



# HELLENIC LINK–MIDWEST Newsletter

A CULTURAL AND SCIENTIFIC LINK WITH GREECE

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## Upcoming Events

### The Rediscovery of the Hellenic Idea in the late Byzantine Empire and Early Modern Europe

On Sunday, April 18, 2021 at 3:00 pm, Hellenic Link–Midwest presents Dr. Nikos Nikoloudis, in an online presentation titled “*The Rediscovery of the Hellenic Idea in the late Byzantine Empire and Early Modern Europe*”. The Zoom link for this webinar is <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83079609863> and the webinar ID is 830 7960 9863.

The ancient Greek world was conquered by the Romans and assimilated politically and socially in the Roman Empire. However, Greek culture (literature, philosophy, science) continued to flourish, especially in the eastern parts of the Empire, where the majority of the population continued to speak Greek. Latin culture declined rapidly in the Eastern Roman Empire during the 7<sup>th</sup> century, as a result of the rise of the Arab Caliphate and the subsequent loss of extensive territories that left it essentially with Asia Minor and the Southern Balkans. It was in these areas, as a result of successive struggles against the Arabs, that the rediscovery of Byzantium’s Hellenic roots was initiated. The process continued in subsequent years under the influence of the Great Schism of the Churches (1054) and the Crusades that created a sharp divide between Byzantines and Westerners. In the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> centuries Byzantine scholars studied ancient Greek culture in depth and some (Plethon’s circle) openly identified themselves as descendants of ancient Greeks. The fall of Byzantium hindered the dissemination of such ideas among the inhabitants of former Byzantine lands. However, the growing admiration in Western Europe for ancient Greek artistic and intellectual achievements during the Renaissance - largely an outcome of the settlement of Byzantine scholars there, after 1453 - resulted in a greater appreciation of ancient Greece and a more systematic study of its achievements. This development also benefitted ordinary Greeks by demonstrating to them their “forgotten” legacy. This process was particularly evident in Venice, home of a large Greek community, as a result of which the Cretan Renaissance was the first “modern” demonstration of the long continuation of Greek culture. Subsequently, the Hellenic idea was explored by European aristocrats through the “Grand Tour”, undertaken both for an in-situ study of ancient Greek culture and the collection of ancient “souvenirs”. The Enlightenment and the French Revolution gave birth to Neoclassicism creating the definitive circumstances for a complete understanding among ordinary

Greeks of their strong ties to their ancient heritage in the last pre-revolutionary years.

*Doctor Nicholas Nikoloudis* received his Doctoral degree at the Department (currently Center) of Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies, at King’s College, London. Subsequently taught History courses at the CYA (College Year in Athens), the Athens School for Tourist Guides and the YWCA, as well at postgraduate seminars at ATINER (Athens Institute for Education and Research). His areas of research interest are, geographically, Greece (medieval and modern), Southeastern Europe, the Middle East and the Mediterranean, and thematically, military and sociopolitical history. He has served as Editor-in-Chief of *Historica Themata (Historical Themes)*, has co-authored two textbooks for the Hellenic Open University, and has published thirteen books and many articles.

### The Hellenistic Dynasty of the Attalids of Pergamon on the Sacred Island of Delos.

On Sunday, May 16, 2021 at 3:00 pm, Hellenic Link–Midwest presents *Professor Elizabeth Kosmetatou* in an online lecture titled: “*The Hellenistic Dynasty of the Attalids of Pergamon on the Sacred Island of Delos.*” Information on how to join the lecture will be provided separately by email and regular mail, and on the website of Hellenic Link–Midwest.

The Hellenistic dynasty of the Attalids ruled Pergamon for about 150 years (281-133 BCE). Its kings were renowned builders of such famous monuments as the Stoa of Attalos in Athens and the Altar of Pergamon, now housed in the National Museum of Berlin. Equally fascinating is the study of their political propaganda as they sought to establish themselves as major players in the politics of the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> centuries BCE, which was a period of conflict among the Hellenistic dynasties and the Greek city-states. This era ended with the Roman conquest of most of the Hellenistic world. The talk will offer an overview of the history of the Attalids of Pergamon, their celebrated victories against Galatian invaders, and their alliances with the powers of the time as they sought to protect their kingdom. It will also focus: on royal efforts to establish this monarchy in the collective memory of the Greek world; and into the activities of its first rulers, especially of Attalos I Soter, on the sacred island of Delos and on setting up four massive sculptural groups on the Athenian Acropolis next to the Parthenon.

