Roderick Beaton

GREECE

Biography of a Modern Nation

'The best history of Greece …
beautifully written'
Victoria Hislop



PENGUIN BOOKS

GREECE

Selected as a *Financial Times* History Book of the Year

'Beaton is admirably placed to tell this tale. In casting it as the "biography of a modern nation", he aims beyond tired controversies about continuities and discontinuities between ancient and modern Greece, focusing instead on the formation of modern Greek identity . . . an illuminating analysis . . . this is a judicious and compelling narrative, in which Beaton makes a convincing case for Greece's contribution to the modern shape of Europe'
John Kittmer, *The Times Literary Supplement*

'The best history of Greece around . . . Beautifully written and packed with insights about the culture and the people. I will be dipping into this book for the rest of my life'
Victoria Hislop, *The Week*

'Beaton salts the story with fascinating details that constantly surprise . . . covers bitterly contested historical terrain with flair and an admirable lack of partisanship . . . scrupulously fair on the most controversial episodes, including Greece's painful recent headaches over Eurozone debt and austerity . . . a scholarly and elegant introduction to this beguiling country'
Sean McMeekin, *Literary Review*

'This book explores the history, not of a Greece of romantic or philhellenic imagination, but the reality of the country as it has become today . . . Beaton's account instantly becomes the single most outstanding treatment of its subject' Professor Robert Holland

'A wonderfully engaging narrative . . . It is a superb achievement and to be recommended to anyone with even the most rudimentary interest' Professor Kevin Featherstone

'His book is indispensable for anyone trying to understand a country whose strategic importance astride two of the three traditional routes to the East can only impinge more decisively on the rest of Europe as the twenty-first century develops' *Country Life*

Copyrighted Material

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Roderick Beaton is Emeritus Koraes Professor of Modern Greek and Byzantine History, Language and Literature at King's College London. He is a three-time winner of the Runciman Award, for his books *George Seferis: Waiting for the Angel – A Biography*, *An Introduction to Modern Greek Literature* and *Byron's War: Romantic Rebellion, Greek Revolution*, which was also shortlisted for the Duff Cooper Prize. He is a Fellow of the British Academy, and in 2019 was made a Commander of the Order of Honour of the Hellenic Republic, in recognition of his 'distinguished contribution to the study of Modern Greek and Byzantine History, Language and Literature'.

Copyrighted Material

RODERICK BEATON

Greece

Biography of a Modern Nation



PENGUIN BOOKS

Copyrighted Material

PENGUIN BOOKS

UK | USA | Canada | Ireland | Australia
India | New Zealand | South Africa

Penguin Books is part of the Penguin Random House group of companies
whose addresses can be found at global.penguinrandomhouse.com



First published by Allen Lane 2019
Published in Penguin Books 2020
001

Copyright © Roderick Beaton, 2019

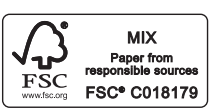
The moral right of the author has been asserted

Typeset by Jouve (UK), Milton Keynes
Printed and bound in Great Britain by Clays Ltd, Elcograf S.p.A.

A CIP catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

ISBN: 978–0–141–98652–4

www.greenpenguin.co.uk



Penguin Random House is committed to a sustainable future for our business, our readers and our planet. This book is made from Forest Stewardship Council® certified paper.

Copyrighted Material

In loving memory of my parents, who first introduced me to Greece, and supported me as I went on to discover more and more wonders of the Greek world

Janet Mary Beaton
24 July 1922–15 April 2018

Duncan MacGillivray Beaton
13 September 1922–7 April 2018

Αἰωνία ἡ μνήμη

Copyrighted Material

Copyrighted Material

Τα μάτια μου δεν είδαν τόπον ενδοξότερον από τούτο το αλωνάκι.

My eyes have seen no land more glorious than this small threshing-floor.

Dionysios Solomos, *The Free Besieged* (1826–9)

Those principles which are now in action in Greece will gradually produce their effect, both here and in other countries . . . I cannot . . . calculate to what a height Greece may rise. Hitherto it has been a subject for the hymns and elegies of fanatics and enthusiasts; but now it will draw the attention of the politician.

Lord Byron, speaking at Missolonghi, Greece (1824)

A nation? says Bloom. A nation is the same people living in the same place . . . Or also living in different places.

James Joyce, *Ulysses* (1922)

A people that has within it a spirit, when it reaches the final depth of despair, finds the strength to react against itself. It reacts suddenly without any warning and without at all preparing the ground . . . The time is ripe for bold pioneers.

Giorgos Theotokas, *Free Spirit* (1929)

Copyrighted Material

Copyrighted Material

Contents

List of Illustrations and Photographic Acknowledgements xi
List of Maps xv
Names, Dates and Titles xvii
To the Reader xix

Introduction: The Nation and its Ancestors 1

1. East Meets West? (1718–1797) 15
2. A Seed is Sown (1797–1821) 43
3. Born in Blood (1821–1833) 74
4. First Steps (1833–1862) 112
5. Ideals and Sorrows of Youth (1862–1897) 142
6. Military Service (1897–1913) 170
7. The Self Divided (1913–1923) 199
8. Starting Over (1923–1940) 233
9. Meltdown (1940–1949) 268
10. Uncle Sam's Protégé (1949–1974) 306
11. Coming of Age in Europe (1974–2004) 343
12. Midlife Crisis? (2004–) 375

Notes 399
Sources and Further Reading 423
Acknowledgements 439
Index 443

Copyrighted Material

Copyrighted Material

List of Illustrations and Photographic Acknowledgements

Every effort has been made to contact all copyright holders. The publishers will be happy to correct any errors or omissions brought to their attention in future editions of this book.

1. Ali Tepedelenli, Pasha of Yanya [Ioannina], known as Ali Pasha. Illustration from Thomas Smart Hughes, *Travels in Sicily, Greece & Albania* (London, 1820). (*Getty Research Institute*)
2. Rigas Velestinlis, also called Pheraios. (*National Historical Museum, Athens*)
3. The tricolour banner of Rigas's Hellenic Republic, 1807. (*Library of the Romanian Academy of Sciences (Ms. Gr. 928, f.275v))*
4. Adamantios Korais (Coray). (*National Historical Museum, Athens*)
5. *Karaiskakis' trophy from Arachova*. Watercolour by Athanasios Iatridis, 1827. Benaki Museum, Athens. (*Bridgeman Images*)
6. Theodoros Kolokotronis. Pencil sketch by Karl Krazeisen, 14 May 1827. (*National Gallery-Alexandros Soutzos Museum, Department of Prints and Drawings, Athens*)
7. Count Ioannis Kapodistrias. Oil painting by Sir Thomas Lawrence, 1818–19. Royal Collection Trust. (*Copyright © Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, 2018/Bridgeman Images)*
8. *Entry of King Otto of Greece into Nauplia on 6 February 1833* (detail). Oil painting by Peter von Hess, 1835. Neue Pinakothek, Munich. (*Copyright © Blauel Gnamm/Artothek*)

