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ABSTRACT

This is another of several multi-media packages on ethnic groups in Toronto that attempt to introduce Toronto teachers (especially those who teach English as a second language) to the cultures and societies from which their students came. An introduction to the multi-media package on Greece is given here. Sections included in the document are: Impressions of Greece; Climate, Geography, and People; Village Life: The Coffeehouse; "The Glory that was Greece..." and Modern History; and The People. A short bibliography is included followed by a listing of written materials and audio-visual aids to be used in the classroom. Related documents are: SO 004 347 and ED C66 384 and ED 067 332. (OPH)

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GREEK IMMIGRANTS AND GREECE: AN
INTRODUCTION TO THE MULTI-MEDIA PACKAGE
ON GREECE

Includes an Annotated List of
Contents of the Package

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Anne Witzel

September 1969

Shows 347

FOREWORD

The multi-media packages on the ethnic groups in Toronto are an attempt to introduce Toronto teachers, especially teachers of English as a second language, to some of the cultures and societies from which their students come. It is now widely accepted that learning to use a second language requires a thorough awareness and understanding of the society in which that language is spoken. Conversely, a knowledge of other societies and cultures on the part of teachers may help to bridge gaps in understanding and facilitate the students' mastery of English.

The following paper is an introduction to the multi-media package on Greece. In the extensive reading and studying done on Greece for this project certain themes and issues emerged. These themes and issues also provided the criteria for the selection of materials in the package and for the emphasis of this paper. The multi-media package gives only a sample of Greek culture; the following pages of text provide a few reference points to encourage a further exploration of Greek culture, history and society. All the materials in the package and in the bibliographies contributed to the content of this paper, although the primary sources listed here were the most significant.

GREEK IMMIGRANTS AND GREECE: AN
INTRODUCTION TO THE MULTI-MEDIA PACKAGE ON GREECE

IMPRESSIONS OF GREECE

Perhaps it is the quality of the light in Greece that has so aroused the sensibilities of the western tourists who have visited, dallied, or remained there. Certainly almost everyone comments on it. It is said to cast a super-real character over everything that is seen or experienced. Along with the rocks and the sea and the bare hills, the light of Greece has become a part of western consciousness.

"Greece is a stage," writes John Knowles, author of A Separate Peace.

"The famous clarity of the light there -- you can see the contours and depth of a small hill four miles away -- makes it a beautifully illuminated stage. This must be why drama was invented there, and why the first masterpieces of the theatre were Greek."

(Knowles, 1962, 1964, p. 158)

The ancient Greek poets were acutely aware of light and air, yet they had what to us is a baffling inability to differentiate between colours, and the few words in their vocabulary to describe colour were used indiscriminately. The ancients measured colour in terms of different qualities of light:

"It was light and air that the Greeks loved most of all nature's manifestations. What beautiful and frequent words they had to express their sense of shining or glistening...."

(Nicolson, 1956, p. 202)

Whatever it is, there is something in Greece that makes the English-speaking visitor feel extraordinarily alive. Henry Miller's The Colossus of Maroussi, (included in the multi-media package), illustrates this feeling

well -- every page bursts with life. Miller's book is not the only example, for fortunately there is much about Greece that seems to propel the pens of many of its visitors. Greece has inspired some of the best travel writing in English letters, so much so that no literate person need be a stranger to that country.

Most visitors also see the Greek people as being extraordinarily alive. How much this is a reflection of the mood of the visitor is hard to tell from this distance. Surely, however, a relationship does exist between the land and its people which inspires a special quality of life:

"I dislike Greek wines; however, there is one unresinated white wine that is as dry and light as the best Italian soaves. It's called King Minos, and just now, sitting under the starlight on the afterdeck, I drank a half bottle of it while eating two enormous peaches....The sky, a bonfire of stars -- as ablaze as the skies above the Sahara. The sway of the caiques. Music from a harbour cafe. An ouzo-scented old man dancing in front of the cafe. The cool King Minos warming my veins, the taste of peaches lingering, the perfume of peach-skins saturating the soft, salt-tart air."

