



*Routledge Studies in Modern European History*

# THESSALONIKI

**A CITY IN TRANSITION, 1912–2012**

Edited by  
Dimitris Keridis and John Kiesling



# Introduction

## Continuities and discontinuities in the transition from imperial to national order

*Dimitris Keridis*

The publication of *Thessaloniki: A city in transition 1912–2012* fulfils a promise made by the Organizing Committee as the international conference of that name came to a close on October 21, 2012, in Thessaloniki. This four-day conference was the chief scholarly event marking the one-hundredth anniversary of the liberation of Thessaloniki from Ottoman rule in 1912. It featured dozens of presentations in Greek and English and a series of round table discussions on the past, present, and future of Thessaloniki, attended by hundreds of Thessaloniki residents and foreign visitors. The high quality of the papers submitted, the broad range of subject matter they covered, and their utility for the historiography of Thessaloniki, were an irresistible argument for publishing them, first in Greek and now at last in English for an international audience.

Our city was founded by Cassander, son-in-law of Alexander the Great, in honor of his half-sister Thessaloniki. It counts a history of twenty-three centuries of unbroken urban continuity from Hellenistic times to the present. Often the second city of the empire but never the first, Thessaloniki was a magnet for heretics and radicals escaping the limitations imposed by the capital: Zealots of the late Byzantine period, the cabbalists of Sabbatai Zevi, the Young Turks, Federation socialists of Avraam Benaroya, and most recently the demoticists of modern Greece.

The Christian community of Thessaloniki, the second oldest in Europe after that of nearby Philippi, was founded by the Apostle Paul himself, who wrote two of his famous epistles to his Thessalonian brethren. From Thessaloniki came Cyril and Methodius, the evangelists of the Slavs, and here too preached the Hesychast Gregorios Palamas, a key shaper of Orthodox Christian tradition. Thessaloniki was the birthplace of Mustapha Kemal, founder of the modern Turkish Republic, and of many other key figures in the Young Turk and Kemalist movements. At the beginning of the twentieth century, Thessaloniki was at the center of the great upheavals that dismantled the Ottoman Empire and created modern southeast Europe.

The entry of the Greek army into Thessaloniki in October 1912 was a key event of the First Balkan War, shaping the modern history of Greece and the southern Balkans. With Thessaloniki and its Macedonian hinterland, Greece doubled its territory and resources, expanded its borders and its horizons, and hastened its

## 2 *Dimitris Keridis*

urban modernization. Greece was no longer an insignificant state at the tip of the Balkan peninsula; instead it claimed a leading role in the eastern Mediterranean.

The year 1912 represented a sharp break in the history of the city as well. The transition, however, was not completely abrupt. Thessaloniki retained its Turkish mayor for a decade after 1912. During the World War I the city reached the high point of its doomed cosmopolitanism, when its Jewish, Christian, and Muslim residents found themselves living side by side with tens of thousands of Entente soldiers on the 'Balkan Front'.

The Asia Minor Catastrophe of 1922 followed, with the 1923 exchange of populations, and then the horrific extermination of almost all its numerous Jewish communities by the Nazis in 1943. These tragedies were followed by impressive successes, such as the assimilation of the refugees from Anatolia, industrialization and economic growth during the interwar years, and evolution as a modern metropolis and center of commerce and education. Thessaloniki developed as essentially the only urban counterweight to Athens and the hydrocephalous Greek state. The opening of the borders with Eastern Europe after 1989 and the arrival of economic migrants changed the face of the city once again.

The modern form of Thessaloniki results from three major developments: the urban planning interventions of late Ottoman reformers who aspired to free the city from its medieval past and turn it into a modern Mediterranean port; the great fire of 1917, which destroyed its historic center and allowed Ernest Hébrard to redesign it as a Greek city; and finally, the frequently anarchic construction boom of the first post-WWII decades and the attempts of Konstantinos Karamanlis to preserve and, if possible, reinforce its metropolitan character (new sea front, university campus, port, etc.).

The 1917 catastrophe left the Upper City and a handful of monuments in the Lower City as reminders of continuity with the Ottoman and Byzantine past, while the villas of the eastern 'extensions' symbolized the city's commercial prosperity at the end of the nineteenth century. Ambitious plans for reshaping the city center withstood the pressure of building contractors and property speculators in a few cases only, such as the monumental Aristotle square with the rectangular and diagonal street grid surrounding it. The display and conservation of surviving historic monuments reflected a nationalist agenda that emphasized the city's Roman-Byzantine rather than Ottoman heritage.

