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Upcoming Events

Cultural Heritage, Human Rights, and Community Sustainability: Turkey's Weaponization of Cultural Heritage Against the Ecumenical Patriarchate and Greek Orthodox Community.

On Sunday, December 10, 2023, at 3:00 pm, Hellenic Link–Midwest will present *Dr. Elizabeth Prodromou* in a talk titled: "*Cultural Heritage, Human Rights, and Community Sustainability: Turkey's Weaponization of Cultural Heritage Against the Ecumenical Patriarchate and Greek Orthodox Community.*" The event will take place at 3 pm at the Four Points by Sheraton Hotel, 10249 West Irving Park Road at Schiller Park (southeast corner of Irving Park Road and Mannheim Road). This lecture is supported by the *Hellenic Foundation, Chicago*.

The twin events of the seventy-fifth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) and the centennial of the establishment of the Republic of Turkey provide an opportune, urgent moment for considering the application of a universal human rights framework to cultural heritage protections, most especially with regard to the sustainability of the Ecumenical Patriarchate and the Greek Orthodoxy community of Turkey (EPGOCT). Although a broad range of international human rights instruments has been developed to address the original deficits in the UDHR regarding the linkages between cultural heritage protection and the sustainability of religious, ethnic, and linguistic minority populations, the Turkish state has architected a cultural heritage policy towards the EPGOCT that functions as a multi-purpose weapon—appropriation, expropriation, erasure, destruction—deployed towards the goal of national homogenization and unsustainability of the EPGOCT. This talk will introduce the linkages between university human rights, cultural heritage rights, and minority communities as a framework for analyzing Turkey's use of cultural heritage policy towards the EPGCOT over the past century. I explore Turkey's "Haghia Sophia fetish" as part of the broader set of tools targeting the tangible and intangible heritage of the EPGOCT, and I suggest that the case of the EPGOCT is paradigmatic and consequential for understanding the vulnerability of the country's other minority communities. I close with some suggestions for efficacious action that combines the work of diplomats, heritage experts, and human rights practitioners, that improves the agency of the EPGOCT, towards improved outcomes in this case and comparative cases.

Dr. Elizabeth H. Prodromou is Visiting Professor in the International Studies Program at Boston College, and an affiliated faculty member of the Islamic Civilizations and Societies Program as well as the Boisi Center for Religion and American Public Life. Her research interests and policy work focus on the intersections of geopolitics, religion, and human rights, with particular focus on the Eastern Mediterranean and Middle East. Prodromou served a diplomatic appointment on the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom (2004-2012), and she was a member of the U.S. Secretary of State's Religion & Foreign Policy Working Group (2011-2015). She is co-editor of two volumes—*Eastern Orthodox Christianity and American Higher Education: Theological, Historical, and Contemporary Reflections*, and *Thinking through Faith: Perspectives from Orthodox Christian Scholars*—and multiple book chapters, and is widely published in academic journals such as *Journal of World Christianity*, *Journal of Democracy*, *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, *Orbis*, and *Survival*.

She sits on the editorial board of *The Review of Faith & International Affairs* and *The Journal of World Christianity*, and Co-Chairs the Orthodoxy, Politics, and International Relations Group of the International Orthodox Theological Association. Her policy and practitioner appointments include the Atlantic Council's Eurasia Center (Non-Resident Senior Fellow), Religions for Peace (Co-President), and the Freedom of Religion or Belief Women's Alliance (Alliance Advisor). She was a member of the delegation of the Ecumenical Patriarchate to the Holy and Great Council at Crete in 2016.

Her current research focuses on two areas: religious geopolitics and typologies of power, with a case study of Russian influence-building through religious soft and sharp power; and, the effects of cultural heritage policy on institutional religious freedom and religious pluralism, with comparative case studies from the Near East.

Prodromou has taught at The Fletcher School at Tufts University, where she was the founding faculty director of the Initiative on Religion, Law, and Diplomacy; at Boston University; Princeton University; and, as an invited flying faculty member, at the College of Europe (Natolin campus). She earned a Ph.D. and an S.M. in political science from MIT, an M.A.L.D. from The Fletcher School at Tufts University, and a B.A. in history and international relations from Tufts University, where she graduated Phi Beta Kappa and summa cum laude.

