

BYZANTIUM AND  
THE MODERN  
GREEK IDENTITY

DAVID RICKS AND  
PAUL MAGDALINO

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GREEK IDENTITY

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# BYZANTIUM AND THE MODERN GREEK IDENTITY

edited by

David Ricks and Paul Magdalino

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# Contents

Editors' preface	vii
1. From Christian Roman emperors to the glorious Greek ancestors <i>Alexis Politis</i>	1
2. Aspects of modern Greek historiography of Byzantium <i>George Huxley</i>	15
3. On the intellectual content of Greek nationalism: Paparrigopoulos, Byzantium and the Great Idea <i>Paschalis M. Kitromilides</i>	25
4. Byzantine law as practice and as history in the nineteenth century <i>Caroula Argyriadis-Kervégan</i>	35
5. Byzantium and the Greek Language Question in the nineteenth century <i>Peter Mackridge</i>	49
6. <i>Metamorphoseon permulti libri</i> : Byzantine literature translated into modern Greek <i>Panagiotis A. Agapitos</i>	63
7. 'As <i>Byzantine</i> then as it is today': <i>Pope Joan</i> and Roïdis's Greece <i>Ruth Macrides</i>	75
8. Papadiamantis, ecumenism and the theft of Byzantium <i>Robert Shannan Peckham</i>	91
9. Two cheers for Byzantium: equivocal attitudes in the poetry of Palamas and Cavafy <i>Anthony Hirst</i>	105
10. Byzantium and the novel in the twentieth century: from Penelope Delta to Maro Douka <i>Marianna Spanaki</i>	119

11.	'Our glorious Byzantinism': Papatzonis, Seferis, and the rehabilitation of Byzantium in postwar Greek poetry <i>Roderick Beaton</i>	131
12.	Byzantium in contemporary Greece: the Neo-Orthodox current of ideas <i>Vasilios N. Makrides</i>	141
13.	The restoration of Thessaloniki's Byzantine monuments and their place in the modern city <i>Efrychia Kourkoutidou-Nikolaïdou</i>	155
14.	'Thessaloniki and Life' <i>Nikos Gabriel Pentzikis (translated by Leo Marshall)</i>	169
	Index	181

## Editors' preface

One possible reaction to this volume's title might be surprise that the topic could merit scholarly investigation. Of course Byzantium is (at the very least) part of the Modern Greek identity, it might quite reasonably be said, given that Greece is a country whose population is, almost in its entirety, of the Orthodox Christian confession and whose church architecture, iconography, music and liturgy have deep Byzantine roots. The view, indeed, that it is the Byzantine, and not the ancient, heritage which is modern Greece's central and enduring source of identity has had powerful advocates. One is Mr Zissimos Lorenzatos, who in his eightieth year (1994) brought out two rich volumes of collected essays, many of them revolving around this question; another was the late Philip Sherrard (1924–95), who was for some years Lecturer in the History of the Orthodox Church at King's College London, and who has been one of the most influential advocates of the Byzantine tradition in the West.<sup>1</sup>

Yet the turn towards Byzantium that these writers eloquently represent is itself a self-conscious and distinctively modern phenomenon, a response, *inter alia*, to the challenges of independent Greece; and the colloquium out of which this volume has grown, convened by David Ricks in May 1996, aimed to look dispassionately at a number of aspects of Byzantium which have (depending on the facts of the matter, but also on the scholarly idiom adopted) been inherited, appropriated, or indeed contested in Greece since 1821. Such questions have become familiar in contemporary classical studies, yet this sort of look at the relationship between Byzantium and independent Greece is still relatively uncommon.<sup>2</sup> Attempts to examine the

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In the notes that follow, as in the notes to each paper in this volume, all works in English have London as place of publication unless otherwise indicated; all works in Greek, likewise, have Athens as place of publication unless specified to the contrary.

<sup>1</sup> See Z. Lorenzatos, *Meletes* (2 vols, 1994). Philip Sherrard's lifelong advocacy of the Eastern Church was initiated in *The Greek East and the Latin West: a Study in the Christian Tradition* (1959) and continued in a wealth of publications thereafter.

<sup>2</sup> See for example in the classical field G. Van Steen, 'Aristophanes on the modern Greek stage', *Dialogos*, 2 (1995), 71–90.

