



HELLENIC LINK–MIDWEST Newsletter

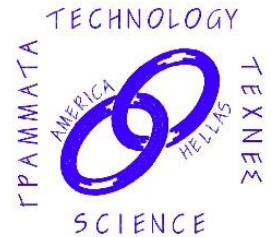
A CULTURAL AND SCIENTIFIC LINK WITH GREECE

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Upcoming Events

The Greek Communities in Southern Russia and Ukraine

On Sunday, December 4, 2022, at 2:00 pm Central Standard Time, Hellenic Link–Midwest presents professor *Alexander Kitroeff* in an online lecture titled "*The Greek Communities in Southern Russia and Ukraine from the 19th Century to the Present*". Note the earlier starting time, set to accommodate the speaker who will join from Greece. The Zoom link for this webinar is:

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/83632516671>

This presentation will describe the history of the Greek settlements on the northern shores of the Black Sea from the 19th century to the present. The Greeks arrived in the region in the modern era when they were invited there by Catherine the Great so that they could help the agricultural and commercial development of the region. In the over two centuries that followed the Greek communities flourished, and survived moments of repression, until the outbreak of the recent war.

Alexander Kitroeff is Professor Emeritus of History at Haverford College in Pennsylvania. He received his doctorate in Modern History from Oxford University. He is author of *The Greeks in Egypt, 1919-1937: Ethnicity and Class*; *Griegos en América* (The Greeks in the Americas); *Wrestling with the Ancients: Modern Greek Identity and the Olympics*; *Hellas, Europe Panathinaikos! 100 Chronia Hellenike Istoria*; *The Greeks and the Making of Modern Egypt*, and *The Greek Orthodox Church in America: a Modern History*. He has collaborated with film director Maria Iliou as historical advisor in several documentaries including "*The Journey: the Greek Dream in America*" and "*Smyrna 1922—the Destruction of a Cosmopolitan City*." Their most recent film, "*Athens Between East and West, 1821-1896*" which is the first of a five-part series, premiered in February 2020 at the Benaki Museum in Athens.

U.S. – Greece Relations and the Provocative and Aggressive Stance of Erdogan’s Turkey Against Greece and Cyprus

On Sunday, January 22, 2023, at 3:00 pm Central Standard Time, Hellenic Link–Midwest will present *Endy Zemenides*, Executive Director of the Hellenic American Leadership Council, in a lecture on the U.S.-Greece Relations in view of the war in Ukraine, the extremely provocative and aggressive stance of Erdogan’s Turkey against Greece and Cyprus and the growing alignment of Erdogan’s Turkey

with Putin’s Russia. More information about this lecture will be provided in the near future.

Endy Zemenides is the Executive Director of the Hellenic American Leadership Council (HALC), a national Greek-American advocacy organization. He oversees staff and fellows in Chicago, New York and Washington, D.C., and leads the organizations advocacy efforts at the federal, state and local levels, as well as HALC’s public education programs. Zemenides is in the Leadership Circles of the Chicago Council on Global Affairs (CCGA), where he also was one of the CCGA’s Emerging Leaders Fellows.

He served as Senior Advisor to former Illinois State Treasurer and Democratic nominee for the United States Senate, Alexi Giannoulis; has served on the editorial board and board of advisors of the National Strategy Forum, as a participant in the Aspen Institute’s Socrates Program, and has lectured in international relations and American foreign policy in DePaul University’s political science department.

He received a BA from DePaul University, an MA from the University of Essex (UK), and his JD from the Georgetown University Law Center, where he served as a fellow for the Harrison Institute for Public Law and an Editor of the Georgetown Journal of International Law.

In Brief

The Strategic Significance of the Port of Alexandroupolis

A recent article in the magazine *The National Interest*, authored by *Jonathan Ruhe* and *Ari Cicurel*, and titled *Without Alexandroupolis, Transatlantic Security Is Dead in the Water*, stresses the strategic significance of Alexandroupolis to the United States and Europe in view of the challenges transatlantic security is and will be facing in the foreseeable future after Russia’s brutal aggression in Ukraine.

The article points out that Alexandroupolis offers unique opportunities for achieving shared transatlantic objectives to reduce European dependence on Russian natural gas, strengthen NATO’s vulnerable eastern flank, and ensure Ukraine’s harvests can continue feeding the world.

The United States must act with purpose, in concert with its allies, to secure these goals for the short and long term. Europe can neither go cold turkey nor wean itself off slowly from Russian hydrocarbons without liquefied natural gas (LNG) imports from and through the eastern Mediterranean, which boasts significant—and growing—offshore reserves.

Given serious logistical bottlenecks extending eastward from the heart of the continent, combined with Turkey's abandonment of its historical role as the alliance's southeastern anchor, NATO needs new routes from the south to project power against Russia and China—both of whom are making serious inroads across the eastern Mediterranean and the Black Sea. At the same time, Ukrainian grain needs to circumvent a Russian naval blockade and the Turkish Straits as it heads south to the Middle East, Africa, and Asia.

