

# GREECE

*By*

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## PREFACE

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A. W. G.

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## CHAPTER I

### THE TWO TRADITIONS

**M**ODERN Greece—Hellas is her own name—is the heir to two traditions, the Classical and the Byzantine: two traditions so contrary in their natures that it is difficult to imagine their reconciliation. The Greeks of the Classical period, say from 700 to about 250 B.C.—a long period of four and a half centuries—were politically divided into hundreds of small states, wonderfully creative in art, letters, science, politics, philosophy, and commerce, in essentials rationalist and secular, never theocratic, individualist, critical above all things. The states were all Greek in speech and race (which does not mean that the race was pure, whatever that can mean, but that the racial mixture was about the same everywhere); they extended over the whole Aegean area including its northern and Asia Minor coastlands, to Cyprus, the Nile delta and Cyrenaica, the southern and western coasts of Italy as far north as Naples, Sicily, and some parts of the southern coastline of France and north-west Spain, including Marseilles. The Byzantine Empire, on the other hand, was vast in extent, racially divided—it included for long periods Asia Minor as far as the Euphrates, Syria, Palestine, and Egypt, the whole of the Balkan peninsula, and, at times, large sections of Italy and North Africa—politically united under an autocratic emperor, secured by a powerful bureaucracy, theocratic, on the whole non-creative and essentially non-critical. The classical Greeks had lived by discussion in politics and in thought; the Byzantines accepted the rule of emperor and priest, living by faith. Their unity was political and religious; and this was (apart from some theological disputes which did not affect the masses) complete.

This great change in outlook had been brought about politically by the conquests of Alexander the Great towards the end of the fourth century and those of Rome in the second and first centuries B.C. These ended, ultimately, the divisions of the Greeks and (according to our point of view) either raised all

mankind to a universal brotherhood or reduced them to an equal subjection; the old Greek homeland became provinces and parts of provinces of a world empire. They also ended Greek creativeness in thought and action. But Alexander's conquests had a further result of overwhelming importance to later Europe as well as to Greece herself: the spread of the Greek language over Asia Minor, Syria, Palestine, and northern Egypt—further east as well at the beginning, but there it did not last—by the founding of Greek cities, with Greek institutions, habits, and culture. The Romans, who made Latin the common language throughout the western half of the empire, including in the end the Greek west, did not evict Greek from the eastern half; there Greek became finally rooted till the Arab conquest of Syria and Egypt in the seventh century and the Turkish conquest of Asia Minor in the eleventh. From the first then the Roman Empire was dual in language, with the southern Adriatic as the rough dividing-line between the two halves; yet, since the Romans learned so much from the Greeks, with a unity in the Graeco-Roman 'classical' culture and in the political system.

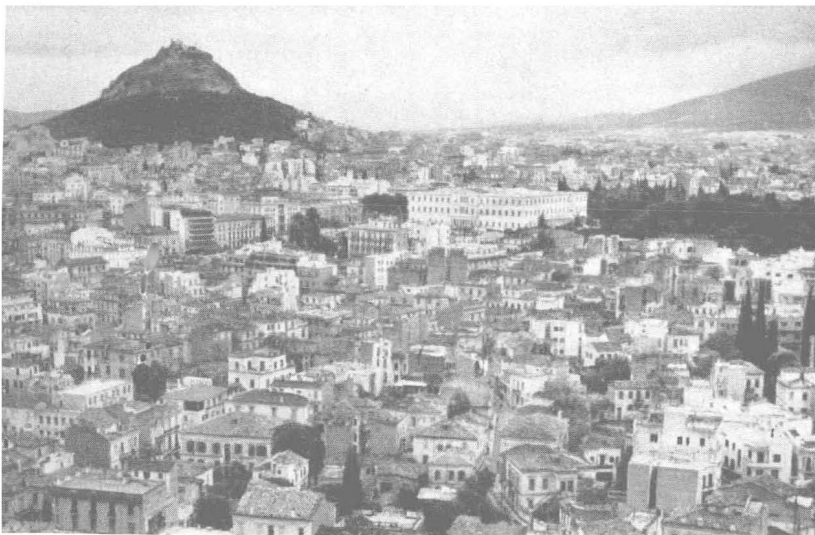
Even the Jews of Palestine were in part hellenized and were surrounded by Greek-speaking peoples; Greek was the language of literature and of trade. Hence the books of the New Testament (and the last books of the Old) were written in Greek; and when the Gospel was preached beyond Palestine, whether to Jews or to Gentiles, it must use the Greek tongue. When learned men began to expand its doctrines, they used the language of Greek philosophy; and a religion which was so entirely Hebrew in origin and which introduced ideas so novel to the classical world became half-Greek in thought. Because there was cultural unity, with no barrier of language or custom, and easy communications, the Apostles naturally went westward over Asia Minor to such old Greek cities as Ephesos, Thessalonike, Athens, and Corinth; because there was yet weaker political unity, and no national boundaries, and Greek was still the native language of southern Italy and was understood in Rome, they went beyond the Adriatic into western Europe. Christianity thus became in its early years a European religion; it also became a world religion, supra-national, with a universal appeal.

