

The Ionian Islands

The Ionian Islands:
Aspects of their History and Culture

Edited by

Anthony Hirst and Patrick Sammon

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The Ionian Islands: Aspects of their History and Culture
Edited by Anthony Hirst and Patrick Sammon

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

These are abbreviations which occur in footnote references to archival and other sources not included in the Bibliography. They are given in full at the first occurrence in any chapter, but listed here for convenience, with English translations where relevant.

AK	Archeia Kerkyras (Archives of Corfu), combined with GAK
CO	Colonial Office, following TNA
DP	14th Earl of Derby Papers (following LRC)
EA	Ektelestike Astynomia (Executive Police), following GAK-AK
FO	Foreign Office, following TNA
GAK	Genika Archeia tou Kratous (General Archives of the [Greek] State)
GD	Gifts and Donations (following NAS)
<i>GSUIJ</i>	<i>Gazzetta degli Stati Uniti delle Isole Jonie</i> ([<i>Government</i>] <i>Gazette of the United States of the Ionian Islands</i>)
Hansard	The official record of the proceedings of the UK Parliament (available online from 1803 to the present)
HC Deb	House of Commons Debates, following Hansard
IAK	Istoriko Archeio Kythiron (Historical Archive of Kythira)
LMS	London Missionary Society archives (following SOAS)
LRO	Liverpool Record Office, UK
NAS	National Archives of Scotland (National Records of Scotland)
PP	Parliamentary Papers (UK), widely available in public libraries
SOAS	School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London
TNA	The National Archives of the UK

EDITORS' PREFACE

ANTHONY HIRST AND PATRICK SAMMON

Most of the chapters in this book have been developed from papers presented at the seminar on “The History and Culture of the Ionian Islands” held at the Durrell School of Corfu, 16–21 May 2010. Two of the authors whose papers were presented at the seminar have contributed additional chapters to the book: A. A. D. Seymour with “The Least-Known Lord High: James Alexander Stewart Mackenzie” (Chapter 6), and Jim Potts with “The Fate of the Jewish Communities of Corfu, Zakynthos and Ioannina” (Chapter 9).

The seminar title suggests a comprehensiveness which the book cannot claim, and that title has in any case already been used for a recent publication.¹ “Aspects” of the history and culture of the islands is a more appropriate label for this contribution to such a vast subject, with chapters ranging in time from the legendary period of Bronze-Age Greece reflected in the Homeric epics to the twentieth century, and from the fine detail of a specific craft (the carving of walking sticks, in Chapter 16) to the strategic importance of the Islands in Mediterranean history and great-power politics over several centuries.

Peter Mackridge acted as Moderator of the seminar and chaired almost all of the sessions, and very kindly agreed to write the Introduction in addition to contributing his own chapter (Chapter 15) on some of the poets of the Seven Islands. In the course of reading all the chapters in preparation for writing the Introduction, he made a major and extremely useful contribution to the editing of the book, for which—since he declined the invitation to be credited as a co-editor—we would like to record here our very warm thanks and appreciation.

We would also like to thank A. A. D. Seymour for his assistance in the editing of some of the historical chapters.

We have divided the book into three parts. Part I consists of chapters on the history and social history of the islands; Part II deals with the perception of the Islands in non-Ionian literature; and Part III with aspects

¹ Pylarinos 2007.

of the culture of the Islands themselves: religion, philosophy, music, literature, fine art and craft. Within each of the three parts the arrangement of the chapters is broadly chronological.

Part II consists of only two chapters: one on the presentation of Corfu in two Ancient Greek authors (if one can speak of Homer as an “author”), and one on the descriptions of all the principal Ionian Islands by a fourteenth-century Venetian writing in Latin. Two other chapters destined for Part II were withdrawn at a late stage; they would have dealt with the islands as they feature in selected non-Greek literature (chiefly prose fiction) of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Their loss is much regretted by the editors.

Like all editors of books on Greek themes we have been confronted with the problems of transliteration, and particularly in relation to the very high proportion of Greek titles in the extensive Bibliography. We hope this book will be of interest to a wide readership and not just to specialists in Hellenic Studies who are familiar with the Greek language; and, in the interests of this wider readership, we decided to restrict the use of the Greek alphabet to an absolute minimum. In the main body of the book, but not always in the footnotes, we give modern Greek names (of people and places) and occasionally other Greek words or phrases in a form of transliteration which is broadly phonetic for English speakers. There is one major exception to this in Chapter 7, where Eleni Calligas is presenting for the first time parts of poetic texts written in gaol by Kephalonians who rebelled against the British authorities in 1849. Here it was thought essential to present her transcription of the manuscripts in Greek characters, with each short excerpt followed immediately by her English translation.

