

1 HELLAS OF DIASPORA

Over the last 3000 years Greeks have always perceived themselves as an elect people. Their history of two thousand years under foreign dominion portrays the sufferings of a nation, which attained the highest degree of civilisation in antiquity. Yet, all those years have not eradicated their national character and culture, including their language, nor reduced their national ambitions.

During classical antiquity the Greek identity was established through language, culture and superiority in science, technology and letters. Soon after, via Alexander the Great and the unified Greek army, they established the first real empire of the world spreading Hellenism across three continents and leading the genesis of the Eastern Hellenic world. Later, Greeks appeared as Byzantines in a Christian Empire (330–1453 AD), which alone guarded and disseminated the true faith, the Orthodoxy. Yet in historical and political terms, it was only in 1830 that the Greek people achieved an exclusive sovereign identity through the establishment of a modern Greek state. This was made possible only with the active support of the European Powers, the influence of the utilitarian western tradition and institutional life, and the active moral and financial contribution of the Greek communities scattered throughout Europe since the middle of the fifteenth century. Prior to the foundation of the Greek state, Greeks lived for almost five hundred years as a subject *millet* (people) in the Ottoman Empire distinguished only by their religious affiliation. The Greek War for Independence (1821–9) represented the first revolution by a Christian oppressed nation against the Ottomans and its successful

outcome inspired other Balkan millets to rise against them, thus causing the disintegration of their Empire.

Greek expatriation has also been an intense phenomenon over the last 3000 years, with more than 40 per cent of Greeks residing, at any given time, outside the national borders of Greece. This phenomenon has been the outcome of a national ambition to expand and survive or the consequence of a long period of foreign domination. This massive exodus took initially the form of colonisation from the eighth to fifth century BC, followed by the dispersion of thousands of Greeks precipitated by military campaigns or long term occupations of Greece. This dispersion took the form of a Diaspora and was best manifested during the Hellenistic era (352–160 BC), the Roman conquest of the Greek world (160 BC to 350 AD), and the fall of Byzantium to the Ottoman Sultans (1453–1821). The last exodus of the Greeks took the form of migration and commenced in massive numbers during the second last decade of the nineteenth century. Until 1974, they settled in almost 150 countries around the world, carrying with them their heritage together with their homeland's political divisions and national rivalries.

The era of Hellenic colonisation commenced from the eighth century BC, spreading Greeks over colonies around the entire Mediterranean and Black Seas, in search of new ports and fertile lands. Wishing to secure their lives, thousands of Greek colonists 'emigrated' and built over one hundred prosperous colonies, in North Africa, South Europe, especially Sicily and South Italy (*Magna Graecia*), South Russia and the Crimean peninsula, the Levant and the whole of Asia Minor. These colonies established robust administrations and managed to flourish both financially and socially, even surpassing, in some cases, their metropolis city-states with which they usually maintained amicable relations and to which they turned in times of need. Odessa, Marseilles, Nice, Tripolis and the affluent states of south Italy and Sicily including Catania and Syracuse were some of these colonies. These expatriate Greek colonists brought with them the Hellenic culture and language, influencing the neighbouring foreign peoples and in many instances Hellenising them. Greek sailors and merchants, poets and orators travelled within the Mediterranean Sea, from colony to colony, transforming the entire region into a Greek world.

During the classical years (c. 490–350 BC) Greek expatriation slowed for domestic and external reasons. Following the victorious wars against the Persians (490–479 BC), the Athenian hegemony led *Hellas* to prosperity and affluence. Greek theatre, schools of thought