(Capote, 1969, p. 46)

CLIMATE, GEOGRAPHY AND THE PEOPLE

The ancient Greek poets seem to have been comparatively indifferent to many of the beauties of nature. Sea, mountains, woods, flowers and animals seemed to matter very little to them. This is surprising to anyone familiar with English poetry, which frequently expresses a concern with nature, its manifestations, and its relationship to man. It is also surprising because of the mental picture many westerners have formed of Greece ---

"We, with our strange Celtic admixture of thought and feeling, cannot even read the word 'Greece' upon a printed page without forming an immediate mental picture of blue seas and shining mountains."

(Nicolson, 1956, p. 193)

Yet our mental picture is not a totally valid one. What we tend to forget, as Nicolson points out, is that Homer was describing a rather harsh land and climate.

Much of the north of Greece is mountainous, and very cold in the winter. Summer is hot and dry almost everywhere.* Rainfall varies markedly. Athens averages about 15 inches a year; Thessaloniki (Salonika), where the summer drought is not so extreme, gets about 21 inches. The west coast is the wettest part. The winter rains fall in downpours, often separated by long periods of clear days, hence much of its potential value is lost by immediate seepage and runoff. Lack of moisture is a serious problem. One farmer when asked what he grew replied, "Rocks." He explained: "I plant seeds on the hillside and the rains come and the rocks get bigger and bigger. The earth is washed away."

* "The parching heat of the Greek summer is...a constant theme of the poets, leading them invariably to extol the delights of shade and water, the charm of lush meadows in the spring." Nicolson, 1956, p. 202.

Only about 25% of the land is arable at all. The severity of this statistic can be seen when one realizes that, according to the 1961 Greek census, 59% of the population is classified as "rural." The total population of Greece is over $8\frac{1}{2}$ million people, living in an area of 51,182 square miles. (This makes it about twice the size of New Brunswick with a population 13 times as large.) Significant also, when one considers such problems as communications and industrialization, are the facts of urban settlement in Greece. Athens is the principal large city; Greater Athens (including the port city Piraeus) has a population approaching 2 million. The next largest city is Salonika, with a population of about 250,000. Only one other city, Patrai (Patras), has a population of over 100,000; in fact there are few other cities of any size.

Ethnically, the population of Greece is quite homogeneous being composed of Macedonians (1%), Turks (4%) and Greeks (93%). About 96% of the people speak the Greek language. The vast majority belong to the Eastern (Greek) Orthodox Church (about 97%); less than 2% are Muslims, while Catholicism is the religion of about 0.4%.

Most of the people of Greece who emigrate to Canada come from the scattered villages where life is hard and the major occupations are either fishing or farming. Some undoubtedly come from Athens but statistical proportions are hard to find. Those who farm may own strips of land here and there which means they may have to walk miles to get from one strip to another.

It is a temptation for the modern Greek to blame his country's currently harsh existence and poverty on the climate -- on the poor and exhausted soil, the lack of rainfall. There is much to this view as climate can never be overlooked in counting a nation's assets. There is a counter-theory as well -- that the great achievements of the past resulted from an

undeniably gifted people who were challenged by the inadequacy of their climate and sought to overcome it by other means.

If people can be considered a natural resource, it is generally considered (at least by the Greeks themselves) that Greece is blessed in this respect. There is even a Greek legend about the creation of the country that takes this point into account:

"When God was building the earth he lavished all goods such as water, good pasture, forests and rich soil on the countries of the world. Then suddenly he remembered that he had forgotten Greece. What could he give to this country since he had given all the riches to the others? He started stroking his beard thoughtfully. All at once an idea struck him when he saw the rainbow hanging over his head. Reaching up he chopped a piece off, stooped and picked up a little soil and many stones and kneaded them all together in the palm of his hand. Opening his hand he blew the mixture into the sea and Greece came into being."

