

= Greeks =

The Greeks or Hellenes (Greek : ??????? [?elines]) are an ethnic group native to Greece , Cyprus , Albania , Turkey , Southern Italy , and other regions . They also form a significant diaspora , with Greek communities established around the world .

Greek colonies and communities have been historically established on the shores of the Mediterranean Sea and Black Sea , but the Greek people have always been centered on the Aegean and Ionian seas , where the Greek language has been spoken since the Bronze Age . Until the early 20th century , Greeks were distributed between the Greek peninsula , the western coast of Asia Minor , the Black Sea coast , Cappadocia in central Anatolia , Egypt , the Balkans , Cyprus , and Constantinople . Many of these regions coincided to a large extent with the borders of the Byzantine Empire of the late 11th century and the Eastern Mediterranean areas of ancient Greek colonization . The cultural centers of the Greeks have included Athens , Thessalonica , Alexandria , Smyrna , and Constantinople at various periods .

Most ethnic Greeks live nowadays within the borders of the modern Greek state and Cyprus . The Greek genocide and population exchange between Greece and Turkey nearly ended the three millennia @-@ old Greek presence in Asia Minor . Other longstanding Greek populations can be found from southern Italy to the Caucasus and southern Russia and Ukraine and in the Greek diaspora communities in a number of other countries . Today , most Greeks are officially registered as members of the Greek Orthodox Church .

Greeks have greatly influenced and contributed to culture , arts , exploration , literature , philosophy , politics , architecture , music , mathematics , science and technology , business , cuisine , and sports , both historically and contemporarily .

= = History = =

The Greeks speak the Greek language , which forms its own unique branch within the Indo @-@ European family of languages , the Hellenic . They are part of a group of pre @-@ modern ethnicities , described by Anthony D. Smith as an " archetypal diaspora people " .

= = = Origins = = =

The evolution of Proto @-@ Greek should be considered within the context of an early Paleo @-@ Balkan sprachbund that makes it difficult to delineate exact boundaries between individual languages . The characteristically Greek representation of word @-@ initial laryngeals by prothetic vowels is shared , for one , by the Armenian language , which also seems to share some other phonological and morphological peculiarities of Greek ; this has led some linguists to propose a hypothetically closer relationship between Greek and Armenian , although evidence remains scant .

Proto @-@ Greek speakers are mostly placed in the Early Helladic period (3rd millennium BC) , i.e. towards the end of the European Neolithic . Russell Gray and Quentin Atkinson in a 2003 paper using computational methods on Swadesh lists have arrived at a somewhat earlier estimate , around 5000 BC for Greco @-@ Armenian split and the emergence of Greek as a separate linguistic lineage around 4000 BC .

= = = Mycenaean = = =

In circa 1600 BC , the Mycenaean Greeks borrowed from the Minoan civilization its syllabic writing system (i.e. Linear A) and developed their own syllabic script known as Linear B , providing the first and oldest written evidence of Greek . The Mycenaeans quickly penetrated the Aegean Sea and , by the 15th century BC , had reached Rhodes , Crete , Cyprus and the shores of Asia Minor .

Around 1200 BC , the Dorians , another Greek @-@ speaking people , followed from Epirus . Traditionally , historians have believed that the Dorian invasion caused the collapse of the Mycenaean civilization , but it is likely the main attack was made by seafaring raiders (Sea Peoples

) who sailed into the eastern Mediterranean around 1180 BC . The Dorian invasion was followed by a poorly attested period of migrations , appropriately called the Greek Dark Ages , but by 800 BC the landscape of Archaic and Classical Greece was discernible .

The Greeks of classical antiquity idealized their Mycenaean ancestors and the Mycenaean period as a glorious era of heroes , closeness of the gods and material wealth . The Homeric Epics (i.e. Iliad and Odyssey) were especially and generally accepted as part of the Greek past and it was not until the 19th century that scholars began to question Homer 's historicity . As part of the Mycenaean heritage that survived , the names of the gods and goddesses of Mycenaean Greece (e.g. Zeus , Poseidon and Hades) became major figures of the Olympian Pantheon of later antiquity .

