THE MODERN AND CONTEMPORARY GREEK DIASPORA. SOME FUNDAMENTAL HISTORICAL AND GEOGRAPHICAL PARAMETERS

[La diáspora griega moderna y contemporánea. Algunos Parámetros Históricos y geográficos fundamentales]

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ABSTRACT

Primary questions in either a comparative, interethnic approach or an interdisciplinary exploration of the migrations of a specific ethnic group (the Greeks). Relationship between modern Greek Diaspora and corresponding phenomena of previous periods of the Hellenic history, as well as between modern and recent Greek migrations and relevant chapters in the history of other peoples. Compatibility and incompatibility between the geographical and historical data of the Greek case according to the typological models presented in the international literature. Chronological boundaries in the history of Modern Greek Diaspora on a conventional basis, namely on the main motives behind emigration (economic, social, political, and educational), the disponible quantitative information, the geographical distribution of the colonies, the internal functioning of the communities, their relations with the homeland and the host countries, etc. The author of this study tried to summarise these parameters (albeit in a succinct and schematic manner).

KEYWORDS: History, Geography, Greek Diaspora, continuity, host countries.

RESUMEN

Cuestiones primordiales en un enfoque comparativo e interétnico o en una exploración interdisciplinar de las migraciones de un grupo étnico específico (los griegos). Relación entre la diáspora griega moderna y los fenómenos correspondientes de periodos anteriores de la historia helénica, así como entre las migraciones griegas modernas y recientes y los capítulos relevantes de la historia de otros pueblos. Compatibilidad e incompatibilidad entre los datos geográficos e históricos del caso griego según los modelos tipológicos presentados en la literatura internacional. Límites cronológicos en la historia de la diáspora griega moderna sobre una base convencional, es decir, sobre los principales motivos de la emigración (económicos, sociales, políticos y educativos), la información cuantitativa disponible, la distribución geográfica de las colonias, el funcionamiento interno de las comunidades, sus relaciones con la patria y los países de acogida, etc. El autor de este estudio ha intentado resumir estos parámetros (aunque de forma sucinta y esquemática).

PALABRAS CLAVE: Historia, Geografía, Diáspora griega, países de acogida, continuidad

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Although much has been written about the history of the Greek Diaspora and about various aspects of the functioning, integration, and ideology of some of its centers, there has been limited general overviews of this major chapter in modern Greek history. Until recently, the Greek literature on the subject comprised approaches strongly coloured by their authors' ideological (nationalistic or marxist) preconceptions. On the one hand, we have the idealistic interpretations of 'continuity,' which, firmly entrenched in the style of traditional Greek historiography, view the historical evolution of the diaspora (as indeed all the historical phenomena of Hellenism) as an inseparable, continuous and unbroken process, from the time of the archaic colonies to the present day. Of a similar stripe are those who seek the factors of Greek migration in unscientific areas: in the 'nature' of the Greek 'national characteristics' or the unique psychography and temperament of *Odvsseus* the Greek. But a good many of those who avoid the trap of these stereotypes still fall into other ideological and methodological snares, examining the subject either from a purely Marxist angle or on the basis of one-sided criteria, at best economy-oriented.

Recent times have seen some as yet uncoordinated attempts at a comparative, and even an interdisciplinary approach. By and large, students of the Greek Diaspora seem to be trying to co-ordinate their own theorisation with those of the anthropologists, sociologists, and political scientists who have been trying over the last five decades to conduct a holistic, global investigation of migration and minority communalism. A highly applauded example of this theorisation is John Armostrong's study on 'mobilised' and 'proletarian' diasporas. All the same, despite widespread efforts towards an interdisciplinary treatment of the diasporic phenomenon (which have undeniably broadened the range of our speculation and enriched our methodological arsenal), some fundamental questions remain unanswered by either a comparative, interethnic approach or an exploration of the migrations of a specific ethnic group. Some of the typological models presented in the literature have in a number of cases proved incompatible with the documented historical data of the Greek case.

