

**“Challenging the modernization – secularization dogma:
The identity cards crisis in the 90’s and the Church’s ‘conservative renovation’”.**

It is reasonable to question oneself where would social studies on the Greek Church have stood today, if the “religion turn” of the nineties had not occurred. Prior to the post-89 paradigmatic (in Thomas Kuhn’s understanding of the notion)¹ turmoil, studies about the Greek Orthodox Church were scarce. Quite ironically, we owe to S. Huntington, who in his famous article about “The Clash of civilizations” relegated Greece “on the other side of the wall” - because of its orthodox background - the stimulus given to the field. At the same time the shock of this statement structured the debate. Authors usually challenge Huntington’s claim concerning Greece, or his general argument, but feel obliged (?) to abide to the criteria and the scientific categories used in relation to “culture” and political modernization. Therefore, the dominant use of the “traditional” dualistic models such as “Tradition versus Modernity” or “Orthodoxy versus Europe” have impoverished the debate, the main reason for this being the aforementioned lack of substantial socio-historical research concerning the Church of Greece. To paraphrase Nietzsche’s remark, we can say that part of the problem with the development of generalizing scientific literature is that talking about Orthodoxy in general is far more “economical”, although considerably less accurate, than examining what is being orthodox, who is orthodox, and what does this imply if it does, about political action.²

We do definitely have to account that the current interest concerning the Church, measured in terms of articles and books, is inversely proportional to the number of works produced about the functioning of the Church, its history since 1833, its agents and its internal and external power equilibrium.³ Most authors base their analyses on the treatment of the Church’s discourses as information-sources according to a prefabricated schema which has become a “*weltanschauung*” of greek-relevant social theory: modernization. Even when an author recognizes the limits of these analyses in terms of “identities”, “cultural dualisms”, “traditionalist attitudes”⁴ etc. it becomes

¹ “ they implicitly define problems and legitimate methods of research for future generations of scientists ”. 2 characteristics : remarkable accomplishments attracting a group of researchers from competing scientific activities ; and sufficiently vast perspectives furnishing to this group all kinds of problems to resolve. ” cf. Thomas Kuhn, *La structure des révolutions scientifiques*, Paris, Champs, 1983 (1962), introduction.

² Cf. Michel Dobry’s critic – following Bourdeu’s scheme - of the “ behaviouralist ” school’s fixist and mechanical use of expressions such as “ the political attitudes of the catholic ” or in our case the “ orthodox ”. *Sociologie des crises politiques*, Paris, Presses de la FNSP, 1986, pp. 241-243.

³ Charles Frazee’s book on the History of the Greek Church 1821-1852 is the only work mentioned in bibliographies more than thirty years after its apparition. This contrasts amazingly with the development of historical and sociological works concerning the churches and their agents in other countries.

⁴ E. Papataxiarchis’ essay “La valeur du ménage: classes sociales, stratégies matrimoniales et lois ecclésiastiques à Lesbos au XIXe siècle” pp. 109-142, in: S. Woolf (ed.), *Espaces et familles dans l’Europe du Sud à l’Âge moderne* is a good example of how the Church can have a strategic interest in fighting a tradition cherished by social actors and thus contribute to the appearance of a “ modernity ”, while holding a discourse proclaiming the attachment to tradition and refusing innovation.

difficult to furnish a convincing answer regarding the apparent “contradictions” in the Church’s discourse and acts other than reducing everything to complete post modernist subjectivity.⁵

We would like to suggest a triple methodological shift in dealing with an ecclesiastical institution. In this we are extending E. Troeltsch’s constructive criticism of Weber’s “protestantism” thesis,⁶ as well as R. Koselleck’s efforts to combine social history with the conceptual history apparatus.⁷ Therefore, we propose that discourse analysis need not consider them either as automatically informative⁸ or as performative,⁹ but rather as responses to specific social demands. Furthermore, in these discourses concepts are constantly used and reused while being resemantized in the *longue durée*. And finally in order to understand this process, a shift from discourse analysis to that of practice has to be implemented.

The identity card “crisis” of the 90’s is a good testing ground for this methodological hypothesis. Admittedly, during the 1993-2000 period Church-State relations in Greece go through their greatest phase of turbulence since the proclamation of the Autocephalous in 1833. This turbulence definitely does crystallize in the question of the mention of confessional status in the identity cards. Nevertheless, it is the latent project of constitutional reform diminishing the role of the Church, which seems, as always, to be the apple of discord. Three methodological “illusions” are usually present –isolated or combined- in numerous analyses:

A/ the “etiological illusion” which observes the resurgence of the latent opposition “Orthodoxy-Enlightenment”, not to mention the Byzantium/Occident one. The modernizing history of modernity which mixes up sociological object and social conquest even identifies periods when either the first or second aspect of the antithesis prevails.¹⁰ Therefore, for example the orthodox-nationalist dictatorship of Metaxas becomes a disruption in Greek history with the liberal “modernizers” of the 2nd Republic.¹¹ According to the most renowned law historian of the period, religious minorities’ harassing focalizes with the Metaxas legislation on proselytism.¹² In fact, a critical approach of the period reveals the development and continuity of religious strife on the aftermath of WWI (i.e. 1922 for Greece) and the progressive legislative implication of the Greek 2nd

⁵ For example, Stavrakakis’ critical account of the Diamandouros & Mouzelis thesis concerning cultural dualism, stresses the importance of the apparent incapacity of this theoretical apparatus in explaining what may appear as incoherences within the Church’s actions and discourse, but finally gives up explaining them by accepting to just present their existence. He cannot disentangle his analysis from the “populist discourse” doxa although he does in numerous occasions sense the *veritable* sociological importance and context of Christodoulos’ discourse. *Religion and populism : Reflections on the “ politicized ” discourse of the Greek Church*, LSE paper, 2002, (cf. footnote N° 31).

⁶ E. Troeltsch, *Protestantisme et modernité*, Paris, Gallimard, 1991 (1909-1913), pp. 24-27.

⁷ R. Koselleck, *Le futur passé: Contribution à la sémantique des temps historiques*, Paris, EHESS, 1990 (1979), pp. 19-36 & 99-118.

⁸ N. Chomsky states that “it would be wrong to believe that the discourse’s primary function is to inform.”

⁹ E. Benveniste, *Problèmes de linguistique générale*, Paris, Gallimard, 1966.

¹⁰ Cf. N. Diamandouros, *Cultural dualism and political modernization in post authoritarian Greece*, Athens, Alexandria, 2000.

¹¹ Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 63.

¹² This has been the nature of Alivizatos argumentation in the “identity card” debate. He puts the emphasis on the Metaxas case. Alivizatos, *Uncertain modernization*, Athens, Polis 2001, pp. 287-324. Nevertheless, the author’s major work, *Political institutions in crisis 1922-1974*, Athens, themelio, 1995 (1979), pp. 339-374 gives us a far more interesting, although incompletely problematized insight about the continuity between republic and dictatorship.

Republic in favor of the Greek Church in order to ensure national cohesion. For some minorities, (i.e. the Salonica Jews), it is even flagrant that the Metaxas' dictatorship is seen as a positive development saving them from the "homogenization-modernization" campaign of the Liberal republicans.¹³

B/ the "heroic illusion" usually follows not far away since this archetypal opposition is supposedly exacerbated - in what becomes a "crisis" - by the "charismatic" aspects of the leaders of the two poles. On one hand Prime minister C. Simitis, head of the "modernizers" and on the other Archbishop Christodoulos, expressing the voice of the "populists" or of an "underdog culture". Let us suggest here that the identity card question was latent since the eighties, and the first critical debate took place in 1993, in a period when questions of succession were opened within the Church and the PASOK. The apparent crisis between two charismas couldn't it also be perceived as the successful resolution of a long lasting social debate while consolidating the authority of new leaders within their respective institutions?

C/ finally the "natural history" illusion which is the most treacherous given its inclination towards comparisons. In this version, secularization, which is characterized in the beginning by a decline of religiosity, slowly moves to a second phase when new *élites*, new institutions, new concepts (which are secularized versions of the preceding period's ones)¹⁴ try to substitute themselves to the old ones. This usually provokes crises and the emergence of counter-secular movements. In the older version of the model, these crises were overcome and secularization triumphed. In the new arborescent version of the model¹⁵, historical contingency does allow for counter-secular movements to develop and even triumph over the secularization *partisans*.

However, these approaches cannot convincingly account at the same time for three recent and correlated phenomena in the Greek Church:

- a/ the dazzling improvement of the relations with the Vatican, especially since the Pope's visit in 2001;
- b/ the rapid integration of the Church in the europeanization process; and
- c/ its increasing role in administrating Greek society thanks to a more dense and "modernized" charity-network.

Secularization or counter-secularization? And what if the secularization theory was finally convenient to the Christian churches since it continues to claim their pertinence in spite of their inability to expand and control each and every individual,¹⁶ thus keeping them in life?¹⁷ Beyond the simple descriptive and quantitative

¹³ See Bernard Pierron, *Juifs et chrétiens à la Grèce moderne*, Paris, Harmattan, 1996, pp. 173-198 & 207-218.

¹⁴ One has to keep in mind C. Schmitt's famous apophthegm from his Political Theology concerning "all important concepts of the modern theory of State are secularized theological concepts".

¹⁵ Peter Berger's change of view is the most characteristic of this new version of the model.

¹⁶ I draw this inspiration from the Blumenberg-Schmitt debate. See especially H. Blumenberg, *La Légitimité des Temps Modernes*, Paris, Gallimard, 1999 (1966-1988). Blumenberg argues that while the Antiquity's religious-philosophical crisis which allowed for Christianity to take over as a new paradigm ended with the latter refusing any legitimacy to the former, this is not the case with the legitimacy of Modernity which "springs from" Christianity. Therefore this "spring" justifies, as the recently adopted preamble of the future European Constitution states, the "religious heritage of Europe and its continuing pertinence".

¹⁷ The French catholic Church was stronger as an institution after the French Revolution and the French 3rd republic crisis than before. The fact that less people attended the Church is not a proof of a decline. Ecclesiastical personnel was far more numerous, better trained, more loyal and thus more politically effective concerning

definition of the secularization as a decrease of the Church's influence in a disenchanted world,¹⁸ is it possible to discover a qualitative shift in the Church's role? Let us examine what the situation of the Church of Greece during the 1993-2001 period can suggest in this direction.

A/ 1993 : annus horribilis?

When Caramanlis signed the Greek adhesion to the EEC in 1979, he saluted the other European delegations by announcing that he was proud that “at last the belonging of Greece to Europe, with which it shared a classical Greek and Christian heritage, was realized.” Nobody made any objections at the time. The statement would have probably raised no objections today either, as the European Constitution project witnesses. Nevertheless this was not the case ten years ago.

It is probably unnecessary to recall the chaotic situation of Greek-EU relations in that period: the Macedonian question, the Bosnia war, quasi-bankruptcy and financial control of Greece by the EU etc. That year probably reveals openly the intrinsic antiphases of the Greek national ideologeme: belonging to Europe via the common Greek-Christian heritage. At the same time, the Church of Greece has its own priorities for reviving a reactualization of its relations with the Greek state and it would be simplistic to believe that it is just a plain case of “orthodox nationalism” whatever this *étiquette* may contain.

A/ The opening of the borders initiates massive waves of immigration from Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. Now, whenever these refugees are orthodox, they are usually considered as more church-goers than native Greeks. This can be seen as a positive aspect if we consider that Church attendance is lagging at the time. A statistic concerning “Sunday schools” can illustrate this point:

Fig. 1 Sunday school statistics of the CoG (1980-1990)

	1980	1990
Professors	5 346	4 344 (-18,74%)
Students	335 483	255 408 (-23,86%)

Source: Diptycha of the Church of Greece 1980-2000.

However, most of the immigrants arriving originate from regions of Old-calendar abiding Orthodox churches. Therefore, this can constitute a potential source of conflict. The Old-calendarists, who are not recognized by the Greek state as a separate cult, and who have been a persecuted minority can gain in influence thanks to this evolution. Moreover, the Old-calendarists are a very active and anti-occidental minority within the Church. Certain Metropolitans can be pushed to adopt a more intransigent stance in the Synod.

specific demands at the end of the 19th century than before 1789. As G. Simmel has theoretically put it, conflict can induce sociologically positive results for both conflict-partaking parties. G. Simmel, *Le conflit*, Paris, Circé, 1995 (1908), pp. 19-23 & 37.

¹⁸ The descriptive aspect of secularization is not in question. It is its “philosophy of history” which is problematic.

B/ Mgr. Seraphim's –archbishop of Athens- succession is in stake starting that year. Given his age and his failing health state, it becomes clear that he will be replaced within the near future. Therefore, the pretenders can start preparing the ground for the final sprint. Mgr. Christodoulos, at the time Metropolitan of Dimitriada, is the main participant in most debates concerning, but even non concerning, Church-related issues in the press. His contradictors usually account for this omni-presence without deducing any sociological insight from it.¹⁹ Nevertheless, it is quite impressive to note that Mgr Christodoulos makes regular apparitions as an editorialist in such a well-known newspaper as the Sunday Vima thus earning a definite degree of notoriety. Should we be surprised that Christodoulos' appears as one of the most popular figures in Greece upon his election? Should we doubt that this popularity was at least partly and structurally based upon the conflicting debates in which he took part? If these debates had not occurred, how many Greeks would have known him prior to his election? And isn't this popularity a competitive advantage within the Synod on the eve of the election of a new Archbishop who will have to deal with one of the primary causes of worry: the public's indifference to the Church?

We have no trouble suggesting that it is. The Church's history can give us plenty of examples which can corroborate this thesis as well as the mental framework which conditions the importance of the editorial activity. In a research currently undertaken concerning the Greek Church's functioning as an institution at the end of the 19th and early 20th century we have come across the following findings. Participation in various paraecclesiastical or church reviews during this period is a definite asset for clerics in boosting their career (ex. T. Anastassiou, Valanidiotis, Synodinos). The clerics acquire a network of supporters, while becoming familiar to numerous readers, albeit the most influential ones, the members of the clergy and of the paraecclesiastical organizations. Nevertheless, this development is all but natural. It draws its legitimacy from the necessary respect of the tradition of preaching within the Church. However, this tradition is absent within the Church of Greece in the mid-1850's as numerous considerate authors notice.²⁰ Therefore it has to be "invented", or rather reinvented. But for an invention to be accepted as legitimate within the Church, it has to deny its innovative aspect. Therefore, and in the purest "tradition" of the Greek church, it is presented as a continuation of the traditions of the patristic period. Most accounts concerning preaching directly refer to the 3 Cappadocians, and even better, the Cappadocians' oraisons serve as the exempla to follow.

Thus, preaching, the editorial activity being a modern version of it, becomes not only legitimate but also necessary from a religious point of view. Especially when a new and competing pole of allegiance comes about given the international conjuncture.

C/ The Greek Church's relation with the Patriarchate of Constantinople is in fact a new source of anxiety for the hierarchy. The end of the Cold war signifies a regain of importance for the Patriarchate. It reinitiates a policy of

¹⁹ Alivizatos, *Incertain...*, *loc. cit.* The author often cites this "coincidence" without being astonished by the fact that Christodoulos was almost acting as unofficial spokesman of the Church on all important issues from 1993 all the way up to his election as Archbishop in 1998.

²⁰ A. Makrakis, the most influential figure for the development of the Greek Church in the 19th and 20th centuries as well as the authors of the review *Anaplastis* which is the first large scale association and review with a religious interest in the Greek kingdom. Preaching is during that period mostly an activity of the marginal competitors of the Church. P Brown's works show well how Christian churches once solidly established,

rapprochement with countries, which had been under its zone of influence. This new situation often creates a *port-à-faux* with the Church of Greece especially regarding Albania, but also the Dodecanese and the “New Lands” whose canonic status is subject to controversy. As long as the majority of orthodox countries remained under socialist rule, the Patriarchate’s aura was limited. The center of gravity of Greek orthodoxy was located in Greece, which was the only clear support of the Patriarchate. Following the 1989 upheaval, this situation changes. Once again this antagonism is not a novelty.

A new leader to find, in a new conjuncture and within a new social audience. This is a period of potential internal strife and disunion, the Church’s worse enemy. Especially given the fact that the dynamics of disunion are already present. A group of hieronimist²¹ ex-bishops has filed a complaint against the GOC with the Greek supreme administrative court: the Council of State. The plaintiffs demand the recovery of their metropolitan sees claiming the illegality of their deposition by the Archbishop Seraphim Tikkas during the last phase of the dictatorship. The plenum of the Council of State is supposed to render a decision during the summer of 1993. Given this interference of secular Justice in Church affairs, the Synod needs to acquire the support of the legislator in order to preserve itself from further intrusions of this type. Contrary to the *locus communis* assertion, the Church is aware of the complications which may arise given its legal status within the Greek State. The Hieronymist case is a good demonstration of the potential consequences of non-separation. Especially if we consider the fact that the legislator is solicited by other actors (external and internal) to abolish the GOC’s monopolistic status.

As Bourdieu has put it, modern Churches function in a way like enterprises.²² An enterprise which denies itself but still an enterprise. An enterprise with slowly falling regular subscribers rate, and a steadily growing occasional client rate whose fidelity depends only upon the Church’s monopolistic status. Furthermore, the personnel is plethoric but usually not so well-trained, gradually attracted by a centrifugal doubt, and quite ill-prepared for dealing with the *concurrency*. The end of the protectionist period of the Greek state and the arrival of an era of merchandising and free competition in the symbolic goods market has been the GOC’s nightmare ever since the foundation of the Greek state. Especially so during the periods when the “national market” becomes elastic (when Greek society expands or is deeply modified, the best example being the 1912-1930 period). This competition could be fatal given the fact that the competitors are better equipped and used in this game. Weber stated that a Church is an organization claiming the monopoly of the goods of salvation. The GOC could agree with this statement under one condition: the addition of “within a specific territory.” For the GOC, the current constitutional system had and has to last, because it guarantees to the Church a monopolistic status which provides her with a *clientèle* which could be tempted by the competitors. Concomitantly, this allows the Church the time necessary to invest society and become competitive. **By a curious inversion of ends and means, what appears to be a battle about the orthodox unity of the Greeks in the case of the “identity**

regulated the clerics’ activity and disciplinarized it in order to avoid ecstatic innovations thus rendering the priests unarmed and incapable of countering the newcomers, i.e. the prophet’s word

²¹ Supporters of Hieronymous, Metropolitan of Athens during the Papadopoulos period of the dictatorship, who was replaced by Seraphim during Ioannidis’ dictatorship and was in fine maintained in his function by Caramanlis after the restoration of democracy in 1974.

²² Bourdieu, *Raisons pratiques*, Paris, Seuil, p. 215-218.

cards”, is in fact a battle about the positions which allow the Church to maintain its *clientèle* and thus exercise its influence upon the orthodox unity of the Greeks.

Meanwhile the Church does understand the importance of the fundamental changes of the legal framework, taking place within the European Union. The Church’s aggressive discourse towards Europeans in a period when Greece is condemned in multiple occasions concerning the rights of religious minorities, and when Orthodoxy is becoming the regular object of mockery and assaults, does disappear when the Orthodox Churches manages to obtain a status of recognition within the Community. In fact, the EU-Orthodox dialog starts in 1996 and, *quelle surprise!*, during the 2nd dialog of 1997 the Greek Church is represented by the - at the time - Metropolitan Christodoulos. The same Metropolitan, who upon his election as an Archbishop, opens, at last, an office of representation of the GOC in Brussels, almost 20 years after the adhesion act.

Therefore, once the GOC ensured of the probable constitutional status quo and of the benevolent collaboration of the EU, it abandons the identity cards affaire. The end of that affaire in 2000 compared to the 1993 one reminds us of Marx’s paraphrase of Hegel: “world-historical events occur twice.... The second time as farces.”

As W. Reinhardt has suggested concerning the role of nepotism in the 17th papal state of affairs, “it would be naïve to believe that it disappeared because of the attacks of a progressive élite. It disappeared because its latent function within the papal system – i.e. allowing the pope to act as a decision-maker while protecting him from the strife of roman family fractions – became obsolete. The institution disappeared, the practice continued.”²³

In our case, isn’t it naïf to believe that the identity cards affair which lasts since 1993, which mobilizes the Church apparatus – especially in the petition process, which involves the archbishop’s prestige, just evaporates only because the Greek President declares it so? The identity cards discourse of the Church doesn’t it fulfill a latent function within the Church? Is it possible that the acceptable resolution of other issues renders this “crisis” useless? Let us thus examine the other points of contact between the State and the Church during this period.

Putting the pressure on the Greek government regarding the possible liberalization of the symbolic goods’ market, lobbying and fund-raising within the EU have been the main axes of the GOC’s action during our period. The discourse has often been very aggressive but this should not surprise those who keep in mind the aforementioned tensions within the Church. The Church’s efforts of renovation and innovation could be fruitful and accepted by the most hostile elements of the institution only if they appear as directly attached to tradition as possible.²⁴ It is no secret that an ecclesiastic reformer’s nightmare consists in getting accused of being a heretic. Christodoulos’ aggressive discourse is the institutional symmetrical counterweight to his renovation of the Church. The fact that he gets slapped by some orthodox zealot concerning the Pope’s visit to Athens should not surprise us, if we keep in mind how Archbishop Chrysostomos was attacked in 1924 by a fanatic barber who

²³ Cf. R. Descimon’s introduction, p. 6 to W. Reinhardt, *Papauté, confessions, modernité*, Paris, EHESS, 1998, and particularly “Nepotisme”, p. 68-98, (1975).

²⁴ As Halbwachs has noted in *Les cadres sociaux de la mémoire*, it is an error to believe that people accept, and can accept, easily innovations, since they have not experimented the results of this innovation. Therefore, a

wanted to shave him in front of the Metropolitan temple in order to protest against the instauration of the new revised Calendar. Although Chrysostomos's discourses regarding the Uniates were not particularly tender, this did not avoid him of being called a "papist".

But why does then a renovating party have to side or tolerate the conservative elements of the Church? A provocative answer would be: "Blame it on the secularization". In fact, a detailed analysis of the Church's network and the exact positions and dispositions of the Church's agents and organizations would be necessary, in order to respond precisely to this question. But if we proceed by analogy, we can observe what happened when the COG underwent its most serious transformation in the 1920's. Under the combined pressure of the social chaos of the post-war era, of the diminishing number of faithful, and of the reformist camp, the GOC proceeded to the development of a social network capable of ensuring the Church with a new legitimacy. This network was entrusted not to clerics but to laymen, sole capable of a new spirit within the Church. But their legitimacy within the Church was fragile. Moreover, they had to oppose similar efforts of "proselytism" by other social groups (i.e. political parties, missionaries, voluntary associations etc.). Therefore, those who succeeded were those who developed a specifically morally conservative discourse which discredited opponents outside the Church while guaranteeing for themselves tolerance on behalf of the Church's original legitimacy possessors, i.e. the clerics.

Undoubtedly, the Greek Church is treated as an ideological monolith by analyses merely based on what is perceived as an archaic discourse. Instead, a lot could be earned through the comprehensive analysis of its relation to the state as one of antagonistic interdependence, linked to its proper internal equilibrium of tensions, as M. Bax,²⁵ inspired by N. Elias has put it. The Greek State has indeed mobilized, in several occasions, the "orthodox" resource in order to ensure its legitimacy. Simultaneously, the Greek secular clergy has depended upon the State in order to install a centralized and hierarchical organization of the Church. Notwithstanding this cooperation, antagonism may arise whenever the delimitation of their respective social intervention fields is at stake. Especially, given the growing importance of social intervention for the Church. Let us thus dress a rapid and non-exhaustive overview of this case during our period.

B/ The Welfare Church

As we saw the European integration has been perceived as a threat for the Church's monopolistic status. Thus, its agents are obliged to react and develop strategies allowing them to remain "competitive" in a "free" religious market.

We proceed to the examination of a few aspects of this activity. The Greek Church has not always being very active on the social level in modern times. In fact, the Church's charity action clearly gets moving only after WW I. Its development is considerable during the interwar period.

successful innovation has to appear as little innovative as possible. A Church is the archetype of an institution where this theorem is regularly verified.

²⁵ Mart Bax, "Marian apparitions in Medjugorje: Rivalling religious regimes and state-formation in Yugoslavia", pp. 29-55, in: Eric Wolf (ed.), *Religious regimes and State-Formation*, Albany, SUNY press, 1991.

We have to acknowledge that a new phase of development has started during the period examined. It is interesting to note in the first place that while Mgr Christodoulos was getting elected and the Church-State relations seemed not to be at their best, law 2646/1998 was promulgated. Article 8 of the law confirmed that the Church was a *de jure* member of the Greek Council of Social Welfare, thus confirming all previous legislation which acknowledged the Church's role in this field. At the same time, while the Church was abandoning the guerilla concerning the identity cards, law n° 2873 of the 28/12/2000 increased the tax-free limit of donations to the Church from circa 300 euros to circa 3000 euros. These are not pure coincidences. All over Europe, we can acknowledge the increasing involvement of religious organizations in the development of their charity and welfare networks while the public welfare systems are deconstructed and progressively privatized.

One can visit the Church's website in order to understand not only the new impetus given to charity work and volunteer movements but also the theoretical and political implications of this activity regarding the future of the national state. Blumenberg has presented how Patristic Christianity adopted certain premisses of Greek philosophy by de-legitimizing the philosophy's claim to autonomous development.²⁶ In a similar movement the Greek Church adopts all the modernizing postulates regarding Civil society, decentralization and the privatization of the welfare sector, in proclaiming the Christian origin of the tradition of voluntary organizations and philanthropy. Its claim is not always historically precise but after all, isn't it exact that the European jargon's most pertinent concept is a direct loan from Catholic social theory?

Social action within a new institutional equilibrium where the Welfare state comes under attack in the name of "subsidiarity", thus becomes the Church's new *violon d'Ingres*. New but of course "traditional". This turn authorizes specific developments within the Church:

- the development of a philanthropic and redistributive network facilitates the central authority's (i.e. the Synod) intervention in the affairs of local actors. A crucial point, if we consider that the GOC has always been a very loose federal structure with a lack of a particularly efficient centralized bureaucracy;
- the development of such a network allows the Church to dispose a bureaucracy and a network which is dependent upon her for its survival. Therefore, there exists a network which has a strategic interest in defending the Church.

We will illustrate these two points by two examples taken from recent developments. In our first case, we will consider the Synod's decision to implement a "family planning" policy in Thrace since Christodoulos' arrival in power at 1998. An allocation of currently 120 euros per month has been allocated to orthodox families having a third child. Such a redistributive policy on a regular basis breaks away from the Church's traditional functioning. Ordinary charity work is normally assumed by each Metropolitan on an independent local level. Extra-ordinary appeals to a regional or national solidarity effort have, undoubtedly, always been possible in case of an earthquake or some disaster but remain a specifically limited event.

²⁶ The philosophers having taken their knowledge from Moses., thus not having invented a thing. Cf. Blumenberg, *op. cit.* pp. 11-120.

On the contrary the allocation of a family subsidy on a regular basis requests funding from sources outside the Thracian metropolitans' jurisdiction. The only institution, which can intervene beyond a metropolitan's jurisdiction, is the Synod of the COG. Therefore, it is not surprising that five years after launching the program, the Synod delivers the Encyclical n° 2768 of april 4th 2003. Considering that the program has been a "success", and that this "success" justifies the pursuit of the program, the Synod tackles the financial question. The growing "success" means an increasing financial burden and thus the need for new resources. Therefore the Synod decides to "tax" under specific conditions three kinds of income-sources:

- the General Poor Funds of each and every Metropolitan See;
- the Monasteries and the pilgrimage holy foundations;
- the wealthiest parishes of each Metropolitan See.

The way this third income-source is organized is exemplary. The Synod defines that the 10 wealthiest parishes (the "central" ones as it mentions) of the Sees of Athens and Thessaloniki (20 in total) as well as 10 more parishes of the Attica See will participate in this fundraising. Moreover, each medium-sized Metropolitan See "furnishes" 3 parishes, and small-sized ones participate with one parish. The procedure allows for the Synod to intervene directly in the financial aspects of intermediary level and local level instances and reinforces its role as a centralization agency within the Church. In the meantime, the Metropolitan's role in the hierarchical pyramid of the Church is once again reinstated as has been regularly the case since the Church decided to become an administrator of society in the 1920's.

Becoming an administrator of society requests implementing programs and recruiting a personnel. But sometimes the recruitment of the personnel may be even fundamental. We proceed to examine the importance of summer camps for the GOC, one of the oldest activities:

Fig. 2 Summer camp statistics in Greece (1992)

	Camps	Participants	Budget
Total	79	86992	8,751 (Millions drs)
State	28 (35%)	12051 (14%)	844 M. (9.6%)
Church	34 (43%)	13600 (15.6%)	1,800 M. (20,5%)

Source: Diptycha of the Church of Greece 1980-2000.

Now authors who cite these numbers usually content themselves by glossing on the importance of the Church in terms of volume.²⁷ On the contrary what we would like to single out is the disproportion of volumes in terms of budget and installations. The GOC, as well as the Greek state, have numerous camps for relatively few and

²⁷ It is notably th case of the works presented by G. Dellas of the U. of Athens in the Church's website, www.ecclesia.gr regarding welfare.

approximately equal number of participants. But while the Greek state's budget is very limited, the GOC's budget is the double! Does the number of camps (43% of the total for 15.6% of the participants) explain this? It is probable. The inflationist tendency in terms of camps could be explained by the fact that law 1700/1987 regarding the Church's domain specified that all Ecclesiastical lands used for its philanthropic activity were not subject to a potential nationalization. And this tendency is not upset, since in 2001, the GOC opened 67 summer camps.²⁸ More camps need more personnel and therefore more expenses, thus canalizing the apparition of a discourse requesting more financial support for the Church as well from individuals as from public authorities. This discourse which cannot solely be auto-legitimized by a reference to its financial needs, has thus to express itself in terms of a "real" social demand. The need for social cohesion within a society under tension. But this need is explained in terms of a religious framework which is part of the Church's "repertory"²⁹ of discourses: social distress is a consequence of man's éloignement from God.

The apparent oxymore in this case is that the necessity for a development of the Church is directly proportionate to man's estrangement from God, i.e to man's less interest for the Church. Therefore, the decrease of Church-influx may as well be collateral to an augmentation of Church personnel, better trained and more active. Let us reconsider the Sunday school statistics and the way this may work:

Fig. 3 Sunday school statistics of the CoG (1980-2000)

	1980	1990	2000
Professors	5346	4344 (-18,7%)	3942 (-9,3%)
Students	335 483	255 408 (-23,8%)	198 590 (-22,2%)

Source: Diptycha of the Church of Greece 1980-2000.

Now, we observe that although the steady declining trend in student influx has not been inverted, on the contrary, the number of professors is not decreasing at the same rate anymore. From a 1/60 professor/student ratio in 1980 we have arrived to a 1/50 ratio in 2000.

