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“The making of the Greek History  
The construction of national time”

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## The making of the Greek History The construction of national time

*I awoke with this marble head in my hands  
which exhausts my elbows and I do not know where to set it down.  
It was falling into the dream as I was coming out of the dream  
our lives joined thus and it will be difficult to part them*

George Seferis, *Mythical Story*

### A. The construction of time

#### 1. Representations and Interpretations

As modern history writing was developed within the scope of national historiography since the 19<sup>th</sup> century, so the concept of the nation has become one of the essential categories through which the imagination of space and the notion of time are constructed<sup>1</sup>. This is the tradition and the institutional environment within which contemporary historians conduct their research and write their texts, reconstructing and reinforcing the structures of power that they experience.

The concept of the nation has been approached through two basically different perspectives, despite internal variations. The first one concerns the representations of national revival: the nation, an already existing entity, resurfaces itself and under certain conditions, undertakes an active historical role. The second perspective refers to the interpretations of the construction of the nation through national ideology and the institutions of the political community. Theories of the first category (essentialist theories) constitute parts of the national ideology, especially in its romantic and historicist phases. They refer, and eventually rationalize, the way the nation perceives itself, or more precisely, they describe the dominant view of the national ideology. Essentialist theories contribute to the construction of the nation. Since they have been transformed into ideology and obtain significance in space and time, in culture and in institutions, they do not simply describe a process but reproduce their object. They constitute the reflection through which the nation constructs its self-view. As a result, they intervene in the processes of the re-definition and of the construction of identities<sup>2</sup>. The second category of theories, closer to the French tradition that conceptualizes the nation on the premise of “*a sense of belonging*”, has been formed by the seminal work of Frederik Barth (1969), Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger (1983), Benedict Anderson (1983), Ernest Gellner (1983) and others<sup>3</sup>. This theoretical framework has been enriched by post-seventy’s studies on ideology and on the discursive construction of identities and now constitutes the common background of working theories on the nation within the international academic community

<sup>1</sup> James Sheeham, ‘What is German History? Reflections on the Role of the “nation” in German History and Historiography’, *Journal of Modern History*, 53(1981) pp. 1-23.

<sup>2</sup> Anthony Smith, *Theories of Nationalism* (London 1983)

<sup>3</sup> Frederik Barth, *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries* (London 1969), Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger, *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge 1983), Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities* (London 1983), Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism* (Oxford 1983).

(constructivist theories).<sup>4</sup> Within both of these approaches to the nation, there is a different reading of the direction of time. In representation the direction is from the past to the present; in interpretation, from the present to the past. Both directions relate to the reading of dreams. During dreaming, “*the preceding events are caused by the ending, even if, in narrative composition as we know it, the ending is linked to the events which precede it by a cause and effect relationship.*”<sup>5</sup> This is also the time of history making. History and National ideology share the double time of the dream. As Seferis wrote, “*it was falling into the dream as I was coming out of the dream*”.

## 2. Time and National Narrative

Having a temporal structure, national identity imposes a restructuring of the perception of time. This perception is articulated as narrative and narration. It is formulated in the shape of national history using the organic category of the nation. Through the national narrative, it identifies the subjects with the national collectivity and impersonates the nation; it consolidates these identifications in the domains of institutions and of symbols; it influences, clarifies and unifies different traditions constructing, in this way, the national culture. The construction of the national narrative restructures the experience of time attributing a new significance to it and presenting the nation as an active historical agent that, through the narration, acquires a new historical identity<sup>6</sup>. In this sense, national historiography constitutes the codified past which is activated through present action and which aims at an expected future. In other words it embodies a significant and ever-present element of the nation, its active memory. Memory, however, since it has been activated and articulated in a certain narrative, cannot accept blank spaces. This means that a national narrative should have an internal element of coherence and cannot exist if there are temporal discontinuities. The question of continuity has acquired a crucial importance in the construction of national history, particularly for Mediterranean nations.

## 3. Mediterranean pasts

Mediterranean nations “awoke” with a “marble head” in their hands. The need to deal with these long historical periods and different cultures is a common feature of their national histories. But Mediterranean nations had undertaken the difficult task to combine different and significant pasts: the Greek-Roman world with the Christian, the Latin with the German, the Greek with the Slav and the Ottoman world, the Egyptian, the Hellenistic, the Roman, the Islamic, the Arab, the Ottoman past, the era of colonialism and independence, need to be synthesized. All of these periods have different meanings for the construction of Mediterranean identities and for the shaping of national cultures and politics.

How, for instance, should *historia sacra* and *historia profana* be allayed in Christian nations, or the Arab, Iranian and Ottoman past with the Islamic past? Is the Hellenistic period part of the history of Egypt, or does it belong to the history of

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<sup>4</sup> For an assessment of this transition from the essentialist to the constructivist theories of the nation: Cora Govers and Hans Vermeulen (Ed.), *The Politics of Ethnic Consciousness* (London 1977), pp. 1-30.

<sup>5</sup> Boris A.Uspenskij, *Storia e semiotica* (Milano 1988),p.13

<sup>6</sup> On the restructure of experience of time through narrative: Paul Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative* (Chicago 1983) pp. 52-87, and on the term “appropriation of the past”, his *Memoire, Oubli et Histoire* ( EUI, Working papers, Florence 1995) .

