Fabrications of the Greek Past

Religion, Tradition, and the Making of Modern Identities

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CHAPTER 4

Traditioning Acts of Identification: The Case of Greek "Traditional" Villages

> *"The history which became part of the fund of knowledge or the ideology of nation, state or movement is not what has actually been preserved in popular memory, but what has been selected, written, pictured, popularized and institutionalized by those whose function is to do so."* (Hobsbawm et al. 1983: 13)

The words "tradition" and "traditional" belong to a set of words that have troubled scholars during the last 50 years. Curiously enough, there is not a significant amount of bibliography that tries to address the problem or answer the question "What is tradition?" in a manner that does not draw heavily from the common understanding of the word. There is, on the other hand, an abundance of references to "tradition" or its derivative "traditional" as a way to explain phenomena that otherwise would be difficult to understand – or so it is thought. The problem of tradition is thus that scholars too easily grant or accept people's claims of linear succession over time and then use those claims to explain historical situations rather than treating those claims themselves as the curious object of study – as ways that speakers and writers make their present meaningful by understanding the past as necessarily leading to it.

Raymond Williams, in his important work *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society*, summarizes the various meanings that "tradition" has had over the years as following:

> Tradition in its most general modern sense is a particularly difficult word. It came to English in C14 from the fw tradicion, oF, traditionem, L, from rw tradere, L – to hand over or deliver. The Latin noun had the sense of (i) delivery, (ii) handing down knowledge, (iii) passing on a doctrine, (iv) surrender or betrayal. The general sense (i) was in English in mC16, and sense (iv), especially of betrayal, from lC15 to mC17. But the main development was in senses (ii) and (iii). (318)

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Broadly speaking, and following Williams, scholars who tried to account for the notion of tradition – that is, what it consists of, its persistence, and its mode of transmission – can be divided into two camps. On the one hand, we have those who understand traditions as things (whether beliefs, concepts, material things) "handed over," and therefore persisting through time and space. The task of scholarship is therefore to try to give an account for the properties that make these things called traditions special or salient through time and what their mode of transmission is.[1] On the other hand, we have those who understand traditions as invented to serve or respond to contemporary needs and interests. They therefore see their task as illustrating the processes by which traditions come into being (Hobsbawm et al. 1983). Whereas the first approach focuses on the nature of the item being delivered, the second examines, instead, the delivery process itself and, more specifically, the choices made by social actors in deciding what to preserve, repeat, and thus deliver. Even though the latters' work has been very influential, tradition's common sense usage still persists. That is, traditions are thought to name something that possesses an essence that is transmitted or handed down like a material object from generation to generation.

This common understanding persists in other forms as well. Mark Salber Phillips, for example, rightly observes that:

> Instead of 'tradition' – a term possessing great historical depth – we have adopted a host of more specialized vocabularies that appear to be free of the stigma of traditionalism. 'Discourse,' 'canonicity,' 'memory,' 'diaspora,' 'hybridity,' 'the history of concepts,' – these and similar terms in use across a variety of disciplines have become our most recent tools for talking about tradition's domain. (2004: 4)

Despite a change of technical terminology, some of those terms that Phillips identifies as doing the work of tradition are, to my understanding, equally

1 Representative of this approach would be: Boyer, Pascal (1990). *Tradition as Truth and Communication: A Cognitive Description of Traditional Discourse*, 68. Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press; Pieper, Josef (1956). The concept of tradition. *Review of Politics* 20: 465-491; Redfield, Robert (1956). *Peasant Society and Culture*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press; Shils, Edward (1971). Tradition. *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 13: 122-159; Struan, Jacobs (2007). Edward Shils' theory of tradition. *Philosophy of the Social Sciences* 37: 139-162; Valliere, Paul (2005). Tradition. In L. Jones (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Religion*, 4279-4289. 2nd edition. Detroit: Thomason Gale.

problematic in that they preserve a notion of nostalgia[2] for origins and authenticity, notions that are inherent in the concept of "tradition," as will become evident in this chapter. In contrast to this common understanding of tradition as something that is handed down from generation to generation, I am not interested in maintaining the conventions of such terms. Rather, I am more curious about who is involved in defining and classifying something as a "tradition" or "traditional." By what means? And what modern interests drive that very definition? But before I go into more detail on this alternative approach, let me take you first to a village that is located in Pieria, a regional unit in Central Macedonia, Greece, to begin to illustrate the complexity of this thing we call tradition once our ethnographies of tradition become a little richer and more detailed.

The name Pieria may not be very familiar to many outside Greece, but it is an area of significant historical importance, not only to Greeks but also to anyone who visits the northern part of Greece. This is where Mount Olympus is located. Nearby is the ancient city of Dion, an archaeological site dating from the 5th century BCE. It is dedicated to the cult of Zeus and the area is said to be the home of Orpheus and the Muses, daughters of Zeus. In the southern part of Pieria, up on the slopes of lower Mount Olympus, there is a mountain village called Old Panteleimonas (Παλιός Παντελεήμονας), a village that, upon visiting it, gives you the sense that it is trapped in time, about 200 years ago. It is, in a word, *a traditional village*.

Old Panteleimonas is surrounded by forests of chestnut, oak, and arbutus trees and as you approach it, driving up the mountain, the only thing that you can discern are red-tiled rooftops on a sliding scale looking out over the Aegean Sea and the Thermaic Gulf of Thessaloniki. As you walk into the village – cars are not allowed to enter – you are likely impressed by the harmony of the buildings' architecture, known to locals as Epeirotiko or Macedonian style; that is, two-story buildings built tightly against one another, with white and green or gray tiled walls and wooden doors, windows, and rooftops. Although some of those buildings bear the obvious marks of time, others are surprisingly well-preserved. Walking through the narrow, cobbled alleys, you eventually find yourself in the village's central square, common to all Greek villages, where the inhabitants, along with tourists, socialize under the shade of a big oak tree. Prominent in the square is a church dedicated to St. Panteleimonas – the village's namesake – along with taverns with excellent food,

2 For the problem of nostalgia, see Touna, Vaia (ed.). *The Problem of Nostalgia in the Study of Religion: Towards a Dynamic Theory of People and Place*. Equinox Publishing, forthcoming.

cafés providing homemade or traditional pastries and Greek coffee, and little stores selling all sorts of memorabilia, all of which make the village a favorite destination for a weekend away from the noisy cities.

