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Excerpt

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HISTORY
OF THE
GREEK REVOLUTION.

BOOK FIRST.

EVENTS PRECEDING THE REVOLUTION.

CHAPTER I.

THE CONDITION OF THE MODERN GREEKS.

"Countless generations of mankind
Depart, and leave no vestige where they trode."—WORDSWORTH.

NUMBERS OF THE GREEK AND TURKISH RACES IN EUROPE—PASHALIKS INTO WHICH THE COUNTRY INHABITED BY THE GREEKS WAS DIVIDED—EFFECT OF THE TREATY OF KAINARDGI ON THE CONDITION OF THE GREEKS—DISTINCTION BETWEEN GREEK ORTHODOXY AND GREEK NATIONALITY—SOCIAL DIVISIONS OF THE GREEK RACE—GREEKS IN MOLDAVIA AND VALLACHIA—CLERGY—PRIMATES—URBAN POPULATION—RURAL—MUNICIPAL INSTITUTIONS—STATE OF EDUCATION—CONDITION OF THE GREEKS—LAND-TAX—HARATCH—ROMELIOTS—ARMATOLI—PRIVILEGES OF THE PROVINCE OF AGRAPHA—KLEPHTS—MOREOTS—MOREOT KLEPHTS—MANIATS—ISLANDERS.

THIS History records the events which established the independence of Greece.

As long as the literature and the taste of the ancient Greeks continue to nurture scholars and inspire artists, modern Greece must be an object of interest to cultivated minds. Nor is the history of the modern Greeks

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unworthy of attention. The importance of the Greek race to the progress of European civilisation is not to be measured by its numerical strength, but by its social and religious influence in the East. Yet, even geographically, the Greeks occupy a wide extent of sea-coast, and the countries in which they dwell are so thinly peopled that they have ample room to multiply and form a populous nation. At present their influence extends far beyond the territories occupied by their race; for Greek priests and Greek teachers have transfused their language and their ideas into the greater part of the Christian population of European Turkey. They have thus constituted themselves the representatives of Eastern Christianity, and placed themselves in prominent opposition to their conquerors, the Othoman Turks, who invaded Europe as apostles of the religion of Mohammed. The Greeks, during their subjection to the yoke of a foreign nation and a hostile religion, never forgot that the land which they inhabited was the land of their fathers; and their antagonism to their alien and infidel masters, in the hour of their most abject servitude, presaged that their opposition must end in their destruction or deliverance.

The Greek Revolution came at last. It delivered a Christian nation from subjection to Mohammedanism, founded a new state in Europe, and extended the advantages of civil liberty to regions where despotism had for ages been indigenious. In order to unfold its causes, it is necessary to describe the condition of the Greek people and of the Othoman government during the early part of this century.

When the Greeks took up arms, the numbers of the Greek and Turkish races in Europe were in all probability nearly equal, and neither is supposed to have greatly exceeded two millions. The population of continental Greece, from Cape Tænaron to the northern-

most limit of the Greek language, was supposed to be ^{RETROSPECT.} not much greater than a million.¹ Another million may be added for the population of Crete, the Cyclades, the Ionian Islands, Constantinople, and the Greek maritime towns. If we add to this the Greek population of Asia Minor, the islands on the Asiatic coast, Cyprus, the trans-Danubian provinces, Russia, and other countries, the whole number of the Greek race cannot be estimated at more than three millions and a half.

Two Christian races in the sultan's European dominions were more numerous: the Vallachian or Roman race was not less than four millions; the Slavonian, including the Bulgarian, which speaks the Slavonic language, exceeded five millions.²

The provinces in which the Greeks formed a majority of the inhabitants were divided into six pashaliks of high rank, and many smaller districts, governed immediately by inferior pashas.

1. The most important of the great pashas who ruled the Greeks was the capitan-pasha. Besides being the minister of the marine, and the commander-in-chief of all the naval forces of the empire, he was governor-general of the islands, and of part of the coast of Greece. Inferior pashas administered the affairs of Cyprus, Rhodes, and Mytilene under his superintendence.

2. The pashalik of the Morea was regarded as one of the most valuable governments in European Turkey,

¹ This is the estimate of Colonel Leake, the most accurate and observant traveller in Greece.—*An Historical Outline of the Greek Revolution* (London, 1826), p. 20.

² Little dependence can be placed on the statistical accounts of the Othoman empire. Ubicini, one of the best authorities, in *Lettres sur la Turquie* (1853, p. 49), gives 60,000 as the population of Bassora. In the same year, the official registers at Constantinople were said to give only 5000; and English officers who visited it shortly after, during the Persian war, did not suppose that it could contain a greater number. In 1820 the population was estimated at 12,000, and it has been declining ever since.

for it remitted a large surplus revenue annually to the sultan. It included the whole Peloponnesus, with the exception of Maina, which was under the jurisdiction of the capitan-pasha, and it extended beyond the Isthmus of Corinth, over the Derveno-khoria, embracing the whole of Megavis and a corner of Attica. The pasha of Naupaktos, or Lepanto, was also subordinate to the vizier of the Morea.

