

Representing Greekness: French and Greek Lithographs from the Greek War of Independence (1821–1827) and the Greek-Italian War (1940–1941)

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Abstract

Popular lithographs produced by French and Greek artists during the Greek War of Independence (1821–1827) and the Greek-Italian War (1940–1941) quite often overstated elements of Greek national identity with a focus on classical antiquity and Byzantine Orthodoxy. This is a comparative study of how Greeks and Greece have been represented through the following two collections of the National Historical Museum in Athens: popular lithographs produced, printed, and distributed by French artists in France at the peak of the Philhellenic movement; and those produced by Greek artists in Greece during the Second World War (1940–1941). Although produced more than one hundred years apart and under very different circumstances, popular imagery created by Philhellenes in France during the 1820s and Greek artists under the Metaxas regime in 1940–1941 remains a valuable historical record that helps us explore how popular representations of Greek national identity and the notion of Greece can be adopted and appropriated in a variety of ways based on who is using them and for what purpose.

The German Alois Senefeld invented lithography in 1798, printing, from a stone block onto paper, black-and-white artworks or illustrations. It was and still is a rather “economical means of creating or reproducing works of art” and it is characterized by the vividness and intensity of forms and colors that aim to appeal to emotion, to inform about current events and ultimately to be sold at a low cost directly to the public (Gustafson 2006:26). The French were the first to use the new printing method in the late eighteenth century. At that time, French lithographs were bringing to life the accounts of French travelers to Greece, using a mixture of

dramatic, romantic, and oriental elements to create imaginary and ideal representations of Greeks and Greece (Kastriti 2006:111). Around the 1840s, lithographs (known as “popular icons”—“λαϊκές εικόνες”) appeared in Greece in the form of popular black-and-white and color illustrations representing historical events and current affairs, and they continued to be produced until their last appearance during the Greek-Italian War of 1940–1941 (Meletopoulos 1968:10). Their richness of information about the socio-political period which generated them, their expression of the popular sentiments in response to current affairs, along with their aesthetic and artistic value, have elevated them to valuable cultural objects that feature in prestigious collections held by galleries, museums, and private collectors.

The purpose of this article is to discuss two of the collections of the National Historical Museum (NHM) in Athens that focus on the representations of the Greeks by French and Greek artists respectively, in two important events in Greek history. The first collection consists of a large number of items created in France during the Philhellenic movement, inspired by the Greek War of Independence, and reflects how Greeks and their war were perceived by “outsiders.” The second collection consists of lithographs produced, printed, and distributed in Greece during the Greek-Italian War (1940–1941), created by Greeks themselves. French lithographs of that period have been discussed in reference to French Romantic historiography and the Philhellenic movement (Dimopoulos 1961 in Glencross 1997; Athanassoglou-Kalmier 1989; Glencross 1997; Kastriti 2006), travel literature (Constantine 1984; Augoustinos 1994), and the French illustrated travel book (Fraser 2008), to mention only a few indicative sources. Greek popular lithographs have been examined as cultural objects that contribute to the understanding of Greek history and culture, primarily in three major Greek publications: *To Έπος του 40, λαϊκή εικονογραφία* (1987) (*The Epic of 1940, Popular Iconography*); *Οι Βαλκανικοί Πόλεμοι 1912–13* (1992, 1999) (*Balkan Wars 1912–1913*) by the National Historical Museum; and Baharian and Antaios’s *Εικαστικές μαρτυρίες: ζωγραφική και χαρακτική στον πόλεμο, στην κατοχή και την Αντίσταση* (1984) (*Visual Testimonies: Painting and Sketching during the War, the Occupation, and the Resistance*). The technique of lithography and its relation to commercial advertising and the political poster are the focus of the book *Greek Posters* by Karachristos (1984), whereas popular lithographs have also been discussed in studies on Greek art (Spiteris 1979; Stamelos 1993). With the exception of the above two publications of the National Historical Museum, which present an extensive analysis of the purpose, aesthetics, and thematic continuity between lithographs from the Balkan Wars and the Second World War,

there is a lack of comparative sources, especially on representations of Greeks in major historical events in Greek history by French and Greek artists. This article is a comparative study in this under-researched area that treats lithographs as historical records and pointers of the political and popular ideology of times that brought Greeks into the spotlight of international political affairs. The two periods under discussion indicate two peak times in the production of lithographs in the two countries. The end of the eighteenth century in France marks a shift to images inspired by themes from politics and current affairs, leading to their heightened popularity (Meletopoulos 1968:8). The presence of popular iconography in Greece roughly covers the transitional period from skilfully made engravings (έντεχνο χαρακτικό) to modern posters, covering a chronological period from the middle of the nineteenth century to the middle of the twentieth century. Through the analysis of these lithographs, I explore how representations of Greeks were filtered through the French public during the Philhellenic movement and how the themes used during that time can be compared with representations produced by the Greeks about themselves during another major event in Greek history, the Greek-Italian War of 1940–1941.

Philhellenism, French lithographs and the Greek War of Independence

Greece in the 1820s was part of a crumbling Ottoman Empire and in the throes of political and social turmoil accompanied by massacres and reprisals, diplomacy and intrigue, which had captured the attention of powerful European nations. Britain, France, and Italy, along with Russia, Austria, and Prussia, were observing the developments of the Greek War of Independence and were rather skeptical about their own involvement and their possible political gains.¹ Within this context, Philhellenism, a movement of sympathy for the Greek War of Independence, led Europeans to provide a range of political, military, economic, and artistic means of support for the Greek cause.² Philhellenism grew strong as a result of a number of factors: “the belief that the modern Greeks were the direct descendants of ancient Greeks; the age-old hatreds of the Christians for the Muslims; the timely ideas of national independence and nation state against older political systems” (St. Claire 1977:273). Philhellenic involvement in the Greek affair was also a kind of preventative political measure for France, as the disintegration of the Ottoman Empire could seriously threaten the existing political balance and alliances in Europe. A priority for France was “to keep Russia out of the Mediterranean and therefore maintain Turkish control of the Straits of Constantinople” (Holden 1972:107–108); whereas a tempting possibility was to establish “a virtually

French protectorate” over Greece, especially after the successful French invasion of Spain in 1824 (St. Claire 1977:279). The French support of the Greek War of Independence was not, however, harmoniously shared by all political parties. Kastriti explains that conservative (ultra) popular French press and ultra-Catholic monarchists were rather hostile towards the Philhellenic movement for political and religious reasons (2006:42). They believed that the movement was promoted by the liberal circles, whereas the dogmatic schism between Catholicism and Orthodoxy was perpetuating a negative response towards the “schismatic” Greeks.