In the case of ancient or medieval Greek names we follow Greek spelling as closely as possible—a practice now standard among Classicists and Byzantinists—except where widely used latinized or anglicized forms of the names are preferred. In bibliographical references in the footnotes, and in the Bibliography itself, we follow, in slightly simplified form, the Library of Congress (LoC) system of “romanization” of Modern Greek,² for the practical reason that this is employed in most online catalogues of libraries outside Greece which include Greek publications. To a very large extent the LoC system—which is non-phonetic and preserves Greek spelling as far as possible—coincides with the system used for the transliteration of ancient and Byzantine Greek names. The different modes

² For details of the simplification, see the note at the head of the Bibliography.

of transliteration used in this book are set out in full in Table P-2 at the end of this Preface.

The use of different systems of transliteration for different purposes means that where a Greek author is mentioned in the text and also in the Bibliography (with references in footnotes), the spelling of the name may be different in the different contexts; and Greek authors who published in both Greek and another language may appear in the Bibliography under two different versions of their names.

The proper names used most often in this book are the names of the seven principal Ionian Islands themselves; and for each of these we have imposed a standard form throughout most of the book in our contributors' own texts (but not, of course, in quotations from other authors). In all but two cases we adopt for this volume the Modern Greek forms of the names, but "Corfu" (Italian) and "Ithaca" (Latin) are too well established in English to allow for the substitution of "Kerkyra" and "Ithaki". The same claim might be made for "Paxos", as the smallest of the Seven Islands is almost always referred to by English speakers, but we reject this because it makes singular the Greek name "Paxoi" (pronounced *Paxí* in Modern Greek) which is in fact plural.

Table P-1. The names of the Seven Islands in various languages

<i>In this volume</i>	<i>Modern Greek</i>	<i>Ancient Greek</i>	<i>Latin</i>	<i>Italian</i>	<i>Other</i>
Corfu	Kerkyra	Korkyra Kerkyra	Corcyra [Coryphus]	Corfù [Corcira]	Korypho <i>Medieval Greek</i>
Paxi	<i>Paxi</i>	Paxoi	Paxi [Pachisos]	Paxò Passo	Paxos <i>English</i>
Lefkada	Lefkada	Leukas	Leucas	Santa Maura	
Ithaca	Ithaki	Ithake	Ithaca	Itaca [Val di Compare]	
Kephalonia	Kephalonia Kephallonia	Kephallenia	Cephalenia Cephalonia [Cephallania]	Cefalonia	
Zakynthos	<i>Zakynthos</i>	Zakynthos	Zacynthus [Iacinthus]	Zante	
Kythira	Kythira	Kythera	Cythera	Cerigo	

In Table P-1 the seven chief islands of the group are listed in their geographical sequence, from north to south. The first column shows the form of the name which will be used in this book, except in Chapters 3 and 6 (see below) or where other forms appear in quotations or are introduced into the discussion of particular historical or linguistic issues. In the second column the Modern Greek forms of the names are given in a more or less phonetic transliteration with the stressed syllable marked by a vowel in *italic bold*. In the third column the Ancient Greek names are given in transliteration which this time follows Greek spelling as closely as possible. Latin and Italian names are given in the fourth and fifth columns. The final column gives other forms of some of the names in the languages indicated. A few rare or erroneous forms referred to in this book are included, but in square brackets.

It is a testament to the long-lasting Italian influence on the islands that in the nineteenth century—and in many cases right up to the present day—the British have tended to use the Italian versions of some of the names rather than the Greek ones: *Corfu* for Kerkyra and *Zante* for Zakynthos are still in common use among English speakers, as were in the past *Santa Maura* for Lefkada, and *Cerigo* for Kythira, while Ithaki is more often known by its Latin name *Ithaca*.