In Brief

The Greek Economy in 2023

Last October, European Central Bank (ECB) President Christine Lagarde praised the return of Greece's economy to health and the resilience of the Greeks following the country's debt crisis more than ten years ago.

She said: *"The people of Greece have been on a long journey. It has been a hard journey. But they never lost sight of the destination. And much has been gained along the way. As we all know, the crisis that erupted in 2009 and the program of fiscal adjustment and structural reforms it entailed took an exceptionally heavy toll."*

Lagarde said that after the fiscal adjustment Greece was obliged to make because of the debt crisis, in 2020 its economy contracted by an additional 9% because of the COVID-19 pandemic. *"Yet, despite this succession of setbacks, the country's resilience has been remarkable. Thanks to the hard work that has been done to make the economy more flexible, Greece has made an impressive comeback from the pandemic... But it is not only the economy that has been resilient, it is also the Greek people. There were times when they could have chosen a different path. Yet they have remained committed to being at the heart of Europe, even in the hardest of times."*

Last October, Standard & Poor's granted the country an investment grade rating for the first time after the economic crisis. It said *"This upgrade is a victory for the Greek economy, which is moving forward despite a broader environment of successive global crises."*

According to Moody's, despite the fact that in absolute terms the Greek debt remains high, its sustainability is particularly strong. The "consolidation" of its downward trajectory supports the continuation of the upward trajectory of the country's assessment, and the market has rewarded it. Greek bond yields are "beating" Italian bond yields for a long time, and the next targets, which are Spanish and Portuguese yields, are looking more and more attainable.

While Greek debt stood at around 206% of GDP in 2020, is expected to decline this year to around 160% of GDP and further by 9 percentage points in 2024. According to Moody's, between 2023 and 2030 Greece will also register a world record reduction in the debt ratio, by 26 percentage points, with Portugal second with a 15% drop and the UK third with a 6% drop, while countries such as France (+6%) and the US (+12%) will see their debt ratios increase in the next decade.

Moody's noted that Greece's *"average debt interest rate moves to just 1.5% compared to 4.5% in 2011 and the weighted average duration is approximately 20 years, compared to 6.3 years in 2011."* Consequently, interest payments as a share of government revenue will remain low for a long time, even after taking into account the fiscal impact of the pandemic, monetary tightening by the ECB and the subsequent rise in yields. Also, according to Moody's, the manageability of Greece's debt will remain stronger than Italy's. At 3.9%, the yield on the Greek 10-year bond is close

to the lowest historically recorded levels compared to its Italian peer (at 4.55% currently).

According to the International Monetary Fund, Greece's economy is expected to expand by 2.5% this year due to strong domestic demand, investments and EU funds. Growth will slow down to 2.0% next year. According to Eurostat, at 2.4%, in September 2023, Greece had the fourth lowest inflation rate in the European Union.

However, inflation in food prices is very high. In September, on an annual basis reached 9.6%, the 12th highest among the EU member states. Prices of cheese, rice and olive oil recorded double-digit hikes, and are also among the highest at the EU level. According to Eurostat, in September 2023 prices of cheese products had gone up by 12.8% compared to September 2022—the fourth largest increase in the EU. The price of olive oil increased by 28.8%.

Eurostat estimated that in Greece inflation rose in October to 3.9%—the highest in the Eurozone and mainly attributed to food price hikes after a few weeks of natural disasters that mainly struck central Greece. At the same time, inflation in the eurozone, at 2.9 percent, was at its lowest level in the last two years strengthening hopes that the European Central Bank will not raise interest rates further.

To protect consumers from excessive profits during the inflation crisis, last July, Greece passed a law that caps gross profits for a broad range of key consumer goods and services—mostly in the food and health sectors—until the end of 2023. The law stipulates that the gross profit per unit cannot exceed that from before December 31, 2021.

In November 2023, Greek authorities announced fines totaling 1.67 million euros on the local branches of two US-based health care and consumer products giants for breaches of the profit cap law. Johnson & Johnson Hellas was fined 1 million euros and Colgate-Palmolive Hellas 672,000 euros.