To take Armstrong's categorisation, for instance, most of the Greek emigrants of the early Ottoman era can by no means be described as any kind of 'proletarian diaspora,' yet nor do they share the features of a 'mobilised diaspora,' to which some at least of the late eighteenth century and early nineteenth-century Greek emigration probably appertained. Armstrong's diptych applies mainly to the contemporary period: the working-class origin of at least the majority of the emigrants

to the United States in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, as also of the Greek Gastarbeiter in postwar Europe; those who emigrated to Canada and Australia in the '60s and '70s, fits in with the 'proletarian' category; yet it co-existed —at least between the second half of the nineteenth century and the postwar emigration to Africa (or even the Americas and Canada)— with some of the basic characteristics of the 'mobilised diaspora.' This, coupled with other distinctive features of the Greek migrations, means that the Greek literature itself contains some marked divergences from the typological schemata that have been laid down at various times for the historical evolution of the Greek Diaspora. These divergences —which may be due to imitation of the general models— are apparent not only in the efforts to confront the conceptual challenge, but also in geographical specifications and the assessments of the basic milestones in the historical development of modern Greek migration and consequently of the beginning and the various historical periods of the modern Greek Diaspora. Let us simply try, initially on the basis of the available historical data, to clarify a few points, at least in identifying some basic parameters of the history of the modern Greek migrational experience.

The first issue to be cleared up is a semantic one. There is a tendency to use the term *diaspora*, albeit metaphorically, as a blanket label for all kinds of categories of migrating people —miscellaneous expatriates, expellees, political refugees, alien residents, and even ethnic and racial minorities of all sorts of provenance—. Leaving aside this terminological overuse, let us start with a few established definitions of 'diaspora.' There is, for instance, William Safran's scheme, according to which a diaspora is an 'expatriate minority community' whose members are not merely 'a segment of a people living outside the homeland,' but share some at least of the following characteristics:

- a. They or their ancestors originated from a specific center, a 'homeland,' from which they dispersed to two or more foreign or peripheral regions;
- b. They retain a collective memory, vision, or myth about this center its history or at least its geographic location and its proverbial and physical characteristics;
- c. They sense that they have not been nor are likely to be completely accepted by their host society and therefore feel partly alienated (as 'foreigners') or even insulated from it; and
- d. They continue to relate, personally or vicariously, to their homeland in such a way that the relationship influences and, more importantly, define their ethno-communal consciousness and solidarity.

As regards the Greek paradigm, we can say that the modern Greek Diaspora consists of that segment of the Greek people which, having settled, not necessarily permanently, in countries or regions outside the 'homeland,' has continued in various ways to maintain its material, social, and above all ideological and emotional ties with the *patrida* ($\pi\alpha\tau\rho$ i $\delta\alpha$, 'fatherland') and the *ethnikó kentro* (εθνικό κέντρο, 'national center'). When speaking of Greek migrants in particular, however, we also have to define precisely what we mean by 'fatherland' and 'national center', for these concepts are not the same for Greeks as they are for people originating from other national groups, such as most of the nation-states of Western Europe.

Until the beginning of the nineteenth century at least, ordinary people regarded any change of residence at all, whether to another part of the Ottoman Empire or beyond its borders, as an undesirable form of expatriation. This is why the terms $xeniti\acute{a}$ and $misevm\acute{o}s$ in folktales and folksongs, and $apodim\acute{a}$ ($\alpha\pio\delta\eta\mu\acute{a}$) in the scholarly texts of the same period were used indiscriminately of both forms of departure from 'home,' expatriation. All the same, the scholarly works and a good many of the surviving popular traditions from the Ottoman era do make an indirect distinction between 'internal expatriation' within the religious, lingually and, in general, the socially and culturally familiar Ottomandominated areas, and the extremely displeasing 'external emigration' to more distant and alien lands inside the Ottoman territories (such as the Northern Balkans, and North Africa, for instance) or outside of them (the homodox albeit bizarre Russia, and particularly the unfamiliar heterodox 'Frankish' West).

Besides, for a considerably long period of modern Greek history, when the Greek state either did not exist or had not yet crystallised into its final form (from the fifteenth century to 1830, and for a sizeable proportion of the Greek people until 1923), the notion of 'national center' must also be taken to include those parts of the Ottoman Empire that were formerly —and rather pompously—referred to as *i kath'imas Anatolí* (η καθ' ημάς Ανατολή, 'our [i.e., Greek] East'). So, from this point of view, we should not include in the modern Greek Diaspora (as some people continue to do, even in Greece) either the erstwhile *alýtropos* (αλύτρωτος, 'unredeemed') or the so-called *periferiakós* (περιφερειακός, 'peripheral') Hellenism —i.e., the Greek populations of Northern Epirus (South Albania), Eastern Rumelia (South Bulgaria), Eastern Thrace (Turkey), Asia Minor, and Cyprus—.

Although, from as early as the end of the Middle Ages, it turned the Greek Orthodox element into a linguistic, religious, and ethnic minority, the change of sovereignty and of ethnic composition in these regions

(with the exception of Cyprus) did not completely change the enduring character that the Greek element had acquired over the preceding centuries, nor sever its continuing organic links with the Greek-speaking world of the *kath'ímas Anatolí* as a whole. These observations still apply today, despite the definitive conclusion of the process of so-called 'national integration,' which has identified the terms 'homeland' and 'national center' with what is now the Hellenic territory.