According to the people in Old Panteleimonas, the village was built in 1803, during the Ottoman period, by people trying to find a safer settlement. But a deadly disease was threatening their community and it is said – again according to locals – that a man came to them with an icon of St. Panteleimonas,[3] which miraculously saved the inhabitants. In return, the community built a church dedicated to the saint and named their settlement after him. Although this older church doesn't exist anymore, near its location a new church was built in 1914. Over the years, this new church has been restored many times due to various natural destructions and even a fire.

Old Panteleimonas is a village that has been characterized, since 1978, as "traditional" by a Greek presidential enactment (to which I will come back later) and also a place that is protected by UNESCO (United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization) as a site of "world heritage." "Tradition" and "traditional" are therefore commonly used to describe not only its architecture but also a way of life that it is believed not to have changed too much – a belief shared not only among the residents living there, on the top of that small mountain, but also by those who visit the village.

My interest in how people use the discourse of tradition brought me again to the mountain in 2013 to do some research, knowing that the village was famous for its traditional architecture and lifestyle.[4] Since I was there on a weekday in October 2013 and finding a place to stay would be easy – given also that the tourist season was also almost over – I decided to spend the night in one of those quaint traditional houses located at the heart of the old village square, where the owner had turned the second floor above the tavern into very comfortable accommodations with private bathrooms. After I browsed around the narrow streets filled with taverns, cafes, and small souvenir stores, I went to the owner of the hotel to ask what time breakfast would be served. I was surprised to learn that even 8 a.m. might be a little bit early for him to open the cafe – surprised only because of my previous assumptions that to live in a village means the day starts very early. Soon those assumptions completely faded away, for I was told that most owners and employees leave

3 Whose name Παντελεήμων means "to all (πάντων) charitable (ελεήμων)," a saint and martyr, said to have lived in the 3rd century CE in Nicomedia, who according to his life biography, studied medicine and was known for his healing abilities.

4 To which I have been many times over the years, taking friends who would want to experience a different Greece (different from that of the city, that is).

Old Panteleimonas after closing their stores at the end of each day. Later that night, I could gradually hear silence falling as the tourists were leaving and the owners, each closing their stores, taverns, and cafés, began commuting back down to their homes, located about 6 kilometers south, near the base of the mountain, in the village of New Panteleimonas (Νέος Παντελεήμονας).

This daily movement of people up and down that mountain, even the seeming coincidence of these two villages names, is something that, most likely, goes unnoticed if we travel like visitors and not as analytical scholars, if we visit as people who *simply* want to experience the beauty and uniqueness of the traditional village of Old Panteleimonas which has survived for 200 years holding onto its traditions and traditional aura. Consider, for example, how a guide to traditional settlements in Greece describes the phenomenon:

> Marks unfaded by the passing of people through the course of History, traditional [παραδοσιακοί] settlements in Greece are, today, among the most important sites of our country. A visit to one of those is a unique experience: it will travel (ταξιδέψει) you back in time, will reveal the harmony of human works with the natural habitat, will initiate you to a way of living more warming. Here nostalgia, pleasure, and relaxation seem to coexist almost ideally.[5]

If this is how we visit Old Panteleimonas, expecting to travel back in time, then what goes unnoticed is the work done by anachronism in the discourse of tradition, a discourse which manages and bridges the distance between the top and the bottom of the mountain, between past and present, traditional and modern, old and new. How do we account for this movement? How do we approach the notion of "traditional" that we have so many times encountered walking through the cobbled alleys of the village? What is that tradition that people speak of and which is in many ways represented in the "traditional" architecture of their buildings or way of life? For, as will become evident, despite its governmental classification as traditional Old Panteleimonas, it is in many ways *far newer than New Panteleimonas*.

To better understand not only this irony but also this process of strategic anachronism, we need to look at the history of these two villages within the wider social world in which they are situated.

5 Λαμπρόπουλος, Ανδρέας (2003). Οι παροδοσιακοί οικισμοί στο χώρο και στο χρόνο. In Αριστείδης Μιχαλόπουλος (ed.) *Παραδοσιακοί Οικισμοί: Ένας Πλήρης Ταξιδιωτικός Οδηγός*. Αθήνα: Explorer.

1 Coming Down the Mountain

After World War II and the civil world that followed it, what was then known as Panteleimonas, like most villages, was affected as Greece was gradually transformed from a rural, agricultural economy to a metropolitan, industrial-based economy. By the end of the 1940s, large parts of the population – notably males between the ages of 20 and 35 – moved away from Greece's many small, rural villages in search of better working opportunities and better living conditions in big city centers. According to ELSTAT (Hellenic Statistic Authority),[6] despite the population increase during the 1950s due to the post-war baby boom, amid economic and political instability, many rural areas continued to decline in population, especially in the 1960s and 1970s.

Between 1961 and 1971, 9.8% (almost 1,000,000 people) of the total population of Greece emigrated to Western Europe, North America, and Australia. These emigrants were mainly farmers coming from rural areas. Apart from migration abroad, during the same period, interior migration was not uncommon, especially towards the major Greek urban centers such as Athens and Thessaloniki. For example, between 1951 and 1971, these two urban centers were the only areas to record high increases in population while rural areas (i.e., villages) and islands were continuously losing population. In 1961, Athens contained 22% of the total population of Greece and Thessaloniki contained 5.7%. By the end of the 1970s, Athens consisted of 31% of the total population and Thessaloniki 8.10%.