Pursuing this angle, we join H. Blumenberg's criticism of the quantitativist illusion of the secularization paradigm. Less faithful, but more church-personnel and church activities just as social scientists have observed for many Christian churches in the 19th and 20th centuries. The identity card "crisis" indicates a shift of strategy and a new drive in this direction. Can we seriously talk about a crisis and a "defeat" when we consider the Encyclical 224 of February 11th 2002 about the welfare activities that the Church proposes to develop with the agreement of the Greek state and financed by the 3rd Community Support program:

Fig. CoG subsidiary welfare propositions for EU financial support (2000-2006)

	Quantity	Cost per unit	Total Cost

²⁸ *Martyria tis agapis*, Athens, Apostoliki Diakonia, 2002.

²⁹ In Mikhail Bakhtine's terms. *L'œuvre de François Rabelais et la culture populaire au moyen âge et sous la renaissance*, Paris, Gallimard, 1970.

Child care units	40	132 000 €	5 280 000 €
Open Centers for treatment of the disabled	6	734 000 €	4 404 000 €
Elder citizens' Tele-alarm networks	2	500 000 €	1 000 000 €
Network of preventive medical and psychological action for the youth	40	100 000 €	4 000 000 €
Integrated Complete Social security centers	4	1 500 000 €	6 000 000 €
Renovation of Geriatric institution	20	800 000 €	16 000 000 €
Psychiatric & special needs people's units renovation	8	800 000 €	6 400 000 €
Pilot Childhood and Women abuse centers	2	2 900 000	5 800 000 €
Total			48 884 000 €

Given the fact that these propositions are not exhaustive, they are nevertheless substantial. The 3rd Community support program (2000-2006) is supposed to attribute 385 millions euros (1,7 of the total package) for health and welfare measures.³⁰ The GOC's part would be almost 13% of this package, notwithstanding the financial support to other church projects.

The development of the Church's network, in compliance with current theories about the assumption of welfare policies by "private" actors, is not just supposed to strengthen the ties of the "flock" to the Church, but also contributes to strengthening the ties of the Church and the Church personnel: More than 60% of Church welfare institutions are managed by clergymen. 53% of the managers have a theology degree.³¹ All this personnel is definitely more eager to support the Church in its battles as Bourdieu has showed about the french catholic church.³² However this personnel is also more inclined to adopting an aggressive attitude towards other social competitors in a "free market" as the Uniate/orthodox school battle of the 1920's has showed.

Henceforth, the Church stresses the importance of the effective and more contributing action of a substantive leading minority, rather than the passive allegiance of the whole. But at the same time it becomes dependent of the structural tendency of this minority to adopt aggressive strategies and a religious conservative discourse in a free competition environment. These are the characteristics of a conservative renovation.

³⁰ EU figures.

³¹ *Martyria tis Agapis, op. cit.*, pp. 320-321.

³² Bourdieu, *loc. cit.*

The Greek Interpretations of Agrarian Transformation: developmentalism, populism and institutionalism

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(Abstract proposal for the 1st LSE Ph.D. Symposium on Modern Greece: “Current Social Science Research on Greece”)

This paper discusses the Greek interpretations of agrarian change in the post-war period. Whenever these are not theoretical, then it presents us with a fairly empirical account highlighting some of the questions that a conventional chronological account may pose which are examined in greater depth. More specifically, qualitative research material collected in rural Thessaly in 1997 (60 interviews) alongside archival work (minutes of the communal councils) are used to engage more the academic community in an in-depth investigation of agrarian transformation in post-war Greece and less in a demonstration of the ‘community vs. capitalism’ dualism. In other words, the national state is not the self-evident unit of analysis here as well as anthropocentrism is not the purpose *per se*, whilst the more recent cultural turn and territorial legacy of the integrated approaches are thoroughly examined. The anti-statism of an almighty neo-liberalism has been a profound influence on recent explorations of Greek rural modernisation with a growing emphasis on ethnicity, agricultural system and gender.

The case study under investigation derives its findings from two rural communities which resemble each other markedly in their economic structure and activity, their natural resources, the peripherality of their location and their demographic conditions. The only difference is in their cultural characteristics and their respective capacity for innovation and adaptation as they draw their origins from different ethnic groups. The case study scrutinises their relationships between cultural identities and socio-economic development with the aim to operate as a stepping stone towards an effective comparative ethnography of rural change, which attempts to cancel the binary distinction between macro and micro-analysis. The thematic priorities have determined the choice of research communities. The comparative ethnography of rural change is anchored in empirical research, whilst it employs actor-network methods in a comprehensive case study framework by ways of addressing the communal resistance/capitalist homogenisation dilemma. It puts in practice the obvious necessity of an interdisciplinary method in order to understand networks of action and patterns of rural change in post-war Greece (or elsewhere) without resorting to postmodernism and attributing a singular role either to the political economy perspective or the a-historical totality of community studies. It attempts to explain the boundaries and jigsaw pieces of developmentalist, populist and institutionalist arguments, whilst avoiding eclecticism.

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**Paper for the 1st PhD Symposium on Modern Greece at the London School of
Economics, Hellenic Observatory**

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Title of the paper:

**Discourses, Social Representations and Political Decisions about Cremation in
Greece: Analysis of a Press Data Corpus**

Key-Words :

Social Representations of cremation, discursive strategies, political decision, identity
threat, press analysis

Abstract

Through a press data corpus, relevant to the practice of cremation, we attempted to examine the evolution and the dynamics of the following topics: the discursive strategies used by the different agents involved and the stages in the political decision, which appeared in the debate about the institutionalization of this practice in Greece.

Cremation is characterized by its novelty in the Greek context. It is, at present, forbidden in Greece. However, its institutionalization seems to be necessary given the problems caused in a practical level by the traditional way, i.e. burial, of treating the dead bodies. Thus, it turns out to be the focus of a debate between citizens, the state, and the church.

The theoretical framework, adopted for this research, is that of social representations and their dynamics (Moscovici, 1984; Jodelet, 1989; Abric, 1994); it belongs to the field of social psychology. This framework allows us to study and to account for matters relating to social change, cultural dynamics and identity issues, emerging from our research. Our research also included the tradition and modernity conflict, which seems to define contemporary Greece (Lipowatz, 1996).

The press data sampling that we studied was conducted using the computer program ALCESTE (Reinert, 1986). Other complementary treatments were also realized through a content analysis approach. We also introduced a temporal variable

in our analysis, which permitted us to carry out some comparative studies on the evolution in the production of the discourses.

The results of this research allowed us to understand the role of the religious authority regarding mentalities and politics, and the specificities of the political decision. At the same time, these results explained the conditions on the production of discourses in relation to the threat of the identity. We also compare these results with those of another study (Dargentas, 2002) to provide a more in depth answer to the identity question.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND METHODOLOGICAL POINTS

We would like to specify that this paper is a part of a larger research on social representations of death in Greece, conducted in the field of social psychology. In this paper we refer to the theory of social representations, in the way that was developed by researchers at the EHESS¹. In this theoretical framework, we are interested in the dynamics of social representations, linked to identity issues (Abric, 1994 ; Jodelet, 1989 ; Farr, 1987). Our aim is to study a social object, that of cremation, presenting an identity threat, and to explore the evolution of the discursive strategies of the actors involved in this issue, and the specificities of the political decision. Let us explain the interest of this object in our research.

The practice of cremation is interesting as it questions traditional rituals and social representations (Déchaux, 1997; Pharos, 1989; Thomas, 1985) existing after death; it is also a source of conflicting positions. In fact, this practice is currently forbidden in Greece; its institutionalisation seems however necessary, partly due to practical reasons. A first press review that we have compiled has shown that cremation lies at the centre of a debate between citizens, the State and the Church, a debate relative to its institutionalisation. Moreover, in a previous paper we compared 3 different ways to talk about cremation; we have shown that cremation is mainly viewed negatively when people talk about its institutionalisation; this is due to issues around religious and to ethnic identity (Dargentas, 2002)².

¹ Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales, Paris. = School of High Studies in Social Sciences.

² Sample of 123 respondents.

This social object's study has a number of theoretical implications in the social representations' theory, which we do not intend to develop here. Rather, this paper's aim is to present the forms of the socio-cultural dynamics around a problematic social object. Furthermore, contextualizing our object in Greece, will serve to emphasize the importance of the orthodox identity in the social objects' elaboration, as well as the ambiguity of Greek identity, torn between novelty and tradition. Among the characteristics defining Greece's national identity, given by Lipowats (1996), we draw attention to "society's modernization failure by internal forces", the "compliance between the State and the Church", the "displacement of internal problems on an international level", the "identity shared between Europe and the East". A number of researchers claim that the orthodox religion and nationalism influence the evolution of Greek identity and mask the Greeks' difficulty to face modernization and cultural adjustment.

The press plays an interesting role in our study as it reflects the existing tendencies in a social environment surrounding an object. It is likely to inform us of the different dynamics around cremation: for example, the actors intervening in the debate and their positions; the evolution of their discourses and positions over time. In this manner, the press constitutes a sort of mirror of the representations conveyed in the public sphere (Bourdieu, 1966 ; Grawitz, 1996).

Our corpus spans 13 years and consists of 99 articles, published between 1987 and 2000. They have been collated using a search where the key-word was "cremation of the dead"³. Cremation appears in the press, due to exterior circumstances: problems in cemeteries, political or associative initiatives about promoting its institutionalization, legal problems related to fetus cremation, religious people's reactions. Apart from these situations, there are no published articles on the issue of cremation. The articles that concern it are written for particular reasons, or during specific periods. This incomplete list of circumstances that provoke the debate on cremation, coincide with different periods of time; this fact is at the origin of our study on discourses dependant on the time factor. We have divided those 99 articles

³ Actually we used 2 different expressions in this search : cremation=αποτέφρωση and "act of burning dead people"=κάυση νεκρών. This second expression is the one that is used more frequently in the press.

into 6 groups, according to their publication date; a date that corresponds to different contents and concerns, depending on external events. This is the way in which the 6 periods are delimited, as well as the external events linked to them:

1st period 31/7/87-11/2/90	-practical problems (heat wave, limited space in cemeteries...) -pro cremation association, court decision concerning its legitimacy -cremation seen as a possible solution
2nd period 23/9/92-13/6/93	-1st communal demand -conflicting views -examining the issue, positive and negative aspects
3rd period 22/3/94-3/12/94	-2nd communal demand -conflicting views, divisions -reactions of the clergy
4th period 1995⁴	-affair of stillborn babies/foetus that were illegally cremated in some hospitals
5th period 11/1/96-6/12/97	-3rd communal demand -conflicting views -examining the issue, positive and negative aspects
6th period 11/11/98-12/3/99	-bill and amendments introduced by politicians -conflicting views -divisions inside the Church, conflict between 2 priests

Besides the time factor that allows us to study the discourses' evolution, our approach involves examining the actors' discourses that intervene in the debate on this practice and on its institutionalisation. The actors involved in the press are the following: representatives of the Orthodox church, representatives of the law, politicians, members of the associations defending cremation, people against or in favour of the practice, and the press itself.

The corpus has been treated according to 2 complementary methods: the computer software ALCESTE⁵⁶ (Reinert, 1986) and the traditional content analysis, each method covering different aspects of our approach.

⁴ This 4th period will not appear in our results, as it consists of a small number of articles and the themes are marginal.

⁵ ALCESTE=Analyse des Lexèmes Co-Occurents dans un ensemble de Segments de Texte.

The theoretical and methodological choices we have made involve an epistemological conception relevant to the discourse. This is considered dynamic in structural, discursive strategies and depends on social agents. Thus, its interpretation relates to the social, temporal and historical factors underlying its production and influencing its evolution (Maingueneau, 1987; Potter, 1987); considering the discourse in its dynamic dimension agrees with the theoretical principle relative to the dynamics of social representations. The treatment of data, in terms of methods used, or variables examined, are found to be in agreement with such a conception of the discourse.

RESULTS

Positions on cremation and specific arguments for each one. Link to the actors

Our analysis enabled us to find out the contents associated with the different attitudes to cremation and to establish a link with the actors. It is a question of seeing the argumentation used when rejecting or defending cremation and seeing the groups of actors involved.

The rejection of cremation. Critics and religious representatives

The rejection of cremation is justified by religious arguments, ethnic identity, Greek tradition, the importance of the burial ceremony for the dead and for the bereaved, negative statements and various arguments concerning obstacles in the institutionalization of this practice.

After establishing a hierarchically descending order in the themes used to justify the rejection of cremation, we find out that these arguments involve:

- 1-the religious institution that is opposed to the practice

⁶ The treatment has been conducted using the version 4.5 of this computer programme, available in the social psychology lab at EHESS.

- 2-religious texts that appear to be against it
- 3-the obstacles (for example, cremation being against financial interests, views opposed to cremation, etc)
- 4-tradition and religious identity
- 5-the importance of burial for the soul of the dead
- 6-Greek identity and tradition
- 7-the Church and its enemies
- 8-the importance of burial for the bereaved
- 9-statements concerning this practice

By examining actors evoking those themes, it is the opponents of the practice (namely: religious representatives, legal representatives, critics) that are concerned; the dominant players are nevertheless the religious representatives, a fact that underlines their active role in the Greek society. Here, the group defending the project, politicians, and the press feature lightly in this discourse of opposition to cremation.

The acceptance of cremation, advocates

Actors who accept the practice of cremation evoke arguments and discourses that derive from religious beliefs, practical problems needing a solution, positive evaluations of the practice, its benefits (for both the dead and the bereaved) and the question of rights and the modernisation of society; other arguments concern a re-assertion of cremation through various situations.

In this positive discourse on cremation, dominant arguments by a descending order concern:

- 1-space problems
- 2-the relativity of religious positions
- 3-the relativity of religious practices
- 4-the freedom to choose
- 5-the democratic and legislative dimension
- 6-problems related to hygiene and pollution

7-some comments on the modernization of society

To a lesser extent, people in the press mention :

8-countries practicing cremation

9-the social demand

10-the importance of cremation for the well-being of the dead

11-some theological problems

12- the importance of cremation for the bereaved

13-assertions concerning other social objects that encourage and enhance the practice of cremation (for example: well known people who followed the practice – Maria Callas – the use of cremation in ancient Greece and donating organs)

14-the cost of burial

15-some positive comments on the practice

Therefore, it seems that this discourse insists on the practical necessity of cremation and responds to the arguments put forward in the opposition's discourse. Its actors defend the compatibility of cremation with the religious belonging and practice, and with a greater respect for individuals, both dead and living, than in burial. This discourse, except for these aspects, seems to give an ideological dimension to the institutionalisation of cremation. Defending this practice involves a variety of themes, compared to the previous attitude.

Amongst the actors of this discourse we find the advocates of the practice (namely: association, people in favour), politicians and the press. Advocates and politicians are concerned by all of those themes to a great extent. As for religious representatives, they hardly feature in this discourse and when they intervene it is in an ambiguous manner: for example, they refer to religious relativity, but at the same time they will insist on the incompatibility of cremation with Orthodox practices. More than a dogmatic problem, it seems to be a question of practices.

Decisional and political aspects

Our analysis has also enabled us to study the conditions of the political decision related to the institutionalisation of cremation, the actors involved in those issues, as well as their temporal evolution. This approach allows us to define the functioning of the political and religious authorities, in relation to the institutionalisation of cremation. We may distinguish 2 attitudes, conservatism and openness. As for the actors, their intervention is carried out for different motives from the 2 previous discourses that we examined, of rejection and of acceptance.

Conservatism

The attitude of “conservatism” involves :

- underlining the optional and non-obligatory character of the practice.
- the fact that the bill should not concern the Orthodox, but only other religions and dogmas,
- the duty to take into account the Church’s position concerning the institutionalisation of the practice, and to endorse it only if the church gives its agreement

Those themes are mainly put forward by politicians and religious representatives. Advocates of the practice are missing in this thematic group. Here, we should note that argument about submitting the political decision to the Church’s position is mainly evoked by politicians. Moreover, the latter are the only ones to affirm that the bill should not concern Orthodox people. These results stress on the dependency between the 2 authorities, political and religious. Actually, those results do not truly involve a pressure imposed by religious institutions, but rather a condition set by some politicians.

Openness

The attitude of openness related to the practice of cremation consists in enlarging the bill to other populations; it also concerns some flexible conditions relevant to the political decision. It consists of following themes:

- the bill should also concern Orthodox people

-to denounce the role of the Church in the political decision ; the State should take its decisions independently of the Church.

-the State should be audacious and take this decision without paying attention to political costs

-the Church should be logical and help the State

-Greek people seem to be undecided, but should adjust to novelty.

Unlike the previous attitude, these themes underline the need for independence between political and religious authorities. They are mainly evoked by advocates of the practice of cremation (namely: associations and individuals in favour) and by politicians. The press is also involved. Moreover, concerning the need for independence between the 2 authorities, the religious representatives are deeply involved, whereas politicians are barely represented. This finding confirms once again the dependency of the political decision on religious institutions.

The evolution in the conditions of the political decision

We found out that the political and decisional attitude is that of openness during the first 2 periods of our corpus. During the 3rd period, it is conservatism that dominates. As for the last 2 temporal periods, they are marked by 2 kinds of political attitude, that of openness and that of conservatism. Therefore, we can see an evolution towards submitting the institutionalization of the practice to some constraints, and at the same time, to a diversification in the debate with the coexistence of both attitudes.

CONCLUSION

We saw through the above findings that discourses in favour and against cremation are associated to different groups of actors without ambiguity. Those discourses seem to be well elaborated and to establish a dialog between them. In the level of political decision, we have pointed out that the main actors that remain reticent about the bill are politicians and religious representatives.

It seems to us that this issue relevant to ethnic identity threat, existing in the debate on cremation, constitutes the main obstacle to its acceptance: this issue is

difficult to be removed from the debate, since it is also relevant to an existing logic in Greece concerning ethnic identity, traditions or religion. As for the conflict between tradition and modernity, we discover that different specific groups of actors are associated to each attitude on cremation, positive and negative, without possible evolution. Moreover, we saw that instead of the religious representatives, it is politicians who claim conservatism in the political decision around cremation. On the one hand, religious institutions seem cultivate identity issues. On the other hand, the political authority remains ambiguous regarding decisions about issues linked to ethnic identity. In a scientific level, the development of this approach is consistent to a demand in the field of social psychology relevant to the cultural dynamics' study (Kashima, 2000).

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Name: Vasiliki Kravva

Title: *Eating Food as a Means of Negotiating our Lives: the case of Thessalonikian Jews*

Abstract

This paper is an analysis of the ways the Jewish people in Thessaloniki, a group of about 1,000 who live in a Greek city of the North with a population of just under 1,000,000, negotiate their lives, create their identities and state their presence. It is argued that in this complex process numerous strategies are involved: constructing and crossing boundaries are the most important among them. Food plays an important role in the creation of “a Jewish community” and the sense of belonging to it. Communal institutions like the school, the Old people’s Home and the synagogue are created and recreated through the participation in common activities such as communal, celebratory meals and feasts. Thus the public domain becomes private and vice versa. The Jews of Thessaloniki use food and food discourses as rhetorics of being and belonging. For them the discourses of “healthy” and “light” food are metaphors of “their” food and their “authentic” Sephardic cuisine. Authenticity is translated as traditionality and as such it is used as synonymous of their “authentic” Sephardic identity. And yet boundaries are often negotiated and crossed since their authentic Sephardic food is often equated with the cuisine of Thessaloniki and Greek cuisine. This stresses that as far as cuisine is concerned the term “authenticity” should be a matter of analysis since there is a constant process of food exchange. Of course the processes described above are not harmonious. Tensions and withdrawals often arise. The interpretation of food discourses depends on age. Thus young people cross boundaries easily and so negotiate to a great extent their palate, their boundaries – that often older Jews impose on them - and their identities. This constant interplay of boundaries and identities is deconstructed along with the management of food and eating as strategies of stressing - or refusing - cultural distinctiveness.

Eating food as a means of negotiating our lives: the case of Thessalonikian Jews

“Well the Jews in Thessaloniki had in the past some kind of power because they were thousands. Nowadays there are only a few families left. But you know we still cook. The only thing we have left is our food...” (interview extract)

Introduction

The woman I interviewed is Jewish and lives in Thessaloniki, the most important port of Northern Greece. She is eighty-five years old and she was born and raised in the city before the Second World War. Actually she has lived in a Jewish Thessaloniki in the sense that before the War in a population of about 200,000 almost 70,000 were Jews. The War meant a severe destruction of Thessalonikian Jewry: less than 2,000 people came back from the concentration camps, a loss of 96% of the city’s Jewish population. Today the Jews of this city in a total of 1,000,000 are just under 1,000. Despite their number they belong to an “organised” community in the sense that they do enjoy participation in common institutions like the primary school, the summer camp, the two synagogues and the old people’s home. They also have a museum and a gathering centre which is the community’s administrative centre but it also functions as a place for meetings, communal meals and celebrations.

What follows is an analysis of the ways food is used by Thessalonikian Jews as a means to state their presence, to highlight or hide their distinctiveness - if any - to differentiate themselves from other non-Jewish Thessalonikians and to construct their multiple identities. It is argued that in this complex process of investing their lives with meanings boundaries’ crossing and identities’ negotiation are constant. Thus preparing, eating and talking about food are often used by this group as a rhetoric of being and belonging.

Eating food, constructing boundaries and making communities

Culture is not a fixed and static entity but an ongoing evaluation of past and present relations; the way humans create alliances and oppositions is crucial in maintaining or negating “their” culture. It should be treated as a process that is dialectically and discursively shaped enabling situational and flexible identifications. The opposite view reduces culture to a rigid essentialism where – to use Bauman’s (1999) words – children are seen as “cultural photocopies” and adults turn into “cultural dupes”; in this way all cultural differences are intentional acts of differentiation and cultural

identity is nothing more than an act of identification. Differences, identities and cultures are ongoing processes they are constantly informed by others. Human interrelationships nourish identities, which are marked by translation, interpretation and often negotiation.

Identity is produced through the interplay of social dynamics like “difference”. Differences that are considered to be “real” might be so because they are conceived as such. Identities are highly contested and often challenged or rejected. The term “inflections” used (Cowan, 2000) to describe identity is indicative of the various relations involved.

It has been argued (Fischler 1988) that incorporation plays a significant role in the process of nourishing identities and creating a sense belonging. It is used by groups to define themselves, their boundaries, diversity, hierarchy and organisation. Eating often implies the hope of being or becoming more than we are. Incorporation helps us to be what we wish to be. Thus “the food makes the eater” (Fischler 1988: 282) means that food allows us to realise who we are, who we are not, and who we would like to be or not to be.

In the case of Thessalonikian Jews the sense of belonging to a distinct community and the construction of boundaries were partly achieved through the celebrations that took place at the community's institutions like the primary school, the synagogue and the old people's home. In my experience, food sharing - especially on ritual occasions - proved an effective channel for the reworking of Jewishness and Jewish belonging. It should be noted that there was great differentiation and contestation mainly based on age: the old and middle-aged Thessalonikian Jews expressed a strong association with the Sephardic identity whereas young people were quite reluctant to make such associations explicit. For them "not being different" is a statement often employed in order to express their ambiguous belonging. By tasting food the Jews of the city tasted, transmitted and selectively evoke their past: their Spanishness, their Jewishness, their Greekness and their attachment to Thessaloniki. Yet at times they rejected all these identifications and made different statements about present conditions.

What kind of identities?

a. The Jewish identity

It would be quite essentialising to claim that all Thessalonikian Jews perceived Jewishness the same way since “being Jewish” encompassed memories, past and present experiences, current preoccupations and future fears. It is important to underline that

Jewishness was differently understood by War survivors, middle aged and young people. Thus there was a general consensus among older and middle aged Thessalonikian people that they were not religious, they attended the synagogue rarely and yet they had a strong “Jewish consciousness”. Albertos, a man in his forties, claimed that his feeling of being Jewish had changed over the years with a conscious effort to maintain and even create differences that could distinguish him from others. For him Jewishness was to be understood by contrast with non-Jewishness and Jewish identity was perceived through the process of sharpening and in certain cases creating differences with other non-Jews:

“I remember when I was a child and went to school I was learning Hebrew. At that time Jewishness for me was no more than a game and a leisure pursuit. I felt Greek and Jewish. I have had this feeling since I was very young. As I grew older I tried to elaborate much more my differences. Everyone was smoking so I decided not to smoke, the others studied classics whereas I decided to study progressive literature. I always had the feeling that my identity was special”

Among the younger people there was no single acceptance and identification with Jewishness. Although most of them had attended the primary school and the summer camp, especially those in their mid-twenties were very reluctant to identify themselves with anything “Jewish”. Some remarked that they were “fed up” with discussions of Jewishness and others said that they did not believe in bounded ethnic identities. For them “Europeanism” and “globalised identities” were the paramount values and in our discussions they avoided any association with Jewish identity.

The refusal of Thessalonikian Jews to keep a kosher diet was part and parcel of their non-religious lifestyle. But things were not that simple or even as homogeneous as they presented them to be. Not only did they prove to be very keen in providing me with different interpretations of the meaning and the usefulness of practising kosher, but also such food was not totally absent from their diet. In fact most of them preferred to buy kosher meat from the kosher butcher shop in Thessaloniki and avoided eating pork or mixing meat with dairy products.¹ Additionally some of them, especially people in their thirties and forties, tried to keep the major fasts prescribed by Judaism. For example they avoided eating rice, bread or pasta during *Pessah*. Some middle-aged people were even consciously trying to reintroduce a kosher diet into their lives, although they all admitted that kosher products were far more expensive than non-kosher foodstuffs. I remember an informant who decided to start keeping kosher during the Jewish *Pessah*:

“This year I managed to keep kosher. At least during our Pessah. You know every diasporic people have one major celebration and for us this is the Jewish Easter. This year was the first time I decided to keep the diet rules properly”

On several occasions, as in restaurants,² they used to order dishes that were compatible with kosher laws like for example *moussaka* without mincemeat. Their request often annoyed and confused the waitresses.

In contemporary Thessaloniki kosher was a very sensitive issue especially for the younger generation. The schoolteachers talked about the Judaic dietary rules at school and tried to persuade children to choose a kosher diet. However they avoided exerting much pressure on them. In discussions they argued that the influences on children’s diet were so many and so complex that they did not expect them to keep kosher strictly. According to Barbara, who was a schoolteacher, keeping kosher had become much easier because of the European Community and the opening of the supermarket: it had been possible to find several kosher products including sweets, ice cream, and chocolate. The teachers at the primary school suggested children to prefer these products.

Yet even for the teachers themselves a strictly kosher diet was not feasible and it often generated humorous and even self-sarcastic comments. I remember when I once went to a cafeteria together with Barbara, and some of her friends who were Orthodox Christians. I was surprised that although they had been close friends for more than fifteen years they knew nothing about kosher, or the fact that Barbara used to buy meat from the kosher butcher shop. When Miltiadis asked Barbara if she kept these dietary laws she replied: “I am eating toast with bacon and cheese. What do you think?” and everyone laughed.

b. The Sephardic identity

Thessalonikian Jews claimed to be Sephardic Jews and descendants of the Spanish Jewry that had settled in the area from the end of the fifteenth century onwards. During my fieldwork I witnessed people’s tendency to make associations with their Spanish past. This past stood for something not necessarily distant, but rather familiar and privatised. Memories of Spanish ancestry formulated a common point of reference

¹ Avoiding eating dairy products with meat is a basic Jewish dietary prohibition.

² Eating outside the domestic context is gaining increasing popularity in the “modern” era and it is considered a component of contemporary urban life and the pleasures associated with it. But eating in a restaurant is not a thing in itself. Harbottle (1997) argues that the restaurant should not be treated as a static environment but as a social process involved in change.

and a starting point for differentiation with the rest of the population in Thessaloniki. Remembering this specific past was not only a way to denote distinctiveness but also a source of communal pride. References to Spanish ancestry were discursively tied to the multi-ethnic past of Thessaloniki where many famous Rabbis, scientists, scholars and local rulers were born. This strong affiliation with Spanish civilisation of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries covered many aspects of life and various cultural products, including language, music and cuisine.

According to my informants the Sephardic identity was the supreme expression of Judaism, the most liberal expression of Jewishness and what is more, the Sephardic were the most cultivated people. On the other hand, the Ashkenazi, the Jews from central Europe, were thought to be vulgar and backward. Many times people made comments about the uniqueness and the “superiority” of the Sephardic. The rest of the Jews had to “bow” - as they vividly put it to me - in front of the Sephardic who constitute the “elite of Judaism”.³

Of course, there was not univocal acceptance of the Sephardic identity. The age factor was decisive. Notably, there was a strong dividing line between the young generation and middle-aged people as well as the older⁴ generation. Among the people I talked to, especially those who belonged to the first and the second generation, there was a noticeable consensus about what constituted their past. They were aware of the exact period and the historical reasons for their expulsion from Spain. Young people were also aware of the Sephardic past and yet they avoided –at least in public- any direct identifications with it. They insisted that they were “the same” with other Thessalonikian Greeks they just have a “different religion”.

c. Greek and Thessalonikian identity

Jewishness was not perceived as a homogeneous identity that lacked differentiation. “Being Jewish” evoked some kind of sympathy and commonality but yet different interpretations of “other Jews” resulted in different versions of Judaism. Thus Orthodox Jews were thought to be “obsessed” with Judaism. Israeli Jews were thought to

³ Whereas in Thessaloniki the Sephardic are considered the elite of Judaism in Israel Sephardic Jews are considered “backward” and are looked down upon by Ashkenazi Jews who are considered the more “civilised” people.

⁴ People over fifty-seven were born during or before the Second World War. I believe that the Holocaust has marked their lives in a direct way and has divided time and memories quite sharply between life in pre-War Thessaloniki and life after their return from the concentration camps.

be different because their eating habits were different: “They have *humus* and *felafel* whereas we don’t even know these dishes. We certainly eat differently”.