Ships docking at its deep-water port can unload directly onto, and load from, rail lines running through Bulgaria and Romania and as far north as Poland. In addition to an airfield and military facilities, the city is also the hub for a network of highways, as well as a U.S.-backed LNG import facility linked inland to an expanding lattice of natural gas pipelines.

This infrastructure enables NATO to bypass the Bosphorus and Black seas and more effectively surge forces northward through Bulgaria and Romania up to the Ukrainian and Moldovan borders. In addition to creating an outlet for Kyiv's food exports and new commercial alternatives to the Chinese-run port of Piraeus near Athens, it could also reduce the Balkans' and Italy's deep dependence on Russian energy by shipping more reliable supplies from the Eastern Mediterranean and beyond.

The article points out that while American support has been crucial for Alexandroupolis' growth to date, more must urgently be done to capitalize on its significant potential.

To expedite southeastern Europe's energy independence from Russia, the United States should promote the expansion of the Trans Adriatic Pipeline (TAP) and the Interconnector Greece-Bulgaria (IGB) pipeline, as well as explore the feasibility of reversing the massive Trans-Balkan pipeline to carry natural gas northward from Greece through Bulgaria, Romania, and possibly Ukraine and Moldova. In tandem, Washington should make clear it backs the development of additional Greek capacity to feed these lines with imported LNG, beyond the floating storage and regasification unit (FSRU) currently under construction at Alexandroupolis.

These steps can form the core of a much-needed campaign to underscore U.S. support for, and concretely advance, the peaceful development of the Eastern Mediterranean's abundant natural gas as a direct replacement for Russian supplies to Europe. This should include appointing a U.S. special envoy to build on recent European Union efforts to bring LNG into the continent from Egypt and Israel.

American involvement also must deepen on the defense side. Working with its allies, the United States should explore extending NATO's fuel pipeline in Greece from Kavala to Alexandroupolis, and into Bulgaria and Romania, to simplify logistics for the alliance's expanding presence in

the Eastern Balkans and the Black Sea littoral. Washington also should ensure the looming privatization contract for Alexandroupolis port is awarded to an American company—both to block Russia from securing the bid and to reassure allies that the United States is countering Moscow's and Beijing's growing control of critical infrastructure across the eastern Mediterranean and southeastern Europe. In light of NATO's ambitious new goal to expand its high-readiness forces, the U.S. military should view Greece as an ideal location, both geostrategically and topographically, for combined and joint exercises.

To reach Alexandroupolis' high ceilings on the energy and security fronts, specifically by developing better pipeline, rail, and road infrastructure to interconnect Eastern Europe, the Biden administration should also increase its June 2022 loan of \$300 million to the Three Seas Initiative's Investment Fund, known as 3SIIF. Fortunately, many of these actions will contribute directly to global food security by building up Alexandroupolis as a key terminus for overland Ukrainian grain shipments.

From Our History

Excerpts from the monumental work of the Byzantine historian, Speros Vryonis: “*The Decline of Medieval Hellenism in Asia Minor and the Process of Islamization from the Eleventh through the Fifteenth Century*” (continuation from the previous Newsletter issue):

In Anatolia the representatives of the government were largely Chalcedonian and most frequently Greek in tongue. Whether the Anatolian provincial served in the local military levies, or in the local administration, or went to the local courts for his business, or pursued learning and literature in educational institutions—Greek was the usual language for the relevant transactions. The language of the church in Anatolia was largely Greek. The Greek language enjoyed the prestige attendant upon any language used almost exclusively by governmental, ecclesiastical, and pedagogical institutions. It was also the usual language of commercial intercourse, and consequently the peasants coming into the urban areas to buy and sell were also exposed to Greek. Undoubtedly, the church must have contributed to the Hellenization of the rural areas, though here it is difficult to speak with certainty. From the bishoprics in the urban centers, the Greek-speaking church of Anatolia spread its organization and doctrine into the rural areas. A. H. M. Jones has gone so far as to make the seducing proposition that whereas it was the spread of the Hellenized type of urban center which Hellenized the cities and towns of Anatolia, it was the church that completed the process in the rural areas and finally presided over the extinction of some of the Anatolian tongues.

The process of absorption and assimilation was constantly operative under these circumstances, though its success varied. In the long run, however, the prevalence of these

general conditions favored the victorious progress of the dominant tongue and religion, Greek and Orthodoxy. There are innumerable specific instances of its success which help to give a general picture of its effect on the non-Greek non-Chalcedonians. Perhaps the most impressive recorded example of the church's success is what John the sixth-century bishop of Ephesus has described in his *Ecclesiastical History*. During the reign of Justinian I, John had been appointed to missionize among the pagans residing in the provinces of Asia (Ephesus), Caria, Phrygia, and Lydia. He began his Christianizing task by building four monasteries in the mountain village of Derira, which had evidently been the stronghold of the pagans. Justinian had generously supplied funds for the whole project and then provided that the new churches and monasteries be obedient to missionaries operating from Derira. The Christianization of this portion of rural Anatolia seems to have proceeded rapidly.