Byzantine–modern Greek connection are still unusual – number 2 in the present series, *Digenes Akrites: New Approaches to Byzantine Heroic Poetry*, represents in part an exception – and it is more often the case that such a connection is either assumed or ignored.<sup>3</sup>

Not, of course, that the 1996 colloquium was the first to examine the question in detail: indeed, a Dumbarton Oaks colloquium in 1991 bore the title, 'The Familiar Stranger: Byzantium in Modern Greece'. In one of the papers given there, Panagiotis A. Agapitos identified several relevant areas of cultural activity: historiography, philology and literature, on the one hand; and theology, architecture, the visual arts and music, on the other.<sup>4</sup> The reader of the present volume will find that (for reasons largely beyond the editors' control) it concentrates rather more on the first of these two branches, and the written word accordingly receives disproportionate coverage.<sup>5</sup> One kind of corrective may be supplied, for example, by the catalogue to the 1997 exhibition, 'Photis Kontoglou: Reflections of Byzantium in the Twentieth Century'; but it cannot be emphasized too strongly that this volume hopes to stimulate a broader debate on the question which will take in a wider range of modern Greek *mentalités* and cultural forms than is discussed here.<sup>6</sup>

That said, the present contributions give some idea of just how varied responses to Byzantium on the part of nineteenth- and twentieth-century Greeks have been. The extent of the intellectual revolution whereby Byzantium has come to be placed at the heart of the Greek national identity is brought out in Alexis Politis's opening paper (Chapter 1), where it is shown how deeply Greek intellectuals of the Enlightenment were imbued with a Gibbonian animus against Byzantium as the mere degeneracy of Rome: as a past which might happily be ignored, but which might with greater profit be erased from the national consciousness. Further light on this current of ideas is shed by George Huxley's discussion of the modern Greek historiography of Byzantium (Chapter 2), with its reminder that the development of a scholarly interest in Byzantium from the mid-nineteenth century has its

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<sup>3</sup> Ed. R. Beaton and D. Ricks, Variorum, 1993. This earlier volume attests to one important facet of Byzantium in the modern Greek literary consciousness (not mentioned below in order to avoid duplication): the wish, in independent Greece as in other new nations, to endow the literature with a medieval 'epic'; see here especially the papers by G. Saunier, 'Is there such a thing as an "akritic song"?' Problems in the classification of modern Greek narrative songs' (pp. 139–49) and D. Ricks, '*Digenes Akrites* as literature' (pp. 161–70).

<sup>4</sup> P. A. Agapitos, 'Byzantine literature and Greek philologists in the nineteenth century', *Classica et Medievalia*, 63 (1992), 231–60.

<sup>5</sup> Contributions solicited on local antiquarianism, folklore, liturgical music and painting were, regrettably, never received.

<sup>6</sup> Introduction by N. Zias, with select bibliography (Athens: Foundation for Hellenic Culture, 1997).

own contours and motivations, ones which must be disentangled by today's scholar. And Paschalis M. Kitromilides (Chapter 3) shows how important it is to examine the views of Konstantinos Paparrigopoulos at first hand if we are to understand how, often in a vulgarized form, they came to exert their enormous influence on views of Byzantium in the public mind in the Greek-speaking world.

The next three papers concern important and perhaps neglected areas of modern Greek culture which have engaged with Byzantium. Caroula Argyriadis-Kervégan (Chapter 4) illustrates the extent to which the rich but problematic inheritance of Byzantine law became an object of dispute in nineteenth-century legal theory and practice. Peter Mackridge (Chapter 5) shows how the Byzantine period became one of the key battlegrounds between modern students of the history of the Greek language, in a debate of arcane controversialism yet with quite a wide influence.<sup>7</sup> And Panagiotis A. Agapitos (Chapter 6) draws attention, not without a degree of scholarly disquiet, to a surprisingly flourishing branch of the contemporary book market in Greece: translations of Byzantine works for the general reader.

The five papers that follow concentrate on highly self-conscious literary responses to Byzantium in modern Greek literature. Ruth Macrides (Chapter 7) shows how Roïdis's celebrated and controversial novel *Pope Joan* (1866) stands squarely with the Enlightenment consensus on Byzantium, yet does so in a teasing and playful way. Robert Shannan Peckham (Chapter 8) takes modern Greece's greatest prose writer and one of the two writers most inextricably associated with Byzantium, Alexandros Papadiamantis, and cautions against a critical tendency to see him as an untroubled apologist for the Greek East and for anti-Occidentalism. Anthony Hirst (Chapter 9) contrasts two great poetic contemporaries and rivals, Kostis Palamas and C. P. Cavafy, showing in what different spirits Byzantine history can be quarried by the modern poet.<sup>8</sup> Marianna Spanaki (Chapter 10) compares the presentation of Byzantium in novels by Penelope Delta and Maro Douka, two best-selling women writers, one at each end of the twentieth century, but both of them writing in times of Balkan conflict. Roderick Beaton, finally (Chapter 11), traces the way in which two poets of a later generation, Takis Papatzonis and George Seferis, come to formulate a notion of the 'Byzantine spirit' as something particularly to be valued in a deracinated modern world.