Greece? To whom does Byzantium belong? Is it part of Greek history or does it belong equally to Bulgarian and Serbian History? Is the Ottoman period an organic part of Balkan and Arab history or is it a foreign interruption of their history? To which continuity does Macedonian history belong? Does it belong to a Southern Slav, Hellenic or local Macedonian continuity? To whom does the history of early modern Thessaloniki belong? To a history of the Jewish Diaspora, to Ottoman history, or to Greek history? Is there a place for non-national, ethnic and religious minorities in the Balkan national histories such as the Sephardic Jewish communities, the Vlachs, the Greek-Catholic or the Orthodox-Turkish speaking populations? All these questions relate to identities. What is the Egyptian identity? Is it Arab, Islamic or geographic and cultural (the child of the Nile) extending from the Pharaonic to the post-colonial era? What consequence for domestic or foreign politics could the adoption of one or another of the definitions of identity have?<sup>7</sup>

#### 4. The production of time

The appropriation and the re-signification of these pasts has to do with the adjustment of different perceptions of time to a modern perception of the structure of time<sup>8</sup>. Consequently, the homogenization of the way people perceive time precedes and constitutes a necessary precondition for the construction of national historical time. The narration of this national time implies the incorporation of temporal units into a coherent scheme. This process is particularly depicted in historiography and the philosophy of history. This incorporation of historical time does not take place in a unique way or immediately, but is carried out in stages and with hesitations and contradictions. What is at stake is not simply the appropriation of a part of historical experience but the construction in the present of a discourse that reproduces the past and transforms it into national time. In other words, this is a process of the production of time. According to Paul Ricoeur, history in its narrative form replaces the history which has been collectively experienced<sup>9</sup>. In this way, the elementary myth of the nation is constructed. The rearrangement of the collective sense of time is a presupposition of the construction of the nation, and at the same time, the nation constructs a collective and meaningful sense of time.

### B. The Greek case.

#### 1. Revivalism

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<sup>7</sup> Jack Crabbs, *The Writing of History in Nineteenth-Century Egypt* (Cairo 1984), Anthony Gorman, 'In the Shadow of the Nation: the Politics of Egyptian Historiography in the Twentieth Century', *Journal of Arabic, Islamic and Middle Eastern Studies*, 3(1996) pp. 117-126, Israel Gershoni, 'Imagining and Reimagining the Past: The Use of History by Egyptian Nationalist Writers, 1919-1952', *History and Memory*, 4 (1992) pp. 6-37, David Gordon, 'History and Identity in Arab Textbooks', *Princeton Near East Paper* 13(1971) pp. 1-15

<sup>8</sup> Reihart Kosellek, *Futures Past: On the Semantics of Historical Time* (Massachusetts 1985).

<sup>9</sup> Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative*, pp. 52-87.

Greek historiography is a product of the Greek national state. During the foundation of the new state the constitutive myth was the resurrection of the mythical Phoenix<sup>10</sup>. Its significance was that Greece resurrected itself, like the mythical Phoenix, after having been under the subjugation of the Macedonians, the Romans, the Byzantines, and the Turks. The first rector of the University of Athens in 1837, Constantine Schinas, referred to the metaphor of an enslaved Greece handed over by the Macedonians to the Romans and then by the Byzantines to the Turks<sup>11</sup>. That was the first official imagination of Greek history in the aftermath of the war of liberation in 1821. As a consequence, the primary incorporation into the national feeling of history was the period of classical Antiquity. The appropriation of this period was established during the period of the Enlightenment's influence on Greece, about fifty years before the Greek revolt, and though not without disagreement or reservation from the post-Byzantine tradition of the Orthodox Church, it proved the stronger<sup>12</sup>. Yet, in contrast to most young nations which were expected to construct their own self-image, the myth of Ancient Greece was also powerful outside the Greek-speaking society of the Ottoman Empire. Modern Greeks gripped their passport, without much pain, to introduce themselves to the other nations, although it is oversimplification to consider Greek identity as simply a product of post-enlightenment colonialism<sup>13</sup>.

The story how the myth of Ancient Greece was incorporated into national ideology is complex and controversial. The most powerful tradition, even before the creation of national states, was the tradition of written texts: Greek, Latin and Hebrew<sup>14</sup>. This written tradition was the corpus and the locus where pre-national history were shaped. Even more, before the emergence of nation-states, myths of national origins were connected to this written tradition<sup>15</sup>. Greeks appropriated a great part of this learned tradition and transformed it into a national tradition. This appropriation was not an isolated case. Hellenism, as a cultural topos, was an intellectual product of the Renaissance, which has been renovated through intellectual trends ranging from the

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<sup>10</sup> Loukia Droulia, 'Ta symvola tou neou ellinikou kratous', *Ta Istorika*, 23(1995) pp.335-351.

<sup>11</sup> K.Th. Dimaras, *En Athinai ti 3 Maiou 1837* (Athens 1987) p.31

<sup>12</sup> Paschalis Kitromilidis, 'Imagined Communities and the Origins of the National Question in the Balkans' in Th. Veremis, M.Blichorn (ed.) *Modern Greece: Nationalism and Nationality*, (Athens 1990) pp. 23-66.

