



Teaching History in Greek schools: Another lost chance?



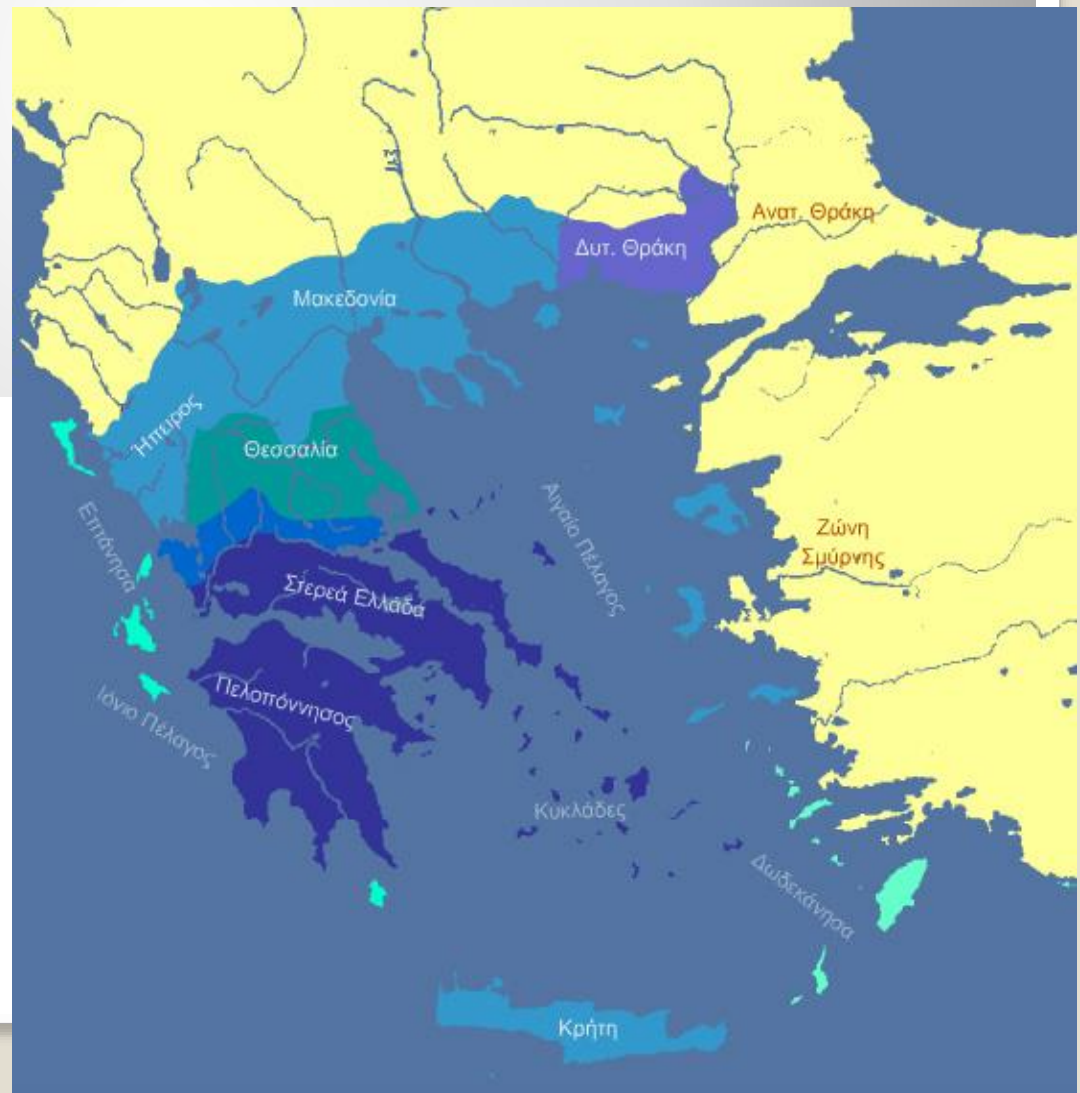
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A.H.E.G.