(Sanders, 1962, p. 1)

In its symbolic meaning, the rainbow of the legend is the Greek people who are as colourful as the sundrenched rocks on which their country grew to greatness. It is a very popular tale.

VILLAGE LIFE: THE COFFEEHOUSE

Despite the rigors of rural life in Greece or perhaps because of them, most people prefer to live in villages rather than in the barren countryside. One of the chief advantages of village and city life is the taverna, or coffeehouse, a peculiarly Greek institution and in many ways the centre of Greek life. Athens is crowded with them, and even the poorest village has them -- often, in fact, three. One of the most elemental rules of coffeehouse etiquette is that men and their sons do not frequent the same ones, perhaps because having a son present cramps a man's style, or because for a son to sit down with his elders on an equal basis shows an inadequate amount of respect. Hence the three coffeehouses arrangement, one frequented by the older men, one by the middle-aged, one by the young. This unwritten rule is perhaps fading with time. They are places where the men go to talk about the day's events, about national and international events, in every ramification, every implication. The coffeehouses act as places where information is disseminated. Often the only radio in the village is there, or the single newspaper. (A newspaper in a small village may be a treasured thing, as perhaps not everybody reads, so the men gather in the taverna and one person who can read will read it aloud to everybody else. Along with the extension of electricity to rural areas, radios have come, even to the remote villages.) Community tastes and decisions are formed in the tavernas, giving Greece "coffeehouse juries" similar to the "tearoom juries" of China.

The men frequent these coffeehouses every evening, and often during the day. In the smaller villages the coffeehouse may be no longer than 9 by 12 feet, with benches along the walls, and may double as a sort of general store where some produce may be sold. Some of the coffeehouses sell alcohol --

local wine or ouzo -- but by no means all; the Greeks are not noted drinkers, and the thick sweetened coffee in small cups is perhaps more nationally representative.

Conversations, as pointed out, are often political in nature. All sides of a topic are touched. The Greeks are intensely curious and passionately interested in the rest of the world, although information may be hard to come by in many parts of the country. For example, when some new roads had been put through, the villagers were asked to evaluate the importance of the roads to them; while some noted that they could now sell more produce than before, they all mentioned that they were in closer touch to what was happening in the rest of the world. Often, not as much interest is expressed in national events. In more sophisticated Athens for example, rural problems are quite forgotten. National events of the past, i.e. ancient Greek history, are the exception but of this more will be said later.

* * * * *

While men are at the coffeehouses, women are at home, or perhaps in the village square or some such place gossiping with their female cronies. Sex roles are quite clearly defined in Greece. A woman is responsible for some of the farming, caring for the chickens, cooking for her family, looking after her husband and raising the children. The husband will consult with his wife about most decisions, although he reserves the right to make the final one. There have been efforts to emancipate the women, to encourage them to pursue other roles besides their traditional ones. But neither the men nor the women seem too eager to change old ways, partly because the present system seems mutually supportive.

Marriage is a subject that may worry a woman from puberty on, for especially in the rural areas, being married is almost a necessity in order

to be respected. To be married, a woman needs a dowry which could be money, but is more likely land, and handmade linens and blankets that girls are taught to make by their mothers. It is the father's duty to negotiate the terms and nature of his daughter's dowry. This may explain why a Greek parent when asked how many children he has may reply "two," and then add, "and a guest," meaning a daughter. Or he may say, "I have two children and a girl." Needless to say, one commiserates with a Greek woman who has had the misfortune to give birth to a girl. Traditionally a son may not marry until his sisters are married. He may not be able to support two households financially since it is taken for granted that he will look after any spinster sister.

Although a man will treat his wife and mother with much consideration, by North American standards the status of women in Greece seems to be distinctly subordinate to that of men.

The supposition that women who are cut off from more important pursuits tends to communicate the conventional wisdom and folklore via gossip appears to be true in the Greek villages. In this way, it is the women who impose the weight of Greek traditions on the next generation. Superstition is encouraged in this way too, and flourishes. The "evil eye" is still to be respected in many parts of the country, and rightly so considering the power of the gossip that can aid it in its work.