Regardless of the political dimension of the movement, Greeks enjoyed this warm international goodwill as they were starting their violent revolution against Ottoman rule. The poetic creed of the Philhellenes, with Victor Hugo, Lord Byron, and Percy Shelley in leading positions, had already paved the way, inspiring the Philhellenic dream of the revival of the ancient glory of Greece (Howarth 1976). France highlighted from the beginning her leading Philhellenic role and spiritual connection with Greece. Parallels were drawn between the war in Greece and the political struggle in France, and Philhellenic artistic expressions closely linked the War of Independence to politics in France, identifying the Greek situation with liberal political beliefs opposed to the Bourbon Restoration (Athanasoglou-Kallmyer 1989). Pre-revolutionary accounts of Greece were reaching the wider French public through travel literature, and included writings like Choiseul-Gouffier’s *Voyage pittoresque de la Grèce* (1782), Chateaubriand’s *Itinéraire de Paris à Jérusalem* (1811), Auguste de Forbin’s *Voyage dans le Levant* (1819), and Pouqueville’s *Voyage dans la Grèce* (1820), to name only a few (Constantine 1984). As Glencross explains, “these works reveal clear differences in scope and ambition: some were memoirs of participants or observers but others, eschewing false modesty, staked their claim to be works of history” (1997:35). On the same note, Samiou adds that these Romantic travelers projected an image of Greece influenced by their origins, education, and political beliefs, adding a political dimension to their travel accounts and representations of the Greeks (2009:456–457).

Literature, travel writing, diaries, and poetry affected the way Greece came to be represented in an abundance of cultural artifacts created by French artists expressing Philhellenic beliefs. These cultural artifacts were samples of private initiative supporting the Greek War of Independence and not a product of organized state propaganda. They were created for popular consumption and will be approached in this article as artistic and historical sources expressing French public opinion, taste, and interest. Exhibitions and bazaars were organized in Paris in order to collect funds and raise interest and awareness. From 1822 to

1827, among other artifacts, numerous lithographs portraying scenes from the Greek War of Independence, the leaders of the revolution, and important battles and allegorical themes in line with the popular ideas of the French Revolution were exhibited in French “Salons” and galleries and bought by the French public (Kastriti 2006:8–9). This interest does not come as a surprise considering that “the rediscovery of Greece in a European context” took place during the eighteenth century when philosophical and historical European discourses favored a European uniqueness founded on the classical ideals of the Athenian democracy (Athanasopoulou 2002:279).

French fascination focused on Greece and a number of events and battles monopolized the attention of the French artists, such as the fall of Mesolonghi in 1826³ and the naval battle of Navarino in 1827⁴, which are only a few of the war events widely depicted in French lithographs and projected to a European public. Apart from writers and poets, a number of French artists embarked on the long journey to Greece, with the dream of sketching the classical ideal *in situ*. One of them was Louis Dupré, a French painter and lithographer who visited Greece in 1819. Dupré’s works are worth mentioning for a number of reasons. The artist depicts Greece as a country with a glorious classical past, reinforcing an important component of the Philhellenic movement. His works, however, move beyond the beauty of the landscape and focus on details that offer a valuable ethnographic account of the Greek land and its people, their costumes, and way of life. What is most important is the fact that Dupré highlights distinctive aspects of modern Greece, which, although geographically located at the edge of Southern Europe, was part of the Ottoman Empire with a strong oriental influence and a population of mixed origins. As Natasa Kastriti points out:

Dupré is one of the first artists who approached a country with a sense of realism, and in particular, a country whose cultural richness has been for centuries a source of inspiration. Through his works, Dupré becomes one of the first orientalists in the era of romanticism. . . . Having discovered and loved Greece (as it is) in the present, he foresees and believes in its forthcoming “re-birth.” (Kastriti 2006:28)

Dupré’s works were on display in French Salons from 1824 onwards, and a volume with 40 lithographs from his six-month trip to Greece and Turkey, entitled *Voyage à Athènes et à Constantinople, ou collection de portraits, de vues et de costumes Grecs et Ottomans*, was published in the following years (Kastriti 2006:28). In that volume, cultural components of Greece’s ancient prestige were revived, expressed, and rediscovered, portraying modern Greeks as the celebrated heirs of their ancestors who

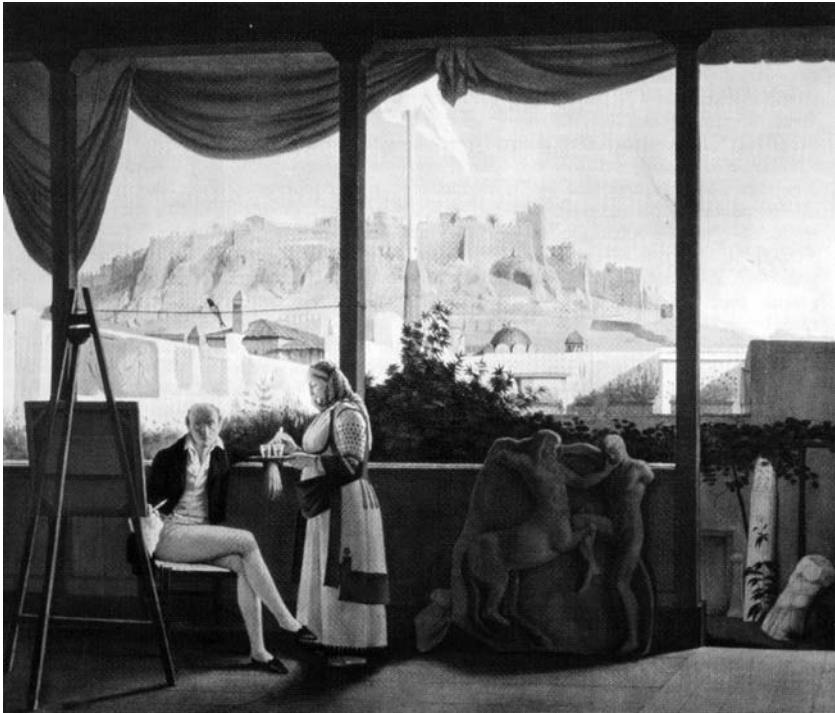


Figure 1. *Acropolis, view from Mr. Fauvel's house* (NHM 14869/19).

remained for too long under a humiliating Ottoman occupation. What comes through in these representations of Dupré and other French Philhellene artists is the repetition of themes that echo a glorious past and a long history with a focus on modern Greeks and their cause for independence.

