**Chapter 11**

Historical Time and National Space in Modern Greece

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In historical writings for the most part during the last two centuries, the concept of the nation and the model of national history resulted in the entanglement of time and space in the chronological and geographical conceptual framework of the nation. For instance, transnational waves in economy and culture were described in national terms. At the same time, local histories were considered as variations of national history. During the twentieth-century '*fin-de-siècle* turn', the emergence of new regimes of territoriality, the debates on globalisation, ethno-spaces and transnationality, as well as the self-reflexivity in history, brought to light two of national historiography's silent and hidden premises: the mono-linear sequence of time and homogenised space. The aim of this paper is to travel in this direction and to see how national histories are the result of a dialogue with various conceptions of space and time and how these conceptions are not given before the formation of national histories but interwoven with them. The field of this exploration is the chronological and spatial plurality inside and outside Modern Greek national history.

Despite its ancient name and self presentation, Modern Greece is not an old nation. The Greek national state was born as the result of a separatist war, which, in the second decade of the nineteenth century, carved the territory from the Ottoman Empire. New territories were annexed during the nineteenth century (1864: the Ionian Islands; 1881:

Thessaly and part of Epirus; 1912–13: part of Macedonia, and the rest of Epirus, the North and East Aegean Islands, and Crete; 1949: the Dodecanese). As a nation, or 'cultural nation' according to the traditional division between Western and Eastern European nations, Greece was the result of a large shift in cultural identifications since the eighteenth century and it was consolidated during the nineteenth century. An uneasy relationship existed between the state and the nation. During the nineteenth century and until World War I, the state had clear borders in the southern part of the Balkan peninsula but the nation was spread over a large area covering disparate regions along the coast of the southern Balkan and Asia Minor peninsulas, the Aegean and Ionian Islands and Cyprus. Greek populations were also living in the big cities around Black Sea and the Eastern Mediterranean. The present border was defined by the Treaty of Lausanne of 1923 after the defeat of Greece in a war with Turkey (1919–22) and the forced mass exchange of populations between Greece and Turkey. After the second decade of the nineteenth century, the once dispersed Greek population of the North-Eastern Mediterranean was concentrated in the territory of the Greek state. This centripetal trend was counterbalanced by two waves of Greek emigration to Northern European and transoceanic destinations in the period before World War I and in the post-World War II period. Despite the dichotomy between the Greeks of Greece and the Greeks of the diaspora, a hierarchy was established between the state as the head and the torso of the nation and the diaspora. The transformation of the Greek nation from a polycentric constellation of communities at the beginning of nineteenth century to a structured and centralised national body in the twentieth century was evident also in the centralised way of nation building in Greece and the primary role of the state, which did not allow much space for regionalism and regional difference. Unlike Italy, where regional differences were strong owing to the pre-national history of these regions and their ruling elites, local differences in Greece were subordinated to central political and cultural projects. However, we should not conceive regionalism only as rigid, spatial-political regimes inside or outside national states. This fluidity could be seen in the case of Greece, where various and intersecting levels of history and territoriality constitute frameworks within which meanings, emotions and attitudes were produced (Clogg 1992; Gallant 2001; Augustinos 1977; Blinkhorn and Veremis 1990).
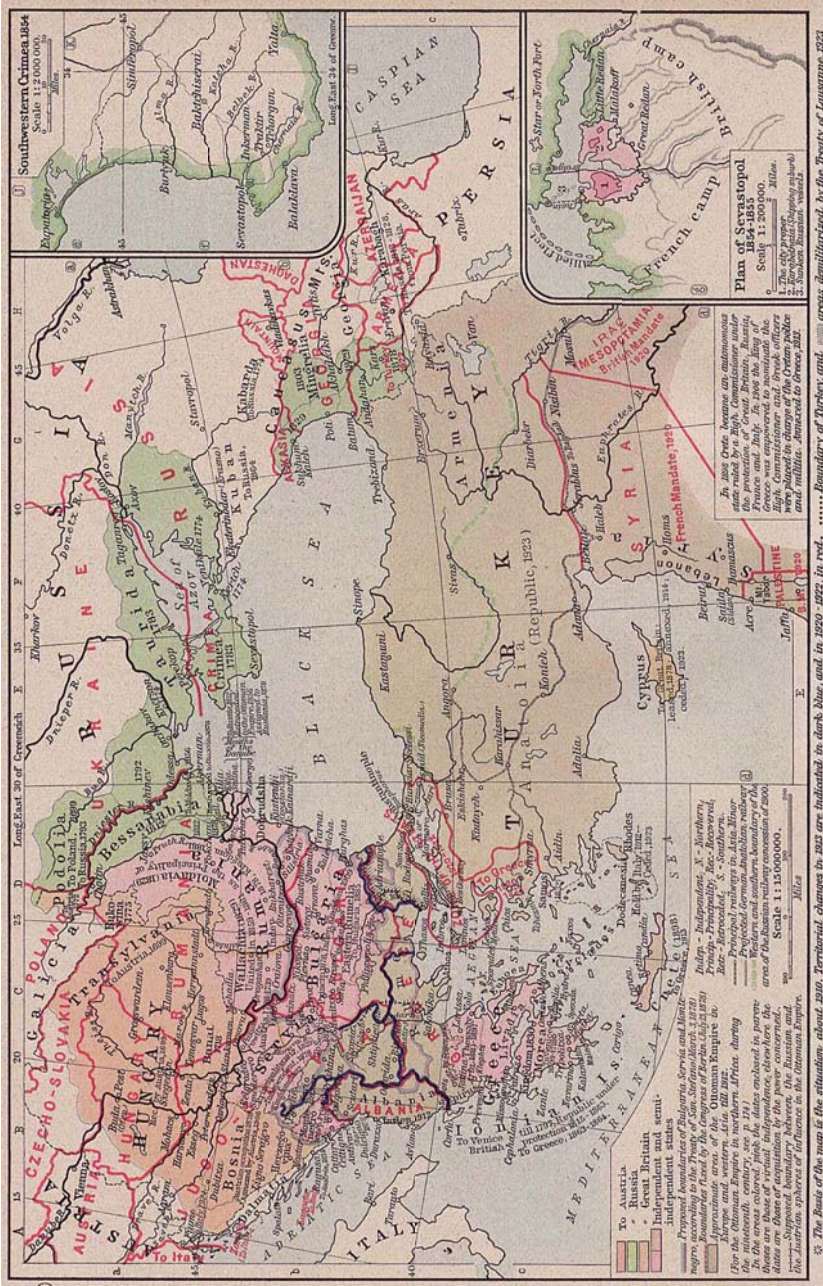
From the Empire to the Nation-States

