

“Modern Greek” in “Byzantium”? The notion of “early modern” in Greek studies*

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When does modern Greek literature begin? Modern Greek and Byzantine scholarship have used various terms in the past in order to describe the *same* texts of the so-called vernacular Greek literature. Thus, the Epic of Digenis Akritis, the Chronicle of Moreas, the Paleologan Romances, the poems of Sachlikis, Kornaros, Chortatsis, to name but a few, have all been described as “Byzantine”, “late medieval/protoneohellenic”, “medieval”, “late Byzantine, Renaissance and post-Byzantine”, “modern”, “early modern”, even “*Neograeca Medii Aevi*”. Although most of these terms can easily be proved a-historical anachronisms (“modern Greek” but also “medieval” and “Byzantine” were completely unknown to the peoples/cultures they aim to describe), one can argue for their necessity, provided that they at least describe accurately literary and related phenomena. In this paper, I will advocate the use of the term “early modern” as the best and most accurate description for this “vernacular” Greek literature in all related contexts (linguistic, historical, social) and I will also reshape its boundaries, gesturing both forward and backward (12th–early 19th c.).

“The linguistic history of a people keeps pace with its political history”;¹ this is how an eminent Greek linguist, Stylianos Kapsomenos (1906–1978), began his account of the history of the Greek language from Hellenistic to modern times. And it was on this axiom that Kapsomenos based his thesis on the origins of modern Greek² and its

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¹ Kapsomenos, 1985:3; all translations of quotations are my own.

² As this paper focuses on terminology, readers must keep in mind that the Greek term “νεοελληνικά” (literally, “new” as opposed to “old”, i.e. “ancient”, Greek) has no implications of “modernity”. Its rendering in English (“Modern Greek”) abolishes the contrast between “old” [= “ancient”] and “new” and the sense of the word “modern” is considerably different. Still, I found it inappropriate to introduce

dialects from the so-called *Koine* of Hellenistic-Roman times, thus proving that all the basic characteristics which differentiate modern from ancient Greek had already been formed in this period, i.e. more or less at the time of Jesus Christ (Kapsomenos, 1985:3–91). But what is the case with modern Greek literature? If modern Greek goes back to the so-called Hellenistic *Koine*, should we not place the origins of modern Greek literature at that time too? The question sounds reasonable: language and literature go together. Nevertheless, one should not forget history. The appearance of the movement of Atticism in the first post-Christian centuries was destined to have a great impact on the intellectuals of the so-called Byzantine Empire, thus bequeathing us the well-known problem of *diglossia*: the Empire of the New Rome, in all its long history, used one language for speaking and another for writing. In practical terms, this means that we do not have any written literary texts in the so-called vernacular, i.e. in the language people spoke, which could theoretically constitute a unified history of modern Greek literature from the years of Christ onwards. In the 12th c., however, for the first time a group of poets appears who, for different reasons, decide to use in their texts the spoken language (the authors of *Digenis Akritis*, *Spaneas*, *Ptochoprodromika* and Michael Glykas). Thus, a new literary tradition is inaugurated, that of the “vernacular” literature, which continues uninterrupted until the constitution of the Greek state (1830), to say the least, undoubtedly favoured by the period’s political conditions of Hellenism (see below).

That is exactly the starting point of the problem I wish to examine in this paper: is this “vernacular” literature “modern Greek” or is it just another by-product of the multifarious “Byzantine” culture that went on into the so called post-Byzantine years? And what are the criteria that a literary historian can use in order to decide when something new begins, in our case “modern Greek” literature? Let us take things from the start.

If we go back to the end of the 19th c. and the *History of Byzantine Literature* by Karl Krumbacher (1856–1909), the man who actually established Byzantine studies in Europe, we discover that in that *History* the “vernacular” Greek literature appears as the final chapter, entitled “Vulgärgriechische Literatur” (Krumbacher, 1897:787–910). In that chapter, Krumbacher included not only texts of the “late Byzantine” period (12th–15th c.) written in the vernacular, but also works of the so-called Cretan literature at its peak (*Erotokritos*, *Erofilis*, etc.) for which the term “Byzantine” is in all respects invalid: Byzantium had fallen in 1453, Crete had been purchased by Venice in 1204, then invaded and held by Genovese pirates until it passed into Venetian administration in 1211. Furthermore, the peak of Cretan literature that can be securely placed in the 16th–17th c. has little to do with the linguistically archaising

the neologism “neohellenic” into English, though it could have better served the purposes of this paper (it was only retained in the compound “protoneohellenic”). Additionally, I write throughout “ancient” and “modern” Greek, considering these adjectives simple attributes that need not be capitalised, as they are not in the case of any other modern European language.