Thessalonikian Jews identified strongly with Greece and felt that they had all the qualities that distinguished “Greeks” from “Europeans”. For Sara the sun and the mild climate were the essence of Greekness. When I complained about the weather in England she commented: “I don’t blame, you sweetie. Our climate is the best in the world. I could not live anywhere else”. Most people narrated to me incidents of meeting other, European Jews who “lacked” all the characteristics of Greek people namely, “warmth” and “friendliness”. Once Barbara narrated how she had met some English Jews during summer vacation:

“I found out that they were Jews. I didn’t care. I disliked them. Typical English people. We are different”

For my informants, one of the most important and decisive elements that defined Greekness was the fact that someone was born and raised in Greece. The older interviewees faced with anger any questioning of their Greekness since they themselves, their parents and their grandparents were all born and raised in Greece:

“I always felt Greek since I was born here. We were raised and lived in this country. All of us: my parents, my grandparents, and me. Most of my friends are Christians. I am not saying I am a Christian, I am saying Greek. They often ask me if I am Greek or Jewish. Of course I am Greek. I am not a Christian”

Rosa -a Holocaust survivor- explained to me that for her, “feeling Thessalonikian” was more important than any other identity. After the War she could have chosen to live in Israel but instead she returned to her native city which was her “home”. Above all she felt she belonged to Thessaloniki and her past and present were tied to this city:

“After the War many things kept me here. Now I know that I could not live anywhere else. I feel so attached to Thessaloniki and I think that I would suffer very much by leaving here. These are not just personal feelings. All the Jews who were born here love Thessaloniki. I feel that this is my home. I feel that every change that happens in this city also happens in my home. Thessaloniki is my home. It was the right decision to return to Thessaloniki”

Jacob objected strongly to the term “double identity”. He explained that he fully experienced his loyalty to Greece and that Jewishness for him was only a matter of

religious identification. He added that being a Greek–Jew does not mean that he or his family “lack” some aspect of Greekness:

“I am Jewish only as far as my religious identity is concerned. But every other aspect of my identity is purely Greek. I am a Greek citizen, my passport is Greek, my children will complete their military obligations towards this country, I work as a civil servant, and I pay taxes. You know I fully realise my identity when I happen to be abroad. I realise then that I am absolutely Greek”

Constructing boundaries

a. The search for authenticity

It is difficult to define “authenticity” the term used to describe most culinary worlds. On the surface “authenticity” entails several other notions like “being old”, “being original”, “being uncontaminated” and thus “real” and “pure”. Yet the more concepts we employ in order to explain the claims to authenticity the more complex the issue becomes. Questions like “why” and “when” authenticity is claimed remind us that “being authentic” is not a natural fact, a given description but a conscious construction, a deliberate identification used by individuals. By this token it becomes increasingly difficult to define the criteria that identify something - food in this case - as “authentic” because there is a constant process of authenticating. It is argued (Bakalaki, 2000) that in relation to food these criteria multiply and change sometimes with unpredictable outcomes. Thus “authentic” food is in a process of constant redefinition without having fixed and prescribed boundaries.

The issue of authenticity could be linked to the question regarding the construction of identity. In a study (Gupta and Ferguson, 1997) exploring the connections between culture, power and the centrality of place, it is argued that identity is often involved in the process of authentication. This process could be described as an endeavour to legitimise and justify social choices. If we take into account the double forces of legitimisation and authentication it becomes easier to explain why specific cultural differences are sometimes considered important in the creation of identities and others are less so.

An analysis of cuisine should enable the deconstruction and the critical re-reading of discourses on “originality” and “authenticity”. Therefore what is interesting is not whether Thessalonikian Jewish cooking was “totally” different from the non-Jewish but to question and assess how, why and when Thessalonikian Jews employed discourses of authenticity and originality in relation to their cuisine. I soon realised that cooking was

used as a channel, which enabled comparisons to be made “silently”. By employing discourses of authenticity in relation to cooking Thessalonikian Jews managed and manipulated in various ways the discourse of cultural distinctiveness. I was often offered to taste this difference: “This is the way our mothers and grandmothers used to cook. Our cuisine has been influenced by theirs”. Others added almost naively that these culinary differences were not actual differences:

“You know most dishes seem the same as yours. But they are not. I don’t know why but they taste differently”

All this emphasis on authenticity sounded like a powerful statement of belonging: eating Sephardic food was equated with being a Sephardic Jew. On several occasions, while I was paying visits to people’s homes or when I participated in celebrations at the community’s institutions, my presence generated a series of comments in relation to the “authenticity” of the food consumed:

“Watch carefully, because these are authentic Sephardic dishes” or
 “This is purely a Sephardic dish. Only Sephardic Jews know how to prepare it”

It is important to note that my informants were aware that I was interested in their culinary habits so they were consciously trying to draw my attention to the fact that their cuisine was undoubtedly Sephardic.

The fact that most dishes echoed Spanish names was the ultimate proof of this cultural and historical association. I recall phrases like:

“*Sfougatico* is of Spanish origin” or “*Maroncinos* is a sweet dish we prepare and this is definitely a Spanish word” or
 “In Greek you call this sweet *loukoumades* and in Ladino we call them *boumouelos*”

Spanish origins were invested with such cultural importance that some Jewish people in Thessaloniki attributed Spanishness to certain food items even where no equivalent word can be found in the Spanish language. I recall the explanation that one of my informants gave me: “Haminados eggs are named like that by the term *hamin*, which means oven in Spanish”. But another, Albertos, strongly objected to this explanation. For him *hamin* is not a Spanish but a Hebrew word and it doesn't mean oven but it is used to describe the food that is cooked on a Friday night and metaphorically means “warmth” and “embers”. Sephardic identity was justified through certain dishes but depended

much on personal interpretations; Spanish associations were highly treasured and yet they were subject to individual translation and thus negotiation.

b. Culinary difference as cultural distinctiveness

Cooking for my informants was a vehicle for expressing the feeling of being different from other Thessalonikians. Food provided an excellent opportunity for the demarcation of boundaries and for emphasising the distinct qualities of Jewish cooking in the city. I was often prompted to “taste” some of this difference. While I was offered some food people made comments like:

“Here, have some so you can tell yourself. This is the way we cook. You cook differently. Now you have an idea”

There was a repeated attempt to define otherness, so that Jewish cuisine often stood in contrast to Christian cuisine. In fact the culinary complex was often employed to stress this dividing line. It is important to note here that although I was given different interpretations of the historical factors that influenced Sephardic cuisine there was a noticeable consensus - especially among the first and the second generations - on separating Greek from Jewish cuisine. As Sara explained to me:

“In general the Jewish food is different from the Greek cuisine. You have too much heavy food and you fry it a lot. Of course this can be explained historically. Our ancestors were poor and always persecuted so that they had to move quite often. Our diet mainly consists of vegetables and bread”

Others considered such comments were historically inaccurate since Sephardic Jewry could be found in Thessaloniki uninterruptedly for more than four hundred years.

Going back through my fieldnotes I realise that people, mostly women, were keen to emphasise the differences between the two cuisines (Jewish and Christian) and stressed that although most ingredients were the same, Sephardic culinary culture involves different “techniques”. Linda who lived with her husband had associated the reunion of the family with cooking Sephardic dishes. Her daughters and grandchildren were not living in the same house. Although she initially argued that she cooked only on the occasion of a family reunion I realised - after a number of visits - that preparing and consuming Sephardic dishes was an everyday task. After several visits, she invited me to her kitchen:

“I am preparing our bean soup. Here, taste some. You know our bean soup differs from yours. We fry the beans with fresh onions until they become brown. See? It must be served thick”

I still cannot explain the fact that although Linda's bean soup looked very similar to the soup prepared in my Christian home it did taste differently. Maybe I was well prepared by my informant to taste this difference. The same thing happened with all the Sephardic Jewish dishes that I happened to try; they had a similar appearance and some of them the same ingredients as non-Sephardic Thessalonikian dishes and yet they tasted differently. Linda's husband added to our discussions afterwards: "I have never tasted your bean soup but my wife is much more flexible. She can eat it".

Linda was also proud of the "secret knowledge" involved in Sephardic cooking. I remember that during another visit the same lady shared with me an important "secret" technique of Sephardic cooking:

" Sometimes before baking a pie we twist it like that. You don't know how to twist pies the way we do. At least I don't think I've seen this technique anywhere"

I am almost positive that this "secret technique" was something that was also found in Christian cooking. Yet what is important is not if differences really existed but the fact that people themselves wanted them to exist. As was mentioned before Thessalonikian Jews interpreted, valorised and negotiated their culinary culture and therefore made statements about their identity.

The distinction "Us" versus "Them" came up frequently when Jewish cooking was compared to non-Jewish cooking. While I was in the field I went to a coffee shop with Andreas, a Christian friend who was very interested in Jewish cuisine, and Nicki the director of the Old People's Home. Our discussion centred on the topic of Jewish cuisine. Andreas said that the other day some friends had gathered and cooked the Jewish bean soup and he remarked "We added some tomato juice as the cookbook recommends". Nicki remarked quite surprised:

"But why? We never put tomato in this soup. Some recipes in this book are not exact. I have noticed it with other recipes as well. For example sometimes it suggests many eggs. No, I never cook this way"

It is quite interesting to note that in her words she made use of both "We" and "I" as if the way she cooks is representative of what Jewish cuisine is, or as if Jewish cuisine was something fixed and strictly prescribed. In other words she considered that only "insiders" knew how to preserve their cuisine "correctly". A fixed culinary order was employed by her and other informants. Yet it has been argued (James, 1997) that the belief in a fixed, static and prescribed culinary world sustains and promotes fixed cultural

identities. Therefore the thought of a culinary order becomes a powerful statement of being and belonging.

Apart from the different techniques of Sephardic cuisine and the different repertoire of recipes the use of different ingredients in cooking is what made dishes different. Thessalonikian Jews translated difference in terms of tastier, lighter and healthier cuisine. Thus my informants drew my attention to the frequent use of unleavened bread (*matzah*) in their cooking. *Matzah* is mainly associated with Passover and it is purchased during those days from the community centre.

The unleavened bread was the basic ingredient for most Sephardic dishes associated with the celebration of *Pessah*. According to Ruth:

“We use matzoth as the basic ingredient in many of our dishes. We use it instead of bread or *phyllo* pastry in order to prepare fried balls, pies, sauces, almost everything. So the dishes become more tasty”

It has been suggested⁵ that the concept of “healthy eating” can become a political issue and the information concerning healthy food enacts political influence and power. In the case of the Jewish people in Thessaloniki the concept of “healthy eating” was evolved in order to serve desired “political ends”. Jewish cuisine was considered to be healthier than the non-Jewish - the Greek in general - and this statement could be considered a powerful statement of belonging and identity.⁶ Susan asserted that:

“ You have too much heavy food and you fry it a lot. Our cuisine is much lighter. Our ancestors’ diet consisted mainly of bread and vegetables. Quite light and simple things”

Even the use of *matzah* to make pies, fried balls or sauces was thought to make the food “tastier” and “lighter” and thus, different. Of course such a belief was not scientifically tested since the preparation of some dishes with *matzah* still involved unhealthy culinary practices like, for example, frying with olive oil. The point I want to make is that Thessalonikian Jews employed the notion of “healthy eating”, most of the time fairly inaccurately, in order to point to the distinct and more positive qualities of

⁵ A number of authors (Keane, 1997, Lupton, 1996, Bradby, 1997, Caplan, 1997) assess the issue of “healthy eating”. Reilly and Miller (1997) discuss the central role of the media in the emergence of food as a social issue. However they argue that it is “important to go beyond media-centric explanations and understand that the way in which the media operates is a product of complex interactions between the media, the social institutions on which they report and the public” (1997: 249).

⁶ The major food classification scheme that emerged from interviews with adolescent women in Toronto divided foodstuffs in two categories: “junk food” and “healthy food”. Each category was vested with symbolic meanings. Hence “junk food” was associated with weight gain, friends, independence and guilt

their own cooking. Their accounts of “cooking differently” and having a “healthier diet” were often statements of “being different”.

Crossing boundaries:

a. When the cuisine of Thessalonikian Jews meets the “other”

Among the first questions which my research generated was whether Jewish cooking was notably different from the cooking of other, non-Jewish Thessalonikians and if so what was the degree of differentiation and the meeting points. My informants were constantly trying to distinguish Jewish from non-Jewish, or more accurately, Christian cuisine and to point up the differences between the two culinary worlds. Nevertheless going back carefully through my field-material I realise that several discussions I had with my informants suggested the blending of Jewish and non-Jewish cuisine. Cuisine, recipes and ingredients, like other cultural devices, are not bounded entities. The search for an uncontaminated and uncorrupted original should be a matter of scepticism (Lavie and Swedenburg, 1996). Hybridity, synthesis, appropriation - or whatever one wishes to name this process - is no less “authentic”.

The issue of proximity between Sephardic and Greek cuisine or more correctly between Sephardic and Thessalonikian cuisine was a recurrent theme in most food discussions I had with middle aged and older people. In these discussions the boundaries between Greek, Thessalonikian and Sephardic cooking constantly shifted and were subject to negotiation and change. Sephardic dishes were considered at the same time Thessalonikian dishes and were seen as part and parcel of the history of the city. When I asked Rosa about the origins of Sephardic dishes she replied: “These dishes are taken from the cuisine of Thessaloniki”. Her friend Rene added that:

“The culture of Thessaloniki has been strongly influenced by Jewish culture. You can’t study Sephardic cuisine if you don’t study Thessalonikian and Mediterranean cuisine”

In some cases people treated Sephardic cuisine as an integral part of Greek foodways. Some of their comments were conscious or unconscious efforts to stress the “Greekness” of several ingredients they used. Once Linda commented: “Our olive oil is the best in the world”. In her words the term “Our” referred to Greece and Greek cuisine as opposed to other non-Greek cuisines. The fact that the Jews had lived in Greece for hundred of years provided the justification for the local adaptation of their cuisine:

whereas “healthy food” was associated with weight loss, parents and being at home (Chapman and

“All these are Greek dishes. There is no 100% Jewish cuisine. You know, we have been living here for more than 400 years”

The dynamic processes of negotiation and synthesis were even more evident among younger Thessalonikian Jews. In particular, families with younger members seemed to follow willingly some Christian festivities and the customs that accompany them. Dinah explained the situation as follows:

“I could say that along with the Jewish festive days I also celebrate some Christian festive days and the same applies especially to the younger members of my family. And during Easter we eat *mageiritsa*, the Christian Easter soup (Laugh). We like it. You know, it’s inevitable”

Maria, a young Christian woman, when asked about her Jewish friend, answered:

“She is Jewish but not like the others, she is modern. Lilly follows our customs. For example during the Christian Easter she eats our *mageiritsa*”

When I interviewed Flora, a woman in late thirties, I understood that for her there are no real and objective boundaries between Sephardic-Jewish cuisine and local Thessalonikian. As she accurately put it “All the people of Thessaloniki like well-cooked food. That’s why our cuisine is so tasty”.

The process of synthesis and appropriation involved in cooking was one of the themes I repeatedly came across while carrying out fieldwork. Negotiation, interchange and the shifting of culinary boundaries characterised people’s accounts of their present day dietary habits. Not only the cuisine of Thessaloniki but also the Orthodox Christian food traditions had significantly influenced Sephardic foodways. Thessalonikian Jews, by negotiating their menu, shifted between “being” and “feeling” Jewish, Sephardic, Thessalonikian and Greek. My informants mobilised several culinary discourses in their attempt to construct identifications and negotiate their belonging.

b. Ritual food and everyday cooking

Another theme that emerged from my field research was the constant interplay between ritual and everyday cooking. Not only special, ceremonial dishes but also food ingredients that were mainly used for celebratory meals became in many cases part of everyday cooking. The reasons for this shift between ceremonial and everyday cuisine were numerous. Some of them were related to ageing, perceptions about a “healthy diet”

or even issues of tastiness, and of course the family's food likes and dislikes. But it seemed to me that the notion of "making the food more tasty" or "lighter" or even "less time-consuming" could be translated into other symbolic discourses namely those of making the food more "acceptable" to Thessalonikian Jews, more familiar to them and eventually distinct from that of other Thessalonikians.

Although *matzah* stands for the Jewish Passover, it was also widely used among Thessalonikian Jews for many savoury or sweet dishes. In such cases it substituted for fresh bread and it constituted the basic ingredient that indicated a Jewish association. One dish quite popular among the Jewish population was zucchini and eggplant fritada, which was called *sfougato* or *sfougatico*. My informants noted that they often added some crumbled *matzah* in order to make this dish "more solid" and "tasty".

The use of *matzah* either crumbled or just wet was commonly found in Jewish cooking. It was often used as the basic foodstuff in Sephardic fried dumplings. The filling consisted of cheese, spinach or leeks. *Keftikes* are always found on the ritual table of *Pessah* but they also accompanied daily meals as well. Thessalonikian Jews also used *matzah* in order to make pies. Instead of using *phyllo* (pastry) they used *matzah* - after they had spread on it olive oil or simply water to make it soft - and they filled it with cheese, spinach or pumpkin and beaten eggs. Thessalonikian Jews referred to them as *pastel de spinaka* o *de kalavassa*.

Crumbled *matzah* was used in another dish called *bimwelos* or *boumouelos*. It looked like the *loukoumades* - a kind of doughnut - found all over Greece. *Boumwelos* were normally prepared for the ritual occasion of *Hanukah* but I found that some housewives included them in their everyday diet and sometimes by replacing the main course. As Linda said to me:

"This year I did not prepare any *boumouelos* because my children were away. I used to go to my daughter's in law place and we would prepare these sweets together. But now I prepare them on ordinary days and this is our lunch. We eat only this and nothing else, so we eat seven or eight of them instead of other food"

Negating boundaries and reconstructing new ones

We think that there is nothing left but...

Food perceptions and preferences are not fixed but are subject to transformation and multiple influences. Often young people express their resistance and their resentment of parental culture through their bodies. Refusing to eat what the parents provide or eating the "wrong" food could be seen as an embodied rebellion (Lupton, 1996). This

was the case for the younger generation of the city's Jews. Most young people I talked to emphasised the fact that their diet nowadays was not restricted by any rules and that ready-made food, the food that they preferred, could be easily found and consumed.⁷ In their attitude I witnessed a strong emphasis on sameness: Thessalonikian Jews were not thought as different from other Thessalonikians and the food they consumed was beyond doubt the same. Lucille, a young woman commented:

“We eat ready-made food and go to fast-food places. For example we eat at McDonalds. Things are the same now. We all eat the same”

Isaac, an educated man in his mid twenties was one of them, “a very free and open minded spirit” as his mother commented. Isaac, his mother and I had a very illuminating discussion regarding the “modern” shift in food preferences and the youth's perceptions of Sephardic cuisine.

Isaac: “As far as cooking is concerned I don't think that Sephardic cuisine exists anymore and of course there is no such thing as Jewish identity”

Isaac's mother: “What about the *prassokeftedes* that I cook for you? You do like them...”

Isaac: “Okay, probably there is something left. But as far as the younger generation is concerned things have changed. For example I am a vegetarian”⁸

His mother explained to me when he left:

“I am sure that my son won't create a Jewish family. I can't say the same about my other son. I mean that Isaac will not seek to marry a Jewish woman and bring up his children according to the Jewish principles. I try not to press him. He is a very free spirit. I think inevitably as time goes by our identity will be lost”

For some younger people the emphasis on the cultural distinctiveness of Thessalonikian Jews was a sign of stagnation, backwardness and incompatibility with “modern” life. Thus they emphasised that life in contemporary Thessaloniki was more free and so were their food habits. Nevertheless a significant number of them participated in Jewish celebrations and ate at least some of the “traditional” dishes that the women in their families had prepared. Isaac's mother explained to me that what had changed was

⁷ For an interesting discussion on the issue of fast-food eating see Reiter (1991) *Making Fast Food* and Watson (ed., 1997) *Golden Arches East: McDonalds in East Asia*.

⁸ Vegetarianism is an important issue related to food choices and general lifestyle. According to Lupton (1996) the vegetarian philosophy is based on major objections to meat: its consumption is unhealthy, unnecessary and immoral. Abstinence from it also enhances spirituality and purity. In this case I believe that vegetarianism has another dimension: rebellion to parental culture and therefore refusal to consume “the same” food as parents do.

not the actual food but the context in which this food was consumed with the help of the new food technology:

“I prepare *keftikes* and freeze them. So, whenever my sons feel hungry they can find something to eat. You know they love having them for breakfast”

The reaction of the younger people in relation to the food attitudes of the older and the middle-aged generation varied considerably. I remember once when I visited Sara’s home and she was desperately trying to find the booklet that the community centre sends on the occasion of important Jewish celebrations. On the last page one could find many “authentic” Sephardic recipes. Sara apologised:

“I am sorry but I can’t find it anywhere. You know I hide it somewhere because when I cook I look at the recipes of this booklet. But my children laugh at me. They think I am too obsessed. I don’t think I’ll find it. I have hidden it for good”

Other young people held a more positive attitude to Jewish celebrations and rituals. Andreas is a man in his late twenties who is studying in Paris. His grandmother argued that the celebration of *Pessah* was a strong attraction for him:

“Whenever he phones me he asks me if I intend to celebrate *Pessah*. I keep this tradition and he seems to enjoy it very much. Whenever Andreas comes I cook for him a pie made with *matzah* and meat with peas. You know just to remind him of our *Pessah*”

Although probably Andreas’s food preferences had nothing to do with the food prepared for *Pessah* he nevertheless consumed it as a sign of family reunion. Food for him became a metaphor of “return” physically and symbolically among his own people.

Conclusion

The Jews of Thessaloniki eat food and talk about it while at the same time they perpetuate or reject discourses of cultural distinctiveness and highlight their Jewishness, Thessalonikianess, Sephardicness and Greekness according to the situation they find themselves in. Thus identities whether Jewish, Sephardic, Thessalonikian or Greek shift and are subject to translation and negotiation. Identifications are never unilateral and fixed but contextual, complex often altered and transformed. As it is argued (Hall, 1996: 2) such an interpretation “sees identification as construction, a process never completed but always ‘in process’. It is not determined in the sense that it can always be ‘won’ or ‘lost’, sustained or abandoned”. In the case of the Jewish people in Thessaloniki – in a

city where this group is a religious minority - a constant process of constructing and crossing boundaries takes place. Hence the negotiation of boundaries can be seen as a “survival” strategy and an effective way to create viable and flexible livelihoods in a non-Jewish city.

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**“The Religious Factor in the Construction of Europe:
Greece, Orthodoxy and the European Union”**

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Abstract

(Research in Progress)

After Greek independence and the birth of the modern Greek State, in an effort to combine both the ancient and Byzantine heritage of Greece, the term “Helleno-(Orthodox) Christianity” was used in order to represent the historical and cultural continuity of ancient Greece, through Byzantium, to modern Greece. This constitutes part of the richness of Greece’s dual heritage but is also a source of ambiguity in positioning contemporary Greece between East and West. Today, Greece remains the only Christian Orthodox member-state of the European Union and acts as a bridge between the European Union and Orthodox countries in Eastern Europe.

The focus of this ongoing 2 year research project (Leverhulme Research Grant awarded in March 2003) is the recent controversy in Greece on whether religion should continue to appear on national identity cards, within the larger context of Greek Orthodoxy as a possible factor of integration or resistance towards the European Union. The recent identity cards conflict illustrates how today Orthodoxy remains an inherent part of the historical, cultural and national identity of contemporary Greece. Furthermore, the conflict reveals how the Greek Church can act as an alternative institutional pressure group in expressing growing social insecurities, as a result of the disparity between rapid economic progress and a somewhat sluggish social development, and popular ambivalence with regard to increasing European Union integration and ongoing trends of globalisation.

A preliminary analysis of the identity cards conflict reveals three key research questions to be further investigated. First, although, the identity cards conflict confirms the historic link between the Orthodox Church and the Greek State, it also reveals the tensions within this partnership. Second, as a result of immigration, there are increasing pressures for Greece to evolve from a ‘monocultural’ nation to a multicultural society. Therefore, the assumed link between citizenship and religion and the assumption that being Greek means being an Orthodox Christian has come under question. Finally, the ‘Helleno-Christian’ link in contemporary Greek identity encompasses inherent tensions between, Orthodox traditionalism and growing trends of secularization between tradition and modernity, between Greece’s eastern and western heritage, and between its national and European identity. Therefore, the role of Orthodoxy in Greece’s relations with the European Union and the

increasingly important role of Orthodoxy in view of European Union enlargement (which may include additional Orthodox countries, such as Bulgaria and Romania), remain important and timely but as yet understudied topics.

The identity cards controversy will be analysed primarily through a content analysis of the press. The proposed research will compare the key issues, prevalent opinions and arguments for or against the mention of religion on identity cards drawn from an extensive body of press articles from mainstream Greek and foreign (French and English) newspapers. Public documents issued by the Greek State and the Church, existing surveys and interviews with selected individuals will provide additional data with which to complement the material emerging from the analysis of newspaper comment.

This paper¹ presents the key results of a pilot study conducted as part of a two-year research project (funded by The Leverhulme Trust) that is currently in progress. The focus of the research is the highly mediated conflict in Greece on whether religion should continue to appear on national identity cards. The Greek case provides an instructive example of the significance of the religious factor and the role of Orthodoxy and national identity, themselves interrelated, in Greece's international relations and position in the world. The identity cards conflict is analysed within the larger context of Greek Orthodoxy as a possible factor of integration or resistance towards the European Union.

I. The resonance of the Helleno-Christianity in modern Greek identity

What are the historical, cultural, political and other features that differentiate Greeks and Greece from the rest of Europe? The image of Greek collective identity and the question of what it means to be Greek today is not a recent, nor a new one. These questions relate to a variety of political and cultural aspects of modern Greek history. The political and spiritual role of Orthodoxy during the last few centuries, more particularly during and after the movement of Greek independence from Ottoman domination is of particular interest. The multiethnic citizens of the Byzantine Empire and the diverse Orthodox populations which lived under the Ottoman empire were defined primarily through their faith (Mackridge 2002 ; Yiannaras 1992). The Orthodox Church was recognized as the secular and religious representative of the Orthodox *millet*. Quite apart from its civil authority over the administration of the *millet*, the Orthodox Church was the spiritual authority responsible for

¹ The writing of this paper is still in progress; bibliographic references and citations are not fully completed.

the preservation of the collective identity (language, faith, etc.) of the Orthodox and Greek communities (Mackridge 2002 ; Yiannaras 1992). After Greek independence and the creation of the modern Greek state, towards which the Greek Church was initially hostile², the Greek Church became autocephalus and independent from the Ecumenical Patriarchate in Constantinople in 1833. Therefore, the creation of the Church of Greece coincided historically with the birth of the modern Greek state (1827).

In the late 18th century and after the Greek War of independence a central question that emerged was how to define the Greek nation in a post-classical, post-Byzantine and post-Ottoman period. The debate turned into a socio-political and ideological clash, which opposed the liberal ideas of Enlightenment of the West to those of the Church and the Orthodox tradition in the East³. The effort to create a synergy between the ancient and Byzantine heritage of Greece produced an amalgam of classical Hellenism and Byzantine Christianity giving birth to the notion of “Helleno-Christianity”⁴. In Greek historiography “Helleno-Christianity” became a term used by intellectuals to represent the historical and cultural continuity of ancient Greece, through Byzantium, into modern Greece (Makrides 1991 ; Tsoukalas 1993, 1999).

The term “Helleno-Christianity”, which coined the bonds between Hellenism and Orthodoxy, is an all-encompassing concept embracing not only culture, but also a larger historical, intellectual and spiritual heritage that has contributed to shape modern Greek identity up to this day. Although Helleno-Christianity has become synonymous with Helleno-Orthodoxy, it is Helleno-Orthodoxy more specifically that has played a significant role in modern Greek identity. It is on this particular point that the Church of Greece continues to justify its legitimacy in Greek society, insisting on its active participation in the construction

² Being fearful of the consequences for the Church itself and for Orthodox Christians, the Church originally attempted to discourage or at least delay the Greek uprising in 1821 (Runciman 1968). Although, the Greek revolution was first proclaimed in 1821 by a bishop, the Metropolitan of Patras, the Church overall and with few exceptions, remained initially hostile to the uprising, as independence would mean a loss of its privileged authority (Woodhouse 1986).

³ For a brief historical overview of the clash between the intellectuals of Greek Enlightenment and the Church (Orthodox Patriarchate) see T. Anasstasiadis, 1996: *Religion et Identite Nationale en Grece. Nation Orthodoxe ou Orthodoxie Nationaliste: A Propos du Debat au sujet de la mention de l'appartenance confessionnelle sur la carte d'identite grecque*, Memoire de DEA., Paris: IEP.

⁴ For the historical context and development of the “Helleno-Christian” adjective, see Peter Mackridge “Cultural Difference as National Identity in Modern Greece”, 2002, unpublished paper (the same author refers to K. Th. Dimara’s introductions to K. Paparrigopoulos, *Istoria tou Ellinikou Ethnous* (1st version 1853), Athens: 1970 and *Prolegomena*, Athens: 1970) and T. Anasstasiadis, 1996.

⁵ The partnership between the Orthodox Church and the Greek State and, thus, the identification of Greek identity with Orthodoxy, continued throughout the 20th century, even in more unfortunate periods in Greek history, such as the dictatorship from 1967 to 1973. During that time the Church was drawn into the so-called “moral regeneration” of the Greek nation. The military regime promoted a "Greece of Christian Greeks" consisting of a union between Church, Nation and anti-communist ideology (Venizelos 2000 ; Mackridge 2002) ; this was essentially an undemocratic and distorted interpretation of Helleno-Christianity and Helleno-Orthodoxy.

of the modern Greek nation and on Helleno-Orthodoxy acting as an adhesive body holding together the national unity of Greece.

The Helleno-Orthodox bond was at work as early as the late 19th century with the identification of the Greek Nation with Christian Orthodoxy. The political aspirations of the Greek nationalist movements of Greek irredentism were encapsulated in the *Megali Idea*, which attempted to bring together the Church, the Greek Nation and their Byzantine past, for the political revival of the Byzantine Empire and Greece's expansion to its pre-Ottoman territories (Manitakis 2000). As a result, the Greek Orthodox Church and the Greek State were drawn together in the political upheavals of the Greek nation throughout the 20th century, which cemented the politicisation of the Church of Greece⁵.

Today the linkage between national identity and religious tradition in Greece, namely the Helleno-Christian legacy, is still echoed in the current social, political and cultural life of Greece. The bonds of Greek society and Orthodoxy are maintained through a variety of institutions (Church, State, Education) and cultural and religious activities. Helleno-Orthodoxy resonates in various aspects of contemporary Greek public life, including Church-State relations, state celebrations, popular religiosity, rites of passage and the education system.

After the Greek War of Independence, attempts to modernise the newly created Greek State turned the autocephalus Church of Greece into a department of State, which did not allow the creation or the development of a free and truly independent Greek Church (Agouridis 2002). The Church of Greece⁶ is governed by its own Holy Synod but remains under the authority of the Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs⁷, which pays the salaries of priests and approves the enthronement of bishops and the licensing of church buildings for all religious denominations (Veremis 1995, Makrides 1994, Stavrou, 1995, Papastathis 1996). According to Article 3 of the Greek Constitution of 1975, which is declared in the name of the Holy Trinity, the prevailing religion representing the majority of

⁶ In addition to the Church of Greece, there are 3 other ecclesiastical jurisdictions, which remain under the supervision of the Patriarchate of Constantinople in Istanbul, Turkey: the Church of Crete and of the Dodecanese islands and the monasteries of Mt. Athos.

⁷ After the creation of the modern Greek State the autocephalus Church of Greece was placed under the authority of the Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs and the Holy Synod (a non elected body of government appointees to the Greek Church) with King Otto as the head of the Church who had authority to intervene in religious affairs and approve the election of bishops (Papastathis 1999, Kitsikis 1995, Jelavich 1985). Placing the Church under the Ministry of Education originated in the idea that the transmission of spiritual faith along with education was an essential foundation for the construction of the modern Greek State (Petrou 1992). In 1975, with the revision of the Constitution, the Church became more independent under a revised administration system that limited the restrictive fashion with which the State could regulate Church affairs (Papastathis 1999).