The etymology of *Korypho*, the medieval Greek name which is the origin of the Italian name Corfù, is not altogether clear. G. P. Shipp states that the name derives from the Ancient Greek dialect form κόρυφος (*koryphos*) a variant of κορυφή (*koryphê*) ‘summit’: from here, he claims, arose a phrase στους κορυφούς (*stous koryphous*), meaning ‘to/at the peaks’, since Corfu town is built on two hilltops.³ As Maria Leontsini notes in Chapter 1, a version of this name is first attested in the travel account of Luitprand of Cremona (AD 968), who writes, “ad Coryphus parvenimus” (“we came to Coryphus”). The first attestations of the name in Greek are found in the works of Anna Comnena and Theodoros Prodromos (early- or mid-twelfth century). These authors use a feminine singular form Κορυφῶ (*Koryphô*), with genitive Κορυφούς (*Koryphous*). Later Greek writers use the masculine plural form Κορυφοί (*Koryphoi*), with genitive Κορυφών (*Koryphôn*) and accusative Κορυφούς (*Koryphous*), and this seems to be what Luitprand had in mind. More colloquial versions of these Greek forms existed until at least the nineteenth century, with the middle vowel omitted, among them Κορφοί (*Korphoi*), which brings us close to the Italian “Corfù”.⁴

³ Shipp 1979, under “κόρυφος”.

⁴ Much of the preceding material relating to the names of the islands was provided by Peter Mackridge and Maria Leontsini.

There are exceptions to our imposition of the standard forms of the island names. In Chapters 3 and 6, both by A. A. D. Seymour, the source material is largely British Colonial Office papers in which the Italian names of the islands are routinely used. In these chapters the imposition of standard forms of island names would have created too jarring a disjunction between the quotations and the author's discussion. At the first use of any Italian name in each of these chapters the standard form is given in brackets, but not thereafter (readers can refer to Table P-1 in cases of uncertainty).

Island names are not so prominent in two other chapters based to a considerable extent on Colonial Office papers (Chapter 7 by Eleni Calligas) or on materials in the Historical Archives of Corfu (Chapter 8 by Sakis Gekas), since each chapter is concerned with events on a single island; but in Chapter 7, as also in Chapters 3 and 6, the names of most of the Greeks referred to in the records appear there in Italianized forms, and such forms have been retained in those four chapters, and occasionally in others. It would have been a perilous undertaking to attempt to restore the original Greek forms, particularly for individuals not known to us from other sources. For others who appear elsewhere in the volume under the Greek forms of their names, cross-referencing in the Index should resolve most uncertainties regarding identification.

Occasionally in this book dates are given in dual format (Julian and Gregorian) as found in the sources. Examples include "5/17 August" and "18 February/1 March 1828". In these cases it is the later date that corresponds to the Gregorian calendar which has been in use in most European countries for several centuries. The Greek State (and Greeks living outside Greece) continued to use the older Julian calendar until 1923. In the nineteenth century, the Julian calendar was twelve days behind the Gregorian, and in the twentieth century thirteen days behind, as it remains in the twenty-first century.⁵

We would like to thank all the contributors to this volume for patiently answering our many queries regarding matters of detail in their chapters, and for graciously accepting certain standardizations in orthography and reference which they themselves did not always favour.

⁵ All centennial years are leap years in the Julian calendar; only those divisible by 400 are leap years in the Gregorian. Thus 2000 was a leap year in both calendars and the discrepancy did not increase.

Table P-2. Transliteration of Greek

GREEK CHARACTERS	TRANSLITERATION		
	<i>Post-1453</i>		<i>Ancient & Byzantine</i>
	<i>Text</i>	<i>References & bibliography</i>	
ˊ(rough breathing)	[omit]	h	h
α	a	a	a
αι	e	ai	ai
αυ	af / av ⁶	au	au
β	v	v	b
ββ	v ⁷	vv	bb
γα	ga	ga	ga
γαι	ye	gai	gai
γγ	ng	ng	ng
γε	ye	ge	ge
γη	yi	ge	ge
γτ- + consonant	yi	gi	gi
γτ- + vowel	y	gi	gi
-γτ-	yi	gi	gi
γκ-	g	gk	—
-γκ-	ng	nk	nk
γο	go	go	go
γοι	yi	goi	goi
γου	gou	gou	gou
γυ	yi	gy	gy
γχ	nch	nch	nch
γω	go	go	go
δ	d	d	d
ε	e	e	e
ει	i	ei	ei
ευ	ef / ev ⁶	eu	eu
ζ	z	z	z
η	i	e	e / ê
θ	th	th	th
ι	i	i	i
κ	k	k	k / (c) ⁸

⁶ Determined by the letter that follows, as in Modern Greek pronunciation.

⁷ All other double consonants remain double, except γγ, which is always ng.

⁸ Normally k but occasionally c in well-established Latin or English forms.