In short, Thessaloniki is a city with strong 'continuities' reflecting its long and glorious history, but equally strong 'discontinuities'. These continuities and discontinuities of a city in transition were the focus of the conference and are the chief thematic axis of the book you are reading.

At the beginning of the summer of 2011, new Thessaloniki mayor Giannis Boutaris invited a group of active Thessalonians, under the leadership of businessman Stavros Andreadis, to draw up a new plan for commemorating the centennial of the liberation of Thessaloniki. Ambitious early ideas had fallen victim to the economic crisis and various organizational weaknesses. Fortunately, the idea of a large, open international conference survived intact. Initial planning had focused on the city's Greekness but, as reconsidered, the conference would

become the opportunity for a genuine international encounter that would highlight new approaches to the city's rich, diverse past and confirm Thessaloniki's place in international historical bibliography. The support of a dynamic mayor with a fresh concept of Thessaloniki was a strong guarantee for the success of the enterprise.

The conference became an exercise in self-knowledge for Thessaloniki through a convergence of modern historiographic currents with the related social sciences: social anthropology, economics, law, international relations, political science, archaeology, architecture, city planning, and the arts. We called on the help of distinguished Greek academics and of foreign scholars from neighboring or distant countries, including Bulgaria, Turkey, Israel, and the United States. The enthusiastic response proved that Thessaloniki still has power to inspire.

No other Greek city and very few in southeast Europe can boast so rich a historiography as modern Thessaloniki. Some studies have had global success, particularly the landmark *Salonica: City of ghosts* by Mark Mazower (2004), still widely available after fifteen years in print. Mazower's book has been translated into several languages and enjoyed great commercial success because its main subject, the transition from the imperial past to the nation-state present, remains a subject with global appeal, especially after the explosion of interest in nationalism and ethnic identities that followed the end of the Cold War in 1989.

Thessaloniki and its recent history constitute outstanding raw material for a narrative of that transition. The key drama centers on nationalism and liberalism as the two principal modernist ideologies. Old Thessaloniki, where different religions, languages, and ethnic groups coexisted under the autocratic rule of the Ottomans, with strict social stratification and guild organization of the economy its chief characteristic, was shaken by the infiltration of western capitalism, the progress of industrialization, and the arrival of new radical concepts of rights, including national rights.

At the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth centuries, Thessaloniki was at the center of developments aimed at creating a new, post-imperial order. This was a result both of history and geography. From its founding, it was a major port and important commercial crossroads. After the 1878 Congress of Berlin, it found itself, as capital of the Ottoman province of Macedonia, at the center of colliding efforts to preserve or obliterate Turkey's shrinking foothold in Europe.

The westernmost and most exposed large city of the Empire, Thessaloniki emerged as the headquarters of the Young Turk movement. It is no accident that the Young Turk leadership originated in the city and surrounding region, that the Young Turk revolution broke out in this specific city in July 1908, that the Young Turks drew from it the forces that crushed the counterrevolution that broke out in Istanbul in April 1909, and that it was here that Abdul Hamid was exiled, since only here could they be sure the deposed sultan would be hard put to find local allies.

In this context, it is worth repeating that Thessaloniki was the birthplace of Mustapha Kemal, the future Atatürk, founder of the modern Turkish Republic. Raised in a multi-ethnic and cosmopolitan imperial city gradually encircled by

the hostile nationalisms of the bordering Christian states, with an insecure hinterland ravaged by the struggles between Bulgarian Exarchists and Greek followers of the Patriarch, exposed him from a young age to modernist ideas of progress, science, and nationalism, Atatürk distilled the ideas but also the contradictions of Young Turk nationalism. Already in 1907 he was proposing the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire and the creation of a Turkish national state through an exchange of populations (Hanioğlu 2011, 37). The irony was that the applying of such a policy would turn Atatürk himself and most of the Muslims of Ottoman Macedonia into refugees. Atatürk would go on to build a Turkish state in Asia Minor, which until the end of World War I he had never visited and knew little about.

Atatürk's personal journey demonstrates the role of Thessaloniki and Ottoman Macedonia's place in the rise of the Young Turks and Turkish nationalism and to the creation of Turkey amid the ruins of the collapsed Ottoman Empire. Şükrü Hanioğlu, the prominent Turkish historian of the late Ottoman period, called Thessaloniki the womb from which both the key ideas and the leading characters of post-Ottoman Turkey were bred, gestated, and hatched, with all this implies for the history of the broader Near and Middle East.<sup>1</sup>

However, Thessaloniki in the decades prior to 1912 was not solely or even chiefly Muslim. The dominant element, in population, wealth, and culture, was the Jewish community. That community could not remain isolated from developments, whether local or international. The crisis of the Ottoman Empire, suspense regarding its future, and the strong reservations felt by Thessaloniki Jews regarding the Christian nationalisms laying claim to the city, were linked to the rise of the Zionist movement and also the Labor movement across Europe.

