

HELLENIC LINK–MIDWEST Newsletter

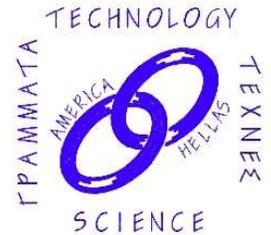
A CULTURAL AND SCIENTIFIC LINK WITH GREECE

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Upcoming Events

Keeping Greek Alive Abroad: Why Speaking the Language Still Matters in the Diaspora

In celebration of the International Greek Language Day, on Sunday, February 22, 2026, Hellenic Link–Midwest will present Dr. Zoe Gavriilidou, Professor of Linguistics at Democritus University of Thrace, in a lecture titled "*Keeping Greek Alive Abroad: Why Speaking the Language Still Matters in the Diaspora*". The event will take place at 3:00 pm at the lecture hall of The Holy Taxiarchi and Saint Haralambos Greek Orthodox Church, 7373 N Caldwell Ave, Niles, Illinois. Admission is free.

For Greeks of the diaspora, learning to speak Greek is far more than an educational choice—it is an act of cultural continuity. Greek is the medium through which family memory, shared values, humor, emotion, and collective identity are transmitted across generations. Spoken Greek sustains intergenerational bonds, connects diaspora communities to their historical and cultural heritage, and enables meaningful participation in Greek-speaking spaces, both local and transnational.

Yet, maintaining Greek as a living, spoken language outside Greece is increasingly challenging. Dominant societal languages, limited exposure beyond the family domain, fragmented educational provision, and the pressure to assimilate often lead to passive understanding rather than active use. Heritage speakers frequently struggle with confidence, literacy, and the feeling of linguistic “in-betweenness,” while families and institutions face time constraints, uneven resources, and shifting language ideologies.

This lecture argues that supporting spoken Greek in the diaspora requires moving beyond nostalgia toward inclusive, flexible, and identity-affirming language practices. Addressing the challenges of heritage language maintenance is essential not only for preserving Greek itself, but for empowering diaspora Greeks to speak, belong, and be heard in their full linguistic and cultural complexity.

Zoe Gavriilidou holds a BA in Philology from Aristotle University of Thessaloniki and a PhD from Université Paris 13. She is Professor of Linguistics at Democritus University of Thrace and has recently served as Visiting Professor at the University of Chicago. She has held several senior academic leadership roles, including Chair of the Department of Greek

Philology, Dean of the School of Classics and Humanities, and Vice-Rector for Academic Affairs and Student Welfare.

She has played a key role in national curriculum reform for language and literature within Greece’s “New School – School of the 21st Century” initiative. In 2022, she completed the curriculum for teaching Greek as a Heritage Language in the United States, commissioned by the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America.

Her scholarly work includes 11 books, over 140 journal articles, and 25 edited volumes. A former President of the European Association for Lexicography, she has extensive experience in vocabulary teaching and dictionary use in education. Equally committed to public humanities, she actively works with schools and educators in Greece and the U.S., and her recent work focuses on AI literacy and curriculum design for the school of the future.

An Attempt to Sketch the Life and Work of Ioannis Capodistrias

On Sunday, March 15, 2026, Hellenic Link–Midwest will present historian Christos Loukos, Professor Emeritus at the University of Crete, in a lecture titled "*An Attempt to Sketch the Life and Work of Ioannis Capodistrias*". This will be an online lecture that will be delivered at 2:00 pm at the lecture hall of The Holy Taxiarchi and Saint Haralambos Greek Orthodox Church, 7373 N Caldwell Ave, Niles, Illinois. Admission is free.

Capodistrias built his career through sacrifice and persistent efforts. He vigorously sought an active position in the Russian diplomatic service, and when it was given to him, he quickly demonstrated his abilities. In pursuit of his goals, he was hard on himself, sacrificing joys from his personal life. In difficult times, he drew strength from his deep Orthodox faith and the ideas that his father had inspired in him.

He was fortunate enough to be noticed by Emperor of Russia Alexander I and appointed as his trusted associate. At his side, he found himself at the center of the most important developments of the period 1814–1822 and, with his ideas, advice and interventions, he contributed to important decisions for the fate of post-Napoleonic Europe.

Capodistrias refused the leadership of the Friendly Society and tried to prevent the outbreak of a revolution. He believed that the timing of the revolution was not right, especially since he knew that the Emperor would not support it, as it

happened. But when it broke out, he tried to exploit Turkish atrocities to make Russia the regulator of developments. Ultimately, his insistence on adopting his own positions would displease Alexander and their separation would be inevitable.