"learned" literature of the Byzantines and considering "Byzantine" the surviving Cretan dramas of Chortatsis and others or Kornaros's *Erotokritos* would be as unsustainable today as to consider products of the Renaissance the poetry of the wandering French troubadours of the 12th c.³ However, with this inclusion at that early stage Krumbacher offered great services to the development of the then infant modern Greek studies.

In the limited space of this article I cannot attempt a complete historical overview of the terms and limits suggested at times for the "vernacular" Greek literature and its characteristics.⁴ What I am going to do here is to go through some basic turning-points.

In the 1950s, there was a full-blown debate on the character (as well as the limits) of Greek vernacular literature due to a fertile disagreement between Emmanuel Kriaras (1906–) and Linos Politis (1906–1982). The two eminent professors of the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki represented a philological school modelled after Western European practices and they both ceased to use exclusively the terms "Byzantine"/"post-Byzantine" for the description of the vernacular literary production of the period 12th–17th c. Instead, they used the terms "medieval"/"Renaissance" literature and talked about "Middle Ages", "Renaissance", etc. following international scholarly practice. Their dispute lies in the fact that Politis held the view that the so called vernacular "Byzantine" literature, i.e. the texts from *Digenis* to *Erotokritos*, should be considered clearly "modern Greek", while Kriaras convincingly argued that most of the texts of that period have both medieval and modern Greek characteristics, and thus it would be fairer to describe them as "late medieval/protoneohellenic" and not plainly "modern Greek".⁵ However, at the end of the 1960s, Kriaras opted for a less precise term that was used in the title of his *magnum opus*, the *Dictionary of Medieval Greek Vernacular Literature, 1100–1669* (Kriaras, 1969–2005).

We have already come across four different terms that have been used for the description of the same texts: "vernacular Byzantine", "late medieval/protoneohellenic", "medieval Greek" and "modern Greek". And there are more to come. In the 1980s, Hans Eideneier (1937–) established the *Neograeca Medii Aevi* conferences, the only ones world-wide dealing exclusively with "vernacular" Greek literature. The name chosen for the conferences by Eideneier ("Modern Greek of the Middle Ages") is not accidental: it represents an effort towards a clearer definition of that field of research, but at the same time it shows his opposition to the strong German *Byzantinistik* tradition to which he belonged academically — his choice to talk about "Middle Ages"

³ However, this and other similar views were held by J. Burckhardt in his 1860 classic *The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy* (Burckhardt, 1997), where "anything he liked in the Middle Ages was promoted to the Renaissance" (Gombrich, 2001:32).

⁴ A complete overview will be included in the book I am preparing on the question of "neohellenicity" [= νεοελληνικότητα] that will appear in due course.

⁵ See mainly Politis, 1954; 1955 (and the relevant chapters in Politis, 1973; 1978) and Kriaras, 1951; 1953; 1995a; 1955b; 1961.

