Studies on Mediterranean Culture and History: From the Middle Ages through the Early Modern Period

Edited by Steven M. Oberhelman

Athens Institute for Education & Research (ATINER) 2014

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Studies on Mediterranean Culture and History: From the Middle Ages through the Early Modern Period: An Introduction

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This volume of papers has its genesis in four conferences, spanning a two-year period, organized by the Athens Institute for Education and Research: the Fourth and Fifth International Conference on Mediterranean Studies (2011 and 2012), and the Ninth and tenth International Conferences on History and Archaeology (2011 and 2012), all held in Athens, Greece. I attended three of the four conferences and was consistently impressed by the excellence and academic rigor of the presentations. So, when Nicolaus Pappas, Vice President of Academic Affairs for ATINER, and Gregory T. Papanikos, its President, approached me about editing a volume on Mediterranean history, I leapt at the opportunity. I even knew from my attendance of so many of the sessions which papers would fit nicely into a thematic volume on Mediterranean culture, history, and society.

The primary issue to be addressed, however, was, which time period of Mediterranean history? It seemed to me that antiquity was of the question, as enough volumes on this subject appear on an annual basis. Even post-antiquity, once so woefully neglected by scholars, has now become a center of attention, especially thanks to the influence of theory (processual archaeology and post-processualism, post-colonialism, gender studies, and cultural studies). And while one can easily find collected volumes on particular epochs like the Middle Ages and the Renaissance or on historical moments like the Arab Conquest or the Crusades, rare is the edition focusing on diachronic and yet synchronic perspectives. Thus, I decided to gather a number of papers that stretched across the centuries—from the Middle Ages to the end of the early modern period—and also could form clusters concentrating on the same era but through different lenses (geographical, cultural). The result is this current volume.

The first paper, 'The Historical Evolution of Biblical Satan and the External Factors That Led to His Metamorphosis,' examines the figure of Satan as it has evolved across the millennia. The author, Tina Wray, takes us back, not just to the Hebrew Bible and such books like Job, but to the epic of Gilgamesh and earlier Near Eastern documents. By examining written artefacts from those cultures surrounding Israel—Canaan, Egypt, Greece, Mesopotamia, and Persia—Professor Wray

demonstrates how their portrayal of evil creatures helped shape and develop the character of Satan. She also shows the evolution of Satan from his earliest appearances in the Hebrew Bible through the Intertestamental period and into the time of Jesus. The end result is the stereotypical image of Satan that pervades the culture and literature of the Middle Ages and down to today. Professor Wray's chapter leads the volume, for it exemplifies the diachronic approach that I have aimed for in this collection.

The second paper provides a wonderful snapshot of a particular moment in time and space: the tenth-century court of Constantinople, the capital of the ever-shrinking Byzantine Empire in the face of constant attacks by the armies of Islam. In his 'Border Fury! The Muslim Campaigning Tactics in Asia Minor through the Writings of the Byzantine Military Treatise Περί παραδρομής του κυρού Νικηφόρου του βασιλέως,' Georgios Theotokis focuses on strategies that Byzantine generals could employ successfully in the face of invasions by Arab forces as related in the treatise 'On Skirmishing for the Lord Emperor Nicephoras Phocas.' The author of the treatise was apparently an experienced field general, perhaps a high-ranking officer in the Byzantine army. The author records centuries-old tactics that have proven very successful on the battlefield. He carefully distinguishes types of strategies in relation to geography, the nature of the attack (raid versus invasion), military objectives, and the kinds of troops that the general had at his disposal and that he had to face. But the author does not rely solely on traditional tactics; he also uses new strategies that were specifically implemented to handle the threats of the tenth century. Professor Theotokis brilliantly shows how the author provides critical military knowledge to the commanders of the tenth century who were now fighting a new kind of enemy and in a topographical area with which they were unfamiliar.

