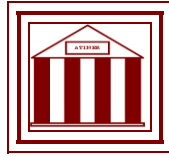


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ATINER's Conference Paper Series
MDT2012-0025

Nineteenth Century Cycladic Warriors: Celtic Heroes

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URL Conference Papers Series: www.atiner.gr/papers.htm

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ISSN 2241-2891

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This paper should be cited as follows:

O'Donnell, Kathleen Ann (2012) "Nineteenth Century Cycladic Warriors: Celtic Heroes" Athens: ATINER'S Conference Paper Series, No: MDT2012-0025.

Nineteenth Century Cycladic Warriors: Celtic Heroes

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Abstract

In Greece's neglected history of the nineteenth century, this paper will demonstrate how Celtic heroes were used to commemorate and compare three Modern Greek heroes rather than Homeric ones in the so-called 'bloodless' Cycladic Revolution. The Greek translator of *The Poems of Ossian* by James Macpherson, was the Kephalonian romantic radical Panayiotis Panas, whose ancestors were from Barcelona and had escaped the Spanish Inquisition. He became the main translator of this poetry, used at certain points in history to expose political machinations by Western European monarchy as it encroached on the newly freed parts of what had been the Ottoman Empire.

After having rescued political antimonarchist prisoners from several Cycladic islands in the Mediterranean, the leader of the Cycladic Revolution, Nicolas Leotsakos, attempted to gain the support of the Cyclades and eventually dethrone the German Catholic King Othon so as to establish a republic. Unfortunately, he was mown down in cold blood by Greek Royalist soldiers. Although Othon did indeed fall he was replaced by yet another Western monarch two years later.

The two poems – *Dar-thula* and *Lathmon* – which Panas published in Kephalaria (part of the Seven Island – a British Protectorate) in 1862 were used as a metaphor to inform the reader of what treachery was and how this could be overcome by magnanimity, justice and sacrifice. There were other Greek men of letters who wrote dedicatory poetry including another translator of *The Poems of Ossian*, Achilles Paraschos.

Nineteenth Century – Cultural history of Greece – *The Poems of Ossian*
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Nov 21 1861

THE ILLUSTRATED LONDON NEWS



...1861 Dar-thula Henry Tidley

"DAR-THULA," BY HENRY TIDLEY. FROM THE EXHIBITION OF THE FINE ARTS AT AUSTRIA IN WATER-COLOURING.

Why and to what extent did nineteenth century Greek intellectuals appropriate Celtic heroes rather than Homeric ones in order to praise those Greek patriots who fought and died to remove foreign monarchy and introduce a democratic constitution in their country? This paper will demonstrate how certain Greek intellectuals translated 'The Poems of Ossian' in one instance and who dedicated this work to nineteenth century Cycladic warriors in the Cycladic Revolution of 1862.

The poetic figure of Ossian, a third century Celtic bard, whose heroes fought in defence of justice and in opposition to tyranny were magnanimous in their treatment of the defeated. Their actions were driven by a system of ethics rather than obedience to divine will. This work attracted radical scholars of this time. They saw in this poetry an example of how the people of the Balkans and Asia Minor, whose emancipation was imminent, could be united in peace and harmony.

The Cyclades comprise Syros, Naxos, Tinos, Paros, Kythnos and Milos and other smaller islands and although it came under the Venetians who conquered them from the Byzantines in 1204, they became under Ottoman jurisdiction. While the Venetians had brought the Catholic religion to the Cyclades, the Ottomans gave support to the Orthodox Church. In 1821, there were about 160,000 Catholics, mostly on Syros, in the Cyclades. During the War of Independence of 1821, the Cyclades had been almost neutral and were given special support by France because of its Roman Catholic inhabitants, especially on Syros. By 1833, the Cyclades came under the rule of King Othon.¹

French influence over the Seven Islands or Ionian Islands (Corfu, Zakynthos, Cephalonia, Lefkada, Paxos, Ithaca and Kythira) increased greatly when Napoleon liberated Greeks from Venetian rule (1386-1796). They then became under the rule of an Ottoman and Russian alliance when, under the Treaty of Constantinople (1800) the Seven Islands became known as the Septinsular Republic. This republic possessed its own constitution, flag and diplomatic missions abroad. It was recognized by King George IV of England. In 1807, the Seven Islands were yet again taken over by the French and became part of the French Empire. Subsequently, they were captured by the English and became a British Protectorate in 1815.² The uprisings in Cephalonia in 1848 were instigated by the French Revolution, which were led by Cephalonian radicals who had studied in France and who were adherents of Utopian Socialists.³ They included Pierre Joseph Proudhon, a philosopher, who was one of the advocates of the 1848 French Revolution.

