From Republican Patriotism to National Sentiment
A Reading of *Hellenic Nomarchy*

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**Abstract:** This article attempts to add a corrective to the exclusive focus of the academic historiography of republicanism on the mainstream of the tradition in Italy and north-western Europe by bringing a perspective from the European south-east on the transmission and evolution of republican ideas. An illustration of this broader perspective on the history of republicanism is provided by the treatise *Hellenic Nomarchy* anonymously published in Italy in 1806. The article examines the origins of Modern Greek republicanism, the meaning of 'nomarchy' and the context and sources of the work. It stresses its social and political radicalism and points to its affinities with the ideas of 18th-century Tuscan republicanism and with the work of Vittorio Alfieri and Ugo Foscolo.

**Republicanism: Multiplicity and Diversity of a European Heritage**

In the history of European republicanism scholarly attention has remained persistently focused on the tradition that originated in Renaissance Italy but bore its finest theoretical fruits in north-western Europe. This predilection cannot be questioned on substantive grounds. The mainstream tradition of European republicanism from the 15th to the 18th century, especially in the light of the research and interpretation of the last 30 years or so, represents by any standards of judgement one of the great achievements of political and social reflection on the preconditions and requirements of human coexistence and community. The only corrective one may wish to add from the perspective of a more pluralistic understanding of modern European culture and political thought would point to the desirability of a broadening of the field of research to take stock of the off-

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shoots and subsidiary traditions of republicanism that developed beyond the mainstream and transferred republican ideas and values into cultural contexts on the European continent that have remained outside the purview of standard histories of republicanism. Such a broadened perspective on the history of republicanism has the potential to recover from sources in lesser known languages a denser texture of republican meanings and arguments on a significantly larger geographical scale. In addition it can trace forms of transmission, reception and adaptation of republican ideas in diverse cultural and linguistic contexts, eventually showing republicanism to be a truly pan-European ideological phenomenon. Of special interest in this story, from the perspective of the history of ideas, would certainly be the encounter of republicanism with older traditions of political discourse in particular contexts and the new twists that such encounters brought to the evolution of political thought.

A case study that would provide ample illustration of all these interconnections and forms of expression of political ideas can be found in the history of modern Greek political thought. Interest in Greek political thought in contemporary scholarship ends as a rule with antiquity. The millennium of Byzantine political literature, its survivals and adaptations in the post-Byzantine period, and the recreation of a whole tradition of political discourse in the Greek language under the impact of new languages and conceptualizations of politics in early modern Europe, have scarcely attracted any attention in the history of political thought. Yet this is a remarkable process of continuity and discontinuity, breaks and survivals, adaptation and transvaluation and finally production of new political languages under the impact of modern philosophy understood as a theory of modernity. Observation of this centuries-long process of intellectual change could contribute to the understanding of the very character of political thought as a story of contextualized languages and changing meanings. Part of the story of modern Greek political thought is the unfolding of a relatively brief but critical tradition of republicanism during the 'age of revolution'. The modest aspiration of the present article is to draw the attention of students of republicanism to some aspects of this moment in the broader history of political thought on the European continent.

The origins of modern Greek republicanism can be traced in the writings of Iosipos Moisiodax, a major exponent of Enlightenment ideas in the Greek language (c.1730–1800). In his Apology, published in Vienna in 1780, Moisiodax appears to abandon his earlier espousal of enlightened absolutism as typified by a reforming monarchy and to turn to republicanism as the model of political legitimacy. True to his militant commitment to the cause of the Moderns in the Quarrel of Ancients and Moderns, Moisiodax did not invoke an ancient Greek republican paradigm. He cited instead the example of the ‘commonwealth of the Swiss’ as the appropriate regime of the rule of law, whereby ‘they all enjoy uniformly an equality, the like of which is not to be found in the other republican regimes of Europe’. The impact of French revolutionary ideas in the 1790s
provided a powerful stimulus to the further development of republican thought in Greek culture. Several sources in the literature of the Greek Enlightenment reflect this political orientation but its most articulate expression came in the literary and constitutional projects of Rhigas Velestinlis (1757–98). A republican patriot born in Velestino in Thessaly, he belonged to the rising tide of Jacobinism provoked by the expansion of ‘la Grande Nation’ of revolutionary France into central and eastern Europe. Shortly before his arrest by the Austrian police in December 1797 and his extradition to the Ottomans who executed him and seven comrades in Belgrade in June 1798, Rhigas produced a blueprint for a ‘Hellenic Republic’ modelled on the French constitution of 1793.