"The Glory that was Greece...."
AND MODERN HISTORY

Greece remains tradition bound; it also remains history bound. Greece has a glorious past of which we are aware in one form or another. Perhaps too aware -- one can be critical of Greece and feel that a bit more time exerted on contemporary problems rather than on past achievements might be useful. One writer points out that dependence on the past has helped Greece in the intervening centuries. In this view, the Greek could always feel a pleasant superiority to any other country no matter how nasty his present situation might be.

Yet today, when economic, agricultural, and medical reforms are badly needed, students at universities still study the classics and the liberal arts to the neglect of pressing problems in the rest of the country. And the villagers, often living their lives out literally in the shadows of classical ruins, are in their own way equally chained.

Again, there are two sides -- perhaps the foreign visitor sees only what he wants to see. There is a revealing anecdote recorded by a tourist who asked his chauffeur, a young man named Sophocles, how much effect the past had on his life. The driver bursting with anger and frustration said, "I want to be me! We are so burdened down by our past that people don't give us a chance to become anything!"

* * * * *

"The isles of Greece! The isles of Greece!
Where burning Sappho loved and sung,
Where grew the arts of war and peace,
Where Delos rose, and Phoebus sprung!
Eternal summer gilds them yet,
But all, except their sun, is set."

(Byron as cited by Milford, 1958, p. 481)

So wrote Byron, and he had a point. Very little of note had happened since the fall of ancient Greece -- except that Greece managed to survive Turkish rule from 1453 to 1821, keeping its culture intact. (It is said that the only thing borrowed from the Turks was the musical instrument the buzuki.) Turkish rule was not inhumanly oppressive, but it was arbitrary and unpredictable, and it gave no rights in return. Through the centuries of foreign rule the Greeks learned to depend upon their own resources for continuity.

The beginning of modern Greek history is considered to be 1770 when for the first time an independence movement received a spontaneous response from Greek citizens. The final and successful revolution occurred not because of immediate foreign repression, but rather because of an enfeeblement and relaxation of tyranny that fed the appetite for liberty. Other encouragements include the temper and events of the times: a general liberalization of western thought; incitements to the Greeks by other western representatives (including Lord Byron); internal problems in the Ottoman Empire; the successful French and American revolutions. It was nearly 1830 before the new state took shape, but Greece had survived almost 540 years of foreign rule and still retained her cultural identity.

Events during the next hundred years were confused and contradictory as various governments rose and fell. By 1935, however, a monarchy had been restored. Greece remained neutral at the outbreak of World War II, but an Italian invasion in 1940 forced the government to join the Allied powers. The Greek army was astonishingly successful against the Italians, pushing them back behind Greek borders and occupying about a quarter of Albania in doing so. At one point, however, the Greeks paraded several Italian prisoners of war through the streets of Athens. Feelings of

confidence and victory were in the air but an old woman watching the prisoners smiled, shook her head, and said, "They really aren't soldiers, they should be playing mandolins."

Then, the German forces invaded and rapidly overran the country. The occupation of Greece lasted for three years and from this period springs the contemporary image of the Greek as archetypal partisan. The hardy, political, and passionate Greeks loathed the German occupation. Appalling suffering and great heroism marked their resistance, not to mention considerable success.

Unfortunately for future events, there was a major division within the resistance ranks, one Communist controlled, the other not. There was only one occasion when they co-operated in common action; at other times they frequently fought each other, as well as undertaking independent actions against the common enemy. By December of 1944, a bitter civil war had broken out in the country, followed by a slight lull, then full scale guerrilla warfare was opened by the Communists in 1946. With aid from the United States, (under the Truman doctrine, 1947) the Communists were quelled by 1949. Reconstruction began and by 1955, Greece was on its way to post-war recovery.