= = = Classical = = =

The ethnogenesis of the Greek nation is linked to the development of Pan @-@ Hellenism in the 8th century BC . According to some scholars , the foundational event was the Olympic Games in 776 BC , when the idea of a common Hellenism among the Greek tribes was first translated into a shared cultural experience and Hellenism was primarily a matter of common culture . The works of Homer (i.e. Iliad and Odyssey) and Hesiod (i.e. Theogony) were written in the 8th century BC , becoming the basis of the national religion , ethos , history and mythology . The Oracle of Apollo at Delphi was established in this period .

The classical period of Greek civilization covers a time spanning from the early 5th century BC to the death of Alexander the Great , in 323 BC (some authors prefer to split this period into " Classical " , from the end of the Persian wars to the end of the Peloponnesian War , and " Fourth Century " , up to the death of Alexander) . It is so named because it set the standards by which Greek civilization would be judged in later eras . The Classical period is also described as the " Golden Age " of Greek civilization , and its art , philosophy , architecture and literature would be instrumental in the formation and development of Western culture .

While the Greeks of the classical era understood themselves to belong to a common Hellenic genos , their first loyalty was to their city and they saw nothing incongruous about warring , often brutally , with other Greek city @-@ states . The Peloponnesian War , the large scale civil war between the two most powerful Greek city @-@ states Athens and Sparta and their allies , left both greatly weakened .

Most of the feuding Greek city @-@ states were , in some scholars ' opinions , united under the banner of Philip 's and Alexander the Great 's Pan @-@ Hellenic ideals , though others might generally opt , rather , for an explanation of " Macedonian conquest for the sake of conquest " or at least conquest for the sake of riches , glory and power and view the " ideal " as useful propaganda directed towards the city @-@ states .

In any case , Alexander 's toppling of the Achaemenid Empire , after his victories at the battles of the Granicus , Issus and Gaugamela , and his advance as far as modern @-@ day Pakistan and Tajikistan , provided an important outlet for Greek culture , via the creation of colonies and trade routes along the way . While the Alexandrian empire did not survive its creator 's death intact , the cultural implications of the spread of Hellenism across much of the Middle East and Asia were to prove long lived as Greek became the lingua franca , a position it retained even in Roman times . Many Greeks settled in Hellenistic cities like Alexandria , Antioch and Seleucia . Two thousand years later , there are still communities in Pakistan and Afghanistan , like the Kalash , who claim to be descended from Greek settlers .

= = = Hellenistic = = =

The Hellenistic civilization was the next period of Greek civilization , the beginnings of which are usually placed at Alexander 's death . This Hellenistic age , so called because it saw the partial Hellenization of many non @-@ Greek cultures , lasted until the conquest of Egypt by Rome in 30 BC .

This age saw the Greeks move towards larger cities and a reduction in the importance of the city

@-@ state . These larger cities were parts of the still larger Kingdoms of the Diadochi . Greeks , however , remained aware of their past , chiefly through the study of the works of Homer and the classical authors . An important factor in maintaining Greek identity was contact with barbarian (non @-@ Greek) peoples , which was deepened in the new cosmopolitan environment of the multi @-@ ethnic Hellenistic kingdoms . This led to a strong desire among Greeks to organize the transmission of the Hellenic paideia to the next generation . Greek science , technology and mathematics are generally considered to have reached their peak during the Hellenistic period .

In the Indo @-@ Greek and Greco @-@ Bactrian kingdoms , Greco @-@ Buddhism was spreading and Greek missionaries would play an important role in propagating it to China . Further east , the Greeks of Alexandria Eschate became known to the Chinese people as the Dayuan .

= = = Roman Empire = = =

Following the time of the conquest of the last of the independent Greek city @-@ states and Hellenistic (post @-@ Alexandrine) kingdoms , almost all of the world 's Greek speakers lived as citizens or subjects of the Roman Empire . Despite their military superiority , the Romans admired and became heavily influenced by the achievements of Greek culture , hence Horace 's famous statement : *Graecia capta ferum victorem cepit* (" Greece , although captured , took its wild conqueror captive ") .