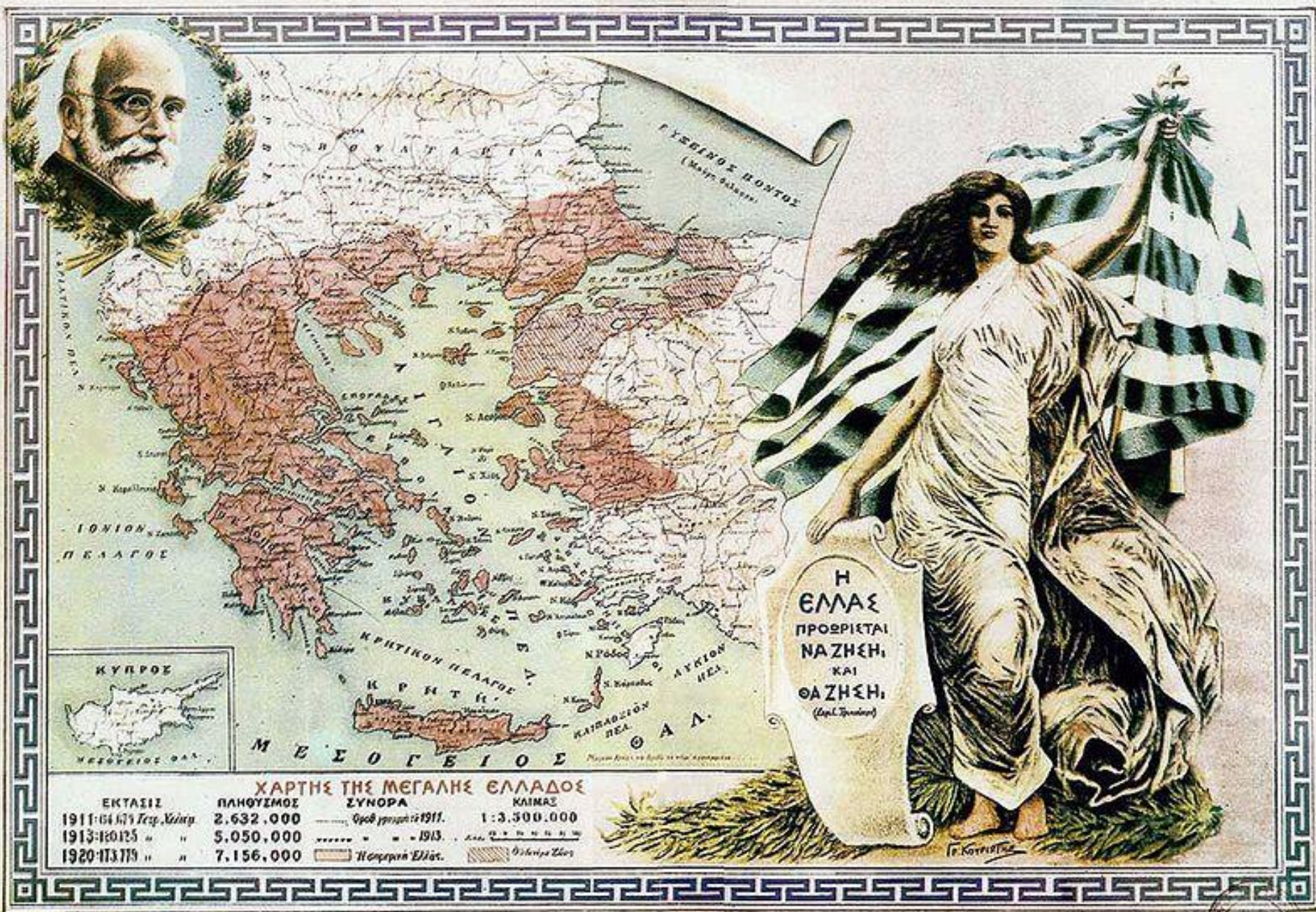
"You need an awareness of the
past in order to know what you
are in the present"

Bodo van Boris

Formation of Greek state: 1830, 1864, 1881, 1912-13, 1920, 1923, 1948



- The **Megali Idea** (Greek: *Μεγάλη Ιδέα*, the "Grand Idea") was an irredentist concept of Greek nationalism that expressed the goal of establishing a Greek state that would encompass all ethnic Greeks
- This was a ***visionary nationalist aspiration*** that was to dominate foreign relations and, to a significant extent, determine domestic politics of the Greek state for much of the first century of its independent existence.