Thus, even if for most of the community the solution to the 'Jewish problem' was assimilation, one part of it sought to imitate other European nationalisms through Zionism and creation in Palestine of a Jewish national state along European lines. Finally, for a third group, the solution was the union movement and socialism, which promised to transcend nationalist differences and, by introducing a new, class-based differentiation, to soften the dividing lines of religion, language, and national conscience.

The result of this attempt in Thessaloniki was the creation of the Federation in 1909. The Federation was the forerunner of similar labor and socialist movements in the Balkans. In due course, after the liberation, it took part in founding both the General Confederation of Greek Workers (GSEE) and the Greek Communist Party (KKE). The gradual industrialization of Thessaloniki and its region, with the development of weaving and the fur industry to the west and tobacco processing to the east, and the existence of a sizeable Jewish proletariat little moved by the call of local nationalisms, was the raw material for the comparatively early development of unionism and socialism in the city. Thessaloniki would continue to take a leading role in labor struggles even after 1912, and the refugees, chiefly tobacco workers, would assume the inheritance of the Federation in the interwar period, culminating in their large mobilizations in 1936.

It would be a mistake, of course, to assume that the relationship between socialism and nationalism was purely hostile. The two would be compelled to

interact and sometimes to form an alliance. This alliance assumes particular importance in the case of Macedonia, since from it would emerge a new nationalism, Slavo-Macedonian, in opposition to the traditional Bulgarian. Already in 1893, the Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization (EMEO/VMRO) was founded in Thessaloniki with the goal of ‘Macedonia for the Macedonians’. The Organization would import new terrorist methods from Russia to the Balkans, blowing up buildings and murdering local personalities. A few years later, an analogous act in Sarajevo, Bosnia, would spark World War I.

If Thessaloniki’s Muslims and Jews agonized over the survival of the Ottoman Empire, the city’s Christians, particularly the Greek community, looked for that Empire’s expulsion from its remaining European possessions or from the world stage. From the end of the nineteenth century and for more than half a century afterward, Thessaloniki was the apple of discord for harsh Greek-Bulgarian conflict. There is an interesting paradox, however. Although Greeks could invoke the city’s glorious Hellenistic and Byzantine past and the existence of a flourishing Hellenic community to support their nationalist claims, the truth is that Thessaloniki, as Paschalis Kitromilides states in his contribution to this volume, was largely absent from the Greek Enlightenment and from rising Greek nationalism.

In the end, Thessaloniki’s future proved Greek. The mass arrival of refugee populations from the east—Greeks from Asia Minor, the Black Sea, Eastern Thrace, and Eastern Rumelia—contributed to this outcome. The ‘Jerusalem of the Balkans’ gave way to the ‘refugee capital’, as Thessaloniki’s faithful literary icon Giorgos Ioannou characterized it.

To the dramas and traumas these upheavals provoked must be added the pan-European tragedy of the Holocaust during World War II. This tragedy sealed the ‘Europeanness’ of the city, since it bound its history to that of the other cities of Central and Eastern Europe, while at the same time it cut the city loose from that of the Middle East. If modernity is characterized by the rejection of the ‘hybridity’ of traditional societies and the crystallization of clear, mutually incompatible national identities, then the Nazis were the most extreme laborers in clearing away the city’s pre-modernist cosmopolitan hybridity, otherwise known, as Philip Mansel describes it in this volume, as Levantinism.

Thessaloniki was a Levantine city *par excellence*, one that more than any of its Eastern Mediterranean peers such as Izmir, Beirut, or Alexandria, found itself at the vortex of history on the eve of 1912. It was also a city of revolutions, as Mansel says. Here converged a series of trends and movements that defined the twentieth century, including every shade of nationalism, socialism, and unionism, political terrorism and antisemitism.

Above all, however, Thessaloniki remained a great city, with all this implies for its function and history. Empires came and went, but Thessaloniki continued to shine as the most important port city of the southern Balkans. Even the hydrocephalous Greek state, which concentrates 40% of Greece’s population in its capital, could not pauperize it.