The division, however, between the Latin and Greek halves of the Empire became later more emphatic and more sharply defined. By the third century it had already become administratively convenient to recognize this by a division of authority between co-emperors or their deputies in East and West; and the foundation of Constantinople by Constantine the Great in 325 on the site of the old Greek city of Byzantium (founded, with many another city on the coasts of the Sea of Marmora and the Dardanelles, in the seventh century B.C.), though it was intended to unite the whole empire once more, gave a definite capital and a new life to the eastern half of it. It was still the Roman Empire (the new capital was styled 'Constantinople and New Rome' officially), and the inhabitants were *Romaioi*, citizens of Rome; but, though Latin was at first the official language, Greek was universally spoken, and by the end of the sixth century it had ousted Latin even as the language of administration and law. The destruction of the western half of the Empire by the barbarian invaders in the late fifth and the sixth centuries, the beginning of the Dark Ages there, left the Greek Empire, as the heir to ancient Greece and Rome, for several centuries the one stable guardian of civilization in Europe.

Doctrinal quarrels, moreover, between eastern and western Christians, and the final schism between Pope and Patriarch in the seventh century, emphasized the division; politically, economically, culturally, and now by religious differences, the Eastern Empire was cut off from the West. The Emperor was head of the 'Greek Orthodox' Church (whereas the Papacy, after long struggles, maintained its independence of the political powers in the West), and as such personified the political-religious unity of the Greeks. Nevertheless, in spite of the separation from the Latin West, and many quarrels with it, and despite the constant wars with the non-Christian powers beyond its Eastern frontiers—first with the Sassanid Empire of Persia, then with the Mahometan Arabs—we must not think of the Greek Empire as a national state. It was consciously non-Latin and non-Persian or Arab, consciously both opposed to the Papacy and the upholder of Christianity against the infidel; but it was still the heir to Rome, in conception a world state. When Slav peoples, Serbs and Bulgars, broke into the

northern half of the Balkan peninsula, and were later converted to Christianity (of the Greek Orthodox rite) and for a time were conquered and ruled from Constantinople, this meant no break in the political tradition. The Empire was still, as it had always been, non-national and non-racial. The Patriarch, like the Pope, was catholic, oecumenical; and the Emperor was the Emperor of 'the Romans'.