Rhigas’s martyrdom gave his political ideas an aura of heroism and enhanced their appeal in radical circles, which visualized the liberation of Greece in the context of the changes that were revolutionizing the political map of Europe. It was in this context that the most important theoretical monument of Greek republicanism was generated. It took the shape of a ‘discourse on freedom’, as the subtitle of the work clarified, and appeared anonymously in Italy under the title Hellenic Nomarchy. Ever since its first appearance in 1806 this has remained an enigmatic work, received with discomfort by contemporaries, shrouded in silence during the 19th and the early 20th centuries and provoking endless debates among scholars on the identity of the author later in the 20th century. The mystery surrounding Hellenic Nomarchy and the intellectual discomfort which has marked the history of its reception in Greek culture can be only partly ascribed to the intentional anonymity of the author, who styles himself an ‘Anonymous Hellene’. The author’s secret has been kept so well that repeated scholarly attempts in recent decades, have proved futile in establishing any of the proposed attributions on any convincing basis. The main reason for the work’s peculiar reception, however, has to do with its profoundly radical nature. The text bears all the hallmarks of European radical republicanism: not only an unwavering insistence on the superiority of a non-monarchical form of government, but also the systematic indictment of corruption that is seen as germane not simply to despotism but to all forms of monarchy, an intense anticlericalism and a radical critique of existing social structures and mores. In view of the radicalism of the content and of the militancy of the argumentation of the work, one suspects that the almost obsessive focus of 20th-century scholarly debates on the question of authorship may not be unrelated to a perhaps unconscious predisposition to evade the sharp substantive issues in the text.

The Meaning of ‘Nomarchy’

To appreciate the significance of the text it would certainly be more constructive to try to recover its meanings and the context of its production rather than dwell on the history of its reception. The anonymity of the author leaves little doubt that his work was intended to be a subversive manifesto, a self-conscious call to
revolution. A distinct feature of the text bears this out very characteristically: the opening dedication of the work to the glorious memory of 'the great and unforgettable Hellene Rhigas', 'who had been sacrificed for the salvation of Hellas'. Addressing Rhigas the author affirmed that 'Hellas will always pay tribute to your immortal name, counting it among those of Epaminondas, Leonidas, Themistocles and Thrasybulus'. In this way, and by invoking Rhigas in his text, the Anonymous Hellene was obviously attempting to incorporate his own work in an evolving tradition of Greek revolutionary republicanism.

His own distinctive contribution to Greek republicanism consisted in the coinage of the term 'nomarchy' (=nomos+arche) to designate the non-monarchical form of government in which instead of men the laws ruled, guaranteeing equality, freedom and virtue for the citizens. Nomarchy represents a conscious - and curious - wordplay signifying the exact opposite of monarchy. Its features, described in the long opening theoretical disquisitions of the author, were those of the republican polities extolled by the European republican tradition from Machiavelli to the Jacobins. Its name, nevertheless, was characteristically Greek. It invoked the entire tradition of Greek political reflection from Plato and Aristotle, Xenophon and Plutarch, to the author's contemporaries Rhigas and Korais. The author did not attempt to use a cognate of the term republic on account of its Latin origin, but chose instead to coin his own evocative denomination for the polity he was projecting as the alternative to tyranny.