2 Village Life in Filmography

This interior migration, apparent in daily life in Greece, was a common theme in the Greek imagination of the time. This *imaginaire* was particularly exemplified in movies produced by Finos Films (1943-1977) – one of the most popular, even today, film production companies in Greece. From the 187 movies that Finos Films produced, only a few were set in a contemporary village; instead, most of them were set in Athens. In addition, most of them concerned with the problem of interior migration, the adventures and struggles of people who were fleeing towards Athens to find a better life there. The migrants

6 All the charts and statistic numbers were retrieved from ELSTAT (Hellenic Statistic Authority), in October 2013.

were typically represented as out of place, naïve, uneducated, and, in most cases, as tricksters. A few comedy movies were set in a village or sometimes on an island.[7] Those films are characteristic of the village life at the time, inasmuch as they portrayed a way of living that was rough, with no household comforts that were expected in the city and with no indoor plumbing (in some cases, people would have to go and get water from a nearby fountain or a fountain spring that was usually located at the yard). Rural people were portrayed as struggling with those difficulties but also were seen as genuine and hospitable even though they lacked what the moviegoers likely understood as essentials. Furthermore, apart from the economic difficulties the people were facing, we see that in many cases there were no hospitals and sometimes even doctors were a luxury, so it was common to suspect some people turning into charlatans and healers. High rates of what was then portrayed as superstition were a commonality, as can be seen in the popular 1958 film entitled *Η Κυρά μας η Μαμή* (Our Mrs the Midwife), directed by Alekos Sakellarios. In this film, a practitioner (played by Orestis Makris) from Athens, having retired, decides to go with his family to his wife's village to practice medicine, only to be faced with the superstition of the villagers who trusted the charlatanisms of the local midwife (played by Georgia Vasileiadou) more than the scientific knowledge of the newly arrived doctor. The film, which to this day retains its popularity, is a characteristic representation of village life from that time, a representation that was not ideal, at least as portrayed and seen by the people who lived in the cities, those who made and watched these movies.

Another example of how village life was represented in films, is a 1965 political satire entitled *Υπάρχει και Φιλότιμο* (A Matter of Pride), directed again by Alekos Sakellarios. The movie is about a minister of the Greek government, Andreas Mavroyialouros (played by Labros Konstandaras), who visits a small village (basically, his constituency) for the inauguration of a maternity hospital that had been built under the minister's authority. As the plot unfolds, he realizes that his associates have been fooling him over the years by using state funding for their own benefit. Many scenes in the film portray not only the rough life in small villages but also the perception that city people, at the time, had of villages and the people living there. For instance, in one scene, a day before his trip, the politician is trying to find someone to join him on his trip,

7 For the record, drama movies produced at the time were more likely to be set in a village and emigration abroad would certainly be a common theme.

asking his wife, daughter, a colleague, and his colleague's wife, none of whom show any kind of interest in visiting the village. They all admit that neither the village life nor its people are appealing to them. On his way to the village where the inauguration was going to take place (joined eventually on his trip by his daughter), and after a car accident, the politician is forced to spend a few of hours at a nearby village – an eye opener for him – where we learn, along with the politician (who hides his real identity), the difficulties these people are facing with no hospitalization, no doctors, and with economic challenges derived mainly from the government's lack of agricultural policies. Both he and his daughter are shocked when a villager tries to cure his daughter's freshly injured knee by placing tobacco on the wound to stop the bleeding. We also see his daughter shocked by having to use an outdoor bathroom, that she can't take a hot bath, or that the nearest phone is about half an hour walk away at another village's local police station.

The reason I've used these two characteristic examples of popular portraits of village life is because we do not see in any of them the so-called appealing "traditional" lifestyle of the village so many assume today (consider, for example, the way the guide to traditional settlements that I discussed early in the chapter idealizes the village life). Also, there is not any kind of nostalgia in these images or romanticized view of a simpler, purer, or more authentic rural life that is closer to the land, one that someone from the city would happily want, desiring to stay there permanently or at least have a vacation. Contrary to today's notion of "traditional," these movie images of backward, poor rural life were once the typical examples of village life and also, in a way, explanatory of the reasons people migrated to cities or went abroad. The village was then a place to escape. Of course, the village that we today call Old Panteleimonas was, at that time, no exception.

3 Panteleimonas

In the mid-twentieth century, Panteleimonas suffered the same economic challenges that faced all rural life in Greece. Agricultural life could no longer support the remaining inhabitants of the village, and living conditions were rough, as they were, of course, in most villages at the time. In the table below, we can see the gradual decline in population – but in the 1971 census, we curiously see the sudden appearance of another village with the same name, a dramatic decline in the population of Panteleimonas, and its renaming.

Census	Population (Panteleimonas)	Population (New Panteleimonas)
1940	1,158	
1951	997	
1961	929	
1971	77 (Old Panteleimonas)	544
1981	4 (Old Panteleimonas)	848

It turns out that in 1965, the remaining inhabitants of the village petitioned the government to allow them to relocate further south, down the hill, to a newly established village to be called New Panteleimonas – with the excuse that after rainfalls, the many landslides were affecting the old village. The new location, far closer to the sea, was also hoped to boost tourism and provide new job opportunities for the locals. A number of modern hotels, restaurants, and cafés along the coast were then created so as to offer an ideal vacation destination for tourists.

Old Panteleimonas was, understandably, abandoned and left to deteriorate – prompting one to wonder how that quaint traditional house came to be my home for the night in October 2013. Also having in mind the way village life was commonly portrayed in contemporary films from earlier times, the question is what happened during the 1970s that altered, romanticized, and in many ways idealized the village life? Or we could say "traditionalized" the village? How, over that 40- or 50-year period did the term "traditional" come to change its meaning so dramatically? Answering such a query necessitates more context.

4 Going up the Mountain

As early as the 1900s, there had been interest in the architectural style of the Greek village house as a mark of a distinct Greek identity, an identity that was not only distinct from neighboring countries but also one that stretched back in time. Aristotle Zachos (1871-1939)[8] – who was born and raised in a village in what in Greece today is called FYROM (Former Yugoslav Republic of

8 He also worked along with another Greek architect Kostantinos Kitsikis with the French architect and archaeologist Ernest Hébrard (1875-1933) in the reconstruction of Thessaloniki's city center after the Great Fire of 1917 during which renovation many Ottoman and medieval features have been ignored while preserving Byzantine and Greco-Roman architecture, transforming the center into a European-styled city. See: Yerolympos, Alexander (2007). Thessaloniki before and after Ernest Hébrard. Thessaloniki. Retrieved from http://www.lpth.gr/en/ (the city's history).