3. The pashalik of Egriboz included the whole island of Eubœa and the adjoining provinces of Bœotia, Locris, and Attica. Thebes, Athens, Livadea, Salona, and Talanta, formed Kazas, whose revenues were administered by voevodes appointed annually by the Sublime Porte. Athens was a provincial town belonging to the fief or avpalik of the kishlar-aga, who named its voevode, and this officer had an interest in protecting the inhabitants against the exactions of the pasha of Egriboz. In consequence of the great authority of the kishlar-aga (the chief of the black eunuchs), the Christians of Athens enjoyed a considerable degree of local liberty. Tradition says that Athens owed this happiness to the beauty of one of her daughters, who proved as great a benefactress as the empresses Eudocia and Irene.¹ An Athenian slave named Vasiliké became the favourite of Sultan Achmet I., and in order to relieve her fellow-countrymen from the tyranny of the Mussulmans of Negrepont, she obtained as a boon from her imperial lover that the revenues of Athens should be administered by the kishlar-aga. The reforms of Selim III. had, however, recently placed Athens under the jurisdiction of the Tchelebi-effendi.

4. Southern Albania formed a pashalik, which took its name from its capital, the city of Joannina. It had been long governed by Ali Pasha, who had annexed the

¹ *Greece under the Romans*, 2d edit., p. 209. *History of the Byzantine Empire*, i. 82.

greater part of Thessaly and all Western Greece, except RETROSPECT. Naupaktos, to his pashalik.

5. The pashalik of Selanik, or Thessalonica, extended over the greater part of Macedonia; but in its northern part there were many semi-independent beys, who farmed the taxes and land revenues. Even in the vicinity of Thessalonica, the descendants of Evrenos, whom the Turks call Ghazi Gavrinos, retained the appanage which Murad II. had conferred on their ancestor. They still held in fief the *istira*, or monopoly of the corn annually remitted to Constantinople.¹

6. The island of Crete formed a great pashalik, divided into three inferior military governments, under subordinate pashas, who resided in the fortresses of Candia, Canea, and Retymo. The district of Sphakia, which was inhabited by Christians alone, was governed by its own primates.

The wrongs of the subject Christians in Turkey have been loudly proclaimed, and the tyranny of the Othoman government has been justly condemned; yet for two centuries after the conquest of Greece, Christian subjects were as well treated by Turkish sultans as heretical subjects were by Christian kings. Indeed, the central government of the sultan, or the Sublime Porte, as it was termed, has generally treated its Musulman subjects with as much cruelty and injustice as the conquered Christians. The sufferings of the Greeks were caused by the insolence and oppression of the ruling class, and the corruption that reigned in the Othoman administration, rather than by the direct exercise of the sultan's power. In his private affairs, a Greek had a better chance of obtaining justice from his bishop and the elders of his district than a Turk from the *cadi* or the *voevode*.

¹ Ducas calls Evrenos, Abranezes; Chalcocondyles, Brenezes, page 115, ed. Par.

The government of the sultan was the administration of a despot whose cabinet was composed of household slaves. The feudal system, which for two centuries lightened the weight of Othoman power to the Turkish population, was an inheritance of the Seljouk empire. The inherent defect of the empire founded by Othman was the absence of a judicial administration, bound to observe fixed rules of justice and a settled form of judicial procedure.

The treaty of Kainardgi, in the year 1774, made a great change in the condition of the Greeks. It afforded Russia a pretext for interfering in their favour whenever they were treated with gross injustice; and the interference of Russia soon led to like interference on the part of the other European powers; so that, before the end of the eighteenth century, the Christians in many parts of the sultan's dominions were beginning to acquire a recognised species of foreign protection. The pashas in large commercial cities often found it less dangerous to enrich themselves at the expense of the Turks than to venture on open exactions from the Greeks. A provincial Mussulman could rarely find an advocate at the Porte; an oppressed Greek could either bribe a dragoman or interest a consul to awaken the meddling spirit that rarely sleeps in the breast of a diplomatist, and thereby secure the protection of some ambassador at Constantinople. But as it was evident that the whole fabric of society among the Mussulman population of the Othoman empire presented an insurmountable barrier to the introduction of just laws and an equitable dispensation of justice, so experience at last proved that no foreign protection could secure the lives and properties of the subject Christians from the tyranny of a government which paid no respect even to the lives of its Turkish and Mussulman subjects. The sultan's government, like the government of the

Roman emperors, was a monarch's household trans-^{RETROSPECT.}formed into an imperial administration, and both destroyed the resources of their subjects and depopulated the regions they governed, without making any distinction between the conquerors and the conquered. A conviction that the Othoman empire was hastening to dissolution became prevalent both among the Christian and Mussulman inhabitants of European Turkey at the commencement of the present century.

In the year 1820 no Christian government, except that of Russia, considered itself entitled to interfere with the manner in which the sultan treated his subjects of the Greek Church. Any interference on the part of Great Britain, under the pretext that the king exercised a protectorate over the Ionian Islands, would have been treated as an unjustifiable assumption. The sultan would have considered himself as much entitled to suggest measures for governing the Moham-medans in India as the King of England to advise any changes in the treatment of the Christians in Turkey. All questions relating to the East were then beyond the domain of public opinion, and very little was known in England concerning the condition of the modern Greeks.