and art, architecture and poetry, sciences and technology offered to the world unsurpassable knowledge and the ethos of *kallos* (beauty). The Golden Age of Athens and its cultural and spiritual enhancement attracted many thousands of Greek and foreign immigrants as well as the envy of her opponent city-states. Greek urban centres, especially Athens, were heavily populated and the fruits of classical civilisation were communicated to the entire then known world via the common Greek (Attic) language. The moral obligation of the metropolis cities to support their colonies coupled with unscrupulous greediness, political arrogance and demagogical attitudes led to the downfall of the Athenian hegemony and with it the beginning of the demise of the classical era. Sparta and her allies, following the unwise Sicilian expedition masterminded by the ambitious and imperialist Athenian general and statesman Alcibiades and the eventual destruction of the Athenian army, defeated Athens. Immediately after the Peloponnesian War (431–301 BC), Athens re-emerged ephemerally as the cultural cornerstone of Greece. This was manifested in Platonic philosophy, the appearance of the new comedy and the contribution of many charismatic philosophers, poets, orators and artists. However, Athens was already militarily exhausted; her navy was destroyed; her population was decimated by successive plagues; her income and wealth, produced of her hegemony over other Greek cities, dwindled. Thus the decline was inevitable. This led other Greek city-states to emerge into prominence. The Boeotian city of Thebes and her allies rose to power, as did the Macedonian royal dynasty of Philip and his son, Alexander the Great. They shaped the history of Hellas and the entire western world. The ascendant dynasty claimed direct descent from the Greek ancestry and tradition, and became the advocate of the Greek heritage and language, spreading them to three continents.

Following the conquest of Persia and her allies by the united Greek armies of Alexander the Great and his successors, thousands of Greeks dispersed and established prosperous centres of the Hellenistic world in Egypt and Asia, including Alexandria, Antioch and Ephesus. These commercial cities emerged culturally in a vacuum, with no local traditions of their own. They were the outcome of the Greek Diaspora and their main language and character was Greek. During the years of the Hellenisation of the eastern world thousands of Greeks were scattered from Macedonia to India and Afghanistan and from Thebes in Egypt to Alexandria Eschate in Russia, disseminating Greek culture and language. This led to the spread of Greek arts and thought to the rest of the known world; to the promotion of the sciences

of medicine, politics, mathematics, architecture, philosophy and astronomy; and to the transfer of the centre of Hellas from Athens to Alexandria. The relocation of the centre of Hellas from Greece to Egypt brought the Hellenic civilisation and tradition closer and more accessible to those nations and peoples of the East, including Africa and the Levant.

After the devastation of the Roman conquest, the destruction of Corinth, the obliteration of Macedonia and the massacre of the Athenians many Greeks seeking safety found refuge in other parts of the world. Under the Romans, the Greeks formed only an insignificant portion of a vast empire and did not play any noteworthy political role. Yet, the conquerors were culturally defeated. The Hellenic cultural dispersion continued, spreading the enlightenment of classical Greece within the borders of the Roman Empire. Greek teachers, pedagogues, poets, orators and artisans were in high demand by the Roman rulers to educate their offspring and thus be acculturated. Famous foreign historians and leaders of the time, including Josephus, Appianos, Lucian, Arianus, Tatius Achilleus, Cassius Deion, Emperor Marcus Aurelius and the Evangelists commenced writing in Greek, instead of their native tongue, Latin or Aramaic. In this way their work circulated to a larger readership and became popular and widespread. The most fundamental texts of western civilisation and Christian scripture were formulated and transmitted through the ages via the Greek language. During this period, certain Greek Christian communities were also scattered across the Roman Empire before it adopted Christianity as the state religion.

The rise of the Christian theocratic Eastern Roman Empire (330–1453) in the heart of the Eastern Hellenic world offered the Greek language and culture an important role to play. That the Eastern Roman Empire was also theocratic further enhanced this importance. Yet, official Byzantium, its administration and its Christian Emperor, were the enemies of Hellenism, representing to the Greeks paganism and polytheism. The moral and religious values of the Hellenic antiquity were hostile to Byzantium, God's earthly kingdom. The hostility led to the closure of the philosophical school of Athens by the Emperor Justinian in the sixth century, the termination of the Olympic Games and the devastation of Olympia by Emperor Theodosius. The terms *Hellene* and *ethnos* (nation) were treated with distaste, perceived to indicate the heretic, the barbarian and the pagan. Even the first Ecumenical Patriarch after the fall of Byzantium to the Ottomans, the controversial Gennadios (George) Scholarios refused to allow himself to be called

Hellene. Yet notwithstanding this official antagonism to Hellenism as a philosophical and moral movement, and in spite of a lack of ethnic identification with the ancient Greeks, the Byzantines maintained a tradition of Hellenic culture while the Greeks were identified with the imperial administration, particularly from the accession of Leo the Isaurian (716). This was implemented via the secular avenues of the Greek language and the Greek literature, which were fully adopted. Classical education and knowledge of the ancient Greek language were indispensable prerequisites for any advancement to the higher ranks of the Byzantine administration. This situation led to the formation of an intellectual aristocracy, admitting only those with a Hellenic education.