<sup>13</sup> Stathis Gourgouris, *Dream Nation. Enlightenment, Colonization and the Institution of Modern Greece* (Stanford 1996)

<sup>14</sup> R.R. Bolgar, The Classical Heritage and its Beneficiaries (Cambridge 1973), U. von Wilamowitz-Moellendorf, *History of Classical Scholarship*, (London, 1982), Vassilis Lambropoulos, *The Rise of Eurocentrism*, (Princeton 1992)

<sup>15</sup> R.E. Asher, *National Myth in Renaissance France*, (Edinburgh 1993), Collette Beaune, *Naissance de la nation France* (Paris 1985), Eugen Weber, *My France. Politics, Culture, Myth* (Harvard 1991), Eoin MacNeill, *Celtic Ireland*, (Dublin 1981), W.B.Stanford, *Ireland and the Classical Tradition*, (Dublin 1976)

Enlightenment to the Romanticism<sup>16</sup>. As concepts, Hellenism and Revival were strictly interconnected. Had the concept of the Renaissance introduced a threefold concept of time (Ancient, Medieval and Modern), revivalism was established as the intellectual model in culture. In this sense, each major change in culture, until romanticism, was presented as a phenomenon of revival<sup>17</sup>. Indeed, nationalism can be defined, in this framework, as the “myths of the historical renovation”<sup>18</sup>. The first incorporation, as a result, constitutes not simply the beginning of the national narrative but actually the construction of the object of this narrative. For Greeks, to feel as national subjects means to internalize their relationship with Ancient Greece.

Another aspect, which should not be underestimate, is that the revival of Antiquity was not aimed exclusively at the legitimization of genealogy. Classical Antiquity was also projected as the ideal model for the organization of a modern society. One of the most important works of early modern Greek historiography, George Kozakis Tipaldos’ *Philosophical essay on the progress and decline of old Greece* (1839), reflects this attitude<sup>19</sup>. The exemplary and nomothetic function of the ancient world does not concern exclusively the construction of the Modern Greek state. It constitutes part of a transcultural tradition. This important functional role of the other (i.e., the Ancient) world, deeply embedded in historical consciousness, relates to notions of authority, power, holiness and truth. In this way the concepts of the world should originate from another world in the remote past. To this same tradition could be ascribed the uses of the Torah for Israel, and of the Koran and the *Sharia* for the Muslim nations.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Frank Turner, *The Greek Heritage in Victorian Britain*, (New Haven, Yale 1981), Olga Augustinos, *French Odysseys, Greek in French Travel Literature from the Renaissance to the Romantic Era* (Baltimore 1994), Moses Hadas, *Humanism, The Greek Ideal and Its Survival*, (New York 1960), Suzanne Marchand, *Down from Olympus* (Princeton 1996), Margarita Milioris, *The Greek Nation in British Eyes 1821-1864: Aspects of a British Discourse on Nationality, Politics, History and Europe* (PhD Thesis, Oxford 1998)

<sup>17</sup> W.K. Ferguson, *The Renaissance in Historical Thought* (Cambridge 1948), Peter Burke, *The Renaissance Sense of the Past* (New York 1970)

<sup>18</sup> Smith, *Theories of Nationalism*, p.22, Hutchinson John, *The Dynamics of Cultural Nationalism, The Gaelic Revival and the Creation of the Irish Nation State* (London 1987)

<sup>19</sup> George Kozakis Tipaldos, *Filosofiko dokimio gia tin anodo kai tin ptosi tis palaias Ellados* (Athens 1839)

<sup>20</sup> V.N. Volossinov, *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language*, Seminar Press, New York, 1973, part II, 75. See also, Peter van der Veer and Hartmut Lehman (ed.), *Nation and Religion* (Princeton 1999), Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi, *Zakhor, Jewish History and Jewish Memory*, (Washington 1982), Yael Zerubavel, *Recovered Roots. Collective Memory and the making of Israeli National tradition*, (Chicago 1995).

## 2. Continuity

During the first decades of Greek independence, the initial present-past relationship was composed of two alternative poles: the national resurrection (the 1821 Revolution and the formation of the Greek state) and Classical Antiquity. The myth of the reborn Phoenix, however, was too weak to sustain a national ideology, especially since it involved an immense time gap. Moreover, it excluded an important part of present experience, the religious one<sup>21</sup>. The blank pages of Greek history became visible in the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. In 1852, the historian, Spyridon Zambelios, pointed out, “*We only hope that all those scattered and torn pieces of our history will be articulated and succeeded by completeness and unity*”<sup>22</sup>. Filling these gaps meant furnishing criteria and signification in order to appropriate different periods such as the Macedonian domination of Greece, the Hellenistic and Roman period, the Byzantine era, along with the Venetian and Ottoman rule. In 1872 a philosopher, Petros Vrillas Armenis, referred briefly to the meanings that should be stressed for each period:

*In what concerns the historical past of Greece, meaning the mission of Hellenism, it is necessary to examine the ways Greece is related to its preceding Oriental World, what it was itself, the influence it exercised on the Romans, its relation to Christianity, what happened to Greece in the Middle Ages, in which ways Greece contributed to the Renaissance, how it contributes to contemporary civilization, how and why Greece survived till our times although it was enslaved, how it resurrected itself, which is its mission today.*<sup>23</sup>

In this view, history is identified with the nation's mission and as a consequence, it is Divine Providence that attributes a certain meaning to it. The temporal incorporation also refers to the nation's relation with the surrounding world. In other words, it constitutes a national reading of world history. It is a specific “world history”, however, concentrated on western European civilization which is recognized as its peak. This is a reading of world history from a eurocentric point of view. In fact, this perspective lays the foundation of a dialectic between European and Greek national historiography. On the one hand, it aims at the emancipation of national history encapsulated in a European point of view (the contempt of Byzantium as a degeneration of the Roman empire) while on the other, national history is evaluated for its contribution to European history, that is, the history of Western civilization.