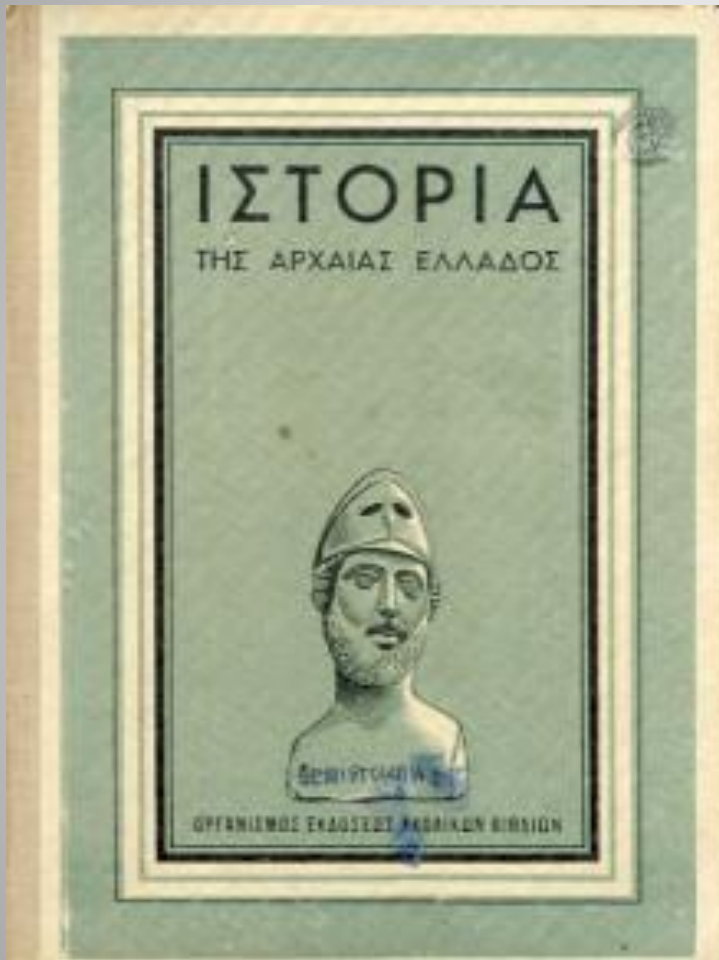
ΧΑΡΤΗΣ ΤΗΣ ΜΕΓΑΛΗΣ ΕΛΛΑΔΟΣ

ΕΚΤΑΣΙΣ	ΠΛΗΘΥΣΜΟΣ	ΣΥΝΟΡΑ	ΚΑΙΜΑΣ
1911: 64,679 Τετρ. Χίλιες	2.632.000	Όρος προσηλίου 1911.	1:3.500.000
1913: 120.125 " "	5.050.000	" " " 1913.	
1920: 173.719 " "	7.156.000	Η σύνορος Ελλάς.	

History Education in Modern Greece: dominated by the Megali Idea (1860-1923)

