

**ETUDES HELLENIQUES**

**HELLENIC STUDIES**

**LA DIASPORA GRECQUE  
THE GREEK DIASPORA**

Edited by / Sous la direction de  
**Stephanos Constantinides**

With associate editor / Avec la collaboration de  
**Thalia Tassou**

Contributors / Contributions de  
**Jean Catsiapis**

**Stephanos Constantinides**

**Michael Damanakis**

**Dimitrios Filippou**

**Dionysia Kontoyiannis**

**Theodosia Michelakakis**

**Dimitrios Filippou**

**George Kanarakis**

**Alexander Kitroeff**

---

**Louiza Christodoulidou**

**Volume 23, No 2, Autumn / Automne 2015**

**2**

# The Greek Diaspora

Stephanos Constantinides\*

The Greeks constitute one of the archetypal diasporas. Along with the Jewish and the Armenian, the Greek diaspora has been considered one of the paradigmatic historical diasporas. The Modern Greek Diaspora appears after the fall of Constantinople (1453) with the fleeing of large numbers of Greeks to various European countries. On the basis of the various economic, sociocultural, space-time and especially historical criteria, the period of the modern Greek diaspora can be subdivided in two. On one hand into the *historical diaspora*, focused on the Mediterranean, Western Europe and the Black Sea, especially from the fall of Constantinople (mid-15<sup>th</sup> century) mainly to the Asia Minor Catastrophe (1922), resulting from historical events and developments and on the other hand the *immigrant diaspora* (late 19<sup>th</sup> century until now) due to population movements from the Greek state, mainly for economic reasons (but also movements from the historical diaspora mainly for political reasons) to Western Europe, USA, Canada and Australia.<sup>1</sup> However, according to a more traditional classification the period from 1453 to this day can be subdivided into the *post-Byzantine period* (1453-1830, time of the foundation of the free Greek State) and the *Modern* (1830- to the present). Within the aforementioned period, other subdivisions are introduced: from 1830 to the start of World War II and from the middle of the decade of 1940 to the 1980s, as well as the present period of new immigration in relation to the economic crisis.<sup>2</sup>

The Greek diaspora has always been and continues today to be an important part of Hellenism. This is because the Greeks have always been a diasporic people. Even when Greece had become a country of immigration in the '90s, there were Greeks, mainly from the fields of science, who chose careers outside the Greek borders. With the economic crisis of 2010 and after, resumed a massive immigration of Greeks at the same time that the country welcomes thousands of new immigrants and refugees.

\* Centre for Hellenic Studies and Research Canada-KEEK

Until recently, the study of the Greek diaspora was a neglected area, but even today, despite the significant progress made in this area, the study of this field remains mostly fragmented. Greek universities offer limited study capabilities within their programs and extremely very few little research institutions are involved in this field. Some research institutes in the diaspora which produced important work occasionally, failed to survive in the absence mainly of financial resources. The official Greek state despite some efforts in the period after the fall of the dictatorship to seriously address the existence of the Diaspora, never had a long-term and systematic policy towards it. Scientists involved with the Greek diaspora and who produced important work did it more with their own interest and often in parallel with their main scientific employment. Important also studies of the Greek diaspora were done in several host countries by Greek scholars of that diaspora or foreign researchers through studies on migration in their countries.

In purely epistemological and methodological levels many problems have hardly been discussed, although recent years have seen a relatively strong interest around them. The epistemological and methodological problems concern exist not only for the history of the Greek Diaspora, but to a lesser or greater extent, and in other social sciences dealing with the diaspora. Political science, for instance, when considering the Greek diaspora as a lobby for the Greek interests, sociology when considering the problems of assimilation and integration, or pedagogical sciences when considering methods of teaching the Greek language as a second language to children of Greek diaspora. Even economics when considering the contribution of diaspora to the overall development of the Greek state, either in the post-independence period when a large part of the Greek bourgeoisie operates outside Greek borders, either in the present age when examining the contribution of Greek shipping, which is active outside Greek borders. But without solving epistemological and methodological problems in the area of history is very difficult to deal with specific problems in the field of other disciplines.