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<sup>7</sup> An up-to-date discussion free of *parti-pris* is now available: G. Horrocks, *Greek. A History of the Language and its Speakers* (1997).

<sup>8</sup> It is striking – even allowing for the fact that the language of modern Greek poetry allows it, in one way, a freer conversation with the Byzantine past – that Byzantium is, by contrast, highly marginal in, say, English poetry. See D. Ricks, 'Simpering Byzantines, Grecian goldsmiths, et al.: some appearances of Byzantium in English poetry', in R. Cormack (ed.), *Through the Looking Glass: British Perceptions of Byzantium* (Variorum, forthcoming).

The last three contributions, each in its own way, take us away from the area of detached intellectual contemplation into the hurly-burly of modern life. Vasilios N. Makrides (Chapter 12) surveys the strong Neo-Orthodox revival of recent years, with particular attention to its two most controversial figures, the theologians Christos Giannaras and Giannis Zouraris. Taking the case of the city of Thessaloniki, the second city of the modern Greek state as it was once the second city of the Byzantine Empire, Eftychia Kourkoutidou-Nikolaïdou (Chapter 13) examines the problems surrounding the restoration of Byzantine monuments which are at once revered houses of worship and archaeological monuments in the crowded environment of a modern city. Finally, as an illustration of how establishing the Byzantine presence in modern Greece is at bottom an act of imagination, the volume includes Leo Marshall's translation of a short text on Thessaloniki by the late Nikos Gabriel Pentzakis (Chapter 14), perhaps the most floridly Byzantinizing of twentieth-century Greek writers.<sup>9</sup>

The ways in which modern Greek culture has conducted a conversation with the ancient Greek past, striving to assimilate, interrogate, emulate, or even annihilate it, have been the subject of many discussions. Just how diverse that culture's responses have been to the Byzantium millennium, understood as the modern nation's past, has less often been discussed, especially in the English-language literature. Yet the centrality of the question emerges even from the limited sample of topics examined in the present volume, which in their different ways attest to modern Greek culture's combativeness, resourcefulness and imagination. The editors dedicate this collection of studies to the memory of Robert Browning, a scholar sympathetic as few others have been to Byzantium and modern Greece alike.

David Ricks and Paul Magdalino

*King's College London and University of St Andrews*  
1998

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<sup>9</sup> See G. Thaniel, *Homage to Byzantium: the Life and Work of Nikos Gabriel Pentzakis* (Minneapolis, 1983).

# From Christian Roman emperors to the glorious Greek ancestors

*Alexis Politis*

We Greeks today have great difficulty in grasping that the sense of the continuity of the nation, as we encounter it in the general climate or at school, was an invention of the mid-nineteenth century, and that the overwhelming majority of Greek intellectuals who envisioned, and saw the realization of, an independent Greek state felt a cultural and political affinity with the ancient Greeks alone, and considered the entire Byzantine period to be part of the history of the Greeks under foreign subjugation, a mere continuation of Roman rule.

Indeed, if one had thought to conduct an opinion poll among men of letters over the first half of the nineteenth century, as in effect K. Th. Dimaras later did on numerous occasions, one would easily have established that most, and among them the most coherent and committed advocates of national independence, would have declared that Greek independence met its end in 338 BC with the battle of Chaeronea, in the wake of which came the various conquerors: the Macedonians, the Romans and, last and worst, the Turks.<sup>1</sup> The War of Independence and the new state had as their ideological basis the claim of succession to the glorious ancient past: all their symbols, and even the name of the inhabitants of the country who rose in arms, were accommodated to this claim. Ancient history and culture were all-pervasive in the world of letters before the war, and the Romantic conception of a Greek Byzantium and of the continuity of the nation only took root much later – at least a generation or so after Paparrigopoulos and

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<sup>1</sup> See generally C. Th. Dimaras, *La Grèce au temps des lumières* (Geneva, 1969), *Neoellinikos Diafotismos* (1977), *Ellinikos romantismos* (1982), *Istorika frontismata* (ed. P. Polemi, 1992). For attitudes to the Macedonians see briefly my *Romantika chronia. Ideologies kai nootropies 1830–1880* (1993), 40–43.

Zambelios (discussed by George Huxley and Paschalis M. Kitromilides elsewhere in the present volume – Chapters 2 and 3) – and without ever supplanting the ancient heritage.

All this is well known, however it may be played down in the school curriculum, let alone in the ideological make-up of the average educated Greek. But one question is still unanswered: just when did this sense of the direct succession of the modern Greeks from the ancients – that is, without the mediation of Byzantium – come to be formed? And with what ideological tendencies are we to connect it?