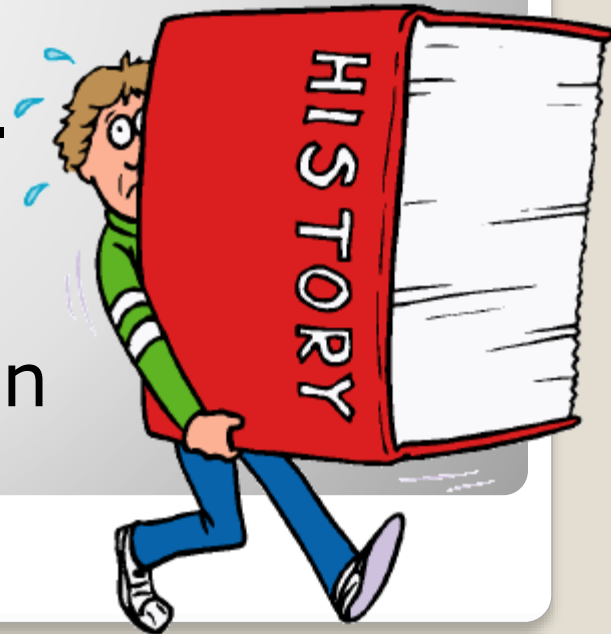
- **History education**: the same ideological canvas for decades
- **18th c.:** Enlightenment affects dynamically Greeks of diaspora and Greeks under Ottoman rule. 'Circulation' of History books, even handwritten. Geography books (published in 1716, 1728, 1759): Vienna, Venice, Odessa, Bucharest, Iasi, Marseilles, London, Paris, Smyrna.
- **19th c. :** century of History as a discipline; nation building process.
- **1835:** first official history and geography 'curriculum' for secondary education schools, subjects completing each other, followed by decrees, instructions, reports, etc. Peer method of teaching.

- **European influence** in every aspect of cultural life. History textbooks: translated English or French books on Ancient Greek History and World (European) History.
- Modern Greeks *form an idea of self based on the idea European intellectuals had for Ancient Greece* during 18th-19th c.
- Enlightenment bearing concepts of humanism, freedom, nature, democracy. School history follows this pattern. Gradually this approach changes. Frustration and insecurity, caused by constant conflicts, *direct modern Greeks to the glorious past*, while implementing their own attitude: **antiquity offers a normative pattern for the present and the future. Ancient Greek History dominates the curricula.**



The eurocentric approach to history turns to hellenocentric after 1880. First periodization of history in Ancient-Medieval- Modern in school.

Greek historian Constantinos Paparigopoulos (considered as the 'national historian') created the first national Grand Narrative with the '**History of the Greek Nation**' (1853) presenting the idea of continuity of the Greek nation from antiquity to present time. A romantic approach serving the idea of the nation, very much dominant until recently in school history...

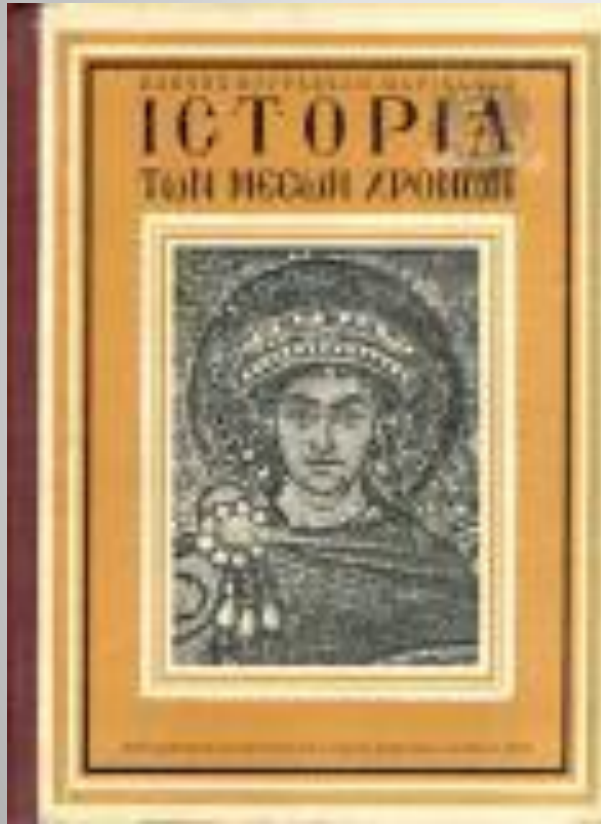


Greeks, since
ancient years...

But mr Paparigopoulos, I want
to understand: how my
classmates came here? Why?

The right
Greek
never asks:
he
memorizes!