Greek population is Eastern Orthodoxy under the authority of the autocephalous Church of Greece, united in doctrine to the Ecumenical Patriarchate. Although freedom of religion (freedom of religious conscience and worship) is protected by Article 13 of the Constitution for known religions (legal entities of public law), proselytism is prohibited (Pollis 1992, Alivizatos 1999, Konidaris 1999). Overall, Orthodox Church is granted significant legal and financial privileges compared to other Churches in Greece⁸. Furthermore, the Orthodox clergy is frequently invited to give their blessings in the military, in prisons, national civil celebrations and military parades (which coincide with religious feasts and ceremonies), and during presidential and government inaugurations (Pollis 1999). Therefore, the Church expects State protection through the Constitution and other legal and financial means, just as the State depends on the Church as a homogenizing and unifying force (Kokosalakis 1996).

Throughout modern Greek history there have been no real and major confrontations between the political authority of the State and the spiritual leadership of the Church but this partnership has had moments of conflict. The socialist government in 1981 had initially promised the constitutional separation of Church and State and the expropriation of Church properties⁹. However, these reforms posed tremendous political and social risks and the government had to compromise at times when it underestimated the influence of the Church over the Greek electorate and society. The process of separating Church and State was never started and the expropriation of Church property was partially materialized at a considerable political cost. The socialist government was successful in establishing civil marriage by law in 1982, but after the strong reaction of the Church, which was opposed to civil and religious marriage being equally valid¹⁰.

⁸ For example, licensing for the building or operation of non-Orthodox places of worship requires permission from the Ministry and the local Orthodox bishop (Alivizatos 1999). The mandatory religious instruction (focused primarily on Orthodox theology) provided by the Greek education system can be seen as an indirect form of proselytism or religious indoctrination on behalf of the Church of Greece.

⁹ The expropriation of Church property (land) has been a controversial issue since the reforms implemented by Mauer, under the reign of King Otto, resulted in the closure of hundreds of monasteries and the seizure of ecclesiastical property and land, which many Christians had entrusted to the Church during the Ottoman Empire. The State expropriation of ecclesiastical property has been typically justified by the argument that the poor financial situation of the Greek State required the sale of Church land with the proceeds to be allocated to various social causes, including education. In the 1950s under the threat of stopping all payments to ecclesiastical personnel, the Church agreed to give away a substantial amount of land. In 1987, under the argument that the remuneration of the clergy was a great burden to the national budget, the Socialist government proposed a controversial legislation for the expropriation of most Church property. The bill was amended a year later and the State was able to obtain some Church land but the case was brought to the European Court of Justice. The issue is currently unresolved and inactive but remains a sore point that is often used by political parties and governments as an argument for postponing any further regulation in Greek Church and State relations (Dimitropoulos 2001).

¹⁰ Also, legislation relative to divorce, which is granted by a civil court, was eventually adopted as early as 1920 and later, in 1983, but not without the reaction of the Church, which eventually withdrew its negative position (Dimitropoulos 2001).

Although belief in God remains relatively high¹¹, Greek society retains a fairly passive attachment to the church, with church attendance limited mostly to special occasions (Davie 2002, Lavdas 1997, Kokosalakis 1996, Frazee 1980). Popular religious and national festivals¹² and major feasts of the Christian year highlight the importance of popular religion in Greece (Kokosalakis 1995, 1996, Veremis 1995, Alivizatos 1999, Stavrou 1995, Makrides 1994, Dubisch 1990). Religious practice is higher than most other EU countries¹³ and, according to a recent Greek study, church attendance between 1985 and 2000 has showed signs of growth rather than decline (Georgiadou and Nikolakopoulos 2001)¹⁴. There is a clear popular attachment to the Orthodox Church as far as rites of passage are concerned, such as baptisms, marriages¹⁵, and burials¹⁶. At the same time, there is a significant degree of syncretism and some growth of new religious movements (Kokosalakis 1996). Small but visible conservative groups ('Neo-Orthodox' groups, Old-Calendarists¹⁷) also exist, using religion as synonymous with Greek identity (Kokosalakis 1996, Stavrou 1995). Forms of 'Neo-Orthodoxy' emerged in the 90s, supported by some intellectuals, artists and theologians, aiming to rediscover a forgotten and, in their terms, more authentic Orthodox tradition (Fokas 2000, Makrides 1998).

Despite recent attempts towards the liberalisation of Greek religious education, the Greek school system continues to transmit Helleno-Orthodoxy into the new generations (Pollis 1999). Based on the prevailing religion model (Article 3), weekly religious instruction is mandatory in Greece's public school system ; it consists essentially of an Orthodox interpretation of Christian faith and social issues (Argyriou 1992, Sotirelis 1998, Molokotos-

¹¹ According to the European Values Survey in 1999, 93.8% of respondents in Greece believe in God, a higher percentage than the European average (77.4%) (Halman 2002, Lambert 2002).

¹² For example, the date of the annual pilgrimage to the Annunciation Church in Tinos and to the Icon of the Madonna (*Panagia*) coincides with state celebrations of Greek national independence.

¹³ According to the European Values Survey in 1999, 53.9% of respondents in Greece go to Church on special occasions (European average: 38.8%), 20.9% of respondents go to Church once a month (European average: 10.8%) and 22.3% of respondents go to Church once a week (European average: 20.5%) (Halman 2002, Lambert 2002). Greece was not included in the previous European Values Surveys (conducted in 1991), so the 1999 figures do not allow any comparisons with previous years.

¹⁴ Also, the monastic life in Mt. Athos is undergoing something of a revival and some monasteries are now being restored with new recruits coming from Australia and America and traditionally orthodox countries.

¹⁵ Although civil marriage was established by law in 1982, statistics indicate that only approximately 8.5% of marriages in Greece are civil, as Greeks prefer to have marriages solemnised in the Orthodox Church (Kokosalakis 1995, Makrides 1994). According to the European Values Survey in 1999, 89.6% of respondents in Greece (European average: 73.6%) want a religious service for marriage (Halman 2001, Lambert 2002).

¹⁶ According to the European Values Survey in 1999, 92.5% of respondents in Greece (European average: 82.3%) want a religious service at the time of death, while only 69.1% (European average: 74.9%) want a religious service at the time of birth (Halman 2001, Lambert 2002). Demands for civil burials and cremations are increasing. Civil burials are permitted by law and citizens are free to choose between a civil or religious burial, but the underlying assumption of the Church is that those who select a civil burial are atheist (*Kathimerini*, 14 May 2000).

Cremations remain against the law in Greece (*Kathimerini*, 14 May 2000) ; the Church has voiced its opposition towards cremation but an association and a cross-party alliance of Greek MPs has proposed a bill to legalize cremation (*Kathimerini*, 14 May 2000; *Eleftherotypia* 15 March 2002).

¹⁷ See Kitsikis, Dimitris 1995: *The Old Calendarists and the Rise of Religious Conservative in Greece*, Monographic Supplement.XVIII, Center for Traditionalist Orthodox Studies.

Liederman 2003). Furthermore, Greek text-books tend to stress the uniformity and continuity of Hellenism across centuries¹⁸ (Frangoudaki-Dragona 1997).

II. Religion and the identity cards: the conflict

The reading of approximately 800 newspaper articles on the conflict over religion on identity cards, drawn from the Greek national daily press¹⁹, allows a synthetic presentation of the conflict and a chronological deconstruction of the main events that took place.

The recording religion on official identity cards originates in the early 1940s²⁰, when identity cards became mandatory by law (law 87/1945) for all citizens²¹ and, among other personal details, they had to include religion. The policy of including religion on identity cards and other public documents (birth, marriage and death certificates) remained into effect until 1986, when under new legislation passed by the socialist government, the declaration of religion on new identity cards became optional²².

In a reversal of the 1986 legislation, the centre-right wing New Democracy party, in power by 1991, introduced a law according to which the declaration of religion on a new type of identity cards became mandatory. By 1993, the New Democracy government announced plans to change the law and make the declaration of religion on identity cards optional. The

¹⁸ In Greek history textbooks, Helleno-Christianity is first introduced in the chapters devoted to the Roman Empire, particularly the period of Emperor Justinian. According to the textbooks, Justinian's internal policy was founded on Greek culture and Christian faith, which created the so-called "Helleno-Christian world" (textbook of 4th grade, p. 256). Another example is religion textbooks, where Helleno-Christianity and the link between Orthodoxy and Greek identity is not only established, but also explicitly affirmed. Here are two representative excerpts from the religion textbooks: « Our people linked their life with Orthodox faith and life. This can be confirmed by the study of the history of our nation, our traditions and our hopes » (textbook of 3rd grade, p. 216). « The reception of Hellenism by Christianity was so successful that today it is very difficult to distinguish between these two elements ... [The synthesis between Christianity and Hellenism] can inspire and provide new directions to contemporary Greek society and offer solutions to the problems of humanity in Europe and in the entire international community » (textbook of 5th grade, p. 209). For a more detailed analysis of Greek religious education see Lina Molokotos-Liederman, "L'orthodoxie à l'école grecque", unpublished paper and public lecture at the Ecole Partique des Hautes Etudes, Paris, France, as part of a European conference on "Sciences des religions et systèmes de pensées", 20 March 2003.

¹⁹ The following daily papers, representing different political views, were selected: *Kathimerini*, *Vima*, *Nea*, *Eleftherotypia*, *Rizospastis* and *Estia*. The articles were collected primarily via the internet through the research engines provided by each selected newspaper; they were also collected via subscription to press clipping services in Athens (*Idryma Votsi* and *Argo-Etairia Apokommaton Ellinikou & Xenou Typou*, Athens, Greece).

²⁰ According to some preliminary research and from the historical circumstances of the period shortly before the end of the Second World War, the measure of recording religion on identity cards was possibly a means of distinguishing citizens according to their religious affiliation (*Vima*, 14 May 2000, *Nea* 20 May 2000; *The Independent*, 22 May 1994).

²¹ Mandatory identity cards are issued in other European countries (Germany, Belgium, Luxembourg, Portugal, Spain); other countries where religion is recorded on identity cards are outside Europe, i.e., Israel, Indonesia and Turkey. According to some unconfirmed sources, new identity cards issued in Turkey may not include religious affiliation.

²² The Church and religious organizations expressed their opposition partly because the new identity cards would include a personalized identification bar code containing the number 666, which is associated with the coming of the Antichrist.

Church demanded the continuation of the declaration of religion on identity cards. The European Parliament and many international religious organizations condemned the Greek decision and strongly encouraged Greece to reverse the legislation.

Between 1994 and 1996, the new socialist government adopted a ‘wait and see’ attitude on whether the government would finally change the legislation. By 1997 Greece became a signatory to the Schengen Treaty²³. At that time, a privacy protection law was passed with the assistance of the Greek Data Protection Authority, according to which Greek citizens were no longer required to declare their occupation, nationality, religion, fingerprints and marital status on identity cards.

After the death of Archbishop Seraphim in 1998, Christodoulos became the new Archbishop of Greece, instituting a tense period in Greek Church-State relations. In 2000, the Minister of Justice announced plans to proceed with the issue of new identity cards, dropping the inclusion of religion. Archbishop Christodoulos organised a national mobilization campaign calling for an informal referendum to collect signatures requesting the voluntary declaration of religion on identity cards and hoping to force the government to hold a national referendum²⁴.

Finally, in 2001, the Council of State declared that the inclusion of religion on identity cards is unconstitutional, while Archbishop Christodoulos suggested that the Greek Prime Minister was subject to strong international pressure²⁵. The Church conducted a six-month referendum collecting approximately 3 million signatures and requesting the voluntary declaration of religion on identity cards. In response, the Greek President reiterated that according to the Greek law and Constitution there was no question of holding a referendum or changing the existing legislation, which put some closure on the conflict.

Since the first outbreak of the problem, each government coming into power has had an impact on the question of whether religion should be included on identity cards. The debate, with a few exceptions, has been largely partisan and polarised. The socialist party initially advocated a voluntary declaration, but later insisted on the elimination of religion on identity cards altogether. The centre-right wing party has been consistently aligned with the

²³ According to the intergovernmental Schengen Agreement for the free movement of persons within the EU, passports were to be replaced by identity cards as an efficient way to maintain internal controls.

²⁴ Apart from the political undertones of the conflict, as far as Greek mainstream public opinion is concerned, according to various polls conducted in 2000, a little over half of those surveyed were favorable to the inclusion of religion on identity cards²⁴ (*Eleftherotopia* 28 May 2000, 29 June 2000, *Vima* 2 July 2000).

²⁵ Namely, pressure from the World Jewish Council, the European Union and American Jewish lobbying organizations (*Vima*, 15 March 2001, 20 March 2001; *Herald Tribune*, 16 March 2001; *Athens News*, 16 March 2001).

Church and has insisted on the mandatory or voluntary declaration of religion since 1993, thus creating a unified opposition front against the socialist government (Stavrakakis 2002 ; Anastassiadis 1996). However, in some cases, around election time, traditional party lines were crossed as some socialist and centre-right wing politicians were sceptical on the political costs of the elimination of religion from identity cards (Stavrakakis 2002). Throughout the debate, the Greek left wing and communist parties have both remained against the inclusion of religion (Anastassiadis 1996); the Greek Communist Party has also advocated the separation of Church and State and voiced some criticism on the Schengen treaty because of its potential infringement of civil rights²⁶.

Although the position of the Church of Greece had been originally to put strong pressure on the government to keep the declaration of religion mandatory, faced with a more determined socialist government to drop the mention of religion in 2000, it opted for the optional inclusion of religion. Even within the Church itself, there were few bishops who in 2000 deviated from the position of the Church ; they insisted on the obligation of the Church to follow the laws of the State, thus implicitly supporting the elimination of religion from identity cards, or explicitly promoted a more liberal view of Church-State relations (*Nea*, 12 May 2000).

III. Methods

Religion in Greece has been and still is a public matter, thus present in the public sphere (Demertzis 2002). Since Archbishop Christodoulos's savvy usage of Greek media, the Orthodox Church has become a focus of Greek media attention, as illustrated by the intense media coverage of the conflict over religion on identity cards. In fact, if the question of the identity cards had not been so heavily covered by the Greek and international press, the conflict would not have escalated into such a divisive national controversy. After the (temporary?) closure of the conflict over the identity cards it is time to look at the debate and exchange of positions, ideas and arguments on the issue. Given the intensity of its media coverage, the identity cards controversy will be analysed from a particular angle, that of the mass media. Hence, a fundamental pillar of the research is a systematic and qualitative content analysis of articles from the Greek and international daily press. The project will compare the key issues, prevalent opinions and arguments for or against the mention of religion on identity cards drawn from an extensive body of newspaper articles from

²⁶ Skepticism on the implications of the Schengen Treaty for civil rights is not a phenomenon specific to Greece; for example, there was some debate in Britain on the potential abuses of civil liberties of electronic identity cards linked to a pan-European data base (*The Guardian*, 30 May 1995).

mainstream Greek and foreign daily newspapers. Books, journal articles, Church and State public documents, existing surveys and some interviews with selected individuals will provide additional data with which to complement the material emerging from the analysis of newspaper comment.

Since the mass media are a vast source of public information available to large audiences, they represent and reflect society in their own way. News media in particular have the capacity to represent certain aspects or segments of a society, to raise public awareness of particular issues and events and to set agendas for public discussion; in this capacity, they can contribute towards the construction of our social reality and collective identities and play a role in the formation of public opinion (McQuail 1994, Lazar 1991, Gerbner 1969). An analysis of their content can therefore reveal a great deal about common beliefs and underlying value systems, thus providing a means to study society itself (Lazar 1991). Despite the increased importance of television and radio as sources of information, the daily press is the oldest of the mass media and remains an institution of contemporary political and social life (McQuail 1994). Daily newspapers remain reference points with an implicit ethical responsibility to report events accurately and objectively (McQuail 1994).

The principal method²⁷ chosen for the project is qualitative content analysis, namely the systematic description of the manifest content of a communication (Berelson 1952). The objective of this qualitative content analysis is not an exhaustive classification and reorganisation of the content of the newspaper articles into categories, but rather extracting, analysing and comparing key issues, prevalent opinions and supporting lines of arguments on the inclusion of religion on identity cards. In order to gather more arguments and opinions, rather than analyse factual newsreports, the sample of articles for the content analysis includes opinion articles (editorials, comments and interviews), presenting the opinions of journalists, specialists, academics, and politicians, who expressed their views in the national daily press. A thematic typology of the key lines of arguments justifying each position is constructed in order to demonstrate schematically the structure of the debate, the tension between those in favour and those against the inclusion of religion on identity cards and their respective lines of reasoning. The analysis attempts first to identify the main positions and opinion groups towards the issue in question. As a rule, every opinion is usually justified by arguments, which are placed into a theme category in an attempt to construct a wider thematic typology of supporting arguments and lines of reasoning used by each opinion group.

²⁷ The choice of method reflects a previous study involving a similar analysis of press coverage, this time regarding the place of Muslims in the school systems of France and Britain (Molokotos-Liederman 2000). The prior study focused on the press coverage relating to two symptomatic case studies: the Muslim headscarf controversy in France and the state funding of Muslim schools in Britain.

Careful attention has been used in the selection of newspapers, taking into account: circulation, audience, journalistic authority (reputation) and editorial position (ideological or political orientation)²⁸. With this in mind, six dailies have been selected from the mainstream press in Greece, representing different political views²⁹ on the identity card question. As a means of comparison, however, the study will also look at echoes of the issue abroad by analysing non-Greek perspectives on the identity card issue as these appear in the international press -- primarily representative French and British dailies³⁰.

The content analysis conducted in this pilot study concerns the first period of the conflict, namely from 1986 to 1999 (25 articles), and the beginning of the second period, from January to May 2000 (25 articles). The material analysed comprises a non-exhaustive sample of 50 articles on the identity cards issue drawn from the selected Greek newspapers. The objectives of the pilot study were to identify the key themes and issues of the conflict to be further analysed in the larger project.

IV. The media debate: building a typology of themes and arguments

The content analysis of the pilot study indicated that the debate over the identity cards conflict, as it took place in the Greek daily press, was focused more on historical, political and cultural issues, particularly the link between national identity and Orthodoxy, Church-State relations and Greece's relations with Europe, and less on questions of human rights. What differentiates those advocating for and against the inclusion of religion on identity cards is their line of reasoning, namely that their supporting arguments revolve around these common themes, which are referred to in a greater or lesser extent and interpreted in different ways in each case.

i. The opinion groups

There are two opinion groups that are clearly and diametrically opposed, one is in favour, the other is against the inclusion of religion on identity cards. Those who expressed a

²⁸ Except during the period of dictatorship (between 1967 and 1974), freedom of the press in Greece is guaranteed by the Constitution (Veremis 1995).

²⁹ The following daily papers were selected: *Kathimerini*, *Vima*, *Nea*, *Eleftherotypia*, *Rizospastis* and *Estia*. The articles were collected primarily via the internet through the research engines provided by each selected newspaper; they were also collected via subscription to press clipping services in Athens (*Idryma Votsi* and *Argo-Etairia Apokommaton Ellinikou & Xenou Typou*, Athens, Greece).

³⁰ For example, *Figaro*, *Le Monde*, *Libération*, *La Croix*, *The Times*, *The Guardian*, *The Independent* and *The Daily Telegraph*.

favourable opinion to the mandatory or voluntary declaration of religion on identity cards in the press were primarily members of the clergy, theologians and mostly centre-right wing and some socialist politicians. Among the religious minorities represented in Greece, the Muslim community did not seem to protest the inclusion of religion possibly because identity cards would act as an official document acknowledging the Muslim presence in northern Greece (*Libération*, 19 Dec. 1992).

Those who expressed their disagreement to the mandatory or voluntary declaration of religion on identity cards in the press were primarily legal experts, journalists, intellectuals and academics, representatives of the Catholic and Jewish communities in Greece, politicians representing mostly socialist and left wing parties, and some members of the clergy. Some intellectuals, academics and left wing politicians used the controversy of the identity cards as an opportunity to advocate a more radical change in Church-State relations.

ii. **Nation and Religion: the bonds between national identity and religious tradition**

To justify their positions both opinion groups refer to historical arguments that concern the question of national identity and the link between nation and religion, between Hellenism and Orthodoxy. Both parties acknowledge Orthodoxy as an integral part of Greece's heritage but differ in terms of the extent to which it should play a role in the definition of Greek identity.

Those in favour of religion on identity cards envision an all-embracing and holistic view of Hellenic-Orthodoxy. They conceive faith as a determining factor of individual and collective identity (*Vima*, 27 Apr. 1997; *Nea*, 19 Oct. 1991). In their view, Orthodoxy is not only a religious tradition, but also a whole culture and way of life; Orthodoxy becomes synonymous not only with Hellenism and the cultural and historical identity of Greece, but also with Greek nationality (*Nea*, 8 Apr. 1993, 11 May 2000; *Vima*, 17 Jan. 1993; *Eleftherotypia*, 10 Apr. 1993). This opinion group accuses the government of underestimating the significance of the Hellenic-Orthodox tradition and the historic role of the Church throughout Greek history (*Eleftherotypia*, 15 May 2000). In their view, the elimination of religion from identity cards constitutes an attempt to discredit the religious identity of the country and disconnect Greek people from Orthodoxy in an overall effort to transform Greece into a non-religious or secular country, like other western European countries, or to have the Orthodox population in Greece gradually become a religious minority (*Kathimerini*, 2 March 2000; *Eleftherotypia*, 12 March 1993, 15 May 2000). Moreover, the proliferation of non-Orthodox and non-Christian groups is of particular concern because by eliminating the

inclusion of religion from identity cards there is no way of estimating the number of non-Orthodox and non-Christians, which presents a national security risk, particularly when it involves keeping track of Muslim populations (*Eleftherotypia*, 18 Jan. 1993, 15 May 2000).

Referring to Church and State relations, those in favour of religion on identity cards see the conflict as part of a larger strategy to change the existing situation. They accuse the government of specifically attempting to undermine the Church and detach it from State support. In their view, because existing Church and State relations in Greece reflect the strong link between nation and religion, a separation of Church and State would actually mean the separation of Hellenism from Orthodoxy, which they see as detrimental to Greek society and culture (*Nea*, 8 Apr. 1993; *Vima*, 10 May 1998).

This opinion group sees Helleno-Orthodoxy as an essential component of Greece's heritage and an all-embracing notion that holds together and cements Greek society. There is a concern that the Greek Church and Greece is in a minority position within EU borders and is, thus, threatened by external forces, such as secularisation, by what is perceived as a primarily Catholic Europe and by a possible separation of Church and State. In fact, the underlying assumption is that, faced with further European integration, Greeks may not simply lose their faith, but most importantly, their Helleno-Orthodox identity. Therefore, existing Church and State relations in Greece are considered essential for preserving Helleno-Orthodoxy, which acts as a defence mechanism in the belief that upholding a homogeneous faith is crucial for the survival of Hellenism (*Nea*, 30 Dec. 1992). Thus, religion and national identity become a means of defending against the forces of globalisation and European integration ; this is also linked to the endorsement of a specific version of national identity, which identifies nationality with religion and assumes that being Greek means being Orthodox.

Those against the inclusion of religion on identity cards limit the scope of Helleno-Orthodoxy to Greece's historic heritage and to the cultural and spiritual sphere. Just like those in favour of including religion on identity cards, they acknowledge that the majority of Greek population are Orthodox but they argue that, precisely because Orthodoxy is a majority religion, there is no need to indicate religion on state documents (*Rizospastis*, 18 May 2000). They acknowledge the link between Hellenism and Orthodoxy at a cultural, rather than a political or state level (*Vima*, 10 May 1998). This opinion group also argues that the collective Orthodox identity of the majority of Greek citizens should not be confused with their individual identities established in a state document (*Nea*, 17 May 2000). Moreover, they conceive Orthodoxy as a faith to live by, and not as a belief to declare to government

authorities (*Nea*, 8 April 1993; *Vima*, 17 Jan. 1993). This opinion group further argues that Orthodoxy, having survived through its own strength throughout centuries, does not need a “crutch” from a state document and that including religion on identity cards does not strengthen nor weaken the position of the Church in Greek society (*Eleftherotypia*, 18 Jan. 1993, 19 May 2000; *Nea*, 15 May 2000, 25 May 2000).

Referring to arguments which are specific to Church and State relations, those against religion on identity cards insist that freeing the Greek Church from government control will be beneficial to both parties because the intermingling between Church and State undermines democracy and the original Christian mission of the Church (*Rizospastis*, 16 May 2000; *Kathimerini* 14 May 2000; *Nea*, 1 April 1993; *Vima*, 10 May 1998; *Eleftherotypia*, 13 May 2000, 16 May 2000). They perceive the Church's insistence on including religion on identity cards as tainting its ecumenical and spiritual mission, bordering on nationalism, fundamentalism and political favouritism (*Eleftherotypia*, 18 Jan. 1993, 6 Feb. 1998; *Vima*, 21 May 2000; *Rizospastis*, 16 May 2000; *Nea*, 25 May 2000). In a further critique of the Church, they argue that it is going through a moral and ethical crisis, that it does not seem to be concerned by the real problems of Greek society, and that it is attempting to discriminate against non-Orthodox and maintain spheres of influence on various facets of public and political life (*Eleftherotypia*, 18 Jan. 1993, 6 Feb. 1998). They allude to the Church's self-serving mission fuelling a dangerous form of nationalism, rather than a true serving of the Christian mission. Although few explicitly advocated the constitutional separation of Church and State³¹, most of those against religion on identity cards preferred a loser affiliation between the Greek State and the Church and favoured some form of liberalisation in their relationship.

iii. Greece's relations with Europe

Both those for and against the inclusion of religion on identity cards also refer to arguments that pertain to European integration and Greece's relations with the European Union.

Those advocating the mention of religion on identity cards argue that if Greek identity cards comply with the requirements of identifying a citizen and declaring his/her nationality accurately, the European Union has no jurisdiction over the inclusion of religion on identity cards in Greece (*Vima*, 17 Jan. 1993; *Eleftherotypia*, 13 May 2000). Referring to the period

³¹ In 1993 and 1998 intellectuals, as well as, political, scientific and artistic personalities in Greece published open letters advocating the separation of Church and State (*Eleftherotypia*, 1 April 1993, 5 May 1998).

when religion was recorded on identity cards with no problems or legal infractions, they suggest that the conflict is the result of external pressure. They refer particularly to the European Union and religious minorities inside and outside Greece, particularly Jewish lobbies, as the main sources exerting influence on the government to eliminate religion from identity cards (*Vima*, 27 Apr. 1997; *Nea*, 2 Feb. 1993, 25 May 2000).

The underlying line of reasoning here is that, at least in this case, national interests take precedence over European directives. There is clearly a tension between national and European scale sovereignty, particularly the concern of resigning to European control at the expense of national self-rule. Advocates of religion on identity cards see the question of the identity cards as a strictly domestic issue and accuse the government of compromising and undermining its authority while yielding to European influence; hence, they attribute the conflict to external factors, up to the point of subscribing to some “conspiracy theories” and international manipulation.

Those against religion on identity cards argue that no other European country records religion on public documents. As a member-state of the European Union and a signatory of the Schengen Agreement, it is Greece’s obligation to respect both national and international law provisions and to conform to the European norm (*Nea*, 2 Feb. 1993; *Eleftherotypia*, 18 Jan. 1993; *Kathimerini*, 3 March 2000). They refer particularly to the European Convention of Human Rights (*Eleftherotypia*, 18 Jan. 1993). This opinion group also insists that the recording religion on identity cards is contrary to the Greek privacy law of 1997, which eliminated religion from identity cards (*Eleftherotypia*, 7 Jan. 1992, 18 Jan. 1993, 13 May 2000, 9 May 2000; *Nea*, 25 Nov. 1991). They also point out that it is unconstitutional and contrary to Articles 5 and 13 of the Greek Constitution, pertaining to the protection of citizens by the state and to the inviolability of personal liberty, the freedom of religious conscience and the enjoyment of civil rights and liberties regardless of religious beliefs (*Eleftherotypia*, 18 Jan. 1993, 9 May 2000, 25 May 2000; *Vima*, 17 Jan. 1993, 27 April 1997; *Nea*, 12 May 2000, 15 May 2000). Their underlying legal argument is that the inclusion of religion on identity cards is unconstitutional and violates both national and international legislation. Differentiating citizens according to religious criteria puts some at greater risk of being discriminated because of their faith.

iv. **Human rights: majority or minority rights ?**

Finally, both opinion groups use national and international legislation and human rights provisions to justify their position³². Those advocating the upholding of religion on identity cards give priority to majority rights, the right to choose and the freedom of religious expression. They view the government's decision as anti-democratic since, in the name of European integration, the Greek State dismisses the religious conscience of the Greek population and denies the right of those who wish to declare their religion on identity cards (*Vima*, 21 May 2000; *Eleftherotypia*, 6 Feb. 1998, 9 May 2000, 15 May 2000; *Nea*, 25 May 2000). This opinion groups argues that to be consistent with respect of human rights in Greece, the State has the obligation to take into account the rights of the majority of Greeks who are Orthodox and wish to express their religion on public documents (*Kathimerini*, 9 May 2000; *Eleftherotypia*, 9 May 2000). They insist that since religious tolerance is guaranteed by both national and international legislation in Greece, fears of religious or ethnic discrimination of citizens are unfounded (*Eleftherotypia*, 10 April 1993; *Vima*, 27 April 1997).

This opinion group also evokes the fundamental right to chose by comparing the identity cards issue with legislation on marriage, according to which citizens can chose between a religious or a civil marriage. Thus, by suggesting that the government adopt a similar approach by giving citizens the freedom to choose whether or not to declare their religion on identity cards, they advocate at least a voluntary inclusion of religion (*Kathimerini*, 9 May 2000, 21 May 2000). Their underlying line of reasoning is based on human rights and the right of citizens to be able to express freely their religious belief. Thus, the previous assertion of an all-encompassing Helleno-Orthodoxy is taken a step further with a generalised assumption that the majority of Greeks truly and voluntarily wish to declare their faith on identity cards. Thus, the rights of the majority, the right to choose and the national collective identity seem to take precedence over minority rights, non-discrimination and the right to privacy.

Those opposed to the inclusion of religion on identity cards seem to give precedence to the right to privacy, minority rights and non-discrimination. They refer to the right of citizens to keep personal beliefs private (*Eleftherotypia*, 18 Jan. 1993). They argue that any coercive declaration of religion constitutes a violation of human rights, namely an infringement of freedom of religion and conscience and of the right to choose whether to disclose religious belief (*Nea*, 2 Feb. 1993; *Eleftherotypia*, 18 Jan. 1993, 9 May 2000, 25 May 2000;

³² A brief comparison of the arguments and themes that emerged in the Greek and international press (primarily French and British newspaper articles) it seems that in the international coverage of the identity cards conflict there is more emphasis on issues of human rights and religious discrimination with less reference to issues of Greek national identity.