Macedonia) and studied in various universities in Germany – was a prominent architect specializing in popular architecture. He published an article that contained a rhetoric that has been used ever since implicitly or explicitly to support the distinctiveness of the Greek architecture style. Among other things, he writes:

> If we look at a Greek village house of today and try to compare it directly with an ancient house, from both an aesthetic and a practical point of view, we will see that at first sight there is no resemblance. However, if we compare the modern Greek village house with its immediate historical predecessor – if we compare the house of today with a house representing the final phase of Byzantine art – we will see that there is little difference and that the Turkish conquest brought no change, because the conquerors were a purely military nation bringing with them no culture capable of exerting an influence; on the contrary, they used Greek monumental buildings such as churches, palaces and the mansions of the rich for their own purposes, and so they never felt the need to develop their own architecture except in a few cases; and even then they usually employed Greek artisans.
>
> Having thus demonstrated the connection between contemporary popular architecture and Byzantine art, it is obvious that by continuing backwards through history we arrive at ancient Greek art. Numerous examples of the authentic Greek village house of the northern region survive in a large area around Mount Olympus and the Pindos range, in other words in the very area where authentic Greek popular poetry flourished and the national traditions lived on most strongly. If we would like to have a really genuine contemporary Greek style of architecture with a purely Greek aesthetic, what we should study is precisely that type of Greek house in all its forms. Because the architecture we are now in the habit of calling Neohellenic, that is the houses we see in Athens, is nothing other than Italian Renaissance architecture, an interloper in our midst. It is artificial, laying false claim to a so-called ancient Greek style not derived from our feeling for life (way of living) and thus not connected with our national traditions.[9]

9 Retrieved from a bilingual (Greek, English) publication of the Benaki Museum entitled *Epirus – Thessaly – Macedonia: Through the lens of Aristotle Zachos: 1915-1931*. Benaki Museum, 2007.

From the above excerpt, it is evident that the rhetoric of tradition works because the things that are identified as enduring and timeless, such as the Greek village house, are found so far in the distant past that there is no actual evidence for the claims. That is, the evidence that does remain is itself vague and general, such as the so-called Byzantine style. So, the distance we go back to find the enduring identity of what is said to be an authentic traditional village in northern Greece is indicative of the empirical differences from which a group's rhetoric has to distract us. Other architectural styles that are found in Greece, no less, are examples, at least according to Zachos. The neoclassicism of Athens and the Ottoman architecture (though not mentioned) are two such examples and are not indicative to be characterized as "authentically" Greek. Furthermore, for this rhetoric of unique but enduring identity to work, the Greek village house of this text had to be disconnected from any associations it might have had with the Ottoman Empire's long presence and influences in the region. Instead, it should be linked to an even further removed past of a glorious era, that is, the Byzantine period, since that would provide the enduring existence of Greeks in the area, despite the occasional (and sometimes enduring) presence of others.

Even though the use of the term "tradition" is seen by many scholars as an unreflective habit, at least in the way insiders of various traditions understand it, when we pay closer attention, then we may see that a lot of work has been done not only to establish what we call a tradition (or something to be regarded as traditional), but also a great effort to maintain it as such. And the effort to "traditionalize" something does not necessarily refer to the efforts of previous generations and our desire to preserve them and their choices, but with regard to continually changing interests in the present. That is, although Zachos writes about the "authentic" Greek village house in early 1900s in general terms, he does not identify a specific style, but simply juxtaposes it to that of the Ottoman Empire, thereby defining identity by what something is not. This is understandable in that he writes at a time when the interest of the newly emerged nation-states in Europe (recall that he had studied in Germany) was to create, through various means (e.g., public ceremonies, flags, literature, music, styles of dress, and, of course, architecture) the impression of national distinctiveness and homogeneity. In the successive years, various names have been used to identify this unique "village house" architecture, such as "popular," "anonymous," and "vernacular," each one doing slightly different work. By the 1970s, even though there was specialization of the various vernacular architectural styles that can by identified in various regions of Greece, and despite their differences in style, the common denominator that is said to justify their Greekness lies in the remote past. Architects drew inspi-

ration either from what they identified as Byzantine architecture or ancient Greek.

Well-known Greek architect Nikos Moutsopoulos (born in 1927 in Athens[10]) specialized in the Macedonian architecture that can be found in the northern part of Greece. Recognizing, but nonetheless minimizing the ambiguity among styles, he writes: "The vernacular architecture of a region does not present itself with clear boundaries and readily apparent roots. In the Macedonian vernacular architecture, in its most developed form, we can detect, with caution, two roots each with different origins."[11] According to Moutsopoulos, then, one point of common origin is the ancient Greek style and the other the Byzantine. He therefore goes on to say, "The Macedonian architecture owes most of its characteristics to the Byzantine tradition, to the Byzantine house, which, as we know, in most cases was multistory."[12] Even though architecture, as a discipline, showed an interest in village houses as far back as the early 1900s and especially after the 1940s (following similar trends in Europe[13]), the term "traditional" was widely used only after the above-mentioned 1978 Presidential Enactment (entitled "Characterization of Housing Estates as Traditional"). Soon after, it became evident that in order for the enactment to take effect in the consciousness of the people of Greece, the public had to be sensitized, and, so, the term "traditional" was used to do the heavy lifting. It is likely no coincidence, then, that in 1980 we have the publication of an eight-volume work (completed in the beginning of 1990) entitled, "Traditional Architecture," which catalogued the various regions of Greece and identified their diverse (but shared) architecture. In the introduction of the first volume, we learn that one of the main reasons for the project was not just to inform specialists

10 He studied architecture at the National Technical University of Athens. He also holds a degree from the Theological School of Aristotle University of Thessaloniki in which he later taught a course in Christian archaeology and art. Since 1958, he has been professor at the Polytechnic School of Aristotle University.

11 "Η λαϊκή αρχιτεκτονική ενός τόπου δεν εμφανίζει πάντοτε όρια σαφή και ρίζες ευκολοδιάκριτες. Στη μακεδονική λαϊκή αρχιτεκτονική, στην πιο εξελιγμένη της μορφή, μπορούμε με επιφύλαξι να αναγνωρίσουμε δυο δρόμους, με ολοωσδιόλου διαφορετική καταγωγή τον καθένα ..." (Μουτσόπουλος 1971: 28).

12 "Τα περισσότερα όμως στοιχεία η μακεδονική αρχιτεκτονική οφείλει στη βυζαντινή παράδοση, στο βυζαντινό σπίτι, που όμως γνωρίζουμε, συχνά ήταν πολυόροφο" (Μουτσόπουλος 1971: 33).