Insets: Southwestern Crimea, 1854. Plan of Sevastopol, 1854–5. From William R. Shepherd, *The Historical Atlas*, 3rd edn. (New York: Henry Holt and Companiy, 1923), p. 164. Found at the web-site of the 'Perry-Castaneda Library Map Collection/ Historical Maps of Europe' of the University of Texas at Austin <http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/historical/shepherd/ottoman_dismemberment.jpg>, accessed 17 October 2005.

1. The Construction of National Time and Space: Where History Preceded Geography

As a biography of the nation, national historiography is an historical 'genre' which first appeared in nineteenth-century Europe (Berger, Donovan and Passmore 1999). Greek national historiography was one of the earlier national historiographies, constructed in the second half of the nineteenth century through an appropriation and re-signification of several far distant pasts. The central myth of this historiography was that Modern Greece was the modern sequel of Ancient Greece, which, like the mythical Phoenix reappeared after two thousand years of the nation's subjugation by foreign conquerors, from the Romans to the Turks. This reference to a classical past of the Mediterranean world, separated from the present by a gap—the Middle Ages—was not unusual during the period of the creation of national states in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The biblical and Greco-Roman written traditions formed the core of European collective history, referred to as Universal history until the seventeenth century. As a consequence, the Mediterranean was the stage of myths and invented pasts that concerned most European nations. But who owns these traditions? Some of these traditions, like the Greek, Roman and Jewish ones, were claimed as universal legacies while at the same time were appropriated by Modern Greek and Jewish nationalism. The use of the Roman past was more complicated. Roman republican virtues were invoked in revolutionary France, while the Roman Empire represented a usable past to rulers from Napoleon to Mussolini and to countries from Italy to Romania. There were of course unwanted Mediterranean traditions, such as the Phoenician, which has never been claimed for national purposes.