I have mentioned the opinions of the learned. For the illiterate and the inhabitants of rural areas, information is minimal. Its very paucity, however, is, I believe, testimony in itself: we are not talking about lost evidence, evidence which was not collected when it could still have been, but of evidence which never existed. The rural population had in its world picture only a dim idea of the past, for it lived the sense of time through the annual cycle of sowing and harvest or of the life cycle: the linear development of time, of such significance for us, was but rarely visible, and then merely a reflection of things known by hearsay with no wider importance.<sup>2</sup>

Let us begin with a passage by John Cam Hobhouse, a comment on the striking presence of the ancients in the texts of the revolutionary marches; it condenses first-hand experience and knowledge of the texts:

There may appear a triteness in reminding the Greeks of Leonidas; but the truth is, that of him, and of the other heroes of antiquity, the generality of the people have but a very confused notion, and that very few of them trace the period of their former glory farther back than the days of the Greek Emperors. Those who are most fond of recurring to past times, dwell on the power and merits of those Princes, and begin their history with the great Constantine, the Emperor of the Greeks, (Ὁ Μέγας Κωνσταντῖνος, ὁ βασιλεὺς τῶν Ῥωμαίων). All their hopes are directed towards the restoration of the Byzantine kingdom, in the person of any Christian, but more particularly a Christian of their own church, and I believe that they have never for an instant entertained the project of establishing an independent confederacy on the model of their ancient republics. Their views have naturally been turned towards Russia for more than half a century, and everyone is acquainted with their two desperate attempts to create a diversion in favour of that power in the heart of European Turkey.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> This holds even for matters closer to the rural experience such as banditry and *armatolismos*: see my 'Katagrafes proforikis istorias, 1824 (Kleftes kai armatoloi)' in *I Epanastasi tou 1821, Meletes sti Mnimi tis Despoinas Themeli-Katifori* (1994), 43–61. What Konstantinos Paparrigopoulos records about 'popular feeling' with respect to history (see his *Istorikai pragmateiai* [1888], 201, and Dimaras, *Konstantinos Paparrigopoulos* [1986], 383–4) consists either of learned views or, in the case of Vlachavas, of later embroideries.

<sup>3</sup> *A Journey through Albania and the Other Provinces of Turkey* (1813), 588.

Fifteen years later, in early 1824, a comparable witness, this time an American named Breck, writing to an unknown correspondent, tries to explain why he is not a Philhellene. Having observed that the ancient Greeks had been for the most part slaves, that the country had been for centuries subjugated by a series of conquerors and that its racial composition had changed, that the ancient masterpieces were the work of a tiny nucleus of free men, he concludes:

The modern Greeks know nothing of Thucydides, Aristotle, Solon and other worthies of olden times; their traditions go no further than the Byzantine Empire, and their wish is not to be republicans, but to have an Emperor or absolute master of their own religion.<sup>4</sup>

Before we proceed, however, we shall call a third witness, a contemporary of Hobhouse, von Stackelberg:

The fame of the Hellenes is yet alive among them. By that name they describe anything heroic and slightly supernatural, but they are far from seeing themselves as heirs to the glory of those who dwelt there in ancient times. The simple shepherd holds the Greeks to be the ancestors of the Franks, and considers them to have been foreigners and gifted craftsmen who were once lords and masters of the country; and it is thus that he explains the frequent visits by foreign travellers and the importance they ascribe to these relics of ancient civilization. No matter that in this he is refuted by the self-confidence of other Greeks.<sup>5</sup>

We know of course that the identification of the Hellenes with a race of giants was widespread; we know too that the folk equation: 'Hellene = heathen' (or, in this present example: 'Hellene = infidel Frank') derives from Church tradition. 'Ye are not Hellenes,' Kosmas Aitolos would say, 'ye are not impious, heretical, atheistical: ye are pious Orthodox Christians.'<sup>6</sup> But the connection of the Hellenes with the Franks is probably a chance thought: it is unknown to me from elsewhere, and it helps to show just how vague a conception of the past exists among the rural population, varying with circumstance, or according to who is asking the question.

If we try now to relate our three witnesses, we may consider that those populations without access to the modern education of the Enlightenment had but a vague idea of the past, which they connected with Byzantium and differentiated sharply from the ancient, pagan world: this is precisely the

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<sup>4</sup> See D. N. Robinson, *America in Greece* (New York, 1948), 143–4. The letter, dated 22.1.24, is in a library in Philadelphia; I have no further information on Breck, but his democratic and republican views are clear.

<sup>5</sup> M. von Stackelberg, *Der Apollotempel zu Bassae in Arcadien* (Rome, 1826), 14.