With varying fortunes in war, and with varying boundaries, the empire lasted for several centuries: essentially the same—the home of civilization, but only maintaining it, uncreative; with little enough to show in the arts, except architecture, in letters, in science, and nothing in politics; a large bureaucratic and theocratic machine, living on the past, yet preserving much of it for the future benefit of Europe. The great change came in the eleventh century, about the time when western Europe was waking to a new era, with yet another invasion of peoples from the East, the Seljuk Turks. They failed before Constantinople itself; but their conquest of Asia Minor, strengthened by the second wave of invaders, the Ottoman Turks, in the fourteenth century, proved radical and permanent. It was radical in the sense that nearly everywhere in the Asiatic provinces of the Empire both Christianity and the Greek tongue were finally ousted, and the Mahometan religion and the Turkish language took their place. In the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, the Turks conquered almost all that was left of the Byzantine Empire, and much beyond, Constantinople falling in 1453, the last Emperor, Constantine XI, being killed in the final assault. In this extension of their power, however, the Turkish conquest was less radical: the conquered Greeks, like the Slavs to the north, maintained their language and their religion. The Christian Greeks were now limited to the ancient homelands of their pagan ancestors, where they had been since a thousand or two thousand years before Christ—continental Greece, the Ionian islands to the west of it (never conquered by the Turks), all the islands of the Aegean, the coastlands of the north and east Aegean (eastern Macedonia, Thrace, including Constantinople, and the district of Smyrna), the Trebizond province in northern Anatolia, and Cyprus. Only small and scattered groups remained outside of this fairly well defined area: some of them lasted in an isolated pocket as



## I. ATHENS

1. THE MODERN TOWN AND MOUNT LYKABETTOS  
(*Paul Popper*)

2. VIEW TOWARDS THE ACROPOLIS  
(*Charles E. Brown*)



far east as Cappadocia till the disaster of 1922, to prove how thorough had been the hellenization effected by the conquests of Alexander and the long rule of his successors.

The new Empire of the Turks in many of its aspects itself continued the traditions of Byzantium; *Sultan-i-Rum*, Ruler of the Romans, was one of the Emperor's titles. It, too, was supra-national and autocratic in government; Constantinople remained the capital. The Turks, when their religious fanaticism was not aroused, were a quiet and tolerant people; the Greeks, the Slavs, and the Syrian Christians were allowed the exercise of their religion and language, and the Jews, not politically active, found a tolerable refuge which was so often denied them in the progressive states of the West. Once their military ambitions and energies were checked, when they were driven off from the siege of Vienna, the Turks proved to be even less active, progressive, and creative than Byzantium had been. The Empire stagnated. During the centuries when the Western peoples were most active in almost every field of human activity, it became a backwater, ignorant and unprosperous. Byzantium had to the end at least preserved a civilization; contacts with the West, begun with Italy at the Renaissance, might have been mutually fruitful (as it was they helped only in the West); but Istanbul (the Turkish name for Constantinople) turned its back. 'Europe' did not include the Balkan peninsula, under Turkish rule; the West looked upon it as infidel and foreign, and forgot its Christian population.

Though Turkey was in many ways the true heir of Byzantium, there was one marked difference between the two Empires: there was now a master race. Under Byzantium, all had been 'citizens of Rome'; the Turks, tolerant as they were of differences in race, culture, and religion, did not attempt to absorb their subjects. All who turned Mahometan became Turks, members of the ruling caste; many Christians of Constantinople took a leading part in the administration, but this did not blur the essential distinction. The non-Turks were divided according to their religion into communities, *millets*: the Greek Orthodox (who included the Rumanians and the Slavs of Serbia and Bulgaria), with the oecumenical Patriarch at Constantinople recognized as their head, the

Armenians, who were Christians of the monophysite sect, under their own Patriarch, the Jews, and others. These religious heads were given authority each over all the members of his community, in civil and religious matters. There developed a tendency to identify religions with national and language groups, a tendency which had indeed been present in the early days of the schismatic Churches of Armenia, Syria, and Alexandria, but which in theory at least had been vigorously resisted. The identification became practically complete during the course of the nineteenth century from political causes. The Serbs got their own Patriarch or metropolitan in 1830 with their political independence (the Greeks about the same time declared their own church autocephalous and independent of the Patriarch, though in full communion with Constantinople—this was to protect it from Turkish influence), the Rumanians theirs in 1860.<sup>1</sup> Most interesting of all was the creation of the Bulgarian *Exarchate* by the Sultan in 1870; for the Bulgarians were both Orthodox and still subjects of Turkey (in Bulgaria and Macedonia); they were formed into a separate *millet* with their own Exarch at Constantinople, and so for the first time a purely racial and language group with its own religious head was created among the Orthodox within the Empire. The Exarchate was denounced by the Patriarch as heretical for this reason; the Church was Catholic, universal for all who accepted its doctrine, not national. But it survived; and one effect of it was that henceforth the Patriarch represented in practice only the Greek subjects of Turkey, who spoke and felt as Greeks (with a few exceptions as among the orthodox Albanians), just as the autocephalous metropolitan of Athens in the independent Greek state was the religious head of all other Greeks. The old universal Church had, by force of circumstances, and by no change in doctrine or in theory, become national in scope and feeling. It was national in feeling not only in relation to the Mahometan Turks, but to Latin Christianity in the West. The old hostility between the Papacy and the Greek Orthodox Church had been revived and intensi-