GREEK CHARACTERS	TRANSLITERATION		
	<i>Post-1453</i>		<i>Ancient & Byzantine</i>
	<i>Text</i>	<i>References & bibliography</i>	
λ	l	l	l
μ	m	m	m
μπ–	b	b	—
–μπ–	mb	mp	mp
–μψ–	mbs	mps	mps
ν	n	n	n
ντ–	d	d	—
–ντ–	nt / nd ⁹	nt	nt
–ντζ–	ntz	ntz	ntz
–ντσ–	nts	nts	nts
ξ	x	x	x
ο	o	o	o
οι	i	oi	oi
ου	ou	ou	ou
π	p	p	p
ρ	r	r	r / rh
σ, ζ	s	s	s
σβ–	sv	sv	sb
–σβ–	sv	sv	sb
σμ–	sm	sm	sm
–σμ–	sm	sm	sm
τ	t	t	t
τζ–	tz	tz	—
–τζ–	tz	tz	tz
τσ–	ts	ts	—
–τσ–	ts	ts	ts
υ	i	y	y
φ	ph / (f) ¹⁰	ph	ph
χ	ch	ch	ch
ψ	ps	ps	ps
ω	o	o	o / ô

⁹ Usually nt but occasionally nd, though it is nd which more accurately reflects pronunciation.

¹⁰ Normally ph, but occasionally f in well-established English forms.

INTRODUCTION

PETER MACKRIDGE

The name “Ionian Islands” refers to a number of islands off the western and southern coasts of the Greek mainland—islands which are also known as “the Heptanese”. These names, which did not come into use until about 1800, are both rather misleading. The adjective “Ionian” is used to describe them because they are situated in the Ionian Sea, but this is true only of those that are situated to the west of the mainland. “Ionian” is also ambiguous in English, because it may refer equally to the Ionian Sea and its islands or to the region of Ionia on the west coast of Asia Minor.¹ “Heptanese” literally means a group of seven islands, yet the total number of inhabited islands included in this term—not to mention the uninhabited islets—is somewhat larger. “Ionian” was the preferred term used by the British during the Protectorate (1815–64), both as an adjective and as a noun referring to an inhabitant or subject of the United States of the Ionian Islands, but I am using those words more or less interchangeably.

Each of the Ionian Islands has its own distinct personality in terms of landscape, climate, human character, dialect, music, costume, customs and traditions. Yet an accident of history brought them together, for about five hundred years, under Venetian, then British rule, and separated them from the rest of the Greek world. This shared political and cultural experience led to an increase in the islanders’ emotional bonds, their fellow-feeling for each other, and their sense of sharing common cultural characteristics.

The early history of the islands

Most of the contributions to this volume deal with the period after the islands were first occupied by the Venetians. Because of this, and because my area of expertise is post-medieval and modern Greek culture, I will be devoting most of this Introduction to the islands from the late Middle Ages

¹ Greek spelling distinguishes between the two “Ionians”: *Ιόνιος* (*Ionios*) for the Ionian Sea, its islands and their inhabitants, but *Ιωνικός* (*Iōnikos*) for things related to Ionia in Asia Minor. “Ionic”, the English cognate of *Iōnikos*, is used mainly as an architectural term, or to refer to an ancient Greek dialect.

to the twentieth century. Nevertheless, some of the contributors deal with representations of the islands in Ancient Greek literature (Joseph Wilson), Byzantine texts (Maria Leontsini) and a Venetian text from a time when some of the islands had not yet come under Venetian rule (Benedetta Bessi).

The whole of Greece was under foreign rule for many centuries, starting with the Roman conquest in the second century BC. What distinguishes the Ionian Islands from the rest of Greece is that, with some exceptions, they did not form part of the Ottoman Empire, while the rest of the Greek world was under Ottoman rule for anything between two hundred and five hundred years. The fact that these islands were ruled by Catholics rather than Muslims has made them strikingly different from the rest of Greece, in language, music, costume, cuisine and architecture.

The Roman Empire in the eastern Mediterranean developed seamlessly into the Byzantine Empire, and all of the Ionian Islands, like the rest of Greece, formed part of this Orthodox Christian state. But from the eleventh to the thirteenth century Corfu, in particular, was an attractive strategic location that was fought over by Normans, Venetians and Genoese as well as Byzantines until it was held for more than a century (1267–1386) by the Angevins (the rulers of Sicily who originated from Anjou in France). The Angevins extended the feudal system that had existed in Byzantine times. The most significant change that the Angevins brought about was the abolition of the Orthodox bishopric of Corfu. The Orthodox bishop was replaced by a chief priest (*Protopapas*), who had no authority to ordain priests; from then on, those who wished to be ordained Orthodox priests had to travel to Lefkada, Kephallonia or elsewhere in the Orthodox world. The Catholics subordinated the Orthodox Church in a way that the Muslim Turks never did. For more than five hundred years an Orthodox priest could not be ordained in Corfu.