<sup>6</sup> See I. B. Menounos, *Kosma tou Aitolou Didaches* (1979), 115–16 and, further, for a still clearer use of Hellene = pagan, p. 298.

view that the Church gives its flock, the view which identifies 'us' with the Christians, which considers as belonging to 'our race' all those who place at the world's apex the Virgin or, at a worldly level, the Ecumenical Patriarchate.<sup>7</sup>

Among men of learning, however, and through the ancient Greek language, the Church had no difficulty, at least until the end of the eighteenth century, in sometimes identifying its flock with the descendants of the Hellenes. 'And we, the once great and notable race of the Hellenes': so Samouil Chantzeris from the pulpit of the Patriarchate in the 1760s;<sup>8</sup> or we read in the *Proskynetarion* of the Monastery of the Great Lavra (1770), of 'the worthy descendants of the Hellenes, the *Romaioi*'.<sup>9</sup> But the contradiction was not particularly evident, given that the essential characteristic of 'we' resided not in the past, in descent, but in the present, in faith. This emerges clearly from the *Garden of Graces* by Kaisarios Dapontes.

Encountering in Constantinople some columns from the time of Constantine and Theodosius, Dapontes dubs them 'relics of our sway of yesteryear'. In Samos, relics of an ancient fortress are 'each one, a mirror of the Hellenic valour;/I looked on each and wondered at them and bewailed/our race of today and was full of tears'. Below, an ancient column is 'a wondrous spectacle, a clarion of the valour/of our old forefathers, but also of their wisdom'. Note the subtle but crucial distinction between 'old forefathers' and 'of yesteryear' (literally 'of the day before yesterday': *prochthesinis*). In one more passage, finally, in which Dapontes speaks of the villages of Samos as all being Christian ones (no Jews, Turks, Armenians, Franks, Lutherans: Orthodoxy everywhere), it is clear that race and faith are one, that 'we' are the Orthodox.<sup>10</sup>

We should bear in mind, then, that the link with classical times was by no means dominant: all the historical works written or available in the Greek-speaking world until the third quarter of the eighteenth century (apart from

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<sup>7</sup> 'An ornament of the Orthodox race' is how the learned monk Anthimos Olymptotis describes the Virgin at the end of the eighteenth century: cf. MS no. 220, p. 74; for the MSS see V. Skouvaras, *Olymptotissa* (1967), 413–16; we find a similar expression in Kosmas: see Menounos, *Kosma tou Aitolou Didaches*, 222. 'I am the race', Elenko Emphiedzidena, the mistress of the Patriarch Evgenios, used to say after the Revolution, 'indicating that it was she who led by the nose the leader of the race': see M. I. Gedeon, *Patriarchikis istorias mnimeia III* (1922), 6.

<sup>8</sup> In the *Diatagai Gamon* (Constantinople, 1767), repr. by G. Valetas, *Logoi patriotikoi aplosynthetoi ... Samouil Chantzeri* (1948), 55–6, 85.

<sup>9</sup> Venice, 1772, 158. Quoted here from E. Legrand, *Bibliographie Hellénique du 19ème siècle*, II (Paris, 1918), 768. Half a century earlier, the Patriarchate, condemning Methodios Anthrakites in 1723 for his flirtation with Enlightenment ideas, added to the accusations his inadequacy in 'the discourse of the Hellenes', showing the Church's adherence to the ancient language; see conveniently M. Kalinderis, *O kodix mitropoleos Sisanou kai Siatistis* (Thessaloniki, 1974), 105.

<sup>10</sup> References to the edition by G. Sofoklis (1880), 118, 115, 117, 141. There is a new edition by G. P. Savidis (1995).

the translation of Rollin, which is in a different category) have as their subject the Christian past and leave ancient Hellenism outside their perspective; they are a continuation of the tradition of histories of the world since the Creation. Dapontes's *Book of Kingdoms*, a metrical descendant, essentially, of pseudo-Dorotheos's *Chronographer*, begins with the birth of Christ; and the theocentric mentality is yet more clearly reflected in another work of compilation, the *Geographical History*, which, having begun with a description of the world, continues with one of Paradise and Hades.<sup>11</sup> And other works we know of begin from the time of Julius Caesar.<sup>12</sup>

