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Upcoming Events

From Subjects to Citizens; the Ionian Islands Path to State Formation from Venetian Colony to British Protectorate

On Sunday, December 7, 2025, Hellenic Link–Midwest will present Professor Sakis Gekas, Associate Professor and the Hellenic Heritage Foundation Chair in Modern Greek History at York University, Canada, in a lecture titled *"From Subjects to Citizens; the Ionian Islands Path to State Formation from Venetian Colony to British Protectorate"*.

The event will take place at 3 pm, at Four Points by Sheraton Hotel, 10249 West Irving Park Road at Schiller Park, Illinois (southeast corner of Irving Park Road and Mannheim Road). Admission is free. This lecture is supported by the Hellenic Foundation.

A history of Ionian political identities shows the varied paths to state formation that emerged in the Greek world from the 18th to the 19th century besides the emergence of the post-revolution Greek state (Kingdom after 1833). In the Ionian Islands the arrival of the Republican French in 1797 and the period of the Napoleonic Wars (until 1815) abolished centuries of social hierarchies and ushered constitutional changes that created new hierarchies during the period of the Ionian State under British rule. The talk will trace the legacy of the Venetian period and stress the continuities and changes from the status of the Ionian Islands that defined the political identities of Ionians as colonial subjects to the status of citizens they held under the British protectorate of the Ionian State. These were not theoretical constructs but defined the lived experience of Ionians, allowed for negotiation between those in government and those with the right to vote, and provided an alternative path to state formation.

Sakis Gekas is Associate Professor and the HHF Chair in Modern Greek History at York University. He has published on economic and social history, British colonialism, migration and diaspora, modern Greek and Mediterranean history. His publications include: *Xenocracy: State, Class and Colonialism in the Ionian Islands, 1815-1864* (Berghan, 2016); *Ξενοκρατία* (Εκδόσεις Ανοικτού Πανεπιστημίου, 2021); *Απόμαχοι. Οι αγωνιστές της Επανάστασης του 1821 στο Οθωνικό Κράτος* ("Veterans. The fighters of the 1821 Revolution"), Athens 2021; *"Hellenes of Toronto: Proud of Canadianism"*; *"Commemorating the 1821 Revolution in Canada, 1920s-2021"*. in Maria Kaliambou (ed.). *H*

Επανάσταση του 1821 και οι Έλληνες της Αμερικής. Ασίνη, Αθήνα 2023.

In Brief

Water Crisis in Europe

On June 5, 2025, the Court of Justice of the European Union (EU) found that Greece has breached its obligations to updated flood risk management plans within the time limits prescribed by EU directives. A separate pending case concerns Greece's non-compliance with urban wastewater treatment requirements.

The court decision came one day after European Environment Commissioner Jessika Roswall presented the EU's water resilience strategy, aiming to ensure clean, adequate water for all while protecting aquatic ecosystems.

Under the strategy, member-states must improve water efficiency by reducing consumption at least 10% by 2030. "For Greece, the 10% target is not enough," Roswall acknowledged in comments to Kathimerini, noting she's well aware of the situation in Greece regarding warnings that Athens may face water shortages within two years under current hydrological conditions.

The commissioner emphasized the need for "a holistic approach" to water management, highlighting that leakage averages are 30% across Europe, reaching 60% in some countries like Bulgaria.

All of Europe faces a water crisis, Roswall noted, explaining the problem affects not only drought-threatened southern countries but also northern nations like her native Sweden. Some member-states have already set national consumption reduction targets: France (up to 10%), Italy and Ireland (10-15%).

Water restrictions vary across the EU. Southern countries prohibit pool filling, while Sweden restricts hose-watering in some areas. Spain reuses 60% of its water for irrigation and Cyprus 90%, compared to just 2.4% EU-wide.

The Commission estimates 23 billion euros in annual investments are needed to modernize water infrastructure and deploy digital solutions. The European Investment Bank is launching a 15-billion-euro loan program for 2025-2027, expected to mobilize up to 40 billion euros in total investments.