*Dr. Elizabeth Kosmetatou* teaches Greek and Roman History and Archaeology at the History Department of the University of Illinois–Springfield. She has participated in archeological

excavations in Greece and Turkey including Epidaurus, Vergina, Midea, and Sagalassos. Her research interests include Classical and Hellenistic Greek history and archaeology, early Rome, Greek and Latin epigraphy and numismatics, cultural studies, and political theory. Professor Kosmetatou, holds, a Master of Arts and a Ph.D degree in Classics from the University of Cincinnati, and a Bachelor of Arts in Archeology and Art History from the University of Athens, Greece.

## *In Brief*

### **Thessaloniki Named Top City for Remote Working**

Thanks to its high quality of life, affordability, and good internet connectivity, Thessaloniki has been named a top city for remote working by *Big 7 Travel*. It has been ranked number sixteen among the 50 most attractive destinations for working away from the office—above other European destinations like Prague (#47), Lisbon (#46), Zurich (#44), Budapest (#38) and Madrid (#32). At the top of the list was the Estonian capital of Tallinn.

*Big 7 Travel* writes of Thessaloniki: “*Who doesn’t dream of living in an ancient, picturesque city in the heart of the Mediterranean? Complete with vibrant food, friendly locals and stunning scenery. In Thessaloniki, you’ll get all that and then some. Here you’ll find reliable internet speeds of 15 Mbps, a high level of safety and a low cost of living. When it comes to your office space, Thessaloniki has loads of charming cafes perfect for an afternoon of work along with the famous co-live and co-work space.*” The ranking was based on variables such as internet access, affordability and the presence of attractive co-working spaces and friendly expat communities, and data from the site *Nomad List*.

### **Lord Elgin’s Theft of the Parthenon Marbles and the Complicity of the British Parliament**

In a recent interview to the Greek newspaper *Ta Nea*, British prime minister Boris Johnson, rejecting Greece’s permanent request since 1832 for the return of the 2,500-year-old Parthenon sculptures, said “*They were acquired legally by Lord Elgin, in line with the laws that were in force at that time.*” Greece’s Culture Minister Lina Mendoni, who has referred to Elgin as a “*serial thief*”, said Johnson appeared to be unaware of recent historical evidence showing the former envoy had not acquired the marbles legitimately.

In a 2000 article, David Rudenstine, professor at Benjamin N. Cardozo School of Law, presents very strong evidence that the British Officials committed fraud to keep in England the Parthenon sculptures stolen by Lord Elgin.

Professor Rudenstine writes: The British claim that Lord Elgin received permission from the Ottomans to denude the Parthenon are based on an English document printed in the appendix of an 1816 report of a parliamentary committee convened to evaluate Elgin's request that the British government purchase the Parthenon marbles from him (Parliament went on to vote, 82 to 30, to buy them and give them over to the British Museum). The Parliament report

presents this document as an accurate English translation of a July 1801 Ottoman document that, according to Elgin, authorized the removal of the marbles. Elgin told the committee that the original Ottoman document was given to Ottoman officials in Athens in 1801. Yet no researcher has ever located this Ottoman document. When I was in Istanbul, I searched in vain for it or any copy of it, as well as for any reference to it in other documents or a description of its substantive terms in any related official papers. Although a document of some sort may have existed, it seems to have vanished into thin air, despite the fact that the Ottoman archives contain an enormous number of other documents from the period.

In addition to its startling failure to secure the best evidence it could pertaining to Lord Elgin's legal claim to the marbles, Parliament actually misled the public about the evidence it had concerning the authenticity of the document. The English document printed on page 69 of the committee's report has at its end the following words: “(Signed with a signet) SEGED ABDULLAH KAIMACAN.”

The plain suggestion inherent in the placement of this line at the end of the text in the report is clear: the document examined by the committee had a signet and was signed by the Acting Grand Vizier at the time, thus giving it legal force and legitimacy. But the document examined by the committee—one purportedly translated from an Italian document that was supposedly translated from an Ottoman original—did not have a signet or signature on it at all. The possessor of this document has told me that the Italian document has no signet either, nor is it even signed.