The image of a nation reviving after centuries of absence since classical times was not the unique pattern concerning national history and the present-past relationship. During the first century of Greek independence (the nineteenth century), another image was constructed according to which the history of the nation was a continuum comprising of the medieval period and appropriating the Eastern Roman Empire, or Byzantine, past. Blended at times with public discourse and mass historical culture, the two patterns of present-past relationships were not without different, although vague, geographic references (Liakos 2001;

Ricks and Magdalino 1998). During the time of state/nation disjuncture, the space claimed by Greek nationalism was never defined. The celebrated text on the Great Idea of the Nation (*Megali Idea*) written in 1844 as an official parliamentary speech, referred to the psychic unity of the Greeks of the Greek Kingdom with the Greeks of the Ottoman Empire and to the contribution of Greek Civilisation to Western Civilisation, but not to territories to be claimed. Although all Greek parties and intellectuals supported the enlargement of the territory of the state, the image of Greece as a classical land prioritised Athens as the capital and the Greek peninsula as the national territory. On the other hand, the image of Greece as a continuation of the Byzantine Empire fuelled Greek ambitions to 'restore' the Empire in Macedonia and Asia Minor and to acquire Constantinople as the future capital. The reference to the classical past instilled the image of a well-ordered national state within the borders established after the 1821 Revolution, while the reference to the medieval imperial past was infused with a concept of the romantic destiny of the nation, which included expansion in the Balkans and Anatolia. The image of the classical Greece was embodied to the Acropolis of Athens, while the image of Constantinople as the aspired capital of the Greek Empire to Saint Sofia, the cathedral built by Justinian in sixth century. Both were transformed to powerful 'leux du memoire' transmitting both aspects of the Greek national ideology.

These rival images did not disappear with the geographic consolidation of the national state but remained as speculations on the meaning and variations of Greek national identity. The debate on the two versions of the present-past relationship was productive in several fields of art, literature and ideology, given the official and high European preference for the Classical tradition, and the popular, religious and Eastern influences upon the Byzantine tradition. History was proved bifurcated and the past was only an object of play for the present. The selected dead ancestors proved able to impose commitments to their living descendants. This time/space difference, which was depicted in the Athens 2004 Olympic Games, has produced a voluminous corpus of literature, which serves as an inventory to explore Modern Greek ideology and national historiography (Kitroeff 2004; Skopetea 1988).

**Greek Mythology
and Modern Greek Heroes**
Opening Ceremony of the Olympic Games,
Athens 2004

2. Regional Histories

The Modern Greek state is the result of a gradual agglomeration of regions with the initial territories of the Greek Kingdom of 1830. With the exception of the Ionian Islands, where political life and ruling elites existed before unification with Greece, the new regions were passed from Ottoman to Greek sovereignty and subjected to a rigid Hellenisation in administration, education and cultural life. The names of towns, villages and places, as well as surnames were changed to Greek forms. Governors, police, teachers and state bureaucracy was appointed by the capital, transferred from the old to the new provinces, and local societies were subjected to strong centralisation. Regional histories appeared defending lost local traditions and with the aim to restore and find a place for them in the national imaginary. As a consequence, each region was anxious to

upgrade its regional image according to the terms of the national ideology and to compete for the financial and cultural resources distributed by the state. The regions of northern Greece, with their contested borders and populations, defended their Greek belongingness and their place in Greek national history. Finally, as the Greek state experienced a mass influx of ethnic Greeks from Bulgaria and Turkey through immigration and forced exchanges of population, imagined regions were formed, without territories and consisting of dispersed ethnocultural communities of Greek immigrants (Peckham 2001; Tziovas 1994).

