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‘TEXTBOOK TRUTHS’ AND POLITICAL DILEMMAS: THE IMAGE OF ANCIENT MACEDONIA IN 19TH CENTURY GREEK HISTORIOGRAPHY

The relationship of Greek historiography with ancient Macedonia can hardly be termed a love story. Many distinguished and influential Greek intellectuals considered ancient Macedonians to be conquerors of Greece. Adamantios Korais, a great figure of the Greek Enlightenment, believed that Philip’s victory at Chaeronea was the precise point in time when Greece lost its freedom.¹ In a paper dedicated to the history of Chios, Korais stressed that the islanders were first enslaved by the Macedonians, followed by the Romans, the Genoans, and finally by the Turks.² Grigorios Paliourotis, another intellectual from the time of the Greek Enlightenment, wrote that Philip’s death inspired courage in the hearts of the Greeks, as well as hope that they could regain freedom.³ The anonymous author of the *Eliniki Nomarchia*, published in Italy in 1806, states that Greece started losing its freedom

1 Κουμπουρλής, Γιάννης. «Η ιδέα της ιστορικής συνέχειας του ελληνικού έθνους στους εκπροσώπους του ελληνικού διαφωτισμού: η διαμάχη για το όνομα του έθνους και οι απόψεις για τους αρχαίους Μακεδόνες και τους Βυζαντινούς. *Δοκιμές*, τ. 13-14, ανοίξη, 2005: p. 155.

2 *Ibid.*

3 *Ibid.*, pp. 178

at the time of Philip's coronation.⁴ In 1808, Athanasios Christopoulos clearly noted that Philip and his son Alexander had occupied Greece.⁵ Similar views were also expressed by Athanasios Stageritis, Spyridon Kondou, Nikolaos Darvaris, and many more.⁶

The creation of the Greek state did not put an end to the tendency to regard ancient Macedonians as occupiers of Greece. As he addressed the public gathered to celebrate the opening of the Othonian University, Constantinos Schinas, the first Rector, stated that Greece had been ruled by the Macedonians, the Romans, and the Byzantines⁷ – and perhaps this would be a suitable place to mention that, according to Roudometof, two speakers at the same event talked about “conquering Macedonians”.⁸ In 1836, Alexandros Soutsos wrote that ancient Greece was a victim of Macedonians and Romans;⁹ a decade later, the great Greek intellectual Nikolaos Saripolos underlined that “after the battle at Chaeronea, heavy ashes of slavery cast darkness over Greece.”¹⁰ In 1841, Iakovos Rizos Nerulos, the president of the Archeological Society of Athens, opened a meeting of the Society reminding the members that, by winning the battle of Chaeronea, Philip destroyed Hellenic freedom – but also did something even more horrendous, by creating Alexander;¹¹ Paparrigopoulos, however, writes that Nerulos' speech rather reflected the speeches of Demosthenes than

4 Ανωνύμου του Έλληνος «*Ελληνική Νομαρχία, ήτοι λόγος περί Ελευθερίας*», Εκδοτική Θεσσαλονίκης-«βιβλιο...ΒΑΡΔΙΑ», Θεσσαλονίκη 2006, 56; cf. Μανωλοπούλου, Άννα. “Ανωνύμου του Έλληνος ελληνική νομαρχία ήτοι λόγος περι ελευθερίας.” *Φιλολογος* 50 (1993): pp. 293-304.

5 Πλατής, Βασίλειος. *Ιστορική γεωγραφία και εθνικές διεκδικήσεις των Ελλήνων τον 19ο αιώνα*. Διδακτορική διατριβή, Φιλοσοφική Σχολή, ΑΠΘ, Θεσσαλονίκη, 2008: p. 281.

6 *Ibid.*, p. 266

7 Koulouri, Christina. “Ιστορία και γεωγραφία στα ελληνικά σχολεία (1834-1914).” Γνωστικό αντικείμενο και ιδεολογικές προεκτάσεις. Ανθολόγιο κειμένων. *Βιβλιογραφία σχολικών εγχειριδίων* (1988): 1834-1914. Cf. Koulouri, Christina, and Lina Venturas. “Research on Greek textbooks: a survey of current trends.” *Paradigm* 14 (1994): pp. 42-46.

8 Roudometof, Victor, and Roland Robertson. *Nationalism, globalization, and orthodoxy: the social origins of ethnic conflict in the Balkans*. Vol. 89. Greenwood Publishing Group, 2001: 125, n. 3.