The filling of these gaps was the task of historiography during the second half of nineteenth century. So, in 1918, the historian Spyridon Lambros, summarizing the historical production of the first century of the independent Greek state, pointed out that the “*A cohesive conception of Greek history, representing the fortune of a people maintaining their national existence and consciousness throughout the ages, came to life very late*”<sup>24</sup>. The incorporation into the national narrative of the periods that would

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<sup>21</sup> Elli Skopetea, *To 'protypo vasileio' kai I Megali Idea* (Athens 1988)

<sup>22</sup> Spyridon Zambelios, *Dimotika asmata tis Ellados* (Corfu 1852) p. 16.

<sup>23</sup> Petros Vrillas Armenis, *Peri tis istorikis apostolis tis Ellados* (Corfu 1872) p. 4.

<sup>24</sup> Spyridon Lambros, “Historical Studies in Greece during the first century of independence with an introduction about Greek historical writing during the period of the Ottoman Rule”, (unpublished manuscript of 1918, University of Athens), chapter 7, p. 1-2.

contribute to the making of national history took place in stages and not without objection and cultural debate.

The timing of each temporal incorporation implies a relationship between the Greek and western European historiography. For example, the appropriation of Macedonian and the Hellenistic period, through the concept of national supremacy, was facilitated by the discharge from the classical Greece, of the meaning of civic freedom. Within the debate concerning the re-evaluation of the Hellenistic period (in German historiography of the 19<sup>th</sup> century), it became possible to present Hellenism (with the meaning and the cultural characteristics that were attributed to it at the time) as the predecessor of Christianity and to establish the imperial ideal (especially in the works of Johann Gustav Droysen)<sup>25</sup>. However, the contempt for Byzantium of Voltaire, Gibbon and Hegel, in other words the negative attitude that developed towards it within the framework of the Enlightenment, did not permit its incorporation at this stage<sup>26</sup>. Moreover, since the concept of "Hellenism", as a cultural construction of western civilization, was localized by Philhellenes to the revival of modern Greece, the rejection of Byzantium along with all other historical periods between the classical age and the Greek revolt in 1821 was unavoidable. To span the huge difference between the classical ideal and the reality of Modern Greece, the concept of decline and fall was inevitable. According to Byron, in «Childe Harold's Pilgrimage» (canto 2, stanza 73), Modern Greeks were «*sad relic of departed worth*». Otherwise, the concept of revival itself contained the discontinuity. But, how could a national narrative be possible with such a discontinuity?

The appropriation of the Byzantine period has major significance since it illustrates the transition from one mental structure of historical imagination to another: from the schema of revival to one of continuity. It is a transition that primarily concerns the concept of historical time. Once this transition has been accomplished, each historical period would find its place within this schema. The result of this great mental change was the monumental work of Constantinos Paparrigopoulos *History of the Greek Nation* (1860-1874). Paparrigopoulos, honored as "national historian", created the grand narrative and introduced a new style in writing national historiography<sup>27</sup>. Although his predecessors had employed the third person in referring to their object, Paparrigopoulos imposed a very dominant use of "we" and "us" in describing the Greeks of the past, in this way identifying the reader with the national subject. In addition, the appropriation of Byzantine history, changed the content of national identity and transformed it into a native produced identity. This modification acquired the features of a "revolt" against a view of national self that had been imposed on Greece by European classicism. This transformation was a response to a general feeling of 19<sup>th</sup> c. Greeks intellectuals: " *The Past? Alas, we allow foreigners to present it according to their own prejudices and to their own way of thought and interests*"<sup>28</sup>.

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<sup>25</sup> Arnaldo Momigliano, 'J.G.Droysen tra Greci ed Ebrei', in *Tra Storia e Storicismo* (Pisa 1985) pp.211-235.

<sup>26</sup> Dionysios Zakythinos, 'Le monde de Byzance dans la pensee historique de l' Europe a partir du XVIIe siecle' in *Byzance: Etat-Societe-Economie*, (London 1973) pp.41-96

<sup>27</sup> K.Th. Dimaras, *Constantinos Paparrigopoulos* (Athens 1986)

<sup>28</sup> Zambelios, *Dimotika asmata*, pp. 7.

### 3. Inside and outside Western Europe

At the same time, of course, the agents of the incorporation of Byzantium attempted to define the contribution of Byzantium to western civilization. This became another permanent feature in Greek historical culture: to keep national Greek history beyond the influence of western historical thinking on the one hand, and on the other hand to consider it as an essential contribution to western culture; to resist the western canon of history and to participate in it. For example, the Archbishop of the Greek Church insists that Greeks should not learn Byzantine history from foreigners, and, at the same time, that Byzantine history is one of the foundations of contemporary European identity. This attitude could be compared with modern Islamic attitudes on history: "*[Islamic history] is influenced by Western education, [which is unable] to understand Islam(...)* *The mind that will judge Islamic life must be Islamic in its essence*"<sup>29</sup>. If we attempt to see a grammar of such attitudes we could approach the relational structure of national historiographies. From a non-western point of view, there is a move from the suppression of entire past periods, located outside the western cultural tradition, to the idealization of these same periods as distinct cultural features and as contributions to universal civilization. Another Mediterranean example of this oscillation is the case of Turkish historiography of the Ottoman period. From its suppression during the Ataturk era, Ottoman Empire has come to be considered (by Barkan in 1937) as the solution to the social problem of the peasant and as the third way between capitalism and socialism!<sup>30</sup>.