In the religious sphere , this was a period of profound change . The spiritual revolution that took place , saw a waning of the old Greek religion , whose decline beginning in the 3rd century BC continued with the introduction of new religious movements from the East . The cults of deities like Isis and Mithra were introduced into the Greek world . Greek @-@ speaking communities of the Hellenized East were instrumental in the spread of early Christianity in the 2nd and 3rd centuries , and Christianity 's early leaders and writers (notably Saint Paul) were generally Greek @-@ speaking , though none were from Greece . However , Greece itself had a tendency to cling to paganism and was not one of the influential centers of early Christianity : in fact , some ancient Greek religious practices remained in vogue until the end of the 4th century , with some areas such as the southeastern Peloponnese remaining pagan until well into the 10th century AD .

= = = Byzantine Empire = = =

Of the new eastern religions introduced into the Greek world , the most successful was Christianity . From the early centuries of the Common Era , the Greeks self @-@ identified as *Romaioi* (" Romans ") , as well as *Graikoi* (" Greeks ") ; by that time , the name *Hellenes* denoted pagans but was revived as an ethnonym in the 11th century . While ethnic distinctions still existed in the Roman Empire , they became secondary to religious considerations and the renewed empire used Christianity as a tool to support its cohesion and promoted a robust Roman national identity . Concurrently , the secular , urban civilization of Late Antiquity survived in the Eastern Mediterranean along with the Greco @-@ Roman educational system ; the Greeks ' essential values were drawn from both Christianity and the Homeric tradition of their classical ancestors .

The Eastern Roman Empire (today conventionally named the Byzantine Empire , a name not used during its own time) became increasingly influenced by Greek culture after the 7th century when Emperor Heraclius (r . 610 @-@ 641 AD) decided to make Greek the empire 's official language . Certainly from then on , but likely earlier , the Greek and Roman cultures were virtually fused into a single Greco @-@ Roman world . Although the Latin West recognized the Eastern Empire 's claim to the Roman legacy for several centuries , after Pope Leo III crowned Charlemagne , king of the Franks , as the " Roman Emperor " on 25 December 800 , an act which eventually led to the formation of the Holy Roman Empire , the Latin West started to favour the Franks and began to refer to the Eastern Roman Empire largely as the Empire of the Greeks (*Imperium Graecorum*) .

These Byzantine Greeks were largely responsible for the preservation of the literature of the classical era . Byzantine grammarians were those principally responsible for carrying , in person and in writing , ancient Greek grammatical and literary studies to the West during the 15th century ,

giving the Italian Renaissance a major boost . The Aristotelian philosophical tradition was nearly unbroken in the Greek world for almost two thousand years , until the Fall of Constantinople in 1453 .

To the Slavic world , Roman @-@ era Greeks contributed by the dissemination of literacy and Christianity . The most notable example of the later was the work of the two Byzantine Greek brothers , the monks Saints Cyril and Methodius from the port city of Thessalonica , in Greek Macedonia , who are credited today with formalizing the first Slavic alphabet .

A distinct Greek political identity re @-@ emerged in the 11th century in educated circles and became more forceful after the fall of Constantinople to the Crusaders of the Fourth Crusade in 1204 , so that when the empire was revived in 1261 , it became in many ways a Greek national state . That new notion of nationhood engendered a deep interest in the classical past culminating in the ideas of the Neoplatonist philosopher Gemistus Pletho , who abandoned Christianity . However , it was the combination of Orthodox Christianity with a specifically Greek identity that shaped the Greeks ' notion of themselves in the empire 's twilight years . The interest in the Classical Greek heritage was complemented by a renewed emphasis on Greek Orthodox identity , which was reinforced in the late Medieval and Ottoman Greeks ' links with their fellow Orthodox Christians in the Russian Empire . These were further strengthened following the fall of the Empire of Trebizond in 1461 , after which and until the second Russo @-@ Turkish War of 1828 @-@ 29 hundreds of thousands of Pontic Greeks fled or migrated from the Pontic Alps and Armenian Highlands to southern Russia and the Russian South Caucasus (see also Greeks in Russia , Greeks in Armenia , Greeks in Georgia , and Caucasian Greeks) .