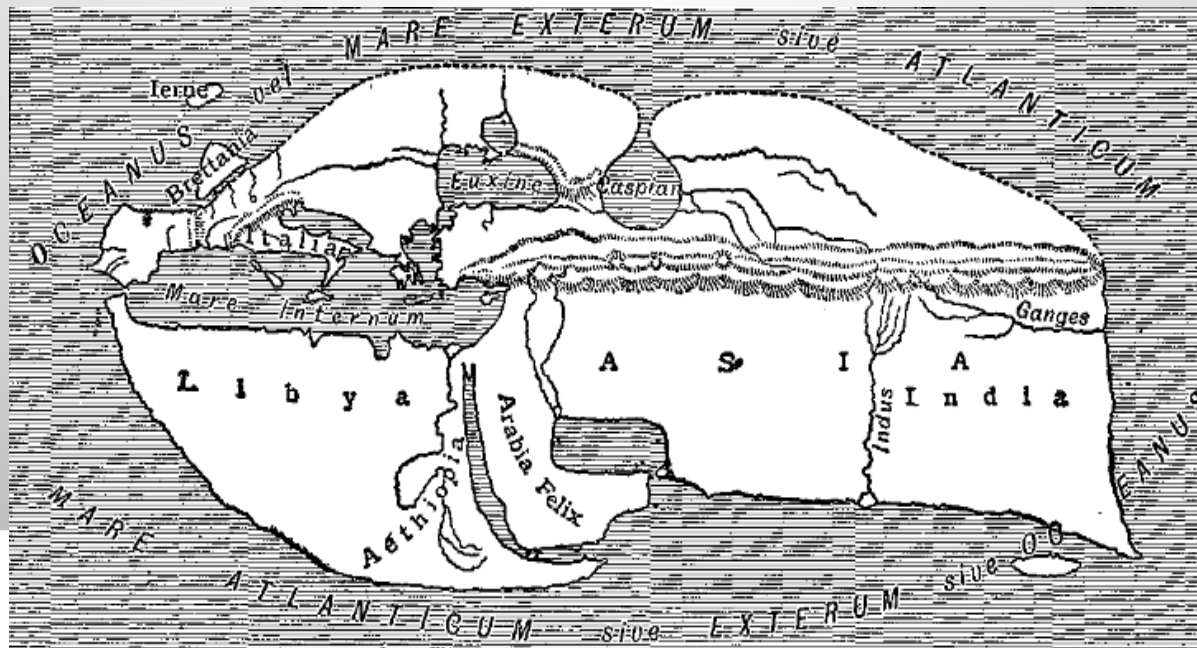


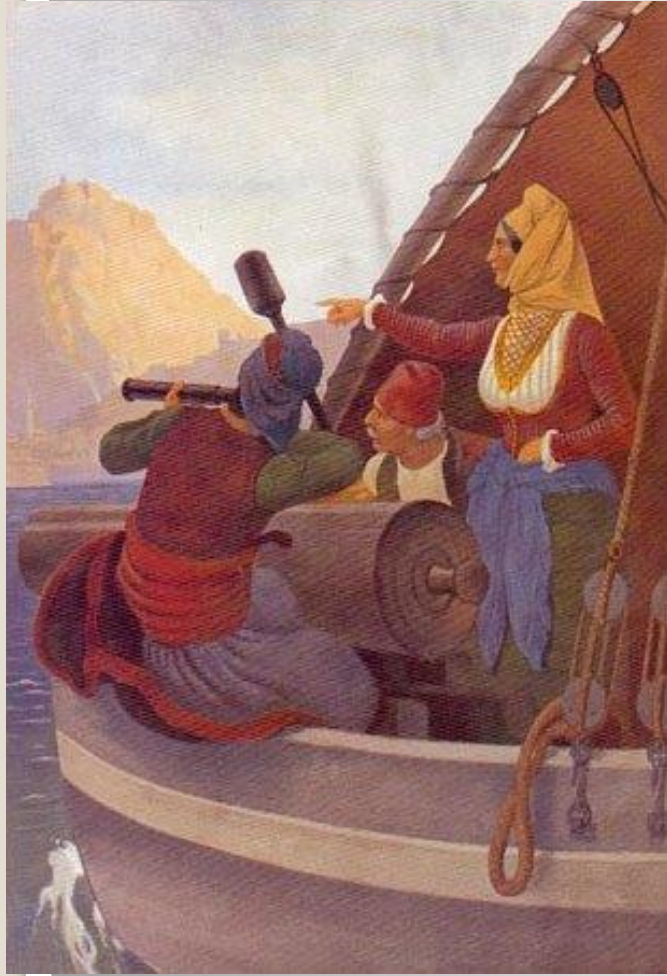


- **1884 - onwards:**
Byzantium is approached as organic part of Greek history. *Balkan peninsula* = *Greek peninsula* in textbooks. Building the nation – state process.
- Important dates for periodization: 323 B.C., 146 B.C., 330 A.D. , 1204, 1453, 1821. Greek and Orthodox character of history - not Universal – Christian.