Greece has accessed EIB funding for nine water projects since 2015, with a water infrastructure investment program under evaluation for EYDAP, Athens' water company.

Roswall emphasized that what's missing in Greece, as in most member-states, is public awareness, hoping the water resilience strategy will spark dialogue not only with governments but also citizens (*source Greek newspaper Ekathimerini*).

Over-Urbanization of Greek Islands

The islands of the Aegean have been transformed radically over the last thirty years, with a marked decrease of agricultural land and forests and a corresponding increase of built-up areas. Specifically, agricultural land on the islands has been reduced by almost 50%, with the harvests of grains and legumes having declined by 74%, and 13,850 hectares of forests have been destroyed (with the islands of Chios, Thasos, and Samos losing between 41% and 32% of their total wooded area). The change has been so severe that on several smaller islands, including Nisyros and Kimolos, the primary sector has been abandoned almost completely. In their place, the islands of the Aegean have seen an increase in built-up areas, with more than 8,500 hectares of land now covered by concrete. The champions of this urbanization are Mykonos and Santorini that have seen their built-up areas increase by 341% and 310% respectively. The main driver behind this change has been the tourism sector, which now poses an existential threat to the very character of these islands. *"We are led towards the 'disneyfication' of these islands"*, noted Associate Professor Kostas Theodorou at the University of the Aegean, who presented this data at a recent conference (*source Greek newspaper Ekathimerini*).

Gas Exploration in Greece

According to the Greek Newspaper Ekathimerini, on November 6, 2026, ExxonMobil, Energean and Helleniq Energy signed an agreement for a joint venture in gas exploration in Block 2 of the Ionian Sea, northwest of Corfu. Exxon will have a 60% stake in the project, with Energean and Helleniq Energy having 30% and 10% respectively.

Energean is an international hydrocarbon exploration and production company, with a focus on natural gas. Helleniq Energy, established in 1998, is one of the leading energy groups in Southeast Europe, engaged in various activities across the energy value chain and operates in six countries. Its primary shareholders are: Paneuropean Oil and Industrial Holdings S.A. (40.41%) and the Hellenic Corporation of Assets and Participations (31.18%), while institutional and private investors hold the remaining shares.

Hellenic Corporation of Assets and Participations, founded in 2017, is a Sovereign Wealth Fund located in Athens Greece and its current Assets are about \$7.6 billion.

Drilling is expected to begin around 2027, and ExxonMobil sees its investment in Greece to be between \$50 million and \$100 million. If all would go well, ExxonMobil expects production of natural gas from the project to start in the early 2030s.

On November 6, 2025, energy ministers from the United States and European countries held talks in Greece on how to use a newly upgraded regional pipeline network to better supply war-torn Ukraine as the Trump administration seeks to further ramp up gas exports to Europe. US Energy Secretary Chris Wright and Interior Secretary Doug Burgum were attending the meeting in Athens, hosted by the Washington-based think tank Atlantic Council. They were joined by more than 80 US officials, European Union energy ministers, and executives from leading American liquefied natural gas companies.

Greek Environment and Energy Minister Stavros Papastavrou said the initiative aims to *"support peace and stability in the region,"* adding that the involvement of major oil companies such as ExxonMobil and Chevron strengthens Greece's strategic position. Wright emphasized Greece's role as a *"perfect entry point"* for natural gas replacing Russian supplies to Europe. *"Every cubic meter of gas not flowing from Russia will remain underground – and not finance Putin's war machine,"* he said, highlighting Greece's infrastructure and the mutual benefits of transatlantic energy cooperation.

US President Donald Trump is seeking to use America's position as the world's top LNG exporter to press the EU to buy more US gas, linking energy exports to broader trade negotiations. With Europe already the largest market for American LNG – and intent on cutting all Russian gas supplies over the next two years – attention has shifted to the so-called Vertical Corridor, a north-south gas route linking Greece with Bulgaria and Romania.