The Greek historical science was interested little in the migratory phenomenon in itself and therefore to the Greek diaspora at large, as a whole. The reference to the Diaspora phenomenon has more to do with the preparation of the struggle for independence, than by the diaspora itself. It is connected with the study of the contribution of the Greek diasporic communities in the national resurrection

of 1821. In this context it refers to the establishment of the Filiki Etaireia (Society of Friends) in Odessa and the preparation of the Greek war of independence, in the premises of the communities, by the emerging Greek bourgeoisie. In the same context the flourishing of Greek enlightenment in the area of the same communities has been studied and is studied. Generally the Greek historiography showed interest in Hellenism's historical communities, the historical diaspora, since their role was important for the creation of the Greek nation state. On the contrary the interest for migrant communities, the immigrant diaspora, created after the Greek independence was from limited to non-existent.

The study of the Greek diaspora nowadays can be done only with reference to the geographical areas in which Greeks are active citizens of Greek origin of these various countries. In other words, the Greek diaspora phenomenon is interrelated with both Greece as a country of origin or reference but also with the countries where the historical and immigrant Greek communities have developed under certain conditions.

We can speak of two components in the Greek diaspora, the historical one of the Greek Communities created out of the borders of the Ottoman Empire and the diasporic migration after the creation of the Greek State. By the term historical diaspora we cover the Hellenism of historical communities and that of the Greeks who survived in some historical foci (Black Sea countries, Northern Epirus, etc.). By the term migration diaspora we cover the communities created after the establishment of the Greek state and primarily the transatlantic diaspora in Canada, USA, Australia and Western Europe.

Based on these observations we could place, as it was previously mentioned, the beginnings of the modern Greek diaspora in the period following the fall of Constantinople in 1453. The Greek diaspora of this period led to the gradual creation of the historical Greek communities formed between the 15th and 19th century. In this long period, which includes a large part of the 19th century after the creation of the Greek state, developed the historical diaspora. The second great period of Greek diaspora is placed after the creation of the Greek state. Specifically, this second period relates to the last two decades of the 19th century when Greek immigration was more directed towards the so-called New World. It is the migration diaspora with different characteristics than that of the corresponding historical one of the preceding century. Of course between these

two categories there is a gray area that extends from the creation of the Greek state in 1830 until almost the end of the 19th century. In this period before starting the migration to the New World, Greeks are routed apart from the known Diaspora centers of Western Europe to the Eastern Mediterranean, South Russia and the Caucasus region. The communities created in these areas fall substantially in the historical diaspora although they present some elements that we find later in the communities of the migrant diaspora.

In the era of historical diaspora, when there was no national centre, the Greek communities had managed to maintain a dense network of contacts thanks mainly to trade. The trade routes were simultaneously communication paths of Greek communities. This networking became more important thanks to intellectuals and cultural exchanges that existed between the communities. It was also strengthened by the publication of newspapers and magazines in several European cities but which were available in almost all communities. The same was also happening with the important publishing activity in the book area. Apart from the commercial and cultural networks that kept a permanent and constant contact with the various elements of the Greek diaspora of this period, important was also the role of the Church which held together the communities among themselves and with the Ecumenical Patriarchate as a reference. This ecclesiastical networking did not stop even when the intellectuals of the Enlightenment came in sharp contrast to the liberal ideas of the conservative ideology that emitted the official Church. Besides, there were clerics who did not hesitate to embrace the modernist ideas of the Enlightenment.

In this diasporic migration the networking was much more difficult and because of the distances and because of the social composition, since these migrants were of agricultural origin. Later, of course, this diaspora has also achieved one relevant networking since it acquired economic power and cultural reach. Nowadays, in the age of globalization and cyberspace, contacts between the various diaspora networks and the national center have become much easier and affordable.

In this volume there is no specific thematic approach but different chapters on aspects of the Greek diaspora, such as education, the lobby, the press, the Centre's policies towards the Diaspora in the time of crisis, historical references and landmarks on diaspora etc.

Michael Damanakis in his article draws a picture of Greek language education both within the community structures of the Greeks of the Diaspora and the official educational systems of the host country. After a brief presentation of the history of educational policies of the Greek state towards the Diaspora, he addresses the current situation and the problems caused by the Greek crisis. To conclude the author asks if the Greek language education in the diaspora is endangered due to the crisis in the National Centre.