Another point that should be clarified is the relationship between the diaspora and the three major periods of Hellenic history (ancient, medieval, and modern/contemporary). It has a direct bearing on the problem of continuity and change ('rupture') over the long course of Greek (and not only Greek) history. Certainly, we can no longer ignore the enormous stretches of time between one historical period and the next, nor above all the radical quantitative and qualitative changes that occurred over the centuries in the agents and the character of Greek migrations. We must therefore regard the modern and contemporary Greek communities as different historical categories from the ancient Greek colonies, even when they have grown up in precisely the same sites as the ancient and medieval colonies of the same name.

In some areas, certainly, there has been an uninterrupted Greek presence, but it has been either limited, disorganised, or merely apparent. This is true, for instance, of Southern Italy and Sicily, some traditional urban centers in the Mediterranean (Alexandria, Marseilles, etc.), and some age-old trading stations on the Black Sea, chiefly in the Crimea. But the modern Greek communities in Sicily and Southern Italy were really created in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries (albeit in association with some of the remnants of the immediately previous Greek-Orthodox settlements, though not the ancient ones). The same applies to the Greek element of the Crimea: it cannot be traced farther back than the Late Middle Ages and -like other Greek centers on the Black Sea coast– acquired real continuity only from the late eighteenth century onwards. Even less closely linked with the Greek colonies of the archaic and Hellenistic periods is the Greek presence in Marseilles and Alexandria, which was not really appreciable before the beginning or even the middle of the nineteenth century.

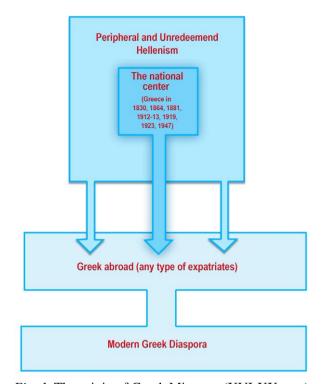
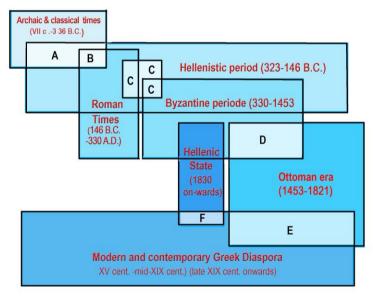


Fig. 1. The origin of Greek Migrants (XVI-XX cent).



A. Ionia, Asia Minor, Pontus, Cyprus etc.

B. Soutern Italy + C

C Middle East + B

D Southern Italy, Crimea, NE coast of Black Sea

E Europe, Northern Balkans, Russia, Caucasus etc.

F Overseas migrations, Western Europe, Africa

Fig. 2. Continuity and change in the Hellenic Diaspora References

So, there is a break during the passage of so many centuries in the historical process, with substantial differences in the operation and the social and cultural characteristics of the centers of the Hellenophone Diaspora. In the first place, their demographic and cultural vigor enabled the ancient Greek colonists to strongly influence or even Hellenise their neighbors. Furthermore, their general development and geographical spread often meant that for long periods of time they became, in effect, the native element in the countries where they had settled (as in Southern Italy and the Crimean Peninsula, for example, not to mention Ionia and some other Greek-speaking enclaves of Asia Minor and the Pontus).

In contrast, the modern Greek communities and 'colonies' have never been more than ethno-religious minorities. Even the massive settlement of Maniots on Corsica in the last decades of the seventeenth century, of Epirots, Heptanesians, Peloponnesians, and islanders of the Aegean Sea in southern Russia, the Crimea, and Bessarabia in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, and of tens of thousands of Pontic Greeks in Transcaucasia and the Caucasus almost throughout the nineteenth century never remotely approached the demographic strength not only of the native element, but of the Russian newcomers, as well. Therefore they cannot be compared with the colonies of the ancient period.

Lastly, the emigration of modern Greeks to so-called Third-World countries, even when they settled in rural areas, was also radically different from the process followed by other West European peoples in modern times. The Greek 'colonies' had neither the same spread nor the same numerical strength, nor were they in any way administratively dependent on the Greek state (after it came into existence, of course), and they therefore never had any of the characteristics of European colonialism.