Classical antiquity in Philhellenic representations of Greece

A distinctive theme in the French representation of the Greek War of Independence deals with the rebirth of the cultural grandeur and magnificence of ancient Greece. Dupré's lithograph *Acropolis, view from Mr. Fauvel's house* (NHM 14869/19) shows the French consul making the most of the classical Athenian past in a house full of antiquities overlooking the elevated Acropolis. Athens is metaphorically and literally depicted as a museum or a gallery full of treasures. A black curtain frames the window separating the interior of the house with its contrasting darker colors in

relation to the brightness of the outside space. In the background, the Greek landscape shows off its trademarks: the clarity of the Mediterranean colors with the blue sky and the bright sun that reflects the whiteness of the marbles situated at the Acropolis. The interior of the house is decorated with scattered ancient treasures, fragments, and mutilated statues which metaphorically could signify the change of status between a proud, composed, and cultivated ancient Greece and a modern Greece in ruins and disarray, a shadow of its former self. Dupré is not shying away from portraying antiquities as an appealing commodity, an export that lures foreign travelers and aristocratic circles in Europe who crave a piece of Greece both literally and metaphorically. The consul himself has his back turned away from the main sight; he appears, however, to be inspired by the background as he has been depicted with a painter's brush in his hand. Fauvel, dressed in Western style clothing, is boldly looking at us while the woman, dressed in a traditional costume, is facing him, concentrating on holding her tray and avoiding eye contact.

Apart from Dupré, a number of other French artists were inspired by ancient Greek civilization, monuments, and myths and used these elements in depictions of real events of the war. Scenes of vicious fighting and carnage between Greeks and Turks take place among encroaching ancient ruins and fragments of an ever-present and alive past. Allegory and symbolism are also extensively used in relation to Greek history within neoclassicism, which attempts to counterbalance aesthetic values with the current Greek reality and the political and social ideas of the French Restoration. Greece becomes the equivalent of French Marianne, either posing as a woman dressed like an ancient goddess among ruins, a proud female warrior, or a devastated mother who has lost members of her family in depictions inspired by real events such as destructions of towns and carnage. One such allegorical representation is Révoil's *Réveil de la Grèce. La Grèce inspirée par le génie de la liberté, se lève, brise ses fers et ses oppresseurs sont foudroyés* (NHM 874). Artists like Révoil depicted the Greek War of Independence in the underlying sense of a mission to save Greece, the cradle of Western civilization, promoted a European constructed visual imagery of the modern Greek nation or "a sense of the past' imported from Western Europe" (Clogg 2002:1). *The Awakening of Greece*, produced in 1822, encapsulated this notion of continuity. It presents Greece as a woman dressed in a long gown, having broken the chains that were keeping her hands tied and crushed her enemy. She is inspired by the spirit of liberty that flies above her head, holding a banner that says "Stand up, gentle sons of the heroes" while surrounded by fragments of antiquities, monuments, and symbols of the ancient Greek civilization: a stone with the engraving "Thermopyles,"



Figure 2. Réveil de la Grèce. La Grèce inspirée par le génie de la liberté, se lève, brise ses fers et ses oppresseurs sont foudroyés (NHM 874).

the heroic resistance and sacrifice of Leonidas and the 300 Spartans in the Battle of Thermopylae (480 BC); and the goddess Athena's shield with the engraved names of well-known ancient Greeks (Leonidas, Miltiades, Pericles). The notion of national dignity is also glorified in this image, as the richness of civilization helps the personified Greek nation to find strength to stand up and fight. Most importantly, however, the Greek landscape is used by the French artists as a way of defining Greece and as "a national symbol with an orientation towards a historical past" (Terkenli 2001:204).

From ancient to modern Greeks: the land of everlasting gods and heroes

Besides the ancient ruins, monuments, and landscape, real people and outfits become the focus of Philhellenic lithographs. Dupré's depictions of Greeks dressed in traditional costumes challenge the Philhellenic model of historical continuity that relies on idealized visions of past glory. His representations of Greek people also reflect the reality of the Ottoman occupation of Greece which has resulted in the "symbiosis of the Greeks with other ethnic groups of Greek or Hellenized origin—who adhered to the Church of Constantinople—with Vlachs in Thessaly, with Albanians and Slavs in the Peloponnese and Northwest Greece, and with Armenians in Eastern Anatolia" (Vryonis 1976:49). The ethnic diversity of Greece is demonstrated through a variety of traditional costumes in Dupré's works, which subtly compare and contrast Greeks, Turks, and Egyptians, composing a mosaic of Mediterranean and Middle Eastern characters.

A portrait of *Ali Pacha de Janina* (NHM 14870) and a lithograph entitled *Le Pinde, traversée de Janina à Tricala* (NHM 8298) that show travelers of different origins and nationalities traveling through Northern Greece are only a few of Dupré's works that successfully compose this challenging Greek mosaic of various ethnic backgrounds. The images emphasize binary distinctions of civilization versus barbarism and Christianity versus Islam, which are often reflected in French written discourse and French travel accounts. These representations of the land and the people also promote a European version of Orientalism that brings together a mixture of romantic, exotic, and mysterious elements, adding to the mythology of the European redefinition of Greece. It also echoes Said's explanation of Orientalism as "a distribution of geopolitical awareness into aesthetic, scholarly, historical and philological texts"; in this case, travelers' and artists' personal perception of Greece's otherness are infused by their own experience, background, and political beliefs (1978:12) .