This move from the hetero-definition of national history and identity to its self-definition, as well as from the move from intellectual élites to the ordinary people, is the attempt to relocate the center of national history: "*While ordinary people recognize that it was to the medieval period that they owe their existence, their language and their religion, it is only intellectuals that deny it*".<sup>31</sup> This is another permanent oscillation between the claims of history to scientific status on the one hand and the mistrust of intellectuals to write history on the other.

Appropriation of a past culture is a long process. Thus, a lengthy period of time passed between the legitimization of Byzantium to participate in the national narrative, the actual interest of historians in Byzantium, and their use of it in the fields of national symbolism and representation. Byzantium was not reconstituted in school manuals until the end of the 19th century; the Byzantine Museum was not established until 1914, and the first Professors of Byzantine Art and Byzantine History were only appointed at the University of Athens in 1912 and 1924 respectively.<sup>32</sup> Appropriation takes place in stages as regards not only the concrete setting of the specific period but also its different aspects. In this way, the theory on the unity of Greek history has

<sup>29</sup> Islamic Yvonne, Yarbeck Haddad, *Contemporary Islam and the Challenge of History* (New York 1980), pp. 166

<sup>30</sup> Halil Berkay, "The Search for the Peasant in Western and Turkish History/Historiography", in H. Berkay and Suraiya Faroqhi, *New approaches to State and Peasant in Ottoman History*, (London 1992) p. 156

<sup>31</sup> Paparrigopoulos, Preface to the Third and Fourth volume of the *History of the Greek Nation*.

<sup>32</sup> Christina Koulouri, *Dimensions ideologiques de l' historicité en Grèce (1834-1914)* (Frankfurt am Main, 1991), Tonia Kiousopoulou, "I proti edra Byzantinis Istorias sto Panepistimio Athinon", *Mnimon*, 15(1993)pp.257-276

been transferred from the field of political history to the field of language <sup>33</sup> and folklore<sup>34</sup>. In the case of Byzantium, this process, took several decades to be completed, and new images are still in play. The delay in the development of Byzantine studies in Western Europe emphasizes the fact that the international historical debate might affect national history but it does not restrict its autonomy totally.

#### 4. National genealogy

The constitution of the “unity” of Greek history also created its narrative form. The innovation in Paparrigopoulos’ work lies in the fact that it reifies Greek history, and organizes it around a main character giving another meaning to each period. He introduced the terms *First Hellenism, Macedonian Hellenism, Christian Hellenism, Medieval Hellenism, Modern Hellenism*. The first Hellenism is the ancient Hellenism, i.e. the classical Hellenism that declines after the Peloponnesian Wars. It is succeeded by Macedonian Hellenism that was actually “*a slight transformation of the first Hellenism*”. This one is followed by Christian Hellenism, which is later replaced by the Medieval Hellenism that brings Modern Hellenism to life in the 13<sup>th</sup> century. A genealogy connects these Hellenisms :

Ancient Hellenism	father	great-great-grandfather
Macedonian Hellenism	son	great-grandfather
Christian Hellenism	grandson	grandfather
Medieval Hellenism	great-grandson	father
Modern Hellenism	great-great-grandson	son.

(no mothers nor daughters; only fathers and sons!)

The specific features, that differentiate or rather give substance to each Hellenism, are formed according to the “*historical order*” prescribed by Divine Providence, in other words, the “*mission*” or the “*final aim*”. These orders are related to the nation’s contribution to world history or that expected in the future.

The crucial question is the relation of these Hellenisms to the nation. The exploration of the internal logic is not helpful here. On the contrary, if we approach the question from a morphological point of view, we soon realize that it is actually a transfer into the history of the religious concept of the Holy Trinity: the same essence in multiple expressions. The schema eventually has a theological point of reference which became obvious in Droysen’s use of the term Hellenism, even if Paparrigopoulos uses it in a different way.<sup>35</sup> This idea has been transformed and diffused. A century later, the Marxist historian Nikolaos Svoronos will face the same problem: “*Hellenism as a metaphysical entity, as a *sui generis* genre, does not*

<sup>33</sup> Georgios Hatzidakis, *Syntomas istoria tis ellinikis glossis* (Athens 1915)

<sup>34</sup> Nikolaos Politis, *Meleti epi tou viou ton neoteron Ellinon. Neoelliniki Mythologia*, (Athens 1871).

<sup>35</sup> This idea is expressed in a text titled “*Theologie der Geschichte*” with which he prefaced the 1843 edition of the *Geschichte des Hellenismus*. The relationship between theology and history is implemented in the development of history itself where the philosophy of history constitutes a transitional phase. The philosophy of history, of course, contributes to the secularization of history but on the other hand it is entirely related to religious perceptions.

*participate in the changes of the environment and as a result, it remains continuous, coherent and unchanging in its qualities* ”.<sup>36</sup> National historiography, even in its Marxist version, remained founded on metaphysics.