<sup>1</sup> The Russian Church, united in doctrine with Constantinople, had been independent since the end of the sixteenth century—again for political reasons, since the Patriarch was a subject of the Sultan, whose consent was necessary for his election.

fied by the Frankish invasions in the thirteenth century; the warriors of the Fourth Crusade, as a prelude to the liberation of the Holy Land from the infidel, seized Constantinople, for so long the bulwark of Christianity against Arab and Turk, and held it for some sixty years, and by this single act did more than anybody to weaken the resistance of the Greeks two centuries later. Other Frankish princes, and the Italian republics of Genoa, Florence, and Venice, carved out portions of Greek land for themselves. Their rule was, in general, brief, ineffective, and unpopular; many Greeks were prepared to welcome even the Turks in exchange. The Greeks were cut off from Western civilization almost as much by their hostility to the Latins as by the depressing blight which descended on the people from Turkish rule. Only Venetian rule in the Ionian islands, till the French captured them in the Napoleonic wars, and in Crete, till the Turkish conquest in the latter half of the seventeenth century, proved more lasting and of some benefit to the subject people. Even so, the West gained more from it than the Greeks: El Greco, 'the Greek', whose name was Doménikos Theotokópoulos, was a Cretan.

What is meant by saying that the modern Greek state is the heir as much to the Classical as to the Byzantine tradition, after the long period of fifteen centuries since the foundation of Constantinople, or, to give a truer picture, of two thousand years since the hellenization of western Asia and the Roman conquest? To instance a symbolic action, why did the Greeks after 1821 give themselves the classical name of Hellenes and call their country Hellas, seeing that they still called themselves Romans (*Ῥωμαῖοι*) and their language Romaic? The answer is complex. In part it was because the Byzantine Greeks, including the learned men of the Church, different as their outlook on life was, were themselves still under the influence of classical Greece—the early Church Fathers were men of learning in the classics; the classics had not died and the use of the language was continuous; and though in the early centuries of Christianity the name Hellene had come to be used most often of those who still clung to paganism, in later times the learned once again began to call their countrymen by this name. In fact, in language, as in most else, the Byzantines were uncreative, and the historians and theologians to the end,

like the last pagan authors and the early Fathers, tried only to write 'correct' Greek, that is, Greek of the fourth and third centuries B.C.; and during the first hundred years of the life of the new state there has been a struggle between those who would use in school and books this 'correct' language and others who would base the written naturally on the spoken tongue.

More important are, first, the fact already emphasized that after the Turkish conquest the Greeks were confined to their old classical homelands, and secondly, the new national character of the Church. The main achievement of Alexander the Great and of the Romans was the creation of the world-state. That was the great break with the past; and this had now ended. Modern Greece, in this sense, was more like classical than Roman and Byzantine Greece: it was small, independent, and national in character. And because it occupied the original homelands, all the influences of geography played their part in the same direction: the people were living in essentially the same physical surroundings as in the centuries before Alexander with much the same boundaries to the outside world. That outside world had changed out of all knowledge, and modern Greece could not in consequence develop politically as ancient Greece had done; but the physical conditions of life within the state were not very different from what they were in classical times.

