



HELLENIC LINK–MIDWEST Newsletter

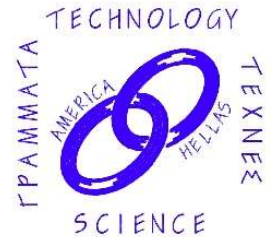
A CULTURAL AND SCIENTIFIC LINK WITH GREECE

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Upcoming Events

Reciting the Nation: Nikolaos Loukanes and the Poetics of a Renaissance Epos

On Sunday, April 27, 2025, Hellenic Link–Midwest will present Professor Calliope Dourou in a lecture titled: “*Reciting the Nation: Nikolaos Loukanes and the Poetics of a Renaissance Epos*” The event will take place at 3:00 pm at the lecture hall of the Holy Taxiarchai and Saint Haralambos Greek Orthodox Church, 7373 N Caldwell Ave, Niles, Illinois. Admission is free.

This presentation will explore Nikolaos Loukanes’ 1526 Iliad, the first printed rendition of Homer’s epic in a modern language. Born at the dawn of the eventful sixteenth century, the Cinquecento of the startling transatlantic discoveries, the ceaseless Italian Wars, and the vociferous emergence of the Protestant Reformation, Nikolaos Loukanes, like so many of his erudite compatriots (e.g., Ianos Laskares, Markos Moussouros), ardently devoted himself to humanist intellectual endeavors aimed at instigating a revival of classical literature. Gravely concerned about the alarming Ottoman advance into European territory, the young author composed his adaptation of the Iliad in a period when hopes for a crusade against the Ottomans were still simmering if not running high. Published one year after Laskares’ urgent plea to Charles V to organize a crusade against the Turks, Loukanes’ Iliad could well have contributed to the cause of liberation in Greece, had the quest for a unified mobilization of the Christian powers against the Ottomans not been irreparably thwarted in the wake of the anti-imperialist League of Cognac and the subsequent Sack of Rome in 1527. Written in an era of profound ideological ferment that gradually culminated in a precocious conceptualization of national identity in Europe, Loukanes’ patriotically imbued Iliad, long predating the nineteenth century Hellenic Library of Adamantios Koraes, offers a unique glimpse into fascinating pre-Enlightenment conceptualizations of post-Byzantine Greek identity.

Calliope Dourou is an Associate Professor (Instructional) in Modern Greek Literature and Culture in the Department of Linguistics at the University of Chicago. Before joining the University of Chicago, she was a Visiting Assistant Professor in Modern Greek in the Department of Classics at Harvard University, where she also completed her PhD in Modern Greek Literature. She specializes in modern Greek literature and cultural history. Her main research and teaching interests embrace, but are not limited, to the following areas: classical reception studies, Renaissance Hellenism, history of

the Greek language, Greek modernism, and contemporary Greek cinema.

In Brief

The Imia Island Crisis and the Position of the U.S.

Last February, on the anniversary of the Imia crisis (January 30, 1996), the Greek newspaper Kathimerini wrote on an extensive archived interview of the US Ambassador to Greece, 1993–1997, Thomas Niles, with historian Charles Stuart Kennedy, as a part of the “*Foreign Affairs Oral History Collection of the Association for Diplomatic Studies*”. Below are some excerpts from this very revealing interview on the Imia crisis that is still plaguing Greek-Turkish relations.

The crisis took place at a time when the then prime minister of Turkey, Tansu Ciller, had just lost an election and was politically weakened. She saw an opportunity to improve her image in the domestic political scene by taking advantage of the instability in Greece due to the failing health of the Greek prime minister Andreas Papandreou, who had relinquished his position a few days before, bringing Costas Simitis to power.

Turkey disputed the sovereignty of Imia, an uninhabited islet in the eastern Aegean, inflaming further the already explosive mix of Greek – Turkish relations.

Turkey’s claim was baseless. Not only was the Greek side adamant about it, **but this was also the US understanding of the situation**, as confirmed in the extensive interview of the then US Ambassador to Greece, Thomas Niles.