This fundamental urban continuity of Thessaloniki is another reason that makes its history so appealing. We live in an age of rapid urbanization. For the

first time, the majority of the world's population lives in cities. Cities are not simple population concentrations within a broader state whole. Today's era of globalization is characterized by increased interest in the local as well as the international, and not only in relations between states but also in the international networks linking nodal cities. Thessaloniki is such a nodal city for its Balkan region, with a strong trans-local and a growing transnational role. Moreover, cities such as Thessaloniki offer historical researchers a rich field for analysis of economic and social developments on the micro-level, going beyond the political history of the macro-level.

Focus on the city foreordains a series of challenges and reversals. The first victim of this focus is the 'national history' reproduced by power structures such as Greece's highly centralized educational system, the mass media, and the Orthodox Church. A simplified national historical narrative is undermined and the horizons of historical narrative expand, revealing paradoxes, nuances, juxtapositions, and interactions that official history would prefer to ignore. To the extent that we live in an age of 'revisionism', where old precepts and 'grand narratives' are challenged, the history of one city, especially a city such as Thessaloniki, as Mazower knows well, offers a marvelous context for applying this revisionism.

More or less in this way, Thessaloniki found itself at the epicenter of modern historiographic discussion, 'stealing the spotlight' of international attention from its southern rival, Athens. Thessaloniki was fortunate to attract a series of particularly inspired and gifted historians and researchers. The present volume is a representative but by no means exhaustive sample of their work. By rights, this book is dedicated to all of them.

Thessaloniki's complex contours are a poor fit with official Greek historiography's categories and divisions. To many, therefore, a conference and book dedicated to the city is a somewhat heretical undertaking. When the question was posed, whether the centennial would be a commemoration centered on Thessaloniki or on the overall Greek conquests in Macedonia, the answer was not self-evident. Putting the focus on Thessaloniki raised the issue of the permissibility of the word 'liberation', with all the reaction that issue would provoke.

The undertaking becomes more unorthodox when scholars from different academic disciplines and national origins take part. The aim was to 'cross-pollinate' using the different levels of analysis of each social science, from the micro-level of anthropology to the macro-level of political science, but also by involving differing, usually competing, national viewpoints. It is worth noting here that the success of the endeavor required a clear political decision by the sponsor of the enterprise, namely the Thessaloniki municipality under the leadership of Giannis Boutaris. Thessaloniki embraced the brave, honorable conviction that its past is a source of wealth for a dynamic, outward-looking, and innovative city.

The goal of this book, as of the conference, is certainly not to address the city's entire past. The subject was more narrowly defined as the 1912 events and their importance for the gradual incorporation of Thessaloniki into the Greek state, in relation to the immediately preceding period and the century that followed. Three basic axes were specified: first is the search for identity, not to specify some 'true'

identity of the city but rather to understand the debates over that identity before and immediately after 1912. The second axis is the transition from an imperial to a national system and how that affects the city and its residents. The third axis, Thessaloniki's futures, aims to foster debate on what future the city deserves, as we lived, then and now, continuous cycles of unfulfilled dreams.

The questions that emerge from these three axes affect every city that survives through the centuries. For this reason, an attempt was made to emphasize comparative viewpoint as well. Judging from the response of the scholarly community, we are confident the lectures, papers, and discussions of this conference will contribute to reframing discussion of our city. A new dialogue with the past can illuminate the future we seek.

This collection of papers begins with the contribution of Mark Mazower, the best-known historian of Thessaloniki internationally. His contribution dissects how older scholars understood the future, in order to sketch out clearly the history of the ideas that influenced Thessaloniki's historic course, particularly in the critical period of the second half of the nineteenth century. The gradual inclusion of Thessaloniki in the global capitalist economy brought with it a teleological idea of History and the future together with the modernist idea of progress. The demolition of the medieval walls and the expansion of the port under an active governor, Sabri Pasha, during the 1870s, signaled a more active role for the state in shaping this future. Even more ambitious was Hébrard's planning after the 1912 liberation. The result was the physical separation of Thessaloniki between a traditional Upper City and a European Lower City, but also the new European neighborhoods, primarily toward the east. The physical transformation proceeded in parallel with the ideological, and the flourishing of modernist ideas such as nationalism, socialism, or ethno-tribalism, that aimed to shape the future. The post-Cold War period is characterized by greater suspicion of all such grand visions.