and not “Byzantium” is telling. The first *Neograeca Medii Aevi* conference, organised by Eideneier, took place in Cologne, Germany, in 1986 (Eideneier, 1987). The second was organised in Venice by Nikolaos Panagiotakis (1935–1997) in 1991 and its subject was the origins of modern Greek literature (Panagiotakis, 1993). Among the many interesting relevant articles published in the conference proceedings,⁶ I will only discuss here the contributions of Stylianos Alexiou (1921–) and Giorgos Savvides (1929–1995). An archaeologist by training, but also an important scholar and editor of “vernacular”, Cretan and modern Greek literature, Alexiou argued in his paper that the “vernacular” Greek literature of the period 12th–15th c. should be considered Byzantine, on the basis that together with the learned Byzantine literature it constitutes the literary production of one and the same country and people (Alexiou, 1993a:57–58). Largely agreeing with the views of Krumbacher as rectified in the 20th c. by Hans-Georg Beck (1910–1999) in his *History of Vernacular Byzantine Literature* (Beck, 1988: esp. 9–12), Alexiou places the beginning of modern Greek literature in the 16th c. (*Rimes Agapis, Erotokritos, Erofilii*) because, according to him, it is only then that we have “for the first time a poetry decisively Renaissance and language-wise Modern Greek in dialectal form” (Alexiou, 1993a:59). A similar placement but for totally different reasons was argued for by another eminent 20th-c. Neohellenist, Giorgos P. Savvides. Savvides suggested that the line between medieval and modern Greek literature should be drawn not on the basis of dates of historic events (fall of Constantinople, conquest of Cyprus, Crete, etc.) which mean little or nothing as far as the actual literary production is concerned, but on the basis of a criterion that would be “relatively objective”, i.e. on “bibliographical data” (Savvides, 1993:38–39): for Savvides, modern Greek literature begins with the first edition of Bergadis’s *Apokopos* (1509), which was the first modern Greek text to ever reach the printing houses of Venice and constitutes, according to him, a significant point of departure from the manuscript tradition which is tacitly considered the hallmark of the Middle Ages. In more recent years, the same placement in the early 16th c. was put forward in a series of articles by another important Neohellenist, Nasos Vagenas (1945–), who used yet another criterion, that of the development of ethnic consciousness.⁷ According to him, modern Greek ethnic consciousness is related to a “Renaissance feeling of the world” and appears exactly at the moment when the Greek-speaking Christians of the late Byzantine period re-establish their relations with ancient Greeks.⁸ For Vagenas, the first poet with modern Greek consciousness is a Renaissance humanist scholar, Michael Maroullas Tarchaniotis (1453–1500), who called himself *graecus*, viewed contemporary Greeks as heirs of the ancient

⁶ Savvides, 1993; Eideneier, 1993; Vitti, 1993; Alexiou, 1993a; Kapsomenos, 1993; Kechagioglou, 1993 and Irmscher, 1993.

⁷ Vagenas, 2003; 2005; cf. his dispute with Danezis, 2006 in Vagenas, 2007 and the intervention of Kriaras, 2007.

⁸ See particularly Vagenas, 2007:309–310.

Greek tradition, but never wrote a single line in modern Greek (Vagenas, 2003). For this reason, he suggests that modern Greek *literature* begins with the 219 Greek fifteen-syllable verses of Nikolaos Sophianos that were included in the Italian comedy of 1533 *I tre tiranni* by Agostino Ricchi (Vagenas, 2003; 2005; 2007:310).

Obviously, I cannot go into many details, but I would like to point out that all the standpoints presented above (but also all the others that could not be included in this paper) seem to fall into two distinct categories: on the one hand, there are those researchers who call for the division of vernacular literature into two parts, “vernacular Byzantine” from 12th to 15th c. and “modern Greek” from 16th c. onwards, and on the other, those who consider Greek vernacular literature as a unified entity that spans roughly from 1100 to 1700 (irrespective of the terms they choose for its description). The first group of researchers is represented by people who, despite their different approaches, all share one common characteristic: they specialise in areas other than vernacular literature. This is valid both for the archaeologist, at least by training, Alexiou and the Byzantinist Beck as well as for the Neohellenists Savvides and Vagenas and it cannot be considered a coincidence: their contributions to the subject in question have indeed challenged well-established views and brought in new considerations, but these considerations were inevitably determined by each researcher’s own field of study and formal training. On the other hand, the majority of researchers who have, mostly or exclusively, dedicated their careers to the study of vernacular literature, from Manolis Kriaras, Hans Eideneier, but also Linos Politis, as we have already seen, to Wim Bakker (1934–), Arnold van Gemert (1938–), Michael and Elizabeth Jeffreys (1941–), David Holton (1946–), Giorgos Kechagioglou (1947–), to name but a few, are all agreed that the texts from *Digenis* to *Erotokritos*, at the very least,⁹ display an organic and uninterrupted continuity, as Politis puts it,¹⁰ and, most importantly, that the study of these texts forms one single, unified scholarly discipline regardless of how one chooses to name it, “medieval”, “modern” or otherwise.¹¹ Thus, it would be perhaps enough to appeal to them to reject the attempted dismemberment of vernacular literature and the artificial borderline of the 16th c. And, undoubtedly, there are several arguments that could be put forward to support the unity of vernacular literature, I mean besides that of language, since the more systematic use of the vernacular in Greek literary production from the 12th c. onwards is accompanied by the revival of old but also the birth of new literary genres as well as by a generic, genealogical and intertextual dialogue among many vernacular texts — but these of course are issues

⁹ The two prose anthologies of Kechagioglou (1999 and 2001) have already shown that the limits can easily be expanded to the early 19th c. (see his theoretical argumentation in Kechagioglou, 1999:vol.1, 13–40).