A significant feature of most modern Greek migration (at least to Central and Western Europe and overseas) is that it led to the creation, either through the arrival of significant waves of migrants or, more commonly, through chain emigration, of chiefly civic communities. In fact, the most vigorous Greek settlements of the Modern Diaspora evolved in urban centers on coasts or rivers or at the intersections of commercial land and sea routes. There are exceptions, but they are either numerically limited (for instance, some of the emigrants who went to Italy at the beginning and to Corsica at the end of the seventeenth century) or geographically restricted – the relocation of the Greeks of the Crimea to Marioupol and the villages on the sea of Azov in the late eighteenth century and, more so, the mass settlement of Pontic Greeks in

rural areas of Transcaucasia in the second half of the nineteenth and in the first decades of the twentieth century.

Regardless of their numbers, the migrants composed the Greek paroikía (colony) in their host country or host city and also, insofar as its members were in any way organised, the Greek *koinótita* (community). If for any reason the members of a Greek colony were in some way dissociated from each other (as happened in Vienna, for instance, at the end of the eighteenth century, when some of the Greeks were with Ottoman and others with Austrian/Habsburg citizenship), or if the sheer volume of numbers caused practical organisational problems (as happened in some large urban centers in the United States and Australia during the Interwar period and in the post-War years), then there would be more than one Greek kinótites (communities) in the same city. From the very start, the communities aspired after official recognition by the local authorities, and they organised themselves according to their members' occupations, the communal traditions of their native regions, and, above all, the established customary and legal status in the host country.

These characteristics apply to the Greek Diaspora throughout the modern and contemporary period. Therefore, any attempt to establish chronological boundaries in the history of modern Greek emigration can ultimately indicate only conventional *termini*—in marked contrast to the indisputable periodisation between the ancient, medieval, and modern historical periods—. Examples of Greek colonies may be found which straddle any slices of history. And the basic motives behind emigration (economic, social, political, and educational) are also present at all times albeit with the inevitable variations.

However, certain factors such as the numerical extension, the geographical distribution, and the the internal functioning of the Greek communities, and their relations with the homeland and the host countries) make it possible to divide, purely conventionally, the history of modern Greek migration into three broad periods: The first covers the four main centuries of Ottoman era, from the mid-fifteenth century to the birth of the Hellenic state in 1830; the second began with Greece's independence —though it took its basic profile after the mid-nineteenth century— and continued until just before World War II; and the third, the period of the contemporary Greek Diaspora, began in the 1940s and 1950s and to a certain extent was still going on until Greece's entry into the European Union if not until today.

From a geographical point of view, most of the emigrants of the first period moved about within the old, more or less known world: the Italian peninsula first of all, chiefly in the south to begin with, and rather less in the center and the north (mainly in Venice); then, from the late seventeenth and early eighteenth century spreading to the large ports and the major commercial centers of Western, South-Eastern, Central, and Eastern Europe. In this first period too, even what passed for mass migration involved far smaller numbers than later movements of the population.

All the same, chiefly because there was no independent Hellenic state, these early émigrés remained profoundly involved in the economic, social, cultural, and political developments in the Greek world and played an important, even a leading part in its ideological orientations. In the last decades of the eighteenth century, economic circumstances underwent an appreciable change both in the host countries and in the 'Greek East,' bringing about the decline of some traditional centers of the Greek Diaspora and the emergence of others (such as Leghorn and Trieste, for instance, which took over from Venice), and above all changing the flow of the migratory waves from west to north and north-east.

Still, the economic and social changes, both in the host countries and in the homeland, had been going on since the end of the seventeenth century, if not before, and the 'commercial' character of at least the most typical colonies also had its roots in earlier times, in some cases even earlier than the seventeenth century. Moreover, the new centers of the Greek Diaspora showed no pragmatic demographic and economic growth until the first decades of the nineteenth century. But the internal organisation of the Greek communities and the framework of their relations both with the fatherland and with their social surroundings and local authorities had already crystallised in the earliest stages of their existence. In some cases, at least, this crystallisation dated from the end or even the beginning of the sixteenth century.

Thus, the first essential quantitative and qualitative changes appeared or became more obvious after Greek independence. This landmark event also marked a change in direction, bringing a reverse migratory flow from the colonies and the 'peripheral Hellenism' into the national center. Some of the main factors in the Greek migrations of this period started to take specific shape only in the last two decades of the nineteenth century. There was also a perceptible change in the geographical directions the emigrants followed now: some of them continued, certainly, to head for the known commercial centers of Europe (Italy, France, Great Britain, in particular), but the largest waves were now making for the Eastern Mediterranean, southern Russia and Transcaucasia, and, above all, the Americas, particularly the United States.