For Paschalis M. Kitromilides, the modern researcher *par excellence* on the transplantation of the Enlightenment into southeast Europe, Thessaloniki is a paradox. In western Macedonian cities such as Kozani, Kastoria, and Siatista, and northwards in Moschopoli, and even on monastic Mt. Athos, where the 'Athonian' academy functioned, hotbeds of the Neohellenic Enlightenment developed, nothing similar happened in the Macedonian capital itself. The paradox intensifies because the city's commercial development did not lead to modernizing debates on education, as Enlightenment social theory dictates. Thessaloniki's absence from the geography of the Enlightenment cannot be blamed on a lack of education in the city, but on its demographic composition and a series of conjunctures. The dominance of the Jewish community in the city's life made the Jewish conduit the most important one for transmitting the spirit of the Enlightenment to the city. However, that conduit remained closed due to the reaction of the rabbinic leadership to the Sabbatai Zevi movement, which entailed serious losses for the community. The long-term results of this adventure were strict control over the spiritual life of the community and the exclusion of potential deviations from Talmudic tradition.



Philip Mansel offers an outstanding comparative study of Thessaloniki in relation to other port cities of the eastern Mediterranean such as Izmir, Alexandria, and Beirut. These cities shared common characteristics of geography, diplomacy, language, hybridism, trade, modernity, and vulnerability, and they comprised a common space, the Levant. For Mansel, Thessaloniki was a Levantine city *par excellence*, but also the first city of the east to be de-levantinized, with the entry of the Greek army in 1912. Levantinism concerned certain cities in a specific historical conjuncture, as the Ottoman Empire attempted to modernize and to negotiate its rescue with western modernism. The Levantine cities, such as Thessaloniki, were the intermediaries in this negotiation. As long as the negotiation continued, the Levantine cities amassed wealth, influence, autonomy from the state to which they belonged, but also the unquenchable hostility of nationalists who detested their cosmopolitanism. The collapse of the imperial east pulled down with it the Levantinism of these distinguished cities and they lost the autonomous role they had played until then.

Spyridon G. Ploumidis plunges into the archaeology of the Greek Macedonian movement, which emerged after the appearance of its rival Bulgarian movement in the 1860s. The 'Megali Idea' focused from the outset on incorporating Macedonia into the national core. The Greek national preoccupation concerned Macedonia as a geographic whole more than Thessaloniki in isolation, where the Jewish population was dominant. It intensified after the Ilinden uprising in the summer of 1903. The thwarting of Greece's 'Ionian Vision' in 1922 reconfirmed the importance of Macedonia for Greek nationalism. In the interwar period, interest in Macedonia developed on the geostrategic and, secondarily, economic level, since Macedonia offered Greece an important hinterland with rich productive resources.

From a different perspective, Yura Konstantinova describes Thessaloniki's place in Bulgarian nationalist thought before 1912. The history of 'Bulgarian' Thessaloniki is the history of the gradual emancipation of Macedonia's Slavophones from Greek cultural domination. In this evolutionary process, a key turning point was the recognition of the Bulgarian Exarchate by the Ottoman government in 1870. However, for a number of years thereafter, many wealthy Bulgarian merchants continued to see Greek education as a means of advancement and development, and to remain under the broad influence of Hellenism. The situation was complicated in 1878 with the foundation of the Bulgarian state, which would aspire to intervene in the region by funding Bulgarian education in Thessaloniki and, still more in 1893 with the creation of the EMEO and evolution of socialist and anarchist ideas to which the Bulgarian community of Thessaloniki proved susceptible. Ultimately Thessaloniki, where the Bulgarian population was at a significant disadvantage, became a problem for Bulgarian foreign policy which, immediately after the First Balkan War, was divided between the moderates, who recognized Greece's precedence in exchange for internationalizing the port, and the extremists, who finally prevailed, who considered possession of Thessaloniki and winning over its Jewish residents the precondition for full Bulgarian dominance in Macedonia.

Nora Lafi supplements the analysis of the physical changes in Thessaloniki's urban environment during the second half of the nineteenth century by analyzing the institutional changes in municipal governance. Apart from the major changes in the hardware of the city, with the arrival of reformist governor Sabri Pasha in 1869, changes that included the demolition of the walls, expansion of the port, a rail connection first with Belgrade and then with Istanbul, construction of a tram line, and a series of large public buildings, Lafi presents the changes in the city's software, chiefly in the functioning of the municipal authority. Because of its geo-strategic importance, Thessaloniki was chosen by Ottoman Tanzimat authorities as one of the seven imperial cities in which to apply new, modern municipal institutions. However, Lafi emphasizes the continuities with the previous Ottoman regime, as it had been shaped over three centuries on the basis of ethnic coexistence. As she stresses, these were reforms based on an old system, rather than a break with that system.