Kathimerini, 14 May 2000). Some even point out that forcing citizens to declare their religious beliefs is incompatible with Christian freedom (*Nea*, 15 May 2000). According to this opinion group, the inclusion of religion on identity cards transforms religious belief from a private matter to a public declaration of faith, when, in a democratic society, the State has to remain neutral by not interfering with the personal beliefs of citizens (*Nea*, 25 Nov. 1991, 25 May 2000; *Eleftherotypia*, 18 Jan. 1993, 25 May 2000). This means that the religious, political and ideological beliefs of citizens are not essential elements with which to establish an individual identity in a public document (*Nea*, 2 Feb. 1993; *Eleftherotypia*, 19 May 2000, 25 May 2000; *Vima*, 27 April 1997; *Kathimerini*, 3 March 2000, 14 May 2000; *Nea*, 25 Nov. 1991, 25 May 2000). Furthermore, they argue that the determination of what information is necessary for the proper identification of citizens on a government document is the sole responsibility of the State (*Eleftherotypia*, 16 May 2000, 19 May 2000; *Nea*, 25 May 2000; *Rizospastis*, 18 May 2000; *Kathimerini*, 14 May 2000).

This opinion group also refers to the historical origins of the law that established the inclusion of religion on identity cards, which they see as a remnant of an anti-democratic regime (*Vima*, 14 May 2000). The policy of recording religion on identity cards differentiates citizens according to religious and/or ethnic terms, who can become victims of direct or indirect discrimination (*Nea*, 19 Oct. 1991, 25 Nov. 1991, 6 April 1993; *Kathimerini*, 14 May 2000). This is particularly problematic for those who do not wish to declare their faith and for non-Orthodox or atheist citizens, who can be treated as different or "less Greek" (*Vima*, 27 April 1997; *Rizospastis* 18 May 2000). Moreover, even if the mention of religion were to become voluntary, there is still the risk that citizens would be differentiated, thus discriminated, according to their choice on whether or not to declare their faith (*Eleftherotypia*, 18 Jan. 1993, 16 May 2000, 18 May 2000; *Vima*, 17 Jan. 1993). This risk is even more pronounced if a citizen does not indicate a religious affiliation, which in Greece can be interpreted as suspicious or as a sign of being an outsider. This means that the mere presence or absence of religion on identity cards can be used as a criterion in itself with which to discriminate citizens (*Eleftherotypia*, 18 Jan. 1993, 16 May 2000; *Vima*, 17 Jan. 1993). Therefore, dropping religion from identity cards rightfully fulfils the State's obligation to protect citizens from any potential discrimination (*Eleftherotypia*, 18 Jan. 1993, 6 Feb. 1998).

Opponents of including religion on identity cards also point out that it is the Parliament and the elected government, which represent the Greek nation (*Vima*, 21 May 2000; *Kathimerini*, 14 May 2000). In their view, the Church's proposal for a national referendum exceeds the limits of representational democracy and gives power to the majority while ignoring the rights of the minority by imposing the will of those who wish to declare their

religion on those who do not (*Eleftherotypia*, 18 May 2000, 20 May 2000; *Kathimerini* 14 May 2000). Their underlying line of reasoning is the concern that, given the strong identification of national identity and citizenship with religious affiliation, non-Orthodox citizens are at greater risk of being discriminated, or at best differentiated from the Orthodox norm. Thus, the right to privacy, non-discrimination and the protection of religious minorities take precedence over the right to choose or the rights of the majority.

Finally, unlike those in favour of including religion on identity cards, who use arguments based on social, cultural and historical factors to support their case, those against use a more practical line of arguments. For example, they point out that address, occupation, marital status and religious affiliation (through conversion) can change at any time; because identity cards have to include information that establishes the permanent identity of an individual religion, religion does not belong on such documents (*Eleftherotypia*, 18 Jan. 1993; *Nea*, 22 May 2000). In some cases, this opinion group even suggested that citizens wishing to record their religion on identity cards could request a special identity card issued specifically by the Church (*Eleftherotypia*, 16 May 2000, 18 May 2000). Finally, they point out that the practice of recording religion on identity cards does not accurately reflect the religious beliefs of the Greek population: authorities fill out the space provided on the identity card with an Orthodox affiliation automatically because many citizens declare an Orthodox affiliation to avoid administrative hassles or to ensure that they are not seen as outsiders (*Nea*, 8 April 1993). Their underlying reasoning is that the mere declaration of religious affiliation to state authorities does not necessarily constitute an accurate reflection of the religious beliefs of the population. This may also suggest that the claim of an Orthodox majority among the Greek population professed by many advocating the inclusion of religion on identity cards may not necessarily a true reflection of Greek society.

V. Concluding remarks and directions for future research

Going beyond the specific arguments used by each opinion group, the highly mediated character of the identity cards conflict points to the link between media and religion, particularly the role of mass media in the process of national self-definition. The analysis of this important theme merits further research but it goes beyond the scope of this short paper.

The pilot study and preliminary analysis of the identity cards conflict provides some key research questions to be further investigated in the larger project and in future research avenues.

i. Although the identity cards conflict confirms the historic link between the Orthodox Church and the Greek State, it also reveals the frictions within this partnership. The significant stakes behind any sort of constitutional separation between Church and State underscore a tension between, on the one hand, Greek Orthodoxy, as popular religious belonging and part of national identity coexisting with the Western life styles and the new realities of Greek society, and, on the other hand, the institution of the Church of Greece, which has showed some signs of conservatism and resistant ambivalence to pluralism³³ in its politicised discourse and positions on a variety of issues³⁴. Through the media coverage of the identity cards conflict, the Church of Greece, acting as the official representative of Greek Orthodoxy, seems to have taken on the role of an institutional pressure group expressing growing social and economic insecurities and popular ambivalence with regard to increasing European Union integration and ongoing globalisation.

ii. Both those in favour and those against religion on identity cards clearly acknowledge the bond between nation and religion, between Hellenism and Orthodoxy. However, the former see Helleno-Orthodoxy in holistic and oppositional terms, as the essence of Greek identity and an all-embracing defence mechanism against the West. The latter see the Helleno-Orthodox heritage of Greece as a component and a resource of Greece's spiritual and cultural identity.

The "Helleno-Christian" link in contemporary Greek identity with its inherent dualism between a Hellenic (ancient Greek) and Byzantine (Orthodox) past is part of the richness of Greece's heritage and history but it is also a source of ambiguity, carrying a conflict of ideas. "Helleno-Christianity" carries tensions between Orthodox traditionalism and growing trends of secularization, between tradition and modernity, between Greece's eastern and western³⁵ heritage, and between its national and European identity. These antagonistic and polarised elements create an ambiguous outlook, positioning contemporary Greece between East and West (Tsoukalas 1999). This cultural dualism between modernizers and traditionalists,

³³ We use the term pluralism in a philosophical sense as "a system that recognizes more than one ultimate principle" (The Concise Oxford Dictionary).

³⁴ For a more detailed analysis on the politicised and populist discourse of the Church of Greece, see Stavrakakis 2002.

³⁵ The British author Patrick Leigh Fermor in a travelogue on Roumeli in Central Greece refers to the "Helleno-Romaic Dilemma", which helps illustrate the dual heritage still at work in contemporary Greece. The author provides a long list of characteristics of the Hellene and the *Romios*³⁵, some of which are relevant to the scope of this study: the *Romios* looks on Greece as outside Europe, while the Hellene looks on Greece as part of Europe and a region of fellow Europeans; the *Romios* sees the Orthodox Church as a unifying guardian in times of troubles, while the Hellene sees the Orthodox Church as a symbol of Hellenism; the *Romios* looks back to the glory of Byzantium, symbolized by St. Sophia / Constantinople, while the Hellene looks back to the golden age of Pericles, symbolized by the Parthenon (Leigh-Fermor 1966). Greeks referred to *Romios* (the Greek word for Roman) to indicate the multiethnic citizens of the Byzantine Empire (New Rome) who spoke Greek and were primarily defined through their Christian faith and their allegiance to the Byzantine emperor (Clark 2000, Hart 1992).

between westerners and easterners, is still a central theme in the political, social and cultural life in contemporary Greece (Allison and Nicolaidis 1997) with some significant consequences:

- The linkage between national identity and religious tradition, and more particularly the bond between Hellenism and Orthodoxy has contributed to the identification of Greek identity with Orthodoxy. However, this assumption is being put to the test by the challenge of pluralism, as Greek society is becoming increasingly diverse through the growing presence of religious minorities. As a result of immigration, there are increasing pressures on Greece to evolve from a 'monocultural' nation to a multicultural society (Alivizatos 1999). The ongoing influx of immigrants will highlight the challenges of integrating minorities in Greek society, which is already starting to confront religious and ethnic diversity; it will also question the link between citizenship and religion and raise questions of self-definition, thus challenging the assumption that being Greek is synonymous with being Orthodox and questioning "Greek Orthodoxy as a marker of Greekness" (Pollis 1999, p. 187).

- The historical and cultural dualism associated with the concept of "Helleno-Orthodoxy" and the dichotomy between Hellenism (associated with modernity) and Orthodoxy (linked with tradition) seems to cultivate a simultaneously exclusive (Greece's specificity as the only Orthodox country in the EU and among Western European countries) and inclusive (classical Hellenism linked with the liberal ideas of the Enlightenment and with the idea of Europe) image of Greece vis-à-vis Europe. Various academic and political circles both inside and outside Greece have debated the possible incompatibility between the Orthodox tradition and modernity with no clear consensus (Fokas 2000). According to some views, the linkage between Hellenism and Orthodoxy and the opposition between tradition and modernity promote an exceptionalist³⁶ view of Greece according to which the Greek case is not only unique, but that it cannot be fully understood by Europe and is, thus, considered as incompatible with western modernity (Allison and Nicolaidis 1997). From a psycho-analytic perspective, the historical and cultural dichotomy between Hellenism and Orthodoxy, between tradition and modernity, can also be seen more as the "split Greek identity" (Lipowatz 1991). However, within the wide range of intellectual debates on the Greek case (see Fokas 2000) it is important to look at the complexities beyond the simple opposition between modernity and tradition (Orthodoxy). As Stavrakakis points out, "in Greece it is not

³⁶ Elisabeth Prodromou argues against "the fallacy of the charge of Greek exceptionalism, in terms of the country's church-state arrangement, and the consequences for the quality of Greek democracy" (Prodromou 2002). However, the prohibition of proselytism and the strong continued linkage of national identity and religious tradition seem to be more specific to Greece relative to other EU member states (with the possible exception of Ireland).

unusual for social objects and institutions to behave in a ‘modernising’ way on one occasion and in a ‘traditionalist’ way in the next” (Stavrakakis 2002, p. 41). In terms of the specific constitutional arrangements between Church and State, Prodromou proposes the concept of “multiple modernities” in Greece, in the sense that “the diversity in state-relation arrangements may suggest the possibility of different representations of modernity” (Prodromou 2002). This concept is of particular interest and remains to be further analysed in the larger project by exploring the complexities and contradictions in the arguments behind the positions of those for or against religion on identity cards.

- The combined dual heritage between East and West also coincides with some ambivalent or even anti-western tendencies. These have been expressed in religious terms through some of the discourse of the Orthodox Church, which, particularly during the identity cards conflict, tends to identify modernisation and European culture with a Catholic and Protestant core³⁷. Anti European or anti-western tendencies³⁸ in Greece can be partially explained by the view that since Greece’s EU membership, economic progress has outpaced social development³⁹, which has resulted in a growing sense of insecurity with regards to the global economy. Furthermore, the construction of a common European culture, is often perceived often as synonymous with the undermining of Greek culture and Hellenic-Orthodoxy (Makrides 1993). This growing insecurity is reinforced by the fact that, although

³⁷ This tendency is historically rooted in the first centuries of the Byzantine Empire and the old conflict between the Western Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox Church, which goes back to the great schism between the two churches (Woodhouse 1986). Indicative of the animosity of the Eastern Orthodox Church towards the Catholic Church is the popular dictum that the Papal tiara (i.e., the Fourth Crusade of 1204 being the primary factor for the decline of the Byzantine Empire) is worse than the Turkish turban (under which the Orthodox Church was in a privileged position) (Dimitras 1984, Tsoukalas 1999). Venetian occupation and extensive missionary activities converting Orthodox populations to Catholicism have also contributed to an overall hostile attitude towards the Catholic Church (Dimitras 1984, Champion 1993). Today it seems that many Orthodox Churches, including the Greek one, consider most positions and actions of the Catholic Church as a new form of crusades towards the East (Anastassiadis 1996). The recent conflict in Yugoslavia illustrates how these historically negative attitudes towards the Catholic Church still resonate today. For example, even before the NATO bombing of Serbia, most Greeks supported the Serbs and mainstream public opinion in Greece, including the Orthodox Church, was opposed to the bombing of Serbia by the Western allies, because of a sense of solidarity for the Orthodox Serbs. In purely religious terms, the conflict was seen as the opposition between an Orthodox Serbia and a Catholic Croatia. Another example is the protest campaign organized by some Orthodox communities against the Pope's recent visit in Greece, which was perceived as part of a larger strategy to "latinize" the Balkans and eastern Europe to the detriment of the Orthodox faith (*The Guardian*, 4 May 2001, *The Guardian*, 20 March 2001, *International Herald Tribune*, 5-6 May 2001, *Wall Street Journal*, 10 May 2001).

³⁸ Ambivalent or anti-EU feelings towards what is perceived as a primarily Catholic Europe are not specific to Greece, particularly if we look at the British and Danish examples, which also demonstrate some strong anti European attitudes. What is more specific to Greece is that Greek anti-European attitudes and an ambivalent outlook towards the West seem to be rooted in cultural assumptions and political reasons tying national definition to a specific religious tradition (Orthodoxy) stemming from a tumultuous political history, Greece’s Hellenic-Orthodox heritage and century-old religious conflicts with the West.

³⁹ In his article "Dress Code for Greek Dinner: Golden Straitjacket" (*International Herald Tribune*, 13 June 2001), the journalist Thomas Friedman writes on the economic benefits to Greece through membership in European Union. He uses Greece as a laboratory for an interesting clash between two theories: the triumph of liberal democracy and free market capitalism and Samuel Huntington's clash of civilizations. "Greece is the last EU country to leave the Old World behind, and proud of it. And it is determined to prove that while you may have to give up your politics when you put on the golden straitjacket, you don't have to give up your culture" (Friedman 2001).

the European Union has no official denomination, its religious core in 1995 was estimated as approximately 53% Catholic and 20% Protestant (9% Anglican, 3% Orthodox, 2% Muslim, 0.5% Jewish) (Willaime 1996). This underpins Greek ambivalence towards the European Union, as it is and will remain the only Orthodox member state of the EU, even after Poland, the Czech Republic and Hungary join the EU (Davie 1996, 2000).

Finally, some additional points of interest for future research seem to emerge, particularly if they are viewed within plans for European Union enlargement towards other Orthodox countries. The role of Orthodoxy in Greece's relations with the European Union and the increasingly important role of Orthodoxy in view of European Union enlargement (which may include additional Orthodox countries, such as Bulgaria and Romania with historic national Orthodox Churches), remain important and timely topics and areas of study⁴⁰. In this light, historic divisions between Eastern (Orthodox) and Western (Catholic and Protestant) Christianity could re-emerge in new ways. Orthodoxy can become a common reference point and a unifying force in Eastern Europe and, in that capacity, it may also be able to act as a bridge for the European Union in its relations with the Orthodox Christian world. As the only Christian Orthodox member-state of the EU, Greece has a key role acting as a bridge between the European Union and its relations with the Orthodox countries in Eastern Europe, the Balkans and Russia, where there are signs of a religious resurgence.

⁴⁰ See Fokas 2000 and her ongoing doctoral dissertation at LSE on the role of religion in Greek-EU relations.

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AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL STATEMENT

Lina Molokotos-Liederman (Ph.D, *DEA, Ecole Pratique des Hautes Etudes*, Paris; MS, Boston University/College of Communication) received her PhD in 2001 with highest honours from the *EPHE/Section des Sciences Religieuses* (Sorbonne). Her dissertation examined religious diversity in public schools, particularly the case of Muslims in the school systems of France and Britain. She currently lives in London and is a researcher at the Centre for European Studies/University of Exeter for a Leverhulme funded research project on “The religious factor in the construction of Europe: Greece, Orthodoxy and the European Union”. She is also a researcher at the *Groupe de Sociologie des Religions et de la Laïcité (GSRL/IRESCO)* in Paris for the research programme: “Education, Citizenship and Religions in Europe” (*“Ecole, Citoyennete et Religions en Europe”*). Finally, she is the Programme Chair for the 2003 annual meeting of the American Association for the Sociology of Religion (ASR).

ABSTRACT

**“The religious factor in the construction of Europe:
Greece, Orthodoxy and the European Union”**

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**The spirit of Greek Nationalism:
the Greek case
in the light of Greenfeld's conceptual framework.**

Introduction

In this paper, I will try to give an outline of the basic questions in my research project, my fundamental hypotheses and directions. I will use the theoretical framework provided by the recent works of Liah Greenfeld on Nationalism and Modernity to interpret the nature, the transformations and the goals of Greek Nationalism. Two hypotheses will be tested:

a. Nationalism, while having certain common characteristics for all nations, varies in its form from nation to nation and from time to time. The idea of the Greek Nation emerged in the late 18th century in the minds of a small group of intellectuals and has, since then, not only been diffused –or imposed- on the population but has also changed its meaning, type and nature throughout the 19th and part of the 20th centuries.

b. While paying excessive attention to “objective” social structures and conditions, social scientists often marginalize the importance of the –by definition subjective- values and ideas that determine, not peoples’ conditions but their goals, motivations and purposes. My theoretical premise is that these goals are ultimately more important to understand social behavior than material conditions –and cannot be derived or deduced from these.

Nationalism is a form of consciousness, a way of understanding one’s identity and one’s fundamental goals. It is both a worldview, the definition of the nature of one’s

community of belonging, and the definition of a set of collective goals which vary from nation to nation and from time to time. It is, I will argue, the definition of these goals, contingent upon the particular people who define them and the reasons of their adoption by the nation, which explain the areas of strength, weakness and achievements of States. I will use this premise to the Greek case.

The theoretical problems of nationalism

Although a nation can share the same language, religion, customs, territory etc., all these elements put together –or any one of them- do not make up a nation. They may define the identity of a community. Benedict Anderson defines the nation as an imagined community, and stresses the constructed -and often imposed by force- character of such common elements as language, religion etc. In Anderson’s view¹, nations are imagined communities which result from the changes introduced by Modernity. It is therefore not the existing “ethnic” characteristics that make up the nation but the emerging nation which selects and constructs the elements which will be imposed upon the whole community as distinctive national characteristics. Against the Modernists, the primordialist view stresses the importance of ethnic communities (distinguished by ethnic characteristics such as language), for the development of a nation². However, while arguing about the scope and importance of ethnic characteristics in the formation of communities, both these theories seem to miss the crucial question: what makes a community –any community- a nation?

In fact, there have always been communities during History, and since any community has to define itself by certain –arbitrary- characteristics, all historical communities were imagined communities. Some of them were based on religion, others on territory, others on language. But what distinguishes a nation from all these communities?

¹ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, London:Verso, 1991.

² See, for instance, Anthony D. Smith, *The ethnic origins of nations*, Oxford, UK: New York, NY, USA: Blackwell, 1987.

Greenfeld's theory³

For Greenfeld, the definition of a nation does not include any consideration of ethnicity. The specific characteristics of a community –ethnic or not- are not related to this community being a nation or not. The core idea of nationalism, i.e. what distinguishes a nation from any other kind of historical community, is its political philosophy. Nations can be based on language, as in Greece, on religion, or nothing of these, as in Switzerland. But all nations share the core principles of nationalism, namely popular sovereignty and equality. Nationalism is a form of consciousness, a worldview. In a nationalistic worldview, the ultimate foundation and source of all legitimacy derives from a people defined as the nation. Transcendence, orders etc. are ultimately dependant on the arbitrary decision of the people. This means, first of all, that a nationalistic worldview is necessarily secular. Even when religion functions as a national characteristic, or when Constitutions are made in reference to a specific religious dogma, theology is seen as ultimately independent from the political sphere. The second important characteristic of nationalism is the alleged equality of all the members of the nation. The word “nation” was used in France to designate the elite, in opposition to the populace. Nationalism meant the extension of the “nation” to all the inhabitants of France, and therefore the symbolic elevation of every citizen to the rank of the elite. Therefore, nationalism defines a community of equals, and stands in opposition to previous forms of consciousness, such as in a community of orders, for instance.

This elevation of the people to the rank of the elite creates a feeling of pride, which is related to one's belonging to the nation. This peculiar feeling, once the exclusive possession of the higher social ranks, becomes available to every one.

The historical question –because it is a historical question- is therefore the following: why and how does a particular community evolve into a nation? Why and how does the elite accept to share its higher status with the populace? And unless we suppose that identities are mere reflections of structural changes and can be deducted logically

³ Liah Greenfeld, *Nationalism, Five ways to modernity*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992.

and *a priori*, this is a historical question. It is the question of the emergence of this particular and unique form of consciousness that we call nationalism.

The story of nationalism

Nationalism first emerged in England, in the 16th century. At the time, nothing could predict it.

It was what we call a historical accident – a new image of the world, which emerged in the minds of some individuals. However, people do not simply decide to change their identity or worldview, neither does this identity reflect their objective situation. The people who created English nationalism were members of the English aristocracy, at a time when the rise of the Crown challenged their privileges. The experience of the English aristocracy in the 16th century was a status inconsistency, i.e. the experience of a contradiction between the image of themselves and their position on the one hand, and on the other hand their experiences from the outside world. Nationalism appeared to them as a form of answer to this anomic situation. The political legitimacy would not derive from the King but from a people to whom they belonged. This new identity seemed preferable to the identity crisis they were experiencing. Protestantism, with its insistence on the importance of individual reading of the Bible and the possibility for every person to understand theological questioning, was used by the first nationalists to promote a much more radical view: namely that every person was powerful enough to decide on matters of politics –and perhaps even religion. By the mid 16th century, England was a nation. Being a protestant or a catholic country appeared ultimately less important than the identity of The Queen of England –whether she was English or French. Thomas More’s trial shows the tragic destiny of those who remained faithful to the old idea of the *Respublica Christiana*, while the political consciousness of England had changed.

English nationalism is individualistic. This means that the nation was perceived as a total of individuals, equal in their common possession of reason. National pride was built upon this idea, and this explains the sustained development of scientific activity which started in England in the 17th century as a matter of national prestige. National

prestige was also sought in other spheres, such as economic growth, which started very early in England, and quickly transformed this country into the biggest economic power in Europe.

For more than two centuries, nationalism existed only in England, and England was the only nation. The nationalistic worldview was then imported, in the 18th century, in France, Germany and Russia, all of them becoming nations as well. The reasons why every one of these countries adopted a nationalistic worldview are particular to each one. In every case, however, nationalism was introduced by certain people –or a social class– who experienced some kind of identity crisis, usually linked with status inconsistency. In France, for instance, the adoption of nationalism by the local nobility came after two centuries during which French aristocracy, while keeping their name, were being robbed of all their privileges by the growing royal power. On the contrary, in Germany, nationalism was rather introduced by middle class intellectuals.

When introduced into another country, nationalism is transformed and adapted to the specific conditions of the situation.

In France, the collectivity defined as nation was perceived not as a total of individuals but as a collective being, possessing a sort of consciousness and will as a whole. This view is philosophically expressed in Jean-Jacques Rousseau.

When introduced in Germany, the idea of the nation changed again. The nation was perceived as a unique people, defined in ethnic terms, as a community of language and culture. The German case shows us also a phenomenon which will be extremely important in other cases of nationalism. The idea of a nation is usually accompanied by an imitation of the nation which serves as a model –French used England, Germans and Russians used France. As the new nation is seen by its members as potentially equal to the model, and national pride is linked with competition, inability to compete successfully often leads to feelings of resentment and frustration. Resentment, in turn, might lead to a complete change of attitude towards the model, which ceases to be seen as something desirable. Depending on the case, the model might then be considered as an inadequate realization of its ideas: for instance, though France admired England for the freedom of its citizens, resentment led to the idea that liberty in England was in fact a fallacy and that true liberty existed only in France. The most extreme reaction to

resentment is a “transvaluation of values”, in which values initially associated with the model are seen as not desirable, and replaced by their opposites. For instance, German resentment led to a transvaluation of values in which reason, initially admired, became associated with decadence and decline.

Types of nationalism

To sum up: Nationalism is a new form of consciousness which emerged in England in the 16th century. It is the image of one’s identity as member of a sovereign community of equals. Nationalism is gradually adopted by other countries, and the adaptation to the new situation changes its original meaning, so that a nation ceases to mean a sovereign people and acquires the significance of a unique people. Greenfeld classifies nationalisms into three major types, using two criteria. The first is the nature of the community: the nation can be understood as a sum of individuals, as in England or, later, the United States; or as a collective being, as in France, Germany, Russia. In the first case, nationalism is individualistic; in the second, collectivistic. Greenfeld argues that collectivistic nationalisms, because of their potential disrespect for the particular individuals, may lead to authoritarian governments. The second criterion is whether citizenship is understood in civic terms, as in France, or in ethnic terms, as in Germany or Russia. In the latter, national pride derives mostly from the idea of one’s sharing the ethnic characteristics of one’s nation. There are three types of nationalism: the individualistic-civic type, as in England, the United States, and a few other countries, but a minority in the world; the collectivistic-civic type (for example France); and finally, the collectivistic-ethnic type, in most of the nations in the world.

Goals of nationalism

For Greenfeld, nationalism is the major component of modernity. Spheres or activities associated with modernity acquired a sustained development only with nationalism. One of these spheres is science, which was developed and institutionalized for the first time in the 17th century in England, because considered as a matter of national

pride. Another sphere is economic growth. The growth of English economy was directly linked to the national identity and to the association of economic growth with national prestige. The spread of economic growth to other countries was due, according to Greenfeld, to the international competition among nations in the economic sphere⁴. It is significant, in this respect, that countries that chose economy as a realm of competition grew sometimes in a spectacular way, even if they did not possess any infrastructure or natural resources. Such is, for instance, the case of Japan. On the contrary, countries like Russia, possessing a huge economic potential, never developed a competitive economy. This is due, for Greenfeld, to the fact that these countries associated their national prestige to other spheres of activity, such as territorial aggrandizement for instance, and not to economics.

Questions opened

Greenfeld's theoretical framework opens a new set of questions for scholars of nationalism. The fundamental question, when dealing with the emergence of nationalism in a specific country is the following. By whom was the idea of the nation imported and why? In other terms, what were the motivations of these agents, what needs did this idea fulfill? In most cases, the situation which opens a certain social group to the national idea is some kind of identity crisis, usually a feeling of status inconsistency. The second question concerns the country which served as a model, and the type of nationalism which was adopted. In France, for instance, the model was England, and the type of nationalism was individualistic; however, internal situations in France led to its transformation to a collectivistic mode. The third question concerns the goals set by nationalists, the areas from where national pride was derived. Such areas could be economic development, territorial aggrandizement, literature or even religious accomplishments. Finally, the degree of success or failure in these goals defines the possible resentment, frustrations and a resulting aggressiveness against the countries initially seen as models.

⁴ Liah Greenfeld, *The Spirit of Capitalism. Nationalism and economic growth*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001.

The Greek nation: an imported idea

In the Greek case, not only was the idea of the nation as a sovereign community imported from the West, but also the particular form that it took in the Greek case. In fact, the national idea, the image of a sovereign community, was first introduced in the Ottoman Empire by Rhigas Ferraios. His political program, his mentioning of a sovereign people (*autokrator laos*) cannot misguide: Rhigas was a nationalist, even though he was probably not a Greek nationalist. Only the fact that nationalism is commonly associated to ethnicity make scholars see Rhigas as a pre-national figure. Rhigas' nationalism would encompass all the peoples of the Ottoman Empire. Had it succeeded, it would probably not have led to an ethnic nationalism, based on language, blood or religion. But this is not more a problem than the absence of any shared ethnic characteristic in the Swiss –and arguably the American- case. However, Rhigas' model did not work, and Greek nationalism emerged from different sources. In fact, the image of a Greek Nation, of a sovereign community, was linked to a specific people in the Ottoman Empire. However, this people did not actually exist. Hellenes, a community of the past, was brought back to life in a legendary form by the classicists of Western Europe. During the Byzantine and most of the Ottoman Empires, despite some notable exceptions, the term “Ellin” meant usually pagan, and was used as an accusation in a Christian environment. A revindication of Greek identity and philosophical heritage appeared from time to time ; in the thomist party of the 14th and 15th centuries; in the neo-platonism of George Gemisthos Plethon; in the attempts of a synthesis between Greek Antiquity an Christianity in the 18th century. But these movements were, on the whole, rather marginal, and did not associate Hellenism to a particular people considered as its carrier. During the Ottoman period, the greek-speaking Christian subjects belonged to the *rum millet* and derived their identity mostly from their religious belonging.

Perceptions of Greeks in the West

In the West, however, the term Greeks was used to designate Christian Orthodox subjects: for theologians of the Roman Catholic Church, it was an implicit accusation against a Church which, together with the Greek tongue, was accused of having kept elements of ancient Greek paganism. The various theological works published in the West under such titles as “Against heresies of the Greeks” leave no doubt as to the significance of this term: Greek was a negative definition of Eastern Christians. After the Fall of Constantinople, Greeks had, in their collective imagery, similar negative connotations as Muslims. For some Western theologians, schismatic Greeks were seen as traitors, and thus even worse than Muslims. Interest for Christian Orthodoxy rose with Protestantism. For the first time, Christian Orthodox were seen as a Christian community, which could join sides with either Protestants or Catholics. The “Greek Church” thus became a focus of interest for Catholic and Protestant missionaries, and, in the collective imagery, Christians were clearly dissociated from the rest of the population of the Ottoman Empire. But the real change in the formation of the idea of the Greek nation came in the 18th century, under the combined influence of neo-classicism and nationalism in Britain and France. Classicism brought Ancient Greece to the fore once again, and made journeys to the Greek land frequent. On the other hand, once England and France developed a national consciousness, they could not perceive the world in another way than composed of nations like themselves. For the first time, it seemed natural to raise the question: what had remained of the Ancient Greek nation? Where were its descendants? It seemed natural that these were to be found in the same geographical area, and that they would be recognizable by language and culture. The hypothesis that nationalism might not apply to the Ancient Greek case, or that centuries of History had changed peoples’ forms of consciousness did not strike their minds. And since Ancient Greece was the model of many Western nationalists in their fight for freedom, it was almost natural that the descendants of these Ancient Greeks were seen as the nation *par excellence*.