Proudhon foresaw that if the lower echelons were to succeed in uniting people through mutualism using cooperation rather than competition, thus leading to neutralisation, of privilege it was clear that the values portrayed in Homer's 'Iliad' and 'Odyssey', which glorified 'The right of force and the right of artifice' were unsuited to the cause: for example, Achilles, 'a glorified heroic character of a robber'

¹ [http://en.wikipedia.org/History of the Cyclades](http://en.wikipedia.org/History_of_the_Cyclades). 27:2:12

² Mavroyiannis, G. E. (1889). *History of the Ionian Islands from 1797-1815*. Athens: Library of Historical Studies, Paliggenesia, D. N. Karavia 1984. [In Greek].

³ Loukatos, S.I. (1997) 'The Ideological Assessment of the Radical Movement in the years under the English Protectorate of the Seven Islands: The United Republic of the Ionian Islands (1815-1864)' in Ilias Beriatos(ed.), *Studies in the History and the Area of the Islands of Cephalonia and Ithaca*. Cephalonia: Cephalonian and Ithaca Society. [In Greek].

who claimed 'My right is my lance and my buckler'. Proudhon saw 'monarchy as the last form of feudal property.'¹

In striving for equity, another kind of hero was needed to instill into the people the meaning of 'heart, courage, will and virtue'.

In 1832, Panayiotis Panas was born. He was a Kephalonian romantic radical whose ancestors dated back to the Spanish Inquisition, when Jews fled to settle in the Venetian Republic.² It is noteworthy that another Jew, Joseph Naci, fled from the Portuguese Inquisition, and later went to live in the Ottoman Empire. The title of Duke of Naxos was conferred on him by Selim the Second in 1566.³

Panas volunteered in the 1856 uprising in Thessaly.⁴ It was probably here where he saw the hero from Mani, Nikolas Leotsakos, an antimonarchist, whose altruistic deeds and magnanimity were renowned as he attempted to free his fellow-men from Ottoman rule. After the failure of these uprisings, Leotsakos was dismissed and exiled to Navpoli.⁵

As Athens was still under Ottoman rule, Navpoli became the capital of Greece in 1828, when its first leader, Jiannis Capodistria, was inaugurated. He was assassinated there, in 1831. Two years later, Athens became the capital and the Bavarian Prince Othon was made king. Veterans of the Greek revolution were replaced by Bavarian soldiers at court.⁶ The National Anthem was 'God save the King' sung in German and Greek.⁷ It replaced the Battle Hymn, which was written by the Greek-Rumanian Rigas Velestinlis (1757-98),⁸ the first proto-martyr of the Greek Revolution and scholar, entitled 'Sons of Greeks arise'. Lord Byron translated it in 1812.⁹ Byron's adaptation of 'The Poems of Ossian' 'Calmar and Orla'¹⁰ was translated into Modern Greek in 1850 when it was published and circulated all over the Greek-speaking world.¹¹ It is remarkable that since then this translated work of Byron has, as far as I know, only been acknowledged by me in a paper, which I presented to the Byron International Conference in 2009, entitled 'Byron and the Ossian Impact on Nineteenth Century South Eastern Balkans and the Democratic Eastern Republic.'¹²

In 1861, Leotsakos established the first revolutionary cell of officers and eminent elements of Navpoli society. He planned an uprising of antimonarchist support in

¹ Proudhon, P.J. (1970). *What is Property? An Inquiry into the Principle of Right and of Government with a new Introduction by George Woodcock*: translated by B.R. Tucker (1890). New York: Dover.

² Tsitselis, I.A. (1901). *Kephalonian Miscellany*. Athens: Leonis. [In Greek].

³ P. Grunebaum-Ballin (1968). 'Joseph Naci, Duke of Naxos.' *Miscellany of St. Joseph University*, Beirut (Lebanon)..Beirut: Catholic Printing Press. 46:223-4. [In French].