Development Minister Costas Skrekas said that fighting high prices was "a top government priority," and promised constant market checks to ensure the profit cap is implemented. {Source: Greek newspaper Ekathimerini}

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"

POLITICAL AND MILITARY COLLAPSE

Events Leading to Manzikert – Byzantine Internal Developments (1025–71)

(Continuation from the previous issue)

The bureaucrats, in a sense at the mercy of the generals when it came to military affairs, defended themselves by embarking upon the dismantling of the military apparatus. This included the dismissal of competent generals, in some cases the dissolution of entire military corps, but above all the cutting off of financial support of the local, indigenous

troops forming the thematic levies, who were fast being replaced by foreign mercenaries. This overall policy becomes clearly apparent with Constantine IX Monomachus during whose reign the prize moneys of the soldiers and revenues that were ostensibly marked for military expeditions were diverted to the use of others, without benefit to the state. He converted the army of the province of Iberia, 50,000 strong and crucial for the defense against the Seljuks, from a body that owed military service, into a taxpaying community. The transformation of the army into a taxpaying unit not only deprived the area of its defense but also caused many of the inhabitants to go over to the Seljuks. Thus, at one blow a key province in the defense of Asia Minor was deprived of its military strength during the period when the Seljuks appeared on the eastern borders. With the gradual dissolution of the provincial, indigenous armies, the emperors began to rely increasingly upon foreign mercenaries. It is true that mercenary troops had always been employed in the past by the emperors, but thematic levies had been more important. Now the mercenaries would replace the Byzantine soldiery that was of primary importance, and the empire's armies came to be characterized more and more by the presence of these mercenary troops that included a bewildering ethnic array—Normans, English, Russians, Georgians, Alans, Armenians, Patzinaks, Turks, Arabs, and other foreign groups.

By the reign of Constantine X Ducas the depletion of the local levies and the reliance upon foreign mercenaries was to become nearly complete. Constantine ruled through the foremost representatives of the bureaucratic element, the university professors Psellus and Xiphilenus, the former in charge of the administration and the latter in charge of the church. At the end of his reign, the destruction of the armies by the bureaucrats, which was already under way during the reign of Constantine IX, had gone so far that the provincial forces were no longer feared either by the civil element of the capital or, more ominously, by the Seljuks, Patzinaks, Uzes, and Normans on the borders. This antimilitary policy of the bureaucrats was continued in all its vigor even after the battle of Manzikert, when it was obvious to all that the army was the most important factor in the survival of the empire. The accession of Michael VII Ducas to the throne (1071), a scion of the leading bureaucratic family and the pupil of Psellus, was most unfortunate in this respect. For he busied himself continuously with the useless and unending study of eloquence and with the composition of iambics and anapests; moreover he was not proficient in this art, but being deceived and beguiled by the counsel of the philosophers [Psellus], he destroyed the whole world, so to speak.

With the crippling of the native military strength, the increased reliance upon the services of foreign troops brought a double liability: questionable loyalty, and far greater financial expense. The numbers of mercenary troops, if one can judge by the information that the sources relate in connection with the revolt of Isaac Comnenus in 1057, was not insignificant. Of the troops collected on the northeastern frontier by Catacolon Cecaumenus in this year, there were