Stephanos Constantinides dresses a portrait of the Global World Greek Lobby with special reference to the Greek American lobby. The author examines its structure and functioning, and especially its contribution to advancing the Greek interests with the governments of those countries with large Greek communities. This is mainly the case of the important Greek lobby in the United States and secondarily in other countries, such as Australia, Canada and Western Europe. The author notes in particular the mobilization of the Cypriot community in Britain, for Cyprus and against the Turkish occupation of a part of the island.

Jean Catsiapis in his article presents Basil Zaharoff, the famous arms dealer of World War I who lived a life full of mysteries which the author endeavoured to decipher. As a friend of political leaders of Greece and France, he was able to serve the interests of these countries while achieving personal financial gain in the armed conflicts in which he was involved. Basil Zaharoff, considered in his time the richest man in the world, has preserved all his life the secret of his origins and his personal life.

Alexander Kitroeff presents the Greek language press in the United States in the first half of the twentieth century which was established by several individuals with strong affiliations with the two major Greek political sides, the liberal venizelists and the conservative pro-royalists. The newspapers, initially formed as the organs of those two ideological blocks, gradually had to adapt to the realities of their American environment. By examining the correspondence of Demetrios Callimachos, the legendary editor-in-chief of the New York-based Greek language daily *Ethnikos Keryx* this article examines how that newspaper tried to adapt to the situation Greek Americans faced and also remain loyal to its ideological roots. In doing so it reveals the ways one important Greek American newspaper began transitioning from a reflection of Greece into a mirror of Greek America.

The article of Michael Damanakis, Dionysia Kontoyiannis and Theodosia Michelakakis describes the implementation process and the evaluation of the research program “Greek Education Abroad”. The program is an attempt by the Greek Ministry of Education to implement education policy for Greek language in the diaspora, as envisaged in the Law. 2413/1996. The partner network development, planning and implementation, the difficulties and problems that emerged and the results of each action of the program, as described and interpreted indicate the outlines of the logic of intervention of the Greek State towards the diaspora.

The text moves within the logic of the historical evaluation of a 15-year assistance effort in Greek language education from the perspective of key players, particularly the scientific responsables and program managers.

The article of Jean Catsiapis on Greeks in France, which form a community of only 35 000 members, emphasizes their weakness, politicization and the division. However, amongst them many have acquired notoriety in the political or cultural field. These are the Philhellenes of France, who act most effectively to defend in recent years a weakened Greece affected by an unprecedented economic crisis and to ensure the safeguarding of Hellenism which is especially threatened in Cyprus.

Linguists accept, according to George Kanarakis, that no languages in contact are completely pure and free of transferred language forms and structures. The Greek language’s influence and contribution to other languages is a historical-cultural phenomenon of international interest. This article focuses on the diachronic linguistic and sociocultural influence of the Greek language on 28 other languages of the world as illustrated in the collective work *Η διαχρονική συμβολή της Ελληνικής σε άλλες γλώσσες* [The diachronic contribution of Greek to other languages]. The 34 studies by 32 participating scholars enlighten our knowledge on this important subject, contribute practically to the planning and organisation of second or foreign language teaching/learning, and provide a stimulus for further productive exploration of the vital subject of global interlanguage-intercultural contact.

In a final section, Dimitrios Filippou presents two letters to the Greek Prime Minister Eleftherios Venizelos, in the 1930s, by two Greek immigrants in Montreal, who ask for his intervention to solve the problems of the Greek

community. The letters show the commitment that these first Greek immigrants in Canada had to the motherland, still waiting for help to deal with their problems and especially to preserve their language, culture and religion.

### NOTES

1. Stephanos Constantinides, "Greek Diaspora and History", in Michael Damanakis, Vasilis Kardassis, Theodosia Mihelakakis, Antonis Hourdakos, *History of the Greek Diaspora, Research and Teaching, Proceedings of the Conference on the Greek Diaspora*, vol. A, p.45-49 EDIAMME, University of Crete, 2004 [In Greek].  
Michael Damanakis, "The National Centre, the Diaspora and Education", *Études helléniques/Hellenic Studies*, Vol. 13, No. 2 (Autumn 2005b): 27-62.
2. Among others, see J.K. Hassiotis, *Review of the History of Modern Diaspora*, Thessaloniki, Vaniat publishing 1993 [In Greek], Nikos Psyroukis, *The Neohellenic Community Phenomenon*, Athens: Epikairota, 1977<sup>4</sup> [In Greek].