13 See for example the Athens Charter of 1931, Venice Charter of 1964, which resulted in the foundation of ICOMOS (International Council on Monuments and Sites), a UNESCO brand that dealt mainly with the preservation and protection of historical settlements all across Europe (for more information on ICOMOS see http://www.icomos.org/en/about-icomos/mission-and-vision/history).

in the field. Rather, it was mainly intended to educate the public, "to promote researches around the traditional (παραδοσιακή) architecture, offering *for the first time* (my emphasis) a complete and systematic overview – as much as that was possible – of the architecture of the main prefectures of our country."[14] Of course, that the term "παραδοσιακή" was used and known so widely among Greeks, from the mid-1970s onward, was the result of various other political and social conditions as well. Thus to understand, as some scholars do, "tradition" or "traditional" as something that self-evidently exists in the world and then moves unchanged through time therefore entirely misses the point and, instead of examining, actually legitimizes the social processes that create the very phenomena classified under those categories. This is a process that, when not examined critically, amounts to a lot of energy and a great deal of investment that help to create an individual's and a group's sense of enduring, unchanging identity.[15]

But in order to understand how those categories were put to use and the worlds they made possible, we need to place them not only in the Greek context that followed World War II, as we have done, but also into the wider, surrounding context; that is, the setting of post-war Europe. For, ever since the end of World War II, there had been movements and discussions towards the formation of a European unity. The Declaration of European Identity[16] in 1973, for example, is among the first documents to consider an initiative towards a common European identity. According to this declaration, among the three things that would define European identity was "reviewing the common heritage" of the nine countries initially involved in the constitution of the union. During the same decade, a European initiative provided funding for reconstructions and development and thus motivation for European countries to begin to look at their cultural artifacts. Those in support of a common European union were therefore trying to find the common denominator that could unite the otherwise diverse countries that were to become part of this new social movement. The search for a suitable, common past is what helps to legitimate present needs (see Hobsbawm 1972: 3-17). It is therefore significant that 1975 was declared by the European Council "European Year of Architectural

14 "Να προωθήσει τις έρευνες γύρω απο την παραδοσιακή αρχιτεκτονική, με το να δώσει για πρώτη φορά μια όσο το δυνατό πλήρη και συστηματική εικόνα της αρχιτεκτονικής των κυριότερων διαμερισμάτων της χώρας" (Φιλιππίδης 1982: 3).

15 While at the same time we have to keep in mind that "nothing springs from the ground fully formed" (McCutcheon 2003: xi).

16 Declaration of European Identity, in *Bulletin of the European communities*. December 1973, No. 12: 118-122.

Heritage," with the motto (notice the plural possessive pronoun) "A future for our past."[17] In the charter – which consists of 10 resolutions – that was drawn in regards to the year of "Architectural Heritage" we read:

> 1. *The European architectural heritage consists not only of our most important monuments: it also includes the groups of lesser buildings in our old towns and characteristic villages in their natural or manmade settings*. For many years, only major monuments were protected and restored and then without reference to their surroundings. More recently it was realized that, if the surroundings are impaired, even those monuments can lose much of their character. Today it is recognized that entire groups of buildings, even if they do not include any example of outstanding merit, may have an atmosphere that gives them the quality of works of art, welding different periods and styles into a harmonious whole. Such groups should also be preserved. The architectural heritage is an expression of history and helps us to understand the relevance of the past to contemporary life.
> 2. *The past as embodied in the architectural heritage provides the sort of environment indispensable to a balanced and complete life.* In the face of a rapidly changing civilization, in which brilliant successes are accompanied by grave perils, people today have an instinctive feeling for the value of this heritage.
>
> This heritage should be passed on to future generations in its authentic state and in all its variety as an essential part of the memory of the human race. Otherwise, part of man's awareness of his own continuity will be destroyed.[18]

Here we have an example of a search for a simpler, shared past that could serve as the site of nostalgia in the present, for the authenticity and beauty of a certain type of life and identity, one that was closer to nature; it is a romanticized past which, or so the document asserts, has been eliminated or distorted by quickly changing modernity and industrialization (i.e., "rapidly changing civilization"). This assertion (dare I say creation?) of a common nostalgia that could unite the otherwise differing European countries eventually – and with

17 Council of Europe (2001). *The Council of Europe and Cultural Heritage 1954-2000*, 11. Germany: Council of Europe Publishing.

18 http://www.icomos.org/en/charters-and-texts/179-articles-en-francais/ressources/charters-and-standards/170-european-charter-of-the-architectural-heritage (retrieved September 2, 2014).

criteria that had to be strictly followed by the countries involved, each with their own interests and agendas, of course – found its materialization (i.e., embodiment) in those sometimes decaying rural villages.

Efforts, of course, for the protection and preservation of heritage (the name by which the discourse on tradition went in this document) were ongoing and involved various institutions. For instance, in 1972, the General Conference of UNESCO met in Paris to decide on a convention concerning the protection of the world cultural and natural heritage. The first article of the convention defines "cultural heritage" as:

> *monuments:* architectural works, works of monumental sculpture and painting, elements or structures of an archaeological nature, inscriptions, cave dwellings and combinations of features, which are of outstanding universal value from the point of view of history, art or science;
> *groups of buildings:* groups of separate or connected buildings which, because of their architecture, their homogeneity or their place in the landscape, are of outstanding universal value from the point of view of history, art or science;
> *sites:* works of man or the combined works of nature and man, and areas including archaeological sites which are of outstanding universal value from the historical, aesthetic, ethnological or anthropological point of view.[19]

UNESCO also set criteria for those countries, whose members could apply for funds under this act in order to preserve and restore those monuments, groups of buildings, and sites that were now classified as "cultural heritage." Criteria for naming something as heritage or traditional were set both by the UNESCO program and the European Union (EU) but also by the various countries, including Greece.

As indicated above, at the same time, Greece was trying to acquire a distinct sense of its own identity within what was then the newly emerging commonality of the EU, doing so with reference to its glorious ancient past and its collective continuity with it. Between the 1960s and especially after the fall of the Greek dictatorship (1967-1973) – which exhibited a particular admiration for anything Classical and leaned towards Neoclassicism like most dictatorships in Europe – the "village" and the idea of being traditional was gradually resignified and it became the site of a new identification, that of authentic

19 http://whc.unesco.org/en/conventiontext/.