⁴ Stavropoulou, E.L (1987). *Panayiotis Panas: A Romantic Radical*. Athens: Epikairota. [In Greek].

⁵ Lekakos, I. 'Nikolas Leotsakos 1820-1862' *Lakonika* 2000-2001. Athens: Benaki Musuem Library. 13-14.

⁶ Loukatos, S. D. (1995). *Rokkos Hoidas: The Advocate of Socialism*. Athens: Akyon. [In Greek].

⁷ Themelis, D. (1979). 'The Musical Collection of the Personal Library of Othon'. *The Greek Literary, Historical and Folkloric Journal*. Athens. 443-472. [In Greek].

⁸ Kara, S. I. (1998). *Rigas's Battle Hymn and its Music*. Athens: Collection for the Diffusion of National Music. [In Greek].

⁹ Byron, Lord (1919). *The Works of Lord Byron*. Paris: Gaulon.

¹⁰ See *The Works of Lord Byron*

¹¹ Georgantopoulos, I. (1850) 'Ossian: The Death of Calmar and Orla by Lord Byron'. *Evterpe* Athens. 127-129. [In Greek].

¹² O'Donnell-Kassimatis K.A. 'Byron and the Ossian Impact on Nineteenth Century South Eastern Balkans and the Democratic Eastern Republic'. Paper presented at the 35th annual International Conference on Byron in Athens and Messolonghi 6-13 September, 2009.

Athens and the Peloponnese, in the Cycladic Revolution that took place in February, 1862. He was then appointed Lieutenant-Commanding Officer of a small military force on the island of Syros, the Cycladic capital, which was then the richest part of the small Greek state. On Syros, he befriended Pericles Moraitini, Second Lieutenant and son of the President of the Supreme Court. He would later meet Second Lieutenant Skarvelis, when he set free political exiles imprisoned on Kythnos and Tinos. Their aim was to free exiled anti-monarchists imprisoned in the Cyclades, unite the citizens and replace monarchy with a Modern Greek leader for a greater Greece to include Epirus, Thessaly and Crete. Leotsakos had at his disposal the 'Karteria', a vessel owned by the benefactor, Averof, when he set sail for Tinos and Kythnos, where the majority of the exiled were imprisoned. He would then sail for Evia to free more anti-Othonist prisoners in order to spread the idea of the revolution. When entering the square on Kythnos, where the revolutionaries were well-received, Leotsakos declared in public that the country must be rid of Othon's dynastic rule and how he wished for a long lasting constitution and freedom from foreign control.¹

When the revolutionaries arrived on Kythnos, they set free: Epaminondas Deliyorgis; Dimitris Kalliphronas; Athanassios Petsalis; K. Kalamidas; N. Kallisperis; Odysseas Ialamos and A. Skarvelis.²

In the meantime, the Prefect of Syros, Alexandropoulos, informed Athens. As a result, royalist troops were dispatched to the island of Kythnos on the frigate 'Amalia'. Leotsakos, Moraitinis, Skarvelis and some others had reached the hill a little further up from the entry to the small harbour. The others fled. Leotsakos appealed to the Othonist soldiers:

'Don't shoot. We are brothers. Come and fight with us for a better Greece.'

There was no response. The fratricidal hatred of the government was irrevocable. The first to die was Second Lieutenant Skarvelis. Leotsakos left his drum and carrying a sword in one hand and a gun in the other he went to help him, whereupon he fell on top of Skarvelis' legs. Moraitinis, breathing his last, when he approached him said:

'Nicolas. Surrender so that at least you can escape!'

'Never!' replied Leotsakos. 'They are waiting for me in the next world and I am coming, my friend.'

He kissed Skarvelis, stood up and charged to his death. Three bullets – one in the stomach, one in the shoulder and one in the mouth made his lifeless body slump to the ground.³ Although the three main leaders, Leotsakos, Moraitis and Skarvelis were outnumbered, having raised the white flag, the opposing leader, Lieutenant Tsiros refused to co-operate, so even though they were in the minority, the revolutionary soldiers decided to fight to the death. Their bodies were stripped naked. Tsiros continued firing bullets into the body of Leotsakos. Prevented from beheading them by a Revolutionary leader, Mitsakis, who reminded Tsiros that even barbarians had abandoned that custom, he was not allowed to bury them and their

¹ See 'Nicolas Leotsakis'

² Kritsinis, C. (1984). 'The Movement of 1862 on Syros against Othon'. *Cycladic Themes*. Athens: Issue 1.82-86. [In Greek].