He finally accepted his election by the Third Greek National Assembly as Governor of Greece, after having previously secured his resignation from Russian service. According to Capodistrias, the Greece of 1828 was not ripe for a constitutional regime. However, despite all his intentions for some future and conditional constitutional concessions, in Greece in 1828–1831 power was concentrated and exercised by one person—with all the positive and negative implications this solution entailed, and in contrast to the democratic tradition of revolutionary constitutions.

His assassination relieved those who feared any form of extension of Capodistrias' power, but it plunged the country into civil war and disrepute, which perhaps only he had the ability, by making some concessions, to prevent.

Christos Loukos graduated in 1967 from the Department of History and Archaeology of the University of Athens. He attended postgraduate studies in Paris and received a PhD degree in History at the the University of Athens. In 1992 he was elected Assistant Professor and in 1996 Professor at the Department of History and Archaeology at the University of Crete where he taught undergraduate and postgraduate students. The subjects he specializes in are the Greek Revolution of 1821, Social Issues of Modern Greek Cities, Issues of the History of the Greek State, History of Greek Typography, and Introduction to the History of Latin America. His publications, books, and articles in journals and collective volumes deal mainly with these topics.

He is a founding and active member of the Society for the Study of Modern Hellenism, which, among other things, publishes the historical review *Mnemon*. He had the general supervision of the classification of the Municipal Archives of Hermoupolis and the municipal-community archives of Ano Syros, Kea, Amorgos, Vilia, Aigio, Symi, Oinousses, Serifos and Santorini. Since 1994, he is the Director of the research program “*The City in Modern Times*” at the Institute for Mediterranean Studies (Rethymno, Crete).

From 2012 he is Emeritus Professor of the University of Crete, and in 2012-2013 he taught undergraduate and postgraduate students as visiting Professor at the University of Cyprus.

In Brief

430,000-Year-Old Wooden Tools Are the Oldest Ever Found

An article published in The New York Times on January 26, 2026 by F. Lidz discusses evidence that early hominins—ancestors of homo sapiens, or human beings—in Europe

were creating tools from raw materials hundreds of thousands of years before homo sapiens arrived there. The evidence is based on the findings of two new studies: 430,000-year-old wooden tools found in southern Greece — the earliest wooden tools on record - and a 500,000-year-old hammer made of elephant or mammoth bone, excavated in southern England.

The findings in Greece, were published on January 26, 2026, in the Journal PNAS in an article titled *Evidence for the earliest hominin use of wooden handheld tools found at Marathousa 1 (Greece) – lead author Katerina Harvati*.

According to the Abstract of the paper:

The Middle Pleistocene (774,100 to 129,000 years ago) marks a critical period of human evolution, characterized by increasing behavioral complexity and the first unambiguous evidence of plant-based technologies. Despite this, direct evidence for early wooden tool use remains exceptionally rare. Here, we present the earliest handheld wooden tools, identified from secure contexts at the site of Marathousa 1— a former lakeshore mine in the Megalopolis basin in Greece — dated to 430,000 years ago. Through systematic analyses of sampled wood macroremains, two specimens were securely identified as modified by hominins: one small alder (a tree of the birch family) trunk fragment bears clear working and use-wear traces consistent with a multifunctional stick likely used in digging at the paleolakeshore of Megalopolis; and one very small willow/poplar artifact that exhibits signs of shaping and potential use-wear. A third specimen, a large alder trunk segment, shows deep, nonanthropogenic striations interpreted here as claw marks from a large carnivoran. The wooden tools were excavated together with butchered elephant remains, small lithic artifacts and debitage (waste material produced during the process of making stone tools), and worked bone, underscoring the diversity of engagement with a variety of different raw materials for technological purposes at Marathousa 1. These finds extend the temporal range of early wooden tools. They represent both the use of expedient larger handheld tools as well as a much smaller, likely finger-held wooden tool, which is uniquely small for the Pleistocene, expanding known functional purposes of early wood technologies. Moreover, they highlight the Megalopolis Basin's exceptional preservation conditions and its role in understanding the evolution of hominin behavior.