Greekness. What the traditional village represents is the authentic and genuine Greek identity and its struggles during the Ottoman rule. For example, in the ninth issue of the architectural journal *Αρχιτεκτονικά Θέματα* ("Architectural Issues"), a yearly journal that dedicated its 1975 issue to "The Preservation of Architectural Heritage," Panagiotis Komilis argues that between the 16th and 18th centuries there had been a significant population movement from the valleys to mountainous and semi-mountainous areas as well as islands. According to the author, "[s]uch movement is attributed to a) the need for protection from military operations and attacks and b) the desire to avoid the burdens and oppressing exploitation from the Ottoman landowners in a feudalistic system" (92). Although we don't know for sure the reasons for such movements, Komilis's second suggestion is still very prominent among Greeks today.[20]

But which villages in Greece, of all the rural villages, represented this "authentic and genuine Greek identity" was something that had to be determined. So, in the same issue of the periodical, there is an extensive article concerning the results of a study commissioned at the beginning of 1960s by the Ministry of Internal Affairs and that involved 10 architectural offices – each one of those was assigned a region of Greece – in order to suggest villages whose historic value was worthy of state protection. The study states that according to EL-STAT (the Hellenistic Statistic Authority), in 1975 there were 11,400 settlements in Greece, 2000 of which the study proposed as worthy of state protection under three categories: 1. ΒΠ1 (complete protection), 2. ΒΠ2 (significant protection), 3. ΒΠ3 (limited protection). The criteria (which, the study admits, received different interpretations from the various offices that were assigned the project) for the evaluation of the settlements were the following three:

1. The value of the settlement: historic value (an important role that the settlement played in a specific historic period, representative settlement of a specific time period), aesthetic value (harmony of the settlement with the natural environment, homogeneity of the elements that comprise the whole, human scale, characteristic expression of an era, of a way of life, etc.), cultural value (the social educational role of the settlement, promotion of its Greek character on the international level, etc.)
2. Potential development and profit: the benefits that are expected from the protection could be: 1) of national interest (promotion and stimulation of Hellenism, especially in the boarders), 2) of cultural benefit (stimulation of the spiritual and cultural level of Greeks with their information for their cultural heritage, etc), 3) of social value (improvement of the natural habitat

20 And it may not be coincidental that during the 1970s there was a big production of folklore movies; that is movies of village life during the Ottoman rule.

and the way of life of the residents of the settlement), and 4) of economic pay-off (economic profit of the protected settlements, e.g., their touristic exploitation)

3. Possibility of their protection: considered here is the degree of the preservation or distortion or the possibility of reinstatement in their original form and the possibility of preservation and continuous protection. Those possibilities should be considered simultaneously from both technical and economic perspective.[21]

Of interest is that the office that was assigned the region of East Macedonia and Thrace exempted from the study the region's settlements associated with Turks and Pomacs for the following reasoning:

> The measures that we propose above concern Greek Christian settlements. The Turks and the Pomacs must be left completely free to build their houses in their own way. It is the best protection that can be offered, because not only the old (houses) but also the new follow the same spirit. Only for a few is suggested ΒΠ1 and ΒΠ2 and only to the best settlement of each group, so that it is preserved intact for historical reasons.[22]

It may be of no surprise that such a policy of exclusion was proposed. Those settlements were and still serve as the foreign "Other" in one's midst, the measure against which the "Greek Christian settlements" could be identified as unified inasmuch as they were all seen to be different and distinct from this Other. And all this, to paraphrase Jean-Francois Bayart, "amounts to conferring the anachronistic meaning" through the rhetoric of tradition, on buildings made centuries ago and with a set of criteria that were "recruiting them for battles that were then unimaginable" (2005: 75).

What followed the results of this study was the 1978 Presidential Enactment (PE), which was the first to provide a list of 300 villages – out of the 2000 that were initially identified by the study – that were characterized as "traditional." Also – and more interesting for our purposes – the enactment gave detailed instructions on what could be restored, and how, always under the supervision and approval of the "Commission Exercising Architectural Verification" (*Επιτροπή Ενασκήσεως Αρχιτεκτονικού Ελέγχου*). This was the first time in Greece that "traditional" was used to distinguish between various types and statuses of villages, at least in official government documents. But after the 1978 enactment, the term, which was used sparingly in the discipline of architecture

21 *Αρχιτεκτονικά Θέματα*, τεύχος 9 (1975), 114.

22 *Αρχιτεκτονικά Θέματα*, τεύχος 9 (1975), 156.

up to that point, gained ground and books that previously would have titles such "anonymous" or "vernacular"[23] architecture more consistently started using the term "traditional" (such as the 1980 volume that was mentioned previously). Of course, as the cultural and the aesthetic sensitivities change, so does the list of the 1978 PE, which was followed by others (e.g., 1979, 1985, 1986, 1989, 1999, 2000, 2002) and the list of authorized traditional villages is now ever-growing.

Despite the economic benefits that a village would gain by its characterization as traditional, public sensibility concerning the importance of preservation – of what the state and the European Union characterized as "cultural heritage" – was not immediate. There were occasions when people asked their village to be de-classified as "traditional" so that the villages would not be restrained in the way that they wanted to restore or rebuild their houses.[24]

The need to sensitize the public and educate them on the importance of their culture, therefore, became a main concern during the 1970s. The Greek state supported private associations that were interested in the preservation of folklore life, either by granting them financial support or allowing them to exhibit their collections in buildings deemed to be of historic value and which were under state protection. Most if not all folklore museums in Greece are thus fairly recent, founded between 1975-1980, and serve "to teach the urban public about the indigenous folk sources of their culture and to generate support (financial or otherwise) for folklore research" (Handler et al. 1984: 279).

Gradually, interest in the "cultural heritage" of the country gained ground, but the state's efforts to sensitize its citizens in matters of folklore coincided with another factor. People who left their villages during the 1950s and 60s, seeking a better life in the urban centers, began to develop a nostalgia for their villages, a nostalgia that was transferred to their children, who also developed a romanticized view of their families' past in the village.[25] And it was mainly the emigrants from the villages who then started to form groups and societies in order to "preserve" the history and traditions of their homeland's[26] (i.e.,

23 For example, Μαρκόπουλος, Γλαύκος Μ. (1975). *Η Λαϊκή μας Αρχιτεκτονική* (Our vernacular architecture). Αθήνα: Αρχαίος Εκδοτικός Οίκος; Τομπάζης, Α. Ν. (1969). Ανώνυμη Ελληνική Αρχιτεκτονική (Anonymous hellenic architecture). *Αρχιτεκτονικά Θέματα* 3: 17-74.