The Venetian period

Each of the islands was administered differently by the Venetians because each was incorporated into the Venetian Empire at a different date. The dates at which each island came under Venetian control are as follows: Kythira in 1363, Corfu and Paxi in 1386, Zakynthos in 1485, Kephallonia in 1500, Ithaca in 1503, and Lefkada in 1684. All of the islands, together with the rest of Venice's *stato da mar* (its overseas possessions) were taken by the French when Napoleon brought the Venetian Empire to an end in 1797.

Because they took over each of the islands at a different date, the Venetians did not always conceive of them as a single entity. When they did treat them as a group, they called them the *Isole del Levante* (Islands of the Levant).

During the Venetian period the Ottomans were very much in the picture; indeed, from the fifteenth to the eighteenth centuries, the fate of the eastern Mediterranean was dominated by the constant rivalry between the Venetians and the Ottomans. The Ottomans occupied Lefkada for two centuries, from 1479 to 1684, Kephallonia from 1485 to 1500, and Kythira briefly in 1715–18, and they unsuccessfully besieged Corfu in 1537, 1571, 1573 and 1716. It is not surprising that several ships belonging to rich Greeks from the Ionian Islands took part alongside the Venetians in the Battle of Lepanto in 1571.

The Venetians imposed an aristocratic form of government on the islands, modelled on the system that obtained in Venice itself. The society of the islands was structured according a class system consisting of nobles (who held land under a feudal system) and a disenfranchised majority, which was divided into *cittadini* (middle-class town-dwellers) and *popolari* (common people). The nobles looked down on mercantile activity with aristocratic contempt. However, this inflexibility led to the gradual decline of the aristocracy and the rise of a more flexible bourgeoisie, which was allowed to amass landed property.²

The nobles bore hereditary honorific titles. Like Venice itself, Corfu, Kephallonia and Zakynthos each had a *Libro d'Oro* ("Golden Book") containing the names of the members of the noble families, which from the sixteenth century included some Greek families besides those of the Italian noble settlers. Those whose names were inscribed in the *Libro d'Oro* were eligible to participate in the ruling council of their island; council membership was hereditary.

After the Venetians

The Ionian Islands gained long experience in suffering from power struggles involving Western powers. After the fall of the Venetian republic in 1797, they came under the successive control of three great powers: France, Russia and Britain. The first two decades of the nineteenth century were the most eventful period in the history of the islands.³

² Yannouloupoulos 1981, 40–49.

³ Yannouloupoulos 1981, 54.

Between 1797 and 1799 the islands were governed by the republican French, who introduced the concepts of “Liberty”, “Equality” and “Fraternity”. The French set up the first education system in the islands, and in 1798 they introduced a printing press—the first press to be established in any territory that is part of the Greek State today. The press continued to be used by subsequent administrations, although the British authorities kept absolute control over printed publications until 1848. Feudal privileges were abolished, and the *Libro d’Oro* of each island was symbolically burned by the French republicans as a symbol of the old social order (a consequence of “medieval Venetian rule”) which they wished to overthrow. Shortly after the French landing, the islands were ceded to France by the Treaty of Campo Formio, and they were integrated, as three *départements*, into the French Republic. The arrival of the republican French is often seen as the beginning of the modern period in the history of the islands—the end of the *ancien régime*—breaking down the barriers between classes and between religious communities (Orthodox, Catholics and Jews). The immediate impact was short-lived and was largely confined to Corfu town. But the brief French occupation sowed the seeds that gradually led to major social and political changes, and the tripartite class system of Venetian times gradually broke down during the nineteenth century.

The brief period of French republican rule came to an end when an allied Russian and Ottoman fleet under Admiral Ushakov captured the islands one by one in 1798 and 1799. This was an alliance between Christian and Muslim emperors against the “ungodly” French: after Napoleon’s landing in Egypt earlier in 1798, the Orthodox Patriarch of Constantinople Gregory V, on orders from the Ottoman Sultan, had sent an encyclical, in both Greek and Italian editions, to the Ionian Orthodox Christians informing them that the Turkish and Russian fleets (in alliance with the British) were on their way to save them from the atheism and impiety of the French and urging them to collaborate with the allied forces to expel the apostates from the islands.⁴ In fact, even before the capture of each island, the inhabitants were already turning against the French because of their disregard for local religion, traditions and manners.⁵ Corfu finally fell to the joint Russo-Turkish forces on 20 February/4 March 1799 after a four-month siege. On 24 April/6 May 1799 the commanders of the Russian and Turkish fleets announced that the islands would become a single state, with a central government (the Senate) based

⁴ The Greek text of the encyclical is reproduced in Ladas and Chatzedemos 1979, 135–8.