The first Greek nationalists

Therefore, the image of a Greek nation kept enslaved by the Turks was created in the West much earlier than in the Ottoman Empire. It was adopted by certain intellectuals of the Ottoman Empire, who had the chance to study in Western Europe and, therefore, brought these European ideas in their homeland. The motivations of this first Greek nationalist class are to be found in the experiences of these people who, once in the West, suddenly realized how the West considered them: they felt all the pride associated to the glory of Ancient Greece, of Plato and Aristotle, of whom they were recognized as the direct descendants. In fact, the West saw these young students as the representatives of the intellectual elite of the Greek Nation. And yet, there was, strictly speaking, no such nation. At a quick look at those people who were supposed to constitute the Greek nation, the Greek-speaking orthodox population of the Empire, Koraes was struck by their absence of national consciousness and knowledge of the Greek language. The population of the Empire did not conceive themselves as a sovereign people because such an idea was unconceivable at that place and time. Therefore, the first national priority for Koraes was not the struggle for political independence but for intellectual and cultural elevation. In other terms, Koraes wanted to show to the West that this nation, of which he was seen as a representative, really existed and deserved admiration. Koraes therefore experienced a sense of personal dignity and national pride as being one and the same thing.

The efforts of Ypsilanti for an uprising of the Orthodox population against the central government were of a much different nature. Although there were certainly references to the Ancient Greek heritage, the main reference for this Revolution was the support of Russia in a general uprising of all the Christian populations kept under a Muslim rule. In other terms, Ypsilanti continued the old Russian policy of using the Orthodox populations of the Empire to expand its influence and control. In these uprisings, references to the sovereignty of the people, or to ideas of self-determination, were more rare.

We know that what we call Greek Revolution was in fact a complex phenomenon, a mix of Greek Revolutionary ideas, of religious uprising and social conflicts between brigands and notables. The intervention of the West and the creation of the Greek State would give to Greek Nationalism a concrete form –at least for a while.

The Greek civic nationalism

The first Greek Nationalism was civic –and not ethnic. Greek citizenship was awarded to any person born in the Greek State and believing in Christ. But the faith in Christ was not conceived as an ethnic distinction, as the national characteristic of a people, but rather as a way of putting forward the religious beliefs of the people and finding a way of uniting people who were living in the Greek state but were divided by language, social class etc. Greek Nationalism was also individualistic and not collectivistic. I have not found, as in the French case, images of Greece as a collective body, as more than the total of its individuals, The only such images come from western Europe, such as Delacroix's painting of Greece as a woman emerging from the battlefield.

The model of Greek Nationalism was France, England and Germany. The idea was that an imitation of Western Europe was natural for Greeks, because that would indirectly lead them back to Greek Antiquity. The cultivation of Ancient Greek, the neo-classicist architecture, the reshaping of administrative divisions to fit the Ancient Greek model proved one thing: Greek Nationalism was adapting itself to the ideal image which Western Europe had of Ancient Greece: in fact, as in a theatre, Greek Nationalists were recreating Ancient Greece on a national basis. For Western Europe, as well as for many Greek Nationalists, that was enough. In the beginning, such goals as territorial aggrandizement or, especially, ethnic considerations such as the liberation of the remaining Greeks of the Ottoman Empire, were secondary.

The Great Idea, put forward by Colettis in the 1830s, did not immediately acquire its famous and well-known sense of conquest of Constantinople. It meant, at first, an organization of the country in order to become culturally homogeneous. Later, Colettis used the term "Megali Idea", but it was not clear whether that meant the recreation of the Byzantine Empire on a Greek basis of just the annexation of some parts of the Balkan area by the Greek State. In any case, it is difficult to know whether the Great Idea corresponded to a specific nationalistic vision of things. Probably it did. But it most certainly provided a unique solution for the canalization of violence from within the country to the outside. The Great Idea transformed the threatening brigands into national

soldiers and gave them a cause, in the same way that the Crusades gave a cause to all the violent elements of Western Europe and, by directing that violence to the East, kept it out of Europe.

The ethno-collectivistic turn: from Paparrigopoulos to Communism

The real change in the nature of Greek nationalism came in the middle of the 19th century. Two elements are responsible for this change. First, the limited successes of the Greek state and a feeling of betrayal from the Great Powers. Second, the pressures exercised from members of the Greek-speaking populations of the Ottoman Empire, who were initially excluded from important positions in the Greek administration and were not allowed entrance in the nation. Last but not least, the violent introduction of German phyletic nationalism came as a form of challenge of the very existence of the Greek nation, through Falmereyer's work. More than an identity crisis, Falmereyer made Greeks realize that Europe was more and more understanding nationalism in ethnic-and not in civic- terms.

How did these elements combine in the Greek case? The feelings of exhaustion, of failure and betrayal from the West developed a movement of rejection. This rejection of the West focused on the idea of a specific and unique Greek identity, which was incompatible with a total imitation of the West, and which had to find its own way. Like in Germany or Russia, frustration led to rejection. The pressure of the "Eterochtones", i.e. Greeks who were not citizens of the Greek State, raised the problem of the integration of people who were not citizens of the Greek State. A new definition of nationality was needed. Falmereyer's work provided the form later adopted by this new construction. This is not the end of the list. An insistence on the Ancient Greek heritage was felt as anti-religious. In fact, all the references of the Greek Orthodox Church, such as the Byzantine Empire, were condemned and seen as centuries of tyranny and obscurantism. Therefore, the popular reaction against the elites often took the form of religious movements. For instance, people would not tolerate a monarch (Othon) who would not be Christian. Orthodoxy became a weapon against people who destroyed the Orthodox monasteries to create Churches following a Western model.

The solution to all these contradictions, and the new form of Greek nationalism was the work of Constantine Paparrigopoulos. Paparrigopoulos is in himself a splendid illustration of the use of social sciences and especially History in the service of national ideology. This is not unique in Greece, not even in the Balkans. Post-Revolutionary French historiography did not evolve out of a scientific curiosity for the past, but under the need to rationalize and give meaning to the brutal choc of the French Revolution, and legitimize it.

Paparrigopoulos' Greek Nation is, above all, historical. Its identity is its history, or, rather, the Greek Nation is to be understood as the moving force of History in the Balkans. The Greek Nation has always had a mission of advancement and civilization. For Paparrigopoulos, the Greek Nation is not exclusively linked to a particular national characteristic, be it language or religion. In fact, the remarkable thing is the way the author copes and maintains the unity of the nation through History, while accepting the fact that race, religion, language, and even the consciousness of the nation, have changed in time. He sees the nation as a mystic entity surviving through various transformations. It is also interesting to point out that, in his Preface, although he starts speaking about the Greek Nation, this term gradually fades out and most of the author's text deal with the notion of Hellenism. It is as if, little by little, the Nation disappeared; as if the actual people who make the national community do not matter, as if the role of these people was ultimately subordinated to the power of this mystical force which he calls Hellenism. With Papparrigopoulos, we therefore observe two changes. First, although none of them acquires exclusive importance, it is clear that ethnic elements are introduced as criteria of Greek nationality. Secondly, the actual individuals who make up the nation become insignificant: they are but pawns, instruments of a collectivity, the Greek nation in its alleged historical unity, which is finally self-conceived as an instrument of a quasi-divine and impersonal idea, Hellenism.

With Paparrigopoulos, the liberal and civic idea of the Greek nation is replaced by an ethnic nationalism. His ethnic definition of nationality will lead, in 1922, to the exchange of population between Greece and Turkey, not on the basis of free choice but on the basis of religious belonging. The collectivity which makes the Greek nation is

finally subjugated to an abstract and a-temporal idea: Hellenism. One may call this idea Hellenism, Greek civilization, or Helleno-Christian civilization, the form stays the same.

There will be another transformation of Greek nationalism during Greek History: communist ideology rejects the abstraction of such ideas as Hellenism and refers to the Greek people. Communist ideology is also collectivistic, i.e. it also focuses not on the actual individuals who make the nation but on a collective individual, the collectivity *per se*, which is the ultimate source of legitimacy. This collectivity does not derive its legitimacy from its historical past, or from an Ancient idea, but from its orientation, for History as future. In other terms, this collectivity is also the instrument of History, as destined to suffer and starve for the ideal collectivity which will emerge and exist for the future generations. A civic-individualistic nationalism will however reemerge in the 1950s and the 1970s.

The changing goals of Greek Nationalism

The achievements of the Greek nation depend on the changing goals of Greek nationalism. These goals are in turn dependent on the type of nationalism adopted and the vision of the place of the Greek nation in the world. Let us take a few examples.

In the first decades of the Greek State, the principal effort of the state and the Greek intellectuals was to promote ancient Greek language and culture, to establish the idea that the new Greek State is the legitimate heir of Greek Antiquity and its inhabitants the descendants of the Ancient Greek thinkers and artists. Emphasis was given to the cultivation of Ancient Greek language, to the development of Universities, to the promotion of literacy among all citizens. The second goal was, of course, the creation of a modern state, i.e. a state similar to the States of the Western Nations, since these were the models of Greek nationalism. The relation between the citizens of this new State and the “Greek” subjects of the Ottoman Empire was seen as a relation of conflict, not of brotherhood.

The transformation of Greek nationalism into an ethnic type changed the orientation and goals of the State. Since nationality was defined in ethnic terms, co-religionist hellenophones of the Ottoman Empire were brothers waiting to be liberated by

the free Greeks of the Greek State. And since ethnic attributes were objective proofs of one's belonging to the Greek Nation, propaganda was seen as a legitimate way to convince these populations that their nature led them to the Greek Nation rather than to the rum millet of which they were still members.

Economic growth was never seen, as in England, Germany or Japan, as a goal in itself, as a matter of national prestige for the Greek nation –at least not until the 1950s. Economic growth has always been dependant on -and sustained by- other goals, such as the development of a strong army for the purposes of the *Great Idea* or the creation of infrastructures inside the country in order to unify and modernize it.

Conclusion

The spirit of Greek nationalism, its nature and its goals, changed at least three times during its History. Greek nationalism was born as a civic and individualistic movement. Its primary focus was freedom, and the way to achieve it was the adoption of the western image of Ancient Greece. It was transformed once in the mid-19th century, into an ethnic-collectivistic type, whose primary goal became territorial expansion. Although expansionism ceased after the Defeat of 1922, Greek nationalism remained ethnic and collectivistic, at least until the 1950s.

Economic growth occurred in Greece during the periods when Greek nationalism viewed economy as valuable for the nation. This happened mostly after 1922, but did not constitute a sustained goal. Greek nationalism is not focused on the economic sphere, although it has valued many times in the past. One could mention Venizelos' economic efforts after 1922, Caramanlis' "evimeria", or the recent mobilization of the Greek nation for the entry into the "eurozone". This interrelation between nationalism and the economy will be the primary focus of my research project. It is hardly studied by economists, and usually neglected by scholars of Greek nationalism. By examining periods of economic growth in Greece, I will try to test whether the Greek case confirms Greenfeld's hypothesis that nationalism is, indeed, the "spirit of Capitalism".

Why Orthodoxy? Religion and Nationalism in Greek Political Culture

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ABSTRACT

This paper is a contribution to the analysis of Helleno-Christian nationalism in Greece. It seeks to investigate the reasons for the politicization of religion and the Church, to account for the production, development and propagation of religious nationalism and the sacralisation of politics in Greece, and explain the paradoxical way in which the Greek Church was constructed as a nationalist political and cultural institution, while its canonical tradition, the Gospel, and its Byzantine past were inherently ecumenical in character. The aim of the presentation is to offer a coherent and convincing narrative about the political processes whereby the Helleno-Christian ideology attained a hegemonic status in Greek political culture, and account for the present eminence of this prominent type of Greek nationalism, by ‘blending’ the theoretical frameworks of ethno-symbolism and discourse analysis.

I. Prologue

The first article of the first constitutional text of modern Greece, the “Epidaurous Constitution” of 1822, classifies as Greeks “all natives [autochthonous] who believe in Christ”.¹ Since then, the close ties between the “Orthodox Eastern Apostolic Church of Greece” and the Greek nation have been more than merely preserved. In the words of the former Prime Minister Constantinos Karamanlis, in a speech he gave in 1981, while in office:

The nation and Orthodoxy...have become in the Greek conscience virtually synonymous concepts, which together constitute our Helleno-Christian civilization.²

Even the most superficial observation of Modern Greek history and society would almost certainly accord with Karamanlis’ conclusions: In the first three Greek revolutionary constitutions (1822-1827), there is no clear distinction between the notions of ‘Greek citizen’ and ‘Greek Orthodox Christian’.³ One can observe in these constitutions the crucial role of Orthodoxy in identifying “Greekness” in a rather exclusionary manner. Even in our epoch, the Greek constitution uses a sanctified language, which denotes the close links between Hellenism and Orthodoxy, while Orthodoxy is the established religion in Greece. Instead of being written ‘in the name of the people/nation’, which is the usual preamble of most liberal constitutions, the Greek constitution is written *In the name of the Holy and Consubstantial and Indivisible Trinity*.⁴ In addition to that, the oath of the President of the Republic is clearly a religious one.⁵

¹ Cited in Rafailidis, V., (1993:445)

² Cited in Ware, K., (1983:208).

³ Paparizos, A., (2000:89)

⁴ Dimitropoulos P., (2001:67-68)

⁵ See article 33, §2 of the Greek Constitution: “2. Before assuming the exercise of his duties, the President of the Republic shall take the following oath before Parliament:

Greek children are taught a divinity lesson in school for seven years, which propagandizes the ideas of the Orthodox Church against other religions.⁶ Orthodox priests are treated as civil servants and are officially paid by the Greek government.⁷ In order for a temple of another religion to be built in Greece, authorities seek the advice (apart from the usual permission of the local city-planning office) of the local Orthodox bishop, and the police.⁸

The last census in which there is data about the religious attachments of Greeks is the one conducted in 1951. According to that census, 96.7% of Greeks considered themselves as members of the Greek Orthodox Church.⁹ In 1991, a Eurobarometer survey showed that 98.2% of the Greeks declared to be members of the Orthodox Church.¹⁰ The *2002 CIA World Factbook* places this figure at 98%. This trend does not appear to vary significantly when it comes to younger generations, since a 2002 Eurobarometer survey showed that the Greek youth (15-24 year-olds) is the most religious youth in Europe after the Irish one.¹¹ Despite the fact that Church attendance levels in Greece are quite low, the level of religiosity (belief in the existence of God) is very high, and comes only second to that of Portugal. Moreover, the level of those who sporadically attend Sunday services is one the rise recently, while the level of those who do not attend Church services at all is dropping over the last years.¹²

The Church is also present in all official state celebrations (oath-taking of new governments, parades, etc.). It is inseparably linked with numerous Greek cultural activities (e.g. open fairs to honour local Saints), customs (e.g. Good Week fast), and foods (e.g. the Paschal lamb).¹³ The Church is also connected in the Greek conscience with “past glories” like the Byzantine Empire, while the Greek language occupies a central role in the Orthodox liturgy

"I do swear in the name of the Holy and Consubstantial and Indivisible Trinity to safeguard the Constitution and the laws, to care for the faithful observance thereof, to defend the national independence and territorial integrity of the Country, to protect the rights and liberties of the Greeks and to serve the general interest and the progress of the Greek People"; cited in <http://www.mfa.gr/syntagma/artcl25.html#A3>. However, there is a provision in the Constitution that allows heterodox MPs to swear according to the rules of their own religion (Art. 59, §2). See Manitakis, A., (2001). Presumably, there is an analogous right for the President. See Venizelos, E. (2000:143)

⁶ Although we should note that there is a provision, which allows heterodox children to abstain from the religious classes. However, this provision is rarely used, both because there is not an alternative religious module that teaches other dogmas, and for reasons of peer pressure.

⁷ Venizelos, E., (2000:110)

⁸ According to the law 1363/1938 which is still in effect

⁹ Ibid., p.209.

¹⁰ Cited in Stavrakakis, Y., (2002:5).

¹¹ Survey conducted throughout the 15EU countries, from 27/5-16/6/2002. See http://www.europa.eu.int/comm/public_opinion/archive/flash_arch.htm. However, according to the last census of 2001, the number of immigrants in Greece has increased to more than 800,000 (more than 7% of the total population). Only 52.7% of those immigrants are baptised Christian Orthodox. See Vernadakis, Ch., (2002: 191)

¹² See Georgiadou, V & Nikolakopoulos H. (2001:141-165)

¹³ Stavrakakis, Y., (2002: 5 n.)

ritual. The Church claims for itself the role of the protector of the Christians during the Ottoman rule in the Balkans, as well as that of the saviour of the Greek language during the ‘400 years of slavery of the Greek people’. Mouzelis (1978) rightly argues that, in Greece, being a good Christian means being a patriot and vice versa,¹⁴ since attachment to Orthodoxy is perceived as automatically implying a commitment to the protection of the Greek traditions. Unlike what happens in other European countries, being a communist, atheist, or agnostic does not preclude someone from attending Church celebrations in Greece.¹⁵ **Orthodoxy in Greece is mostly experienced as a “way of life” rather as an attachment to metaphysical beliefs.** This attitude of the Greeks towards Orthodoxy is graphically exemplified in the words of a Greek dentist as it is narrated by Ware: “Personally I am an atheist; but because I am Greek, I am of course a member of the Orthodox Church”.¹⁶

The Church has been responding to these strong feelings of affiliation of the Greek public by acting as a political and cultural agent, which mainly aims to counter the effects of the ‘westernization’ of Greece by articulating a nationalist discourse, while at the same time protecting and promoting its political privileges. It regards itself as the guardian of the “Greek identity” and continuously interferes in Greek political affairs. This Church policy comes into direct antithesis with the liberal spirit of secularization, which is expressed through the policies of the ruling center-left party (PASOK). The liberal view with regard to the societal role of the Church is quite clear, and suggests that the practice of religion should be confined to the private sphere. This tension between the traditionalist discourse of the Church and the westernization-oriented policy of the government is becoming increasingly important for Greek politics, since it creates cultural and political tensions in the Greek society. The *Economist* ‘Intelligence Unit’ summarizes the current situation in Greece as follows:

The Orthodox Church regards itself as the repository of Hellenism during the 400 years of Ottoman rule and the first 150 years of the struggle to establish the Modern Greek state. The church argues that over the past 20 years the Socialists have adopted an increasingly secular stance in order to achieve European and international acceptance. This, according to Archbishop Christodoulos, has undermined the unique Greek cultural heritage of which the church considers itself the guardian (The identification of the church with a Hellenistic state was best embodied in Cyprus, where the first head of state at independence was Archbishop Makarios, who was also known to the Greek Cypriots as the Ethnarch, essentially the embodiment of the state in the person of the cleric).

¹⁴Ibid.

¹⁵Ibid.

¹⁶Ware, K., (1983:208)

Archbishop Christodoulos has repeatedly spoken out in public against what he considers the corrosive influence of the EU on the spiritual and nationalist character of Hellenism. He has likened the EU to a grinder making mincemeat of the national identities of member states and refers disparagingly to the "Euro-craving" of Greek politicians.¹⁷

As the *Economist* columnist rightly points out, the identification of Greekness with Orthodoxy has been even more evident in the case of the Greek-Cypriot community. This paper is a contribution to the study of the development of the aforementioned religious nationalist political discourse on the part of the Greek Church.

II. Placing the Subject into its Historical and Legal Context

This heavy politicization of the Church is not a new phenomenon. On the contrary, the Orthodox Church has been acting as the main producer of a particular type of nationalism (Helleno-Christianism) since the founding of the Greek state, while the origins of its political activism can be traced even further back. For the last 1600 years, the Eastern Christian Orthodox Church has played an active political role in the Balkan region. Since the times of the Byzantine Empire, it enjoyed the status of the 'state approved church'. The ties between the Church and the state in Byzantium were legal, political, and most importantly 'ideological' in nature. The emperor derived his/her power from God (ἑλέω Θεοῦ βασιλεύς), and the official Orthodox dogma was under the protection of the state that showed little, or no religious tolerance at all. The Byzantine emperor was carrying out the role of the holy inquisition in Byzantium.¹⁸ The religious policy of the Byzantine Empire was based on the doctrine, 'one God, one empire, one religion'.¹⁹

This attitude of the Byzantine Empire was not an idiosyncratically Eastern or Orthodox phenomenon. Throughout the medieval Europe, religious homogenization was seen as a precondition for the consolidation of the state/empire.²⁰ The particularity of Greece is to be found in the fact that she did not follow the path of secularization like most of the other European nation-states, where civic nationalism replaced religion as a basis for national solidarity.²¹

¹⁷ See *the Economist*, 7/6/2000

¹⁸ Adraktas, V., (2001:41)

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Llobera, J. R., (1996:134)

²¹ Ibid. p. 143

After the fall of the Byzantine Empire, and the emergence of the Ottoman rule in the Balkans, the Orthodox Church found itself again in an advantageous political position. The archbishop of Constantinople was the spiritual leader of all the enslaved Balkan Christians, responsible for the collection of some of their taxes, and the representative of the people to the Porte.²² The special privileges of the Church during the Ottoman rule may *partly* explain the disapproval of the Constantinople archbishops for the Greek War of Independence (1821-1827).²³

After the achievement of independence, a nation-building process began in the newly founded Greek state. During that epoch of nation-building and identity formation, different competing discourses and national imaginaries struggled to acquire a hegemonic position in defining Greek national identity. The place that “Orthodoxy” occupied in these discourses varied. Out of these political and intellectual confrontations, a particular political, social and legal arrangement emerged which delineated the relations between Church, State and civil society. At an institutional level, the Orthodox Church became the “established” religious organization in Greece through a royal directive of 1833 (23/7-4/8/1833), which legally established the autonomy of the Greek Church from the Constantinople Patriarchate. Since then, the “Orthodox Eastern Apostolic Church of Greece” enjoys the status of the established state religion in Greece. Ecclesiastical and secular authorities were brought together, and the right of the State to intervene in the internal affairs of the “autocephalous” Greek Church was institutionalized. At the same time, the Church obtained an important political and ideological role and retained some of its Ottoman legal and political privileges. At a social and cultural level, Orthodoxy was recognized as an integral part of Greek identity, and this idea was reflected in official and unofficial public discourse, historiography, education, folklore studies, literature, poetry, architecture, as well as in everyday practices, and customs.

Over the last 170 years, since independence from the Ottoman Empire, the Greek Orthodox Church has developed a nationalist and conservative discourse, it has allied itself with extreme right wing governments, and it was officially a supporter of the military dictatorship in Greece (1967-1974). The autocephalous Greek Church has acted in the recent Greek history **not only as a state-funded institution, but also as an ideological and legitimating mechanism of the state**, which has been “blessing” governmental decisions, in exchange for special privileges.²⁴ The Greek Church has come to understand itself as the

²²Dimitropoulos, P., (2001:53)

²³ Ibid. See also Kitromilidis, P., (1989:179)

²⁴ Manitakis, A., (2000:52)

guardian of tradition and national identity, and the expression of the “true” Greek spirit. This myth has appealed to the Greek public. The Church considers itself more as a guardian of the nation (or even race- γένος²⁵), rather than as a messenger of the will of God.²⁶ However, it considers its views as carrying a divine legitimization, which places them above positive law, and makes them immune to criticism,²⁷ since the “will of God” is perceived as the ultimate foundation for legitimizing one’s views.

Since the declaration of the autocephaly of the Greek Church in 1833, the relationships between the Greek state and the Church have been relatively harmonious, within a legal context of subordination of the ecclesiastical power of the Church to the secular power of the state. The Church played an active role in supporting, through its influence to the people, state decisions, and augmenting popular feelings of national solidarity and nationalism in the face of external “threats” and internal dissents. This congruent cooperation amongst the Church and the State started disintegrating in the beginning of the 1980s when the center-left “Panhellenic Socialist Movement” (PASOK) came to power. Since its first years in office, PASOK attempted to introduce a series of secularizing measures (e.g. civil marriage), which were perceived by the Church as direct attack against its hegemonic position in the Greek national life.²⁸ As James Pettifer argues,

The Church has generally seen PASOK governments as an object of cultural opposition; a secularist party with only a weak, if any, commitment to the position of the Church in national life and enemy likely to champion changes in social legislation of which the Church disapproves.²⁹

The relationships between the Church and the State further deteriorated when the dynamic and charismatic Archbishop **Christodoulos** succeeded the low-profile **Seraphim** as head of the Greek Church in 1998. Christodoulos seemed unwilling to make any further concessions to the state that would compromise the position of the Church in the Greek society. His personal popularity, the strong attachment of the Greeks to the Orthodox dogma, as well as his rhetorical and leadership capabilities facilitated his cause.

²⁵ The meaning of the word “genos” (γένος) is ambiguous. It may mean “Greek speaking populations”, “Orthodox Christians of the Balkans”, or “the Greek race”.

²⁶ Ibid. p. 53

²⁷ See the interview of the Archbishop of Athens Christodoulos in *Eleftherotypia*, 15/6/2000

²⁸ However, the popularity of the Church did not allow to any of the post-1974 Greek Governments to proceed to radical measures such as “disestablishment”, or to permanently solve the issue of the Church property, despite the fact that there were relevant discussions among academics and politicians during the two constitutional reforms of 1986 and 2000.

²⁹ Pettifer, J., (1996:21-22)

Three years ago, when the socialist government attempted to make one more step towards secularization, and abandon the requirement for the Greek citizens to state their religion in their identity cards, the Church fiercely reacted and asked for the carrying out of a referendum to decide on the issue. The government refused, and Christodoulos started a struggle against the government's decision, which included street demonstrations attended by hundreds of thousands of people, interventions in the media, and the collection of signatures in favor of a referendum. Although there are no official data for the exact number of those who signed for the illegal 'referendum' of the Church (we can only rely on the data given by the Church), virtually no one disputes that the Church managed to collect more than three million signatures (around 33% of the voters).³⁰

From a legal point of view, the Church was clearly wrong. Both the independent **Personal Data Protection Authority**, and the superior constitutional court of the Greek state, the **State Council**, had ruled that even the optional inclusion of religious attachment in identity cards is unconstitutional.³¹ However, the Archbishop, through the use of a clearly populist discourse (as it will be shown in following section), managed to convince the people that he is carrying out a "holy war" against the alienation of Greece from her tradition. In addition to that, the Church enjoyed the support of the major opposition party of Greece, the center-right **New Democracy**, and the almost unconditional support of the whole spectrum of the Greek right. Finally, the legal status of the Orthodox Church as the "established Church" of Greece gives it special privileges and allows it to intervene in public affairs.

The present constitution of Greece cannot dictate to the Church its views. It cannot prohibit the ethnocentric fundamentalist doctrines espoused by the Church hierarchy. In fact it gives Orthodoxy the role of the 'established' Church. Article 3 of the 1975 constitution (even after the last revision in 2001) recognizes the Christian Orthodox religion as 'the prevailing religion in Greece'. More specifically, Article 3 reads as follows:

1. The prevailing religion in Greece is that of the Eastern Orthodox Church of Christ. The Orthodox Church of Greece, acknowledging our Lord Jesus Christ as its head, is inseparably united in doctrine with the Great Church of Christ in Constantinople and with every other Church of Christ of the same doctrine, observing unwaveringly, as they do, the holy apostolic and synodal canons and sacred traditions. It is autocephalous and is administered by the Holy Synod of serving Bishops and the

³⁰ According to the Church data, 3,008,901 signatures. Cited in Stavrakakis Y., (2002)

³¹ It appears that there is a significant consensus among legal theorists, academics and jurists towards the view that the statement of religion in identity cards is unconstitutional, and violates the principle of personal data protection. See Maniatakis, A., (2000), Dimitropoulos, P. (2001), and Venizelos (2000).

Permanent Holy Synod originating thereof and assembled as specified by the Statutory Charter of the Church in compliance with the provisions of the Patriarchal Tome of June 29, 1850 and the Synodal Act of September 4, 1928.

2. The ecclesiastical regime existing in certain districts of the State shall not be deemed contrary to the provisions of the preceding-paragraph

3. The text of the Holy Scripture shall be maintained unaltered. Official translation of the text into any other form of language, without prior sanction by the Autocephalous Church of Greece and the Great Church of Christ in Constantinople, is prohibited.³²

That said, we should also emphasize that freedom of worship and belief are typically protected by the constitution in accordance with the Western standards. Article 13 of the Constitution reads as follows:

1. The freedom of religious conscience **is inviolable**. The enjoyment of civil and individual rights **does not depend on the religious conviction of each individual**.

2. Every known religion is free and the forms of worship thereof shall be practiced without any hindrance by the State and under protection of the law. The exercise of worship shall not contravene public order or offend morals. Proselytizing is prohibited.

3. The ministers of all religions are subject to the same obligations towards the State and to **the same state supervision as the ministers of the established religion**.

4. No person shall, by reason of his religious convictions, be exempt from discharging his obligations to the State, or **refuse to comply with the laws**.

5. No oath shall be imposed without a law specifying the form thereof.³³

The conflict between the Church and the State on the issue of the identity cards finally ended in August 29th 2001, with the decisive intervention of the President of the Republic, Konstantinos Stephanopoulos, who refused the demands of the Church for the carrying out of the referendum, on the basis that this was an unconstitutional action. This intervention “led to the suspension of most politicized activities” of the Church at least for the moment.³⁴

Nevertheless, the period starting with the enthronement of Christodoulos in 1998, until the final resolution of the issue in 2001 was admittedly a period of heavy politicization of the Church discourse, and produced a considerable amount of academic literature on the subject. As we can note, the last years of confrontation between the Church and the governments of PASOK marked a radical change in the role of the Church, which, nowadays, challenges the

³² <http://www.mfa.gr/syntagma/artcl25.html#A3>

³³ http://www.uni-wuerzburg.de/law/gr00000_.html, emphases added

³⁴ Stavrakakis, Y., (2002: 8).

legal and political dominance of the state over ecclesiastical authority, and assumes the role of an autonomous political agent.³⁵

Before finishing this brief contextualization of the place of religion within Greek political culture, it would be useful for the reader to provide a background regarding the political party system of modern Greece. Greece has been formally a constitutional democracy since 1864, though democratic politics has been interrupted twice in the past by dictatorial coups and foreign occupation (1936-1946 and 1967-1974). Since 1915, when a ‘national schism’ was brought about as a result of the disagreement between the King and the Prime Minister regarding the position that Greece was to take during the 1st World War, Greek party politics is characterized by the presence of a right and an anti-right coalitions (or, before that, liberal/conservative, and even before that, republican/royalist). The allegiance of the parties of the centre in this conflict varied in different historical periods. The right/anti-right distinction became even sharper during the consolidation period of the Third Greek Republic (1974-1996), when many supporters of the left shifted their support to the center-left PASOK.³⁶ Since 1996, the use of the ‘right/anti-right’ discourse has been limited.

While the Church has been traditionally a supporter of the right, both the centre and the left had never been unequivocally hostile to the Church, and this is partly because of the wide and cross-class appeal of Orthodoxy in Greek political culture. However, even the slightest secularizing measures, which are necessary for the protection of basic human rights, have been perceived by the Church as direct threats to its position in Greek politics, and it is in part because of this Church attitude that there is a continuous tension in the relations between the official Church and the parties of the left until today.