2–1   Upgrading the Regional to the National

The Greek Kingdom was created without any previous reference to state traditions. As a consequence the new state institutions were dominated by local elites who were in competition for supremacy. Even the first political parties, apart from other differences, were regionally, even locally based (Hering 1992). The intellectual elites moved in different orbits. Two groups competed for cultural and ideological supremacy in the Greek state during the early nineteenth century. The first came from Constantinople, capital of the Ottoman Empire, while the second was based in the Ionian Islands, a region first under Venetian dominion until the Napoleonic Wars and under British rule until unification with Greece in 1864. Although the first gradually disappeared, the second remained powerful until the emergence of the Athenian intellectual elite at the end of the nineteenth century. Unique for any Greek region, the Ionian Islands never came under Ottoman rule; they had a compact Greek population but with bilingual elites and a strong tradition of Italian education and culture. The islands' historiography and literature was the oldest regional learned tradition in Greece (Gallant 2002). As a vehicle for integrating the region with the nation, Ionian historiography was dedicated to supporting the prominent position of the islands' elites in the Modern Greek intellectual tradition. The same tendency towards upgrading the local to the national was followed in the historiography of Epirus, another region in northwestern Greece. The region was divided between Greece and Albania and had a strong Vlach minority. The historiography of Epirus was a product of the Greek elites and was dedicated to highlighting the region's intellectual and financial contribution to the building of the Modern Greek state, laying specific emphasis on education.
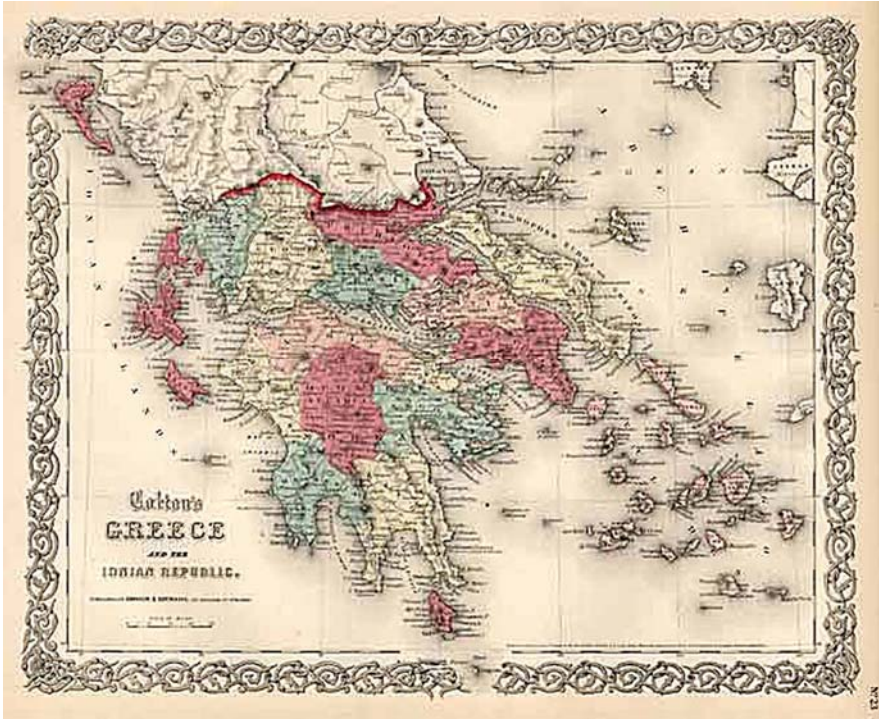
Greek Kingdom and Ionian Republic, 1859 [1]

2–2   Border Narratives

The most conspicuous example of the border narrative is found in Greek historiography and literature regarding Macedonia. The region of Macedonia was the apple of discord between the conflicting nationalisms of Greece, Bulgaria and (Slavo-) Macedonia during the final decades of Ottoman rule. During the interwar years and World War II, a new competitor joined the contest, consisting of Macedonians who claimed the