The testimony of travellers was singularly discordant: some represented the Greeks as suffering intolerable oppression, as living in hourly fear of their lives or of the confiscation of their property; others declared that no people in Europe was so lightly taxed, and subject to so few personal burdens. They were said to enjoy a degree of religious liberty which the Catholics of Ireland might envy; and that they had a more direct authority over their municipal affairs than was possessed by the citizens in French communes. The Greek Church was known to possess considerable wealth and great political influence over all Turkey.

Greeks were known to exercise sovereign power in Val-
lachia and Moldavia, and to profit by the corruption
that existed in every branch of the Othoman adminis-
tration at Constantinople. The primates of Greece col-
lected the greater part of the sultan's revenues in
Europe; and the Greek municipalities were, in many
districts, allowed to exercise an almost unlimited autho-
rity. It was evident that the condition of the Greeks
presented many anomalies. At Constantinople, the
Greek was a crouching slave; at Bucharest and Yassy, a
despotic tyrant; at Chios, a happy subject; and at Psara,
and in the villages of Mount Pelion, a free citizen.

A confusion of ideas has been produced by not
distinguishing clearly between Greek orthodoxy and
Greek nationality. The ancient Greeks paid great at-
tention to purity of race; the modern Greeks have
transferred their care to purity of doctrine. The Mes-
senians preserved their manners and their dialect un-
changed during centuries of exile; the Moreats have
kept their orthodoxy untainted during ages of foreign
domination. At present the Greeks are willing to in-
termarry with Vallachians, Russians, and Albanians of
the Eastern Church; but to render a marriage lawful
with a Catholic of the purest Hellenic descent, it would
be necessary to rebaptise the spouse.

The tendency to forget everything but orthodoxy
was cherished by the political privileges which the
sultans had conferred on the Greek Church. Its ad-
herents formed a great community in the Othoman
empire, known to the Turks by the national design-
ation of Roum. The immense orthodox population of
European Turkey and Asia Minor, embracing many
nationalities, was confounded with the small number
of the Greek race. Yet these two bodies were com-
posed of heterogeneous elements, influenced by diver-
gent interests and feelings, and to whose political

union geography, language, and manners presented RETROSPECT. an almost insurmountable barrier. Even among the Greeks, though the people confounded orthodoxy and nationality, it was only the priests and the learned class who looked forward to a restoration of the Byzantine empire, and to the establishment of the Greeks as a dominant race, by rendering political power a consequence of ecclesiastical authority. They alone deluded themselves with the dream that the Albanians, the Servians, the Bulgarians, and the Vallachians would submit to be ruled by Greek sovereigns and prefects, because they prayed under the guidance of Greek patriarchs and bishops.

The sultan recognised the patriarch of Constantinople as the ecclesiastical chief of all the orthodox Christians in European Turkey, and supported him in the exercise of an extensive civil jurisdiction over several nations. Among these, the Greeks really occupied the position of a dominant race. To the Vallachian and the Bulgarian, the Greek was in some degree what the Turk was to the Greek. The Greek language was the language of the church and the law which ruled the whole assemblage of nations called by the Othoman administration, *Roum meleti*, or Roman nation. Indeed, the power and jurisdiction of the patriarch and synod of Constantinople, as it existed under the Othoman sultans, was an institution remodelled by Mohammed II.; and had the Othoman government found either Vallachians or Bulgarians fitter instruments to govern the orthodox community in accordance with Othoman interests, the patriarchs and the members of the synod of Constantinople would in all probability have ceased to be Greeks.

The great influence of the Greek race in the East is not, however, entirely derived from its priestly and literary superiority. It rests on a wide social basis,

for it forms the majority of the middle class in many districts where the cultivators of the soil and the mass of the people are of another race. A considerable part of the trade of Turkey was in the hands of the Greeks, and their communications were more frequent between the distant parts of the country than those of the other divisions of the population. All news was generally transmitted through a Greek medium, coloured with Greek hopes and prejudices, or perverted by Greek interests.

Yet, great as the ecclesiastical, literary, and commercial influence of the Greek race really was in European Turkey, the events of the Greek Revolution showed that the influence of Greek nationality had been greatly overrated by the Greeks themselves. Even in the Greek Church, ecclesiastical interest was more powerful than national feeling. A large part of the Greek nation made but feeble efforts to aid their countrymen when struggling for independence. The literary powers of the learned created a loud echo of patriotism ; but thousands of wealthy Greeks continued to pursue their own schemes of interest and profit, under the protection of the sultan's government, during the whole period of the Greek Revolution.

The Greeks were divided into many classes, separated by social trammels as well as dispersed in distant provinces. It is not uncommon to find Constantinople spoken of as the capital of the Greek nation because it is the seat of the head of the orthodox church. This is a great error. The Greeks do not form one quarter of the population, and the agricultural population of the surrounding country consists chiefly of Bulgarians. The Turkish and Bulgarian languages are more extensively spoken than the Greek. The ancient Byzantium was a Greek colony, but the Constantinople founded by the great Constantine was a Roman city,