Modern Greeks are depicted both individually and collectively. The focus is on the heroic deeds and the individual and collective self-sacrifice that successfully hides "a story of political upheaval and social discontent, of civil strife and factional passions" (Lekas 2005:162). Modern Greeks as depicted by Dupré are not less heroic or less worthy than their predecessors. Regardless of the changes in outfits, they are modern heroes, descendants of Olympian gods. Beauty, physical prowess, courage, and determination draw similarities with Homeric heroes. One such lithograph, from the collection of the National Historical Museum, that brings together the ancient spirit of gallantry placed in the current context is that of *Démétrius Mavromichalis* (*Dimitrios Mavromichalis*, NHM 14869/21). Mavromichalis, a real character who later participated in the

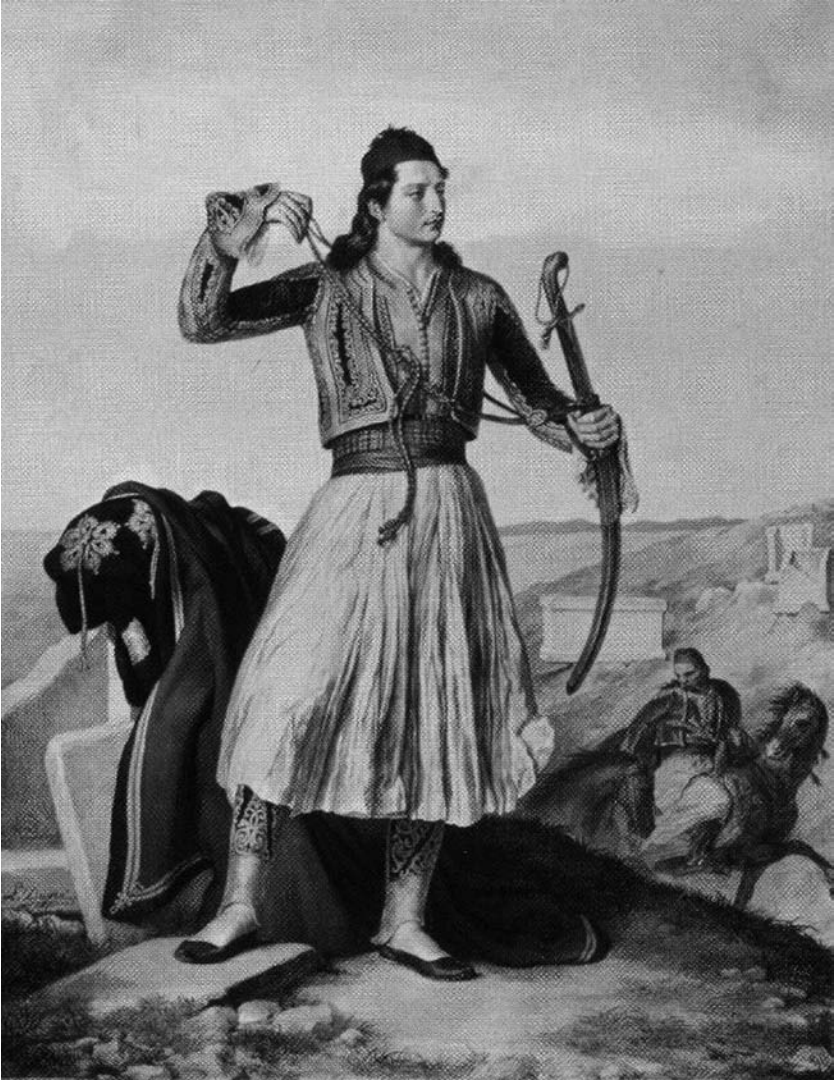


Figure 3. Démétrius Mavromichalis (Dimitrios Mavromichalis, NHM 14869/21).

Greek War of Independence, was a member of the hereditary Maniot chieftains of the Mavromichalis family who controlled a large district of the Southeast Peloponnese, “in a state of nearly complete independence” (Woodhouse 1952:33). In the image, he poses as an idealized Greek hero who holds an elegant curved sword, dressed in the characteristic Greek

foustanéla (knee-length kilt) and accessories with some oriental influences after centuries of Ottoman occupation. The background is overshadowed by Mavromichalis's imposing presence and the emphasis is on the man himself and his costume, as his red and black gown lies in a dramatic way on some fragmented ruins behind him. This costume, worn by the outlaws or mountain warriors (the *kléphants*/κλέφτες), a nuisance to both Ottoman authorities and Greek landowners, becomes a symbol associated with the freedom fighter (Verinis 2005). Lord Byron's and other romantic Philhellenes' accounts had idealized *kléphants* as the materialization of resistance against tyranny expressing conquered people's feelings in a form of social protest (Kitromilides 1996:334).

Orthodoxy versus Islam

From the Renaissance to the eighteenth century, the schism between Orthodoxy and Catholicism resulted in poor descriptions of Greeks, "largely on account of their being Turkic slaves and lacking a clear national identity" (Samiou 2009:455–456). At the beginning of the nineteenth century, when the Ottoman Empire started showing signs of political decline and the imperialist nations of France and Britain started showing a renewed interest in the Greek cause, Greek Orthodox Christianity was addressed either in generic terms or framed in the visual symbolism of Catholicism. As has been discussed earlier in the article, reference to religion was one of the arguments used by Philhellenes in their support for the Greek War of Independence, and as such, there are a number of lithographs depicting Christian Greeks as being persecuted by the Muslim Turks. Dupré's lithograph *La Vierge de Thyamis* (*Virgin Mary of Thyamis River*, NHM 14139) shows a Greek couple standing under the icon of the Virgin Mary seeking protection from their persecutors. The man is standing as a shield between the woman and the Turks, who do not hesitate to aim their guns towards the unarmed and vulnerable couple. The icon is placed on the top of a rock, signalling the powerful position and sacred meaning of religion in Greek culture. It is surmounted by a crooked cross, which has just been hit by the bullet of the Turk who persecutes the Greek couple. The act of sacrilege aims to intimidate and humiliate the Greeks by violating their beliefs. The artist uses the female figures as embodiments of the sacred, the nation, and the unprotected population. Thus, the image echoes France's sense of itself as protector of the defenseless Greeks, eager to intervene sooner rather than later on the side of a Christian nation.

Natasa Kastriti explains that in a number of Philhellenic lithographs, like Chrétien's and Raffet's depictions of Greeks receiving holy



Figure 4. *La Vierge de Thyamis (Virgin Mary of Thyamis River, NHM 14139).*

communion in Missolonghi in 1826, the Greek priests are presented wearing gowns similar to those worn by Catholic priests, and the act of the holy communion is portrayed based on the Catholic tradition of the consecrated wafer (2006:83–84). For Kastriti, these inaccuracies are attributed either to the ignorance of the artists or to their commitment to depicting the religious issue in a positive light in order to justify the Greek cause and avoid unnecessary criticism. The cross, for example, a symbol of Christianity, was used to highlight links between Europe and Greece, along with events that could encourage sympathy and support towards the Greek cause. One such event was the hanging of the Ecumenical Patriarch Gregory V in Constantinople who, along with other religious leaders, was executed by the Ottomans because of his failure to condemn the Greek uprising. According to Clogg, the event caused “outrage in the West and contributed to the powerful upsurge of sympathy for the insurgent Greeks that developed in liberal circles of Western Europe” (2002:36).