The British Parliament had questioned Elgin at some length about whether he had authority to remove the marbles from the walls of the Parthenon. While Elgin consistently insisted, he did have such authority, he also admitted that he had no papers to support his claim.

During his testimony before the committee on February 29, Elgin was questioned about whether the Ottomans gave him permission to remove the marbles. Elgin stated that the Ottomans gave him written permissions more than once, but that he had “retained none of them,” and denied having a copy of any document granting him permission.

The Parliamentary record reveals that the 1801 Ottoman document was not produced to the Committee by Elgin, but by his aid Rev. Philip Hunt who testified to the Committee 13 days later than Elgin. How Elgin could not have seen the document his aid claimed that represented the permission by the Ottomans to desecrate Parthenon?

What we do know is that the British ambassador's agent at the time gave bribes to Ottoman officials to remove the marbles and facilitate their shipment out of Greece. Such bribes would seem to poison any claim of legitimacy that might otherwise be imputed to permission to ship.

You can read Professor Rudenstine’s paper at [https://www.brown.edu/Departments/Joukowsky\\_Institute/courses/worldofmuseums09/files/9703421.pdf](https://www.brown.edu/Departments/Joukowsky_Institute/courses/worldofmuseums09/files/9703421.pdf)

## *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)*

After the conquests of Alexander the Great and the establishment of the Epigonoi, the tempo of Hellenization greatly accelerated and henceforth Hellenism acquired the prestige of political domination and empire. The Hellenistic monarchs pushed the process through the foundation of Greek cities, while the more ambitious of the local population found their desires for advancement a stimulus to learn Greek. The indigenous urban settlements and villages of Anatolia in many places coalesced, on their own initiative, to form cities in the Greek manner. The Attalids were active in promoting Greek cities in western Asia Minor; the local kings of Hellenistic Anatolia adopted Greek as their official language and sought to imitate other cultural forms. It was in the towns that Hellenization made its great progress, the process often being synonymous with urbanization. In contrast, the rural areas were far less affected and retained more of the pre-Greek culture, as reflected in languages and religious practices. Urbanization continued under the Romans, so that in a sense Rome maintained the traditions of Hellenization in the peninsula. The geographer Strabo, himself an inhabitant of one of these Hellenized Anatolian towns (Amaseia), comments on Hellenization by remarking that Lydian was no longer spoken in Lydia (though it survived for a while among the isolated Cibyratae), and he implies that Carian was in the process of dying, the language having acquired large numbers of Greek words. The degree to which Hellenism had penetrated in the towns and cities of large portions of Anatolia is reflected in the comparatively large numbers of men of letters who appeared there in Hellenistic, Roman, and Byzantine times. But the literary aspect of Hellenic culture was largely an urban phenomenon, and if its presence does show the degree to which many of the cities and towns had been Hellenized, it does not reflect at all on the rural areas. Even though Greek was the official as well as the literary language, it had not yet conquered the countryside.

The slower rate of Hellenization of rural Asia Minor is reflected in the survival of a number of the "Anatolian" languages as late as the sixth century of the Christian era, although even here Greek cultural influence of a type is to be seen in the rural areas and in their languages. A study of the survival of these Anatolian tongues (one is not concerned here with Armenian, Georgian, Kurdish) demonstrates the losing nature of the battle they fought against the progress of Greek. The nature of the sources and the archaistic use of ethnic epithets often make it difficult to ascertain whether a linguistic or ethnic term is being used purely geographically rather than culturally. Consequently, the interpretation of

what are apparently geographical terms as denoting ethnic groups has been more harmful than helpful.

One of the better known cases of linguistic continuity is that of the language spoken by the Isaurians, who played such an important part in the fifth-century history of Byzantium, and whose language seems still to have been spoken as late as the sixth century. There is evidence that Cappadocian was still known and spoken in the fourth century; Gothic in the fourth century; and Phrygian at least into the third century. But these languages were for the most part dead or moribund in the sixth century of the Christian era. Of these languages spoken in Anatolia, Neo-Phrygian has received the greatest amount of scholarly attention because of the survival of the Neo-Phrygian inscriptions. Those who have proposed a more lively continuity of these Anatolian languages in western Asia Minor during the Byzantine period have concentrated on the case of Neo-Phrygian. The principal literary texts that have been brought to bear on the question are the ecclesiastical histories of Socrates and Sozomenus, the contents of which refer to events in the fifth century. Holl (and those who have followed him) has concluded as a result of two passages in these texts that Phrygian was a spoken and understood language as late as the fifth century. Let us look then at these two texts on which so many scholars have relied.