## CHAPTER II

### THE LAND—NATURAL ECONOMY AND COMMUNICATIONS

CONTINENTAL Greece, the nucleus of the modern state, is a land dominated by a long and intricate coastline and a mountainous interior. The mountains are not particularly high—Olympos, the highest, is below 10,000 feet—and, most of them, not very forbidding barriers to communication; but they occupy a vast part of the land. They are generally steep and rocky limestone masses; in the eastern half of the country, south of Thessaly, including most of the islands, where the rainfall is light, they are often bare, with little, if any, surface soil, and grow only scrub, food for many flocks of goats. In the west and north-west, they are largely covered with forest, of fir, with some oak, and beech in the north. Pine-woods are common in the hill-country, especially in Attica and Boeotia. Up the lower slopes of the mountains the land is terraced by stone walls and minute and stony fields laboriously maintained. Towards the coast and in the folds of the mountains are the plains, small in area, though some of them are of remarkable fertility. In particular, for the most part Greece lacks broad alluvial plains formed by the silt brought down by large rivers. In long stretches of the coast, and the Aegean islands, the mountains slope steeply down to the sea and under the sea, so that deep water is found inshore, and there is no chance that the soil made by the disintegration of the rocks by the weather should form a plain at the mountain foot; it is all washed into the sea. Plato said long ago of the country of south-east Attica (compared with what it was supposed to have been in a long-previous, mythical age):

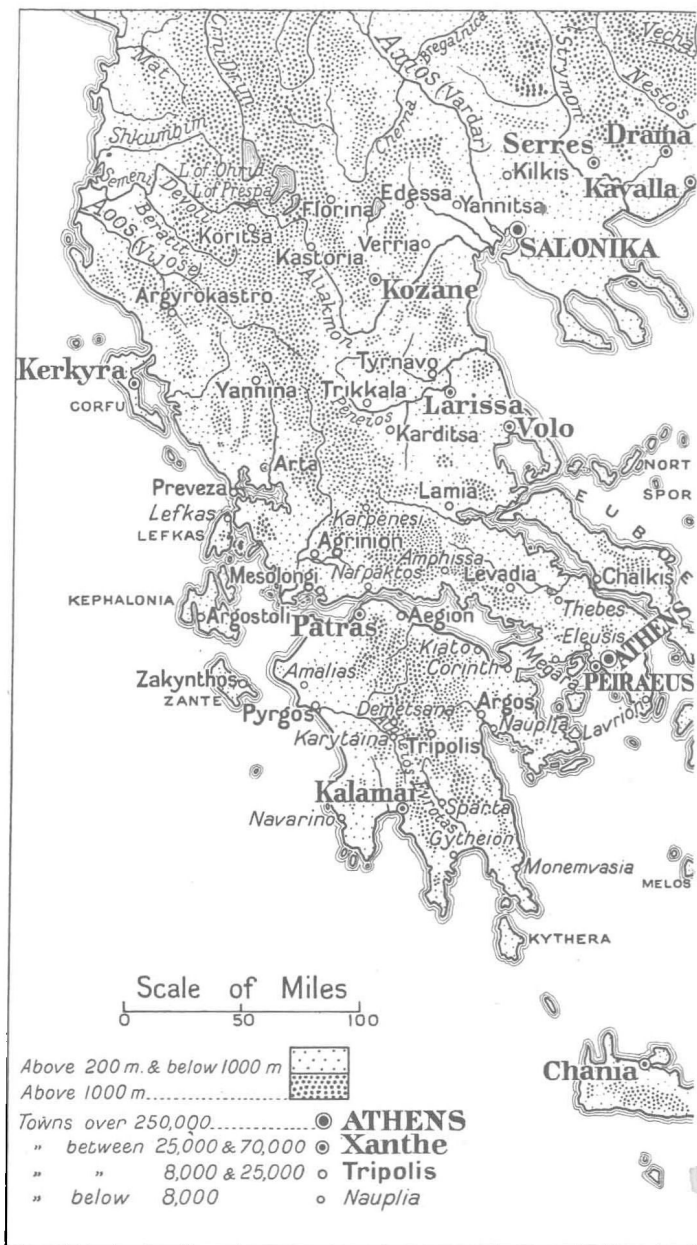
We must notice that Attica extends into the sea like a promontory, and that she has therefore a longer coast-line than the neighbouring states. Moreover the sea that surrounds her is very deep close in to the shore. But in the course of the long period with which we are dealing, there were, naturally, many floods, which swept away the soil from the high-lying parts of the country; but this phenomenon