French Philhellenic lithographs portrayed a Greek national identity defined by the literary legacy and material remains of the classical past, whereas Christianity was used in a secondary role, camouflaged at times behind the visual symbolism of Catholicism. The relationship of modern Greeks with the historical place that bore the same geographical name, “Hellas,” appealed to the French artists. As the war continued, the focus shifted from the place to the people, the glorious inheritors of the ancient land who were often portrayed among “dismembered” ruins of classical antiquity. But did this past defined by outsiders as an ode to classical antiquities and the transformation of the Athenian monuments into sacred landscapes appeal to Greek artists in 1940–1941? How are modern Greeks represented through popular lithographs during another major event in Greek history?

Popular iconography (λαϊκή εικονογραφία), Metaxas and the Second World War

Popular iconography in the form of lithography makes a mark in the Greek art scene in the 1840s until its decline in 1941, with the end of the Greek-Italian War. Prior to this, Greek artists who produced works during the 1840s were inspired by the long tradition of Byzantine iconography enhanced by both Eastern and Western influences (Stamelos 1993:120–121, 128). In particular, Orthodox painters of the eighteenth century traveled freely throughout the countries under Ottoman occupation; that is, “the cities of the Adriatic coast and Italy to the Balkan mainland and Constantinople,” in this way facilitating the spread of religious paintings influenced by Byzantine and Western techniques, along with Baroque and Rococo aesthetics (Drakopoulou 2004:23, 32).

The first example of this era was a set of 24 lithographs created by Panayiotis Zografos between 1836 and 1839 depicting scenes from the Greek War of Independence. Zografos’s work remains to date the most representative example of popular iconography from that time, widely recognized for the uniqueness of its composition, its mythical character, and the harmonious fluctuations of colors (Stamelos 1993:130). The artist was commissioned by General Ioannis Makriyiannis, who was a veteran of the War of Independence, to produce multiple images based on a variety of historical events and battles that took place during the war. Zografos painted under Makriyiannis’s instructions one set of 24 images on wood, using an old Byzantine technique of egg tempera (αυγοτέμπερα), and four more sets on hard paper.⁵ The sets were offered to King Otto of Greece, and the ambassadors of England, France, and Russia, whereas Makriyiannis’s intention was to send another set to Paris for Charles Nicholas Fabvier and other Philhellenes who had fought by

the side of the Greeks during the revolution (Makriyiannis 1980:390). As Meletopoulos indicates, Makriyiannis's idea to make these visual historical records available to wide audiences defined popular Greek iconography as "a private initiative in the hands of individual publishers, that greatly influenced public opinion by teaching Greek history to the mostly illiterate people in one way or another" (Meletopoulos 1968:9–10).

Popular iconography saw its final peak during the Greek-Italian War of 1940–1941. At that time, Ioannis Metaxas was in power, a Greek dictator whose regime was aiming to create the Third Hellenic Civilization, a national rebirth inspired by the best elements deriving from ancient Greece and the medieval Hellenism of religious Byzantium. Metaxas's regime was not fascist in the sense of Mussolini's or Hitler's regimes. The regime did not enjoy popular support, nor did it have a strong propaganda machine and an interest in expansionistic policies like fascist Germany and Italy (Aggelis 2006:25–35). It promoted, however, the leader's persona and a youth organization—the National Organization of Youth/Εθνική Οργάνωση Νεολαίας—promoting the importance of values such as family, nation, and religion.⁶

Metaxas recognized the importance of the traditional Greek cultural heritage and resorted to myths, memories, and traditions, attempting to rediscover, reinterpret, and create a "Metaxist" version of history for the modern Greek nation. He opted for the "threefold continuum of Hellenic history," which is "the heritage of pagan Hellenism, the tradition of Orthodox Byzantium and the post-1830 secular state" (Carabott 2003:29–30). The issue of Greekness and Greek national history and identity had also preoccupied the artistic and literary scene in Greece since the beginning of the twentieth century. Contemporary artists and men of letters, the "Generation of the 1930s," were anxiously trying to answer questions about the contribution of Greece to European culture: should it be the strong oriental influence resulting from centuries of Ottoman occupation, the romantic obsession with classical antiquity, the nationalist dream of a medieval Byzantine empire, or something "Neohellenic like Makriyiannis and Theophilos, reminding the Europeans that there is not only classical but also modern Greece?" (Tziouvas 2006:40).

Within this atmosphere of searching, redefining, and rediscovering the meaning of Greece, it came as no surprise that there was a return to tradition, myths, and symbols widely used in artistic representation and in particular in popular lithography. The arts (music, theater, films), although not as tightly censored as radio and press, did not escape the censorship of Metaxas's regime, controlled as it was by Costis Bastias, director of the General Directorate of Letters and Fine Arts (Γενική Διεύθυνση Γραμμάτων και Τεχνών), initially a section of the Ministry of

Education (Υπουργείο Παιδείας) (Petraakis 2006:134). Metaxas cherished his role as “The Great Protector of the Arts,” confirming that the state would support Greek art as a whole, avoiding specific reference to preferred artistic trends and styles (Metaxas 1969:306–311). This stance left the fine arts and its representatives in an ambiguous position regarding the meaning and definition of Greek art propagated by the Metaxas regime: a mixture of influences from antiquity, Byzantium, and Europe were coming together in an effort to portray “the abstract Greekness” of Metaxas’s vision of modern Greece (Aggelis 2006:49). Yet there was one particular form of art that encapsulated the main essence of this dictatorship with its praising of the Greek landscape, color and light, simplicity in forms, spontaneity, symbolism, and focus on the people. Greek popular art (λαϊκή τέχνη) was especially embraced by Metaxas, the “uncle John (ο μπαρμπα-Γιάννης) of the people” (Aggelis 2006:52). Efforts for the promotion and dissemination of popular art (in particular within youth organizations) were rigorous due to popular art’s relevance to the popular values and traditions that suited the ideological program of the Metaxas regime with its emphasis on the “soul of the people (λαϊκή ψυχή)” and “populism (λαϊκισμός και λαοκρατία)” (Tziouvas 2006:24–26).