Copyrighted Material

9(a). King Otto of Greece as a young man. Benaki Museum, Athens. (*De Agostini/Getty Images*)
9(b). King Otto of Greece. Daguerrotype, *c.* 1848. (*National Historical Museum, Athens*)
10. Alexandros Mavrokordatos. (*National Historical Museum, Athens*)
11. Ioannis Kolettis. Benaki Museum, Athens, Greece (Gift of Aspasia Botasi and Dora Lauder). (*Bridgeman Images*)
12. *Ideal View of Athens with the Acropolis and the Areios Pagos*. Oil painting by Leo von Klenze, 1846. Neue Pinakothek, Munich. (*Copyright © Blauel Gnamm/Artothek*)
13. *Panorama of Athens*. Lithograph by August Ferdinand Stademann, 1841. Private collection. (*Christie's/Bridgeman Images*)
14. King George I of the Hellenes. (*The Print Collector/Getty Images*)
15. *The Opening of the Corinth Canal*. Oil painting by Konstantinos Volanakis, 1893. (*Collection of Alpha Bank, Athens*)
16(a). Theodoros Diligiannis. Illustration from *The Graphic*, 29 May 1886. (*Look & Learn/Bridgeman Images*)
16(b). Charilaos Trikoupis. Illustration from *The Graphic*, 29 May 1886. (*Look & Learn/Bridgeman Images*)
17. *Panepistimiou Street*. Painting by Paul Mathiopoulos, 1900 – 1910. (*National Gallery-Alexandros Soutzos Museum, Department of Prints and Drawings, Athens*)
18. *Pavlos Melas*. Painting by Georgios Jakobides (Iakovidis), 1904. (*National Historical Museum, Athens*)
19. Pericles Giannopoulos, charcoal drawing by Sophia Laskaridou, 1897. (*Municipal Art Gallery, Kallithea*)
20. Eleftherios Venizelos and King Constantine I of the Hellenes, pictured at the time of the Balkan Wars. (*De Agostini/Getty Images*)
21(a). Serres. Photograph taken during the Balkan Wars. (*King's College London Archives. Reproduced with permission of the Anglo-Hellenic League, Katie Lentakis Collection [AHL Acc3619]*)

Copyrighted Material

21(b). The village of Doxato, near Drama, 1913. (*King's College London Archives. Reproduced with permission of the Anglo-Hellenic League, Katie Lentakis Collection [AHL Acc3619]*)
22. Postcard showing the territory of 'Great Greece', according to the terms of the Treaty of Sèvres, 1920. (*National Historical Museum, Athens*)
23(a). Greek prisoners of war, 1923. (*King's College London Archives. Reproduced with permission of the Anglo-Hellenic League, Katie Lentakis Collection [AHL Acc3619])*
23(b). Greek prisoners of war, 1923. (*King's College London Archives. Reproduced with permission of the Anglo-Hellenic League, Katie Lentakis Collection [AHL Acc3619])*
24. Eleftherios Venizelos. Oil painting by F. Papoulas, 1928. (*Municipal Gallery of Athens Collections/Eleftherios Venizelos Museum*)
25. Ioannis Metaxas. Propaganda photograph, 1939. (*Collection of Marina Petrakis*)
26. *Rebetika*: a *bouzouki* band in the 1930s. From Ilias Petropoulos, *Ρεμπέτικα τραγούδια* [*Rebetika Songs*] (Athens, 1968), plate 41.
27(a). German troops raising the swastika over the Acropolis, 1941. (*World History Archive/Alamy*)
27(b). 'People's Rule' in 'Free Greece'. (*King's College London Archives. League for Democracy in Greece collection [MGA/PH2]*)
28(a). A burnt mountain village. (*King's College London Archives. League for Democracy in Greece collection [MGA/PH1]*)
28(b). Men being rounded up in an Athens 'blocco' during the Occupation. (*King's College London Archives. League for Democracy in Greece collection [MGA/PH1]*)
29. Young soldiers of the Democratic Army. (*King's College London Archives. League for Democracy in Greece collection [MGA/PH5]*)
30. Melina Mercouri in *Never on a Sunday*, 1960. (*United Archives/Alamy*)
31. A tank prepares to crush the gate of the Athens Polytechnic in the early hours of 17 November 1973. Photograph by Aristotelis Sarrikostas. (*AP/Rex/Shutterstock*)

Copyrighted Material

32. Propaganda poster for the regime of the 'Colonels'. (*Private collection*)
33. Konstantinos Karamanlis, 1975. (*AFP/Getty Images*)
34. Andreas Papandreou, 1984. (*Bridgeman Images*)
35. Kostas Simitis, 2003. (*Yves Boucau/AFP/Getty Images*)
36. The Charilaos Trikoupis Suspension Bridge. (*Author photograph*)
37. Archbishop Makarios III. Bronze statue near the Kykkos Monastery. (*Author photograph*)
38. The flag of the 'Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus' overlooking Nicosia. (*Author photograph*)
39. The 'dead zone' that divides Nicosia. (*Author photograph*)
40. *Poverty is the parent of revolution and crime*. Street art by Wild Drawings, Exarcheia, Athens, 2013. (*Mystic Politics*)
41. Alexis Tsipras celebrates his election victory on 25 January 2015 in the 'Propylaea' of the University of Athens. (*Nikos Pilos/laif/eyevine*)

Copyrighted Material

List of Maps

1 (p. xxi). The 'Orthodox commonwealth' in the late eighteenth century, showing centres of Greek population and education, with present-day national frontiers superimposed.
2 (p. xxii). The geographical extent of the Greek nation in Europe, western Asia and the Levant at the end of the nineteenth century, showing regions, towns and cities with Greek-speaking populations. The definition and percentages of these populations were highly contentious at the time (see p. 161). Dates indicate the period of mass exodus.
3 (p. xxiii). The expansion of the Greek state (1832–1947).
4 (p. xxiv). Main sites involved in the Greek Revolution of the 1820s.
5 (p. xxv). Greece and immediate neighbours since 1923.
6 (p. xxvi). Cyprus, divided since 1974.

Copyrighted Material

Copyrighted Material

Names, Dates and Titles

Greek names can be difficult for non-Greeks to pronounce. The problem is compounded because there is no agreed system for representing the sounds of the modern Greek language in the Latin alphabet. Letter-for-letter equivalence worked in antiquity. But since then the pronunciation of Greek has changed, over a period of time when English did not even exist. Rather than trying to reproduce roughly the sounds of the language on the page, I have tried so far as practicable to stay close to the Greek spelling, while avoiding forms that look excessively strange in English.

By applying a few simple rules, you can usually recreate the correct pronunciation of Greek names as they appear in this book:

'ai', 'e' = 'e' (as in 'yet')
'ch' (as in 'loch')
'd' = 'th' (as in 'that' not 'thatch')
'ei', 'i', 'oi', 'y' = 'ee' (as in 'meet')
'g' before 'a', 'o' or 'ou' = 'gh' (like the hard 'g' in Spanish or Dutch)
'g' before 'e' or 'i' = 'y' (as in 'yield')

Position of the stress accent is important too. This is often not predictable, and in written Greek is indicated by an acute accent. To avoid a cluttered appearance I have added these only in the Index, to which the reader may refer for guidance.

Obvious exceptions are those Greek names that have long-established equivalents in English: 'Athens' (not 'Athina'), 'Salonica' (not 'Thessaloniki'), 'Pericles' (not 'Periklis'). Another long-standing convention, followed here, is to represent Greek royal names by their English equivalents: 'George' and 'Constantine', not 'Georgios' and

Copyrighted Material

'Konstantinos'. Older histories often anglicize other given names too: 'John Metaxas', 'George Papandreou'. All these, following more recent custom, I have restored to their Greek forms: 'Ioannis' and 'Georgios' respectively.

Until 1 March 1923 the Orthodox Church and the Greek state continued to use the older, Julian calendar (named after Julius Caesar) while most Western states had adopted the Gregorian calendar (named after Pope Gregory XIII, who introduced it in 1582). Julian dates, commonly referred to as 'Old Style', in the nineteenth century fell twelve days earlier than the equivalent Gregorian ('New Style') dates, and thirteen days earlier in the twentieth century. So in Athens, Christmas Day in the nineteenth century would be celebrated on the equivalent of 6 January. In the twentieth century, up to and including 1922, the equivalent date would be 7 January. Histories written in Greek still regularly use 'Old Style' dates for the period when these were in use, a potential source of confusion. In this book, all dates in the main text are given according to the Western, Gregorian, or 'New Style' calendar. (In the notes, dates of documents follow the source cited, and if in Greek they can be assumed to be 'Old Style'.) Where the 'Old Style' date is significant, or frequently cited, I have alerted the reader to the difference – as in the conventional date for the start of the Greek Revolution in 1821: 25 March, which in western Europe fell on 6 April.