Despite the official hostility of the Byzantines to platonic ideas and the moral values of Hellenism, this intellectual élite became the claimants of the Hellenic heritage and propagators of Greek historical identity and continuity. During the first half of the fifteenth century, this 'Hellenising' movement, led by George Gemistos Pletho, Cardinal Isidorus, Constantinos Laskareos, Ioannis Argyropoulos, Manuel Chrysoloras, Cardinal Bessarion, Antonicus, George of Trapezund, Theodore Gazas and other prominent classical scholars was directed to both the hierarchy of the increasingly frail Byzantium as well as to the 'schismatic' Christian West, the latter demanding, in return for assistance to resist the Turkish insurrection, that Byzantium and the Orthodox Church acknowledge the universal authority of the Pope. Pletho, representing the changing attitudes towards the ancient Greek world, idealistically claimed to Emperor Manuel II that the people of mainland Greece were the racial and spiritual descendants of the old Hellenes:

We over whom you rule and hold sway are Hellenes by race, as is demonstrated by our language and ancestral education. And for Hellenes there is no more proper and peculiar land to be found than the Peloponnese, together with the neighbouring part of Europe and the islands that lie near to it. For it appears that the same Hellenes have always inhabited this land, as far as the memory of man reaches back: none lived here before them. Have immigrants occupied it and expelled the others, later to be expelled themselves in the same way? No, on the contrary, the Hellenes themselves appear always to have been its possessors, and never to have left it . . .

The history of the Greek nation demonstrates the degree of human determination and resilience. Neither the Roman Caesars, nor the

Frankish princes, any more than the Turkish sultans were able to interrupt the continual broadcast of a political and cultural inheritance by each generation of the Greek race to its successors. As British historian G. Finley (1877: xxii), a contemporary and associate of Lord Byron, wrote in May 1843:

The Greeks are the only existing representatives of the ancient world. They have maintained possession of their country, their language, and their social organization, against physical and moral forces, which have swept from the face of the earth all their contemporaries, friends and enemies. It can hardly be disputed that the preservation of their national existence is to be partly attributed to the institutions that they have received from their ancestors.

Nevertheless, Greek movements in the Diaspora maintained a strong momentum during the third century AD with the ravages of the Teutonic Herules and the ruthless incursions of the Goths and Alaric in the fourth century. The exodus continued with the massive invasions of the Slavs and their subsequent settlement during the sixth and seventh centuries and the raids of the Albanians in the fourteenth century. After the destruction of Constantinople by the Crusaders in 1204 and their conquest of a large portion of Byzantium, the severity of the Latin influence and domination forced many Greeks to flee to Asia. The expatriation of Greeks sustained its momentum following the failure to implement the Council of Ferrara-Florence's agreement 'Laetentur Coeli' (1439) for the union of the Orthodox and the Roman Churches. The notion of orthodoxy of the 'true faith', where the names of Hellene and Plato were still alien, prevailed over the 'schismatic' and Aristotelian Latin and its Pope. After all, the ideas expressed by the Greeks participating in the Council, including Byzantine Emperor Ioannis VIII Paleologos, were shared only by a small section of the Byzantine educated classes and still less among the inhabitants of Hellas, who remained loyal to the Orthodox Christian tradition. Despite the Council's failure, its chief result was to bring many Greeks to Italy and central Europe, thus strengthening the cultural connection between East and West. In any case, the Turkish conquest that followed, reminiscent of the biblical Babylonian captivity, represented for the Byzantine masses a temporary punishment for the sins, which His people committed before God.

Given the aforementioned constraints, until the last decades of the fourteenth century the Hellenic world did not create any substantial contact with the then western European tradition and institutional life, which began to develop mainly in Italy by the early thirteenth

century. Greek intellectuals and soldiers began their sporadic dispersion towards the European kingdoms and states around the late thirteenth century in anticipation of employment and a more secure environment. However, larger waves of Greek immigrants began to settle in southern and central Europe during the last seventy years before the fall of Constantinople in 1453. During the Ottoman rule (1453–1821) Greeks suffered degradation and calamities, the imposition of unbearable taxes and hostile attitudes to the *rayiades* (slaves), leading to a massive exodus of Greeks, initially towards Europe and, later on, to the rest of the world, thus establishing trans-territorial Hellenism or the Hellenic Diaspora.