The radicalism of the tract consisted primarily in the use of the term 'nomarchy' and in the conceptual universe this unusual term introduced into Greek culture and thought. Nomarchy in the anonymous author's flowery oratory suggested an alternative model of legitimacy, radically contrary to the sense of legitimacy prevailing in Greek political thought for centuries. Nomarchy was projected against the conventional idea of Christian monarchy and of its latter-day adaptations by the theory of enlightened absolutism. The latter's projects of cultural and legislative reform were cited by some as adequate justifications for essentially persevering with the conventional view of politics, despite all its glaring failures being unravelled at the time by the growth of Enlightenment in Greek culture. No such acquiescence was tolerable according to the Anonymous Hellene, who thundered in the name of nomarchy against all those who supported either the traditional Christian monarchy or its modernized reforming adaptations. It was against these supporters of the conventional model of political legitimacy that the anonymous author directed his vociferous social criticism that aimed to expose the collaborators with tyranny in Greek society - the higher clergy and the monks, the Christian dignitaries of Ottoman despotism and the landed primates in rural Greece. It was the captivating vision emanating from the idea of nomarchy that inspired this critique in the spirit of radical civic humanism well known in the European 'Machiavellian' tradition since the Renaissance.

It is this crucial theoretical connection that has been hitherto missed by practi-
cally all commentators on the *Hellenic Nomarchy*. The interpretative debate on this truly unique source in Greek political literature, when it progressed beyond the discussion of authorship, focused almost exclusively on the anonymous author's critical sociology as expressed in his violent critique of the clergy and other elite groups in Greek society. His account was often read as an empirical description of the social structure and of the forms of exploitation of the rural population, the artisans and the urban working classes by the secular and spiritual leadership that was consolidated in Greek society in the shadow of Ottoman autocracy. The anonymous author was particularly vocal in his denunciations of the multiple and vicious devices of religious superstition whereby the clergy managed to keep the illiterate masses of simple folk in a condition of intellectual hypnosis which facilitated their exploitation of the faithful:

My dear Hellenes, the heavy enervation of tyranny itself is the source of their weakness. Woe to that nation which finds itself under such a tyranny. A nation like that is so enervated that it loses the power of thought. It is, therefore, difficult for it to be liberated because it is not aware of its misfortune. Time only can prepare its liberation.

Such nations, my dear brothers, if by chance they dislodge one tyrant, they submit to another, always remaining slaves. These tyrannies consist of a theocracy and an oligarchy. The tyrant is a lifeless, slow moving, statue which the people ignore except when they are seeking the most worthy and the most just of their fellow-citizens for a substitute but cannot find them. Oligarchy is made of a chief minister and his followers, together with a class of some shameless and ignorant people who, due to their laziness and idleness, and to their dependence for their food on other people's sweat and sighs, decided to call themselves nobles. As for theocracy, that is the power of the clergy.

Having a purpose altogether different from the other citizens, the clergy always tried, by using God as a means, to dominate their countrymen. To this day, due to general ignorance and bad education, they have been achieving their purpose. They cover with the mantle of holiness the most evident falsehoods and they fill the weak minds of the people with superstition. Instead of calling impossible ideas falsehoods, they call them holy, to the extent that the people, without any hesitation, believe in every word they say, not daring to examine the slightest thing, for it is actually prohibited to them.

Despite occasional excesses in language and the rhetorical use of hyperbole to get his point across, the author's descriptions cannot be considered as wide of the mark. Historical criticism might produce a more balanced picture but there is not much that can be said against the Anonymous Hellene's accounts in terms of inaccuracies or outright falsification of evidence. His claims can be corroborated from a number of other contemporary sources, both Greek and foreign. All this however, though interesting and important for understanding the dynamics of Greek social structure on the eve of the struggle for independence, is primarily significant in the context of *Hellenic Nomarchy* as an integral component of the author's republican argumentation. His attack on the clergy and on the social hierarchy and on the culture of corruption that sustained them in their despicable ways forms an integral part of the indictment of despotism and its ideological and moral by-products in order to pave the way for the canonization of nomarchy as the only legitimate form of government, befitting intellectually mature personal-
ities distinguished by moral integrity and civic responsibility. The massive sociological evidence adduced by the Anonymous Hellene was intended to strengthen and to lend empirical support to the theoretical argument he initially set out in order to build the framework for the definition of nomarchy. Most of this argument comes from Rousseau’s forceful theory of the origins of inequality and its corrupting effects upon human society that had delivered most of humanity to the throes of despotism. The irresistible force of nomarchy consists in the promise of liberation it brings from the degradation of tyranny and corruption.