At the site of Marathousa 1, archaeologists discovered the partial skeleton of a straight-tusked elephant; the remains of turtles, birds, rodents and hippopotamuses; and stone tools used for butchering. Homo sapiens emerged in Africa more than 300,000 years ago, and the oldest evidence of them in Europe is a 210,000-year-old fossil unearthed in Greece. By the time Homo sapiens established themselves in Britain 40,000 years ago, other hominins had already lived there for nearly a million years.

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) (Manzikert (1071)—Continuation from the previous issue)

On the report of Basilacius' capture, the Byzantines began to fear, and this suspense and fear of the unknown were spread throughout the camp by the sound and sight of the many returning troops who had been wounded by Turkish arrows. Romanus immediately marshaled his force and set out to seek the enemy, but as they had retired before the charge of Basilacius, they were nowhere in sight so the emperor returned to camp.

That night while the Uze mercenaries were outside the encampment buying goods from the merchants, the Turks attacked them by riding around the camp and raining arrows upon them from horseback. The mercenaries rushed back into the enclosed camp in such disorder that those inside feared the Turks would enter the camp simultaneously and then all would be lost. It was a moonless night, and the pursuers could not be distinguished from the pursued—Attaliates remarking that to the Byzantines the Turks and Uzes looked alike. The Turks, possibly for this very same, did not attempt to enter but remained before the camp during the whole night, making noise and shooting their arrows. Attaliates graphically depicts the sleepless night passed by the terrorized troops in the encampment. On the following day a portion of the Uze mercenaries, under their leader Tamis, deserted to the Turks. This increased the fear of the Byzantine generals and further undermined the morale of the troops, because they now feared the remainder of the Uzes would desert. The Byzantines achieved a temporary success when their archers marched out and drove the Turkish forces away from the encampment with heavy losses to the latter. Romanus himself wished to come to close quarters with the Turkish forces immediately and thus to determine the issue without further delay. He had hesitated, however, as the majority of his forces were still supposedly encamped before Chliat. Even though he sent messengers to summon them, the emperor felt that they might not arrive in time, so he decided to march out against the Turks on the next day. Unknown to him, Tarchaniotes and Roussel, with the Frank, Uze, and Byzantine troops under them, had dispersed upon hearing of the sultan's arrival, and, without bothering to inform the emperor, they had fled across the regions of Byzantine Mesopotamia to Anatolia.

Unexpectedly an embassy from the sultan arrived bringing proposals for peace. As Romanus was not disposed to accept the offer, he placed stiff conditions on the opening of such discussions. Before he would consider the proposition, he informed the envoys, the sultan would have to withdraw from his present camp and let Romanus occupy it. Reasoning that the sultan was afraid and his forces weak, the emperor's

counselors strengthened the emperor in his resolve and advised him to reject the sultan's peace offer. The sultan was merely stalling for time, the counselors argued, and as soon as his forces should be augmented he would return and attack the empire, and in this the counselors succeeded in persuading Romanus. There were other factors that must have helped persuade him. The military activities had been extremely expensive, and it was not likely that the emperor could muster another such force in the near future. Then it had been difficult to catch the Turks during his four year reign, for they were always on the move, split up into small but rapidly striking bodies. He now had before him the sultan himself. There were other issues as well to be considered. Psellus and the Ducas' were constantly plotting against him in Constantinople and during the preceding year he had not been able to leave Constantinople because of this fact. So Romanus made what seemed to him the logical choice: force the issue with the enemy of the empire now, a similar opportunity would never present itself again.

On the day of battle Romanus drew up all his troops, leaving none to guard the camp. Most of his army, as mentioned above, had been sent to invest Chliat, and so the emperor needed everyone he could muster on the fighting line. Bryennius commanded the left wing, Romanus the center, Alyattes the right wing, and Andronicus Ducas was placed in the rear with a large body of *hetairoi* and *archontes*. When the emperor attacked, the sultan's forces gave way and retreated, the emperor pursuing them until evening, halted the pursuit, deciding to return to the camp (now divested of guards) lest the Turks return at night and attack it, as they had done previously. So Romanus ordered the army to retire from the pursuit and to march back to camp. The imperial standard was turned from the direction of the enemy toward the camp and the soldiers in the vicinity of the emperor evidently performed the movement correctly. But those who were far away, upon seeing the reversal of the imperial standard, thought that the emperor had been defeated. More specifically, Andronicus Ducas intentionally spread the false rumor that the emperor had been defeated and withdrew his men from the field in haste, bringing them to the camp. The Byzantine sources state categorically that Ducas was executing a premeditated plot, for he and his family had been waiting for an opportunity to do away with their hated enemy.