did not, as in many other countries, lead to the formation of any alluvial plains or deltas worth talking about. This is owing to the depth of the adjacent sea. The light soil was simply washed away by the waters and sank to the bottom. The result was—exactly as in the small islands of the Aegean—that what is left resembles the skeleton of an emaciated body; the good productive earth has disappeared. Where there are now nothing but barren limestone rocks there used to be rounded hills; and where there is now nothing but stony soil yielding a meagre harvest, there used to be fertile fields. Further, at that period the hills were well wooded, even those that now can only maintain bees. Moreover, the rain, instead of rushing uselessly to the sea in streams enclosed in rocky channels, was absorbed into the soft earth and filtered through it, so that there were springs and streams in plenty, which also added to the fertility of the soil.<sup>1</sup>

The Greeks have a story that when the world was made, God put all the earth through a sieve and set down some good soil here, which was one country, and some there which was another, and threw all the stones over his shoulder, and that was Greece.

There is a great variety of scene and type of country. The small plains of Attica between the mountains, all open to the sea and with the most delectable climate, have but a light soil, suitable for the olive-tree and the vine, not good for corn, especially not for wheat. Just to the north are the rather larger plains of Boeotia, enclosed by hills from the sea, suitable for corn, colder in winter and hotter in summer, with hills good for grazing. In the Peloponnese, the two plains in the south, in Lakonia and Messenia, are of great richness: beneath rows of olive-trees, barley is succeeded by maize in the same season, and fruits, orange, fig, and mulberry, as well as the vine, grow abundantly. In the west of peninsular Greece, where there is much more rainfall, the Ionian islands, except rocky Itháke,

<sup>1</sup> *Critias* 111 (Burnet's paraphrase). It is often said that the denuding of the mountains of soil and of trees, and even a consequent change of climate, is the result of modern carelessness in Turk and Greek alike. There is little evidence that where the mountains are now bare they were covered with forest in classical times; and the extent of existing woods and forests is often underrated. Plato's own picture of a much earlier age of fertility is of very doubtful truth.







are as fertile as man could desire; but on the mainland, mountains almost everywhere predominate, to a degree remarkable even in Greece. Further north, the plains and lower hills of Thessaly, shut in by high mountains on all sides and watered by a true river system, give good soil for wheat and for grazing. But the richest land, in extent and depth of soil, is in Macedonia and Thrace. There the large rivers water the inland plains and have formed true alluvial plains near the sea. Here and in Thessaly is the best land in Greece.

The country is poor in minerals: some lignite ('brown coal') of not very high quality, emery on the island of Naxos, bauxite, magnesite in Chalkidiké, lead in Attica; and there is not much else. Attempts to find oil in worth-while quantities have failed altogether. 'Poverty and Greece are sisters.'

If you take the country as a whole, Greece is thinly populated. It had some 7,000,000 inhabitants in 1939 in an area of about 130,000 square kilometres or 53 per square kilometre. This compares with

Bulgaria	..	..	53	per square kilometre
Rumania	..	..	61	„ „ „
Italy	..	..	132	„ „ „

and with the much higher densities in such fully industrialized states as Holland (225), Belgium (265), and England and Wales (254). But by the nature of the country, though wide mountainous zones are never far away, if we take the richer provinces by themselves we find, of course, higher ratios: in Attica and Boeotia (which are combined in one province, the latter being almost entirely rural), because of the capital and Peiraeus, the largest port, 153 per square kilometre;<sup>1</sup>

Salonika	..	..	74	per square kilometre
Ionian Islands	..	..	110	„ „ „
Chios	..	..	80	„ „ „
Mytiléne	..	..	80	„ „ „
Samos	..	..	80	„ „ „
Elis	..	..	70	„ „ „
Messenia	..	..	72	„ „ „

<sup>1</sup> 1928 figures; a good deal increased since then.