¹⁰ Politis, 1978:2 (“από το Διγενή ως τον Ερωτόκριτο υπάρχει ενότητα και εξέλιξη οργανική, αδιάσπαστη”).

¹¹ This is exactly how they all dealt with these texts throughout their long careers and this is why it would be excessive to provide here examples for each one of them.

that cannot be analysed here.¹² However, I would like to concentrate a little more on language.

There is no doubt that there is something new going on in the 12th c. with all the writers who suddenly decide to abandon the “learned” (ancient or archaising) and write in the “vernacular” (spoken or close to spoken) language. The unprecedented step that this group of poets takes inaugurates a new literary tradition not only in linguistic, but also in generic and genealogical terms. Now whether this “new” tradition is also “modern Greek” in character depends on what is meant by the term. However, it should not pass unnoticed that the use of the vernacular in literature is an important innovation on its own: in all major European literatures it is the very use of vernaculars (Italian, French, etc.) and the disengagement from Latin that signals the beginning of “national” literatures, a beginning usually placed in the years 1000–1200, i.e. in exactly the same time when the first Greek vernacular texts appear.

But is the language used in these texts “modern” Greek? To give some idea of the language, I will provide three characteristic examples. The first is a short passage from the epic of *Digenis Akritis*, written in the first half of the 12th c., most probably between 1100 and 1143,¹³ and considered by many, as we have seen, the first modern Greek literary text. The excerpt comes from the Escorial version (verses 1554–1561, ed. Alexiou, 1995). The hero, Digenis, in an interesting narrative shift to first person singular, describes his duel with the Amazon Maximou:

Τον Λιάνδρον εφώναζεν και φέρνει της ιπάριν,
πηδά και καθαλίκευσε και παίρνει και κοντάριν
και από μακρέα μ' εφώναζε: “Εδά σε βλέπω, Ακρίτη!”
Και το κοντάρι εμάκρυνε, την κονταριάν με δώση.
Σπαθέαν της φάρας έδωκα απάνω εις το κεφάλιν’
τα δύο μέρη εσχίσθησαν κι έπεσαν παραμίαν
ήτον και η σέλα πάντερπνος, όλη κατεζουλίστην,
και απέμεινεν η Μαξιμού πεζή, ελειινή εις τον κάμπον.

¹² I will only provide a few significant examples. The “heroic epic poetry” represented by *Digenis Akritis*, the poetry of imprisonment represented by M. Glykas and the satirical beggar poems of Ptochoprodromos, all constitute new or revived genres previously completely unknown to the learned tradition of the Eastern Roman Empire. Genealogies and intertextual dialogues can easily be constituted among many of these texts (see e.g. the explicit reference to Akritis in Ptochoprodromos [poem IV, verses 189–192, ed. Eideneier, 1991] or the misogynous *Topoi* shared by Ptochoprodromos, some versions of *Spaneas* and many Cretan poems of the 15th–16th c., i.e. the peak of early modern Greek misogynous poetry [for an analysis see Kaplanis, 1999]). Finally, the *Digenis* epic, which in later versions gradually transforms into romance, also serves as the intertext of several later vernacular texts, including the romances *Achilleid* and *Livistros*, the verse autobiography *Afigisis paraxenos* of Sachlikis, etc.; cf. the observations in Alexiou, 1995:78–83).

¹³ I accept Alexiou’s dating (for a detailed analysis and evidence see Alexiou, 1993b).

The second example comes from the pen of the author who should be considered the first eponymous modern Greek poet, the Cretan Stephanos Sachlikis (born in 1331, died after 1391 and before 1403) and his poem *Vouli ton politikon* (second half of the 14th c., most probably c. 1370).¹⁴ It is well known that Sachlikis’s favorite subject are *πολιτικές*, i.e. whores, hence the ribaldry of this passage:

Γαμιέται η Κουταγιώταινα κι ο σκύλος της γαβγίζει
 και κλαίσι τα παιδάκια της κι εκείνη χαχανίζει.
 Η χήρα η Καψαμπέλαινα είναι που τη μαυλίζει
 και τρώ’ την ως το κόκκαλον, διά να τη συργουλίξει.
 Στου Κουταγιώτη την αυλή κέρατα ξεφυτρώνουν
 κόπελος έν’ στο σπίτι του, δι’ αυτούνον εξεστρώνουν
 και λέγουν της: “Πολιτική, διατί δεν σε γκαστρώνουν;”