A word should be said about the depth and bitterness of the civil war, scars of which have not yet healed. Again, one cannot underestimate the importance of politics to the Greeks. All of them were definitely on one side or the other. Family loyalty and blood feuds complicated the picture; if one member of a village family was killed by the Royalists then the family became Communist, and Greeks feel compelled to avenge the death of anyone in their family. It would be impossible to say which side was more passionately convinced of the rightness of its cause. It is known that horrible atrocities occurred frequently on both sides.

Post-civil war Greek history is a confused one. There were, for example, six general elections between 1950 and 1961. (In one of these, 1956, women were allowed to vote for the first time.) In 1963, Georgios Papandreou was elected prime minister, a name still familiar to North Americans. In 1964, the monarchy, which had been restored by plebiscite in 1946, underwent a change as King Constantine succeeded to the throne after his father's death.

The next years were a confused period of rapidly changing events that are still being unravelled in an attempt to understand the development of Greece in the modern era. The following chronology of events indicates the rapidity and extent of these changes:

JULY 1965 -- King Constantine dismissed Papandreou from office, claiming the latter was aiding penetration of the army by a left wing organization headed by his civilian son Andreas Papandreou.

SEPTEMBER 1965 -- After withholding confidence from two successive governments, the Chamber of Deputies approved a government headed by Stephanopoulos.

OCTOBER 1966 -- 28 officers indicted in connection with left-wing infiltration mentioned above.

DECEMBER 1966 -- Stephanopoulos resigned. King authorized Paraskevopoulos to form an extra-parliamentary government with a view to holding general elections in May, 1967.

MARCH 1967 -- Paraskevopoulos resigned office.

APRIL 3, 1967 -- New government under Kanellopoulos formed. Papandreou and friends threaten violent opposition.

APRIL 14, 1967 -- Parliament dissolved.

APRIL 21, 1967 -- Before elections could be held, an army coup d'etat took place, acting in King's name although apparently without his knowledge. Georgios and Andreas Papandreou put under arrest.

At the time of this writing, the generals run Greece and information about the nature of the regime is not easy to acquire. It appears that civil liberties by Canadian standards are stringently curtailed, and that moral standards, superficially at least, are very strict and enforced as a matter of governmental policy. There are also many unanswered questions about the events leading up to the coup. How valid were the charges against the Papandreous, father and son alignment with Communism? * What was the role of the United States and other western powers who are committed to containing Communism? How deeply involved was King Constantine? (He and his family are now in exile in Italy.) Did he plan a coup himself, only more moderate than the one that occurred? These and other questions are not likely to be answered to everyone's satisfaction for some time.

* Georgios Papandreou is now dead; his son, Andreas Papandreou has accepted a faculty appointment at York University for 1969-1970 as Professor and Director of the Graduate Programme in Economics.

THE PEOPLE

"The Greek shocks our sentimentality, for he has none of his own. He looks straight at life."

(Sir Richard Livingstone as cited by Nicolson, 1956, p. 204)

It was an axiom of Greek religion that mortals should think mortal thoughts and should never aspire to imitate the gods. To do so would be impious and might bring down on the offender the terrible penalties imposed on those guilty of hubris. In light of this it is strange that the Greek character has been invested with such god-like qualities by non-Greeks. One thinks even of Lord Byron's phrase -- "Land of lost gods and godlike men."

The Greek may look straight at life; sometimes, one suspects, the Anglo-Saxon Canadian has trouble looking straight at the Greeks. He is sentimental and he has invested every Greek with the qualities of a Zorba -- extremely, passionately individualistic, "alive with energy... earthy and Rabelaisian" (excerpts of a Saturday Review review of Zorba the Greek on cover of the 1968 Ballantine edition). The Greek is seen as loving life, as throwing himself into life, as doing everything that staid Anglo-Saxons theoretically don't do. It is forgotten that the Greek "national character" must envelop a wide variety of individual characteristics.

To some extent, however, a people can be discovered through their own rituals and celebrations, and some Greek rituals do contain in them a great affirmation of life. The Greek reaction to death is a good example. Those who mourn a particular death embrace mourning whole-heartedly. They wear black, they wail, they weep. There is very little emphasis on the after-life, or on meeting again after death. Rather the emphasis is

on loss: The survivors' loss of a loved one, and the dead person's loss of life. Thus, the celebration becomes a passionate espousal of the values of life.