24 *Αρχιτεκτονικά Θέματα*, τεύχος 9 (1975): 143.

25 To this day, many metropolitan Greeks retain close ties with their familial village, traveling there for holidays, burials, etc.

26 Of interest and of no coincidence is that the "Folklore and Ethnological Museum of Macedonia and Thrace" in Thessaloniki was initiated in 1957 (and eventually became a public corporation [ΝΠΔΔ] in 1970) by members of the Macedonian Educational Brotherhood

village's) music, dances, cooking, etc. – that is, their "traditions." Eventually, the economic benefits (funded both by the EU and the Greek state) – such as low-interest loans to fund authorized renovations – which were given to people whose villages or houses could be characterized as "traditional" resulted in an archival quest by people, for there was now a need to find historical evidence of the significance of a village or a house.

Accordingly, villages deemed traditional if they were closer to the set of assumptions that city people had concerning authentic rural life, or what for the European community would count as traditional, or if they fit the criteria set by the state. Those villages, gradually, saw a growth in their population and economy as people began to restore their ancestral village houses in the now-appropriate architectural styles in order to attract more tourists (see for example Noyes 2009) – at which point our story returns to that abandoned village at the top of the hill, near Mount Olympus.

Old Panteleimonas was one among the 300 villages that made it to the 1978 Presidential Enactment's list of "Characterization of Housing Estates as Traditional" and its entire region, as indicated above, is now under the protection of UNESCO. To be sure, interest by its current residents to restore and renovate what is, for them, their parents' village (for a generation had by now passed) was not immediate. The people of New Panteleimonas started to show interest in their ancestors' decaying village at the top of the hill as recently as 1990; the nearby Yugoslavian war (1991-1999) negatively affected their hopes for an increase in seaside tourism, so they instead saw the village as an alternative tourist destination mainly for Greek vacationers from the city. And so, the residents of New Panteleimonas began applying for funding to restore (αναπαλαιώνω = to make old again) their long-abandoned houses at the top of the hill, on many occasions turning them into quaint hotel-styled accommodations or opening souvenir stores, restaurants, and cafés that would offer visitors a taste of "authentic Greek traditions." And it was in one of these that I found myself that evening in October of 2013, when the village did not reopen until sometime after 8 o'clock each morning.

5 Conclusion

What we may now begin to understand about claims of tradition from the tale of these two villages that share the same name but rather different histories –

(ΜΦΑ [Μακεδονική Φιλεκπεδευτική Αδελφότητα]) of Istanbul who after the exchange of population in 1922 relocated in Thessaloniki.

one that closes at night and where no one really lives – is how strategic social actors construct their representations of the past to suit their present social, economic, and political needs, and how they authorize their present by linking it to a past *that suits these practical interests*. What should also be evident is that when it comes to studying people's traditions and the stuff of which they are made, scholars should not simply reproduce people's own claims about tradition that is, portraying it as something handed down to them from the past and for their safe keeping. For as was evident from the above example, the construction of "traditional villages" is far more complicated than asserting, as do the people whom we study, that traditions are static and delivered to them from the past. Instead, what one might call tradition was and is the continuous working result at various social sites and institutions within and outside Greece, invoking their very modern criteria for what gets to count as "traditional." Tradition is the result of entrepreneurial social actors who try to fit into their new recreation of the "old" (i.e., in their *αναπαλαίωση*, which means exactly to make old again) village the assumptions and expectations of the tourists. Tradition is now seen to be the outcome of a kind of instant-aging process, a recreation (αναπαλαίωση) that has to provide not only a certain imaginaire of how the past ought to look based on the criteria set by the state but also to provide the comforts, standards, and safety of the modern living.

When I visited Greece the summer of 2013 to conduct research at the office of *Architecture and Traditional Settlements* of the Ministry of YPEKA (Ministry of Environment Energy & Climate Change), I was told that there is an ongoing specialization and study of the settlements of the various prefectures with new criteria and new morphologic rules, since there might be deviation from what is considered "traditional." Although the official representatives of the state speak of deviation, we, as scholars, should instead have in mind what Bayart writes about the concept of authenticity:

> Authenticity is not established by the immanent properties of the phenomenon or object under consideration. It results from the perspective, full of desire and judgments, that is brought to bear on the past, in the eminently contemporary context in which one is situated. (2005: 78)

In recent years, as the aesthetic values have changed, it has become clear that the traditional villages were becoming too "authentic," that is, they were too homogeneous or in some cases too touristy, something that, according to the architects and the state officials, was weathering and withering the essence of those villages. In order to deal with these effects, the state promoted – espe-

cially after the 1990s – the idea of agritourism.[27] It is a trend that had already spread in other European countries and which was supported by the European Union with economic programs such as LEADER I, II, and PLUS. With these programs, the European Union aimed at finding effective ways to help local economies, especially in countries such as Greece, Spain, Italy, and Portugal.[28]

How has that most recent innovation impacted the village of Old Panteleimonas? A few years ago, the Greek government issued a decision for Old Panteleimonas that it would not issue any more permits for the opening of cafes, restaurants, and hotels. Instead, the decision was to encourage people to turn to alternative forms of business, preferably a return to agriculture (and therefore agritourism) that would promote or enhance the traditional way of living. So the people of New Panteleimonas, who already had their businesses in Old Panteleimonas, were encouraged to do such things as cultivate silk, something that their ancestors did years ago. This, however, brought new problems. There were no local experts left to tell them how to cultivate silk. This required that they had to seek guidance from other parts of Greece where silk cultivation was already taking place. In addition, they also would have to create a co-op with modern facilities and, of course, a good final product[29] if they wanted not just to be traditional but also competitive in the international market.

What now is evident is that words such as "traditional," much like "authentic," "heritage," or "original" and the like, are social constructions, always evidence of invention, signified and resignified in the present. The discourse on tradition, then, is a mode of discourse that people use in order to gain benefits, whether social, economic, or otherwise. It should be evident also that there is no one center that creates and controls the results of these processes, i.e., the things we call traditions. Rather, various interrelated centers are working towards that direction and for their own purposes and interests (that may or may not overlap). UNESCO (and its partner ICOMOS), a worldwide organization, was established in 1945 (that is, after World War II and going into the so-called Cold War period) in an effort to prevent another world war by creating the idea of a united mankind through the protection of world heritage sites, among other things. The European Union was trying, for yet other political and economic reasons, to find among the countries that constituted it a common

27 On the importance of tourism for the European Union, visit: http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/sectors/tourism/background/index_en.htm.