Nadezda Koryakina, in the next chapter, moves us from the battlefield and the frontier of eastern Turkey to the domestic sphere of medieval France. In her "Her Husband Went Overseas": The Legal and Social Status of Abandoned Jewish Women in Medieval Provence and Languedoc,' she deals with the place in the medieval French Jewish community of women who had been abandoned by their husbands. The term *medinat ha-yam* was applied in the case of such women, but its usage says much about the status of women at the time. As Professor Koryakina shows, *medinat ha-yam* was applied to people in the context of property: debtors who refused to pay their debts, commercial partners taking someone else's property from their homeland, and husbands who forsook their wives. Women, in other words, were viewed

¹The Greek grammar can allow Nicephorus to be in the genitive (the possessive case); that is, the treatise was written by the Emperor Nicephorus Phocas. However, the translation of 'to' or 'for' is much more likely.

through marriage as a commodity exchange and part of a commercial deal. Professor Koryakina discusses the legal and social status of the wife who had been left by her husband in search of wealth, often overseas. Through an exhaustive study of rabbinical *responsa*,² she demonstrates that abandoned women had to resort to the legal system for material support; very often the women were extended a degree of leniency not normally extended to women. Women were even allowed at times to initiate the dissolution of marriage; they even could approach Jewish judges to plead their cause. They became much more visible in the public sphere and active in society; as such, they stood in sharp contrast to other women in France and elsewhere in the Mediterranean world who were relegated to strict gender roles.

Contemporary with the events of Professor Koryakina's chapter is the object of Tommaso Casini's 'Organized Collective Violence in the Twelfth- and Thirteenth-Century Tuscan Countryside: Some Case Studies from Central and Northeast Tuscany.' Doctor Casini discusses episodes of violence in medieval central and northeast Tuscany. Some monasteries and rural communities organized collectively to carry out acts of violence, usually with the purpose of plundering, damaging estates, and harming targeted groups of people. Many of these armed bands of armed men waged their conflict for years, as much as a decade. The struggle could be carried out by a monastery against a local aristocratic family or because of a dispute over land or seigniorial rights. Sometimes local notables harassed and raided monasteries or hermitages. Their motivation was to emulate aristocratic behavior and to achieve the status of an aristocrat for themselves. Not all monasteries carried out violence, however. In those instances, as Doctor Casini demonstrates through an exhaustive review of primary documentary and archival evidence, the leaders of the religious communities came from non-notable families and so did not bring with them the system of values wherein war was seen as a means of attaining status. The same pattern appears in the rural communities: some communities participated in organized violence, while others did not. Doctor Casini shows that those communities actively involved in aggressive attacks had effective aristocratic leaders or at least notables who were trying to be elevated to that status; those communities, simply, needed the organizational skills of an experienced military person. Other rural communities did not indulge in this form of action. Sometimes there was no one at hand to organize, but even when such a person was present, violence was avoided. The men of the community refused to act since they were too involved in their agrarian activities and were not interested in leaving them. Cities were a different matter, however, and

²A *responsum* is a reply made by rabbinic scholars in answer to submitted questions about Jewish law. *Responsa* were written first after the final redaction of the Talmud and are still being formulated. The questions and answers frequently deal with such practical matters and as a result of changing cultural and social conditions.

their ability to assemble forces dictated that they became the new bastions of power.

A cluster of eight papers follow.3 The chronological focus of all spans just over a century, but we travel from one end of the Mediterranean to the other: Portugal, Italy, the Balkans, Greece, Turkey, and Egypt. The late fifteenth century to the early seventeenth was a momentous time in the Mediterranean. People had just seen the remarkable achievements of the Renaissance, whose impact on spirituality, culture scientific inquiry, art, and architecture was being felt in many quarters. With the end of feudalism came the emergence of the great nations. The reformation burst onto the scene, followed by the Counter-Reformation. The Eastern Orthodox Church was involved in a spiritual war with the Roman Catholic Church, while even busy in keeping the Russian Orthodox Church in the fold and facing the political domination of the Ottoman Turks. The Ottomans were spreading their empire into Egypt, overthrowing the Malmuk rulers, and expanded into Europe, taking the Balkan Peninsula and going as far as Hungary. The European superpowers of Spain, the Papal States, and Venice defeated the Turkish fleet at the Battle of Lepanto in the last great battle of oardriven ships. The battle may have marked a turning point of the Ottomans' power in Europe, but the change came slowly. For example, as we see in Professor Zajc's chapter, Romania, which then consisted of independent territories ruled by local princes who paid tribute to the Ottomans, was absorbed into the Empire once Michael the Brave, who had momentarily united the kingdoms, was assassinated. This was also a time of transnational trade, interchange of ideas, and interconnects between countries, and yet we see amazing internal growth of individual countries as they built upon the artistic, cultural, literary, religious, and scientific achievements that occurred in the centuries after the Middle Ages.