⁵ Moschonas 1975, 389, 391–2.

in Corfu.⁶ This semi-independent new state, named the Septinsular Republic (Republic of the Seven Islands; in Greek: *Eptanisos Politia*), was the first Greek State to be established since the fall of Constantinople in 1453. The Russians, who oversaw the administration of the islands under the suzerainty of the Sultan, reinstated the Orthodox bishopric of Corfu, which had been abolished by the Angevins.

When the Russians took over in 1799, they reversed the French reforms. The “Byzantine” constitution of 1800 (so called because it was ratified in Constantinople) introduced a semblance of independence and restored the political privileges of the Ionian aristocracy. It decreed that there should be no extension of the franchise, so that the hegemony of the nobility would continue.⁷ It was succeeded by the “aristocratic” constitution of 1803, so called because its first article stated that “La Repubblica delle Sette Isole Unite è una, ed Aristocratica” (“The Republic of the United Seven Islands is one, and aristocratic”), which meant in practice that it was a unitary state administered by meritocratically elected representatives.

After the Ottoman Empire declared war against Russia, Russo-Turkish rule over the islands was succeeded by a period of rule by the French Empire starting in 1807 under the terms of the Treaty of Tilsit. Much to the indignation of many of the islanders, the Septinsular Republic was abolished and the inhabitants became subjects of the French Emperor, Napoleon I. However, the French imperial administration left much of the 1803 constitution intact. It was during this period of French rule that the magnificent arcaded row of shops and cafes, modelled on buildings in the recently constructed Rue de Rivoli in Paris, was built along the promenade known as the Liston in Corfu town.⁸ It has been said that for two hundred years the Liston has been “the navel of the Corfiot world”.⁹

The various occupying powers proclaimed that they were bringing true liberty to the islands. They also flattered the islanders’ vanity by referring to their descent from the glorious Ancient Greeks. It is significant that the same respected elder welcomed both the revolutionary French in 1797 and the Russians in 1799 to Corfu with a great public show of enthusiasm. “Citizen Spiridion Teotochi” (1722–1803) was one of those Corfiots

⁶ Moschonas 1975, 392.

⁷ Yannouloupoulos 1981, 41, 52.

⁸ The Venetian word *listón* (an augmentative form of *lista*, as in the Lista di Spagna in Venice) means a paved area for promenading. Several towns in the Veneto region (Belluno, Padua, Rovigo and Verona) have a *listón*.

⁹ Koskinas 2009.

whose pro-French speeches are contained in a volume published in 1797.¹⁰ He was appointed president of the central administration. Shortly afterwards, in 1800, as vice-president of the newly founded Senate, Spiridione Giorgio Teotochi triumphantly hailed the foundation of the Septinsular Republic and expressed his gratitude to the Russian liberators.¹¹ Three years later Count Spiridione Giorgio Teotochi became president of the Senate (making him in effect president of the Republic) with the title of Prince, although he died a few months later.¹² The last president of the Senate under French imperial rule was Emmanuel Theotoky, who remained in the same post after the British had taken over Corfu in 1814. In 1812 he was granted the hereditary title of Baron by Napoleon I, and in 1818 he was one of the first small group of Ionians to be awarded a knighthood by the British, who allowed him to retain his French title. Although these two men belonged to two different branches of the same family, their careers show that there was a remarkable continuity in the camarilla of nobles who governed the islands on behalf of their successive foreign masters.¹³

The British period

The British took over the islands one by one from the French, beginning with Zakynthos, Cephalonia, Ithaca and Kythira within a few days in 1809, proceeding to take Lefkada in 1810, and ending with Corfu in 1814. The Treaty of Paris (5 November 1815) stipulated that “The Islands of Corfu, Cephalonia, Zante, Maura, Ithaca, Cerigo, and Paxo, with their dependencies [...] shall form a single, free, and independent State, under the denomination of the United States of the Ionian Islands. This State shall be placed under the immediate and exclusive protection of his

¹⁰ *Discorsi pronunciati nella Società Patriotica di Corcira* (see Papadopoulos 1996, 67). Corcira is the Italian version of the ancient Greek name of the island, in contrast to the normal Italian name (Corfù).

¹¹ *Manifesto del Senato*, 24 February 1800 (see Papadopoulos 1996, 86–7).

¹² Stamatopoulos 2003, 53. The preamble to the 1803 constitution, written shortly after his death, calls him “l’Uomo più accreditato dalla Nazione” (“the man who is most respected by the nation”).