= = = Ottoman Empire = = =

Following the Fall of Constantinople on 29 May 1453 , many Greeks sought better employment and education opportunities by leaving for the West , particularly Italy , Central Europe , Germany and Russia . Greeks are greatly credited for the European cultural revolution , later called , the Renaissance . In Greek @-@ inhabited territory itself , Greeks came to play a leading role in the Ottoman Empire , due in part to the fact that the central hub of the empire , politically , culturally , and socially , was based on Western Thrace and Greek Macedonia , both in Northern Greece , and of course was centred on the mainly Greek @-@ populated , former Byzantine capital , Constantinople . As a direct consequence of this situation , Greek @-@ speakers came to play a hugely important role in the Ottoman trading and diplomatic establishment , as well as in the church . Added to this , in the first half of the Ottoman period men of Greek origin made up a significant proportion of the Ottoman army , navy , and state bureaucracy , having been levied as adolescents (along with especially Albanians and Serbs) into Ottoman service through the devshirme . Many Ottomans of Greek (or Albanian or Serb) origin were therefore to be found within the Ottoman forces which governed the provinces , from Ottoman Egypt , to Ottomans occupied Yemen and Algeria , frequently as provincial governors .

For those that remained under the Ottoman Empire 's millet system , religion was the defining characteristic of national groups (milletler) , so the exonym " Greeks " (Rumlar from the name Rhomaioi) was applied by the Ottomans to all members of the Orthodox Church , regardless of their language or ethnic origin . The Greek speakers were the only ethnic group to actually call themselves Romioi , (as opposed to being so named by others) and , at least those educated , considered their ethnicity (genos) to be Hellenic . There were , however , many Greeks who escaped the second @-@ class status of Christians inherent in the Ottoman millet system , according to which Muslims were explicitly awarded senior status and preferential treatment . These Greeks either emigrated , particularly to their fellow Greek Orthodox protector , the Russian Empire , or simply converted to Islam , often only very superficially and whilst remaining crypto @-@ Christian . The most notable examples of large @-@ scale conversion to Turkish Islam among those today defined as Greek Muslims - excluding those who had to convert as a matter of course on being recruited through the devshirme - were to be found in Crete (Cretan Turks) , Greek Macedonia (for example among the Vallahades of western Macedonia) , and among Pontic Greeks

in the Pontic Alps and Armenian Highlands . Several Ottoman sultans and princes were also of part Greek origin , with mothers who were either Greek concubines or princesses from Byzantine noble families , one famous example being sultan Selim the Grim (r . 1517 ? 1520) , whose mother Gülbahar Hatun was a Pontic Greek .

The roots of Greek success in the Ottoman Empire can be traced to the Greek tradition of education and commerce exemplified in the Phanariotes . It was the wealth of the extensive merchant class that provided the material basis for the intellectual revival that was the prominent feature of Greek life in the half century and more leading to the outbreak of the Greek War of Independence in 1821 . Not coincidentally , on the eve of 1821 , the three most important centres of Greek learning were situated in Chios , Smyrna and Aivali , all three major centres of Greek commerce . Greek success was also favoured by Greek domination of the Christian Orthodox church .