No small part in this story is played by diplomats, particularly British ones. Before the Second World War, only the most illustrious foreign missions were granted the title 'embassies' by the Foreign Office, headed by 'ambassadors'. Until then, Great Britain was represented in Athens by a 'Legation' headed by a 'Minister', strictly speaking a 'Minister Plenipotentiary'. In the text and notes that follow I use the terminology of the period. There is no difference in role between a 'Minister', in this sense, and an 'ambassador'.

Copyrighted Material

To the Reader

I started work on this book in August 2015. Only a month before, Greece had for the third time narrowly avoided a chaotic exit from the Eurozone, with potentially incalculable knock-on effects elsewhere. By the time I had finished it, my own country had embarked on its own exit from the European Union. 'Grexit' had been all but forgotten, while during 2016 'Brexit' was reported to have become the most frequently used new word in British English. But 'Grexit' came first. The Greeks had been the first to face that existential choice. And they had come through to the other side. Greeks in modern times have often been the pioneers – that is one of the arguments of this book.

Writing it, I was always conscious of doing so at a particular historical moment – little more than the blink of an eye between a 'Grexit' that didn't happen and a 'Brexit' whose consequences remain to be seen. That moment is the 'now', or 'today', that often features in the pages that follow. But the genesis and the real heart of this book go back much further.

I have been engaging with Greece and the Greek-speaking world all my adult life – from student days in the shadow of military dictatorship, running the gauntlet of tanks and rooftop snipers in the streets of Athens in the 1970s, all the way to the lecture halls and seminar rooms of King's College London, where I served as Koraes Professor of Modern Greek and Byzantine History, Language and Literature for exactly three decades until the summer of 2018. As a teacher no less than as a student, I have constantly been learning – from peers, colleagues, and particularly from cohorts of students, many of them Greeks themselves. From them I have learned to

Copyrighted Material

appreciate a multitude of different perspectives that have contributed to my own changing and deepening understanding of Greece, and of what it means to be Greek in the modern world.

What has fascinated me so deeply and for so long is not so much the story of the Greek *state* – dramatic and sometimes heart-rending as that story can be – but rather the interplay between the solid historical facts of state-building and the more nebulous complex of ideas, attitudes and aspirations that go to make up the shared consciousness of a *nation*. In order to discover what makes a nation, we have to look farther than to the headline facts of history, beyond the actions and words of leaders, or the graphs and statistics that can capture human activity across groups and populations. The story of a nation must also be the story of how people have thought about themselves, and the world, and their place in it.

This is why I have chosen to call the story told in this book a 'biography' rather than a 'history'. A biography requires long and deep acquaintance with the subject, but also a certain distance. Usually, you don't write the biography of someone you are close to, or a member of your own family. I have no family connection to Greece or Greeks. I write as an outsider, and the distance that that implies has helped to shape this particular way of telling the story. But I do not claim to write dispassionately. I believe – indeed with passion – that Greece and the modern history of the Greek nation *matter*, far beyond the bounds of the worldwide Greek community. If I have done my work at all adequately, by the time you have finished this book you will understand why, and will decide for yourself whether I am right.

Copyrighted Material



The 'Orthodox commonwealth' in the late eighteenth century, showing centres of Greek population and education, with present-day national frontiers superimposed

Copyrighted Material



The geographical extent of the Greek nation in Europe, western Asia and the Levant at the end of the nineteenth century, showing regions, towns and cities with Greek-speaking populations. The definition and percentages of these populations were highly contentious at the time (see p. 161). Dates indicate the period of mass exodus.

Copyrighted Material



The expansion of the Greek state (1832–1947)

Copyrighted Material



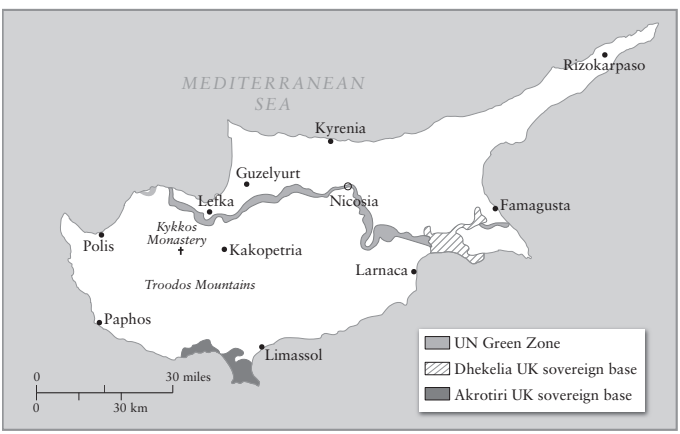
Main sites involved in the Greek Revolution of the 1820s

Copyrighted Material

Copyrighted Material



Greece and immediate neighbours since 1923



Cyprus, divided since 1974

Copyrighted Material

Introduction

The Nation and its Ancestors

Who are the Greeks? What shared experiences, collective memories, aspirations and achievements have shaped a worldwide population of some fifteen million people today? Most of these live in the southeast corner of Europe in two member states of the European Union, Greece and Cyprus, while communities can also be found in all the earth's inhabited continents and are known as the 'Greek diaspora'.

There have been many books asking the question, who *were* the Greeks? That is a question that has preoccupied western European thinkers ever since the Renaissance, when scholars and travellers began to rediscover the literary, philosophical, political and scientific achievements of the civilization that had flourished in the same corner of Europe between three thousand and two thousand years ago. It is an important question, because just about everything that defines 'European' or 'Western' culture today, in the arts, sciences, social sciences and politics, has been built upon foundations laid down by the makers of that ancient civilization, whom we also know as 'Greeks'.

Those long-dead Greeks play a part in this story too, but it is not *their* story. This book begins and ends with the Greek people of today. It explores the ways in which today's Greeks have become who they are, the dilemmas they and generations before them have faced, and the choices that have shaped them subsequently. Above all, this book is about the evolving process of collective *identity*. In the case of Greeks over the last two centuries, it makes sense to call that identity a *national* one, since this has been the period that witnessed the creation and consolidation of the Greek nation state. So let us begin with the nation.

Opinions are divided on just what constitutes a nation. Since the

Copyrighted Material

late twentieth century an influential trend in historical thinking has redefined the nation as by definition a modern phenomenon, a product of the eighteenth-century Enlightenment and the Industrial Revolution. According to this view, you cannot have a nation without modern ideas of the self-governing state in which most of its citizens voluntarily participate. Others have revived the older counter-argument: that communities based upon more or less 'ethnic' lines have always existed in human society – in which case, why should not these, too, be called nations?

The case of the Greek nation polarizes opinion even more than most. According to the first definition, the Greek nation as we know it today, based upon a geographical homeland, shared institutions and participatory democracy, was brought into being by a revolution against the rule of the Ottoman Turks in the 1820s. On the other hand, the Greek language enjoys a continuous recorded history that can be traced back in the geographical area of today's Greece for more than three thousand years. Is not the story of the Greek nation, then, every bit as old?

Either perspective is valid. But the story I have set out to tell in this book is the story of Greece as a *modern* nation. I have chosen, therefore, to understand the term in its narrower, more rigorous sense, and so to begin the narrative with the century that led up to that nation's birth.