The activity of the church in this respect is evidenced throughout Asia Minor. By the tenth and eleventh centuries there existed even among the Armenians a minority, but a significant one, which belonged to the Chalcedonian rather than to the Armenian church. These were the so-called Tzats, a group that included the Armenians, who had remained within the empire and accepted the Chalcedonian creed early, as well as many of the inhabitants of the districts of Tao-Khlarjeti and Mesopotamia. The number of Armenian aristocrats who came to Byzantium and who appear as Chalcedonians is particularly impressive. One need mention only the families of Lecapenus, Tzimisces, Musele, Martinaces, Taronites, Tornices.

The conversionary activities of the church bore fruit among the Jews of the empire as well. The meager sources reveal converted Jews from late seventh-century Cappadocia, but the most famous example of a convert from Judaism was St. Constantine, a Jew of ninth-century Synnada. Formulas by which Jews abjured Judaism and accepted Christianity have survived in a manuscript of the early eleventh century, and conversions of Anatolian Jews to Christianity are evidenced as late as the twelfth century.

During the long course of the struggle between Greeks and Arabs, considerable numbers of Muslims found their way into the Anatolian regions, sometime as prisoners of war, at other times as political refugees. The large group of Persians who fled to Anatolia in the reign of Theophilus were settled there, given Greek wives, and were baptized. A well-known passage in the *De Caerimoniis* of Constantine Porphyrogenitus gives details as to the manner in which the central government implemented this policy of absorption through religious conversion. The text remarks that Saracen captives settled in the various themes who should accept Christian baptism were to receive land, monetary support and grain to start a farming life—a considerable incentive for a war prisoner to convert. But the imperial effort to

assimilate these Muslims went further. Each Christian household that would take such a baptized Muslim into the family through marriage received a three-year exemption from taxes, and the land the convert received would be tax-free for three years. A spectacular case of conversion was that of the Taghlabite tribe of the Banu Habib, a tribe that could put 10,000 to 12,000 cavalry into the field. Toward the middle of the tenth century, they and their families fled the Hamdanids, converted to Christianity, and settled in the provinces.

The state and church continually subjected Christian heretics to pressure. Aside from the individual efforts of such monks as St. Lazarus, or of Photius, there were the more systematic attempts to enforce Chalcedonian Christianity on the various nonconformists of Anatolia, attempts that the government backed with persecution. Such measures were applied, at various times, to Jews, Montanists, Paulicians, and Monophysites. Of a similar nature were the policies of Nicephorus Phocas during his reconquest of Cilicia, where all the Muslim population who wished to remain in the land might do so and retain their property by conversion to Christianity. Those who wished to remain Muslim had to depart from Cilicia.

Thus, the assimilative process on the religious plane was constantly in motion. Though it never achieved a complete and unqualified success, time favored it. In easternmost Anatolia it was a complete failure in the eleventh century, for here the Monophysite population was a majority and Monophysitism was too strongly associated with ethnic consciousness and linguistic differences.

The same forces that worked for Christianization (church, state, and the Greek Christian milieu of Anatolia) also worked for Hellenization on the linguistic plane. There are numerous examples of the preponderance of Greek among the population of western and central Anatolia. Catacolon Cecaumenus, whose grandfather apparently was an Armenian, wrote his *Strategicon* in Greek. Nicetas of Amnia, the grandson of St. Philaretus of Armeniacon, recorded the life of his grandfather in Greek. Genesius the historian, though of Armenian ancestry, also recorded the affairs of the empire in the Greek language. Romanus Lecapenus and John Tzimisces, first generation Byzantines, were acclimatized to the Byzantine way of life and alienated from their Armenian patrimonial environment. In some extreme cases Armenian aristocrats came under the literary and intellectual sway of the Greek classics. The famous Gregory Magistrus, who played a leading role in Armenian affairs during the eleventh century, translated Plato into Armenian. The influence of these Greek authors is evident in the continuation of the translating activities of the Syrian Monophysites of eastern Asia Minor. Evidence, though sparse, exists also for the process of Hellenization of the Slavs of the peninsula and of the Jews.

(to be continued)

From the Riches of Our Cultural Heritage

Poetry by Giorgos Seferis

ΦΥΓΗ

Δεν ήταν άλλη η αγάπη μας,
έφευγε ξαναγύριζε και μας έφερνε
ένα χαμηλωμένο βλέφαρο πολύ μακρινό
ένα χαμόγελο μαρμαρωμένο, χαμένο
μέσα στο πρωινό χορτάρι
ένα παράξενο κοχύλι που δοκίμαζε
να το εξηγήσει επίμονα η ψυχή μας.