To continue the first point: when East met West in economic terms, in the case of Egypt it was not for the best because of internal political factors. Although the Arabs far outstripped the Europeans in preservation of ancient knowledge (much of Greek science and medicine, for example, would have been lost if not for Arabic translations of Greek manuscripts) and then in applying that knowledge, this was true for the previous centuries. Incompetent rulers and stagnation of technological and scientific innovation led to a new supremacy of the West and a decline in the East. Professors Wan Kamal Mujani and Noor Inayah Yaakub in their paper, 'The Deterioration of the Crafts Industry in Egypt during the Mamluk Period (1468–1517),' demonstrate that the crafts industry in Egypt—e.g., textiles, sugar, paper, soap, glasswork, and metalwork—flourished under pervious

³In the next few pages I discuss these eight papers according to theme and interconnections, not in the order in which they appear in the volume.

rulers. But the Malmuks undertook a series of steps that resulted in the gradual deterioration and dissolution of a number of these artisan industries. Professors Mujani and Yaakub use Egyptian chronicles and Italian archives and Italian merchants' guides to recover Malmuk governmental policies and the trading activities of the Europeans. The Malmuks instituted a state monopolization of all the industries and heavily taxed the civilian industrialists. Innovation was discouraged, leaving Egyptian industries vulnerable to the advances of European innovations (e.g., the invention of treadle looms, the spinning wheel, and looms driven by water-powered engines, all of which greatly affected the textile industry). Likewise, improvements in the production of sugar in Sicily, Italy, and elsewhere left the Egyptian sugar industry far behind. Paper production in Egypt could not keep up with the manufacture of high-quality but cheaper paper made in Italy, and the same was true for glassmaking and soap. They show that a shortage of workers in Egypt, caused by occurrences of the plague, exacerbated the situation by driving the labor costs and the price of products.

West encountered East not just on the economic front, but the military front as well. In 1571, the Ottoman navy suffered its first defeat at the hands of a Christian force. The battle was a major setback for the Ottomans, as their ambition for moving their empire into the heart of Europe was thwarted. Sometimes, however, in the aftermath of victory comes defeat, or at least unanticipated adverse circumstances. In the case of Lepanto, the eastern Adriatic actually suffered. As Professor Klemen Pust shows in "Defending the Christian Faith with Our Blood": The Battle of Lepanto (1571) and the Venetian Eastern Adriatic: Impact of a Global Conflict on the Mediterranean Periphery,' thanks to his exhaustive review of archival materials, about 40 percent of the Christian forces came from the territories of the eastern Adriatic, e.g., Dalmatia and Albania. These territories suffered massive losses in the Battle of Lepanto. The Venetian Senate even went to the remarkable length to exempt certain towns from providing men for naval service because of the depopulation. Constant subsequent raids by Ottoman corsairs devastated coastal towns and destroyed economies, as Venice could not offer protection, especially to the Dalmatian islands. Plague broke out, and this, coupled with the raids and destruction that in turn caused famine, led to civic unrest and revolts. This whole area of the Adriatic became a casualty in the struggle between the Venetians and

Even as the two sides—Western Christianity and Eastern Islam—were caught up in this moment of their centuries-long conflict, a part of the Balkans briefly enjoyed independence from the Ottomans. In Professor Gelu Călina's 'Prince Michael the Brave in the History of the Romanians,' we see a young man of royal birth galvanizing the peoples of what is now Romania but then three independent kingdoms. Each kingdom as ruled by a prince who paid large amounts of tribute to the

Ottomans each year. Michael (b. 1557/158), through years of diplomacy, war, negotiations, and pure force of will, managed to unite the provinces of Transylvania, Wallachia, and Moldavia into a single kingdom. Michael was motivated by a sense of patriotism, but also by his deep Christian (Greek Orthodox) faith. He saw himself as a liberator of Christians suffering from abject humiliation and oppressive poverty. Albanians, Bulgarians, Croats, Greeks, and Serbs, inspired or spurred on by Michael, revolted; the flames of rebellion even spread to the Peloponnesus. These uprisings were short-lived, however, as Michael was assassinated and the Romanian kingdom was split up into provinces again and placed under the Ottomans. Michael's legacy was twofold. First, he inspired in future Romanians a strong desire for unification. After three more centuries of oppression by the Ottomans and then the Russians, and even interference from Germany and Greece, Romania recovered all its ancestral lands in the peace settlement of World War I and became a whole free nation again. Michael also helped the Orthodox Greek Church achieve recognition and influence equal to what Catholicism and Protestantism enjoyed in the Balkan Peninsula.