Greek Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis said *"Greece is blessed with a very unique geographic location, and we are the natural entry point for American liquefied natural gas into Europe. The vertical corridor is a project of great geopolitical and economic importance to us. We're happy that it's becoming a reality."*

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 Interrelation of Byzantine Decline and Turkish Pressure (1042-1071)
(Continuation from the previous issue)

Manzikert (1071)

Accidents, evil omens, and ugly spectacles studded the beginning of Romanus' final campaign (1071) against the

Turks as his armies journeyed to the eastern front. A gray dove alighted on Romanus' ship and came to the emperor's hand as the imperial vessel was crossing the Bosphorus to Asia, a sign interpreted by some to bode well, but felt by many others to be a forewarning of evils to come. Upon the pitching of the imperial pavilion at Helenopolis, instead of at Neocome, the soldiers remarked that inasmuch as the place was called Eleinopolis (miserable city) by the rustics, this was very definitely unlucky. Indeed, after the imperial tent had been raised, the central pole supporting it gave way and the tent collapsed, an event too obvious in its implications to pass unnoticed. The emperor himself seems not to have been perturbed by such superstitious signs and moved on to the important military station of Dorylaeum and to the theme of Anatolicon to muster the Anatolian armies. Here again the emperor's coming misfortune seemed to be announced, for the structure built to house Romanus and his retinue caught fire, and his select horses, armor, bridles, and carriages were consumed by the flames. Though some of the animals were saved, others were to be seen running wildly through the camp, living torches. Romanus next crossed the Sangarius River at the Zompos Bridge in hopes of collecting the Anatolian levies. But as these had scattered to the mountaintops, caverns, and other places of refuge (because of the Turkish raids), Romanus took few of them. The expedition crossed the Halys, eventually making its way to the military station of Cryapege, and it was here that the German mercenaries attacked Romanus. The following station, Sebasteia, brought Romanus no respite, for the Greeks of the city complained against their Armenian neighbors. On the road from Sebasteia to Coloneia, Romanus and his troops were treated to the sight of the corpses of Manuel Comnenus' army that had been handled so roughly by the Turks in 1070, and this in particular was interpreted as a bad omen. Upon arrival in Erzerum, rations for two months were passed out to the army as "they were about to march through uninhabited land which had been trampled underfoot by the foreigners." The march to the eastern front must have had quite a demoralizing effect on the soldiery for they had seen many frightening signs. The mercenaries had rebelled, the Greeks had complained about Armenian cruelty, and just before reaching the borderlands they had seen the corpses of their former comrades, a sight that was morbidly suggestive.

The armies continued their march to the northwestern shores and the vicinity of Lake Van, intending to take Manzikert

and Chliat. The decision to divide the armies on the eve of the fateful battle was due, perhaps, to the intelligence report of Leo Diabatenus who wrote that as soon as Alp Arslan had received news of the Byzantine advance, he broke off his march on Damascus and retired to the east with such haste that his army virtually disbanded and the animals were drowned in crossing the Euphrates. The sultan had not been interested in attacking the Byzantine borders but was occupied with his schemes against the Fatimids, and for this reason the advance of Romanus had caught him by surprise.