- ***Innovations:*** 1894, 1911, 1917: evaluators of history textbooks, in their reports, characterize not pedagogically correct the use of nouns such as 'fortunately', 'unfortunately' within the narrative (!).
- **1897:** first 'History of Civilization' in schools, parallel to political and military history.

- Ancient Historical Geography based on the works of *Pausanias* (Παυσανίας, 2nd A.D.) and *Strabo* (Στράβων, circa 64 B.C.- 24 A.D.) is taught in schools, during 19th c.
- Historical Geography offers opportunity for identification of new and ancient names of places and cities.





- **1880- onwards:** *moral-religious* education gives floor to *moral- national* education. First hints of Citizenship Education (Patridography= Πατριδογραφία) within History Education.
- **Late 19th- early 20th c.** History for women's schools: biographies of important women serving as example for the nation.

- **1917- 1921**: brave and important innovations ('Educational Association') affected by socialist ideas. Interrupted by Greek-Turkish war (1919-1922).
- **Interwar period**: Greece struggles to face the problems of population exchange after the defeat in Greek-Turkish war: collective trauma and financial crisis ('20s -'30s).
- **30's**: Ioannis Metaxa's dictatorship: ultra nationalist content on history books, following fascist patterns.



The eternal enemies



- **40's:** Nazi occupation and Civil War. Increasing influence of Church and Sunday schools, in order to fight significant influence of leftish ideology. National history: 'we and the others'. History that divides the nation.
- **50's:** cold war period. History books serving anti-communist propaganda. Half of the Greeks in exile and prison, persecuted and excluded from political and social life.
- School life in tight control

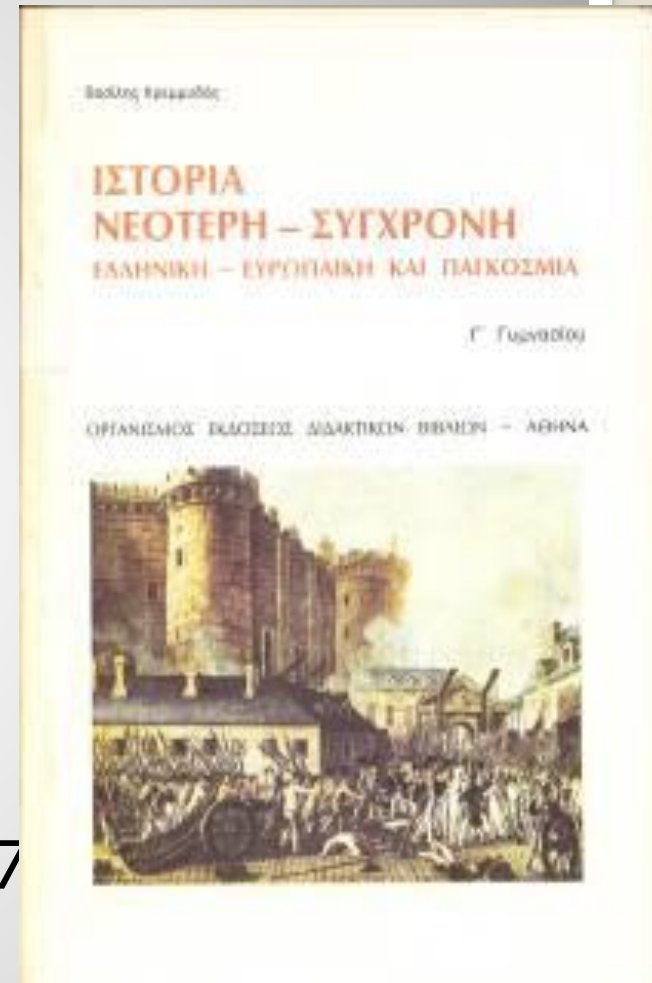


- **(Turbulent) 60's:** important educational reform, interrupted by military coup and Junta. Seven dark years (1967-1974).
- **1974-1981:** transitional period. Timid, tentative steps, still nationalistic content. Greece joins E.U. (1979).
- **1982-** Biggest reform in History textbooks. European turn. Alternative approaches.

