek Orthodox institutions in the Ottoman Empire, of a difference of self-perception between the Greeks as defined by the newly founded nation state and the Greek Orthodox still subjects of the Sublime Porte. So even if the process of staging and understanding oneself as Greek (*Hellin*) was well advanced among some segments of the Greek Orthodox population of the Ottoman Empire, as Paschalis Kitromilidis put it:

«[the Hellenic and Ottoman Greek educational leaders], exclusively controlling the educational system of unredeemed Hellenism, worked systematically for tens of years and progressively but decisively succeeded in incorporating Hellenism outside of the Greek state into the symbolic and psychological system of Modern Greek nationalism»³⁴.

I have argued that the process was not completed by 1922.

In the popular culture of mainland Greece, the use of *Christianos* and of *Rômios* is not extinguished either: It is still an ironic and rather affectionate to call people, as if the use of these words fleetingly abolished the “Hellenic” conventions, thus putting them into question and revealing the relatively artificial character of the former rupture in the Orthodox East.

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³³ The young capital Athens, an insignificant village at the beginning of the 19th century, soon experienced a blossoming of archaeological schools founded by the Western Great powers of the time (the first one to be founded was the French School in 1846. England, the United States and Germany promptly followed suit). They decisively contributed in forging continuity between contemporary Greece and the classical times.

³⁴ Paschalis KITROMILIDIS, *art. cit.*, pp. 152-153.