The conceptual construct of multiple Hellenisms solves various problems that neither the theory of revival nor the theory of continuity could solve, because the narrative structure of Hellenisms combines the unity through difference. The revival survives within the schema of continuation. In Paparrigopoulos' work, the rise of Modern Hellenism in the 13<sup>th</sup> century, is related to the rediscovery of Ancient Hellenism: “*The fall of Constantinople* (to the Crusaders, 1204) *reorientates our minds and hearts towards historical Athens* ”. It is Ancient Hellenism that provides the political element to Modern Hellenism and makes national independence possible without the intervention of Europe, and the impact of Renaissance and Enlightenment. So, the revival turns into a radical political identity. The historical argument here is that national consciousness was the result of the elaboration of political consciousness, through its relation with the civic culture of classical Greece. Nevertheless, the difficult and vague compatibility between Hellenism and the Greek Nation has survived until now. In contemporary historical culture, the greater number of references to the term Hellenism than to the term Greek Nation conceals a contempt of the political process by which the Greek nation has been constituted and the downgrading of citizenship to the status of an ethnonationalistic definition of Greek identity. In this way Greek identity has been purified of "alien" elements - most obvious in the politics and popular attitudes towards minorities in Greece, through the elaboration of the term Hellenism, an ethnocultural definition of the nation has been imposed.

## 5. Cultural history

One of the problems related to the issue of different Hellenisms was the historical appropriation of the periods since the disintegration of the Byzantine Empire in 1204. The period of the Frankish occupation was mingled with the Byzantine period but it was also connected with the period of the Venetian occupation which in turn was interwoven with that of Ottoman Rule. New axes were necessary for the incorporation of this field to the national narrative, and new meanings needed to be attributed to it. Greek historiography, without the central backbone of political history, has used as a substitute, cultural history.

The first pathway, which originated from western historiography and more precisely from Renaissance historiography, was the contribution of Byzantine scholars to the Italian Humanism the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> centuries, which extended to the myth that the Greeks were the cause of the revival of the civilization in modern Europe<sup>37</sup>. This powerful myth largely influenced the formation of the Greek national myth, the Great Idea. “*Greece is destined to enlighten the West with its decline and the East with its resurrection* ”<sup>38</sup>. It was expected, of course, that this specific perception, that stressed

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<sup>36</sup> Nikos Svoronos, ‘Reflections on an Introduction in Neohellenic History’ in *Analekta Neoellinikis Istorias kai Istorioriographias* (Athens 1982) p.71.

<sup>37</sup> Deno Geanakoplos, *Greek Scholars in Venice* (Harvard 1962), N.G. Wilson, *From Byzantium to Italy. Greek Studies in Italian renaissance* (London 1992)

<sup>38</sup> In this metaphor, used by the Prime minister Ioannis Koletis (1844), Greece is like a candle. With the fall of the Byzantine Empire, the light was migrated to the West, but with the national revolution of 1821 the candle is destined to enlighten the East . K. Th. Dimaras, *Romantismos* (Athens 1982) pp. 405-407.

the nation's contribution to world history, would be pointed out, not only as an accidental event in world history but more or less through the perspective of " *The History of the Greek education from the fall of Constantinople till 1821* " <sup>39</sup> Since education was an indication of progress, it was obvious that the history of the progress of the nation would emphasize the history of the expansion of education. The interest in scholars that promoted the interaction between Byzantium and the West had already been introduced by Andreas Moustoxidis and his periodical *Hellenomnimon* (1843-1847) <sup>40</sup>. The origins of modern Hellenism were pursued in the history of literature and erudition. From literature to the history of language, research was mainly orientated towards the vernacular texts of the last centuries of the Byzantine Empire with specific emphasis on literature and culture in Crete during the five centuries of Venetian rule. So, scholars turned to the Venetian archives, which provided new ground for Greek historiography<sup>41</sup>. In order to be incorporated into the national narrative, the history of the Venetian period was adapted to the demands of national ideology.

*"in an a posteriori judgment, one would say that this subjugation of Hellenism by Western peoples has proved fatal ever since. Due to the interaction of the two elements (Greek and Latin), the revival of art and scholarship became possible in the West"* <sup>42</sup>.

The most conspicuous attempt concerns the exploration of the characteristics of the Hellenic "soul" in the works of Cretan literature and painting, and the emergence of the idea of a Greek Renaissance through Cretan culture<sup>43</sup>. In this way, cultural history filled the gap in the absence of the political supremacy of the nation. It is remarkable to say, therefore, that cultural history dealing with the biographies of literary men and literature, and not political history, was the traditional genre for Modern Greek historiography.

## 6. The Ottoman legacy

A great problem for Greek historiography was the appropriation of four centuries of Ottoman rule from 1453 till 1821, called "Turkokratia" (Turkish occupation). Through this term, four centuries has been detached from a longer period of the

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<sup>39</sup> This was the title of the 4th Rodokanakeios Literary Competition (1865) in which Constantinos Sathas was awarded the first prize for his work *Neoelliniki philologia Biographiai ton en tois grammasi dialampsanton Ellinon apo tis kataliseos tis Vizantinis Aftokratorias mehri tis Ellinikis Ethnegersias ( 1453-1821 ) ( Neohellenic Literature. Biographies of distinguished Greek scholars from the decline of the Byzantine Empire till the Greek resurrection ),* (Athens 1868).

<sup>40</sup> Andreas Moustoxidis was an intellectual from Corfu, who attempted to connect Italian to Ionian scholarship. His work belongs partly to Italian Literature.

<sup>41</sup> M. Manousakas, 'Syntomos episkopisis ton peri tin Venetokratopumenin Kritin ereknon' *Kritika Chronika*, 23,2 (1971) pp. 245-308

<sup>42</sup> Spyridon Theotokis, *Eisagogi eis tin ereknan ton mnimeion tis istorias tou ellinismou kai idia tis Kritis en to kratiko archeio tou Venetikou kratous* (Corfu 1926), p. 3.