¹³ In 1822 Emmanuel Theotoky described the British takeover as follows: “It was the first time [...] that a new Government in these Islands had succeeded to the old one, without some violent departure from the Constitutional management under which the old Government had proceeded”: The National Archives of the UK (hereafter TNA): Colonial Office (hereafter CO) 136/219, Register of the Proceedings of the Primary Council, 20 December 1822.

Majesty the King of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland, his heirs and successors.” This was the first time that the title “United States” had been given to a new state since the American Declaration of Independence in 1776. The judge and poet Ioulios Typaldos wrote in 1858 that

by the occupation of the Ionian Islands, England secured [...] the exclusive domination of the Mediterranean, the entrance to which she guards by means of Gibraltar, the centre by Malta; and by Corfu she commands its Eastern Coast, Turkey and the Adriatic.¹⁴

The British controlled the islands until they handed them to Greece in 1864. Corfu became the seat of the British Lord High Commissioner, who tended to rule autocratically despite the existence of a local Senate and legislative Assembly, which were established under a constitution ratified by the King of England in 1817. As A. A. D. Seymour notes in Chapter 3, in 1838 the High Commissioner Howard Douglas described the Protectorate as being in “a sort of middle state, between a colony and a perfectly independent country, without, in some respects, possessing the advantages of either”.

The British set up a new education system in the islands, including the Ionian Academy (1824–64), which is often described as Greece’s first university. However, as Nondas Stamatopoulos writes, “one of the most important changes effected under the [British] Protectorate was the gradual abolition of the centuries-old Byzantine, Angevin, and then Venetian feudal system of land ownership”.¹⁵ When they occupied the Ionian Islands in 1797, the revolutionary French overthrew the feudal system and proclaimed that they were introducing political and social equality. When the British took over the islands, they went halfway back by recognizing the hereditary Venetian noble titles but also introducing non-hereditary knighthoods that rewarded specific individuals for public service. In 1818, to encourage the local inhabitants to play a leading role in the administration of the islands, the British instituted the Most Distinguished Order of St Michael and St George¹⁶ for “natives of the United States of the Ionian islands, and of the island of Malta and its

¹⁴ TNA: CO 136/161, “Paper by Dr Julius Tipaldo Pretenderi, President of the Tribunal of Zante”, attached to letter from Sir John Young to Sir Edward Bulmer-Lytton, 14 July 1858.

¹⁵ Papadopoulos 1996, 59–60.

¹⁶ Originally there were two classes: Knight Grand Cross (GCMG) and Knight Commander (KCMG). A third was added in 1832: Companion (CMG).

dependencies, and to such other subjects of His Majesty as may hold high and confidential situation in the Mediterranean".¹⁷

Class (especially the antithesis between town and country) continued to be a divisive phenomenon in Ionian society under British rule and after the Union of the islands with the Greek State. British officials preferred to work with "members of the old nobility (as it had been constitutionally sanctioned for the first time in 1803)".¹⁸ It is therefore not surprising that the lower classes identified the British and the *signori* as their common enemy.¹⁹

When the Greek Revolution broke out in 1821, the British High Commissioner resolutely kept the islands neutral, despite the Ionians' fervent sympathy for the insurgents. Although the Ionians may have been pleased to be protected by the British from the Ottomans who ruled the rest of the Greeks, the success of the Greek war for independence from the Ottoman Empire raised the question: who or what were the British protecting the islanders from? When Ionians began to demand Union with Greece, they were met by a lack of understanding on the part of the British, who refused to see the situation from the point of view of the local population—as happened again in Cyprus in the twentieth century. This was partly no doubt because they were surrounded by a circle of local people who preserved or gained privileges by supporting them. In 1848 the Ionian Parliament itself affirmed its wish for the islands to be united with Greece, but this wish was not to be fulfilled until fifteen years later.

In the same year, press freedom was instituted in the islands, and this led to the publication of a large number of newspapers representing various attitudes to the British administration. These newspapers allowed people's grievances against the regime to take on a specifically political content.²⁰ At the same time the three political tendencies that had already developed among the members of the Ionian Parliament after the independence of Greece in 1830 became more clearly defined: the Protectionists (known to their opponents as *Katachthonii*, meaning "infernal" or "fiendish") favoured the continuation of British control, the Reformists favoured the introduction of liberal reforms into the constitution, and the Radicals were basically opposed to British rule.