Is there any attempt made to change the approach in history teaching?

- Of course: several attempts following curriculum change and educational reforms: 1984, 1999, 2003, 2006, 2011, 2018. But history battles hold on well here.
- **1984**: a big educational reform performed by the first socialist government in modern Greek history: a rather “leftish” approach of Greek, European and World history, balanced and innovative for the time being. Embraced by students and adored by teachers. The textbooks on Contemporary and Modern History were in use for about 23 years!!!

- **1984:** Leften Stavrianos' *'History of Human Species'*, an alternative textbook for the 1st grade of Lyceum was withdrawn after two years of use, due to the reaction of the Greek Orthodox Church (questioning Darwin's 'Evolution of Species' theory!).
- **1991:** Prof. V. Kremmydas' (Athens University) *'Modern and Contemporary National, European and World History'* textbook, withdrawn by conservative government, after 7 years of use (3rd grade gymnasium), considered to be very cosmopolitan (!)





- **2001**: the new history textbook ('*Modern and Contemporary History*' for 3rd grade of Lyceum) by a team of 12 experts (Professor George Kokkinos, Aegean University, ed.) presenting *an alternative approach to national and world history, focusing on social history and history of ideas*. Fierce attack by the media, triggered by the reaction of Cyprus Republic government - right and left wing politicians attacked the book, which was withdrawn immediately!

Greece in the last 15 years

- Financial crisis affecting dramatically every aspect of everyday life (huge cuts in wages, demolition of social state; unpredictable recession and constant social unrest). Euroscepticism, rise of nationalism
- Younger teachers (better studies, postgraduate degrees, extra training, more open-minded) willing to change the approach in history teaching. Schools face cuts in budgets up to 40%.

Greece today 2

- 10% of the population are migrants, mostly illegal: provokes several problems (increasing racism, xenophobia, 'demonization' of migrants). A new reality not faced effectively in education too (ineffective policies by the state, unprepared teachers).
- These problems prepare the ground for negative ideologies, and allow populism expressed in many ways to affect public opinion through media. Nationalism is a kind of refuge/shelter for societies in crisis
- Media and Church very influential
- New kind of nationalism (from far right to left wing parties) fed by crisis.

- Still poor budget for education:
- Low teachers' wages
- Merging school units and piling more pupils in class
- Shortage of teachers in schools
- Poor infrastructure
- Re-arrangement of cognitive subjects
- Subject history delivered by non qualified teachers
- More but not enough Teacher Training courses lately
- Financial centered and bureaucratic approach to pedagogical issues

Crisis and Education

Pathology of History Education in Greece

- Ethnocentrism /eurocentrism, didacticism, traditional and conservative content focusing on political and military history
- Stereotypical approaches, methodology issues
- Lack of empathy and multiperspectivity
- Introspective narrative. Grand Narrative - focus on glorious past



- Reluctance to approach traumatic and controversial issues
- Deficiency in posing historical questions, using multiple interpretations, complex causal connections (second order concepts)
- Issues of lacking experiential methodology
- Need to connect with Public History
- New curricula: still conservative
- Exams centered school system