Context and Sources of Inspiration

How did the Anonymous Hellene arrive at the theoretical vision he earnestly hoped to put to the service of the liberation of Greece? Earlier commentaries on the text have assumed that his inspiration came from Montesquieu’s attack on despotism and especially from Rousseau’s reflections on the problems of equality and freedom. This is corroborated by the internal evidence of the text, but begs the question: how – in which ways – did the Anonymous Hellene approach his theoretical models? The book was published in Italy in 1806 without specifying a place of publication. On the evidence of the type used in printing the book and generally on the basis of its physical appearance it is reasonable to suppose that it was printed in Lenghorn (Livorno) at the printing workshop of Tommaso Malas, which in the very same year, 1806, had also printed a work very similar in appearance in Greek entitled, A General Idea on Some Qualities of the Bodies and on the Nature and Qualities of Temperature by George Kalaras, a medical doctor from Corinth, who had studied mathematics and medicine in Pisa. On the basis of the similar appearance of the two books and of several quite striking similarities in style and diction between Hellenic Nomarchy and A General Idea it has been claimed that the two works are the product of the same author. I do not wish to enter into the debate on authorship at this point. What is significant is the Tuscan origin of Hellenic Nomarchy. This is an important consideration in clarifying the ideological identity of the text, even though the question of authorship per se cannot be settled in the absence of definitive external evidence. In being produced in Tuscany the Greek treatise on Nomarchy presupposes the strong tradition of revived republicanism that had developed in the area since the rediscovery of Machiavelli before the middle of the 18th century and the subsequent reception of Montesquieu’s Spirit of the Laws in intellectual circles in Pisa, Florence and Livorno. It was the sanctified relationship between freedom and virtue denoted by Machiavelli’s name that was projected in the works of republican thinkers like Giovanni Lampredi, Professor of Law at the University of Pisa, and Paolo Mattia Doria, the leading neo-Machiavellian in Italy. It was precisely this idea that animated the author of Hellenic Nomarchy.

Machiavelli’s name is not mentioned in the pages of the anonymous author’s treatise and no direct textual evidence of knowledge of the works of Lampredi or
Doria can be located in his work. Their works belonged to an earlier period, although their ideas shaped the terms of political debate among neo-Machiavellians, who were transformed into Jacobins after 1789 and into militant Italian patriots after 1800. It was to these circles above all that the anonymous author was intellectually indebted. Muratori's idea of 'filicità pubblica' is quite evident in Hellenic Nomarchy, mostly through its updated version found in Genovesi's broadening of its scope by connecting it with the idea of sociability. But it is primarily the ideas of Carlo Antonio Pilati and Cesare Beccaria that loom in the background of the anonymous author's arguments. Pilati's claims that the first act of revival consisted in 'freeing Italy from the tyranny of prejudice, superstition and ignorance' were taken up in their integrity by the Anonymous Hellene and applied to the experience of Greece. Beccaria's vision of individual autonomy through the reform of penal legislation informed the Anonymous Hellene's vision of the future of Greek society under the liberating regime of nomarchy.

From Theory to Politics

If we recognize these ideas as forming the broader intellectual background of the Anonymous Hellene's arguments, his direct interlocutors among his contemporaries emerge clearly from his text: Vittorio Alfieri and Ugo Foscolo. Alfieri is mentioned by name in Hellenic Nomarchy, and called 'Italy's new Sophocles', with three verses quoted from his satirical poem 'Il commercio'. It is not this direct quotation, however, but the overall incorporation of Alfieri's political and social ideas in the Anonymous Hellene's perspective that shapes this important intellectual connection. Though Alfieri's posthumous Satire is quoted directly, the Nomarchy's moral temper is defined by the ideas of Della tirannide. The opening invocation of liberty, the description of the condition of tyranny, the critique of vain ambition and the condemnation of luxury, the appeal to a purified Christianity, the model of the citizen-soldier serving in the militia of the fatherland, the relentless tirade against the moral effects of tyranny, especially in the treatise's second book, invariably recall themes treated by the Anonymous Hellene in Hellenic Nomarchy. One of the most striking coincidences between the two texts is the treatment of fear as a bulwark of despotic government.