Olivia Pallikari selected theater and its history in Turkish-ruled Thessaloniki to illustrate the gradual Europeanization of residents' entertainment but also the intensifying national rivalries expressed in the separate theatrical life of each of the communities that coexisted in Thessaloniki. The history of theater, a quintessentially urban pursuit, attests the city's increasing wealth, the gradual secularization of its morals, and the entry of Thessaloniki in the broader national and international cultural events of the age. Indeed, from 1850 until 1912, more than 150 performances of Greek and foreign plays took place, by amateur and professional companies, and the most important Greek professional theater companies and many foreign ones passed through.

Scientific interest in the past and archaeology are part of European modernism and are part of a teleological idea of historical time. On this basis, Edhem Eldem analyzes Ottoman interest in archaeology in Thessaloniki during the 1832–1912 period. Eldem sketches a charming history of Ottoman archaeology from its first disorganized steps to the improvement and systemization of its efforts and finally to the official calendars published by the Thessaloniki provincial administration, in which one section is devoted to the antiquities. Thessaloniki at the beginning of the twentieth century is recognized as a model city for modernization and westernization. However, unlike in other sectors such as education or industry, interest in archaeology began and ended in the imperial center, Istanbul. Thessaloniki was on the archaeological periphery, feeding the imperial collections in the capital with its finds. Finally, Ottoman Thessaloniki never acquired an archaeological museum, unlike other modernizing cities in the east, and this was remedied only in 1925 under Greek administration, using the New Mosque of the *Dönme* for the purpose.

Thessaloniki was not simply a city of revolutions, especially at the beginning of the twentieth century, but even further, it was the capital of the most important of them, the Young Turk revolution of 1908. Sotiris Dimitriadis addresses this key event to analyze the effect of the revolution on the city during the four years of 1908–1912. In 1908, the simmering discontent in the Ottoman army stationed in the city burst out in an uprising against the arbitrary government of

Sultan Abdul Hamid II. The Ottoman state's declaration of bankruptcy in 1897, the widening gulf between social classes, the instability in the wider region of Macedonia, and increasing tensions between Orthodox Greeks and Bulgarians, were some of the causes of the uprising. Mass gatherings, demonstrations, and public speeches were the chief characteristic of local life during the whole period of intense political activism that followed. However, the initial expectations for democratization of the Ottoman polity and safeguarding of workers' rights were disappointed, with an autocratic turn to one-party rule by the Committee of Union and Progress.

Thessaloniki was also in the vanguard in printing, once Don Yehuda Gedaliah established the first printing plant in southeast Europe at the beginning of the sixteenth century. Complementing Konstantinova's analysis, Vlas Vlasidis studied the development of the city's newspapers, and particularly of a relatively neglected part, the Bulgarian newspapers. Already in the nineteenth century Thessaloniki had several Jewish, Greek, and Turkish papers. Indeed, the first Turkish/Ottoman newspaper, which was published in 1869 on the initiative of the local administration, in four languages, was entitled *Selanik/Salonica/Thessaloniki/Solun!* Until 1908, Thessaloniki's Bulgarian-language press lagged behind the others in number of imprints and in circulation. This changed in the four years prior to the Balkan wars, when the Young Turk revolution imposed pacification in Macedonia and returned the national rivalry to more political means. Study of Bulgarian newspapers and periodicals in Thessaloniki before 1912 reveals the quarrels within the Bulgarian-Exarchist community, but also the general hyper-politicization of the press in the service of nationalist aims.

Devin E. Naar opens the second section of the book by tackling a sensitive issue, the inclusion of Thessaloniki Jews in Greek national life in the 1917–1933 period. Naar offers a series of nuances to the standard account that sees Thessaloniki Jews as opposed to the city's being part of Greece. The Greek state handled the issue more sensitively and intelligently than is usually recognized. 'Hellenization' affected not only Thessaloniki Jews but also the Macedonian Slavophones and many Asia Minor refugees. This 'Hellenization' meant adopting a Greek national identity, one that for the whole first half of the twentieth century was still taking shape. Finally, at the beginning of the 1930s, knowledge of Greek had made important progress, particularly in the younger generations of Thessaloniki Jews, and the assimilation process was proceeding normally. Naar attributes the Campbell anti-Semitic Pogrom of 1931 to the success of the Venizelist assimilationist policy rather than to its failure.

Elpida K. Vogli studies the process of incorporating Thessaloniki into Greece after its seizure by the Greek army in 1912. The process of incorporating the 'New Lands' was complicated and time-consuming because of their size relative to the rest of the country, but also because of the internal conflicts provoked by the national schism that lasted the whole interwar period. As we know, the national completion of Greece was gradual, and the Greek state acquired the relevant experience early on, with the annexation of the Ionian Islands in 1864. Cosmopolitan Thessaloniki, however, had its own distinctive issues, expressed in its 'municipal

question' and the intermittent dominance of anti-Venizelist candidates for city hall thanks to the Jewish vote.