Another choice has been to imagine this modern nation as though it were a living person, the subject of a biography. The life of a nation and the lives of individuals present fascinating, perhaps even illuminating, analogies – notably the ideas that bind a nation together are more often than not themselves based on organic metaphors. Let us then suspend disbelief and concede – hypothetically, experimentally – that the Greek nation 'born' out of revolution in the 1820s shares some of the characteristics of a human subject. We can trace the history of that subject just as a biography teases out the life and career of an individual.

A nation, just like an individual, has distant ancestors and a more immediately traceable genealogy, or family tree. In the life of nations, Greece, born in this sense in the early nineteenth century, must be considered still a youngster. And there is one characteristic of

Copyrighted Material

biography, as a genre, that in this case we can happily escape. A nation in the fullness of time may evolve into something else, but there is no reason to expect the story to end in death. All will surely agree on this in the case of Greece. No obituary is to be expected. The biographer is spared the dubious benefit of looking back on a life complete and ended. Think of this book, in this respect at least, as more like a 'celebrity' biography that leaves its subject still in the prime of life and fame. The story does not end with the end of the book.

But first, we need to begin at the beginning, with ancestors, and the complex inheritance that issues from them.

ANCESTORS: ANCIENT HELLENES AND MEDIEVAL ROMANS

None of us knows who our most distant ancestors were. If all modern humans are descended from groups that began to migrate out of Africa more than fifty thousand years ago, then the Greeks must be no exception. Future advances in genetics may reveal to what extent those who speak the Greek language today share genetic material with the builders of the 'classical' civilization of antiquity. In terms of understanding the history of the Greeks in modern times, it really doesn't matter. History on the scale of a few millennia is shaped by such things as environment, actions, events and ideas, not evolutionary biology. What is at stake here is not the literal, biological ancestry of the individuals who make up a population – even if those are the terms in which it is most often expressed – but rather the 'ancestry', in a partly metaphorical sense, of a nation, a state or that complex phenomenon that we call a culture. It is doubtful whether ancient Greek civilization can properly be called a nation, and it certainly was never a state. Nevertheless, Greeks experience a *sense* of kinship with those they call 'our ancient ancestors'. The phrase has become something of a cliché in recent decades, and is widely acknowledged as such. Even so, it sums up a great deal of what continues to define the Greek nation in the modern world.

This sense of kinship was articulated in its most nuanced form by the poet George Seferis, in his speech accepting the Nobel Prize for

Copyrighted Material

Literature in 1963: 'I do not say that we are of the same blood [as the ancient Greeks] – because I have a horror of racial theories – but we still live in the same country and we see the same mountains ending in the sea.'[1] Seferis also laid stress on the continuity of language: the words for 'light of the sun', he pointed out, are almost unchanged from the equivalent words used by Homer almost three thousand years ago. Like most of his generation, Seferis had experienced the horrors unleashed upon the world by the racist dogma of the Nazis in the 1930s and 1940s. It is an *affinity* that he asserts, based upon landscape and the language in which humans have engaged with it over time – an affinity deeply felt, but not a dogma, and not built upon genetic assumptions.

It is not only Greeks who share this perception. How often in the years following the financial crisis that began in 2010 have the cartoonists of the world's media drawn upon classical stereotypes and images in order to give visual expression to the sorry state of a once-great civilization? Images of ancient temples with their gleaming marble riven with cracks, of a euro coin as a badly thrown discus causing havoc, have gained a place in the popular imagination in countries far removed from Greece, often with an edge that is critical, if not downright hostile. Among Greeks themselves, it is the same sense of affinity that lends such passion to calls for the return of the 'Elgin Marbles', or Sculptures of the Parthenon, removed from the Acropolis of Athens by Lord Elgin in the first years of the nineteenth century and since 1817 exhibited in the British Museum in London. These creations by craftsmen of extraordinary skill and imagination who have been dead for two and a half millennia have come to be imagined in their turn, in the memorable words of the film star and popular singer, and later Minister of Culture, Melina Mercouri, as 'our pride . . . our aspirations and our *name* . . . the essence of Greekness'.[2]

This is not something that can be denied, or simply wished away. Some have argued that the gene pool of the ancient Greeks cannot possibly have survived successive migrations and invasions over the centuries. Others dismiss an obsession with ancestors as a way of avoiding the facts of history. But this is to miss the point. We are talking about a *sense* of kinship, a perception, not a set of facts that can

Copyrighted Material

be objectively verified. The sense of affinity with the ancients is itself a historical fact, to be understood and explained. How it came to exist at all, and then to exercise such an enduring hold, is an essential part of the story of how Greece became modern, which is the story of this book.

So used are we, today, to thinking of 'modern Greece' as an offshoot of ancient Greece, it can be hard to realize that for many of the centuries separating classical antiquity from ourselves no such sense of affinity existed among Greek speakers. The people we call 'ancient Greeks' did not call themselves that. The names 'Greek' and 'Greece' derive from Latin: *Graecus* and *Graecia*. It was the Romans, as they conquered most of 'Graecia' in the second century BCE, who made these names famous. Ancient Greeks called themselves 'Hellenes' – the word is almost identical in English and Greek. The lands where Hellenes lived were collectively called Hellas. The same names, in their modern form, are standard in Greek today: the people are *Ellines* (with the stress on the first syllable), the country is either *Ellas* (the older form) or *Ellada*. So what has changed?

The answer is: a great deal. By the fourth century CE, those populations of the eastern Mediterranean hinterlands that spoke and wrote in Greek had been living for hundreds of years under the rule of Rome. When Christianity was adopted as the official religion of the Roman Empire during that century, the use of the term 'Hellenes' in Greek came to be reserved for those Greeks who had died too soon to benefit from the new religion, and could therefore not help being pagans. Before long, and by extension, 'Hellene' came to mean just 'pagan', that is, anyone who was not a Christian. Throughout the Christian Middle Ages, that remained the primary meaning of the word in Greek. With the spread of secular ideas in the eighteenth century, 'Hellene' became predominantly an antiquarian term: the 'Hellenes' were the *ancient* Greeks, whereas living speakers of the Greek language had centuries ago found a different name for themselves. It was a conscious choice, taken during the First National Assembly of the Provisional Greek Government in January 1822, to revive the ancient names: 'Hellenes' for the citizens of the new state that was then fighting for its independence, 'Hellas' for the state itself.[3]

Copyrighted Material

In the same way, the drachma, to which it is often supposed that Greece would return if the country were to leave the Eurozone, is often called 'the world's oldest currency'. The name is as old as you could wish for – but for approximately seventeen centuries before its re-introduction in 1833, not a single drachma had ever been minted. To take another example, Athens in antiquity had fought its way to pre-eminence among the rival Greek city states; the ruined classical temples on the Acropolis at its centre have for long been iconically synonymous with Greece itself. It is an easy assumption to suppose that Athens has always been the capital city. In fact, it became the capital for the first time on 13 December 1834.

Names, too – place names and personal names – often seem to imply a closer kinship than historically exists. Look at any map of Greece, and at least half the names of towns and geographical features can also be found in ancient sources. But many of these were deliberately revived, after independence, to replace the customary names that had been in use for centuries, and which still appear on older maps and in travellers' accounts. On the Gulf of Corinth, for instance, the hard-to-pronounce 'Aigio' has replaced 'Vostitsa' that Lord Byron visited and where a famous conclave of revolutionary leaders took place in 1821. 'Troezene', the birthplace of Theseus in mythology, returned in the 1820s to oust the long-familiar 'Damala', where a medieval French barony had once had its seat. *Old* names have been replaced by *ancient* ones, replacing one history with another. Or take personal names. For a millennium and a half all children of Greek Orthodox parents had been baptized with the names of saints in the Church calendar. It was not until the 1790s that these names came to be paired, or replaced altogether, with the names of famous pagans from antiquity. A Greek today can be called Odysseus or Socrates or Euclid, Penelope or Calliope, and one might suppose these names had run in families ever since ancient times. Not so. This is something else about ancestors: you can pick and choose.