The last example is the opening 10 lines of *Erotokritos*, written around 1600¹⁵ by the most famous author of the Cretan Renaissance, Vitsentzos Kornaros, who, I believe, needs no further introduction:¹⁶

Του κύκλου τα γυρίσματα που ανεβοκατεβαίνουν
 και του τροχού που ώρες ψηλά κι ώρες στα βάθη πηαίνου,
 και του καιρού τ’ αλλάματα, που αναπαημό δεν έχουν,
 μα στο καλό κι εις το κακό περιπατούν και τρέχου,
 και των αρμάτων οι ταραχές, όχθρητες και τα βάρη,
 του έρωτα οι εμπόρεσες και τση φιλιάς η χάρη,
 αυτάνα μ’ εκινήσασι τη σήμερον ημέρα
 ν’ αναθιβάνω και να πω τά ’κάμαν και τά ’φέρα
 σ’ μιά κόρη κι έναν άγουρο, που μπερδευτήκα ομάδι
 σε μιά φιλιάν αμάλαγη, με δίχως ασκημάδι.

Since these texts were written c. 900, 630 and 400 years before our time respectively, it would be naïve to believe that their language would be exactly the same as the one spoken today. Thus, minor differences, mostly in morphology, are quite to be expected. However, it should be underlined that the differences between vernacular Greek of 1100, 1370, 1600 and contemporary Greek are minor and, indeed, much less significant than the differences that distinguish the language of Chaucer or Shakespeare from today’s English. And although no one has ever considered seriously expelling Chaucer or Shakespeare from English literature, in the modern Greek

¹⁴ For details on Sachlikis and his work see van Gemert, 1980; 1997 (for the excerpt presented here see also van Gemert, 1997:65 — there is no modern edition of the text).

¹⁵ For its dating around 1600 see Holton, 1997:261–262, with bibliographical references. An attempt to place the Cretan masterpiece in the Italian literary *milieu* of the second half of the 16th c. and, thus, date it even earlier, most probably in the 1590s, may be found in Kaplanis, 2004 and 2006.

¹⁶ The text as in Alexiou, 1990:11. For a prose English translation of the text with introduction and notes see Betts et al., 2004.

case, as we have already seen, there are certain scholars who propose the exclusion if not of Kornaros any more, certainly of *Digenis* and even Sachlikis from the modern Greek literary canon. Obviously, they set aside the fact that Sachlikis is not only the first eponymous modern Greek poet who has no connection whatsoever with either Byzantium or the Middle Ages, but also the one who introduced rhyming verses in modern Greek poetry, a contemporary of Boccaccio and a generation younger than Petrarch who transferred a “Renaissance feeling” to Greek letters in form (various rhyming and metrical schemes), language (use of the vernacular) and genre (from frivolous satires and poems of imprisonment to poetic autobiography); a “genuine” “Byzantine”/“medieval” poet indeed.

To return to the language: it is hopefully clear that vernacular Greek from the 12th c. onwards may best be described as “early modern” Greek, in the sense that it is very close to “modern” Greek yet it appears in rather early times, i.e. already in the Middle Ages.¹⁷ So far, I have tried to show, firstly, that vernacular literature from 1100 to 1700 forms a unified entity and, secondly, that this literature, linguistically speaking at least, is early modern Greek. In this respect, its starting point must be set in *Digenis* and the 12th c. But why does one need to place its end in 1669/1700 when we know that these conventional dates mean nothing in terms of literary history and, furthermore, contradict the important findings of modern Greek research of the last 40 years? These findings clearly prove that the vernacular literary production does not by any means stop in either 1669 or 1700; instead, it goes well into the early 19th c., if not even later, and this is valid not only for the earlier established archi-genre of poetry, but also for the later developed prose writing and drama.¹⁸ Provided that all the major genres written in the vernacular demonstrate both coherence and continuity until at least 1830, the literary production of all this period (12th–early 19th c.) can safely be described as early modern Greek. The term should not be understood restrictively in language terms: let us not forget that the linguistic history of a people keeps pace with its political history. And it is in the political history of Hellenism of that period that the term early modern Greek finds its best justification.