Interaction between East and West during this time was cultural too, and here bias and prejudice can easily be seen. Fatma Gürses, in 'The Orientalist View of İzmir in the Seventeenth Century: An Investigation into the Manuscript of Antoine Gallands,' relies on a methodology based on theories of discourses of power and postcolonialism. She describes how Western travelers framed their narratives of the East in binary oppositions: civilized versus barbaric, versus 'Other,' 'our' versus 'their.' These categories were constructed to distinguish geographical as well as cultural differences. One such traveler was the polyglot Antoine Galland (b. 1646), who was knowledgeable of Turkish culture and society, Arabic literature, and Islam. Galland wrote of his many adventures in Turkey in a travel book. This book consists of an account of his journey to İzmir from the Sicilian port of Messina; a description of İzmir; a description of the city during the Ottoman Empire; and a contrast between the culture, habits, and lifestyles of the Turks and of the French. It is in the final section that Galland's prejudice emerges most clearly. Galland, quite simple, constructs Europeans as developed and civilized; he praises their professional careers, educational system, religion, their women's behavior, concern for proper hygiene, bravery in warfare, even their eating and drinking habits, and clothes. The Turks, on the other hand, are greedy, adverse to proper precautions against the plague and other diseases, endowed with the worse daily habits; their woman act contrary to what is 'civilized,' while the men themselves are liars, cheats, and cowards. The Turks stand as primitive in stark contrast to the refined Westerners. If only the religion and culture of the West could transform these people, Galland seems to say!

In the West the exchange of ideas increased as travel across Europe became safer and the printing press allowed easier dissemination of knowledge. Maxim Grec (early sixteenth century) was a Greek monk who traveled extensively and assisted in the copying and publication of Christian Greek and pagan Greek texts. As Neža Zajc shows in her chapter, 'Maxim Grec (Maksim Grek): The Preservation of (Canonical) Christian Tradition,' Maxim (née Michail Trivolis) was trained in a classical Greek education but migrated to Italy. He went first to Florence, where he joined a group of translators, calligraphers, and copyists. After stays in other cities like Milan and Padova, Maxim went to Venice and worked at the famous printing house of Aldus Manutius. He also helped create the famous Medici Library in Florence. Maxim returned to Greece in 1506 and was ordained at the Vatopedi Monastery of Mount Athos. While at the Athonite monastery, he learned Slavic languages. Because of his linguistic abilities Maxim was sent to Moscow at the invitation of the tsar to translate texts from Greek into Old Church Slavonic. In Russia Maxim translated from Greek (through Latin) into Slavonic the New Testament and the Psalter. Unfortunately for Maxim, in 1525 he was accused of heretical translation errors; six years late the charges were changed to spying for the Ottomans. The charges were baseless, their impetus being Maxim's opposition to the tsar's impending second marriage and Maxim's outspoken views on the Russian Church's ideology and wish to be freed of Constantinople. Ultimately released from prison, Maxim resumed his literary pursuits. He edited collections of texts, wrote polyglot dictionaries, and theological treatises, as well as the history and practices of the monasteries of Mount Athos. Maxim even wrote poems (800 lines in Greek elegiac couplets). Maxim was never allowed to leave Russia, but he influenced many subsequent Russian intellectuals, helped shape the final formation of the Russian formal language, and laid the foundation of Russian Orthodox philosophy.

Professor Mika Yamaguchi, in 'Italian Influence in the Composition of Rubens' Early Self-Portraits with Friends,' discusses the travels and activities of another genius on foreign soil, Peter Paul Rubens (b. 1577); only this story has happier circumstances and ending. As Professor Yamaguchi argues, Rubens' stay in Italy and his exposure to painters there explains the composition of two of his early self-portraits: *Rubens with Friends in Mantua* (1602–1606) and *Four Philosophers* (1611–1612). In these paintings Rubens depicts himself alongside a circle of intelligentsia. There is no Flemish precedent for an artist to paint himself thusly, but there are Italian examples. Professor Yamaguchi carefully examines the Italian exemplars and demonstrates how the companions chosen by the artist are people of high social status. She then looks at the details of the two Rubens paintings and, through a study of current scholarship and the paintings themselves, shows how

Rubens has painted himself among the most highly educated humanists in the Spanish Netherlands of the time.