To acknowledge these facts is not, of course, to diminish the immense significance that these ancestors have come to assume in defining Greek collective identity over the last two centuries. Only when you realize the full extent of the choices made by hundreds and thousands of Greeks during those years does the scale of the achievement become

Copyrighted Material

apparent. It was a conscious and, it would seem, a little-contested policy choice, beginning around 1800, to *reassert* kinship with the lost civilization of classical antiquity. It has also been a highly selective one. Think of all those ancient practices that have been entirely airbrushed out: nudity, pederasty, slavery, submission of women, infanticide, paganism, animal sacrifice.

And, as a policy, it has been overwhelmingly successful – as those cartoons of discus-euros and cracked marble columns sadly testify all too well.

It can be difficult enough to live with one famous ancestor. The Greek nation has not one, but two. The second of these has never enjoyed the prestige of the first, at least in western Europe. On the other hand, it is less remote, both in time and perhaps also in the affections of many Greeks. This is the civilization that has been known since the nineteenth century by the label 'Byzantine' – yet another problematic term, since the 'Byzantines' never called themselves that, and among English speakers there is not even agreement on how the word should be pronounced. The Byzantine Empire is usually said to have begun when the Roman emperor Constantine renamed the city of Byzantium, on the European side of the Bosphorus facing Asia, after himself: Constantinople (today's Istanbul, the largest city in Turkey). This was in the year 330 and coincides with the adoption of Christianity. For more than a thousand years after that, Constantine's successors ruled, from the capital city that he had founded, over a Christian empire whose official language and sole medium of education soon became Greek. This is how Greek speakers came to lose their attachment to the old name of 'Hellenes', preferring instead to define themselves simply as 'Romans' (*Romaioi*, later *Romioi*, pronounced *Romyí*) – because politically the empire to which they belonged was the continuation of the Roman Empire in the east. They kept this name even after their empire came to an end in 1453 and Constantinople became, instead, the capital of the Ottoman Turks. For the same reason the modern Greek language was until the early nineteenth century known not as 'Greek' but as 'Romaic'. For a millennium and a half, those whom westerners called 'Greeks' were accustomed to define themselves as 'Romans'.

Copyrighted Material

Throughout much of that time Constantinople was the largest and most prosperous city in Europe, if not the entire world. At its greatest extent the empire reached from North Africa and Italy in the west to the borders of Persia in the east. With the brief exception of Alexander the Great in the fourth century BCE, no Greek speaker had ever ruled over such wide dominions or so many subjects, or would again. Byzantine civilization is often portrayed as intensely spiritual, even ascetic. It is true that its surviving literature, architecture and art are overwhelmingly religious in purpose. But the Byzantines, or at least their elite, enjoyed high standards of literacy and secular education. They were meticulous scholars and sophisticated readers of ancient Greek drama, poetry, philosophy and history. Indeed, it was thanks to Byzantine librarians, copyists and men (and some women) of learning that all of the literature and much of the science of Greek antiquity that we know today came to be preserved, and in due course transmitted to western Europe from the fourteenth century onwards. The Byzantines gloried in the possession of wealth and power such as few who spoke Greek had ever possessed before or have since.

These were all good reasons for Byzantium to exert a strong pull of attraction for the Greek imagination during the centuries after the empire's final destruction in 1453. Another is the institutional continuity of the Orthodox Church, which continued to function without a break through the centuries of Ottoman Turkish rule that followed. By contrast, no *institution* that began in classical times has a similarly continuous existence. The modern supreme court perpetuates the name of the court of justice in ancient Athens, the Areopagus – but only since 1844. Drama, one of the greatest cultural legacies of the ancient Greeks, has never been more alive than it is today, and revivals of Greek tragedies and comedies thrill audiences in London and other major cities. But there is no continuous history of performance, neither in Greece nor anywhere else.

When national institutions were being set up, beginning in the 1820s and 1830s, the models could perfectly well have been drawn from the eastern Roman Empire, and backed by a religious tradition shared by most Greek speakers at the time. Instead, it was only later that Byzantium began to emerge as a role model for the modern nation state to emulate. That was another choice that had defining

Copyrighted Material

consequences. Byzantium had to wait until the second half of the nineteenth century to come into its own, as the second most illustrious ancestor after the ancients.

DESCENDANTS: WESTERN HELLENES OR EASTERN *ROMIOI*?

For at least a century and a half these two illustrious ancestors, the ancient and the Byzantine, have jostled uneasily together in the national imagining. There have been various attempts made at a precarious synthesis, sometimes called 'Helleno-Christian civilization'. But that terminology was hijacked by the military junta of the late 1960s and early 1970s and ever since has been tarnished beyond use. Ancient Greece and Byzantium were two civilizations so different from one another that it is hard even to think of them at the same time.

The consequence of looking back simultaneously towards two such different ancestors has been a remarkable doubling, or perhaps better a splitting, of identity. The modern language has not one but two words to describe a person as 'Greek': 'Hellene' and '*Romios*' (*Romioi* in the plural). When it comes to translation, both have the same meaning. But they are not interchangeable. 'Hellene' (*Ellinas*) is the standard term. Ever since 1822 it has been used in all official contexts. Indeed the official name for the Greek state in English is the 'Hellenic Republic'. '*Romios*', on the other hand, appears on no passport or official document. Increasingly, since the early nineteenth century, it has become the *unofficial*, more intimate way for Greeks to refer to themselves – and, more often than not, *among* themselves too. 'Hellene' is the outward-facing term, it defines the Greek for the outsider. '*Romios*' carries an emotional weight. The poet Kostis Palamas, writing at the beginning of the twentieth century, detected in the very word 'something poetically and musically charged', 'something soaring, that fills us with youthful vigour, something ethereal even'.[4] This is an understanding tacitly shared and appreciated by *insiders*. It is nobody else's business. When Melina Mercouri, in the days before she became Minister of Culture in a socialist government, was stripped

Copyrighted Material

of her Greek citizenship by the military junta, she recorded in song her scorn for the petty bureaucrats who had dared to make out 'that I'm no longer a *Romia*'. The point of the song-lyric is that citizenship may be conferred or taken away, but one's identity as a *Romia* or *Romios* is inalienable. It exists beyond a threshold where officialdom has any right to interfere or can even reach.

It has sometimes been suggested that each of these overlapping but distinct identities, as 'Hellene' and '*Romios*', can be mapped onto cultural traits or patterns of behaviour. So when Greeks think of themselves as 'Hellenes', they are apt to have in mind elites and official culture, to identify with Western Europe in their politics and cultural preferences (admiring classical music, for example), to embrace a secular outlook and rational ways of thinking. When they think of themselves as '*Romioi*', on the other hand, they do so in order to emphasize intimacy and informality, to identify with traditional forms of culture linked more immediately to the Balkans and the Middle East (admiring *rebetika*, for example, a musical style with its roots in the traditions of the Levant), to embrace a religious outlook, spontaneity and emotional ways of thinking.[5]

It is not that individuals can be pigeon-holed as belonging to one category or the other. Rather, *both* identities are experienced by the same individual, perhaps in different but rarely in fixed proportions. It is no accident that Melina Mercouri has been mentioned twice in this Introduction: once as the charismatic champion of the return of the 'Elgin Marbles' to Greece, a quintessentially 'Hellenic' choice, and once as the gutsy proponent of a 'Romaic' identity that contemptuously defies the bureaucratic categories of the Western mindset.