9 Πλατής, Βασίλειος. *Ιστορική γεωγραφία...*, p. 282

10 Литоксоу, Д. *Измешана нација*. Скопје, 2006: p. 32

11 Hamilakis, Yannis. *The nation and its ruins: antiquity, archaeology, and national imagination in Greece*. Oxford University Press, 2007: p. 112.

what Greeks were aware of at the time.¹² In 1839, Georgios Kozakis-Tipaldos, another prominent Greek intellectual, presented an interesting division of Greek history. According to his views, the Greek past could be broken down into the following periods: 1. Hellenic (up to the battle of Chaeronea); 2. Helleno-Macedonian (from the battle of Chaeronea to the battle of Cynoscephalae); 3. Helleno-Roman (from Cynoscephalae to Constantine the Great); 4. Helleno-Graeco-Romaic (from Constantine the Great to the fall of Constantinople); 5. Helleno-Ottoman (from the fall of Constantinople to the uprising of 1821); and 6. Modern Hellenic (from the uprising onward).¹³

The snippets mentioned above clearly show that our opening observation is neither ill-willed, nor, for that matter, exclusive. As the modern Greek state was being born, Robert Peckham wrote that Macedonia was not an issue of interest to Greek intellectuals;¹⁴ and, despite his views on geographic and historical Macedonia, Greek historian Ioannis Koliopoulos wrote that, at the time of the Greek uprising, Greek public opinion regarding Macedonia was influenced by those in the West that argued for leaving Macedonia outside of Greece.¹⁵ What Peckham and Koliopoulos said is not unsubstantiated. In Greece, an interesting debate was being conducted concerning ancient Macedonia. Macedonia was routinely left out of the earliest descriptions of the nation, as in 1849 Paparrigopoulos wrote that the ancient Macedonians “were a hybrid race”,¹⁶ while Koubirlis emphasised that the founder of modern Greek historiography referred to the ancient Macedonians in the same way he did to the Romans, as a foreign power.¹⁷ There were even Greek politicians who did not consider ancient Macedonia a part of ancient Greece: thus, a member of the Greek parliament commenced his speech

12 Δημαράς, Κωνσταντίνος Θ. *Κωνσταντίνος Παπαρρηγόπουλος: Η εποχή του, η ζωή του, το έργο του*. MIET, 1986.: p. 70.

13 *Ibid.*, pp. 99-100.

14 Peckham, Robert Shannan. *National histories, natural states: Nationalism and the politics of place in Greece*. IB Tauris, 2001: p. 42.

15 Koliopoulos, Ioannis. “The shaping of the new Macedonia.” In: *History of Macedonia*, Thessaloniki, 2007: p. 174.

16 Robert Shannan Peckham, *National Histories, Natural States...*, p. 42

17 Koubourlis, Ioannis. “European historiographical influences upon the young Konstantinos Paparrigopoulos.” *The Making of Modern Greece: Nationalism, Romanticism, & the Uses of the Past (1797-1896)* 11 (2009): p. 53.

on 15 June 1848 with the remark that, in ancient times, Macedonia had occupied Greece.¹⁸

However, after Ioannis Kolettis stood up in the Greek Assembly in January 1844 and made his famous speech in which he promoted the Greek Megali Idea, things started to change. Little by little, the ancient Macedonians, their kingdom and their history began to be considered a part of the Greek traditional past. Greek historians started re-evaluating Ancient Macedonia and including it as an inseparable part of Greek antiquity. Konstantinos Paparrigopoulos, the founder of modern Greek historiography, played an immense role in making ancient Macedonia a part of Greek history and legacy.¹⁹ Just as Spyridon Zambelios, a prominent intellectual from the Ionian Islands, stated that it was ill-advised to consider the Ancient Macedonians occupiers and foreigners in Greece,²⁰ the real first step towards the incorporation of ancient Macedonia within the Greek national realm was a school textbook written by Paparrigopoulos in 1853, in which he proclaims that “Philip, the king of Macedon, who united Greece in 338 B.C., was not a foreigner at all. During ancient times, Macedonians considered themselves to be Greek.²¹ Furthermore, the kings of Macedon were said to be direct descendants of Hercules and other prominent Greek heroes”.²²

Koubourlis notes that Hellenism constitutes the theoretical basis of Paparrigopoulos's final argument in support of the Greek identity of the ancient Macedonians. Thus, the founder of modern Greek historiography wrote: “that [Macedonian Hellenism] is not ancient Hellenism, we have conceded; that it is not Hellenic at all, we deny with all our powers”.²³ Paparrigopoulos constructed “a system of unity” of Greek history, where ancient Macedonia was an important part. As Liakos remarked,

18 Πλατής, Βασίλειος. *Ιστορική γεωγραφία...*, 285.