= = = Modern = = =

The relationship between ethnic Greek identity and Greek Orthodox religion continued after the creation of the modern Greek nation @-@ state in 1830 . According to the second article of the first Greek constitution of 1822 , a Greek was defined as any native Christian resident of the Kingdom of Greece , a clause removed by 1840 . A century later , when the Treaty of Lausanne was signed between Greece and Turkey in 1923 , the two countries agreed to use religion as the determinant for ethnic identity for the purposes of population exchange , although most of the Greeks displaced (over a million of the total 1 @.@ 5 million) had already been driven out by the time the agreement was signed . The Greek genocide , in particular the harsh removal of Pontian Greeks from the southern shore area of the Black Sea , contemporaneous with and following the failed Greek Asia Minor Campaign , was part of this process of Turkification of the Ottoman Empire and the placement of its economy and trade , then largely in Greek hands under ethnic Turkish control .

While most Greeks today are descended from Greek @-@ speaking Romioi / Graikoi , there are sizeable groups of ethnic Greeks who trace their descent to Aromanian @-@ speaking Vlachs , Albanian @-@ speaking Arvanites , Slavophones , Armenians , Georgians , and Turkish @-@ speaking Karamanlides . Today , Greeks are to be found all around the world .

= = Identity = =

The terms used to define Greekness have varied throughout history but were never limited or completely identified with membership to a Greek state . By Western standards , the term Greeks has traditionally referred to any native speakers of the Greek language , whether Mycenaean , Byzantine or modern Greek . Byzantine Greeks self @-@ identified as Romaioi (" Romans ") , Graikoi (" Greeks ") and Christianoi (" Christians ") since they were the political heirs of imperial Rome , the descendants of their classical Greek forebears and followers of the Apostles ; during the mid @-@ to @-@ late Byzantine period (11th ? 13th century) , a growing number of Byzantine Greek intellectuals deemed themselves Hellenes although for most Greek @-@ speakers , " Hellene " still meant pagan . On the eve of the Fall of Constantinople the Last Emperor urged his soldiers to remember that they were the descendants of Greeks and Romans .

Before the establishment of the modern Greek nation @-@ state , the link between ancient and modern Greeks was emphasized by the scholars of Greek Enlightenment especially by Rigas Feraios . In his " Political Constitution " , he addresses to the nation as " the people descendant of the Greeks " . The modern Greek state was created in 1829 , when the Greeks liberated a part of their historic homelands , Peloponnese , from the Ottoman Empire . The large Greek diaspora and merchant class were instrumental in transmitting the ideas of western romantic nationalism and philhellenism , which together with the conception of Hellenism , formulated during the last centuries of the Byzantine Empire , formed the basis of the Diafotismos and the current conception of Hellenism .

The Greeks today are a nation in the meaning of an ethnos , defined by possessing Greek culture

and having a Greek mother tongue , not by citizenship , race , and religion or by being subjects of any particular state . In ancient and medieval times and to a lesser extent today the Greek term was *genos* , which also indicates a common ancestry .

== = Names == =

Throughout the centuries , Greeks and Greek @-@ speakers have developed and used different names to refer to themselves collectively . The term Achaeans (??????) constitutes one of the collective names for the Greeks in Homer 's Iliad and Odyssey (the Homeric " long @-@ haired Achaeans " would have been a part of the Mycenaean civilization that dominated Greece from circa 1600 BC until 1100 BC) . The other common names are Danaans (??????) and Argives (???????) while Panhellenes (?????????) and Hellenes (???????) both appear only once in the Iliad ; all of the aforementioned terms were used synonymously to denote a common Greek civilizational identity . In the historical period , Herodotus identified the Achaeans of the northern Peloponnese as descendants of the earlier , Homeric Achaeans .

Homer refers to the " Hellenes " (/ ʔhʔliʔnz /) as a relatively small tribe settled in Thessalic Phthia , with its warriors under the command of Achilles . The Parian Chronicle says that Phthia was the homeland of the Hellenes and that this name was given to those previously called Greeks (???????) . In Greek mythology , Hellen , the patriarch of the Hellenes who ruled around Phthia , was the son of Pyrrha and Deucalion , the only survivors after the Great Deluge . The Greek philosopher Aristotle names ancient Hellas as an area in Epirus between Dodona and the Achelous river , the location of the Great Deluge of Deucalion , a land occupied by the Selloi and the " Greeks " who later came to be known as " Hellenes " . In the Homeric tradition , the Selloi were the priests of Dodonian Zeus .