Socrates mentions that the bishop of the Goths in Asia Minor, a certain Selinus, was the son of a mixed marriage. *He was a Goth from his father and a Phrygian through his mother. And because of this he taught in both languages, readily, in the church.*

This passage has been interpreted as meaning that Selinus addressed his congregation in both Gothic and Phrygian. But the real question is the meaning of “*in both languages.*” Does this mean that he really spoke both Gothic and Phrygian? Or, is the word Phrygian in the text simply a reference to the fact that his mother was from the district of Phrygia? Here again one is faced with an archaistic use of a term that refers to nothing more than a geographical district. The second language to which he refers is probably Greek. That this is so, and that the passage has nothing to do with the Phrygian language, emerges from the parallel text in Sozomenus which is much more explicit as to what this second language of Selinus was. Sozomenus narrates that Selinus was able to deliver sermons “*not only in their national language [Gothic], but also in that of the Greeks.*” Both texts indicate the following. The Goths, who settled in Phrygia in the fourth century, still preserved their national tongue in the fifth, and so Selinus their bishop often addressed them in Gothic. But, as his mother was a non-Goth, an inhabitant of the district of Phrygia, he could also speak Greek, the inhabitants of Phrygia having been Hellenized in their speech. Thus, he used both languages, Greek and Gothic. This passage, then, does not prove the vigorous survival of Phrygian into the fifth century. Rather it shows the process of Hellenization at work among the Goths through intermarriage and religion.

*(To be continued)*

## *From the Riches of Our Cultural Heritage*

### **Poetry by Kostis Palamas**

ΠΑΤΡΙΔΕΣ (Αποσπάσματα)

Το Αιγαίο γαλάζιος θησαυρός σμαραγδοφόρος,  
ο ουρανός και η γη σα Δάφνης και σα Χλόη,  
φυτρώνει της ζωής λαχταριστός ο σπόρος,  
βυζαίνεται απ' των Όντων το μελισσολόι

των Όλων ο χυμός. Όλυμπος, Πήλιον, Όσσα,  
πελάγου κάθε κόρφος, κάθε στεριάς γλώσσα, η  
λιμνοφάνταστη Κασσάντρα, η Θράκη, γάμου  
φορούνε φόρεμα, κι εγώ; «Κύριε, γίνου  
Σωτήρ μου!» Και θολώνω με τα δάκρυστά μου  
το θείο Βρέφος, ζωγραφιά του Πανσελήνου.

Η Ρούμελ' είναι μια κορόν' από ρουμπίνι,  
κι είν' ο Μοριάς μια σμαραγδένια λαμπυράδα,  
κι εφτάδιπλο τα Εφτάνησα είναι μπουγαρίνι,  
νεράιδα είν' αφρογέννητη κάθε Κυκλάδα.

Κομματιασμένη κι η Ήπειρο γελάει κι εκείνη,  
κι η Θεσσαλία σκορπίζει μια ξανθή ομορφάδα:  
κρυμμένη στην πολύπαθη τη Ρωμιοσύνη  
σα να ξανοίγω τη βασίλισσα Ελλάδα.

Ακόμα το έλατο της λεβεντιάς φουντώνει,  
κι απ' των αιώνων τους καημούς κι από τα πάθη  
του Διγενή η πνοή παντού χυμένη πλάθει

Κανάρη, Καραϊσκάκη και Κολοκοτρώνη:  
και μες στις χρυσοπράσινης νυχτιάς τα βάθη  
ακόμ' αργολαλεί του Κολωνού τ' αηδόνι.

Από το Δούναβη ως την άκρη του Ταινάρου  
κι από τ' Ακροκεραύνια στη Χαλκηδόνα  
διαβαίνεις, τότε σαν της θάλασσας Γοργόνα,  
πότε σαν άγαλμ' από μάρμαρο της Πάρου.