Even from our limited knowledge of eighteenth-century Greek libraries it is clear that the *Vyzantis* series is among the very few historical works often encountered.<sup>13</sup> It is characteristic that in 1672 the French Ambassador in Constantinople, the Marquis de Nointel, gives the Patriarch (the bibliophile Dionysios IV Mouselimis) a set of the French edition.<sup>14</sup> (One hundred and twenty years later a French consul brought as a gift volumes of the *Encyclopédie*.<sup>15</sup>) William Martin Leake, in Ioannina in 1805, writes of the libraries there: 'There is a collection of books also in the metropolitan church, but the Fathers and Byzantine history are almost the only works which the kalogheri have to boast of.'<sup>16</sup> We know too that Katartzis recommends the reading of the *Vyzantis*, and that it remained in use to the time of the Revolution at least – though from 1809 on in the light of Korais's comment that 'it has provoked in Greeks of sense nothing but grief at the foolishness of the Greco-Roman emperors'.<sup>17</sup> But, above all, the six-volume

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<sup>11</sup> MS in the Xiropotamos Monastery, description by S. Lambros, 223–4. Some characteristic excerpts appear in Lambros, *Collection des romans grecs* (Paris, 1880), xcix, and in Legrand, *Dakikai efimerides*, I (Paris, 1880), φε'–φθ' and II (Paris, 1881) 40–41. Description and sample of the *Geographical History*: *ibid.*, III (Paris, 1888), lvii–lxxi.

<sup>12</sup> In fact, few of these works are known or accessible. See however the *Epitomi tis ierokosmikis istorias* of Nektarios of Jerusalem (1677), ed. P. F. Christopoulou 1990 (with an important study by M. I. Manousakas), or the materials in K. N. Sathas, *Mesaioniki Violiotiki* (Venice, 1872), III. For a general survey, see D. A. Zakythinos, *Metavyzantina kai Nea Ellinika* (1978), 23–66.

<sup>13</sup> I base myself on the library catalogues in the National Research Centre, Athens.

<sup>14</sup> See O. Augustinos, *French Odysseys* (Baltimore, 1994), 82.

<sup>15</sup> P. Echinard, *Grecs et philhellènes à Marseille* (Marseilles, 1973), 8–9, n.24.

<sup>16</sup> *Travels in Northern Greece*, IV (1835), 148. The following year Chateaubriand finds a couple of volumes in the Archbishopric of Mistra: *Itinéraire de Paris à Jerusalem* (repr. Paris, 1964), 89–90.

<sup>17</sup> A. Korais, *Prolegomena stous archaious Ellines syngrafeis*, 1 (1985), 328. Of more or less the same period (1807) is the negative remark of his friend Etienne Clavier, *Histoire des premiers temps de la Grèce*, I (Paris, 1822), 23. For Katartzis see *Ta evriskomena* (ed. C. Th. Dimaras, 1970), 51. In 1808 Konstantinos Oikonomos was still recommending the *Vyzantis*: see K. Lappas, "Nouthesiaí patros pros yion." *Mia anekdoti metafrasi tou Kon. Oikonomou*, *Mesaionika kai nea Ellinika*, 2 (1986), 322. So too was Daniil Filippidis: see his *Geografikon tis Roumounias*, Ib (Leipzig, 1816), 14–15; while in 1820 Kodrikas acquires a copy from a Parisian bookseller for Dimitrios Postolakas: see F. K. Bouboulidis, 'Anekdotoi epistolai Kodrika pros

redaction in 'our common idiom' by Ioannis Stanos (Venice 1767) bears witness to continuing interest in this work; and, like the Byzantine chronographers, Stanos begins with the Creation and ends with his own day.<sup>18</sup>

This Christian perspective on the past takes root in the sense of the present: the world is God's work, its history the conflict between faith and infidelity, the central human problem salvation. Curiosity about the past, then, contracts into a broad picture of the fortunes of the Faith, on the one hand, and, on the other, into biographical details from the chronographers which concern only small circles of the educated – which is why many such works never saw print. For the many, for the illiterate rural population, the general schema holds that:

The good God sent St Constantine and founded a Christian kingdom, and the Christians had this kingdom for one thousand one hundred and fifty years. Then God took the kingdom from the Christians and brought the Turk from the East and gave it to him for our own good ... For God knew that the other kingdoms do harm to our faith and that the Turk harms us not ... and God has the Turk as our guard dog.<sup>19</sup>

In Enlightenment thought, by contrast, the past had another meaning: it was the fortunes of humanity, a pendulum between the right and the wrong; the future was for the improvement of this life. A good representative of the new mentality is Ioannis Pringos. Reared in the old ways, he found himself a merchant in Holland, where he learned to read and amassed a library, coming into contact with contemporary currents. A little after the first Russo-Turkish war, in September 1773, he writes:

The *Romaioi* say that it is through their sins that they fell to the Turk. But if this was so, then the whole of Europe is guilty of like sins; yet they keep their own countries because they have taken care to keep their own countries. If the *Romaioi* too had taken care, they would not have lost theirs.