Who enters a city in Hellas without feeling a shudder in his heart when he hears from everywhere people say 'woe unto us'? What does a stranger hear except groans? What does the Hellene see except tears? In other words, is there anything among the Hellenes except grief, fear, incarceration and death. A general murmur of grief, a silence of hopelessness dominate the hearts of all. Their inability to inflict just retribution, as well as their excessive sensitivity, corrodes their lives and they die in despair. Finally, poverty, like a mild but persistent fever weakens even the healthiest body. Poverty overrides the bravery and stability of the unfortunate fathers and dulls the spirit of the children.

The author's pages on the paralysing effect of fear on the minds and souls of the
subjects of despotism could very plausibly have their source of inspiration in Alfieri's third chapter in *Della tirannide*, book i.\(^2\) This debt in turn provides a channel bringing Montesquieu's original treatment of fear and silence under despotism\(^3\) into Greek political thought. We have in this case a remarkable illustration of the levels of transmission of political ideas across literary traditions.

The Anonymous Hellene's affinities with Foscolo have remained unnoticed by previous commentators. The points of contact between the *Hellenic Nomarchy* and Foscolo's *Ultime lettere di Jacopo Ortis* are strikingly political and reveal a shared appraisal of the prospects of liberation for the peoples of Italy and Greece arising from the upheavals caused by Napoleon's campaigns. Foscolo like many other freedom-lovers around Europe – including a number of Greeks – had early on in his literary career produced a set of odes to Bonaparte but by the time he published the revised version of *Ultime lettere di Jacopo Ortis* in 1802 his political judgement had changed. The love of liberty and of the homeland, the lively patriotism and concern for the prospects of a free republic in Italy, are all there but Foscolo makes plain that it was a vain hope indeed to expect liberation from foreigners.\(^4\) The allusion to Napoleon's intentions is clear and the same disappointment is vocally expressed by the Anonymous Hellene in *Hellenic Nomarchy*.\(^5\)

There can be little doubt that the author of the *Nomarchy* had read Foscolo, just as he had probably read Alfieri's *Misogallo*, which had expressed the same disillusionment with the prospects of liberation through foreign intervention. It was under pressures such as these that the old republican theory set itself on the road to an internal transformation. This made the claims of liberty and virtue, public happiness and sociability, freedom from superstition and ignorance, individual autonomy and the rule of law, contingent upon liberation of the homeland, which could only be achieved through a massive collective effort of the entire community of patriots. In order to mobilize the latter, that is, the people in its entirety, something more was needed beyond the ethic of republicanism and this increment in collective feeling, in moral will and psychological force could only be supplied by a potent novel social force sustaining the spread of modernity in Europe: nationalism. How this transition was attained is quite revealingly illustrated in the pages of *Hellenic Nomarchy*. The author uses the language of republicanism in order to articulate his arguments against tyranny and in extolling the virtues of nomarchy. But when it comes to the struggle for liberation he turns to the moral greatness of ancient Greece in order to stimulate collective pride and to find models of heroism: \(^6\)

So, the great Leonidas, having found himself with two thousand troops in the straits of Thermopylae, and having seen the multitude of his Persian enemies drawing near, immediately decided to sacrifice himself for the salvation of his fatherland Hellas. He thus chose only three hundred Spartans and turned the others back. He then turned to the three hundred Spartans and said:

`Come, my brothers, the freedom of our fatherland depends today on our bravery. Let`
no one lose heart in front of so many enemies, for even if they are many they are nevertheless cowards who think of nothing but women. The barbarians will be terrified when they see the Hellenes hurling themselves against them. Let us go forth then; for the glory of such an undertaking is not a daily affair since it rarely occurs. Let us not throw away such an honour, let us glorify our fatherland. It is my duty to sacrifice myself for it and since you are my countrymen you cannot possibly be thinking otherwise. The life of the true citizen must end either for his freedom or with his freedom.

But how can I express the enthusiasm of Leonidas, the great hero and the fervent zeal of his followers? My dear Hellenes, such things cannot be recorded in writing neither can they be related, they are only felt.