As these examples have already begun to show, the duality between ancient and Byzantine ancestors encourages, or reflects, a far deeper duality of thought and perception. Does Greece (do Greeks) belong to the East or to the West? The actual geographical space in which the two ancestor civilizations flourished was not so very different. But in geopolitical terms we always think of ancient Greece as belonging to the West. No doubt this is because of its influence on Rome and then, much later, on the Renaissance. Byzantium, on the other hand, was always the *eastern* half of the Roman Empire. Constantinople was (and is) the pre-eminent centre of the *eastern* Orthodox Church, from

Copyrighted Material

which the western Catholic Church split off in 1054. To identify with Byzantium is to identify with an Orthodox tradition that today is shared predominantly with Russia, with most but not all of the Balkan states, as well as with Moldova, Ukraine and Georgia.

Samuel Huntington, in his influential book *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of the World Order*, published in 1996, noted the paradox: 'Greece is not part of Western civilization, but it was the home of Classical civilization which was an important source of Western civilization.'[6] In fact, Greece *is* part of Western civilization, for the very simple reason that over the last two hundred years Greeks have determined that it should be. But as the double inheritance from its ancestors shows, Greece does not belong *only* to the West. It belongs also to the East. This is part of the same duality and is not reducible to a single proposition. It is not 'either/or', but 'both/and'.

It is quite true, as the author of an insightful introduction to the subject summed it up in 2015, partly in response to Huntington, that in its two-hundred-year history as a nation state, 'Greece never seriously considered abandoning the West'.[7] Every lasting political decision, just about every official action and every democratic choice made since the 1820s, has affirmed the westward alignment of Greece – and in the fullness of time also of the Republic of Cyprus. But we should not overlook the cost of this repeated affirmation. More often than not, the argument has been won only after internal conflict and by the narrowest of margins. During the 1820s and again in the 1940s, Greeks killed one another in civil wars that were fundamentally about this issue. Scars such as that are not easily healed.

During the Balkan wars of the 1990s, when the former Yugoslavia fragmented along the lines of its pre-communist religious divisions, Greek public opinion sided overwhelmingly with the Orthodox Serbs. Sometimes official government policy did too, in a rare break from solidarity with the West. Then as recently as the spring and early summer of 2015 the government of the Coalition of the Radical Left (known in Greek as SYRIZA), led by Alexis Tsipras, seriously considered an alternative alignment with Vladimir Putin's Russia, if Greece had been unable to remain within the Eurozone. If the nation has always ended up aligned (more or less) with the West, it has never done so unanimously or without tremendous cost, as these instances

Copyrighted Material

illustrate. The story of the ancestors reveals why this should be. When circumstances have forced a binary choice, either answer is bound to ride roughshod over a sizeable portion of the nation's deepest allegiances.

Given this history, it would be unwise to assume that the decision must always go the same way in the future.

FAMILY TREE

Distant ancestors are important as role models, points of reference against which to measure up. In addition, a nation, just like an individual, can trace its origin back through the equivalent of a family tree. There is a genealogy that can be reconstructed through the 'hidden centuries', as one recent historian has called them, separating the collapse of the Byzantine Empire from the first stirrings that would lead to the formation of the Greek nation state.[8]

Continuity through those centuries was provided by the Greek language, both in speech and as a medium of education, and by the Orthodox Church. Those two essential ingredients of a modern nation were already in place, with a long tradition behind them, before the eighteenth century. But what about the political and cultural systems under which Greek-speaking Orthodox Christians lived during those centuries? There were several different ones, and the part played by Greek speakers in each of them was different.

The Byzantine Empire continued to exist until 1453. But its collapse had begun two and a half centuries earlier. The decisive blow that shattered the political unity of the Greek-speaking Christian world of Byzantium came not from the East, or from Islam, but from the Catholic West. In 1204 the knights of the Fourth Crusade, strapped for the cash they needed to reach the Holy Land, turned aside from their objective and ended up attacking Constantinople instead. In the name of a holy war, the richest and most populous city of medieval Christendom was sacked by Christians. In the words of Steven Runciman, author of a classic history of the Crusades, 'There was never a greater crime against humanity than the Fourth Crusade.'[9] Eight hundred years after the event, in June 2004, Pope John

Copyrighted Material

Paul II delivered a historic apology for the event to his counterpart, Patriarch Bartholomew of the Orthodox Church.

The Byzantines would regroup and recapture their capital in 1261. But what had been broken could not be mended. From 1204 onwards, Greek-speaking Orthodox Christians had to get used to living in a fragmented world, ruled over by masters who were usually in deadly competition with one another. Some Greek speakers remained the subjects of the Byzantine emperor or his local vassals, who were Orthodox for as long as they lasted. Others came under French or Italian jurisdictions, which were Roman Catholic. More and more of them, as time went on, came to be absorbed by conquest into the ever-expanding Muslim empire of the Ottoman Turks.

In Constantinople and a steadily decreasing amount of its hinterland, from 1261 to 1453, there was the 'rump' state of Byzantium itself. Isolated dependencies also existed for different periods of time: to the west the 'Despotate of Epiros' (the northwestern part of today's Greece), to the south the 'Despotate of the Morea' (the medieval and later name for the Peloponnese), and to the east the 'empire of Trebizond' on the southern shore of the Black Sea, which lasted the longest, until 1461. During the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries these last Byzantine outposts, including the capital, Constantinople, were no more than city states, and by this time less powerful or wealthy than the great Italian maritime city states of Venice and Genoa with which they had to compete.

Elsewhere, the descendants and successors of the Crusaders ruled. In the Peloponnese, until the Byzantines temporarily recaptured it, an independent state flourished for more than a hundred years in the thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries, under the sway of a colonizing French nobility. Far to the east, the island of Cyprus with its Greek-speaking Orthodox population had come into the possession of Crusaders even before 1204. There the French Lusignan dynasty ruled over the 'Kingdom of Cyprus and Jerusalem' down to 1489, when control passed to Venice for almost a century until the Ottoman conquest of 1571. The Venetians also held Crete from 1211 to 1669 and kept control of the Ionian islands, to the west of the Greek mainland, until the end of the Venetian Republic in 1797.

Crete under the Venetians, especially during the sixteenth and early

Copyrighted Material

seventeenth centuries, saw an extraordinary flourishing of the arts. A distinctive school of religious painting emerged. Plays and poems were written in the contemporary Cretan dialect of Greek; performances took place in the main towns. In these works the spirit of the Italian Renaissance met the local vernacular tradition – just as was happening in the plays of Shakespeare and his contemporaries in England at exactly the same time. Venetian Crete gave the world the painter Dominikos Theotokopoulos, better known in the West as El Greco. Candia (the modern Heraklion), capital of Crete, was as civilized a city as any in Europe in the early seventeenth century. Cretan aristocrats, merchants and artisans identified with their island and with its composite Greek and Italian way of life.

Lastly, there was the Ottoman Empire itself. Ottoman expansion across the Bosphorus into Europe had begun during the 1340s – ironically enough in the form of mercenaries recruited by one side against the other in a Byzantine dynastic war. By 1669 the vast majority of Greek speakers had become a subject people within the Ottoman Empire. As such they were excluded from many privileges allowed only to Muslims and liable to special taxes and prohibitions. But they were not systematically persecuted in the way that 'heretics' were in medieval and early modern Europe. The Ottomans never sought to impose uniformity on their subjects. Under the sultans, Orthodox Christians educated in the Greek language rose to become an aristocracy and an elite that would wield considerable power and influence within the Ottoman system – without thereby losing anything of their distinct religious identity.