One must recall in this conjunction that prior to his expedition in 1071, Romanus had arrested and exiled the Caesar John Ducas, father of Andronicus. The whole episode is vaguely but definitely echoed in the later account of Michael the Syrian who remarks that Romanus and his nobles were at odds, and then that most of the nobles abandoned him in the battle. This is in complete accord with the accounts of Attaliates and Bryennius, the latter of whom tells us that the *archontes* or nobles were under the command of Ducas. Given the already nervous state of the soldiers, the anarchy in the armies thus begun by the activities of Andronicus Ducas spread rapidly and the emperor was unable to halt it.

(To be continued)

From the Riches of Our Cultural Heritage

Ποίηση Οδυσσέα Ελύτη από το «Αξίον Εστί»

Ένα το Χελιδόνι

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 Μαγίου
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 γυαλοί κι όλο το πέλαγος.

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

Τα Θεμέλια μου στα Βουνά

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!

Ο Ποιητής των Νεφών και των Κυμάτων

Ο ποιητής των νεφών και των κυμάτων κοιμάται μέσα μου!
Στη θηλή της θύελλας τα σκοτεινά του χείλη
και η ψυχή του πάντοτε με της θαλάσσης το λάχτισμα
πάνω στα πόδια του όρους!

Ξεριζώνει δρυς και δριμύς κατεβαίνει ο θρηϊκίος.
Μικρά καράβια στου κάβου το γύρισμα
ξάφνου μπατάρουν και χάνονται.
Και πάλι προβαίνουν ψηλά μες στα νέφη
απ' την άλλη μεριά του βυθού.

Στις άγκυρες έχουν κολλήσει τα φύκια
στα γένια θλιμμένων αγίων.
Ωραίες αχτίδες γύρω στην όψη
την άλω του πόντου δονούν.

Νηστικοί κατά κει τ' άδεια μάτια γυρίζουν οί γέροντες
Κι οι γυναίκες τη μαύρη σκιά τους επάνω
στον άχραντο ασβέστη φορούν.

Μαζί τους εγώ, το χέρι κινώ
Ποιητής των νεφών και των κυμάτων!
Στον σεμνό τενεκέ με το χρώμα βουτώ
τα πινέλα μαζί τους και βάφω:
Τα καινούρια σκαριά
τα χρυσά και τα μαύρα εικονίσματα!

Βοηθός και σκέπη μας αι-Κανάρη!
Βοηθός και σκέπη μας αι-Μιαούλη!
Βοηθός και σκέπη μας άγια-Μαντώ!

Οι Εχθροί μου

Ήρθαν ντυμένοι «φίλοι» αμέτρητες φορές οι εχθροί μου
το παμπάλαιο χώμα πατώντας.

Και το χώμα δεν έδεσε ποτέ με τη φτέρνα τους.

Έφεραν τον Σοφό, τον Οικιστή και τον Γεωμέτρη
Βίβλους γραμμάτων και αριθμών
την πάσα Υποταγή και Δύναμη
το παμπάλαιο φως εξουσιάζοντας.

Και το φως δεν έδεσε ποτέ με τη σκέπη τους.

Ούτε μέλισσα καν δε γελάστηκε το χρυσό ν' αρχινίσει
παιχνίδι

ούτε ζέφυρος καν, τις λευκές να φουσκώσει ποδιές.

Έστησαν και θεμέλιωσαν

στις κορφές, στις κοιλάδες, στα πόρτα
πύργους κραταιούς κι επαύλεις ξύλα και άλλα πλεούμενα,
τους Νόμους τους θεσπίζοντας τα καλά και συμφέροντα
στο παμπάλαιο μέτρο εφαρμόζοντας.

Και το μέτρο δεν έδεσε ποτέ με τη σκέπη τους.

Ούτε καν ένα χνάρι Θεού στην ψυχή τους σημάδι δεν
άφησε

ούτε καν ένα βλέμμα ξωθιάς τη μιλιά τους δεν είπε να
πάρει.

Έφτασαν ντυμένοι «φίλοι» αμέτρητες φορές οι εχθροί μου
τα παμπάλαια δώρα προσφέροντας.

Και τα δώρα τους άλλα δεν ήτανε

παρά μόνο σίδηρο και φωτιά.

Στ' ανοιχτά που καρτέραγαν δάχτυλα

μόνον όπλα και σίδηρο και φωτιά.

Μόνον όπλα και σίδηρο και φωτιά.