The contribution of Constantinos Katerinopoulos concerns the installation of refugees after the Asia Minor Catastrophe of 1922, which radically changed the city's ethnic composition, residential patterns, economy, and political behavior. The first expansion outside the walls was launched by the visit of sultan Abdul Mecit in 1859, signaling the Ottoman government's renewed interest in reform. Major infrastructure works, an opening of the local economy to global trade, and rapid economic progress followed, prior to liberation. The arrival of the refugees gave a second, even stronger impetus to the city's development and transfiguration.

Eyal Ginio returns to the interwar Jewish community and to the effort to negotiate the new situation that emerged after 1912, especially on the part of its historians. Though part of the Jewish community decided to emigrate, the majority remained and, in time, became divided among Zionists, socialists, and moderates preaching assimilation. Jewish historians in the interwar period attempted to teach Greek history to their co-religionists, in order to ease their entry into Greece. In this effort they highlighted the long historical course of Greeks and Jews and their great contribution to shaping western civilization. One interesting element Ginio adds, with important ramifications in the current age, is the dominance and gradual decline of Judeo-Spanish, which had been the language of the Jewish community.

The Aristotelian University of Thessaloniki, the largest university foundation in Greece, recently announced creation of a Chair of Jewish Studies at the Philosophical School. This is in fact the refounding of a chair abolished by the Metaxas regime. The key point of interest is the language in which the Chair will teach: Judeo-Spanish, the language of the Thessaloniki Jews, or Hebrew, the language of modern Israel, which very few spoke prior to 1945? In other words, is the target of this important educational initiative, with significant political implications, the city's Jewish community or today's Israel, with its wealthy potential investors.

The eminent Thessaloniki historian Evangelos Hekimoglou offers a breath of Marxism, focusing on class stratification and its reordering during the first decades after liberation. As has already been said, the history of Thessaloniki and, generally, all the formerly multi-ethnic cities of eastern Europe became fashionable after 1989 and the great international discussion of nationalism and ethnic identity triggered by the fall of Soviet communism and the dissolution of Yugoslavia. With the same ease that older generations of historians used to refer to 'social class' as the only analytical category worthy of their attention, younger historians refer to the 'nation', frequently excluding any other identity besides national/ethnic. In this way, however, Thessaloniki's history around 1912 is limited to a contest between its national-religious communities. Hekimoglou, on the contrary, presents not only a general economic history of the city from the end of the Ottoman period to World War II, with his analytical tool of the three-fold division of economic activity into archaic, colonial, and capitalist, but also the social stratification of the city as it was interwoven with its ethnographic composition.

Eleni Kallimopoulou, Kostis Kornetis, and Panagiotis C. Poulos offer an innovative piece on Thessaloniki's auditory landscape and how this changed after 1912, once the voices of the muezzin disappeared and the sound of cars and other modern technology increased. The value of the work lies in its reminder of the power of sound and hearing in shaping social, class, and national identities. Moreover, the mass arrival of refugees after 1922 did not necessarily imply homogenization and 'Hellenization' of the acoustic landscape, but strengthened its polymorphism, since many of the new arrivals brought with them their own customs and languages, such as Pontic and Turkish.

Mazower's work on Thessaloniki was criticized by various sides, including by Greek nationalists, since it challenged the national narrative of the city's uninterrupted Greekness from its founding to the present. The truth, however, is that if Mazower's history 'wronged' anyone, it was not the Greeks and other Christians nor, certainly, the Jews, but perhaps the city's Muslims, who were the masters for five centuries before 1912. These Muslims are perhaps those most left out of efforts to trace Thessaloniki's historical course during the twentieth century. The article by Konstantinos Tsitselikis makes an attempt to fill the gap. He reports on the Muslim presence in Thessaloniki after the 1912 change, which was especially painful for Muslims, many of whom emigrated. The Muslim population coexisted with the now-dominant Christian element for a decade, until the compulsory population exchange in 1923. Tsitselikis focuses on the legal devices used by the Greek state to incorporate but also to control the city's Muslim population.

Eleni Bastéa and Vilma Hastaoglou-Martinidis have contributed an ambitious overview of the city's transformation. They juxtapose the changes in the built environment to key contemporary examples from the rich literary culture Thessaloniki inspired, to bring home how sweeping the changes were for the inner life of Thessaloniki residents, and how the anchors of personal and civic memory shifted over time.