I will now turn to the analysis of the Church’s nationalism and populism during the first years of Christodoulos in office. The following analysis of Christodoulos nationalism will be carried out through the deployment of the techniques of discourse analysis. The term discourse analysis has become quite fashionable in the field of social sciences lately, and it has been used in a variety of different ways. In other words, there are many different methodological approaches which have been labeled as “discourse analysis”. In this paper, the term is used to denote the “Essex School” approach to the study of politics.³⁷ Discourse analysts “treat a wide range of linguistic and non-linguistic material- speeches, reports, manifestos, historical events,

³⁵ Ibid. p.162

³⁶ PASOK’s founder, and three times-elected PM of Greece, Andreas Papandreou, managed to gain the support of the left, with the talented use of a populist discourse, in which he claimed that he represented all the democratic and ‘anti-right’ forces of Greece, and that he supported the claims of the “unprivileged”.

³⁷ i.e. E. Laclau, Ch. Mouffé, A. Norval, D. Howarth, Y. Stavrakakis, J. Glynos, J. Torfing, et al.

interviews, policies, ideas, even organizations and institutions- as ‘texts’ or ‘writings’ that enable subjects to experience the world of objects, words and practices”.³⁸ Discourse analysis is therefore a ‘creative catachresis’ of the concept of ‘discourse’ which is now used in a much wider than its original linguistic sense. It is a technique for studying any meaningful social practice, and thus any human practice, since, for discourse analysts, any human practice is meaningful. Discourses are therefore systems of meaning that are bound together by particular signifiers and make the social world intelligible to subjects. These systems of meaning are contingent ideological structures which are subject to change, since a discourse can neither close the horizon of social meanings nor represent the ‘real’.³⁹ Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe have developed a conceptual framework for analysing the construction, stabilization, and deconstruction of discourses.

III. The Political Discourse of Archbishop Christodoulos

The first rhetorical strategy that the Archbishop uses in order to articulate his nationalist discourse is the construction of the **logic of equivalence**. “The logic of equivalence constructs a chain of equivalential identities among different elements that are seen as expressing a certain sameness”.⁴⁰ In the case of populism, the political spectrum is simplified by the populists, to the extent that is perceived as being formed by two opposing camps: the people and its “enemies”.⁴¹

Populism, characterized by the identification of all social groups as “the people” and by the masking of individual and corporate demands as “popular demands”, affects political practice and shapes the manner in which social and political reality is perceived and understood.⁴²

In this case, the Archbishop refers to the “people” as a unified and undivided entity. He then constructs a set of ideological and political frontiers between the people and its enemies. The imaginary ‘will of the people’ is the supreme will in a society according to the Archbishop:

The history, and the will of the people are above the Constitution and the laws...when the people do not want the laws, then they are not implemented, they become useless

³⁸ Howarth D., (2000:10)

³⁹ Indeed, if we define the real as everything which is extra-discursive, then the real is **almost** inaccessible, since subjects can only experience the world through discourses.

⁴⁰ Torfing, J., (1999:301)

⁴¹ Lyritzis, C., (1987:671)

⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 683

and, in reality, they cease to exist. The consciousness of the nation about what is right and what is not rejects them.⁴³

In the above passage, one can see a direct challenge to constitutional democracy in the name of the people. And, since heterodox and atheists in Greece are less than 4% of the population, the Church assumes the role of the representative of the people, or at least of the vast majority of the people.⁴⁴ However, it is clear that even if Orthodox Christians comprise the vast majority of the population in Greece,⁴⁵ it does not follow that all the Orthodox Greeks have chosen the Church as their representative in political affairs; nor does it follow that their Christian identity leads them to challenge the political Constitution of Greece. Nevertheless, the Archbishop claims to speak both in the name of the people (and not in the name of Orthodox Church), as well as in the name of God, since he is the head of the Holy Synod. These claims provide his discourse with an unusual status of infallibility. Speaking in the name of the people is a typical practice of populist movements.⁴⁶

Another emblematic example of populist practice is Christodoulos' tactic of presenting himself as a direct and unmediated representative of the people, one who rejects the modern unpopular bureaucratic procedures, and his words appeal to the nation as a whole, independently of party attachments. He acts like a media star, his speeches are deeply emotional (and therefore illogical), his vocabulary is extravagant, and sometimes includes the argot of the youth. Like most of the populist movements, contemporary Greek populism is characterized by the presence of a charismatic leader.⁴⁷ This empirical observation seems again to be consistent with Laclau's theoretical framework for the analysis of populism. As it is noted by Lyritzis, in his Laclau-based study of Greek populism,

Even where populism is expressed through a strong grassroots organizational base, the latter seems to maintain a direct relationship with the leader, weakening the intermediary administrative levels between the top and the rank and file. Intermediaries are distrusted and are seen to impede the direct and immediate rapport between leader and led...Populism is thus often characterized by a plebiscitarian-charismatic leadership, which acts as a substitute for a strong and effective organization in achieving necessary political cohesion and a common identity.⁴⁸

⁴³ Christodoulos, in *Eleftherotypia* (in Greek), 15/6/2000

⁴⁴ Stavrakakis, Y., (2002:24)

⁴⁵ However, according to the last census of 2001, the number of immigrants in Greece has increased to more than 800,000 (more than 7% of the total population). Only 52.7% of those immigrants are baptised Christian Orthodox. See VPRC (2002: 191)

⁴⁶ Laclau, E., (1997:165-174)

⁴⁷ Sofos, S., (2000:141)

⁴⁸ Lyritzis, C., (1987:671)

The question, which now emerges, is what does the Greek populism of Christodoulos involve. The first crucial observation is that “the people” in Christodoulos’ discourse is defined in racial terms. In his *From Earth and Sky* (1999), he argues that, during the nation-building process, we (the Greeks) “unfortunately” lost the identity that the Church had assigned to us: our racial identity.

Against the conqueror [the Ottoman Empire], we had a religious as well as a racial difference. We were the Race [γένος]. We kept our racial identity until around the 17th century when the ideas of the British philosophers about the Nation [έθνος] were spread among the Greek intelligentsia... Since then we lost the identity that the Church had given us, we ceased to be a race and we became a nation.⁴⁹

In another passage of his book, Christodoulos even more boldly states: “The other man, the one who has a country, and a family and values, this man is today useful to the Race. And this is the type of man that Orthodoxy shapes and supports: the man with self-consciousness and identity”.⁵⁰ Apart from the clear indications of the development of racial ideas within the contemporary Church discourse, other authors have also emphasized the existence of strong Anti-Semitic ideas. The bishop of Corinth Panteleimon (an honorary Doctor of Philosophy of the Theological Faculty of the University of Athens!) has written in his book *Jewish and Christians*:

[The Jews] are natural enemies of Hellenism, because Hellenism is based on the correct placement of mind, on rational thinking, on the correct positioning of the human in his real dimension, while Judaism leads him to irrational and utopist dreams of material dimension.⁵¹

The political identity of “the people” in Christodoulos’ discourse is constructed through the articulation of the social antagonism between the people and its enemies; and the enemies are everywhere according to Christodoulos: Among the enemies of the people are “the Islamic menace”, the Vatican, Turkey,⁵² the E.U, the intellectuals, or even the conscientious objectors (!).⁵³ The common aim of all these ‘enemies’ is to alienate Hellenism from its tradition and culture.⁵⁴ Hellenism is an “endangered culture”,⁵⁵ and the Church is the only political and

⁴⁹ Christodoulos, (1999:220). As it has been argued earlier in the text, the meaning of the word «γένος» is ambiguous. However, in the cases above, I would contend that it clearly has a racial connotation.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 233

⁵¹ Cited in Zoumboulakis, S., (2002:82)

⁵² Christodoulos, (1999:100)

⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 242

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 173

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p.219

spiritual agent available in Greece, which is able to carry out the Messianic role of saving Hellenism from assimilation into a global culture.⁵⁶ In a rather clichéd manner, Christodoulos criticizes the decadence of modern ethics, and argues that Greeks “have been infected with the malicious tumor of alienation”.⁵⁷ Christodoulos’ political positions, as they are presented in his *From Earth and Sky*, may be summarized into two demands: **firstly, in order to combat the ethical decay of modern Greek society, the social role of the Church should be protected and enhanced. Secondly, in order to contain the “Muslim Curtain” in the Balkans, Greece should pioneer in the establishment of an “Orthodox Axis” in the Balkans.**⁵⁸

The Church considers itself as the only institution, which is eligible to speak in the name of the “people” and express such views, since it regards itself as representing 97% of the Greeks who are baptized Christian Orthodox. In this sense, it articulates an image of national identity that derives from the Byzantine theocratic culture. By linking Greekness with Orthodoxy, the Church has managed to convince a large part of the Greek population that secularization measures in Greece are irrelevant and illegitimate. In other words, the ideas of the West and the Enlightenment are only acceptable as long as they do not come into conflict with the Greek Orthodox ‘tradition’.

Furthermore, the Church’s discourse aims to undermine the Greek government. The Church argues that it is the only agent available to protect Greek national identity, since the state is becoming increasingly detached from the idea of the nation. Therefore, membership in the E.U is potentially dangerous for Greek national identity in the absence of a strong Church, which will be able to protect the Greek tradition from the corrupting influence of the heterodox.⁵⁹

The issues that Christodoulos addresses during his public appearances are not theological, but political (or national, as he calls them) in nature. In his demonstration speech against the new identity cards legislation in Athens, Christodoulos was waiving the flag of *Ayia Lavra*, a symbol of the 1821 War of Independence. This was not accidental. This move intended to demonstrate that when the Church is ‘under threat’, then Greekness is also under threat. A large part of the Greek population was convinced by Christodoulos’ arguments that secularization would be a step towards the alienation of Greeks from their tradition.⁶⁰

⁵⁶ Ibid., p.153

⁵⁷ Ibid., p. 77

⁵⁸ Ibid., pp. 20-31

⁵⁹ Dimitropoulos, P., (2001:158)

⁶⁰ The abovementioned views of the Church, and especially of its Archbishop, seem to be very appealing to the Greek public. According to a recent public opinion poll conducted by the Greek public opinion agency “MRB” (published on 03/07/2002. Cited in <http://www.ego.gr/pegasus/articles/article.jsp?artid=71913&pubid=85872>) the

IV. Why Orthodoxy? An account for the development of Helleno-Christianism

IV.i. Existing Accounts

Nationalism is undoubtedly one of the most significant social phenomena of modernity. However, the academic study of nationalism has only been seriously promoted since the 1960s, while the decade of the 1990s experienced a substantial growth in the literature in this field. We may broadly distinguish between five competing approaches to the study of nationalism: Primordialist, perennialist, modernist, instrumentalist, and ethno-symbolic. Of course, this is an ideal-types categorization and probably downplays the importance of substantive differences among individual authors.

Primordialist perspectives on nations and nationalism emphasize the significance of individual emotional ties to the nation, as well as of ‘primordial’ traits that demonstrate the uniqueness of the nation. These qualities may be the result of biology (see for example the sociobiological approach to nationalism put forward by Pier van den Berghe), belief in biological decent (Geertz), or of cultural environment (see for example the romantic views of the nation put forward by Herder). Romantic views on Greek identity have been articulated by New-Orthodox and Neo-Romantic Greek thinkers,⁶¹ who idealise the communal nature of Greek Orthodox culture, and argue for the superiority and uniqueness of ‘Greekness’. Nations, for most primordialist authors, exist since time immemorial, and nationalism is essentially an extension of kinship ties characterizing pre-modern ethnic communities, which arise from natural ‘givens’ of human history (race, language, region, etc.).⁶²

Perennialist thinkers also hold that nations (or at least some nations) existed before the emergence of nationalism. However, unlike primordialists, perennialist authors hold a historicist, instead of an organic view of the nation.⁶³ Through exhaustive historical research, these ‘historians of nations’, are at pains to demonstrate the existence of ethnic and/or national affiliations well before the modern era.

Modernist conceptions of the nation constitute indisputably the orthodoxy in the field, while the majority of the analyses of Greek nationalism are influenced by modernist paradigms. Most well known scholars of nationalism subscribe to the modernist paradigm (e.g.

Archbishop’s popularity remains very high- 68%, while in the past it has been as high as 74.6% (Vernadakis, Ch, 2002: 366)

⁶¹ See for example, Zouraris, K. (1999) and Giannaras, Ch. (1999)

⁶² For an excellent account of the primordialist perspective on nations, see Smith, A., (1998: 145-151), and Smith, A., (2001:51-56)

⁶³ See for example the work of Hastings, A. (1997), and Armstrong, J. (1982)

Kedourie, Gellner, Hobsbawm, and Anderson). Although there are major dissimilarities between the different modernist approaches to nationalism, essentially the basic assertion of modernism remains unaltered: “Nationalism...is a product of modernity, nothing less...But it is not only nationalism that is modern. So are nations, national states, national identities, and the whole ‘inter-national’ community”.⁶⁴

Perhaps the most famous modernist/structuralist theory of nationalism has been articulated by Ernest Gellner (1983). He argued that nationalism has been the product of the modern capitalist state, which used its “educational machine” in order to produce a class of literate clerks who could meet the administrative needs of modern bureaucratic politics. Nationalism has spread throughout the world due to the effects of combined and uneven development and revolution. Though Gellnerian approaches to Greek nationalism are not dominant in the literature, we may still trace some examples of them. Anna Koumandaraki for instance, emphasizes the role of the Greek state in fostering Greek nationalism and national homogeneity, and downplays the importance of the Greek Church in the production of national identity.⁶⁵

Benedict Anderson, on the other hand, views nationalism as an ‘imagined community’. “Rather than thinking of it as fabricated, one should understand national distinctiveness in terms of its style of imagination and the institutions that make that possible” (e.g. print-capitalism).⁶⁶ Anderson’s concept of ‘imagined communities’ is well-received in analyses of Greek and Greek-Cypriot nationalism, and has been the basis for one of the most authoritative conceptualizations of the place of Orthodoxy in nation-building by Paschalis Kitromilides.⁶⁷ Kitromilides argues that the ‘Orthodox commonwealth’ was one of the most powerful imagined communities in the Balkan region during the Byzantine and Ottoman eras. Orthodoxy had been outspokenly hostile to the nationalist ideals of the Enlightenment due to the ecumenicity of the Orthodox dogma, as well as because of the institutional interests of the Constantinople Patriarchate. The nationalization of the Orthodox Churches throughout the Balkans and Eastern Europe replaced the Orthodox imagined community by national imagined communities.

Before continuing with this review of theories of nationalism, it would be useful to point out that, apart from Kitromilides, other authors have also noted the antithesis between Orthodoxy and nationalism. Gregory Jusdanis, in his *Necessary Nation*, argued that there is a

⁶⁴ Smith, A., (2001:46-47)

⁶⁵ Koumandaraki, A., (2002:39-51)

⁶⁶ Hutchinson J. & Smith A., (1994:48)

⁶⁷ Kitromilides, P., (1989: 149-194)

fundamental antinomy between the ecclesiastical conceptions of knowledge, time and progress and the nationalist ones in Greece.⁶⁸

To return to our exposition of theories of nationalism, a large part of modernist scholars of nationalism adopt an instrumentalist view of nationality. This is particularly the case with Marxist and Neo-Marxist thinkers (e.g. Eric Hobsbawm), and rational choice theorists. For Hobsbawm, nations are ‘invented traditions’, used by elites to legitimize their authority. These traditions are invented, or constructed, through national education, national symbols, national monuments, and national ceremonies. In general, Marxist thinkers have been exceptionally hostile against nationalism.⁶⁹

Perhaps the most seminal Marxist analysis of the relation between religion and nationalism in Greece has been carried out by Apostolis Harisis.⁷⁰ Harisis argues that the conflation between religion and nationalism in Greek political culture is the result of particular dynamics and configurations of power in Greek capitalism, and arises as a result of the manipulation of farmers, petty-bourgeois and ‘luben’ classes by capitalist elites. Structural-Marxist theories of Greek nationalism, though useful in identifying structural features of Greek political culture tend to reduce nationalism to a feature of the capitalist dynamics at a particular historical juncture.

Finally, ethno-symbolic approaches to nationalism (Anthony Smith, Jon Hutchinson) accentuate the significance of pre-modern ethnic symbols and cultural resources for the construction of national identity. Elites may be able to produce nationalism, but their efforts are constrained by the cultural environment in which they operate. Ethno-symbolism shifts the focus of analysis of nationalism from economic, political, or socio-biological factors to the importance of ideas, myths, memories, symbols, and traditions.⁷¹ As I will be arguing in the following section, ethno-symbolism is probably the paradigm which provides us with the most fruitful conceptual resources for studying the complex dynamics of Greek and Greek-Cypriot nationalism. This is mainly because ethno-symbolism may offer theoretical solutions to the major flaws of the modernist paradigm on nationalism and offer answers to questions yet unresolved. These flaws can be summarized with reference to two points: first of all, modernist theories of nationalism fail to account for the immense role of the pre-modern past for the popular legitimization of nationalist movements, and the subsequent amalgamation of tradition

⁶⁸ Jusdanis, G., (2001: 109)

⁶⁹ Especially classical Marxist thinkers like Rosa Luxemburg (1997:295). However, even among classical Marxism, there were voices (e.g. Lenin, and Otto Bauer) that saw nationalism as essentially an anti-imperialist (and thus progressive) force. See Ishay M. R. & Goldfischer D., (1997: 386).

⁷⁰ Harisis, A. (2001)

⁷¹ Smith, A., (2001: 59)

and modernity in nationalist ideologies. This failure is basically the result of the overemphasis of many modernist scholars on forces of production (e.g. print capitalism- Anderson) and relations of production (e.g. unequal development- Gellner), which downplay the importance of the realm of ideas. Secondly, modernist theories of nationalism tend to exaggerate the role of the elites in manipulating the masses into nationalism, and thus contain “conspiracy theory” undertones (e.g. Hobsbawm) which are unable to account for the durable effects of nationalist feelings in the human psyche. In other words, modernism fails to explain how ideology communicates with the “masses” and affects individual identifications.

The above portrayal of some of the main theoretical arguments regarding nationalism was not by any means an exhaustive review of the burgeoning literature around the subject. Besides, the study of theories of nationalism at an abstract level is beyond the scope of the present enquiry. The purpose for exposing the reader to some of the major theories of nationalism was to place this work within the wider context of academic debates regarding nationalism and national identity and to give a picture of the views on Greek nationalism already being conveyed.

This thesis will seek to challenge the aforementioned theorizations of Greek nationalism by putting forward an alternative angle of analysis. It will also aim to challenge the dominant theoretical scheme on Greek political culture, which has been offered by Nikiforos Diamandouros. Diamandouros perceives Greek society as an arena where two political cultures are at conflict with each other: the first one, “the underdog culture”, is anti-western, parochial, clientist, and statist in outlook (religious nationalism has sprang from this culture), and the other one is the culture of the “modernizers”, inspired by the Enlightenment and its liberal ideals.⁷² Diamandouros believes that the latter political culture will eventually prevail within the milieu of the E.U. However, I would contend that this is a reductionist and oversimplified approach to political culture, which may partly reflect the differences among Greek academics, but definitely underestimates the complexity of Greek society.

First of all, the ideological horizon of Greek politics has been a great deal more fragmented than Diamandouros believes, and the intellectual and social struggles during the first years after independence cannot fit into a one-dimensional spectrum which would divide the political map of Greece between two opposing camps. A discourse analysis twist in Diamandouros’ theory would suggest that what Diamandouros describes in his ‘cultural

⁷²Diamandouros, N., (1993:3-5); see also Diamandouros, N. (2000:41-50). Other Greek authors also share similar views. See for example, Mouzelis, N., (1995:17-34).

dualism' theorem is in fact an antagonistic struggle between two discursive formations. Even then, unlike what teleological thinkers may believe, social antagonisms are a constitutive feature of every society and they are unlikely to be resolved with a complete prevalence of a particular discourse. Antagonisms are the outcome of the essential contingency of subjective identities and the consequent impossibility for total closure in the horizon of social meanings. Identities are always partially fixed and essentially contested due to the discursive nature of the social, and therefore no discourse can ever achieve total hegemony. To put it in Laclau's words:

...The social only exists as a partial effort for constructing society- that is, an objective and closed system of differences-antagonism, as a witness of the impossibility of final suture, is the 'experience' of the limit of the social.⁷³

Furthermore, unlike what Diamandouros believes, the boundaries between discourses are not always clear resulting to what some authors have described as 'the perpetual crisis of the Neo-Hellenic identity'. For example, on the one hand, many Greeks are enthusiastic supporters of Christodoulos, and, in opinion polls, Christodoulos is among the three most popular public figures, and on the other hand, 68% of the Greeks are supportive of E.U. membership (E.U. average 54%).⁷⁴ In addition to that, even though the Church is a fierce critic of the E.U., it is a beneficiary of its budget. Consequently, when we make the distinction between 'modernizers' and 'traditionalists', we should bear in mind that subjects' identities are not completely coherent. Individuals hold multiple and often self-contradictory views and self-images, which cannot always fit in a concrete theorization between two opposing ideologies. A final point that demonstrates that the boundaries between the two opposing discourses of 'tradition' and 'modernisation' are blurred is that modernisation cannot exist outside a tradition. Modernisation presupposes a tradition,⁷⁵ and this is most evident in nationalist movements in which the past is 'recruited' in order to legitimize the present and the future.

Despite the existence of the abovementioned theories of Greek nationalism, we should note that **most** of the literature of the 'academic left' on Greek political culture disregards questions about the emergence of religious nationalism and the reasons for its persistence. It just assumes that the Church is and has always been nationalist, and develops polemical arguments against this nationalism. Although this study will expose racist and nationalist elements in the political discourse of the Greek Orthodox Church, the aim is to proceed further

⁷³Laclau, E., (2001:125).

⁷⁴ *Standard Eurobarometer*, vol. 56, p.20

⁷⁵Demertzis, N., (1997: 118).

than that. On the other hand, New-Orthodox academics view through rose-tinted glasses the role of the Church in Greek and Greek-Cypriot political culture. Sofia Mappa evaluates the current state of affairs in Greek social science work related to Orthodoxy, as follows:

With very few exceptions, Orthodoxy today constitutes the object of praise of the ‘faithful’ and the new-Orthodox...and the object of rejection... of those who are supposed to be pro-western and ‘modernizers’...Both the former and the latter spend most of their time reaffirming themselves and fighting each other, rather than reflecting or deliberating.⁷⁶

The majority of studies, which have addressed the issue of the political function of the Church of Greece, have been mainly concerned with the legal aspects of the problem.⁷⁷ Especially the works of Alivizatos and Dimitropoulos have been very helpful in delineating the constitutional aspects of the complex relationship between the state and the Church. However, legal research is inept to account for the dynamics of an issue, which is so closely related to political culture. Moreover, the vast majority of legal works (in particular the works of Venizelos) reduces the complexity of the subject matter to an issue of constitutional (dis)establishment. A plethora of examples from around the world points out that constitutional separation between the Church and the state does not necessarily confine religion to the private sphere nor it does produce a ‘secular ethos’. This is particularly the case in the U.S.A. and Turkey for instance.

The effectiveness of the liberal theorem of secularization has often been challenged. William Connolly, in his *Why I Am Not a Secularist* (1999), contended that “secular models of thinking, discourse and ethics are too constipated to sustain the diversity that they seek to admire”,⁷⁸ in the sense that they seek to hegemonize the public space with a singular view of public reason (like the one presented by Rawls⁷⁹), which excludes alternative pictures. However, my reading of Connolly leaves me with the impression that he has not yet managed to produce a concrete alternative to secularization, and that his “ethos of engagement and pluralization” is a vague scheme. Moreover, the principle of secularization has managed to

⁷⁶ Mappa, S., (1997:20)

⁷⁷ See Alivizatos, N. (2001), Venizelos, E., (2000), Dimitropoulos, P., (2001), Manitakis, A., (2000).

⁷⁸ Connolly, W., (1999:6)

⁷⁹ What Rawls’s liberal political project proposes is that people should use their public reason, independently of religious doctrinal adherences, and conform with the basic principles of justice as they are laid out in democratic constitutions. Rawls also believes that societies should convey three characteristics in order to be stable and **well ordered**: a) their citizens should agree upon the same principles of justice, b) their institutions should fit together in a fair system of cooperation, and comply with these principles, and c) their citizens should comply with the rules of these institutions and regard them as just. Reasonable comprehensive doctrines (i.e. systems of belief that define what is of value in human life), whether ethical, philosophical or religious, should not challenge the basic institutions of a democratic society, or else social cohesion is threatened. See Rawls, J. (1993). See especially pp. 35, 58-59)

gain the acceptance of both the **neo-liberal** right as well as that of the democratic and radical left and there is not a concrete alternative legal framework, which will ensure the equal treatment of religions in a democratic society. The contribution of Connolly to the recent discussions about disestablishment is to be found in the fact he drew our attention to the reality that secularization and disestablishment may be essential (not sufficient though) for the protection of the rights of minorities in a multicultural society, but they are not a panacea.

Besides, Durkheim maintained that there is no such thing as a ‘nonreligious’ society, since there can be no society without symbols, rituals, and beliefs that bind it together, or without some form of distinction between the sacred and the profane.⁸⁰ For Durkheim, religion performs similar functions as nationalism performs for Smith. Even sociologists who predicted the eventual withering away of religion, like Marx or Weber, accepted that at least in the modern era and before that, religion has been a primary source of social meaning.⁸¹ These functions of religion remain relatively unexamined in Greek historiography of the Orthodox Church.

Expectantly, this review revealed that there are indeed some gaps and inadequacies in the literature regarding the production of nationalism by the Greek Church, which necessitate the conduct of further research. In the following section, I will attempt to propose a novel theoretical framework for the study of Helleno-Christian nationalism.

IV.ii. Combining ethno-symbolism and discourse analysis to explain Helleno-Christian nationalism

As it became evident from the above literature review, nation and nationalism are essentially contested concepts. Their nature, principles, as well as their causes are subject to ongoing debates. I would identify three main reasons which may explicate the fundamental disagreements among the academia regarding nationalism: nationalism has been a ‘universal’ social phenomenon within the milieu of modernity. It has arisen during several historical phases of modernity, and in all the continents of the globe, and tended to hypostasize in different forms under different social contexts. Secondly, nationalism is both a political project/movement, as well as an ideology. This fact complicates attempts to explain the phenomenon. Thirdly, there is no single canonical text, or a single founding theorist of

⁸⁰Edles, L. F., (2002:32). For a detailed account of the ‘functions’ of religion, see Durkheim, E., (1965).

⁸¹Marx believed that religiosity will disappear with the eventual win of proletariat over capitalism. Weber thought that bureaucratic legitimization will replace divine legitimization of societal arrangements. See Edles, L. F., (2002:23-55)

nationalism who would outline the main principles of the ideology.⁸² Therefore, a general theory of nationalism, which would grasp all of its manifestations, has not yet been realized. A deliberation over the validity of the propositions of all the aforementioned paradigms would be beyond the scope of this paper. My emphasis will be placed on the relevance of the above debates on nationalism for the Greek case.

The debate about the era of the birth of nations has not yet been resolved. Modernist, perennialist, primordialist and ethno-symbolist theories of nationalism give different and competing answers to the question of “when is the nation”. Despite these continuing debates, we may still argue that even if there were “nations before nationalism”, there are at least qualitative differences between pre-modern and modern nations. This thesis treats the ‘Greek nation’ (at least in its present form) as a modern phenomenon.

This paper also rejects any primordialist, essentialist (e.g. Marxist-determinist), and sociobiological perspectives on modern nations and nationalism. Instead, it is closer, at an ontological and epistemological level, with those approaches/theoretical traditions that view modern nations as discursive constructions of nationalism. **Nationalism is viewed as a way of imagining political community and communitarian fullness.**⁸³ The fact that nations and national or religious identities are discursively constructed does not make them any less “real”. Conversely, discourses are materially effective in the sense that they determine political subjectivities and constitute subject positions within a society, and they are “materialized in specific types of institutions and organizations”.⁸⁴

As it has already become evident, there are two paradigms which inform the approach of this paper. These are **discourse analysis and ethno-symbolism**. Both these idioms of social analysis shift the focus from economic and/or sociobiological dynamics in their study of political culture, and emphasize the importance of the symbolic domain (or the superstructure, to use a Marxist term). While ethno-symbolism is a paradigm exclusively used in the analysis of nationalism, discourse analysis is more often used in other fields of sociology, psychoanalysis, and political theory. Moreover, a study which will attempt to ‘blend’ these two paradigms *has not yet been attempted*.

As it was mentioned above, I do not claim that the theoretical strategies used in the present paper may be applicable to any single case of nationalism. However, I would contend

⁸² Halliday, F., (1997: 361)

⁸³ Torfing, J., (1999:193)

⁸⁴ Howarth, D., (2000: 94, 108). For an excellent explanation of the materiality of discourses see Laclau, E. & Mouffe, C., (1985:108)

that ethno-symbolism, with its emphasis on the relation between culture, ethnicity, and nation, is the most appropriate approach for the specific case study.

The working definition of nation that will be used in the present work will be the following: **Nation is a mode of conceiving the political identity of a population, based on the re-interpretation of pre-existing cultural material and symbolic resources in this referent population by nationalists.** In other words, it is the ideology of nationalism that defines what is the nation, and not some ‘objective’ criteria. A subjective definition of the nation has been chosen over an ‘objective’ one, since the use of ‘objective’ elements (geography, history, religion, ‘race’, ethnicity, citizenship, etc.), and their articulation within a particular system of meaning which describes ‘what is the nation’ differs from case to case and ultimately depends on the handling of symbolic resources by nationalists. Thus, **nationalism is an ideology which constructs the “nation-as-this and the people-as-one.”**⁸⁵ Moreover, this definition places emphasis on the existence of pre-modern communal affiliations and allegiances (‘pre-existing cultural material’) in the nationhood-construction process. Hence, **it attempts to explain the peculiar intertwining between tradition and modernity within nations,**⁸⁶ while it hopefully avoids the essentialism of ‘objective’ definitions. Finally, this definition pre-supposes that an image of the nation may exist in the minds of nationalists well before the people who are supposed to constitute the nation have internalised a national identity.

While the definition of the nationhood is idiosyncratic to each case of nationalism, it would not be hyperbolic to suggest that the political aims of the nationalist project are to some extent ‘universal’, meaning that they do not significantly vary among different cases of nationalist movements. “These generic goals are three: national autonomy, national unity, and national identity, and, for nationalists, a nation cannot survive without a sufficient degree of all three”.⁸⁷ The core themes of nationalist ideology as they are presented by Anthony Smith are the following:

⁸⁵ Torfing, J., (1999:193)

⁸⁶ Nationalism combines tradition and modernity when it constructs nations. This is another reason for which Diamandouros’ binary opposition between ‘modernizers’ and ‘traditionalists’ fails to grasp the complexity of national identity construction.

⁸⁷ Smith, A., (2001:9)

Table 1: The Core Themes of Nationalist Ideology

1. Humanity is naturally divided into nations.
2. Each nation has its peculiar character.
3. The source of all political power is the nation, the whole collectivity.
4. For freedom and self-realization, men must identify with a nation.
5. Nations can only be fulfilled in their own states
6. Loyalty to the nations overrides all other loyalties
7. The primary condition of global freedom and harmony is the strengthening of the nation-state.