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[1] Detailed map of the Greek Islands, showing towns, mountains, rivers, roads, lakes, gulfs, bays, etc. Decorative border. A terrific regional map, from J. H. Colton, one of the most prolific American mapmakers of the mid-nineteenth century. From the scarce 1859 edition, bearing the imprint of Johnson and Browning, one year before these two publishers commenced publication of Johnson's Illustrated Family Atlas of the World. Marvelous vibrant colours. Found at www.raremaps.com <http://www.raremaps.com/maps/big/6117.jpg>, accessed 17 October 2005.

region's name as their ethnic name. In Greece, history, folklore and archaeology were called to furnish arguments in order to prove the Greek character of the region and to define the northern borders of the nation. The dispute over the name of the Republic of Macedonia after independence in 1991 strengthened the border character of the (Greek) Macedonian culture. At the same time, history and literature were a way to domesticate the Slav-speaking minority of Greek Macedonia and to appropriate its differences by the Greek national narrative (Danforth 1995; Cowan 2000; Aarbacke 2003).

Excavations in Vergina in western Macedonia during the 1970s revealed the royal tomb of King Philip, Alexander's father (Andronicos, 1984). This royal tomb became a new holy place for Greek national memory. A visit to Vergina was not only obligatory for schools but was part of the hospitality itinerary for foreign visitors to Salonica during the 1990s. On the gold urn containing the bones of the royal dead was the engraving of a star. This engraving, named the 'Macedonian star' or 'Macedonian sun', became a new national emblem, decorating a great diversity of things: from coins to national buildings and flags, and from supermarket plastic bags to bus tickets. Thus, a previously-unknown symbol became the eternal symbol of Macedonian Hellenism. Yet, this same emblem featured on the first official flag of the (Former Yugoslav) Republic of Macedonia. Thus, the Macedonian star rose over both sides of the Macedonian border, each in different national colours: gold and blue in the south and gold and red in the north. The adoption of this symbol by the Republic of Macedonia was considered in Greece as new proof of the usurpation of Greek history by the other side. Even in 2005, the unresolved conflict on the ownership of the name of Macedonia forms a dividing border-culture in the region. The relationship between border

(a)   (b)

Border Disputes over the Symbols: (a) Greek Macedonian Star; (b) FYROM Macedonian Star

narratives and mainstream national history could be described as a tug-of-war between central and peripheral elites, the latter anxious to assure a place on the centre stage.

2–3   Narratives of Nostalgia

Nostalgia, as a component of thinking time and space, is a recent preoccupation of historians after the turn of memory in the 1990s (Boym 2001). Nostalgia, the sense of trauma, the history of loss and disturbing memories, are another hidden agenda in the writing of national histories. In Greece, this traumatic history was constructed around the concept of *disaster*, using the Greek word 'catastrophe'. The Asia Minor Catastrophe, '*Mikrasiatiki Katastrophi*' became a memory landmark, a chronotope, for Greeks after 1922. Indeed, between 1922 and 1923, a massive influx of 1,500,000 Greek refugees from Asia Minor, Eastern Thrace and the southern coast of the Black Sea streamed into Greece, increasing the population by a fifth. This forced migration was the final result of the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire and the decade of the Greek-Turkish War (1912–22) (Smith 2000; Hirschon 2003). The refugees were dispersed throughout Greece carrying with them histories and memories of massacres, dislocations, deprivations, deportations, famine and long walks from the interior of Anatolia to the coast and from the Eastern Thrace to Greece. After spending the first few years trying to survive in their new places in Greece, they started to recreate their community life along the lines of their regional provenance. Throughout Greece, the names of their former villages and towns appeared prefixed with the word 'New', such as Nea Ionia, Nea Peramos, Nea Philadelphia to name but a few (Augustinos 1992). Refugees' associations, common holy places and feasts, sporting associations and small journals have created an imaginary map of the 'lost homelands'. Greek Anatolian evacuees reemerged throughout the regions of the Greek state and a new regionalism, unifying these dispersed communities, joined the existing regional identities and cultures in Greece. The core of refugee culture was the reference to memory. The memories of individuals and communities acquired the status of a collective framework of refugee identity. They developed a narrative of pain, suffering and mourning of loss, which became another *topos* in Greek literature and historiography (Hirschon 1998; Papailias 2005). As it was the case with other Greek regions, the refugees tried to