³ See 'Nicolas Leotsakos'.

bodies were dumped into a boat. Some historians have regarded this act as slaughter, regarding Tsiros's behavior towards the three dead Greeks as unacceptable. The Turkish pasha in Volos, Thessaly, who had fought and lost in battle with Leotsakos said:

'I do not believe that Greeks could have abused their country like this.'¹

The deeds of the three heroes and martyrs became poems, songs, plays and dirges, exciting the anticipation of Greeks for democracy and constitutional freedom.²

Working as a journalist on Kephallonia, Panas was forced into exile having been imprisoned and tortured under the British Protectorate in 1857. When he came to Athens, he worked with Sophocles Karidis, the editor of the anti-Othon newspaper 'Phos'. In 1860, after the editor was imprisoned for publishing anti-Othonist material, Karides promoted Panas to editor in the summer of that year. Panas himself was eventually arrested on similar charges. He was then tortured by the military police in Piraeus. In bad health as a result of his treatment he was forced to go on foot from Piraeus to Patras where he was deported to Kephallonia. The sensation of the deportation was enormous. The publicity it was given in the opposition Athenian Press concerning the behavior of the Greek police towards not only nationals but foreign subjects as well resulted in other Greek intellectuals being arrested and imprisoned.³ These included Achilles Paraschos, whose poem 'The Plane Tree of Madrassa Prison'⁴ symbolizes the prevailing tyranny. The Madrassa prison had been an Islamic School from 1720 where not only the Koran but science was also taught as well, no doubt, including translations by Arabic scholars of Classical Greek philosophers. It was converted into a prison in 1836 under Othon.⁵ Paraschos would be re-imprisoned once again later in the same year.⁶

In September, 1862, Panas published his book 'Dar-thula-Lathmon', in Kephallonia. Using Cesarotti's Italian translation of 'The Poems of Ossian',⁷ which, in turn had been translated from James Macpherson's original version,⁸ Panas translated these two poems into demotic Greek fifteen-syllabic poetry. They were dedicated to the three heroes who were cowardly assassinated by Greek Royalist troops on 1 March, 1862 on Kythnos. They are compared to the three sons of Usnoth, Ossianic heroes. Usnoth was Lord of Etha in Argyleshire, married to Cuchullin's sister Slis-sama. His sons Nathos, Althos and Ardan, were slain trying to defend themselves in battle against the tyrant Cairbar. Cairbar had usurped the throne of Ulster by slaying Cormac, the king. After having killed Dar-thula's father and brother he then abducted her. Dar-thula then eloped with Nathos. Cairbar shot down Nathos, Althos and Ardan with arrows, having arrogantly refused to fight Nathos in single combat because of his inferior status. Cairbar symbolizes the tyrannical monarchy of the Bavarian King Othon whose Royalist troops committed a similar act to that of

¹ Korthatos, G. (1956). *A History of Modern Greece*. Athens: 20th Century. [In Greek].

² See 'Nicolas Leotsakos'.

³ See Stavropoulou.

⁴ <http://athensville.blogspot.com/2010/05/o.html> 27.2.12

⁵ <http://ottomanmonuments.blogspot.com/2011/05/blog-post.html> 27.2.12

⁶ Zoras, G. T. (1965). *Greek Romanticism and the Phanariots*. Athens: University Philosophical School. [In Greek].

⁷ Cesarotti, M. *Posie di Ossian* translated from English poetic prose by James Macpherson. Padua: Comino [In Italian].

⁸ Macpherson, J. (1996). *The Poems of Ossian and Related Work.*, H. Gaskill (ed.): With an introduction by Fiona Stafford. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

Cairbar and his men on the three Modern Greek anti-monarchists. Panas indeed places a note after Cairbar posing the question as to how many Cairbars are alive today. In his preface is a dedicatory poem of which the following is an extract:

While our blood boils on the coast,
Our assassin still remains in Athens!
They cover their faces and enter the grave...
Like the sons of Usnoth
Who were also sacrificed by
Cowardly assassin!