In the Hesiodic Catalogue of Women , Graecus is presented as the son of Zeus and Pandora II , sister of Hellen the patriarch of the Hellenes . According to the Parian Chronicle , when Deucalion became king of Phthia , the Graikoi (???????) were named Hellenes . Aristotle notes in his Meteorologica that the Hellenes were related to the Graikoi .

== = Ancient and Modern == =

The most obvious link between modern and ancient Greeks is their language , which has a documented tradition from at least the 14th century BC to the present day , albeit with a break during the Greek Dark Ages (lasting from the 11th to the 8th century BC) . Scholars compare its continuity of tradition to Chinese alone . Since its inception , Hellenism was primarily a matter of common culture and the national continuity of the Greek world is a lot more certain than its demographic . Yet , Hellenism also embodied an ancestral dimension through aspects of Athenian literature that developed and influenced ideas of descent based on autochthony . During the later years of the Eastern Roman Empire , areas such as Ionia and Constantinople experienced a Hellenic revival in language , philosophy , and literature and on classical models of thought and scholarship . This revival provided a powerful impetus to the sense of cultural affinity with ancient Greece and its classical heritage . Throughout their history , the Greeks have retained their language and alphabet , certain values and cultural traditions , customs , a sense of religious and cultural difference and exclusion (the word barbarian was used by 12th @-@ century historian Anna Komnene to describe non @-@ Greek speakers) , a sense of Greek identity and common sense of ethnicity despite the undeniable socio @-@ political changes of the past two millennia . In recent anthropological studies , both ancient and modern Greek osteological samples were analyzed demonstrating a bio @-@ genetic affinity and continuity shared between both groups .

== = Demographics == =

Today , Greeks are the majority ethnic group in the Hellenic Republic , where they constitute 93 % of the country 's population , and the Republic of Cyprus where they make up 78 % of the island 's population (excluding Turkish settlers in the occupied part of the country) . Greek populations have

not traditionally exhibited high rates of growth ; a large percentage of Greek population growth since Greece 's foundation in 1832 was attributed to annexation of new territories , as well as the influx of 1 @. @ 5 million Greek refugees after the 1923 population exchange between Greece and Turkey . About 80 % of the population of Greece is urban , with 28 % concentrated in the city of Athens .

Greeks from Cyprus have a similar history of emigration , usually to the English @- @ speaking world because of the island 's colonization by the British Empire . Waves of emigration followed the Turkish invasion of Cyprus in 1974 , while the population decreased between mid @- @ 1974 and 1977 as a result of emigration , war losses , and a temporary decline in fertility . After the ethnic cleansing of a third of the Greek population of the island in 1974 , there was also an increase in the number of Greek Cypriots leaving , especially for the Middle East , which contributed to a decrease in population that tapered off in the 1990s . Today more than two @- @ thirds of the Greek population in Cyprus is urban .

There is a sizeable Greek minority of approximately 200 @, @ 000 people in Albania . The Greek minority of Turkey , which numbered upwards of 200 @, @ 000 people after the 1923 exchange , has now dwindled to a few thousand , after the 1955 Constantinople Pogrom and other state sponsored violence and discrimination . This effectively ended , though not entirely , the three @- @ thousand @- @ year @- @ old presence of Hellenism in Asia Minor . There are smaller Greek minorities in the rest of the Balkan countries , the Levant and the Black Sea states , remnants of the Old Greek Diaspora (pre @- @ 19th century) .

= = = Diaspora = = =

The total number of Greeks living outside Greece and Cyprus today is a contentious issue . Where Census figures are available , they show around 3 million Greeks outside Greece and Cyprus . Estimates provided by the SAE - World Council of Hellenes Abroad put the figure at around 7 million worldwide . According to George Prevelakis of Sorbonne University , the number is closer to just below 5 million . Integration , intermarriage , and loss of the Greek language influence the self @- @ identification of the Omogeneia . Important centres of the New Greek Diaspora today are London , New York , Melbourne and Toronto . In 2010 , the Hellenic Parliament introduced a law that enables Diaspora Greeks in Greece to vote in the elections of the Greek state . This law was later repealed in early 2014 .