In November 1940, the Athens School of Fine Arts, and in particular Professor Giannis Kefallinos (1894–1957), head of the Engravings Section (Εργαστήριο χαρακτικής) along with his students A. Tassos, K. Grammatopoulos, G. Manousakis, I. Moralis, Vasso Katraki, and Loukia Maggiorou, produced a number of works with the aim of boosting morale and encouraging the nation in the war against Italy.⁷ The following five artworks were selected and reproduced by the Athens School: *Go Forward Ahead Greeks (Εμπρός της Ελλάδος Παιδιά)*; *Heroines of 1940 (Οι Ηρωίδες του 1940)* in 1–2,500 reprints; *Come and Take It (Ελα να τα πάρεις)* in 2,500–5,000 reprints by Constantinos Grammatikopoulos; *Have You Given Money? (Έδωσες εσύ)* in 5,000–7,500 reprints by Tasos Alevizos; and *For the Soldiers (Για τους στρατιώτες)* in 7,500–10,000 reprints by Vasso Katrakis (Mazarakis-Ainian 1987:29). Apart from the students of the Athens School of Fine Arts, a number of artists, including Frixos Aristeus (Φρίξος Αριστεύς), Aginor Asteriadis (Αγεινωρ Αστεριάδης), Hector Doukas (Εκτωρ Δούκας), Georgios Gounaropoulos (Γεώργιος Γουναρόπουλος), Nikos Kastanakis (Νίκος Καστανάκης), Nicholas Neiros (Νικόλαος Νείρος), Nicholas Paschalidis (Νικόλαος Πασχαλίδης), and Svolos (Σβόλος), produced work for private publishing houses, creating lithographs inspired by themes from the Greek-Italian war (Argyriou 2006:16; Pavlopoulos 1997:12–14). Grigorakis explains that the images were engraved on wood and linoleum, allowing artists to depict “historical memories, illustrated testimonies and great ideas inspired by the

communal psyche and the resistance of the Greek nation” (1997:22). They were called “popular icons” (λαϊκές εικόνες) and were based on iconographic concepts capable of being recognized and understood by the people and of attracting attention with their colors and symbols drawn from traditional iconography (Mazarakis-Ainian 1987:22). As soon as they were printed in multiple copies, some were sold in the streets of Athens at a low price. A number of them were distributed in other cities and villages in order to be displayed in public spaces such as cafés (καφενεία) and public offices. The Sub-Ministry of the Press and Tourism was also taking a number of images for distribution in military bases, encouraging private initiative at a time when morale boosting was of primary importance (Mazarakis-Ainian 1987:23).

Embracing the past but focusing on the present

Unlike French Philhellenic images, classical antiquity, allegory and myth, ruins, and goddesses were not popular choices in the Greek-Italian War depictions. There are examples of popular icons that introduce Olympian goddesses and warriors from victorious battles of antiquity, such as the following two images from the Alan J. N. Wace collection of the Centre of Hellenic and Byzantine Studies at the University of Birmingham. Their difference from the majority of the lithographs produced during the war is that they do not focus on particular events of the war, but aim instead to boost morale by resorting to mythical representations and a long history of gallantry. Their importance is that they introduce the themes of heroism, valor, and patriotism that marked the icons of that time. In both images, the idea of modern Greeks as descendants of heroes allows for “nationalism to denote something akin to the generic concept of identity, sameness over time, and the idea of an unchanged nation beneath all the ravages of time, awaiting its moment of regeneration” (Smith 2001:29). The colored lithograph entitled *The Liberators (Οι Ελευθερωταί — Ο Μαραθωνομάχος, ο Αρματωλός και ο Εύζωνας)* depicts Metaxas’s threefold continuum of antiquity, Byzantium, and the present. It portrays three warriors from three different chronological periods of Greek history standing at the top of a hill. An “*Evzonas*” from the current Greek-Italian War of 1940–1941 stands in the middle, flanked on his right by a “*Marathonomahos*” (combatant protagonist) from the victorious battle of Marathon in B.C. 490 who moves forward holding his spear and shield, and on the left by an “*Armatolos*” from the Greek War of Independence dressed in the Greek national costume with the characteristic *foustanéla* (kilt) and ornamental firearms. The other colored

lithograph (again from the Alan J. N. Wace Collection), *On the Summit of Pindos, 28 October to 12 November 1940* (Επί της κορυφής της Πίνδου 28 Οκτωβρίου έως 12 Νοεμβρίου 1940), shows Nike the goddess of victory holding a wreath above the head of an *Euzonas*.

The majority of images, however, relied on a more realistic depiction of the war. As has been previously mentioned, popular lithographs were the result of private initiative, while the state encouraged their production without interfering with the artists and the publishing houses. The artists were using their imagination and experience, but the choice of themes was mainly guided by current affairs and the news headlines, making the popular icons “illustrated news” (εικονογραφημένες ειδήσεις) (Pavlopoulos 1997:15). For example, when Metaxas died on 29 January 1941, months before the end of the Greek-Italian War, the colored lithograph *Our Leader has not Died / He Will Always Be by our Side and He Will Guide us to Victory* (Ο αρχηγός μας δεν απέθανε / Πάντα θα είναι κοντά μας και θα μας οδηγή προς την νίκη—IEEE 4657/32) paid tribute to Metaxas.

The image shows Metaxas leading the Greek army to victory. Modern Greeks feature as symbols of a “‘united’ nation that shares ‘a common’ origin, racial homogeneity, common religion, and traditions” (Mahaira 1987:27–28, 31). The “ideal and humble servant of the nation,” who is currently depicted in the role of the leader (αρχηγός) remains faithful to his vision of a united and victorious Greece even after his death (Papakonstantinou 2010:26–27). The artist has placed Metaxas’s spirit, depicted as larger in size than the soldiers, in the elevated position usually given to an allegorical, mythical, or religious character. The particular image resembles images from the Balkan Wars with Prince Constantine in a leading role, thus repeating cultural expressions of the use of the past that influenced the building of national history and the definition of Greek identity. Specifically, popular icons showing prime ministers and royalty leading the nation reflect political beliefs that dominated the first century of the formation of modern Greece. One of those beliefs is the *Megali Idea* (Great Idea), “the dream of unifying within one modern state, territories in the Balkans and Asia Minor which were perceived as culturally Greek” (Brown and Hamilakis 2003:15). Although the dreams for territorial expansion were no longer alive, the artists achieve a balance between a “nostalgia for an older order now in ruins, and confidence that the world born from these ruins was moving in the direction of progress” (Leontis 1997:125–136).



Figure 5. Ο αρχηγός μας δεν απέθανε / Πάντα θα είναι κοντά μας και θα μας οδηγή προς την νίκη (ΙΕΕΕ 4657/32).