In dividing his forces, Romanus wished to reduce Manzikert (captured by the sultan in the previous year), and then to rejoin his forces before Chliat. As the body of Turkish and Daylamite defenders in Manzikert was negligible, Romanus further weakened his army by sending the majority of it, and the very best troops, to Chliat under the leadership of Joseph Tarchaniotes. Manzikert fell almost without resistance. The strategy of the emperor, which had called for the splitting of the armies and which had left him with the weaker portion, seemed justified on the basis of his intelligence reports. But Diabatenus failed to keep him informed of later developments, for on his way eastward Alp Arslan received the fugitives from Manzikert, who appealed to him to come to their aid. Sometime previous to Romanus' final campaign, the Turkish emir Afsinios had raided central Anatolia with such ease that he reported to the sultan that Asia Minor was defenseless. Whatever the reason, the sultan hurriedly, but quietly, gathered his forces and marched on Manzikert. After having captured Manzikert, Romanus retired to his camp outside the city and planned to march to Chliat on the following day to rejoin the major portion of the army. It was at this time that the advance body of the sultan's army came upon Byzantine forces that were foraging in the vicinity of Manzikert. As yet the emperor had not realized that the sultan was present, and he believed that this was just a raiding force of Turks under some emir. The emperor sent out Nicephorus Bryennius to oppose them, but as he was soon being hard pressed by the Turkish force he sent an urgent message for reinforcements. Romanus, still unaware of the true nature of the situation, first accused Bryennius of cowardice, but eventually sent another force under Basilacius to aid him. Basilacius and his troops charged the Turks, forced them to retreat, but in the pursuit that followed, Basilacius was captured near the enemy defenses. Bryennius, though seriously wounded, returned to the side of the emperor.

(To be continued)

From the Riches of Our Cultural Heritage

Ποίηση Οδυσσέα Ελύτη από το «Αξιον Εστί»

Η ΠΟΡΕΙΑ ΠΡΟΣ ΤΟ ΜΕΤΩΠΙΟ (Β')

Νέος πολύ και γνώρισα,
των εκατό χρονώ φωνές
Όχι του δάσους μία στιγμή,
στα στέρνα ο πεύκινος τριγμός
Μόνο του σκύλου που αλυχτά,

στα βουνά τ' ανδροβάδιστα
Των χαμηλών σπιτιών καπνοί,
και κείνων που ψυχορραγούν
Η ανομολόγητη ματιά,
του κόσμου του άλλου η ταραχή

Όχι που αργούν στον άνεμο,
των πελαργών μικρές κρωξίες
Πέφτει η γαλήνη σαν βροχή,
και γρούζουν τα κηπευτικά
Μόνο του ζώου που σπαρταρά,
τα πνιχτά κι ασυλλάβιστα
Της Παναγίας δύο φορές,
ο μαύρος γύρος των ματιών
Στην πεδιάδα της ταφής,
και στην ποδιά των γυναικών

Μόνο της θύρας χτύπημα,
κι όταν ανοίξεις πια κανείς
Μήτε σημάδι καν χεριού,
στη λίγη πάχνη των μαλλιών
Χρόνους πολλούς κι αν καρτερώ,
γαληνεμό δεν έλαβα
Στων αδερφών τη μοιρασιά,
μου δόθη ο κλήρος ο λειψός
Η πετροκόλλητη σαγή,
και το ζακόνι των φιδιών.

Γ'

Τον πλούτο δεν έδωκες ποτέ σ' εμένα
τον ολοένα ερημούμενο από τις φυλές των Ηπείρων
και απ' αυτές πάλι αλαζονικά, ολοένα, δοξαζόμενοι!
Έλαβε τον Βότρυ ο Βορράς
και τον Στάχυ ο Νότος
τη φορά του ανέμου εξαγοράζοντας
και των δέντρων τον κάματο δύο και τρεις φορές
ανόσια εξαργυρώνοντας.
Άλλο εγώ
πάρεξ το θυμάρι στην καρφίδα του ήλιου δεν εγνώρισα
και πάρεξ
τη σταγόνα του νερού στ' άκοπα γένια μου δεν ένιωσα
μα τραχύ το μάγουλο έθεσα στο τραχύτερο της πέτρας
αιώνες κι αιώνες.