It is said that Thessaloniki is first and foremost its port. However, Vilma Hastaoglou-Martinidis reminds us that until 1870 the city had no access to the sea, being shut in by its walls. Only then was decided, in addition to demolition of the sea walls, creation of a spacious waterfront that even today is one of the city's chief sights, and construction of a modern harbor. The 1869 opening of the Suez Canal preceded it, as did the development of port installations in other Eastern Mediterranean cities such as Izmir, Beirut, and Alexandria. This was the city's most important infrastructure project and, in conjunction with the rail links to Europe via Belgrade and to Istanbul, upgraded its geopolitical significance and economic potential. French companies undertook the construction and managed the port until 1930, thus even after liberation. It is impressive that the port of Thessaloniki and prospects for privatizing and improving it remain in the news even today.

Charis Christodoulou offers a gripping account of the post-war changes in Thessaloniki, by decade, from the standpoint of the urban periphery rather than the city center. This is an unusual but valuable look at the 'real' city, not the one on paper, which fills in the architectural and urbanistic course of Thessaloniki.

Athena Yiannakou addresses the Greek state's housing policy in Thessaloniki from the interwar period through the construction explosion in the 1960s. Even though most of the urban expansion of the city, after the arrival of the refugees and the creation on the outskirts of new neighborhoods to shelter them, took place on land managed by the state, the policy it followed favored small property owners. Thessaloniki followed the rest of the country and avoided creating faceless, ghettoized dormitory suburbs around it.

Kornilia Trakosopoulou-Tzimou focuses with admirable care on the policy regarding protection of Thessaloniki's monuments from late Ottoman times until today. It is not particularly original to recognize that Thessaloniki is a city with a long, rich architectural heritage, certainly unique in Greece for the range of architectural currents meeting in it, eclecticism the most prevalent, but also neo-classicism, Ottoman baroque, and Italian influences that converge in the pre-1912 buildings of Greeks, Turks, and Jews, respectively. Many ideas and practices changed along the historical path she charts. Once walls were demolished, while today they are restored. The author adopts a critical stance toward the 'innovations' of Hébrard. It is worth noting, as was mentioned several times in other essays as well, that the Greek state was slow to recognize the cultural value of Islamic monuments, most of which were lost. A characteristic example is the mass destruction in 1926 of all the city's minarets except that of the Rotunda. Alexandros Papanastasiou protested in vain: 'I am sorry because many (Islamic) monuments were mutilated by demolishing the minarets ... history is not erased with the demolition of innocent monuments that beautified the city ... they are a national property, they are valuable, and they must be respected'.

The opening of the borders after the end of the Cold War and developments such as the expansion of the European Union in the Balkans, created an expectation that the city would take on a regional role as the most important nodal port in the area. Although these expectations, superficial and sometimes even imperialist in how they were cultivated, never became reality, Thessaloniki has been transformed today, thanks to immigration but also to the new economic networks that have developed, into a real Balkan city.

In closing, I want to express my gratitude to all those who worked for the successful realization of the Congress, but also to those who contributed to the present publication. Professor Vasilis Gounaris was crucial to this effort, and it is fitting that the final essay in this volume is his meditation on future histories of the city. Once the idea of a conference took hold, he played the leading role as president of the Scientific Committee. That committee also included historians Dimitris Lyvianos, Adjunct Professor of Journalism and Mass Media at the Aristotelian University of Thessaloniki; Konstantinos Svolopoulos, Emeritus Professor at the University of Athens and member of the Athens Academy; Giannis Stefanidis, Professor at the Law School of the Aristotelian University; and Mark Mazower, Professor of History at Columbia University in New York. Together they contributed their scholarly insights and were the guardians and guarantors of the whole endeavor from an academic perspective. For the publication, first in Greek and now in English, special thanks are due to researcher

## 14 *Dimitris Keridis*

Anastasia Lekka, and to Aspa Kyriaki who managed the Navarino Network in Thessaloniki until 2019.

Dimitris Keridis, Professor of International Relations, Panteio University, Greece, Director of the Navarino Network and Chair of the Organizing Committee of the International Conference ‘Thessaloniki: A City in Transition, 1912–2012’.

### **Note**

- 1 Indeed, the first chapter of Hanioglu’s ‘spiritual biography’ of Atatürk is entitled ‘*Fin-de-siècle Salonica*’ (Hanioglu 2011, 8–30).

### **References**

- Hanioglu, Ş. M. Atatürk, *An Intellectual Biography*. Princeton: Princeton University Press (2011).
- Mazower, M. *Salonica, City of Ghosts: Christians, Jews, and Muslims, 1430–1950*. London: Harper Collins (2004).