At another (earlier?) moment we find ourselves witnesses of this daring thought:

May the Lord God have mercy on us to set us free, for that we lost our kingdom through our sins. But I say: through our ungovernability. And again I say: are all the rest not sinners, but we the only sinners?<sup>20</sup>

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Postolaka', *Epistimoniki Epetiris Filosofikis Scholis Panepistimiou Athinon*, 21 (1970–71), 54–5, 72, 80, 88.

<sup>18</sup> That is, to 1709; he had originally intended to go up to 1718: see N. G. Svoronos, 'Ioannis Stanos', *Athina*, 49 (1939), 233–42.

<sup>19</sup> Menounos, *Kosma Aitolou Didaches*, 269–70.

<sup>20</sup> V. Skouvaras, *Ioannis Pringos* (1964), 190, 189. It is worthy of note that the second quotation is written in a copy of Niketas Choniates.

Pringos's contemporary Dimitrios Katartzis is the representative *par excellence* of the new tendency, enlightened despotism. His intellectual formation and his high position in the social scale make him a unique case. Hemmed in by the phanariot aristocracy, he had an influence only on his own small circle: his works remained unpublished until recently, but in them we may set the beginnings of modern Greek thought. Katartzis is, for example, the first systematically to use the word *ethnos* in the singular in the place of *genos* (which he uses very rarely); the first to make a clear distinction between the *Romioi* and the other Christian subject peoples of the Ottomans. He has, then, a different view of the past. He writes of one man of letters that:

Two *ethni*, the Hellenic and the Roman, covering two thousand and more years between them, he holds to be one, the Hellenic, simply because the latter descends from the former; but they differ one from the other in fortune and constitution and religion and customs and language and conduct, even in their clothing and utensils.

This in 1787, the mature reflection of a man approaching sixty. About four years earlier Katartzis had written:

What is more, when a *Romios* reflects that he is descended from Pericles, Themistocles and like Hellenes, or from the relatives of Theodosius, Belisarius, Narses, the Bulgar-Slayer, Tsimiskes and so many other great Romans, or is in the line of some saint or his relative, how can he not love the descendants of these and other great men?<sup>21</sup>

There is, then, a sense of time, a sense of the boundary between antiquity and Byzantium, based not only on Christianity but on language. There is also an awareness of national formation which seems close to modern views. Note, however, the crucial absence of the notion of national independence, the perspective of the nation-state. Nowhere in Katartzis's writings do we find a hint of these – something doubtless explained by his position at court.

This at the height of the Russo-Turkish wars. In contemporary chronicles, in the numerous texts addressed to, or prompted by, Catherine the Great, in numerous texts of a personal character, the sudden hope of a different lot is everywhere present. Nowhere, however, do we meet with the notion of national independence, let alone political autonomy: hopes are for a Christian ruler not of Greek origin; for an Orthodox ruler; sometimes for an enlightened monarch.<sup>22</sup> And before the Treaty of Jassy in 1792, indeed, it

<sup>21</sup> See 'Gnothi sauton' and 'Symvoli stous neous ...', *Ta evriskomena*, 104, 45.

<sup>22</sup> See above all *Iketiria tou genous ton Graikon. Pros pasan tin christianikin Evropin* (probably 1771), repr. in F. Iliou, *Prosthikes stin elliniki vivliografia*, I (1973), 290–300, and especially the phrase, 'Vouchsafe, Lady, to give us thy grandson Constantine for our sovereign, this is all that our entire race beseeches of thee (for the race of our emperors has been extinguished).' This passage was prompted in 1790: see W. Eton, *A Survey of the Turkish Empire* (1798), 358, and P.

would have been difficult even for the most advanced thinkers to think otherwise. In what Dimaras terms the critical decade of the 1790s,<sup>23</sup> however, with the progress of the French Revolution and the hardening of the Russian stand against it – and here the events in Poland must have had a decisive influence<sup>24</sup> – the search for some other solution began.

Meanwhile, Enlightenment ideas had become not only more established but the tool of a social group with ever-growing strength in the Balkans, the merchant class. The passing of considerable economic power into its hands had an effect on both the traditional ruling class and indeed the patriarchates. It is from the conflict between these two sides in this decade that the new idea of a nation in search of national independence emerged. This idea, however, entailed a national consciousness with Western affinities and foundations. The ancient world would no longer be simply that of the ancestors but the defining pole of national existence: ‘the Hellenizing of the *Romioi*’ might sum up the ideological significance of the 1790s.