incorporate their narrative into the national narrative. Under the impact of the international discourse on genocide and the Holocaust, the refugee narrative was reshaped around these concepts at the end of the twentieth century. The imaginary regionalism of this population has survived the post-World War II migration to northwestern Europe, Canada and Australia, creating international associations which run along the lines of their regional provenance, such as the Pontic associations for the people from the southern coast of the Black Sea. As a consequence, imaginary regionalism has acquired the dimension of a diaspora. In South East Europe and the Eastern Mediterranean there are crossing diasporas, which have constructed an imaginary geography, mental and mnemonic map. This map is the consequence of the wars and the turbulent history of the area and the movement of populations across borders.

3. National History and Diaspora

The myth of Ulysses is the big bang of Mediterranean mythologies because of the overlapping diasporas around this sea. The Jewish, Greek and Phoenician diasporas were the classical and typical cases in antiquity. New diasporas formed as a result of the dissolution of empires, the creation of national states along the shores of the Mediterranean and the impact of the economic and social reorganisation of the world in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The age of nationalism in the Mediterranean was characterised by the mass exodus of the Christian population from Asia Minor to Greece, of Muslims from the Balkans to Turkey, of the Slav-speaking population from Greece to Bulgaria, and also by Jewish migration to Palestine, the migration of Palestinians to surrounding Arab countries, and by the mass departure of Europeans from Egypt and Lebanon and of French citizens from Algeria. Mediterranean migration has also resulted from economic change in Europe and the Mediterranean has experienced four mass migration movements in the last two centuries. The first was from the Northern to the Southern Mediterranean at the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries as a result of the colonisation of North Africa. The second was the transatlantic migration to North and South America. The third movement was the post-war migration from Spain, Italy, Greece, Turkey and Yugoslavia to Northern and Western Europe, while the fourth is the ongoing and

irregular mass migration from postcolonial Arab and post-socialist Eastern European states (Chasiotis 1993).

Ulysses became the self-mirroring myth in Greece because migration and diaspora have been considered a constant feature of Greek history. As a *topos* of national historiography, diaspora implies a disassociation between territory, state and nation. This dislocation is in juxtaposition to the systemisation of these elements by the national state. In terms of the discourse of the diaspora, the subject is not the Greek nation but Hellenism. Both terms are diffuse as a clear definition would crystallise an undesired difference, for both parties. In contrast, the unity and unanimity between fatherland and the diaspora is underlined. The difference is that the concept of nation implies a strong emphasis on politics, civic bonds and the state. On the other hand, the concept of Hellenism is used as a non-territorial conception of nationhood that is comprised of the metropolis and the diaspora, giving a strong emphasis to the cultural aspects of the national identity. For this reason, the historical culture of the Greek diaspora is particularly sensitive and intransigent in matters related to nationalist issues, cultural legacies and identity politics.

Diaspora is itself a construction of the national historiography which has homogenised separate migration movements, with different motivation, in various parts of the world and at different times. Beneath this cultural over-determination exist a multiplicity of voices regarding the past in autobiographies, novels and local histories of the diaspora. This multiplicity has the potential to introduce peripheral outlooks and complex articulation to the monolinearity of national history. The concept of diaspora is central in understanding the multiple frameworks in which the concept of region and regionalism has being inscribed. If we accept that space is not only a geographical term but also a historical and cultural construction, imaginary places of identification such as the diaspora belong in equal terms to this cultural geography (Laliotou 2004).

4. The Balkan and Mediterranean Context

Does the Balkan or Mediterranean region work as a wider framework for a supranational Modern Greek identity? The response depends on the uses of these wider regional identities, the meanings with which they are loaded and the discourses within which they have been contextualised.