Η αγάπη μας δεν ήταν άλλη,
ψηλαφούσε σιγά μέσα στα πράγματα
που μας τριγύριζαν
να εξηγήσει γιατί δεν θέλουμε
να πεθάνουμε με τόσο πάθος.

Κι αν κρατηθήκαμε από λαγόνια κι αν αγκαλιάσαμε
μ' όλη τη δύναμη μας άλλους αυχένες
κι αν σμίξαμε την ανάσα μας με την ανάσα
εκείνου του ανθρώπου
κι αν κλείσαμε τα μάτια μας, δεν ήταν άλλη,
μοναχά αυτός ο βαθύτερος καημός
να κρατηθούμε μέσα στη φυγή.

ΜΕΡΕΣ ΤΟΥ ΙΟΥΝΙΟΥ '41

Βγήκε το νέο φεγγάρι στην Αλεξάνδρεια
κρατώντας το παλιό στην αγκαλιά του
κι εμείς πηγαίνοντας κατά την Πόρτα του Ήλιου
μες στο σκοτάδι της καρδιάς — τρεις φίλοι.

Ποιός θέλει τώρα να λουστεί στα νερά του Πρωτέα;
Τη μεταμόρφωση τη γυρέψαμε στα νιάτα μας
με πόθους που έπαιζαν σαν τα μεγάλα ψάρια
σε πέλαγα που φύραναν ξαφνικά·
πιστεύαμε στην παντοδυναμία του κορμιού.
Και τώρα βγήκε το νέο φεγγάρι αγκαλιασμένο
με το παλιό· με τ' όμορφο νησί ματώνοντας
λαβωμένο· το ήρεμο νησί, το δυνατό νησί, το αθώο.
Και τα κορμιά σαν τσακισμένα κλαδιά
και σαν ξεριζωμένες ρίζες.
Η δίψα μας ένιππος φύλακας μαρμαρωμένος
στη σκοτεινή πόρτα του Ήλιου
δεν ξέρει να ζητήσει τίποτε: φυλάγεται
ξενιτεμένη εδώ τριγύρω
κοντά στον τάφο του Μεγάλου Αλεξάντρου.

ΠΑΝΩ ΣΕ ΜΙΑ ΧΕΙΜΩΝΙΑΤΙΚΗ ΑΧΤΙΝΑ

Φύλλα από σκουριασμένο τενεκέ
για το φτωχό μυαλό πού είδε το τέλος·
τα λιγοστά λαμπυρίσματα.
Φύλλα πού στροβιλίζονται μέ γλάρους
άγριεμένους μέ τό χειμώνα.

Όπως ελευθερώνεται ένα στήθος
οι χορευτές έγιναν δέντρα
ένα μεγάλο δάσος γυμνωμένα δέντρα.

Καίγονται τ' άσπρα φύκια
Γραΐες αναδυόμενες χωρίς βλέφαρα
σχήματα πού άλλοτε χορεύαν
μαρμαρωμένες φλόγες.
Το χιόνι σκέπασε τόν κόσμο.

FLIGHT

Our love was nothing more
leaving, coming back and brought us
a lowered distant eyelid
a marble smile, lost
in the morning grass
a strange shell that our soul
tried insistently to explain.

Our love was nothing more than touching
slowly among the things that surrounded us
to explain why we don't want to die
with so much passion.

What if we were held on to each other by the loins,
claspings
with all our might each other's necks
and if we mixed our breath with the breath
of the other person
and if we closed our eyes, it was nothing more
only this deepest heartache that we hold on to
in the middle of our flight.

DAYS OF JUNE '41

The new moon came out in Alexandria
holding the old one in her arms
and we were going to the Gate of the Sun
with darkness in the heart — three friends.

Who now wants to bathe in the waters of Proteus?
We looked for transformation in our youth
with desires that played like big fish
in seas that suddenly slipped away;
we believed in the omnipotence of the body.
And now the new moon came out embracing
the old; with the beautiful island bleeding,
hurt; the calm island, the strong island, the innocent.
And the bodies like broken branches
and like torn up roots.
Our thirst a mounted guard of marble
at the dark Gate of the Sun.
he doesn't ask for anything: he is on guard
an exile around here
near the tomb of Alexander the Great.

ON A WINTER SUNBEAM

Sheets of rusty tin
for the poor mind who saw the end;
the sparse flickers.
Leaves swirling with seagulls
crazed by winter.

As a breast is freed
the dancers became trees
a large forest of bare trees.

Burning the white seaweed
the Grey Sisters emerge without eyelids
shapes that once danced
in marble flames.
Snow covered the world.