two tagmata of Franks, one tagma of Russians, and only two tagmata of Chaldians and Coloneians. In other words, three-fifths of these were foreign mercenaries, as were also the Armenian levies of Sebasteia, Melitene, and Tephrike. There were enough Normans in Anatolia by the reign of Michael VII so that the Armenian rebel Philaretus Brachamius was able to enlist the services of 8,000. When Alexius Comnenus set out to halt the advance of Nicephorus Bryennius, he had in addition to his Norman troops, 2,000 Turks from Anatolia. Nicephorus Palaeologus was sent to the Caucasus where he raised 6,000 Alans with which he was supposed to suppress the rebellion of Rousse1, and Rousse1 himself had perhaps something like 3,000 Normans in his service. Although it is impossible to obtain anything like exact figures of the mercenaries, and even though some of the figures often reproduced may be exaggerated, they indicate that by the mid-eleventh century mercenaries had replaced or supplemented the indigenous troops of the Byzantine armies. The presence and activities of these mercenaries in eleventh-century Anatolia were to play a prominent role in the Byzantine collapse. As their only bond of loyalty to the empire was based on their salaries, any financial difficulties of the state which might delay or lessen these financial rewards would of course break the slender bond that held them to the empire. In 1057 the Norman chief Herve Frankopoulus, dissatisfied at not having obtained a promotion, retired to the theme of Armeniacon and deserted to the Turk Samuh who was then raiding the eastern borders. In 1063, after having returned to the services of the emperor, he betrayed the Byzantine commander of Edessa to the enemy for which deed he was summoned to Constantinople and drowned in the Bosphorus. Herve is only one example from many that would appear as events progressed. This pattern of mercenary disloyalty, rebellion, and ravaging of the very provinces that they had been hired to defend becomes a singularly constant theme in these bleak years of the empire's history.

Finally, the strife of bureaucrats and generals resulted in the summoning of Turkish invaders, each side bidding highly for the favor of Turkish chiefs and generals and for the services of their troops. On each occasion that the two factions prepared for military action, victory usually depended on success in acquiring the services of the Turkish chieftains. This pattern, however, did not come to prevail until after the battle of Manzikert.

The single most fateful development leading to the defeat of Byzantium in Anatolia was, then, this vicious contest for political power between the bureaucrats and the generals, consuming as it did the energies of the state in a destructive manner at a time when the external pressures were becoming dangerous. It resulted in the studied and intentional neglect of the indigenous armies and in the reliance upon expensive and less reliable mercenary bodies. These latter, because of their lack of loyalty and because of tardiness in their payment, did not hesitate to plunder and ravage the very lands that they had been hired to defend, or even to desert to the Turks.

(To be continued)

From the Riches of Our Cultural Heritage

Poetry by Odysseas Elytis

From Axion Esti

Τη γλώσσα μου έδωσαν ελληνική
το σπίτι φτωχικό στις αμμουδιές του Όμηρου.
Μονάχη έγνοια η γλώσσα μου στις αμμουδιές του Όμηρου.
Εκεί σπάροι και πέγκες
ανεμόδαρτα ρήματα
ρεύματα πράσινα μες στα γαλάζια
όσα είδα στα σπλάχνα μου ν' ανάβουνε
σφουγγάρια, μέδουσες
με τα πρώτα λόγια των Σειρήνων
όστρακα ρόδινα με τα πρώτα μαύρα ρίγη.
Μονάχη έγνοια η γλώσσα μου, με τα πρώτα μαύρα ρίγη.
Εκεί ρόδια, κυδώνια
θεοί μελαχρινοί, θείοι κι εξάδελφοι
το λάδι αδειάζοντας μες στα πελώρια κιούπια
και πνοές από τη ρεματιά ευωδιάζοντας
λυγαριά και σχίνο
σπάρτο και πιπερόριζα
με τα πρώτα πιπίσματα των σπίνων
ψαλμοδιές γλυκές με τα πρώτα πρώτα Δόξα Σοι.
Μονάχη έγνοια η γλώσσα μου, με τα πρώτα πρώτα Δόξα Σοι!
Εκεί δάφνες και βάγια
θυμιατό και λιβάνισμα
τις πάλες ευλογώντας και τα καριοφίλια.
Στο χώμα το στρωμένο με τ' αμπελομάντιλα
κνίσεις, τσουγκρίσματα
και Χριστός Ανέστη
με τα πρώτα σμπάρα των Ελλήνων.
Αγάπες μυστικές με τα πρώτα λόγια του Ύμνου.
Μονάχη έγνοια η γλώσσα μου, με τα πρώτα λόγια του Ύμνου!