We have seen above regarding Michael the Brace a strong nationalistic movement underway in many of the Mediterranean countries. For Michael the goal was the establishment of a free Romanian state united under the Orthodox faith. Other figures looked to the formation of a new literature that spoke to the hopes of a foreigndominated people. Here we are illuminated by Manuel Ferro's chapter, 'From Hesiod to Manuel de Galhegos: The *Theogony* versus the Gigantomachy.' Ferro discusses epic poetry of the Portuguese Baroque. A main theme of the epics produced then was the praise of past national glories; this was done in the spirit of fostering a sense of autonomy among the Portuguese who then were ruled by the kings of Spain. One of Portugal's greatest epic writers was Manuel de Galhegos (1597–1665) who also wrote theoretical essays on the purpose and use of epic. Galhegos tried to encourage Portuguese writers to rely on their native language, not Spanish, for their texts and to embrace nationalistic themes. Galhegos also looked to antiquity for poetical forms through which he could express feelings against the Spanish government in Portugal. He found the *Theogony* of Hesiod and, especially, the *Gothic* War of Claudian, who wrote during the collapse of the Western Roman Empire, to be most useful sources. Claudian had used the Gigantomachy story, found in its fullest form in Hesiod's epic poem, as a means to depict the struggle between the Roman Empire and the Goths. Galhegos also took the mythic struggle between the civilized gods of Olympus and the brutish monsters of earth and the underworld and used it to express an anti-Spain sentiment. Professor Ferro argues that the poem helped in the creation of a nationalistic uprising against the Spanish kings and the resulting restoration of Portuguese independence on 1 December 1640.

The final paper in the cluster of eight papers on the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries is Claudio Mazzanti's 'Development Transformation in Roman Church Façades of the Sixteenth Century.' The topic has nothing to do with nationalistic policies, international warfare, cultural ideology, or the transmission of knowledge. Rather, it deals with a more narrow focus: the development and transformation of the façades of the churches in Rome and Tuscany by their architects, from the late fifteenth century to the end of the sixteenth. Professor Mazzanti, through a close study of historical documents and original drawings, identifies three main prototypes of the façades. He argues that the formal aspects of the design of the facade in Roman Renaissance churches did not change; however, architects did have the liberty to make personal modifications and adapt some standard features. The key point to be taken from this most interesting architectural analysis is that a local model became the principal design for the rest of Italy and subsequently for all Western Europe. The brilliant work of a group of central Italian architects began to be replicated by other architects whom they inspired.

Three chapters fill out the volume. Steven M. Oberhelman in his 'The Power of the Word in Early Modern Greek Medical Texts' discusses the healing power of words in the medical healing manuals of the early modern Greek period. 'Healing words' can be spoken or written and can be applied in conjunction with medical prophylaxis or alone. Professor Oberhelman places into five distributive categories the use of the word in medical practice: spells and incantations that are spoken by the healer as he administered medicines; words that a healer uttered while cutting roots or gathering herbs for use in medical recipes; words that formed part of a binding spell to arrest a disease or a demon responsible for a disease; words that release a doctor's patients who may find themselves the victim of an evil binding spell cast by an enemy; and words that are Greek Orthodox in nature and often supplemented by magical letters or magical words, all of which were written (and then carried on the person of the sick patient) or spoken over the patient. Professor Oberhelman demonstrates that many of these practices can be traced back to classical antiquity and remained unchanged or slightly modified by Christianity. Modern readers of the medical texts under discussion may be surprised by the ready acceptance of binding spells, exorcism prayers, magical incantations, and magical characters by Christian healers. But such a pluralistic approach has been typical of Greek medicine since its beginnings down to the twentieth century.4 Greeks have always sought healing wherever and however it was available: the temple (or church), the house of the village wise woman, a root-cutter's booth, a folk healer, an academically trained physician, a sorcerer/magician. The medical texts described in this chapter show that a multipronged approach to healing was the norm, not the exception.