Competing Balkan Nationalisms[2]

4–1 The Balkans

The term Balkans, encompassing the European part of the Ottoman Empire and the Christian nations competing for its spoils, was imposed on the region in the late nineteenth century. A constellation of negative meanings was constructed around this term and the term balkanisation came to be used as a synonym for compartmentalisation, fragmentation and conflict (Todorova 1997; Mazower 2000). Given this negativity,

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[2] Map from *Report of the International Commission to Inquire into the Causes and Conduct of the Balkan Wars* (Washington DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 1914), p. 38. 'There was hardly any part of the territory of Turkey in Europe which was not claimed by at least two competitors' (ibid). Found at the web-site of the 'Perry-Castaneda Library Map Collection/ Historical Maps of the Balkans' of the University of Texas at Austin <http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/historical/balkan_aspirations_1914.jpg >, accessed 17 October 2005.

Modern Greek history and culture refused to be defined as Balkan historiography, considering itself as the modern sequel to Classical and Byzantine history. Between the pigeon holes of time and space, the first provided greater opportunities for recognition and respectability (Tziovas 2003).

The Ottoman past was another reason why there was no room for categorising Greek ideology under the umbrella term of the Balkans. The Ottoman Empire and its legacy were the more recent and visible past shared by all Balkan nations. However, the nationalisation in the Balkans presupposed the rejection of this common past (Petropoulos 1978). On the other hand, was a common past of a Balkan brotherhood possible? What was considered as victory and success for the one Balkan nation was described as a defeat for the other, and vice versa. For instance, what is mourned as the Asia Minor Catastrophe in Greek history is celebrated as the Day of Independence in Turkey. The division of the Balkans during the Cold War and the subsequent differing pace of Balkan societies deepened the division of the area. Wishing to be recognised as European, the Balkan nations turn their backs on the term Balkans and Balkanism in the belief that the concepts Balkan and Europe were not complementary but self-exclusionary (Koulouri 2002). In his official speech during his state visit to France on 24 November 1994, the then president of the Bulgarian Republic, Zhelyu Zhelev, appealed to President François Mitterrand, to 'Make us Europeans quickly if you don't want to become Balkans' (*Le Monde* 26 Nov. 1994). In his appeal, the internalisation of the difference between the Balkans and Europe is described with a self-sarcastic metaphor of an infection. Although his statement came during the Yugoslav crisis and the enormous difficulties of the Bulgarian post-communist economy, Balkan nations still envision their mutual relation to Western Europe not as a collective effort but as an individual and exclusively asymmetric relationship. As the prejudices towards Balkans were turned into an internalised negative consciousness, this consciousness, turn bottom-up, was transformed into a Balkan self irony, which gave a sense of regional communality through cinema and popular music. In the 1990's, Balkan was the imaginary region for Greek cinema. The well known film of Theo Angelopoulos, 'Gaze of Ulysses', was encompassing Balkans instead of travelling to the Mediterranean sea (Horton 1997; Iordanova 2001).

4–2   The Mediterranean

As a dimension of thinking history and culture, the Mediterranean is not an old but a recent construction. The more recent and popular is related to the use of the Mediterranean world as a place of summer holidays, vacation and historical tourism for the last fifty years. As a consequence, the adoption of a Mediterranean identity by the surrounding countries was a matter of self promotion in a world market. Besides that, three academic approaches have constructed the concept of 'mediterraneity' and the distinctive unity of this region during the same period. There are three different origins of this conception, which are related to different approaches. The first and more widespread is the Braudelian concept of the Mediterranean social history during the *longue durée* and the subsequent scholarship it created, mainly in the economic and social history of the early modern and modern periods (Paris 1999). Second, there was the anthropological conception of Mediterranean societies based on values of honour and shame, strong familiar bonds, masculinity and patronage. During the 1990s, Mediterranean social anthropology was criticised for its essentialism (Peristiany 1965; Albera and Tozy 2005). A third concept was the political science approach to Mediterranean societies, which originated during the 1970s after the fall of the dictatorships in Portugal, Spain and Greece and their contemporaneous admission to the then EEC. This approach bears the strong influence of Mediterranean anthropology with its key words being *patronage*, *corruption* and *latecomers to modernity*. Finally, the region has been defined by the European Mediterranean programs for Greece, Spain and Portugal, financed by the European Union during the late 1980s and 1990s.