Who are the modern Greeks?

Another prominent theme in the popular icons of 1940–1941 was the defense of the homeland. In comparison with the Philhellenic lithographs, modern Greeks are not vulnerable and powerless against the persecutor. They have taken their fate into their own hands, fighting for the defense of their homeland. The essence of Greekness is transmitted through a missionary aspect, “referring to the international role the nation ascribed to itself, its cultural and historic mission vis-à-vis European civilization and its place in the new circumstances produced by the regeneration of the national community” (Kallis 2003:245). In the lithograph titled *Greek-Italian War: The Battle of the Giants at the Straits of Kleisoura and the Complete Rout of the Italians* (Ελληνοϊταλικός Πόλεμος — Η Γιγαντομαχία των Στενών

της Κλεισούρας και η Κατατρόπωσις των Ιταλών, IEEE 4955/6), the forward motion of forceful *Evzones* and the fearful faces of the surrendered enemies depict the nerve and bravery of the Greek army fighting in very harsh conditions. The image contrasts the prowess of the *Evzones* against the cowardliness of the Italian enemy, who was left with no choice but to surrender. The heroic Greek soldiers become the embodiments of living myths and symbols, dressed in a costume that had captured the hearts and minds of Philhellenes in the previous depictions of the liberation fighters at the beginning of the nineteenth century. The *foustanéla* (kilt), *tsarouchi* (pom-pomed shoe), and the daring soldiers who are wearing them were associated with patriotism and nationhood. National identity, masculinity, and costume became inseparable. Again, the image bears similarities to popular icons from the Balkan Wars, especially in regard to its title and composition. For example, the compound Greek word “γιγαντομαχία” (the battle of the giants) has been used in a number of 1912–1913 images that portray Greek victories: *Η Γιγαντομαχία του Μπιζανίου* (IEEE 4951/98β), *Η Γιγαντομαχία και η Άλωσις του Κιλκίς* (IEEE 4952/15), and *Η Γιγαντομαχία της Κρέσνας* (IEEE 4952/27). As I have mentioned in the previous section, popular icons during the Greek-Italian War did not



Figure 6. *Η Γιγαντομαχία των Στενών της Κλεισούρας και η Κατατρόπωσις των Ιταλών* (IEEE 4955/6).

resort to depictions of classical antiquity, ruins, and Olympian gods but they definitely imply the heroism of the modern Greeks, which is clearly stated in the text and titles of the images. Additionally, the dramatic scenes of fighting respectfully follow the same resolute way the Greek army approaches and crushes the enemy (i.e., *Η Μάχη της Στρωμνίτσας*, IEEE 4952/23).

A similarity, however, with French Philhellenic lithographs is the emphasis on costume. For the French artists, clothing and physical appearance were used to define the otherness of the Greeks, reaching an uneasy compromise between the traditional and the oriental. Greeks during the Greek War of Independence were portrayed as the descendants of ancient Greeks, courageous and heroic even in the face of the worst adversities, paying, however, special attention to the male outfit, a costume primarily comprised of a kilt-like garment (*foustanéla*). For the Greek artists, the costume of the kilted soldier is an element that illustrates historical continuity but also a gradual change towards progress and modernity. It is intriguing that although this item of clothing becomes a visible point of reference and recognition through the centuries, the men who wear it have different “names” and duties relevant to the chronological periods they identify with: “*klephts*” were those who fought during the Ottoman (Turkish) occupation of Greece; “*Evezones*” (or colloquially *tsoliades*)⁸ were those elite light infantry and mountain units of the Greek Army active during the Balkan Wars, the First and the Second World Wars; and today, the presidential guards, a solely ceremonial force, continue to wear a variation of this official Greek national costume.

Religious depictions: the Virgin Mary

Orthodoxy featured as an integral part of Greek national identity in popular images produced during the war. Embracing the Byzantine past as the link between antiquity and modern Greece, popular images of the Second World War represented divine intervention through the religious persona of the Virgin Mary. As Yannis Hamilakis and Eleana Yalouri write, “given the prominent and central role of Christianity within Byzantine institutions, the incorporation of the Byzantine past within the main body of the national narrative promoted further the fusion between Orthodoxy and Hellenic national identity” (Hamilakis and Yalouri 1999:129). The image *The Total Annihilation of the Italian Alpinists on Pindos* (*Η Πανωλεθρία των Ιταλών Αλπινιστών εις την Πίνδο*, IEEE no. 4957/43) depicts another battle between Italians and Greeks. The Greek army is supported by civilian men and women positioned on the upper slope, fighting and throwing rocks onto the Italians who are below in



Figure 7. *The Total Destruction of the Italian Alpinists on Pindos (Η Πανωλεθρία των Ιταλών Αλπινιστών εις την Πίνδο)* (IEEE no. 4957/43).

the ravine. The link between religion and national consciousness is aptly depicted in this image that portrays a united Greek nation, as men and women fight together in the front line against the common enemy. There is an element of realism in the scene, as the battle actually did take place on Mount Pindos, where local men and women assisted the Greek army by carrying ammunition and food. Apart from the fact that the war was conducted in the mountains, space becomes a metaphor through the centuries that carries the Greek nation as an imagined community, from the top of Mount Olympus, to the sacred top of the hill of the Acropolis in Athens, and to the top of Mount Pindos. Additionally, the Olympian gods, who according to Greek mythology resided on the top of Mount Olympus and were adored on the sacred hills of the Acropolis, have now been replaced by the religious figure of the Virgin Mary. There is, in other words, an interplay between a metaphorically sacred antiquity and a literally sacred icon of Greek Orthodoxy.

Greek popular iconography projected representations of national identity enhanced by elements of historical continuity, progress, and imperial ambitions. The Greek nation in its policies and its cultural expressions seems to be constantly defined in contradistinction to the

“‘others,’ the ‘non-Greek Orthodox Christians, the Latin or Western Christians and the Muslims,’ using culture and religion as primary factors in distinguishing and defining group self-perceptions” (Koliopoulos and Veremis 2002:249). Apart from the depictions of political ideas of the time, the images refer to the unique character of popular iconography that delves into a century of tradition, maturity of expression, and Byzantine influence in order to produce fine pieces of artwork for the last time.