Source: Smith, A., (1983: 21), as cited by Halliday, F. (1997: 362)

These ‘core themes of nationalist ideology’ are widely accepted as the founding rules of legitimacy of the modern interstate system. They are reflected in the basic texts of contemporary *international law*,⁸⁸ *international politics*,⁸⁹ and *international political theory*.⁹⁰ When, and if, a nationalist movement achieves a ‘sufficient degree’ of its abovementioned ‘generic goals’, it follows that a nation has been constructed and a significant part of what is perceived by nationalists to be the national population has internalized a national identity.⁹¹

⁸⁸ See for example Article 1, §2 of the U.N. Charter, which states that among the basic purposes of the U.N. is “to develop friendly relations among nations based on respect for the principle of equal rights and self-determination of peoples...”. This principle of national self-determination was later ‘promoted’ to a human right in international law. See for example the *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights* (1966), the *International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights* (1966), *The Helsinki Agreement* (1975), the *Vienna Declaration* (1993), etc.

⁸⁹ Especially among the dominant realist school of international relations (e.g., K. Waltz). However, even liberal-institutionalism nowadays accepts these principles, while Neo-Marxist schools of autonomous development (e.g. I. Wallerstein) contain nationalist overtones.

⁹⁰ Even liberal political theorists, who are supposed to have cosmopolitan principles, accept the basic themes of nationalist ideology. For example, in 1861, John Stuart Mill wrote: “Where the sentiment of nationality exists in any force, there is a *prima facie* case for uniting all the members of the nationality under the same government, and a government to themselves apart”. Mill, J., S., (1997:282)

⁹¹ I use the term identity with caution here. Unlike Enlightenment, naturalist, or theological conceptions of identity, which assume the existence of an autonomous and unified individual, my use of the term ‘identity’ draws on post-structuralist and psychoanalytic insights into the study of subjectivity. These schools of thought emphasize the social construction of identities and their inherent contingency. They also contend that identities are never permanently fixed, but always subject to change and reconstruction. Furthermore, subjects occupy numerous subject positions within a social structure. These subject positions constitute, in a sense, ‘mini’ fragmentary identities. A subject may therefore have a ‘Muslim’, a ‘middle class’, a ‘black’, and a ‘woman’, identities at the same time. The different subject positions of individual agents may at times conflict with each other (e.g. someone may be a ‘leftist bourgeois’ or a ‘nationalist-socialist’). In this case, different identities prevail under different circumstances. My only critique against this account of the human subject is that its emphasis on ‘contingency’ tends to exaggerate the unsettledness of identities which tend to be more stable than many post-structuralist scholars would accept. The point here is that there is no such thing as a ‘concrete individual’. The myth of the unified individual has come under attack at an even more fundamental level: the level of the human psyche, which is divided, according to psychoanalysts, into three interacting parts: the ego, the super-ego, and the

National identity is constructed on the basis of different criteria by different types of nationalism. In the case of Greece, national identity was constructed according to the logics of cultural nationalism, which stress the importance of the organic unity of the nation, and its cultural uniqueness.⁹² To be more specific, the Orthodox Church in Greece formed the primary cultural material for the construction of national identity, and became a **national religion**, meaning a **religion which advances a national identity and legitimizes a nationalist project**. The presence of a national religion in Greece made Greek nationalism a moral as well as a political project. In addition to that, the Church remained the only pre-modern institution which retained its importance throughout the modern era in Greece and Cyprus. As a result, it managed to ‘relocate’ pre-modern cultural material into the modern nation-state environment, thus enhancing national identity. This possible function of churches is outlined by Jon Hutchinson:

In spite of significant differences between pre-modern and modern societies, long established cultural repertoires (myths, symbols and memories) are ‘carried’ into the modern era by powerful institutions (states, armies, churches) and are revived and redeveloped because populations are periodically faced with similar challenges to their physical and symbolic survival.⁹³

In the case of Greece there was no pre-modern army and no pre-modern state, and therefore cultural repertoires were carried out by the only important pre-modern institution that was able, and indeed did so, to carry out cultural repertoires into the modern era was the Church.

National identity, like all types of identities, is relational and socially constructed. It is constructed upon the opposition between insiders and outsiders. “National identity is the form, *par excellence*, of identification that is characterized by the drawing of rigid, if complex, boundaries to distinguish the collective self, and its other”.⁹⁴ By pointing out the relational nature of individual and collective identities, discourse analysts underline the importance of antagonisms in constituting the social. One of the reasons that “Helleno-Christianism” has been so successful was that it could establish an antagonistic relationship between Greek identity

id. For the relevance of (Lacanian) psychoanalysis to politics, see Stavrakakis, Y., (1999), and for a psychoanalytic view to national identity see Stavrakakis, Y. (forthcoming, 2004)

⁹² Though a distinction between ‘cultural’ and ‘political’ nationalism is useful for analytical purposes, one should bear in mind that each nationalist movement combines both cultural and political elements; it is just a question of emphasis. For more on the dynamics of cultural nationalism, see Hutchinson, J. (1994).

⁹³ Hutchinson, J., (2000:661) as cited by Smith, A., (2001:77)

⁹⁴ Norval, A. J., (2000:226)

and its ‘constitutive outsides’, the Ottoman Empire/Turkey, and the surrounding Slavic and Balkan populations.

This becomes particularly evident if one looks back in the formative period of Greek nationalism. Unlike what is usually believed, this period is not characterized only by the presence of two opposing blocs: the modernizers and the traditionalists. Rather than that, it may be argued that multiple- and equally nationalist- paradigms of Greek national identity were articulated by a plethora of agents: from an extreme republican and atheist nationalism (*Kairis et. al.*), to an extremely theocratic conception of the nation (*Oikonomou, Fanariots, and Iuben Orthodox*). Between these two extremes, there were less radical, but equally nationalist views (*Farmakidis, Enlighteners, Bavarians, etc.*). Other nationalist views also existed, which cannot easily fit to a “religious/ non-religious” ideological spectrum (e.g. the *Helleno-Ottoman position*). All of these nationalisms shared some common nodal points in their discourse: They all believed more or less to the superiority of the Greek nation and the Greek language at least in the Balkan Peninsula and Asia Minor, the need to hegemonize the Balkans with an educated class of Greek speakers, and the need to expand the Greek state. It is quite interesting that, during this period, there were three major political parties in Greece: the Russian party, the French party, and the English party, each with a different view of the “nation’s destiny”. The Church was also ideologically divided. While the patriarchate in Constantinople was usually in the Russian side, the Holy Synod in Greece was controlled by and expressed the views of the Bavarian government. However, even the patriarchate changed its position several times as a response to Russian policy, and appointments of new Patriarchs. The point here is that there was not at any time in Greece, during this period, a significant cosmopolitan, non-expansionist, and progressive political movement of modernizers. Such views would not even be imaginable by the majority of people, let alone legitimate, in the newly founded Greek state. Moreover, there was not a unified Church policy, or a single source of an ‘underdog’ Eastern oriented culture. Concepts, such as “the East”, “Orthodoxy”, “the West”, “Byzantium”, “nation”, etc. acquired different meanings and place within different discourses. The most peculiar example of such discursive ambiguities can be found in the word “*genos*”, which came to denote, under different discourses, anything from “race”, to the “Hellenic Volk”, and from Greek speaking populations, to the Orthodox Christians of the Ottoman Empire. Within this context of political, social and discursive struggles, a particular national imaginary attained a hegemonic position in Greek society. This hegemonic form of nationalist discourse was structured around a series of nodal propositions: A) there is a unified history of *one* Greek nation starting from the pre-Homeric era, through to Classical Greece, the Hellenistic epoch, the Byzantium, and

continuing in modern Greece. B) The nation is bound together by geography, history, language, and *religion*. C) Being Orthodox Christian is an almost necessary pre-condition for being Greek. D) The Greek nation is superior to almost any other nation in the world since Greeks are the heirs of almost all the great civilizations of the West (Ancient Greek, Hellenistic/ Alexander the Great, Eastern Roman/ Byzantium). This Helleno-Christian nationalism managed to transcend party and class differences, to legitimize government policies, to constitute political orthodoxy and to define publicly accepted social behaviours.

Furthermore, I would argue that the legal arrangements of this period affected later Greek Church political culture in a controversial manner. Despite the fact that the legal status of ‘semi-separation’ has been widely perceived as a progressive measure which restricted any theocratic aspirations on the part of Church officials and admirers, we may argue that the recent confrontations between the Church and the State in Greece are partly the result of the Church’s legal status. The legal regime of 1833 in essence legitimized the intertwining between secular and ecclesiastical authorities. It also assigned the Church an ‘ethnarchic’ role. Contemporary Church policy may be perceived as an attempt of the Church to ‘stick’ to its role as it has been drafted out during the first years after independence, despite the fact that it has originally reacted to this role.⁹⁵

In other words, the Church has acted throughout the course of Modern Greek history as a secular political institution and as an ideological mechanism, which has been gradually converted to the values of Greek nationalism (not always willingly as Kitromilides has demonstrated) and assumed the role of a national religion. Given that both agents and institutions hold relatively stable identities, the Church is finding it difficult to confine itself to a lesser political role.

Since the restoration of democracy in Greece, the state has attempted to change the legal status of the Church and the ideological position of Orthodoxy in Greek society. The stance of the Church during the “colonels’ dictatorship” may have contributed to boost attempts for secularization in post-authoritarian Greece. We may note that historical ‘shocks’ can be used in this case as independent variables which may explain the sudden dislocation of the Church-state-nation equivalence in Greece (dependent variable).

We have already seen in previous section how the Church has reacted to secularizing measures and how it successfully continues to produce nationalism in our epoch. The legal and social arrangements of the first period after independence may partly explain why the Church

⁹⁵ Its reactions were suppressed (sometimes violently) by the Bavarian regime.

remains a nationalist institution in our era. The Greek Church seeks to protect the role which has been assigned to it during the nation building period. To use Zoumboulakis' metaphor, the Church feels like a 'betrayed wife', who offered its support to the state for as long as it was needed, and now it is set aside.

Moreover, the present political discourse of the Greek Church signifies a structural change in Greek politics, whereby the Church emancipates from the political influence of the state, and assumes the role of an autonomous political agent. Within this climate of antagonism between the Church and the state, a new series of competing nationalist doctrines is developed, which have indeed provoked a debate over the "renegotiation" of Greek national identity. However, religious nationalism remains the hegemonic form of nationalist ideology in Greek political culture and public discourse, and this can be partly explained on the basis of the tradition that the 1830-1865 historical developments produced. Instead of a weakening of religious nationalism in Greece, we may empirically observe a revival of "Helleno-Christian" ideas (among political parties, intellectual elites, and the Church) in the face of liberal globalisation.

V. Conclusion

To summarize the argument so far, despite the efforts of the state and some intellectuals and, at some stages, of the state to generate and proliferate a secular political nationalism in Greece, the 'Helleno-Christian' thesis (i.e. a primarily cultural form of nationalism, which accommodates some elements of political nationalism) prevailed for three reasons: a) it was more appealing to the people, since it drew on pre-modern and pre-national existing communal ties. This type of nationalism was compatible with many of the other identities (familial, communal, religious, linguistic, ethnic, and citizen identities) that subjects were holding during the periods under investigation, since it was based on myths, symbols, traditions and memories with which large parts of the population were familiar with. Helleno-Christianity was therefore ideally constructed in order to replace a previous symbolic order with mostly familiar symbols, but within a new nationalist ideological framework. Contingent and otherwise unrelated practices acquired meaning within this new symbolic order. Speaking an archaic Greek dialect, going to the Church, and disliking the Turks for instance were practices which were bound together in a particular system of meaning which was later called Helleno-Christianity and these practices were experienced by individuals as aspects of the "Greek Way of life" b) The legal and political position of the Church of Greece facilitated the birth and eventual dominance of 'Helleno-Christianism'. Moreover, despite the fact that the Church was

politically subjected to the secular authority of the state, it managed to retain an extensive degree of autonomy at a **cultural level**, and thus was able to use the mechanisms that its legal position provided it with, in order to disseminate its distinctive cultural nationalism c) As an ideology, 'Helleno-Christian' nationalism was able to construct rigid boundaries between insiders and outsiders, Greeks and non-Greeks, and thus provide the newborn nation with a solid collective identity. For example, other forms of nationalism that were emphasizing the religious element of Greek identity were unable to offer adequate grounding for a firm distinction between Greeks and the other Orthodox populations of the Ottoman Empire. The Helleno-Christian thesis managed to do so, by emphasizing the 'Hellenic' element of Greek identity. On the other hand, 'Hellenized' conceptions of the nation were unable to communicate with the masses that formed the Greek nation. These masses were divided into ethnically, linguistically, and culturally fragmented groups, very few of which could understand the 'language of Plato', despite the fact that they were mostly using Hellenic dialects. Therefore, Orthodoxy was a cultural resource with which they could easily identify (at least more easily than they could identify with Ancient Greece)

Pre-existing cultural material and symbolic resources posed obstacles and created complexities in the modernization/secularization process in Greece. While formal western-style representative institutions were established in Greece from the early period of independence, their interaction with the local Orthodox tradition influenced their functions to the extent instead of having a Western polity with traits of an Eastern political culture, we have an Eastern/Orthodox political culture operating within a milieu of western formal institutions (at least during the period before 1974). Therefore, the functioning of western-type institutions in Greece has not always been harmonious, if not always problematic. Within a context of ineffective bureaucratic politics, the Church has been the only institution with a long tradition and continuing presence in Greek pre-modern and modern social life with which people could identify. In general, the Greek case is an example which illustrates that modernity is not a linear process towards rationalization and secularization of society, and that pre-modern institutional structures and political culture impede modernization waves. It also illustrates, that the forces of Westernization and European integration do not automatically dilute the forces of nationalism in Europe. Finally, the prevalence of Helleno-Christianism demonstrates the importance of drawing political, social, and cultural frontiers between 'us' and 'them', in constituting individual and collective identities

This paper has not by any means been an exhaustive investigation into the dynamics of Greek nationalism. It should be better perceived as a research exercise which hopefully illuminated the analytical validity of ethno-symbolism and discourse analysis as heuristic tools for the study of national identity. There are three main areas in which further research is required in order to draw safer conclusions regarding the theoretical framework which has been used in this paper: a) the nationalism of the Greek diasporas and Cyprus and its relation to Orthodoxy and mainland Greek nationalism, b) comparative analysis of the role of the Church in producing nationalism, between Greece and other Orthodox countries, and c) comparative analysis between Greek nationalism and other nationalisms of the Balkan and Southern-Eastern European regions where cultural attitudes towards the West are also ambivalent.

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GREEK SEXUAL CULTURE, IDENTITY AND

ETHNICITY

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1. Introduction

The study of identity development for ethnic minority lesbians and gay men has previously examined identity development in the context of ethnic minority and lesbian or gay identity models (Espin, 1987; Wooden, Kawasaki, & Mayeda, 1983). Both studies used the theoretical Model of Homosexual Identity Formation (Cass, 1979) as a model for understanding the six stages of development that an individual moves through in developing an integrated identity as a homosexual person. In her study of identity development among Latina Lesbian women, Espin (1987) also used the Minority Identity Development model (Atkinson, Morten, & Sue, 1979) as a model for understanding Latina identity.

As Espin (1987) noted, these two models of identity development describe more or less the same process of identity development. Each model, however, presents a means for understanding identity development of either homosexual identity or ethnic minority identity. How does an individual who is gay or lesbian and a member of an ethnic minority group come to terms with identity issues?

Morales (1983) proposed an identity formation model for ethnic minority lesbians and gays that incorporates the dual minority status of this group. This process seems to center around five different states. Each state is accompanied by decreasing anxiety and tension through the management of the tensions and differences. As cognitive and lifestyle changes emerge the multiple identities become integrated leading toward a greater sense of understanding of one's self and toward the development of a multi-cultural perspective.

The life of an ethnic minority lesbian or gay person often means a life that is lived within three communities: the gay community, their ethnic community, and the predominantly White heterosexual mainstream society. Each community has its set of norms, values, and beliefs, some of which are fundamentally in opposition to each other. Some choose to keep each community separate, and others vary the degree to which they integrate the communities and lifestyles. Each community offers important aspects supporting lifestyles and identities. Each community can be self-

sufficient if the individual chooses to stick with a particular one. The gay community offers support in the expression of one's sexual orientation identity, the ethnic community offers emotional and familiar bonding as well as cultural identity, and the mainstream society offers a national and international identity as well as a mainstream culture and multidimensional social system.

In an ideal world a lesbian or gay person of colour would have drawn resources from and maintain associations with each of the three communities. But as Carballo-Diequez (1989), Espin (1987), and Morales (1990) have suggested, such associations carry negative consequences with them. Their ethnic minority community has homophobic and negative attitudes toward gays in general; the gay community is a reflection of the mainstream White community and mirrors the racist attitudes toward the lesbian and gay people of colour through discrimination and prejudice; the mainstream White heterosexual community embraces the homophobic and negative attitudes toward gays and lesbians as well as the racist attitudes and practices toward the lesbian and gay people of colour. As a result of the above the ethnic minority lesbian and gay people find themselves weighing the options and managing the tensions and conflicts that arise as a result of the multiple interactions (de Monteflores, 1986).

Where do the lesbian and gay people of colour turn for support though? A possible source is the members of the mainstream gay and lesbian community who become important outlets for social and moral support. However, lesbian and gay people of colour report discriminatory treatment in gay bars, clubs, and social and political gatherings, and in individuals within the gay community (Dyne 1980, Cochran 1988, Morales 1989, Garnets and Kimmel 1991, Chan 1992, Gutierrez and Dworkin 1992,

Greene 1994). They describe feeling an intense sense of conflicting loyalties to two communities in both of which they are marginalised by the requirement to conceal or minimise important aspects of their identities in order to be accepted. Lesbian and gay people of colour frequently experience a sense of never being part of any group completely, leaving them at a greater risk for isolation, feelings of estrangement, and increased psychological vulnerability.

My discussion¹ in this paper focuses specifically on Anglo-Greek men resident in London² (who have sex with men) because they receive marginal if any attention in the sociological and psychological literature. For the most part, empirical investigations and scholarly work on ethnic minority gay men devote little time or attention to the specific issues relevant to Anglo-Greek men and the ways that ethnicity and racism ‘colour’ the experience of sexism (Hall & Greene, 1996; Williams, 1999).

This paper first examines some of the key cultural concepts and relevant historical factors that may shape the development of Anglo-Greek gay identity. Accounts of sexual identity experiences provided by second generation Greek Cypriot gay men in London³ are examined in the light of this analysis to explore how these men negotiate their Anglo-Greek and gay identity.

The personal accounts of these men demonstrate that their sexual identity does not always become their primary identity and that different identities are constructed by individuals at different places and times.

¹ Phellas, C.N. (2002). *The Construction of Sexual and Cultural Identities: Greek-Cypriot Men in Britain, England*: Ashgate

² The issues raised in this paper may be equally applied to Anglo-Cypriot lesbian women resident in London. However, due to the complexity and richness of the challenges these women face it was felt that it would be inappropriate to discuss them in this paper.

³ 25 self-identified second-generation Greek-Cypriot gay men living in London were recruited by advertising in the gay press, by writing to community groups and gay groups and organizations and by ‘snowballing’. Semi-structured face-to-face and telephone interviews were conducted with those men recruited through these channels. Data were subjected to thematic content analysis and multidimensional scaling techniques.

Most of the respondents indicated that the translation of their sexual desires and behaviours into the 'political statement' of gay identity is not only difficult but is strongly resisted. Instead, they chose to construct their identity in terms of their relationships with their families, their peers at work and other members of their community.

Finally, the findings of this research may help develop an understanding of the complexities surrounding the 'sexual and cultural identities' of Anglo-Greek gay men, thereby informing the practice of therapeutic professionals who may encounter these men in their work

2. Sexuality in the Greek-Cypriot Culture

Some people might argue that the Greek-Cypriots living in the UK, present different social characteristics from the ones living in Cyprus. My own personal experience and the various conversations and meetings I had with diaspora Cypriots show a lot of similarities in terms of cultural and ethnic dynamics.

The same beliefs and values, traditions, motivations, religious practices, principles and moral codes, and to a large extent, psycho-social dynamics, exist. Indeed, it is true to say that, if anything, the Greek-Cypriot communities living outside Cyprus tend to show greater conservatism and adherence to 'old-fashioned' ideas than those in Cyprus.

The concept of sexual behaviour in the Greek-Cypriot culture is closely tied up with the concept of the 'honour and shame' value system. This system predetermines the way Greek-Cypriot women and men view themselves in relation to issues concerning sexual and moral codes and the way they are viewed by others in relation to these matters.

Women are considered to be both passive and threatening to the "masculine sexual" moral code of the society. They are believed to have the capacity to either make or break this moral code by the way they behave in the social sphere outside their homes. It is widely accepted that a mans' sexual drives and sexual urges are natural but uncontrollable. Therefore, the onus is on the woman to maintain this moral code by proper and decent behaviour. (Loizos, P., Papataxiarchis, E., 1991)

A husband's infidelity is more or less accepted amongst Greek-Cypriots. As long as he does not neglect his family duties and he comes back to his bed at the end of the day, he is forgiven. He has to show the necessary respect to his wife, his family and his parents if that is threatened by his extra-marital affairs then he will be accountable to the people around him (both the family and social circles).

The main categories that have dominated Western 'homosexualities' studies - 'heterosexuality', 'homosexuality', 'bisexuality' - are clearly present in Greek-Cypriot culture. Nonetheless, they have a history that is connected as in the Western Europe and the USA, to the emergence of modern medical science. Cypriot (homo) sexuality cannot be meaningfully understood simply as a postmodern by-product of multiple historically contingent identities. That would have been an ideal scenario for a coherent Western culture, and even within that, the social and cultural conditions for homosexual identities are many and varied.

The notion of a single homosexual identity or a distinct homosexual community or a gay ghetto is a notion fairly new to the Cypriot community. "The structure of the sexual life in Cyprus and, as a result, the way Cypriots perceive the concept of sexuality has traditionally been conceived in terms of a model focused on the relationship between sexual practices and gender roles on the distinction between masculine (*ενεργιτιηκοτητα*, activity) and feminine (*παθητικοτητα*, passivity) as central to the order of the sexual universe" (Faubion, J.D, 1993). As a result, the societal definition of homosexuality in Cyprus originates around the schema of penetration, and in this conceptualisation the label of the homosexual is attributed to any individual who is being penetrated or thought to be penetrated. The other remains free of this label, regardless of the fact that he is engaged in homosexual sex as well (Plummer 1991).

" It is along the lines of such perceptions that the distinctions between (*αρσενικου*, male) and (*θηλυκου*, female), (*αρσενικοτητα*, masculinity) and (*θηλυκοτητα*, femininity), and the like, have traditionally been organised in Cypriot culture" (Faubion, J.D, 1993).

A Greek-Cypriot male's masculine gender identity is not threatened by homosexual acts as long as he plays the insertor sex role. Real Greek men should always hunt and

penetrate. They should never allow themselves to be stationed and being penetrated. “Therefore, the ‘active homosexual’ is still entirely and unambiguously a ‘man’” (Faubion, J.D, 1993).

The above highlights a major difference between the ‘Western’ and Greek-Cypriot cultural setting for male bisexuality: the lack of stigmatisation amongst Cypriots of the active insertor participant in homosexual encounters. As a result of the above, many Cypriots do not believe that ‘one drop of homosexuality’ makes one totally homosexual as long as the appropriate sexual role is played.

3. Gay Identity in the Greek-Cypriot Culture

In the Greek-Cypriot culture the individual man is merged with the family and the community. He does not have an identity as his problems are shared with the rest of the family. It is very difficult to develop his own personality and character, as he often stays with his family until he gets married. Should he decide to break away from the family and set his own home without getting married, he is seen as acting against the family. Individuals are not allowed to have any secrets or, even worse, any private lives. If they do, then there is something wrong that ought to be shared and resolved within the family itself. Decisions regarding financial, emotional, or business, affairs are taken jointly with the rest of the family. From an early age, the children learn that their actions have a reflection upon the whole family’s status in the society. They cannot take any decisions without first considering the consequences their actions would have upon the rest of the family.

So, can one talk about a ‘gay identity’ within a culture in which ‘identity’ *per se* is problematic? How can Cypriot men (gay identified or not) start addressing their needs when they cannot even express their needs or voices as individuals. How can one accept and act on his sexuality when the family and society denies them the right to be themselves.

Gay identity emerges when people are free to make choices and decisions about their lives and lifestyles, hence a popular concept when discussing ‘Western

homosexualities'. However, in a culture where the individual is submerged in the community, such a definition becomes unrealistic.

As Yiannis (age 31) said:

'The main reason, I haven't come out is my mother. I cannot do that to her. Even though we're not close I do acknowledge that she has sacrificed her life for me. She was the one who was getting beaten up by my dad, she was the one who had to go out to work to feed us, and to say to her, "Yes, I am gay" would totally destroy her. You see, she is homophobic like most of Greek people. They're racist, you know. She is a typical Greek person ... it's O.K. to be anything else, anything you want to be as long as it's not in the family. That's their way of thinking and that's the way with my mum. As long as it's kept outside the family is fine. It's my duty to look after her. They've looked after you, that's the way I see it, now it's my turn to look after her.'

Coming out in the family and showing one's sexual flag may be considered as an act of treason against the culture and the family. It may be seen as a form of rejection and abandonment of all the things their parents are representing. As Espin (1984, 1987) and Hidalgo (1984) noted, a gay or lesbian family member may maintain a place in the family and be quietly tolerated, but this does not constitute acceptance of a gay or lesbian sexual orientation. Rather, it constitutes the denial of it. The gay son is very much welcomed in the family, so long as he does not disclose or declare his sexual orientation.

As a result, Greek-Cypriot gay men internalise all these negative attitudes as gleaned from loved and trusted figures. This has a negative effect on the development of a healthy identity and self acceptance.

One of my interviewees (Costas, aged 33) said the following when I asked him whether his religious upbringing had any effect upon his identity and personality development.

'In fact, I felt guilty from the very onset till I was mature and understood. But the society didn't recognise what I was up to. It wasn't normal to speak as a gay man. But in addition to that, the biggest factor that induced guilt in me was the religious aspect and it run very strong in my family. While I was in Cyprus, I was quite a

religious person. I used to go to the church very frequently. I used to be the priest's assistant basically. So, I saw my sexual tendencies as being in disunity with the religious teachings. So, it did bother me a lot. It still bothers me, but not as much as it used to bother me.'

When I asked him whether he has shifted over the years in the way he perceives himself, he answered:

'Yes. I have created a more positive image in that I don't fight myself the whole time, not as much as I used to. All the time, it was an internal battle between what I wanted to experience and what society, my family and the church wanted me to experience. You know, those people that obey the religious teachings and they have a married life, they do so many things that are equally more wrong for humans than what I'm doing wrong, basically by being gay.'
(Respondent No 1, age 33).

4. Multiple Identities and Greek-Cypriots Gay Men

It has become quite apparent from the interviews that the concept of 'multiple identities' is quite a normal thing among the interviewees. Sexual identity for the majority of the people I have interviewed did not become the primary identity. A lot of them have devised various coping mechanisms and tried to incorporate their sexual identity in their everyday life. The Greek-Cypriot men I have interviewed accepted the fact that constructing a full gay life-style may not be feasible. The ways of coping and dealing with their sexual identity vary from person to person. However, the main aim in all the coping mechanisms is to minimise the strain on them by finding a happy medium between their sexual identity and social lives. Their personal journeys and struggles do not make them less gay than the ones who allowed their sexual identity to predominate over other aspects of their identity.

How difficult is this constant struggle to maintain that equilibrium among the multiple identities?

Nicos (aged 28) spoke for a lot of my interviewees when he pointed to the difficulties of integrating (rather than simply juxtaposing) aspects of his different worlds:

‘The thing that I dislike is not being able to come out to my family, that’s what stopping me from being a real gay person and a fulfilled person. Once you’ve come out to the family and they can accept it, which I know mine won’t, at least you can bring a partner home to meet the family. He could be someone who even if he does not understand my culture, at least I’ll be with them in a surrounding that I feel comfortable with. I think that’s the only annoyance that I’ve got not to be able to share my partner with my parents. It’s not with the gay life, it’s with my own culture and community, that’s the difference.’

And yet lesbians and gay men need the same strong connections with their family members, as everyone else. Furthermore, strong family ties are even more crucial to lesbians and gay men given the hostility and rejection they face in the outside world. It is clear from the interviews that, despite the anti-gay sentiment of the Greek-Cypriot community and their families, there is a deep attachment among the Greek-Cypriot gay men to their Greek culture and a frame of reference that most frequently claimed ethnic identity and community as a primary concern.

What has come across the interviews was a fear of being an outcast in their own community of such an importance. As a result, a lot of my interviewees spend a lot of energy and devise different behaviours to delicately balance the two worlds, and that can make life more difficult and stressful. The Greek-Cypriot gay men I have interviewed in London exist as minorities within minorities with the multiple oppression and discrimination that accompanies such status. A lot of them struggle to integrate two major aspects of their identity - sexual orientation and ethnicity - and usually their sexual orientation is devalued by the closest family before even themselves becoming aware of their gay or lesbian orientation.

Andreas (age 43) spoke frankly of the imbalance between the worlds of his culture and his sexuality and the difficulty he experienced in finding a place for himself.:

‘The time I missed that Greek-Cypriot connection was last year when I went to a Jewish Bar Mitzvah. I went away feeling extremely sad. I often get this sense of deep sadness, because there isn’t a community I belong to. There’s the gay community but it doesn’t fulfill me. It’s not even a need for belonging, it’s a sense, yes, it’s a sense of belonging. When I hear Greek music being played sometimes it triggers off a sense of loss or a sense of not belonging. I felt it most strongly when I went to this Jewish gathering. If I go to a Greek gathering I tend to link up with my brother and his family and I feel ill at ease because they’re being very intrusive, they’re asking me all sorts of questions. I’ll answer them and if they ask me if I’m married, I’ll turn round and tell them the truth. Really it’s up to them whether they want to accept that or not. It’s the connection with my Greek culture I miss most’.

5. Conclusion

It is clear from the above findings that identity can be problematic. Any attempts to globalise all gay men into a homogeneous group based on a ‘Western’ model of homosexualities can be misleading and dangerous. Not only can important differences between gay men be hidden but local and national differences of culture, traditions and political strategies will not be properly addressed.

The personal accounts that come out of this research reinforce the notion that identity is multiple, contested and contextual and show that different identities are constructed by individuals and groups at different places and times. For a lot of the Greek-Cypriot men in this study, the translation of their sexual desires and behaviours into a political statement of a gay identity was not only difficult but was also strongly resisted. Sexual identity – although relevant- was not a primary identity dimension to them. Many men had developed more or less effective coping mechanisms to manage the conflicts they faced. Most importantly, though, the men I spoke to were united in their struggle for acceptance by the Greek-Cypriot community.

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