As a consequence, despite the fact that Greece is at the crossroads between the Balkans and Mediterranean and belongs to both, it was easier to identify with the broader Mediterranean region than with the Balkans, which was considered the powder keg of Europe.

The Mediterranean Dimension
Found at the web-site of the 'Perry-Castaneda Library Map Collection/ Europe Maps' of the University of Texas at Austin <http://www.lib.utexas.edu/ maps/europe/mediterranean_rel82.jpg>, accessed 17 October 2005.

5. The Intellectual Region: *Hellenism* between Western Scholarship and History Committed to the Nation

The textualisation of national historiographies into broader, supranational contexts is an aspect often neglected in the history of historiography. In the case of Greek history, one of these contexts was the European classical tradition and the concept of Hellenism constructed within it. Through this intellectual tradition, Hellenism and Greece acquired a meaning which plainly contrasted with what Greeks thought about themselves and their history. Philhellenism had assisted the making of Greece as a nation, but there was little in common between the 'Greece of Byron' on the one hand and the Greece of the Greeks on the other (Roessel 2001; Marchand 1996; Basch, 1995; Settis 2004). In the European concept of universal history, the Greek classical past was highlighted as a Western past with a normative meaning. In contrast, the past in the Greek imagination was their ancestral past and Greek historians claimed their own interpretation of it. For European history, the Greek Middle Ages was a long-lasting period of decadence, eloquently described by Edward Gibbon. For modern Greeks it was presented as the millennium of medieval Hellenism which gave birth to modern Hellenism (Leontis 1995).

The two sides collided on several occasions. A well-known case is the forced resignation of Arnold Toynbee from the chair of Modern Greek history at the University of London in 1923. The chair was financed by the Greek government, which fired him because of his writings on the Greek-Turkish War of 1920s (Clogg 1986). A more extensive debate took place in the 1960s between Greek historians and foreign scholars. The issue was Byzantine history and its relationship with modern Greece. The debate revolved around the question: *Who owns Byzantine Studies*? Was it independent international scholarship or dependent on the Greek state and its financial support? Who gave the context and the meaning to this history? This debate, which lasted for two decades and involved scholars from Europe and North America, informed the context which affected contemporary Greek studies at home and abroad. The contrast between the *scholars of Greece* and *scholars from Greece* became a real gap during the post-war period and the 1967–74 dictatorship. The long-term consequence of this debate was an apologetic imprint on the writing of

Greek history. Greek historians were anxious to complete a superimposed task: to demonstrate the continuity of Greek history, the value of neglected post-classical periods, the contribution of these periods to European history and their kinship to Hellenism (Liakos 2004).

Hellenism at the Roots of the Universal History
Opening Ceremony of the Olympic Games, Athens 2004

Conclusion

The central argument of this overview has been that regionalism has many facets, which depend on the way regions have been interwoven with national states. Apart from geographical regions, at the same time imaginary and intellectual regions have to be included in the category of regions and regionalism. The relationship between regions and the nation affects historiographical traditions. National histories are not an exclusively internal construction of the nation-state and cannot be studied in isolation from supranational or transnational contexts. They are conceptualised in the context of competing narratives and cultural exchanges which transcend the territorial and intellectual space of nation-states. In the case of Greek history the five points above describe the discursive practices which inscribe national history. They indicate not only the fluidity and the ambivalence but also the flexibility of national history to absorb challenges and to transform them into new or alternating versions of self-images. On the other hand, this intra-discursive practice constructs the relationship between regions, regionalism and nation, and defines the imaginary and cultural meaning of geography and territorial identification.

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