19 Cf. Далибор Јовановски, Константинос Папарригопулос и Македонија: *Историја, историографија и настава по историја*, СИРМ, Скопје, 2007, 187-195.

20 Ζαμπέλιος, Σπυρίδων. *Άσματα δημοτικά της Ελλάδος: εκδοθέντα μετά μελέτης ιστορικής περί μεσαιωνικού ελλητισμού*. Τυπογραφείον Ερμής, 1852: 45.

21 Paparrēgopoulos, Kōnstantinos D., and Andreas Koromēlas. *Ιστορία του Ελληνικού έθνους από των αρχαιοτάτων χρόνων μέχρι της σήμερον*, 1853: 57.

22 *Ibid.*, 118

23 Koubourlis, Ioannis. “European historiographical influences upon the young Konstantinos Paparrigopoulos.” *The Making of Modern Greece: Nationalism, Romanticism, & the Uses of the Past (1797-1896)* 11 (2009): 61.

there were five Hellenisms: 1. Ancient Hellenism as a father; 2. Macedonian Hellenism as a son; 3. Christian Hellenism as a grandson; 4. Medieval Hellenism as a great-grandson, and 5. Modern Hellenism as a great-great-grandson.²⁴ As a final point, Paparrigopoulos was an ardent Greek nationalist, very much involved in the political debates of the period. Coconas accurately concludes that an essential element of Paparrigopoulos' work concerning strong historical continuity was the Greek nature of the ancient Macedonian kingdom.²⁵

Thus, a quite important school textbook – but a textbook nevertheless – redefined Ancient Macedonia for the Greek public. However, it is common knowledge that textbooks are produced under political and ideological frames. Learning to see what those frames are, what kinds of questions are tolerable, and what kinds of questions are considered outside the acceptable bounds is an important part of critical thinking. Historical 'facts' have a capricious nature. Statements that stand the closest to historical truth are, actually, quite useless.²⁶ This is where historians enter the scene – bringing along contemporary politics and partiality. A textbook narrative could be factually true; however, the problem lies within its narrative substance, which can be obviously partial.²⁷ The narrative substance does not necessarily establish the plot itself; however, it is precisely this substance that serves as an implicit concept used to band together the historical facts within the narrative²⁸ and create a sort of a 'narrative confusion', which would, of course, serve the purposes of the author.

24 Liakos, Antonis. "The Construction of National Time: The Making of the Modern Greek Historical Imagination." in Jacques Revel and Giovanni Levi (ed.), *Political uses of the Past. The recent Mediterranean experience*, Frank Cass, London – Portland OR (2002): p. 34.

25 Coconas, Evangelos. *"The Macedonian Question" – a Historical overview and evaluation with special attention to the traditional Greek ideology*, MA thesis, Faculty of Humanities – University of Johannesburg, (2015): p. 146.

26 For example, consider the statement *"Between 431 and 404 BC, several Greek poleis engaged in armed warfare with several other Greek poleis"*. Although perfectly impartial and as close to the absolute truth as possible, it is completely useless, as it tells us nothing about the conflict itself.

27 V. Ankersmit, Frank. *Narrative Logic. A Semantic Analysis of the Historian's Language*. The Hague, 1983.

28 E.g., the narrative substance "Peloponnesian War" is what connects two rather distinct events, like the Theban attack on Plataea and the Battle of Aegospotami.

‘Narrative confusion’ put aside, it is a fact that history textbooks often tend to mix and match multiple methodologies and disciplines in their narratives. They rarely represent purely political or social-economic history; more often, they read as a medley of social, gender, political, economic and micro-histories.²⁹ Even without making this seem worse than it really is, one has to admit that, more often than not, this results in methodologically ‘ambivalent’ histories.³⁰ History textbooks, the love child of political, economical and ideological interests, are as accurate as they can (or are allowed to) be.