These changes took place by leaps and bounds: in some cases people did not grasp them at the time. In fact, the eclipse of Byzantium can be seen only in part, as the glamour of the ancients grows. The *Modern Geography* of Philippidis and Konstantas makes, I think, a good point of departure: in the ‘Brief chronological and historical summary of the changes of Greece’ which introduces the geographical description, the Byzantine period is called the ‘Empire of the Hellenes’, but has very little space devoted to it, and indeed contains a description of the successors of Alexios Komnenos as ‘unworthy and blood-thirsty’.<sup>25</sup> Byzantium is thus included in Greek history but in no flattering way – this attempt at compromise, a step beyond Katartzis, had no successors.

Three years later, in 1794, another pupil of Katartzis, Panagiotis Kodrikas, repudiates his view more vigorously. Not persuaded of the linguistic autonomy of the ‘Romaic tongue’, he attempts to show that ‘unhappy Greece ... once she started to decline from her former glory ... started little by little to lose ... the ancient nobility of her tongue’, and that ‘the successive

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M. Kitromilides, ‘War and political consciousness: theoretical implications of eighteenth-century Greek historiography’ in *East Central European Society and War in the Pre-Revolutionary Eighteenth Century*, ed. G. E. Rothenberg et al. (New York, 1982), 351–70; H. Ragsdale, ‘Evaluating the traditions of Russian aggression: Catherine II and the Greek project’, *Slavonic and East European Review*, 66 (1988), 91–117; and Franco Venturi, *Settecento riformatore*, III (*La prima crisi dell’ Antico Regime (1768–1776)*) (Turin, 1979), with material on Antonios Ghikas, the probable writer of the *Iketiria*.

<sup>23</sup> Dimaras, ‘Deka chronia ellinikis paideias stin istoriki tous prooptiki, 1791–1800’, in *Neoellinikos Diafotismos*, 277–62.

<sup>24</sup> Closely followed by the *Efimeris* of the Poullos brothers, repr. KEMNE (1995), with introduction by L. Vranoussis.

<sup>25</sup> D. Filipidis and G. Konstantas, *Neoteriki Geografia* (ed. A. Koumariou, 1988), 103–5.

invasions and enslavements which she experienced at the hands of various nations, whether Macedonians, Romans, or Goths' brought her language into desuetude. The passage culminates:

when the Greek dialect was already in such a state, mutilated and transformed, as piteously was also its mistress the Roman Kingdom, there came next, alas! the most bitter Heavenly scourge, and the unavoidable outcome of the political instability of the *Romaioi*.<sup>26</sup>

This ideological configuration demands a word by way of analysis. Ancient Greece is credited with its civilization; the Roman Kingdom is accepted, but the Turks are metaphorically considered a punishment for its sins – all this prefacing a translation of a work which subverts the Old Testament, and in which Montesquieu and the *Encyclopédie* are referred to. The overt rejection of the vernacular language takes on a clearer meaning when seen in relation to the esteem for the language cultivated by 'the present Leaders of our race':<sup>27</sup> this support for enlightened despotism is more prominent in Kodrikas's later thought, once he discerns the might of the merchant class and its intellectual leader, Korais.<sup>28</sup>

The following year, 1795, an anonymous translation of Montesquieu was printed in Leipzig: *Researches into the Progress and Fall of the Romans*. The picture of Byzantium given there is well known: Montesquieu, with Voltaire,<sup>29</sup> is its principal critic before Gibbon. The preface to the translation contains the following statement:

Everyone I suppose knows that there was once a Greek Kingdom (Γραικικὸν Βασίλειον), that it was captured, and that we have since been enslaved, scattered, and left in our present condition. Yet has anyone examined this kingdom's beginnings? has anyone examined its progress? has anyone examined its changes? has anyone indeed examined the causes of its destruction? If I do not say, no-one, then I say perhaps one in ten thousand.

The translator concludes: 'I hope, finally, if any support and help be given me by the race, to translate other books which do not contain myths and curious stories, but which have a view to the enlightenment and benefit of our race.'<sup>30</sup> (Interestingly, the second translator, in 1836, adopts Korais's term *Graikoromaïos* for *Graikos*.<sup>31</sup>)

<sup>26</sup> See G. G. Ladas and A. D. Chatzidimos, *Elliniki Vivliografia ton eton 1791–1795* (1971), 316–17.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 320, 321, 324.

<sup>28</sup> See A. Politis, 'Patris, Alitheia. Ena axioma tou P. Kodrika kai kapoies parallages tou ston dekato enato aiona' in *Zitimata istorias ton neellinikon grammaton* (Thessaloniki, 1994), 265–71.

<sup>29</sup> Good summary in Augustinos, *French Odysseys*, 137ff.

<sup>30</sup> Ladas and Chatzidimos, *Elliniki Vivliografia*, 357.

<sup>31</sup> *Skepseis peri tou megaleiou kai tis ptoseos ton Romaion* (1836): the translator is the otherwise unknown G. A. Therinos.