Conclusion

This comparison of the two collections of the National Historical Museum in Athens examined representations of Greekness during two periods of modern Greek history: the Greek War of Independence and the Greek-Italian War. The main questions asked were: who produced these images, what were their motives, and how is a group’s definition of itself related to how it is defined by others. The analysis showed that, although representations of a national past (either re-invented or re-constructed) were employed by different actors in different national and historical contexts, the similarity in both cases was “the reinterpretation of pre-existing cultural motifs and the reconstruction of earlier ethnic ties and sentiments” by insiders and outsiders (Smith 2001:83).

French artists and Philhellenes were enchanted by their understanding of Greece’s cultural past as a reflection of Western political ideas and the beliefs of the Liberal Restoration. Nevertheless, due to a chain of political events in Europe, the main concern of the Great Powers at the time of the Greek War of Independence was not to defend the interests of the Greeks but to avoid political risks “as Russia came very close to war with Turkey over the wild and ill-considered attempts of the Sultan to reassert his authority” (Woodhouse 1952:52). Political ideologies of the time, along with individual motivations and interests, influenced the representations of the Greek War of Independence created by French artists. Their accounts of Greece’s otherness mainly focused on the three themes of classical antiquity, heroic ancestry, and current battles, and a generic depiction of Greek Orthodox Christianity. The French lithographs projected the image of the unprotected Greeks who were making their first attempts at liberation, surrounded by the weighty inheritance of their glorious past. Although they were the proud descendants of the Olympian gods, they were presented as moving uncomfortably among the ancient ruins, not being able to clearly define their Greek national identity’s balance between the burden of a distant past and an unknown future.

In Metaxas’s Greece, the regime of “the Fourth of August” encouraged Greek artists to promote and project values associated with clas-

sical Greece and Byzantium in their quest to represent modern Greek identity, but it did not interfere with popular iconography as it did with other artistic media. The popular icons of that period were made by Greek artists and marked the end of the long tradition of popular iconography in Greece. The artists used their expertise but they also applied the technique and the style of popular icons by Zografos, which had glorified the bravery and heroism of the Greeks during the Greek War of Independence. Compared with the French lithographs, they represented modern Greeks as the confident descendants of heroes who respond boldly to the Italian attack. They appreciated the glorious past's legitimizing of the continuity of an alleged Greek cultural superiority from antiquity to the present, but they were also inspired by the concept of a modern state that moves forward. Christianity remained a constant in both sets of images, but the difference is that in the Greek images, the history of the Byzantine empire is appropriated, and the Orthodox religion is celebrated as a clearly defined characteristic of Greek culture.

In conclusion, popular lithographs celebrated a glorious Greek classical past, victorious battles, and gallant heroes, and constructed sets of imaginary and epic depictions of a nation's history fed by artists' backgrounds and experiences and the general political and artistic climate of each era. The impressive range of tonalities found in the French lithographs and the richness of symbolism and detail attracted the audience and brought attention to the Greek cause. The Greek popular images encouraged viewers to anticipate a triumphant result of a journey to nationhood. Through visual images that bridge nostalgia for the past and aspirations toward progress, French and Greek artists used light, color, fantasy, and imagination to construct a timeless sense of Greekness.

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NOTES

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¹A detailed account about the involvement of the Western Powers in the Greek War of Independence is given in Christopher M. Woodhouse, *The Greek War of Independence: its Historical Setting*.

²The term “Philhellenism” is used in this paper with particular reference to the Greek War of Independence, 1821–1827. There are, however, other studies that discuss Philhellenism in a variety of contexts and different chronologies. To name only a few studies, Gilles Pécout discusses Philhellenism in regard to the contribution of the Italian Philhellenes during the Greco-Turkish War of 1897 (Giles Pécout, “Philhellenism in Italy: Political Friendships and the Italian Volunteers in the Mediterranean in the Nineteenth Century” [2004]). See also Όλγα Αυγουστίνου, *Ιδανικά Ταξίδια: Η Ελλάδα στην Γαλλική Ταξιδιωτική Λογοτεχνία 1550–1821* (2003) and Antigoni Samiou, “French Travellers to Greece and the Representation of Modern Greeks in the Nineteenth Century” (2009) for an extensive discussion of the artistic and literary expressions of French Philhellenes in art and literature. For a discussion on how early photographs of Athens add to the rich literature of Romanticism about nineteenth-century Greece, see Andrew Szegedy-Maszak, “True Illusions: Early Photographs of Athens” (1987) and R. A. McNeal, “Athens in the Nineteenth Century Panoramic Art” (1995).

³Mesolonghi was a place that became internationally known with the arrival of Lord Byron in April 1824 and his death there four months later. Byron’s poetry and active contribution to the Greek cause attracted public interest, managing to “transform the Philhellenic movement to the great romantic crusade of the early nineteenth century” (Woodhouse 1968:140–141).

⁴The naval battle of Navarino in 1827 defined the outcome of the war with the victory of the allied British, French, and Russian fleets against the Turkish and Egyptian ones. For a detailed account, see Woodhouse, *The Battle of Navarino* (1965:17).

⁵*National Historical Museum* (Athens: Istoriki Ethnologiki Etairia tis Ellados, 1994):37. Today, the NHM has in its collections only eight of these wooden paintings and two watercolors on paper.

⁶For a detailed analysis, listen to the radio program *Ιστορία—λόγος και εικόνα* (εκπομπή 25 Τρίτη 5.7.2005) (<http://panorama.ert.gr/ekpompes.asp?subid=1028&catid=3218>). See also Theodoros Sambatakis, «Η Δικτατορία του Μεταξά: η καταστροφική υποχώρηση των θεσμών» (“The Metaxas Dictatorship: a Destructive Institutional Retreat”) (2010:14).

⁷Ioannis Mazarakis-Ainian explains that the School of Fine Arts offered its support to the war effort by declaring a competition among the students of the Engravings Section and funding the printing of the first related artwork in 10,000 copies. A total of five artworks were printed in colored lithographs at the expense of the School: «όπως προσφέρει η Σχολή την εκτέλεσιν διαφόρων «διαφημιστικών πινάκων εθνικής σκοπιμότητος» διαθέτουσα προς τούτο το εργαστήριον της χαρακτηριστικής αυτής υπό την διεύθυνση του κ. Κεφαλληνού» (*Το Έπος του 40, λαϊκή εικονογραφία*, 1987:29).

⁸Singular: *Evzonas* (Greek: Εύζωνας); plural: *Evzones* or *Evzoni* (Greek: Εύζωνες, Εύζωνοι). Singular: *Tsolias* (Greek: τσολιάς); plural: *Tsoliaides* (Greek: τσολιάδες).

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