Also, textbooks have a different purpose than a work of original scholarship. Scholarly articles or books are based on original arguments that contribute to the discipline and propose new ways of reading the sources; other scholars are able to follow not just the deductions, but also the process of creating the arguments. In contrast, textbooks introduce a general (and generalized) story, just the ‘universally acceptable’ facts, without offering new or radical opinions that would need to be justified by an academic argument. Except that, in this case, Paparrigopoulos’ textbook offered precisely that – a radically new view, based not on radically new finds or arguments – what new finds could justify this sharp turn in the 1850s? – but rather on redefined national interests and changes in the political compass of his times.

Of course, were it presented in a scholarly journal, things would turn much less elegant, as the presentation of Paparrigopoulos’ thesis is troubled by the shadow of a serious error of methodology, not uncommon even in our time: namely, in order to present someone as Greek, one must first explain what a Greek is (and, of course, what a Macedonian is, in the setting of the 4th century BC). The exact margins of what a Greek is and is not are rather tricky over the entire course of Greek history. It would be distracting and unnecessary to compare what Paparrigopoulos knew to what we know today; however, it is also unavoidable to briefly

29 Klerides, Eleftherios. “Imagining the textbook: Textbooks as discourse and genre.” *Journal of Educational Media, Memory, and Society* 2, no. 1 (2010): pp. 31-54.

30 Klerides, Eleftherios. “Thinking Comparatively about the Textbook: Oscillating Between the National, the International and the Global.” In *Comparative Perspectives on Textbook Research and Their Implications for Quality Education (special issue)*, *Journal of International Cooperation in Education* 14, no. 2 (2011): pp. 51-65.

delve into these matters, as we have to examine the entire span of the argument, and where they have been drawn from.

The first author to debate the actual makings of Hellenism was Herodotus, and, by the mid-4th century BC, a century had passed since Herodotus had stated that all Greeks shared blood, language, cults, culture and lifestyle. By contrast, Homer uses 'Hellene' in order to refer only to the specific natives of Phthia, which implies that the perception of this particular identity was not innate, but rather something that gained currency or was actively emphasized.

Now, it is certainly true that, from the point of view of Herodotus, the Macedonian royal family were bona fide Greeks by blood, language, and lifestyle; there were others, however – and among them Demosthenes in the mid-4th century BC – who argued that Philip was not Greek at all, but a lowly, detestable barbarian. Putting Demosthenes' political attitudes and personal feelings aside, it is thought-provoking that attitudes about the Greekness of Ancient Macedonians were still held in dispute by his time – and were so closely reflected in the shifting historical examples in the time of Paparrigopoulos.

Common Macedonians, people outside the royal house, are discussed less, a fact that is hardly surprising. Nevertheless, it is clear that they had a very particular identity, and that their lifestyle in the Classical era was different to that of Classical Greeks. Macedonians had a different phoné (a meaningless fact either way, as ethnicity and language are not inextricably linked); were pastoral rather than farmers; were ruled by a king; had practices more akin to those of the fierce Thracians than to the Greeks; had to sit at a table and were not allowed to recline until they had killed a boar on foot with no traps and nothing but a spear; did not mix their wine, which was something only barbarians did; were characterized in Athenian circles as uncouth, violent, treacherous and untrustworthy, resembling barbarians in their morality; and finally, did not at all embrace either the mere notion of the polis, or the political concept of civic representation. On top of that, there was the question of Upper Macedonia, whose rulers owed allegiance to the royal palace, but whose population was regarded as nearly semi-barbaric even by people in Lower Macedonia.

As we can see, few things made Macedonians Greek enough so as not to be considered barbarians. So, it should be very hard – nearly impossible, without using modern historical methodology – to simply proclaim a people outside proper Greekness, or covered by a veneer of Greekness that was very thin indeed, as Greek. Yet, this case of bad historical exegesis is precisely what Paparrigopoulos came up with.

3. How did it come about that ancient Macedonia – and especially the times of Philip and Alexander – became such an important issue for the Greeks of the mid-1800s? Georgios Michalopoulos answers the question in his doctoral thesis: “Paparrigopoulos was the first to include Macedonia in the history of ancient Greece. In Phillip II and Alexander, he saw the saviors of Athens and the other Greek cities from political decadence. Paparrigopoulos’ interest in Macedonia was not solely historical: he concluded his chapter on Phillip II with a comparison of Phillip to Vittorio Emmanuele, observing that the Macedonian hegemony over Greece was analogous to the unification of Italy, with Macedonia acting as an ancient Piedmont”.³¹ Roudometof adds that the re-evaluation of the role of Macedon in the history of Greece was intended to fortify the idea of Greek unity.³² In this regard, one cannot avoid mentioning the speech of Konstantinos Asopios, delivered on the occasion of his appointment as rector of the University of Athens in 1856 – merely twenty years after the speech of Schinas – in which he stressed that Alexander the Great was a symbol of unity.³³