The Greeks in Diaspora played a key role in the establishment of the modern Greek state (1830) and the post-independence development of Greece, and substantially contributed to the cultural, political, economic and social welfare of the host countries where Greeks had settled. The patriotic role of the Greek communities diminished after the establishment of the Greek state; nevertheless, it remained robust in any international crisis affecting Greece or Cyprus. The term ‘Hellenic Diaspora’ characterizes those Greeks, who despite their temporary or permanent expatriation to foreign lands for any reason, continue to maintain cultural, political, economic or social relations with their country of ancestry and descent. The total population of those people currently residing outside the boundaries of Greece and Cyprus could be estimated between 4 000 000 to 4 500 000. The Greeks, upon their arrival in the host country, establish their own separate social groups, which they call *paroiktes* (communities) and identify themselves as different from the mainstream society. These communities do not require the active participation or affiliation of their members. During antiquity the term *paroikia* (community) was closely linked with the *apoikia* (colony), the difference being in the distance separating them from the metropolis, rather than the structure of the group. The equivalent commonly accepted term in western European bibliography was *colonia*. The members of the Greek community in any given host country were organised in distinct ethno-religious entities, called *koinotetes* (communities). Although most of the Greek communities in Diaspora were united in cases of imminent strife or danger to Greece or Cyprus, nevertheless constant intra-community dissension in times of peace led to schisms and serious rifts. During the initial years of the Hellenic Diaspora the conflicts were mainly religious, between those aspiring to a United Catholic Church under the primacy of the Holy See in Rome and those remaining loyal to the Ecumenical Patriarchate in

Constantinople. Later on, intra-community splits occurred for reasons of political ideology, the preferred type and structure of the organisation or personal animosities. Greek community organisations, upon their establishment, acquired legal status from the host country.

Until the establishment of the world Council for Greeks Abroad (SAE) in 1989, there was no administrative linkage between the organised Greek communities in Diaspora and Greece or Cyprus. Initially, the Church of Greece (1908–25) and the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople thereafter, in the absence of the Greek State in Diaspora, played an ethno-religious role, as was the case during the stony years of the Ottoman Rule (1453–1821), often with catastrophic results.

During their initial exodus (1400–1860) Greeks were scattered in well-known ports and commercial cities throughout Europe, where they occupied themselves first with commerce and later on with navigation, banking, insurance and other industries. The settlement in most urban centres was numerically very limited. Greek migration was precipitated by the harsh land occupancy laws introduced by the Ottoman Empire. Demographic pressures followed, exerted on the Greek-speaking Christian population because of massive numbers of Muslim settlers especially in the plains and fertile regions of the empire and the movement of the peasantry to more secure parts. A large portion of those emigrating settled in countries around the Danube River, especially Moldavia, Vlachia and Romania. Earlier (late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries), there was a sizeable exodus of scholars and charismatic intellectuals, experts in classical studies and ardent masters of the ancient Greek language, heading towards central and northern Italy and playing an important role in the Italian Renaissance. A smaller number of Greek soldiers, remnants of Byzantium, left for France and England. During the second half of the fifteenth century the expatriation currents increased and most Greeks settled in southern Italy. Another group of 4000 Greeks sought refuge in the Spanish colonies in Italy. Most of them later crossed to Spain, where they settled in Toledo and from this group many travelled as far as Central and South America. The wave of migration increased dramatically 200 years later with the termination of the Venetian occupation of Euboea and Crete (1645–69), when thousands of islander Greeks fled from Turkish rule to seek refuge in Italy. The constant warfare of the European countries with the Ottoman Empire generated the massive exodus of Greeks towards Europe. Thus, hundreds of Greeks from the Dodekanese fled to Malta (1530) and from Rhodes to Italy (1522),

while during the period 1532–4 more than 6000 Greeks from the western Peloponnese sought refuge in Sicily (Palermo, Syracuse and Messina) and Italy (Naples, Brindisi, Regio di Calabria), where they established local Greek communities. Substantial numbers of Greeks emigrated to Europe following the fall of Nafplion and Monemvasia (1540–1) and of Cyprus (1570–1) to the Turks.