28 Council Regulation (EEC) No 797/85 of 12 March 1985 on improving the efficiency of agricultural structures.

29 Unlike their parents and grandparents, for whom a cocoon of silk would suffice to live for a year.

ground. Greece, as part of the European Union, was, among other countries, trying to find not only its own marks of distinctive identity but also ways to fit into the European Union's vision of "a common future for our past." For the residents of New Panteleimonas, "tradition" became a useful anachronistic tool that enabled them to revive their local economy within an ever-changing and, in many ways, uncontrollable world. All these are interconnected, though not necessarily complementary, motive forces that led to the invention of "traditional villages" in Greece.

Unless we want to be merely descriptive, our analysis of historical processes ought to be something different than simply repeating the anachronisms social actors use to anchor their present. We should, instead, look at all the other variants (e.g., political and economic changes in Greece, the role of EU and its relation to Greece, UNESCO, etc.) that were in place, prompting these people to turn their attention – by traveling back up the mountain – to their brand new "traditional" village. "Tradition" should therefore not be seen as something static and antique, but rather as a process in the present that amasses a lot of energy and requires a lot of investment and effort to maintain it. So apart from the various institutional circles (EU and UNESCO) which, for their own purposes, initiated an interest towards heritage in Greece, both the people and the state developed for their own reasons and purposes a discourse on what it means to be part of a tradition, and of course the discourse on traditional houses/villages served that purpose.

This anachronistic strategy, which is useful for authorizing specific and contemporary social arrangements, is not unique or limited either to Greek villages or to the discourse of tradition. It can be accomplished with words and in scholarship and not with just government-approved building materials.[30] In a 1990 essay, Russell McCutcheon offers a caution for critical scholars to be self-reflexive when studying such processes, and thus to be aware of the limits of *their* conceptual tools and the manner in which they are themselves the makers of what is old again (that is, of a certain type of αναπαλαίωση) when they use modern concepts such as "religion" or "the west" and then project them backwards in time as if they had always been there, as if those concepts have come to us unchanged. In other words, they fail to recognize that the discourse on "religion" or "the west" – and I would add to that the discourse on "tradition" – is, as McCutcheon phrases it, "part of *our* cosmographic formation"

30 See for example the creation of tradition in Quebec: Handler, Richard and Jocelyn Linnekin (1984). Tradition, genuine or spurious? *Journal of American Folklore* 97: 273-290; also, Lowenthal, David (1998). Fabricating heritage. *History and Memory* 10: 5-24.

(2015: 217), an anachronistic strategy that makes possible a certain identification in the present. Thus, looking at Old Panteleimonas's "traditional" houses and trying to study them as something precious handed down from the past, that people today try to preserve and restore because they belong to their "tradition" or to their ancestors, is likely not very helpful. Such an approach does not allow us to look at all the other motive forces that were in place for people to turn their attention to the "traditional" village conceived in this specific way. Furthermore, although the village at the top of that hill may have been abandoned in favor of hopes for a seaside tourist destination, it never remained in its past form and past usage. For some people in the new village at its base, it may have been seen as an irrelevant artifact in their everyday lives (and thus not seen at all). Once people returned to the village in order to restore the houses and thus to revive the "old" days, they did not time-travel and neither did they just pick up where their parents or grandparents left off. There was nothing self-evidently of significance left there to return to, nothing of use to them that was handed down and thus to be received, because the minute people decided to return, something new was already emerging – something that was idealized, romanticized, monetized, and mostly imagined in order to meet new needs and interests unforeseen, even unimagined by predecessors. Despite peoples' understanding to the contrary, "old" things, which are used to serve present needs and interests, are always new, suggesting that the return to Old Panteleimonas was not a return after all.

Looking at "traditional" villages in Greece, we may begin to understand that the terms "traditional" and "tradition" do not possess an essential characteristic or meaning that transcends time, and neither do they name actions that possess such a status, but it seems that traditional, much like authentic/original and the like, is an ongoing social construction, always invented and renewed in the present. It is a term people use to suggest a quality, employed in order to gain benefits, whether social or economic. Despite people's claims that their traditions have a connection to the past:

> [t]raditions are social creations embedded in the present to justify or validate a particular ideological or political claim ... and as Hobsbawm argued traditions occur most frequently in times of rapid social transformation. Wherever old social patterns are undermined or destroyed, it becomes necessary to develop new models to ground the changing and the ambiguous. (Hughes 2005: 54)

A tradition thus could be understood as a need for a constant social effort towards the creation of a body of things whose perceived traditional quality

can eventually unify people around a common identity and a shared sense of the past and future.

Therefore, we can conclude that nothing from the past is important or authoritative in its own right but, rather, all we may have are change, accident, and unintended consequences; these, as well as mixes of agency (i.e., people's present interests and needs, for example Greeks trying to find their identity within Greece and the EU) and structure (EU, UNESCO, wars, new economic opportunities, etc.), are what needs to be managed with a tradition discourse. People's discourse on tradition and traditional things to which, by reference to a chosen and often imagined past, a group attributes value and ascribes identity – therefore helps to create a sense of common belonging (Grieve et al. 2005: 3). "Traditioning" acts, they are what Bayart calls "operational acts of identification" (2005: 92). For the European Union, "tradition" or "cultural heritage" was a handy strategy to unite what had up to then been seen as divergent groups under the same rubric, despite their cultural disparities and differences. The same can be said for Greece: "traditional" was made to serve as a unifying category both within the nation but also within the broader European context and its demands. For the people of New Panteleimonas, "traditional" and "old" became synonymous with a new economic opportunity and it was this new opportunity – meeting criteria set by the state and the EU – that is actually represented in the architecture of that little village that is a few kilometers up the hill. "Traditional," to paraphrase Bayart (who was talking about authenticity), "is less a matter of conferring or identifying than of making: making something new with something old and sometimes," in the case of what we now name Old Panteleimonas, "also making something old with something new." In the end, we could say that it is but one more instance of, as he concludes, "making Self with the Other" (2005: 96).