Vernacular literature appears for the first time in a period when everything that remained from the once powerful Eastern Roman Empire starts collapsing: the “empire

¹⁷ Sporadic appearances of vernacular phrases in learned texts occur even earlier. Some interesting examples may be found in Jeffreys, 2007:62–70, esp. 64, with bibliographical references. Jeffreys in his paper, which is characteristically entitled “Modern Greek in the 11th century — or what else should we call it?”, discusses terminological difficulties concerning the description of the development of the Greek language (the vernacular, in particular) and I would go a long way with him. However, he rejects the term “early modern Greek” on the grounds that it is “problematic, especially when users less familiar with the articulation of the phrase give the adjective or prefix independent weight” (Jeffreys, 2007:78). I do not find this argument convincing, for, besides the reasons presented here, it contradicts standard international practice (the term “early modern” must be considered a well-established, widely used and, thus, quite familiar term nowadays).

¹⁸ Ample examples may be found in the relevant recent anthologies of early prose (see note 9 above) and drama (see Puchner, 2005).

of the Romans" (that is, of the Greeks) is abolished in 1204 by the crusaders and Frankish states appear in the Balkan Peninsula and the Eastern Mediterranean. In less than two centuries, the Ottoman advance will also begin. As a result, Hellenism, that is Greek-speaking, Orthodox Christian populations which have lived in these areas for centuries will start to pass under foreign rule, and this will be the dominating political stigma of the whole period from the 12th c. to the formation of the Greek state in 1830 and for all areas (irrespective of whether under Frankish, Venetian or Ottoman rule). The partition of the "empire of the Romans" takes place in different historical moments in each place and the foreign rule that is imposed each time has a different political, social, ideological composition and shade. As a result, Greeks under Venetian rule, for example, follow a completely different course from those under Ottoman dominion. Thus, ideologically, the former become attached as a rule to the West and associate the fate of Hellenism first and foremost with Venice, but also, by extension, with Rome and all Christian European leaders, while the latter are hostile, as a rule again, to an alliance with a Christian catholic power and see in the face of the Sultan and in the relatively tolerant Ottoman religious system the guarantee for securing their faith and, thus, their identity. But neither group represents the most popular ideological tendency of the time: the majority of Greeks (mainly, lower social strata) become attached to their Orthodox tradition and are not in favour of either the "τουρκικόν φακίολιον" or the "λατινικήν καλύπτραν", to use a famous phrase attributed to Loukas Notaras.¹⁹ Parallel to these three dominating ideological currents, other tendencies, not less important, appear from time to time and in different places, tendencies that may also be found, as expected, in the literary production of the period, no doubt together with other, more narrowly literary, tendencies and influences, related to the dominating literary currents which prevailed from time to time in both East and West.

The reason why I attempted here this sketchy historical-political review and description of the dominating ideological currents that appeared in those years is because these very currents run through the whole of modern Greek history. Their reverberations can be discerned even in *contemporary* Greek political history and ideology: if one attempts to look under the varnish of the homogenised ideology of the national state, one will easily ascertain that even today Greeks squint ideologically at times towards the West — highlighting their European dimension — and at others towards the East — highlighting their oriental physiognomy and culture —, that is when they don't flatter themselves by emphasising their glorious ancient Greek heritage or their surviving Byzantine Orthodox traditions. Of course, other tendencies may also appear (for example, some, even today, look to the Balkans or the former Soviet and now Orthodox again Russia, as they also did in earlier historical periods). But all these observations are very important, as they demonstrate clearly enough one thing: that the main ideological currents that exist even today in modern Greek

¹⁹ See, conveniently, Argyriou, 1980:11 and note 3.

society originate from and were originally formed in the period from the 12th c. onwards. This is of paramount importance, because, even if in those years we cannot yet speak of the formation of a modern Greek “national” consciousness, we can however speak of the formation of the dominating currents which determine even today the modern Greek *identity* in all its multifariousness and contradictions. From this point of view, this whole period can be considered “early modern Greek”, exactly because we can find in it “modern Greek” characteristics, tendencies and currents, even in an “early” form and/or in quite “early” years. This is also the sense in which the term “early modern” is chosen today to describe the equivalent “early” phases of the “national” history or literature of all major European peoples (and not only them), thus proving that the Greek case does not form an exception but rather makes part of the rule.

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