Niles said: “*We took the position that we would not take a position on the sovereignty issue but that we would encourage the states, Greece and Turkey, to work it out. We said that we generally agreed with the Greek position that this was something that should go to the International Court of Justice. I personally think that was a big mistake. We knew by the time we took this position that the Greeks were right on the sovereignty argument. The Turks knew that we knew their position was very weak. When we refused to take a position, it sent a signal back to the Turks that we were prepared to countenance or not do anything about aggressive Turkish behavior toward the Greeks on the territorial issues in the Aegean. We did not want to offend an important ally, Turkey, but what this led to was a succession of Turkish claims and statements about the Aegean*”

territorial issues that poisoned the relationship with Greece even further”.

Turkey has fabricated the theory of the so called “grey zones” between Greece and Turkey to support its baseless claims against Greece in the Aegean and the East Mediterranean. If at the Imia crisis the U.S. had been clear to Turkey that Greece was right, Greek-Turkish relations might have followed a different path.

Corruption in Greece

In March 2025, Reuters reported that in the island of Rhodes when Greek police raided the apartment of a 49-year-old planning officer suspected of bribery, they found thousands of euros stashed in her pots and pans and even in the cooker hood.

According to the Greek newspaper Kathimerini, seven suspects were arrested for their alleged involvement in an urban planning corruption ring on Rhodes. The defendants – five urban planning employees, a private architect, and a civil engineer—are accused of soliciting bribes in exchange for issuing urban planning permits, bypassing regulations, approving unauthorized expansions, facilitating illegal construction, forging documents, and even engaging in extortion. Authorities believe the network had been active on Rhodes for several years, allegedly demanding payments ranging from €1,000 to €10,000, depending on the type of service provided.

In May 2024, a letter to police had accused Rhodes planning officials of enjoying luxury cars and foreign travel beyond their means, adding: "Their greed has no limit."

According to Harry Papapanagos, professor of economics and vice president of Transparency International Greece, public sector corruption, including pork-barrel politics and bribery, costs Greece up to 14 billion euros (\$15 billion) a year, and in turn, poor governance undermines willingness to pay taxes, harming state finances. Greece's shadow economy is among the highest in Europe at about 20% of GDP.

Transparency International has ranked Greece as second worst in the euro zone for perceived corruption in 2024, and in a Eurobarometer survey last July, nearly a third of respondents said they knew someone who had been bribed.

Last December, more than 100 people in northern Greece were charged in bribery cases, many of them town planners.

According to the European Public Prosecutors Office's website, in December 2023, the European Public Prosecutor's Office (EPPO) in Athens (Greece) brought charges against 23 suspects – including 18 public officials – for crimes relating to the execution of contracts for restoring remote traffic control and signaling systems on the Greek rail network, co-funded 85% by the European Union (EU) in 2014.

According to the investigation, a total of seven unlawful extensions of the original contract were granted, pursuant to the decisions of the Board of Directors of ERGOSE. For this reason, the project has not yet been completed, more than nine years after the original contract was signed.

It is alleged that employees of ERGOSE, responsible for the management of the project, intentionally declared incomplete and false information to the Managing Authority regarding the existence of facts critical to the distribution of the funds and the approval of the extensions. As a result, the requests were approved by the Managing Authority, which paid the funds to the beneficiary, ERGOSE, which subsequently paid the Consortium Contractor.

Furthermore, it is alleged that officials of the Managing Authority, responsible for overseeing the use of the funds, acted in breach of the principles of prudent asset management. It is understood that, despite the fact that the information conveyed by employees of ERGOSE was patently inaccurate or false, the public officials of the Managing Authority approved the distribution of the corresponding funds, causing damage to the financial interests of the EU and the Greek State amounting to over €15.6 million.

The investigation also uncovered facts that could constitute a breach of duty by inspector-auditors of Greece's National Transparency Authority (NTA), who were entrusted by Greece's Public Prosecutor's Office with the task of carrying out an audit into the execution of contract. The EPPO decided to refer this new case to the Greek competent authorities, for further legal action, as the facts subject to this investigation do not constitute a criminal offence within the EPPO's mandate.

The EPPO is the independent public prosecution office of the European Union. It is responsible for investigating, prosecuting and bringing to judgment crimes against the financial interests of the EU.