Kathleen Ann O'Donnell, in her contribution 'Nineteenth-Century Cycladic Warriors: Celtic Heroes,' discusses how poetic figures were used to praise the heroism of Greek patriots who were trying to free the Cyclades from foreign interference and domination in the nineteenth century. What may surprise the reader is the fact that the literary heroes chosen by contemporary poets were not the Iliadic characters; there is no Achilles, no Ajax, no Agamemnon. Instead, poets like Panayiotis Panas drew on a cycle of poems centered on mythic Celtic heroes. Panas saw the barbarities inflicted by the troops of the Bavarian King Othon and how the islands were suffering under British hegemony. The massacres on the island of Kynthos were especially brutal. Panas dedicated to the heroes of the Kynthian tragedy a book based on a

⁴See Steven M. Oberhelman, *Dreams, Healing, and Medicine in Greece: From Antiquity to the Present* (London: Ashgate Publishing, 2013), 1–23 with bibliography there.

translation of *The Poems of Ossia*, while Achilles Paraschos similarly adapted poetry from the Ossian collection. The purpose of these adapted poems was to let readers know about the treachery of the government and what the ideals of magnanimity, justice, and sacrifice which were displayed the rebels fighting to be free from foreign domination.

The final paper, 'Hermes Iconography in Communications and Commerce: Semiotics of Cultural Networks,' is the bookend to the first chapter on that it begins wits discussion in antiquity but concludes in modern times. The authors, Diane DeBlois and Robert Dalton Harris, describe the character of Hermes, the messenger god of the Greek Olympians. Hermes was endowed iconographically with three pieces of equipment: a winged caduceus, a winged hat, and winged sandals. These items helped Hermes achieve fame for swiftness, protection of travelers, and authenticity or authority. Hermes was also aligned very frequently with a female figure, for example, Hestia (goddess of the public and the private hearth) and Tyche/Fortuna (goddess of prosperity). By the nineteenth century, Hermes (and often with his female counterpart) had been appropriated by businesses of every ilk. The authors, thanks to their study of hundreds of printed images from Europe, the United States, and elsewhere, group the portrayal and use of Hermes into various categories. First, Hermes served as authority of the press and post, insofar as he symbolized certainty, celerity, and security of safety and schedule; thus, Hermes was often placed on newspaper mastheads and postal seals and stamps. Second, Hermes had functioned as the protector of travelers and their goods, and so he now became also the insurer of customs, currency, and the transmission of merchandise; his image was soon imprinted on bills of exchange, bank deposit documents, and stock, bond, and insurance certificates. Third, as the embodiment of commerce, Hermes became part of commercial product advertising and can be seen on ads and logos for such products as matchbooks, foot products, ledgers, and beer). Finally, Hermes was put in charge of transportation and communications, as he was associated with speech and reliable delivery of news; thus, Hermes appeared on all sorts of transportation logos and advertisements, electric company publicity documents, and the telegraph.

These 15 papers, in my opinion, offer a unique and important contribution to the study of the Mediterranean world during the second millennium A.D. I am confident that the reader will reach the same conclusion.

Preface

I wish to offer my thanks of appreciation to Nicolaus Pappas and Gregory Papanikos for the kind invitation to edit this volume of papers. I am grateful for their confidence and their continued support. I have attended many international conferences sponsored by the Athens Institute for Education and Research—from history and archaeology to Mediterranean studies to health and allied sciences. I have yet to experience a conference that failed to yield stimulating and thoughtprovoking papers. Of course, no opportunity to visit Greece, and especially Athens, a city where I have lived and studied off and on for over 35 years, should ever be bypassed. There is simply no other city in the world, in my opinion, where the mind and the soul are so enlivened and enriched. One cannot sit astride the rocks at the top of the Filopappou Hill or climb the tree-lined paths of Lykabettos and stand at the summit next to the Chapel of Aghios Giorgos without perceiving that you are part of the art, culture, history, literature, and philosophy which have served as the bedrock of Western civilization for nearly three millennia. One does not love Athens; one becomes Athens.

Finally I owe a special debt of gratitude to Afrodete Papanikou who typeset this volume. Afrodete has been patient and has offered wonderful advice. She took my files and turned them into this splendid volume through her hard work. I thank her profusely.