<sup>43</sup> George Seferis, *Dokimes* (Athens 1981) pp.268-319, David Holton (ed.) *Logotechnia kai koinonia stin Kriti tis Anagennisis* (Irakleio 1997), Nikos Chatzinikolaou, 'Ethnikistikes diekdikiseis tou Dominikou Theotokopoulou' in Jose Alvarez Lopera (ed.), *El Greco. Tautotita kai Metamorfosi: Kriti, Italia, Ispania* (Milano 1999), pp.61-87

Ottoman presence in the north-eastern Mediterranean, dating from the 11<sup>th</sup> to the second decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. For 19<sup>th</sup> century Greek society, this period was its immediate past, still alive in its everyday culture, although in the cultural debate has been suppressed, as a cause of the backwardness of Greece. At the same time was mythologized, as the nest of national virtues. In historiography “Turkokratia” has been considered as a passive period of slavery and at the same time as a long prologue to the National Revolution. According to Paparrigopoulos, “*In the years of slavery, there were created the military, bourgeois and intellectual forces that realized the Greek Revolution*”. The history of this period was mixed with historical mythology, seeking to justify the ideological, social and political balance of power in post-revolutionary Greece. It should be pointed out that each historical period was appropriated through a different discourse. If the canon of Greek history was defined by Paparrigopoulos, the epistemological rupture in neohellenic historiography is related to the importation of historical positivism by Spyridon Lambros<sup>44</sup>. This rupture concerned not only the establishment of a positivistic discourse. While the nation had been convinced that all preceding historical periods belonged to it, the new social and further cultural demands of the 20<sup>th</sup> century needed a different knowledge of this recent past.

## 7. Demoticism and Socialism

One of the most important intellectual movements at the end of 19<sup>th</sup> and at the beginning of 20th century, was Demoticism, the movement for the adoption of the vernacular as the official language. Demoticism proposed the term *Romiosyni* instead of *Hellenism* for the Greek identity. The term disassociates modern Greek identity from the classical past, and adopts a more diffused, popular and immediate feeling for identity, that of Romaioi, the self-nomination of Greeks during the Byzantine and Ottoman centuries. However, the perception of Demoticism for the national Past was not different from the official one. Demoticism was basically aiming at the transformation of the discourse of national identity through literature and linguistic change and not exclusively through historical writing. In spite of that, Demoticists were accused of attempting to disrupt the unity of national history and so, in response, they devoted little attention to history writing. In their discussions, they preferred sociology to history. However, they managed, to graft onto the hegemonic version of Greek continuity a strong (and positive) sensitivity towards the nation’s recent past and particularly towards the cultural tradition of recent periods<sup>45</sup>.

The hegemonic version of history was not challenged even by socialists and marxists. However, they did challenge the prevailing version of the Greek revolution, mainly through the work of George Skliros (*Our Social Question*, Athens 1908) and Yannis Kordatos (*The Social Significance of the Revolution of 1821*, Athens 1924) and thus provoked an intense political debate on the origins of the Revolution and its agency. This debate was the result of a reorientation of Greek intellectuals’ interest from the Unification of the Nation towards the “social question” under the influence of the Socialist Revolution in Russia and the emergence of the Greek socialist movement<sup>46</sup>.

<sup>44</sup> Effi Gazi, *Spyridon Lambros (1851-1919): “Scientific” History in national perspective in nineteenth century Greece* (PhD Thesis, EUI, Florence 1997)

<sup>45</sup> Dimitris Tziovas, *The Nationalism of the Demoticism and its Impact on their Literary Theory (1888-1930)* (Amsterdam 1986)

<sup>46</sup> George Dertilis, ‘I Istoriorafia tou neoterou ellinismou simera’, *Sygkrona Themata* 36-37 (1988), pp.84-93

The influx of Greek populations from Asia Minor and the Balkans into Greece in 1922, the social crisis of the interwar years and World War II, including the Resistance and the Civil War, posed the question of the redefinition of national identity. Thus, the first serious works on Greek society during Ottoman rule, were those of Michael Sakellariou<sup>47</sup>, Apostolos Vakalopoulos<sup>48</sup>, Nikos Svoronos<sup>49</sup> and Costantinos Dimaras<sup>50</sup>, which laid the path for a new approach to the period of "Turkokratia" and the foundations of the field of the modern Greek historiography in the years during and after World War II.

In order to be effective, the appropriation of "Turkokratia" needed an interpretative narrative. It was offered by Dimaras, who introduced the term "Neohellenic Enlightenment" to the historical discourse in 1945. Through this term, all events of the "Turkokratia" were viewed in a different perspective. Dimaras introduced a new organisation of time, a new discourse and new research priorities that meant a shift in the paradigm relating to the period. Through this schema, Hellenism gains an active role in the period of Ottoman rule and the historical narrative gains coherence and orientation. Thus, a "missing" period was integrated into the national time. The national narrative composed by Paparrigopoulos was concluded by the Dimaras narrative but this conclusion had a paradoxical effect. In his writings, Dimaras had activated the debate on the issue of national identity, offering alternative suggestions, and new concepts that came from western Europe related to the construction of the nation. Dimaras emphasized the role of the intellectuals, the development of their communicative networks, their social mobility. In this way, Dimaras managed to reveal the processes and the constituent elements of nation-building and its self-consciousness. In this way, he deconstructed the prevailing representations of the nation, even though he himself was not familiar with the interpretative theories of the nation. On the other hand, however, while integrating a period within historical time and revealing the process of its construction, he did not deconstruct the broader schema of national time created by Paparrigopoulos.