In September 1848 armed peasants attacked the town of Argostoli in Kephallonia with the aim of taking power from the protectorate. This move was violently suppressed, and those who subsequently began to call

¹⁷ Haydn 1890, 703–4.

¹⁸ Gekas, A. 2009, 168.

¹⁹ Calligas, 2009, 155.

²⁰ Moschonas 1977b, 203.

publicly for Union with Greece were arrested and exiled. Another insurrection broke out in Kephallonia in August 1849, this time in the region of Skala.²¹ This was again harshly suppressed. However, class antagonism probably played as much of a part as national sentiment in these events.

The desire for Union was far from universal among the Ionians. Take the example of Dionysios Solomos, who came to be known as Greece's national poet on the strength of the *Hymn to Liberty* that he wrote in 1823 to celebrate the successes of the national revolutionary forces against the Ottomans. Solomos is not known to have expressed himself publicly for or against Union with Greece, either in his poetry or elsewhere. In fact, in his later life he devoted a number of his poems to members of the British civil and military administration. He was inspired to write one of his most famous poems by the death of a member of the British garrison who was killed by a shark while swimming off Corfu in 1847.²² He even displayed his close relationship with some of the local representatives of the British Crown by addressing poems to them and to members of their families. In 1849 he wrote and published a Greek epigram to the daughter of John Fraser, the long-standing secretary to the High Commissioner, and he wrote another in Italian to Fraser himself after his departure for England in 1854 following his retirement. In 1853 or 1854 he even wrote an Italian epigram to the daughter of Sir Henry Ward, the "particularly reactionary"²³ High Commissioner who had exiled the leading Radicals and had violently put down the Skala uprising. Indeed, it seems from Solomos' manuscripts that he intended to dedicate his unpublished Italian prose-poem "L'usignolo e lo sparviere" ("The nightingale and the hawk") to Ward himself. Although it would be wrong to identify Solomos' political views with those of his younger brother, Count Demetrio Salamon, it is significant that Demetrio was very much part of the British administration: he served as Regent (governor) of Zante and was later awarded the GCMG in 1850 while serving as president of the Ionian Senate (the equivalent of prime minister of the Ionian Government); in fact, he was the very next person to be awarded this supreme honour after High Commissioner Ward himself.

The satirist Andreas Laskaratos was openly opposed to Union with Greece. In his poem "The Heptanesian after Union" an anonymous

²¹ On the 1849 rebellion, see Chapter 7 by Eleni Calligas in the present volume.

²² For the Greek text and David Ricks's English translation of "The Shark", see Solomos 2000, 87–9.

²³ Moschonas 1977b, 203.

speaker refers to the high-taxation Greek Government as a mother-in-law, and expresses his nostalgia for the British administration:

She was a loving mother,
she governed us maternally,
but this one is a thirsty Turk
who makes a tavern of our blood.²⁴

As for another poet, Ioulíos Typaldos, the fact that he emigrated to Florence in 1867 and spent most of the rest of his life there suggests that he had no great desire to live out his last decades within the borders of the Greek State.

The political Radicals were in favour of a republican form of government, yet they wanted Union with Greece, which happened to be ruled by the autocratic Bavarian-born King Otto. As a result of this dilemma, they became split between non-political Unionists and political Radicals. The former won greater popular support, while the latter ended by opposing Union.²⁵

From November 1858 to March 1859, William Gladstone served as Lord High Commissioner Extraordinary to negotiate the political future of the Ionian Islands. He recommended that the Ionian Islands remain under British protection.²⁶ In fact, the British refused to allow the islands to be united with Greece as long as Otto was on the throne; when Otto was deposed in 1863 and replaced by the Anglophile George I, the islands were ceded to Greece.

When British visitors to Corfu come back with stories of the locals playing cricket and drinking ginger beer, these are not mere fancy. I was told by a local cricket umpire that there are thirteen teams on the island of Corfu, mostly consisting of native Corfiots rather than British residents. Locally produced ginger beer is drunk not only by British visitors but by Corfiots too. Another probable legacy from the British are the celebratory processions of wind bands dressed in quasi-military uniform,²⁷ such as I witnessed in Corfu town on 21 May 2010 during the celebrations for the anniversary of Union with Greece. One of the pieces being played was the

²⁴ Laskaratos 1981, 324.

²⁵ See Calligas 2009, 157–8.

²⁶ Gladstone's 3-volume *Studies on Homer and the Homeric Age* had been published in March 1858. The fact that Gladstone was a Classical scholar was considered to qualify him to judge the future of the Ionian Islands.

²⁷ For further information on the wind bands of Corfu, see Chapter 16 by Kostas Kardamis in the present volume.