In addition the author resorts to xenophobic rhetoric against the Ottoman rulers and he appeals to the virtues and superiority of the Greek race:

My dear Hellenes, even if we were fewer than the Turks, we would have defeated them without fail because of all those reasons that I mentioned above. How much more since we are seven times their number! Our enemies are a hundred times inferior to us, not only in numbers, but also in strength of character, bravery and magnanimity. How is it possible then not to defeat our enemies?

Perhaps someone of those who ask questions without understanding, might remark: If such is the case, why did we not defeat them as yet? Oh, you foolish man, when did the Hellenes fight without defeating them? Those few outlaws in the forests where they daily fight and win, are they not demonstrating the truth of what I am saying? The Hellenic navy, especially that of the Hydriot, almost always defeats the foreign pirates with whom they daily fight, even though these enemies are incomparably greater in numbers? Did George not liberate the Serbs? And who doubts that Rhigas would have liberated Hellas if our envious fate had not given the wicked sword of betrayal to the cruel Oikonomou?

On the way, the multicultural vision of his own source of inspiration, Rhigas's cosmopolitan republicanism, is lost. The example of the Serbs, who were at the time embarking on their own revolt against the Ottomans, was cited by the anonymous author as a model of a struggling neighbouring people to be emulated by the Greeks, but the Serbs were not invited to join a common nomarchy, as Rhigas had done in his own revolutionary appeal. Liberation under nomarchy had become in a matter of very few years a purely national affair, to be pursued by distinct cultural communities defined by their language and pursuing their separate historical destinies. The republican heritage provided the language of freedom and collective purposes but in the crucible of Napoleonic Europe the community of patriots had been clothed in the mantle of nationalism in order to develop the capability to ride the wave of the future.

Notes

4. The book appeared under the title *Hellenic Nomarchia* by an 'Anonymous Hellene' with the title page giving the publication details simply as Italy 1806. It is a small book in octavo format, very densely printed and runs to 266 pages. The text runs continuously without any internal subdivisions and without changing paragraphs. Although some literary evidence on its circulation has survived, only five copies are known to exist in libraries in Greece. See Ph. Iliou (1997) *Elliniki Vwliographia* 1801–1818, p.176. Athens: ELIA. It was not reissued until the mid-20th century. A 2nd edn was published in Athens by N.B. Tomadakis in 1948 (*Elliniki Nomarchia* [1948]) and another one in Athens with extensive introductory and supplementary material by G. Valetas in 1957 (*Elliniki Nomarchia* [1957]). A facsimile reprint of the original was published in Athens in 1976 by the Historical and Ethnological Society of Greece. For a concise and well informed discussion of the work see G.P. Henderson (1970) *The Revival of Greek Thought* 1620–1830, pp. 159–69. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press; and for a selection of representative excerpts translated into English see Richard Clogg (1976) *The Movement for Greek Independence* 1770–1821, pp. 106–17. London and Basingstoke: Macmillan. On the question of authorship the latest and most cogent contribution is by C. Papachristou (1987) *Poios egrapse tin Elliniki Nomarchia*. Athens: Estia. This surveys and appraises critically earlier literature on the subject.


8. Ibid. p. 196.

9. Ibid. pp. 93–6; see also pp. 146–95. The quoted passage is from an unpublished translation by Loukis Theocharides and Paschalis Kitromilides.


18. This understanding of Beccaria prevails in Korais's commentary on the text in his Greek translation of Dei delitti e delle pene (Paris, 1802). Korais's work was known and admired by the anonymous author of Hellenic Nomarchia and it would be reasonable to assume that his own reading of Beccaria was informed by the views of the 'new Hippocrates', as he called Korais on account of the latter's medical training. On the impact of Beccaria's ideas on the aspirations of reform movements beyond Italy see Franco Venturi (1972)


25. Elliniki Nomarchia (1806), pp. 219–20. It is quite revealing that the Anonymous Hellen invokes explicitly in this connection Italy’s misfortunes which show ‘what it means to be liberated by foreigners’ (p. 221).


27. Ibid. pp. 110–29 and passim.