This second period ended with World War II. Some historians regard the outbreak of World War I as the end, and the Asia Minor Disaster (1922) as the start of the next period; but the fact that between 1922 and 1940 emigration overseas fell to about a quarter of the level of the previous twenty years shows that the events of 1919-22 had no really excessive effect on Greek migration levels, even in view of the acute housing problems and difficult living conditions caused by the massive influx of refugees in Greece.

The fall in emigration can be explained by greater demand for labour and increased work opportunities in Greece, as also by a change in immigration policy in the host countries, particularly the United States. Moreover, the numbers of Asia Minor refugees who were channeled to the USA before it closed its doors to immigrants in 1922 do not compare, even at the period of greatest movement, with the sheer volume of emigrants from the Peloponnese. Lastly, the tripling of the number of Greeks in Australia between 1920 and 1940 was due to emigration either from the Italian-held Dodecanese (mainly Kastellorizo) or from the Ionian Islands (chiefly Kythira and Ithaki), which is to say from areas with few or no refugees from Asia Minor or anywhere else. Only the increase in the members of the Greek communities of northern Africa, particularly Alexandria, in the 1920s could be attributed to an influx of refugees from Asia Minor, shortly before and immediately after the Asia Minor Disaster.

The third period, a new cycle of emigration, started in the mid-1940s, increased dramatically in the '50s and even more in the '60s, and more or less came to an end in the 1970s and '80s. While many emigrants still made for the countries that had become popular in the previous period (Africa, the Americas, Canada, and above all Australia), over 60% (and in 1963-64 up to 75%) now sought work as *Gastarbeiter* in Western Europe, particularly the Federal Republic of (West) Germany —in countries, that is, which had long ceased to be a target of Greek migration.

Furthermore, in this third period the growth of the Greek colonies abroad was not connected with the development of international trade, but in most cases with the rising economic prosperity and labour demand of the developed nations. The emigrants' places of origin also changed now. Whereas in the previous period the Peloponnese had made the biggest contribution to the migratory flow, particularly to the United States, it was Northern Greece, and particularly Macedonia, that was the principal source in the 1960s.

Finally, in the postwar wave of emigration, mainly to Western Europe and Australia in the 1960s, there was a marked quantitative and

qualitative change as regards the sex of the emigrants. Before the War, relatively few Greek women emigrated (on average 2.5-5% between 1869 and 1925); and they played a fairly marginal role in the host countries once they arrived. After the War, however (especially from 1960 to 1976), women made up a greater proportion of emigrants (around 42%) and, as they were now seeking work in the host countries to the same extent as the men and on their own account, their role was upgraded.

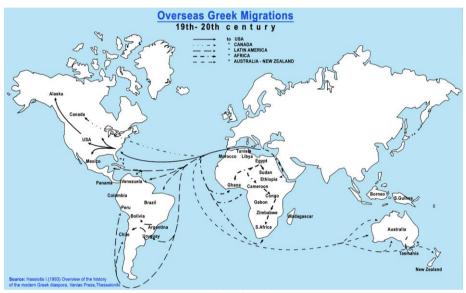


Fig. 3. Overseas Greek Migrations, XIX-XX cent.

From the mid-seventies onwards, and even more so in the early '80s, a number of new factors began to appear, inaugurating a new chapter of the history of Modern Greek Diaspora. Some of these factors are 'internal', connected with the evolution of the Greek society itself; others are 'external,' arising out of more general, not exclusively Greek, considerations. The first group includes an increasing current of repatriation, even of emigrants who had been permanent residents in their host countries for decades. Among the 'external' factors are the changing interstate and labour relations between the countries of the European Union. In view of European integration and freedom of labour and movement (without legal, administrative, or technical barriers) for the citizens of the member states, there has been a marked change in the motivation and the traditional status of European migrants. No longer will they be regarded as 'foreigners' or even as Gastarbeiter in their host countries, but rather as 'transient workers' and equal citizens of a common 'homeland' (albeit still under construction).

However, for the Greek communities, which emerged outside Europe (mainly in the Americas, Russia and the Antipodes), a difficult respond will be required to the transnational and intercontinental challenges, created by the inevitable globalisation, such as the survival of an ethnic identity of the upcoming generations. In most of the cases of organised Greek settlements abroad, a conservative reaction is observed, accompanied with the strengthening of ties with the homeland or with some of its cultural traditions. But the endurance of this phenomenon is, for the time being, unforeseen: Apart from the complete social integration of the diasporic national groups in their new homelands (no longer host countries), there are also a number of unformulated and contradictory factors that cannot be traced with our currently available data.

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