In addition to Dimaras, another strong influence on the studies on "Turkokratia" came from the work of Nikos Svoronos. He emphasized the economic and social history of the period and particularly the emergence of a class with modern economic activities. This thematic shift reoriented historical studies from the political and cultural events of the Greek Revolution to the social realities in the period which preceded it. However, Svoronos' influence on the wider public is chiefly due to his *Histoire de la Grece Moderne*.<sup>51</sup> If in the Enlightenment School the schema of history was the modernist elite versus the inert masses, the schema of Marxist history, inspired by Svoronos, was "society and people" versus "State" and the "mechanisms of local and foreign power".

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<sup>47</sup> Michael Sakellariou *I Peloponnisos kata tin defteran Tourkokratia, 1715-1821* (Athens 1939)

<sup>48</sup> Apostolos Vakalopoulos, *Prostiges kai Prosfigikon Zitima kata tin Ellinikin Epanastasin tou 1821* ( Thessaloniki 1939 )

<sup>49</sup> Nikos Svoronos, *Le Commerce de Salonique au XVIIIe siecle* (Paris 1956)

<sup>50</sup> K.Th.Dimaras, *Istoria tis Neoellinikis Logotechnias* (Athens 1945)

<sup>51</sup> Nikos Svoronos, *Histoire de la Grece Moderne* (Paris 1955), Greek edition: *Episkopisi tis Neoellinikis Istorias* (Athens 1975).

## 7. History and Aesthetics

The literature of the modernist "Generation of '30s", the interest in popular art (Angeliki Hatzimihali) and the transformation of the aesthetic canon in the interwar period (Dimitris Pikionis, Fotis Kontoglou) had provided the wider cultural framework within which a new reading of the history of the Turkokratia became possible. It is specifically the period of the Resistance to the German Occupation that activated the references to the Revolution of 1821 and created historical analogies. Thus, the historical appropriation of the period of the Ottoman rule, came in the 20<sup>th</sup> century and brought as a consequence, the late study of the Modern Greek history and its isolation from the Ottoman and Balkan context. The first Professor of the Modern Greek history at the University of Athens was appointed as late as 1937.

Through these experiences came, firstly, a popular reading of the hegemonic scheme of history, and, secondly, a connection between history and aesthetics. The popular reading of history meant a plot in which the Greek people were the victims of foreign intervention and popular efforts for progress were frustrated by imposed regimes. The marxist and anti-imperialist spirit of this time is obvious in this reading. The connection between history and aesthetics meant the historization of aesthetics and the aesthetization of history. The discourses during the interwar years about "*Hellenikotita*" (the equivalent of *Hispanidad* or *Italianita*) resulted in a search for authenticity in the tradition and contributed to a consideration of history as part of the aesthetic canon, from the high cultural activities to popular entertainment<sup>52</sup>. The modernist poetry of Yannis Ritsos, George Seferis and Odiseas Elitis, and the popularization of poetry through the music of Mikis Theodorakis and Manos Hatzidakis in the postwar period, spread this sentimental affection for national history. This popular reading of history, enriched by aesthetics, came out with the end of the dictatorship in 1974. So, in the eighties, there was a renewed attachment to national history politicized by the socialists of Andreas Papandreou: "*Greece for the Greeks*". When the socialist ideals sank after 1989, what remained was the popular attachment to the great historical continuities, Hellenism and Orthodoxy. With the disappearance of anti-imperialism, a kind of nativism with anti-western colors surfaced. In this way, it is not strange that when the "Macedonian crisis" explodes in 1991-93, this attachment to history prevailed over all other political considerations. Politicians had argued like historians. History, even without historians, had become a decisive force for determining politics<sup>53</sup>.

## 8. The modernization of national history

The major issue of the modernization of national history coincided with an attempt at the renovation of neohellenic historiography. However, the postwar period was not favorable for the development of research. Even the suspicion that historical work disputed the official version of history was enough to incur legal consequences for the author. Thus, in 1955, when Nicolas Svoronos published his *Histoire de la Grece Moderne* in Paris, he was deprived of his passport. It took more than 20 years after the end of the War for modern Greek history to be incorporated into the national narrative. In the last twenty years, the majority of Greek historians have been influenced, by the French School of Annales with a tint of western Marxism, by the

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<sup>52</sup> Dimitris Tziovas, *Oi metamorfoseis tou ethnismou kai to ideologima tis ellinikotitas sto mesopolemo* (Athens 1989)

<sup>53</sup> A.Liakos 'La crise dans les Balkans et le Nationalisme en Grece', *Science(s) Politique(s)* 2-3(1993) pp.179-193

English-American social science, and, more or less, by the school of the history of the Greek Enlightenment, created by Dimaras. The traditional history of the Nation has been substituted by the new history of the society. This state of the craft created a critical counterbalance to the pressure of nationalism. The criticism of the national ideology and representations, the construction of the national narrative and identity, as well as the history of the Greek minorities, emerged in '90s, as new topics in Greek historiography. Yet despite what is happening within the community of historians, the structure of national time, elaborated over the past two centuries, is sustained in the public use of history and in the historical culture. Paraphrasing the poem of Seferis, *“the marble head which exhausts our elbows, is difficult to set it down»*.