Another cause of expatriation was the Russian–Turkish Wars (1768–74) and (1787–92), especially from the Peloponnese and the islands of the Cyclades. Some of the fleeing Greeks moved to the British-occupied Ionian Islands, however, the majority dispersed throughout central Europe, Russia and the cities of Venice, Napoli, Livorno, Trieste and Minorca. During the beginning of the Greek War for Independence (25 March 1821) thousands of Greeks left their ancestral homes from Smyrna, Kydonies (Aivali), Constantinople, Cyprus, the islands of the Aegean, Macedonia and the Peloponnese. However, they repatriated immediately after the establishment of the modern Greek state in 1830.

During the long period between 1390 and 1821, those Greek immigrants living in Europe had better cultural, social and political opportunities to realise the political problem of their country, if compared with those living under the Ottoman yoke. The former understood that a compromise between the values of the Greek Orthodox tradition and the need to modernise their society with the prevailing western concepts was the ideal situation. The influence exerted on Greek immigrants by the societies of European countries (primarily France and Italy) via the Renaissance was also based on the culture and thought of the ancient Greek world. The Greek manuscripts were initially translated into Latin during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries from Arabic, whereas Greek literature began to spread to the West during the fourteenth century with the arrival of Byzantine scholars and the visits of Italian humanists to Constantinople. Thus for the Greek immigrants living in the Diaspora of Europe this was not a foreign influence but rather a repatriation of the ancient Greek cultural tradition. This time the idealisation of the classical golden age of ancient Greece was not emerging from the Greeks and their bibliography. The European intellectuals themselves, including the divine Petrarch, argued that only Greek and Latin authors should be studied for guidance on how to live, how to enjoy nature, how to cultivate friendship and so on. The whole pattern of education for citizenship, the thoughts about civil and social order, the norms of a rationalistic interpretation of life were concepts well known to the Greek intellectuals, students and

merchants residing in European countries. The educational reorientation in Europe had been an intellectual revolt replacing the theocratic doctrine of the universe with the capacity of the human individual. The humanist ideology emerging amongst those Greek immigrants scattered in Europe, as merchants in large commercial centres, as students in the Venetian Republic's University of Padua and the University of Bologna was based now on the dogma that the Greek political problem could only be resolved with the implementation of western type of administration. To implement this it was necessary to expel the Turks from the Greek regions with the military assistance of the Christian European countries. These ideas were not isolated to within the European Greek communities but were also spread throughout Greece, via those Greek students studying abroad, Greek merchants, sailors, and shipping agents, and via the circulation of printed material. Following a number of commercial treaties and the signing of charters of privileges between the Ottomans and France and England (sixteenth and seventeenth centuries) the Greek lands and in particular the Greek islands received the enlightened visit of a large number of scholars and well educated merchants carrying with them the dream of the liberation of Hellas.

The exposure of the Greeks to the 'Hellenised' western ideals was paying back. The Greeks were re-emerging as the first 'westernised' ethnic group in eastern Europe inspired by the concepts of liberalism and humanism. The Greeks of the Diaspora undertook also the important role of infiltrating the various regions under Ottoman rule with a large Greek population, involving diplomats, merchants, missionaries and intellectuals, and thus they were breaking their cultural and political isolation. During the centuries of the Turkish occupation, the Christian Orthodox Church in Greek lands, from the Peloponnese to Macedonia, remained idle, as it had been in Byzantine times, unable to produce any radical thought. The Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople was proclaimed by the ruling Sultans not simply the spiritual but also the temporal ruler *milletbashi* (national leader) and enjoyed privileges for the entire civil and ecclesiastical administration of the Christian *millet* (nation). Thus, the Greeks under Turkish rule remained as anti-western as they used to be when they were masters of their own empire, Byzantium. Conservative ecclesiastic attitudes, portraying western Europe as apostates from the 'true faith' coupled with the collective memory of the Crusaders of 1204, who sacked Constantinople and imposed their long occupation, continued to generate legacies of extreme suspicion and rejection. This hostile sentiment