These, then, are the political and cultural antecedents of the Greek nation state – its genealogy or 'family tree'. Just like any real family tree, this one includes its 'black sheep' – those whom later generations might rather prefer to forget. The legacy of Crusaders from the west, or of an Ottoman civilization imposed by conquest from the east, may not be much prized by most Greeks today, particularly when compared to the more distant glories of ancient Greece or Byzantium. But like it or not, these and other byways of late medieval and early modern history would play at least as large a part in the formation of the modern Greek nation. The story of how that came about begins in the early eighteenth century.

Copyrighted Material

1

East Meets West?

1718–1797

The Greek nation state would be born out of a series of encounters between Christian Europe and the Ottoman Empire, from whose body it would literally be torn. These began during the period of relatively peaceful co-existence between these traditionally embattled adversaries.

Ottoman expansion into Europe had come to an end with the second siege of Vienna in 1683. However, peace did not break out immediately. The Austrians and the Venetians would each fight two more wars against the Ottomans, and the Russians one, before a relatively stable, defensible and more or less mutually agreed set of boundaries would be established to mark off Muslim Turkey from Christian Europe. These boundaries were consolidated by the Treaty of Passarowitz, signed between the Habsburgs and the Ottomans in July 1718.

To the west, the Adriatic and Ionian seas marked the limits of the Ottoman Empire. To the north, natural boundaries were formed by the river Danube, from Belgrade where its course turns eastwards, and then by the Black Sea into which it flows. On the European side of each of these three natural barriers lay three buffer zones, or borderlands. The first of these was formed by the seven Ionian islands to the west of the Greek peninsula, from Corfu in the north to Cerigo (ancient and modern Kythera) in the south. The second consisted of the principalities of Wallachia and Moldavia to the north of the Danube. The third was made up of the northern shores of the Black Sea and their hinterland. In each of these borderlands, Greek-speaking Orthodox Christians occupied elite positions and enjoyed the benefits of wealth and education. It was in these borderlands, too, that the first interactions between East and West took place.

Copyrighted Material

BORDERLANDS

In the Ionian islands, Venetian rule had been established in the aftermath of the Fourth Crusade and was still continuing. In the eighteenth century, conditions there remained very much as they had been in Venetian Crete until the Ottoman conquest, completed in 1669. Indeed many Cretans of the upper classes, who had had a stake in the Renaissance-inspired culture of their native island, had since found refuge there. Almost everyone permanently settled in the islands by this time professed the Orthodox faith and spoke the local dialect of Greek in daily life. But the official language was Italian. Sons of the aristocracy were sent to be educated at schools and universities in Italy. In this way, Western ideas began to filter through to the better-off sections of society during the course of the century. This education was generally available only to the landed gentry, so it was not especially likely to lead to ideas of revolutionary change. The primary loyalties of educated Ionians during the eighteenth century were to their native island, to the Orthodox Church and to the Most Serene Republic of Venice.

The second borderland, the 'Danubian principalities' of Wallachia and Moldavia, today forms part of Romania. Here, there was no significant Greek-speaking *native* population. Most of the inhabitants were Orthodox Christians who spoke the Latin-derived language that we know today as Romanian and was then called 'Vlach' or 'Wallachian'. The Treaty of Passarowitz in 1718 confirmed Ottoman sovereignty, but not direct rule. Instead, the sultans appointed trusted proxies, 'princes' drawn from the wealthiest and most highly educated of their Orthodox Christian subjects established in Constantinople. This metropolitan elite was a kind of quasi-aristocracy that had grown up in the service of the Ecumenical Patriarchate of the Orthodox Church. For that reason its members became known collectively as 'Phanariots', from the name of the district of the city where the Patriarchate was (and indeed continues to be) housed. Irrespective of their mother tongue, all these people had been educated in the Greek language. In that sense the Phanariots could be thought of as 'Greek', even though in modern, 'ethnic' terms many were not.

Copyrighted Material

Increasingly, from the late seventeenth century, this group came to be trusted with important offices of state in the Ottoman system, especially those involving a knowledge of languages and a high degree of education. In an age when expansion by military means had given way to the new art of diplomacy, there was a need for a suitably qualified corps of diplomats. Often given the title of *dragoman*, or 'interpreter', these versatile linguists who were also Orthodox Christians became increasingly embedded in the Ottoman system of governance through the course of the eighteenth century.

For a little over a hundred years, from 1711 until the outbreak of the Greek Revolution in 1821, with only brief interruptions during times of war, Moldavia and Wallachia would be ruled by a succession of Phanariot princes. Competition for these offices was intense, and reigns tended to be short. None of his successors would last as long as Nikolaos Mavrokordatos, who after a short period of office in Wallachia and another in Moldavia, settled down to eleven years of undisturbed rule in Bucharest, the capital of Wallachia, from 1719 until his death in 1730.

Just as the Greek-speaking aristocracy of the Ionian islands was continuously and unproblematically loyal to Venice, so the overwhelming majority of Phanariots throughout the eighteenth century identified with the Ottoman state. Indeed, such was the extent of their ascendancy, and so great the trust placed in them, that for Orthodox Christians the standard route to preferment within the Ottoman system, by the second half of the century, had become the Greek language and the educational institutions organized by wealthy Phanariots and the Orthodox Church.

The third borderland consisted of the Crimea and parts of today's Ukraine. This one does not enter the story until the beginning of the 1770s. From 1768 until 1774 the Russians and the Ottomans were at war. The Russians won, and as a result gained control of the coast and hinterland north of the Black Sea. The same conflict brought disruption to the Danubian principalities, which for the duration passed under Russian control, and devastation to the Peloponnese and some of the islands of the Aegean. At the end of 1769, for the first time, a Russian fleet from St Petersburg sailed via the Straits of Gibraltar into the eastern Mediterranean. A half-hearted attempt by

Copyrighted Material

the Russians to induce their Greek-speaking co-religionists to rise up in their support sparked rebellions in the Peloponnese and Crete. When the Russian fleet withdrew, these were easily crushed. The *Orlofika*, as these events are known in Greek (after the Russian admiral Count Orloff), are often remembered as a kind of proto-national revolution. But self-determination for the Christian inhabitants of the Peloponnese or the islands was never on the table. If the revolts had succeeded, and if the promised military support from Russia had materialized, the local populations would only have exchanged one foreign master for another.

A more significant consequence of the war was the way in which Russia, under Catherine the Great, chose to populate and administer the newly gained territories north of the Black Sea, which at this time came to be named 'New Russia'. Beginning around 1770, the Russian state embarked on an ambitious programme of resettling there the families of Orthodox Christians who had been displaced from their homes in the Ottoman Empire by the fighting. It is estimated that as many as a quarter of a million Ottoman Christians were encouraged to migrate to 'New Russia' during the last quarter of the eighteenth century.[1]

By the end of the century, a large proportion of the trade carried on in southern Russia, across the Black Sea and up the Dnieper river was in the hands of these Greek-speaking subjects of the tsars. Positions of responsibility in the Russian government and army were thrown open to talented members of this immigrant population. It was during the same period, and on Catherine's initiative, that the new towns of Mariupol and Sevastopol were established, with transparently Greek names. The port cities of Odessa on the Black Sea and Taganrog on the Sea of Azov grew up during the same period. Both had large Greek-speaking populations. Catherine and her ministers, during the 1780s, even drew up a grand plan that would have re-established the Christian Orthodox Byzantine Empire with its capital at Constantinople. Had the plan succeeded, it would have left no room for an independent Greek nation state. But by 1792, at the end of yet another war with the Ottoman Empire, although Russian gains had been considerable, it was clear that the Ottoman capital was not for the taking. The plan was quietly abandoned.