On February 28, 2023, a passenger train going north from Athens to Thessaloniki collided at Tempi of Thessaly with a freighter train travelling south to Larissa. Both trains were travelling on the same track in opposite directions. Fifty seven people died in the tragic accident, the worst accident in the history of the Greek transport system by rail. Most of them were students at the University of Thessaloniki returning to school after a holiday.

According to Kathimerini, a 59-year-old Hellenic Train station manager was accused for: sending the passenger train on the same track as the freighter by ignoring the electronic system that covered part of the route and showed that both trains were travelling on the same track; and by also ignoring a warning 17 minutes before the collision by another station master that both trains were on the same track. The tragedy of Tempi would have not also happened if the restoration of the remote traffic control and signaling systems on the Greek rail network, co-funded by the EU, had been completed.

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 (Continuation from the previous issue)

Interrelation of Byzantine Decline and Turkish Pressure (1042-1071)

On the eve of the battle of Manzikert itself, when the emperor was encamped at Cryapege, the mercenaries were busy ravaging the environs. As Romanus attempted to halt their depredations, the Germans attacked the emperor in force and the remainder of the army had to be mustered in order to put down the Germans. The shortsightedness of the bureaucrats in hiring such large numbers of mercenaries at the expense of the local soldiery was dramatically manifested during this period, and their disloyalty severely hampered the defense of Anatolia against the Turks and contributed to the chaos and disruption of provincial administration.

With this paralysis of the provincial governmental structure, the hostilities of the three principal ethnic groups in eastern Byzantine Anatolia came into full play. There had been tense moments in the relations of Greeks, Syrians, and Armenians in the first half of the eleventh century, but at that time Byzantine authority was effective in these eastern provinces and a semblance of order and regularity prevailed. The disruption of provincial administration in the reign of Constantine X, and the latter's ill-conceived religious policies, unleashed the specter ethnic and sectarian strife from Antioch to Sebasteia and Caesarea. The state, in a policy recalling events of the sixth and seventh centuries, attempted to force ecclesiastical union and the Chalcedonian creed on both the Syrians and Armenians. In 1063, all who did not accept the Chalcedonian creed in Melitene were to be expelled from the city, and one year later the Syrian patriarch was arrested and the leading Syrian clergymen were brought to Constantinople. Charged with spreading their own religious doctrines and having refused to accept Chalcedon, the Syrian ecclesiastical leader (the metropolitan of Melitene) was exiled to Macedonia. The Armenians similarly experienced considerable imperial pressure in this matter, as the Armenian catholicus and many of his bishops were summoned to Constantinople and held virtual prisoners (1060–63). Two years later (1065) they were once more ordered to appear in Constantinople, but this time the Bagratid and Ardzrouni princes were also summoned. The Armenians, like the Syrians, refused to give in at the religious discussions that followed, but unlike the Syrians they obtained permission to return to their domains in Anatolia. When Kakig, the Bagratid prince, returned to his lands in the province or Cappadocia he instigated what amounted to open warfare against the Greeks in his vicinity. That these regions of Anatolia were thrown into a state of ethnic war seems to be confirmed by a number of incidental facts. The outrage of the Armenians was such, Matthew remarks, that Kakig intended to desert to the Turks, but he

was eventually slain by the Greeks in the Taurus before he could do so. Romanus had considerable trouble with the Armenians and considered the areas in which they were settled as a no-man's land that was not safe for his armies. During his eastern campaign of 1069 Romanus was obliged to halt to receive the stragglers from his army lest they perish at the hands of the Armenians in the regions of Celtzene. When he made his appearance at Sebasteia, the Greek inhabitants complained to him that when Sebasteia had been sacked by the Turks (1059), the Armenians had been more violent and unpitiful toward the Greeks than had the Turks themselves! So it was that Romanus ordered his troops to attack Sebasteia, a Byzantine city, and then he swore that he would destroy the Armenian faith. In addition to the tension between Greeks and Armenians and between Greeks and Syrians, there was strife between the Syrians and Armenians in the region about Melitene where the Armenians raided the Syrian monasteries and roamed the countryside attacking the Syrian population. They even considered taking the famous Syrian monastery of Bar Mar Sauma. The existence of these diverse ethnoreligious groups in the eastern provinces of Anatolia, and Constantine's attempt to enforce the Chalcedonian creed upon them during this period, were among the factors leading to the breakdown of Byzantine authority in these critical areas.