But there was another reason why ancient Macedonia was so important for the Greeks: namely, spreading the border of “modern Hellenism”. In 1860, Ioannis Typaldos – Alfonsatos remarked that Alexander the Great had extended the frontiers of Hellenism not by the might of weapons, but by the dissemination of Greek letters,³⁴ and Paparrigopoulos correspondingly credited Alexander the Great for spreading Greek

31 Michalopoulos, Georgios. *Greece and Macedonia: 1878-1910. Political parties, irredentism and the Foreign Ministry*, PhD thesis, University of Oxford (2013), p. 50.

32 V. Roudometof, *Nationalism, Globalization and Orthodoxy*, p. 108.

33 Demetriou, Kyriacos N. “Historians on Macedonian imperialism and Alexander the Great.” *Journal of Modern Greek Studies* 19, no. 1 (2001): 54, n. p. 13.

34 Robert Shannan Peckham, *National Histories, Natural States...*, p. 58

culture across the eastern world.³⁵ The change of attitude of the Greek intellectuals was associated to the Greek territorial ambitions concerning the Ottoman Empire. Compared to the Slavic population, the Greek population in Ottoman Macedonia was negligible. However, if ancient Macedonians were accepted as Greek, Macedonia accordingly became a Greek historical land; textbook history is a very strong weapon.

Be that as it may, the incorporation of Macedonia within the historical narrative of Ancient Greece – as well as its implantation straight into Modern Greek identity – was in plain sight in the history textbooks that were used in Greece. Theodore Zervas noticed that textbooks portrayals of Phillip II and his son Alexander were highly political “in no small part, because Greece wanted to reclaim Macedonia from the Ottoman Empire”.³⁶ Starting from the 1880s, depictions of ancient Macedonia and its connection to Hellenism gained momentum. Interpretations of the past were changed. Demosthenes, who had earlier been characterized in the textbooks as a protector of democracy, especially against Phillip II and Macedonian ambitions to dominate over Greece, came under fire for his lack of political judgement and his opposition to united Greece.³⁷ Links were established between Ancient Macedonian, ancient Greek and Modern Greek history. Phillip II and Alexander the Great were presented as being purely Greek. Macedonia became purely Greek.

At the same time, ordinary Greeks were still mystified at the character and the history, even the territory of Macedonia.³⁸ “According to a widespread rumor, the politician Theodoros Deliyannis asked a merchant from Serres, a large town in the Salonica vilayet, about the commercial volume of the port of his city.

35 Zervas, Theodore G.. *Ressurecting the Past, Constructing the Future: A Historical Investigation on the Formation of a Greek National Identity in Schools, 1834-1913*, Dissertations Paper 156, Loyola University Chicago (2010): p. 109.

36 *Ibid.*, p. 117.

37 *Ibid.* , p. 190.

38 Evangelos Kofos states that Crete, Epirus, and Thessaly had precedence over Macedonia; he also believes that mid-19th century Greeks in Athens knew very little of the situation in Macedonia and the Balkans. V. Kofos, Evangelos. “Dilemmas and orientations of Greek policy in Macedonia, 1878-1896.” *Balkan Studies*, 21, Institute for Balkan Studies, Thessaloniki (1980), p. 45.

In reality, Serres had no port, and the offended merchant returned to Macedonia with stories about the ignorant politicians of Athens”.³⁹

Abstract:

There are numerous documents that provide various information about the Greek aspirations toward the region of Macedonia. A question that keeps reappearing is when those aspirations began and how large a territory they encompassed. Early statements of representatives of the Greek political and intellectual elite show that during the time the Greek state was in its infancy, Macedonia was not a political priority. Greek opinions on Ancient Macedonia and Macedonian kings replicate this impeccably. We follow the presentation of ancient Macedonians from ‘barbarians’ and ‘enslavers’ in the 1830s, to ‘Hellenes’ and ‘saviors of Hellenism’ in the 1850s, showing that ancient Macedonians, proclaimed to be Greeks by the means of a textbook, became a focal point of Greek historiography for reasons that were closer to Realpolitik than to scholarly and scientific truth.

Key words: Greece, ancient Macedonia, Paparrigopoulos, historiography politics.

³⁹ Michalopoulos, Georgios. *Greece and Macedonia*, pp. 8-9.