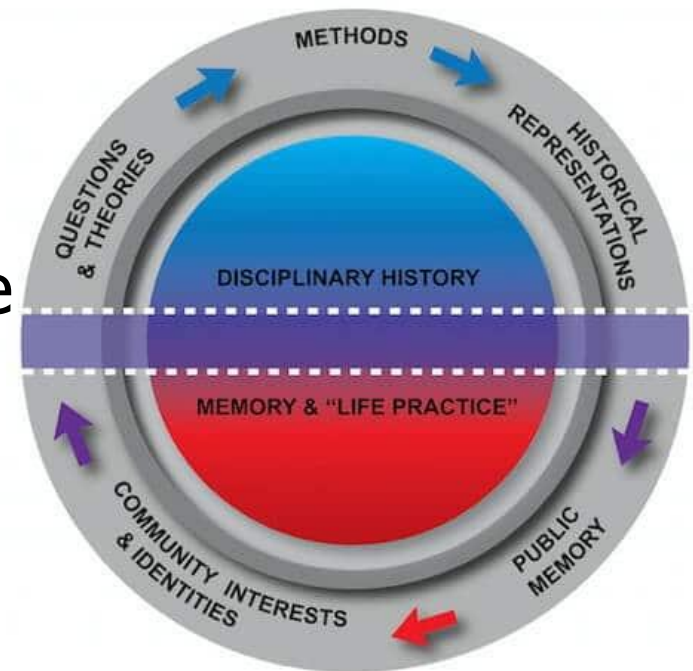
Aiming at:

- Historical literacy
- Social literacy
- Media literacy
- Visual literacy

In order to:

- Promote critical thinking and active citizenship
- Enhance democracy

- **New History Curricula** were prepared for compulsory Education (Dimotiko-Gymnasium) 2011 and 2018.
- *Public history* and *hidden curriculum* were taken into consideration as factors affecting history teaching
- The new curricula, open, inclusive and innovative, were rejected before being implemented in schools, due to reaction of conservative politicians and others



Taking into consideration, among others:

- Pupils as thinking subjects
- Social, Cultural, ethnic, linguistic background of pupils
- Gender, prior knowledge, experience and attitudes
- The locality of the school and the special features of it
- Pupils' special educational needs
- The current situation of the country, the international context, the technical infrastructure and communication means

- The new curriculum was officially rejected and a new one is being implemented by a new committee. Not sure what the outcome will be. Within this committee one can find people who support completely different attitudes in history teaching. Waiting for the outcome.



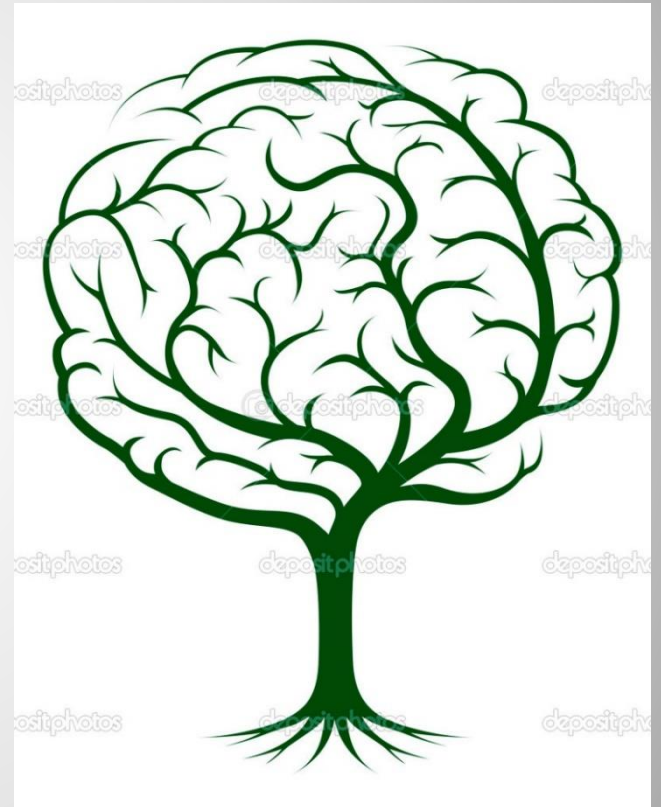


OHTE General Report on the State of History Teaching in Europe 2023

Volume 1
Comparative analysis



OBSERVATORY
ON HISTORY TEACHING
IN EUROPE



***'Ever tried. Ever failed.
No matter. Try again.
Fail again. Fail better...'***

Samuel Beckett



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