In the poem 'Lathmon' Panas dedicates it to the youth of Athens. Lathmon, a leader of the Picts in Eastern Scotland, is preparing to do battle with Fingal, who is in Ireland. In order to demonstrate his art in uniting his men Fingal chooses Ossian, his son and surprisingly as leader in battle, Gaul, the son of Morni, a former enemy. This will be Gaul's first battle. When Lathmon confronts Ossian in single combat, as the latter is close to death, Gaul intervenes and saves him. Impressed with Gaul's bravery, Lathmon throws down his weapon and refuses to fight such brave warriors. Fingal allows Lathmon to go free. Later Gaul becomes engaged to Lathmon's sister Oithona.¹ Lathmon symbolises how Modern Greeks should have conducted themselves in the Cycladic Revolution. It is a blueprint for chivalry. Had the behavior of Lathmon been emulated there would have been a possibility of uniting Greeks to create a republic.

Paraschos, who adapted the poem 'The Songs of Selma', from 'The Poems of Ossian', entitled 'Colma – Phantasmagoria', parts of which have been cut in the 1904 edition of his anthology, conveys the powerful message of this poem, which was used to express the underlying political hopes that unity is better than war. Colma mourns both the death of her brother and his enemy, Selgar, her lover, who slew each other in battle.² This particular poem was translated a great deal, especially as it was included in Goethe's 'The Sorrows of Young Werther', by various Greek intellectuals in the nineteenth century³ and was used as a lament at times when deliberate disunity was created by the Great Powers and the Church. In 1862, Paraschos wrote an elegy of seven verses devoted to the three martyrs, of which the following first, second and last verse is as follows:

On Kythnos, one step from the coast,
In a month, three brothers repose in embrace.

Priests did not bury them; they did not light candles.
The thugs took them and tied a leash around their waists.

You will not hear a 'good morning' from the three of them.
But should you meet their mother, dumbfounded she will
Put you to shame!⁴

¹ Panas, P. (1862). *Dar-thula-Lathmon Poems of Ossian*. Kephallonia: Kephalinia. [In Greek].

² Paraschos, A. (1904). *Unpublished Works*. Athens: Leoni. [In Greek].

³ Denisi, S. (1995). *Translations of Novels and Short Stories (1830-1880) Introductory Study and Listing*. Athens: Periplous. [In Greek].

⁴ Gounaris, A. (1939) 'Kythnos' by A. Paraschos. Athens: *Kythnian Life*. Athens. The Anthemius Historical and Folklore Museum, Paros. [In Greek.]

Writing in the London Saturday Review dated 8 November, 1862, after Othon's abdication, George Finlay, a Scottish philhellene, who had, in fact, sailed on the 'Karteria' as a veteran in the 1821 Revolution, was an Athenian resident.¹ He wrote that instead of using an immense amount of drachmas on the construction of a transport system and improving other municipal necessities, the King invested this money on becoming the Emperor of a Byzantine Empire (known as the Great Idea). Othon also used the money to retain public officers whose role it was to spread conspiracy in his palace and create unrest in the Seven Islands. Finlay hoped that after the fall of the monarch, the first duty of the then present government would be to restore its power to the people.² The poetry of Homer was used to extol the Great Idea while 'The Poems of Ossian' were used to support a Democratic Eastern Federation.

It can be concluded that 'The Poems of Ossian' were translated into Greek to symbolize those Greeks who were prepared to fight for a republic with a democratic constitution, free from foreign domination. Their struggle in the 1862 Cycladic Revolution failed. It was crushed by Greek followers who believed in foreign monarchy that thrived on Homeric deeds. Further research of nineteenth century translations of 'The Poems of Ossian', which have been grossly neglected, will foster not only a greater picture of unacknowledged historical data but will also reveal how this work enriched the Modern Greek language as well. This poetry also encouraged hope while depicting examples of magnanimity. Its inclusion in the education curriculum would give the youth of today an opportunity of emulating real post-1821 Modern Greek heroes and enable them to compare the moral worth of Ancient Greek heroes with that of Celtic warriors.

¹ Potter, L. (2004). 'British Philhellenism and the Historiography of Greece: A Case Study of George Finlay (1799-1875)'. *The Historical Review, Institute for Neo-Hellenic Research*. London. 183-206

² Finlay, G. (1862) 'The Revolution in Greece' *The Saturday Review*, London November 8. 567. British School at Athens, Archives. I am grateful to the librarians of the British School at Athens for retrieving this article from the British Library, London.