Against this background of ghost armies, rampaging mercenaries, and ethnic warfare in the provinces, the Turkish invaders make their appearance with greater frequency, numbers, and effectiveness. The border warfare of the Turks was loosely controlled by the sultan, who for this purpose had entrusted command of the Anatolian borders to Yakuti Beg. The Turkish bands were considerably increased in number when the Turkmens of the rebel Ibrahim Inal were moved westward by the Seljuks, and then again in 1063 when Kutlumush with 50,000 Turkmens revolted against Alp Arslan in Rayy. After the defeat and death of Kutlumush, his sons were pardoned and sent to fight on the Anatolian borders. The names of the raiding chiefs now begin to appear in greater numbers in the sources; Samuh in the regions of Sebasteia and elsewhere; the Khurasan Salar in the districts of Thelkum, Nisibis, and Seveverek; Amertices about southern Anatolia and Coelo-Syria. But perhaps the most active of these was the emir Afsinios (Afshin) who established himself on Mt. Amanus in 1066–67 and raided from Antioch and Melitene as far west as Chonae. The emir Kumush Tekin operated in the vicinity of Thelkum and Edessa, whereas Gedrigdj-Chrysoscule raided northern Anatolia before deserting to the emperor. In addition to the ever-present bands on the borders, the sultans themselves made occasional appearances there, strengthening the Turkish forces.

When Constantine X Ducas ascended the throne (1059), the Turkish raids had previously devastated Armenia, the Byzantine provinces of Iberia and Mesopotamia, the regions around Coloneia, Melitene, and Chaldia, and were now to threaten the more centrally located regions of Anatolia. At least eight major urban centers were to suffer pillaging at the hands of the Turks, and others were to experience difficult sieges in the next years.

(To be continued)

From the Riches of Our Cultural Heritage

Ποίηση Γεωργίου Σεφέρη

Ἄρνηση

Στὸ περιγιάλι τὸ κρυφὸ
κι ἄσπρο σὰν περιστέρι
διψάσαμε τὸ μεσημέρι
μὰ τὸ νερὸ γλυφό.
Πάνω στὴν ἄμμο τὴν ξανθὴ
γράψαμε τ' ὄνομά της
ὠραῖα ποὺ φύσηξεν ὁ μπάτης
καὶ σβήστηκε ἡ γραφὴ.
Μὲ τί καρδιά, μὲ τί πνοή,
τί πόθους καὶ τί πάθος
πήραμε τὴ ζωὴ μας· λάθος!
κι ἀλλάξαμε ζωὴ.

Στροφή

Στιγμὴ, σταλμένη ἀπὸ ἓνα χέρι
ποὺ εἶχα τόσο ἀγαπήσει
μὲ πρόφταξες ἴσια στὴ δύση
σὰ μαῦρο περιστέρι.
Ὁ δρόμος ἄσπριζε μπροστά μου,
ἀπαλὸς ἀχνὸς ὕπνου...
Στιγμὴ σπυρὶ τῆς ἄμμου,
ποὺ κράτησες μονάχη σου ὅλη
τὴν τραγικὴ κλεψύδρα
βουβή, σὰ νὰ εἶχε δεῖ τὴν Ὑδρα
στὸ οὐράνιο περιβόλι.

Ὁ γυρισμὸς τοῦ ξενιτεμένου

—Παλιέ μου φίλε τί γυρεύεις;
χρόνια ξενιτεμένος ἦρθες
μὲ εἰκόνες ποὺ ἔχεις ἀναθρέψει
κάτω ἀπὸ ξένους οὐρανοὺς
μακριὰ ἀπ' τὸν τόπο τὸ δικό σου.