Στον πηλό το στόμα μου ακόμη και σε ονόμαζε
Ρόδινο νεογνό στικτή πρώτη δροσιά
Κι από τότε σου πλάθε βαθιά στα χαράματα
Τη γραμμή των χειλιών και τον καπνό της κόμης
Την άρθρωση σου 'δινε και το λάμδα το έψιλον
Την αέρινη ασφαλτη περπατηξιά
Κι απ' την ίδια εκείνη στιγμή μέσα μου ανοίγοντας
Άγνωστη φυλακή φαιά κι άσπρα πουλιά
Στον αιθέρα ερίζοντας ανέβηκαν κι ένιωσα
Πως για σένα τα αίματα για σένα τα δάκρυα
Στους αιώνες το πάλεμα το φριχτό και το υπέροχο
Η σαγήνη για σένα και η ομορφιά
Στα πνευστά των δέντρων και κρούοντας ο πυρρήχιος
Δόρατα και σπαθιά να λες άκουσα Εσύ
Μυστικά προστάγματα και παρθενοβίωτα
Με την έκλαμψη πράσινων αστερών λόγια
Και πάνω απ' την άβυσσο αιωρούμενη γνώρισα
ΤΟΥ ΣΠΑΘΙΟΥ ΣΟΥ ΤΗΝ ΚΟΨΗ ΤΗΝ ΤΡΟΜΕΡΗ!

Ένα το χελιδόνι κι η Άνοιξη ακριβή
Για να γυρίσει ο ήλιος θέλει δουλειά πολλή
Θέλει νεκροί χιλιάδες να 'ναι στους Τροχούς
Θέλει κι οι ζωντανοί να δίνουν το αίμα τους.

Θε μου Πρωτομάστορα μ' έχτισες μέσα στα βουνά
Θε μου Πρωτομάστορα μ' έκλεισες μες στη θάλασσα!

Πάρθηκεν από Μάγους το σώμα του Μαγιού
Το 'χουνε θάψει σ' ένα μνήμα του πελάγου
Σ' ένα βαθύ πηγάδι το 'χουνε κλειστό
Μύρισε το σκοτάδι κι όλη η Άβυσσο.

Θε μου Πρωτομάστορα μέσα στις πασχαλιές και Συ
Θε μου Πρωτομάστορα μύρισες την Ανάσταση!

Σάλεψε σαν το σπέρμα σε μήτρα σκοτεινή
Το φοβερό της μνήμης έντομο μες στη γη
Κι όπως δαγκώνει αράχνη δάγκωσε το φως
Έλαμψαν οι γιαλοί κι όλο το πέλαγος.

Θε μου Πρωτομάστορα μ' έζωσες τις ακρογιαλιές
Θε μου Πρωτομάστορα στα βουνά με θεμέλιωσες

Τα θεμέλιά μου στα βουνά
και τα βουνά σηκώνουν οι λαοί στον ώμο τους
και πάνω τους η μνήμη καίει
άκαυτη βάτος.

Μνήμη του λαού μου σε λένε Πίνδο και σε λένε Άθω.
Ταράζεται ο καιρός
κι απ' τα πόδια τις μέρες κρεμάζει
αδειάζοντας με πάταγο τα οστά των ταπεινωμένων.
Ποιοι, πώς, πότε ανέβηκαν την άβυσσο;
Ποιες, ποιών, πόσων οι στρατιές;
Τ' ουρανού το πρόσωπο γυρίζει κι οι εχθροί μου έφυγαν
μακριά.

Μνήμη του λαού μου σε λένε Πίνδο και σε λένε Άθω.

Εσύ μόνη απ' τη φτέρνα τον άντρα γνωρίζεις
Εσύ μόνη απ' την κόψη της πέτρας μιλάς
Εσύ την όψη των αγίων οξύνεις
κι εσύ στου νερού των αιώνων την άκρη σύρεις
πασχαλιάν αναστάσιμη!

Αγγίζεις το νου μου και πονεί το βρέφος της Άνοιξης!
Τιμωρείς το χέρι μου και στα σκότη λευκαίνεται!
Πάντα πάντα περνάς τη φωτιά για να φτάσεις τη λάμψη.
Πάντα πάντα τη λάμψη περνάς
για να φτάσεις ψηλά τα βουνά τα χιονόδοξα.
Όμως τι τα βουνά; Ποιος και τι στα βουνά;
Τα θεμέλιά μου στα βουνά
και τα βουνά σηκώνουν οι λαοί στον ώμο τους
και πάνω τους η μνήμη καίει
άκαυτη βάτος!