Πότε κρατάς τη δάφνη από τον Ελικώνα  
και πότε ορμάς με τη ρομφαία του βαρβάρου,  
και μες στο πλάτος του μεγάλου σου λαβάρου  
βλέπω διπρόσωπη ζωγραφισμέν' εικόνα.

Εδώ ιερός ο Βράχος φέγγει σαν τοπάζι  
κι ο λευκοπάρθενος χορός των Κανηφόρων  
προβαίνει και τον πέπλο της θεάς ταράζει:  
και πέρ' αστράφτουν τα ζαφείρια των Βοσπόρων,  
κι απ' τη Χρυσόπορτα περνώντας αλαλάζει  
ο θρίαμβος των νικητών Αυτοκρατόρων!

Πατρίδες! Αέρας, γη, νερό, φωτιά! Στοιχεία  
αχάλαστα, και αρχή και τέλος των πλασμάτων,  
σα θα περάσω στη γαλήνη των μνημάτων,  
θα σας ξανάβρω, πρώτη και στερνή ευτυχία!

Αέρας μέσα μου ο λαός των ονειράτων  
στον αέρα θα πάει: θα πάει στην αιωνία  
φωτιά, φωτιά κι ο λογισμός μου, τη μανία  
των παθών μου θα πάρ' η λύσσα των κυμάτων.

Το χωματόπλαστο κορμί χώμα και κείνο,  
αέρας, γη, νερό, φωτιά θα ξαναγίνω,  
κι απ' των ονείρων τον αέρα, κι απ' την πύρα

του λογισμού, κι από τη σάρκα τη λιωμένη,  
κι απ' των παθών τη θάλασσα πάντα θα βγαίνει  
ήχου πνοή, παράπονο, σαν από λύρα.

(continued from the previous issue)

EXCERPTS FROM "FATHERLANDS"

The blue Aegean spreads a sapphire treasure;  
Like Daphnis and his Chloe stand sky and earth;  
Quivering, lo, the seed of life blooms forth;  
In swarms, the living beings suck the sap

Of all. Olympus, Ossa, Pelion,  
And every lap of sea, and every tongue  
Of land, lake-like Cassandra, Thrace's shores  
Are clad in wedding garb; and I? "O Lord,  
Be my Redeemer!" and with floods of tears  
I bathe the god-child Panselenus wrought.

Rumele is a royal crown of ruby;  
Moreas is a glow of emerald;  
The Seven Isles, a jasmine sevenfold;  
And every Cyclad, a Nereid sea-born.

Even the chains of rugged Epirus laugh;  
And Thessaly spreads far her golden charms.  
Hidden beneath her present waves of woe,  
Methinks I look on Hellas, Queen of lands.

For still the ancient fir of valor blooms;  
And from the pangs and sighs of ages risen,  
The breath of Digenes fills all the land

Breeding a race of heroes strong and new;  
And in the depths of green and golden Night  
Sings on Colonus Hill the nightingale.

From Danube to the cape of Taenaron,  
From Thunder Mountain's End to Chalcedon,  
Thou passest now a mermaid of the sea  
And now a statue of marble Parian.

Now with the laurel bough from Helicon  
And now with sword barbarian, thou sweepest;  
And on the fields of thy great labarum,  
I see a double headed image drawn.

The sacred Rock gleams like a topaz here;  
And virgins basket-bearing, clad in white,  
March in a dance and shake Athena's veil;  
But far the sapphires shine of Bosphorus;  
And through the Golden Gate exulting pass  
Victors Imperial triumphantly.

Fatherlands! Air and earth and fire and water!  
Elements indestructible, beginning  
And end of life, first joy and last of mine!  
You I shall find again when I pass on

To the graves' calm. The people of the dreams  
Within me, airlike, unto air shall pass;  
My reason, fire-like, unto lasting fire;  
My passions' craze unto the billows' madness;

Even my dust-born body, unto dust;  
And I shall be again air, earth, fire, water;  
And from the air of dreams, and from the flames  
Of thought, and from the flesh that shall be dust,  
And from the passions' sea, ever shall rise  
A breath of sound like a soft lyre's complaint.