—Γυρεύω τὸν παλιό μου κῆπο·
τὰ δέντρα μοῦ ἔρχονται ὡς τὴ μέση
κι οἱ λόφοι μοιάζουν μὲ πεζούλια
κι ὅμως σὰν ἡμouνα παιδι
ἔπαιζα πάνω στὸ χορτάρι
κάτω ἀπὸ τοὺς μεγάλους ἴσκιους
κι ἔτρεχα πάνω σὲ πλαγιές
ὦρα πολλὴ λαχανιασμένος.

—Παλιέ μου φίλε ξεκουράσου
σιγὰ-σιγὰ θὰ συνηθίσεις·
θ' ἀνηφορίσουμε μαζί
στὰ γνώριμά σου μονοπάτια
θὰ ξαποστάσουμε μαζί
κάτω ἀπ' τὸ θόλο τῶν πλατάνων
σιγὰ-σιγὰ θὰ ῥθoὺν κοντά σου
τὸ περιβόλι κι οἱ πλαγιές σου.

—Γυρεύω τὸ παλιό μου σπίτι
μὲ τ' ἀψηλὰ τὰ παραθύρια
σκοτεινιασμένα ἀπ' τὸν κισσὸ
γυρεύω τὴν ἀρχαία κολόνα
ποὺ κοίταζε ὁ θαλασσινός.
Πῶς θὲς νὰ μῶ σ' αὐτὴ τὴ στάνη;
οἱ στέγες μου ἔρχονται ὡς τοὺς ὄμους
κι ὅσο μακριὰ καὶ νὰ κοιτάξω
βλέπω γονατιστοὺς ἀνθρώπους
λὲς κάνουνε τὴν προσευχὴ τους.

—Παλιέ μου φίλε δὲ μ' ἀκοῦς;
σιγὰ-σιγὰ θὰ συνηθίσεις
τὸ σπίτι σου εἶναι αὐτὸ ποὺ βλέπεις
κι αὐτὴ τὴν πόρτα θὰ χτυπήσουν
σὲ λίγο οἱ φίλοι κι οἱ δικοί σου
γλυκὰ νὰ σὲ καλωσορίσουν.

—Γιατί εἶναι ἀπόμακρη ἡ φωνή σου;
σήκωσε λίγο τὸ κεφάλι
νὰ καταλάβω τί μοῦ λὲς
ὅσο μιᾶς τ' ἀνάστημά σου
ὀλοένα πάει καὶ λιγοστεύει
λὲς καὶ βυθίζεσαι στὸ χῶμα.

—Παλιέ μου φίλε συλλογίσου
σιγὰ-σιγὰ θὰ συνηθίσεις
ἡ νοσταλγία σου ἔχει πλάσει
μιὰ χώρα ἀνύπαρχτη μὲ νόμους
ἔξω ἀπ' τὴ γῆς κι ἀπ' τοὺς ἀνθρώπους.

—Πιὰ δὲν ἀκούω τσιμουδιά
βούλιαξε κι ὁ στερνός μου φίλος
παράξενο πῶς χαμηλώνουν
ὅλα τριγύρω κάθε τόσο
ἐδῶ διαβαίνουν καὶ θερίζουν
χιλιάδες ἄρματα δρεπανηφόρα.

Ἡ λυπημένη

Στὴν πέτρα τῆς ὑπομονῆς
κάθισες πρὸς τὸ βράδυ
μὲ τοῦ ματιοῦ σου τὸ μαυράδι
δείχνοντας πῶς πονεῖς·

κι εἶχες στὰ χεῖλια τὴ γραμμὴ
ποὺ εἶναι γυμνὴ καὶ τρέμει
σὰν ἡ ψυχὴ γίνεται ἀνέμη
καὶ δέονται οἱ λυγμοί·

κι εἶχες στὸ νοῦ σου τὸ σκοπὸ
ποὺ ξεκινᾷ τὸ δάκρυ
κι ἦσουν κορμὶ ποὺ ἀπὸ τὴν ἄκρη
γυρίζει στὸν καρπό·

μα τῆς καρδιάς σου ο σπαραγμὸς
δε βόγκηξε κι εγίνη
το νόημα που στον κόσμο δίνει
ἐναστρὸς ουρανό.