One suspects that the Greek feels that all he has is this world. Therefore, perhaps he does embrace his life a little more vigorously than do other peoples. This in turn may explain why the Anglo-Saxon so vigorously embraces so much of what is Greek.

CONCLUSION

Reading the philosophy, poetry and history, looking at the art and listening to the music can provide a better understanding of the Greek way of life than a summary. The multi-media package attempts to introduce the reader to all these aspects of Greek culture, past and present. It is set up in such a way that the reader can probe as deeply or as lightly as he chooses to.

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THE CONTENTS OF THE MULTI-MEDIA PACKAGE ON GREECE

Written Material

1. Bibliographic Material

A critical bibliography has been prepared to cover books dealing with many aspects of Greek society and history.

Bibliographies listing filmstrips, slides and films are included in the same report. Information about rental, availability and content is provided where possible.

2. Books*

The Colossus of Maroussi by Henry Miller

Henry Miller tells exuberant tales of his adventures and encounters in Greece. Whether describing a loud and long evening in an Athenian taverna or near escape from drowning in a windstorm he makes every page of this book thoroughly alive for the reader.

Earth and Water by Shelagh Kanelli

The author of this autobiographic work is an Englishwoman who married a Greek lawyer several years her senior and went to live with his family in a small Greek town. She tells of some of the adjustments that had to be made by both sides of the family, and much of contemporary small town Greek life.

* Full bibliographic information for these books is given in the Critical Bibliography of Materials on Greece.

My Brother Michael by Mary Stewart

Another international adventure from the pen of a prolific writer but as usual Miss Stewart knows her locale well. This novel is set in Athens and much of the beauty and flavour of that city is well-described. Also as usual an exciting, if romantic, plot.

Zorba the Greek by Nikos Kazantzakis

Does Zorba need any introduction to anyone? Hero of a fantastically successful movie, hero of a long-running play on Broadway, he was first of all hero of this warm and energetic novel. Highly recommended by everyone who has read it.

The King Must Die by Mary Renault

One of the finest historical novelists alive today, Miss Renault specializes in reconstructions of ancient Greek mythology/history. This book is one of her most engrossing and tells of the early years of Theseus, legendary boy-king of Athens and including his years in the Court of the Minotaur. The author writes with sensitive and intuitive understanding of her subject.

My Family and Other Animals by Gerald Durrell

Each reader has to decide for himself, whether the Durrell family, the "other animals," or the Greek island of Corfu where it all takes place is the most captivating ingredient of this book. All the anecdotes about the island and the Blanders are absolutely true. Durrell says, "Living in Corfu was rather like living in one of the more flamboyant and slapstick comic operas."

Ancient Greek Sculpture from the Museums of Athens by Francois Chamoux

Nineteen colour photographs of some of the most beautiful pieces of sculpture to have survived since Greece's classical period provide a major attraction of this book. M. Chamoux's informative and well-written introduction provides the background necessary to understand these works of art, and their place in the society that created them.

Audio-Visual Material

Prints

A booklet comprised of eleven black and white photographs obtained from the Royal Ontario Museum and two colour postcards obtained from the Art Gallery of Ontario provide more information about the life and art of ancient Greece.

Filmstrips

Two filmstrips from the Carman Educational Associates' series on Greece portray aspects of Greece -- Land of Myth and Modern Greece. These filmstrips are in colour, and are accompanied by an introduction.

A black and white filmstrip produced by Encyclopaedia Britannica Publications and entitled Greek Children is also included in each package. This is one of the Children of Many Lands series, and is included for use in primary and intermediate grades; however older age groups would also enjoy it.

Tape

A tape of Greek music and contemporary poetry has been recorded in a cassette in order to provide both an introduction to and encouragement for further investigation of these two art forms.

A Greek magazine has also been included in each package.