Copyrighted Material

Once again, as in the Danubian principalities, the Greek elite in the new territories of southern Russia were incomers from the Ottoman Empire. But this time they were not a *ruling* elite. Their newly acquired wealth and status derived from the entrepreneurial skills fostered by Catherine's policies. This was not an aristocracy but a middle class. In other respects, it functioned like its counterparts in the other two borderlands. This was a group that had every reason to owe its primary loyalty to the state that supported it and made its activities possible – that is to say, in this case, to Russia.

Finally, during the second half of the eighteenth century, a fourth 'borderland' would open up in which Greek-speaking Orthodox Christians could interact with western Europeans. This, unlike the previous three, was not a single space, and not literally situated near a frontier. Rather, it consisted of a series of local communities established by merchants and traders in ports and trading centres across the Christian continent: Venice, Vienna, Trieste, Livorno, Marseille, Paris, Amsterdam. (Others, further afield, would come later.) These scattered Greek-speaking communities were the pioneers of what would later become a worldwide Greek 'diaspora'.

This development, too, was very much a consequence of the Russo-Ottoman war of 1768–74, although it had begun even earlier. The treaty of Küçük Kaynarcı, which brought that war to an end, allowed new trading privileges to Ottoman Christian merchants, who were now entitled to some degree of nominal protection by Russia. But there was an important difference between the merchants newly settled in Russia and those who set up trading centres in the west. In 'New Russia' the Greek trading communities had been brought there and been helped to prosper as a result of a deliberate policy. In the west the same thing was happening quite spontaneously in many different centres. It follows that the communities in western Europe were apt to be politically more independent-minded than their counterparts in Russia – or, for that matter, than the aristocracy of the Ionian islands or the Phanariots in the Danubian principalities. Perhaps predictably, it would be among these communities of merchants in western Europe that the most active preparations for a revolution would come to be made – although not until the very last years of the century.

Copyrighted Material

CROSSING BORDERS: PEOPLE, IDEAS, GOODS ON THE MOVE

These, then, were the four borderlands where interaction between Christian Europe and the Muslim empire of the Ottomans took place during the eighteenth century. In each of them, Orthodox Christians who spoke Greek occupied elite positions.

Individual members of these elites were extraordinarily mobile, and not only along the trajectories that might have been expected: Ionian islanders to and from Venice, Phanariots between the Danubian principalities and Constantinople, settlers and merchants between their new homes and their native provinces. A glance at the careers of some of the most famous of these men reveals a remarkable mobility, at a time when travel over long distances was invariably slow and uncomfortable, sometimes also hazardous. Take the case of Evgenios Voulgaris. Born into an aristocratic family in Corfu in 1716, Voulgaris went on to study, write and teach at Arta in Epiros, Venice, Ioannina, Kozani, the self-governing Orthodox monastic community of Mount Athos, Salonica, Constantinople, Jassy (capital of Moldavia) and the German city of Leipzig. From there, now under the patronage of Catherine the Great, Voulgaris went on to become one of the first Orthodox bishops to be consecrated in the 'New Russian' lands north of the Black Sea. His last years were spent at Catherine's court at St Petersburg, where he died at the age of ninety. In this way Voulgaris's restless progress encompassed in turn each of the three borderlands between Europe and the Ottoman Empire, as well as European centres such as Venice and Leipzig, the Ottoman capital itself and several of its provinces in southeast Europe.

The world through which people like Voulgaris moved in the eighteenth century has been characterized in the twenty-first century as an 'Orthodox commonwealth'.[2] That is to say, a sense of commonality was based on a shared religion and a shared education in the Greek language. This 'commonwealth' had no single geographical centre. Its heartland could be described as the southeastern corner of Europe, known today as the Balkans, but it was sustained by links deep into Russia in one direction and into Anatolia and parts of the

Copyrighted Material

Middle East in the other. Under its umbrella came together a broad mix of peoples who would later go on to forge distinct and often competing national identities of their own: Serbs, Bulgarians, Romanians, Moldovans, Ukrainians and (some, but not all) Albanians, as well as Greeks. The collective identity of this 'commonwealth', loose though it was, was capable of transcending the different political loyalties of the different elites of the borderlands.

There are two transforming achievements associated with this commonwealth during the eighteenth century. One of these is the development of education, along with the circulation of printed books in modern Greek and the dissemination of secular learning adapted and translated from the West. The other is the expansion of trade. Both have been seen, from the perspective of later national history, as precursors that paved the way for the Revolution of the 1820s. But it is not as simple as that.

What has come to be known as the 'Greek Enlightenment' was essentially a process of dissemination of ideas eastwards and southwards from France, Britain and the German states, with gathering momentum during the second half of the century. Much of what was published, or circulated in manuscript, consisted of translations or adaptations, particularly of scientific and philosophical works. It is worth asking how enlightened *were* these 'enlighteners'. It is only in retrospect that they have acquired this name, since the 1940s. Most of them believed that the sun revolves around the earth, as their Church still taught. The first exposition of the physics of Galileo and Newton in Greek, ironically enough, and suitably hedged about, comes from a future bishop of the Russian new territories, Nikiphoros Theotokis, in a book published in Leipzig in 1766. It was not until very late in the century that anyone writing in Greek began to question the truth of revealed religion, or criticized the Church as an institution – and even then only rarely.[3] This was in marked contrast to the Enlightenment in France. Indeed, very many of these 'enlighteners' were themselves in some form of holy orders – unsurprisingly, since the great patron of these early advances in Greek education in the eighteenth century was the Orthodox Church itself. When it came to politics, some were reformers and many were interested in political theory. But none was in any sense a democrat, still less a revolutionary.

Copyrighted Material

Exemplary, in many ways, for those who came later, was Nikolaos Mavrokordatos, whom we met earlier as one of the first, and the longest-reigning, among the Phanariot princes of Wallachia and Moldavia. His father had been educated abroad, in Italy; he himself was unusually little-travelled. Like his father, in addition to his native modern Greek, Nikolaos was proficient in ancient Greek, Latin, Italian, French, Ottoman Turkish, Arabic and Persian. To these, late in his life, he added Hebrew. As a ruler he introduced to southeast Europe the model of the 'enlightened despot', overhauling the ancient feudal system and encouraging the foundation of schools. Mavrokordatos was truly a philosopher-prince. Among his surviving works are a book of maxims, written in response to the more famous ones by the seventeenth-century French nobleman La Rochefoucauld. He was also the author of a treatise on the art of ruling. Essays by Mavrokordatos praise books and reading, and condemn the vice of smoking. A long disquisition on contemporary manners has been hailed by some as the first 'modern Greek' novel.[4]

If there was ever truly a Greek 'Enlightenment', it made no original contribution to philosophy or science. These pioneers may not have made any detectable contribution to the Europe-wide movement. But they did make one very important discovery, one that would come to make an enormous impact within their own sphere. This was the discovery of *themselves*.

It started with geography. Geographical treatises written in modern Greek, based largely on Western sources, began to appear, the first in 1716, the second in 1728. The purpose of the writers was avowedly educational, and the scope of these works was the whole world. But when they came to adapt the descriptions, which they found in their sources, of a land called '*Graecia*', they felt bound to draw on sources available to them and familiar in *their own language*: the chronicles of the Byzantine Empire.

The result was a curious hybrid of geography and history, of radically different modern Western and medieval Eastern ways of looking at the same things. By the time that Grigorios Phatzeas published his *Geographical Grammar* (freely adapted from an English work of the late seventeenth century) in Venice in 1760, the readers of his book found themselves named indiscriminately as 'Romans', 'Hellenes'

Copyrighted Material