Εκοιμήθηκα πάνω στην έγνοια της αυριανής ημέρας
όπως ο στρατιώτης επάνω στο τουφέκι του.
Και τα ελέη της νύχτας ερεύνησα
όπως ο ασκητής το Θεό του.
Από τον ιδρώτα μου έδεσαν διαμάντι
και στα κρυφά μού αντικαταστήσανε
την παρθένα του βλέμματος.
Εξυγίσανε τη χαρά μου και τη βρήκανε, λέει, μικρή
και την πατήσανε χάμου σαν έντομο.
Τη χαρά μου χάμου πατήσανε και στην πέτρα μέσα την
κλείσανε
και στερνά την πέτρα μου αφήσανε τρομερή ζωγραφιά μου.
Με πελέκι βαρύ τη χτυπούν, με σκαρπέλο σκληρό την
τροπούν

με καλέμι πικρό τη χαράζουν, την πέτρα μου.
Κι όσο τρώει την ύλη ο καιρός τόσο βγαίνει πιο καθαρός
ο χρησμός απ' την όψη μου:

ΤΗΝ ΟΡΓΗ ΤΩΝ ΝΕΚΡΩΝ ΝΑ ΦΟΒΑΣΤΕ
ΚΑΙ ΤΩΝ ΒΡΑΧΩΝ Τ' ΑΓΑΛΜΑΤΑ!

Τις ημέρες μου άθροισα και δε σε βρήκα
πουθενά, ποτέ, να μου κρατείς το χέρι
στη βοή των γκρεμών και στων άστρων τον κυκεώνα μου!
Πήραν άλλοι τη Γνώση και άλλοι την Ισχύ
το σκοτάδι με κόπο χαράζοντας
και μικρές προσωπίδες, τη χαρά και τη θλίψη
στη φθαρμένη την όψη αρμόζοντας.
Μόνος, όχι εγώ, προσωπίδες δεν άρμωσα
τη χαρά και τη θλίψη πίσω μου έριξα
γενναιόδωρα πίσω μου έριξα
την Ισχύ και τη Γνώση.

Τις ήμερες μου άθροισα κι έμεινα μόνος.
Είπαν άλλοι: γιατί; κι αυτός να κατοικήσει
το σπίτι με τις γλάστρες και τη λευκή μνηστή.
Άλογα τα πυρρά και τα μαύρα μού άναψαν
γινάτι γι' άλλες, πιο λευκές Ελένες!
Γι' άλλη, πιο μυστικήν αντρεία λαχτάρησα
κι από κει που με μπόδισαν, ο αόρατος, κάλπασα
στους αγρούς τις βροχές να γυρίσω
και το αίμα πίσω να πάρω των νεκρών μου των άθαπτων!
Είπαν άλλοι: γιατί; κι εκείνος να γνωρίσει
κι εκείνος τη ζωή μέσα στα μάτια του άλλου.
Άλλου μάτια δεν είδα, δεν αντίκρισα
παρά δάκρυα μέσα στο Κενό που αγκάλιαζα
παρά μπόρες μέσα στη γαλήνη που άντεχα.
Τις ημέρες μου άθροισα και δε σε βρήκα
και τα όπλα ζώστηκα και μόνος βγήκα
στη βοή των γκρεμών και στων άστρων τον κυκεώνα μου!

Δ'

Μόνος κυβέρνησα, τη θλίψη μου
Μόνος αποίκησα, τον εγκαταλειμμένο Μάιο
Μόνος εκόλπωσα, τις ευωδιές
Επάνω στον αγρό, με τις αλκυονίδες
Τάισα τα λουλούδια κίτρινο βουκόλισα τους λόφους
Επυροβόλησα την ερημιά με κόκκινο!
Είπα: δε θα 'ναι η μαχαιριά βαθύτερη από την κραυγή
Και είπα: δε θα 'ναι το Άδικο τιμιότερο απ' το αίμα!
Το χέρι των σεισμών το χέρι των λιμών
Το χέρι των έχτρων το χέρι των δικών
Μου, εφρένιασαν εχάλασαν ερήμαξαν αφάνισαν
Μία και δύο και τρεις φορές
Προδόθηκα κι απόμεινα, στον κάμπο μόνος
Πάρθηκα και πατήθηκα, σαν κάστρο μόνος
Το μήνυμα που σήκωνα τ' άντεξα μόνος!