= = = = Ancient = = = =

In ancient times , the trading and colonizing activities of the Greek tribes and city states spread the Greek culture , religion and language around the Mediterranean and Black Sea basins , especially in Sicily and southern Italy (also known as Magna Grecia) , Spain , the south of France and the Black sea coasts . Under Alexander the Great 's empire and successor states , Greek and Hellenizing ruling classes were established in the Middle East , India and in Egypt . The Hellenistic period is characterized by a new wave of Greek colonization that established Greek cities and kingdoms in Asia and Africa . Under the Roman Empire , easier movement of people spread Greeks across the Empire and in the eastern territories , Greek became the lingua franca rather than Latin . The modern @- @ day Griko community of southern Italy , numbering about 60 @, @ 000 , may represent a living remnant of the ancient Greek populations of Italy .

= = = = Modern = = = =

During and after the Greek War of Independence , Greeks of the diaspora were important in establishing the fledgling state , raising funds and awareness abroad . Greek merchant families already had contacts in other countries and during the disturbances many set up home around the Mediterranean (notably Marseilles in France , Livorno in Italy , Alexandria in Egypt) , Russia (Odessa and Saint Petersburg) , and Britain (London and Liverpool) from where they traded , typically in textiles and grain . Businesses frequently comprised the extended family , and with them

they brought schools teaching Greek and the Greek Orthodox Church .

As markets changed and they became more established , some families grew their operations to become shippers , financed through the local Greek community , notably with the aid of the Ralli or Vagliano Brothers . With economic success , the Diaspora expanded further across the Levant , North Africa , India and the USA .

In the 20th century , many Greeks left their traditional homelands for economic reasons resulting in large migrations from Greece and Cyprus to the United States , Great Britain , Australia , Canada , Germany , and South Africa , especially after the Second World War (1939 ? 1945) , the Greek Civil War (1946 ? 1949) , and the Turkish Invasion of Cyprus in 1974 .

While official figures remain scarce , polls and anecdotal evidence point to renewed Greek emigration as a result of the Greek financial crisis . According to data published by the Federal Statistical Office of Germany in 2011 , 23 @, @ 800 Greeks emigrated to Germany , a significant increase over the previous year . By comparison , about 9 @, @ 000 Greeks emigrated to Germany in 2009 and 12 @, @ 000 in 2010 .

= = Culture = =

Greek culture has evolved over thousands of years , with its beginning in the Mycenaean civilization , continuing through the classical era , the Hellenistic period , the Roman and Byzantine periods and was profoundly affected by Christianity , which it in turn influenced and shaped . Ottoman Greeks had to endure through several centuries of adversity that culminated in genocide in the 20th century . The Diafotismos is credited with revitalizing Greek culture and giving birth to the synthesis of ancient and medieval elements that characterize it today .

= = = Language = = =

Most Greeks speak the Greek language , an Indo @-@ European language that forms a branch itself , with its closest relations being Armenian (see Graeco @-@ Armenian) and the Indo @-@ Iranian languages (see Graeco @-@ Aryan) . It has one of the longest documented histories of any language and Greek literature has a continuous history of over 2 @, @ 500 years . Several notable literary works , including the Homeric epics , Euclid 's Elements and the New Testament , were originally written in Greek .

Greek demonstrates several linguistic features that are shared with other Balkan languages , such as Albanian , Bulgarian and Eastern Romance languages (see Balkan sprachbund) , and has absorbed many foreign words , primarily of Western European and Turkish origin . Because of the movements of Philhellenism and the Diafotismos in the 19th century , which emphasized the modern Greeks ' ancient heritage , these foreign influences were excluded from official use via the creation of Katharevousa , a somewhat artificial form of Greek purged of all foreign influence and words , as the official language of the Greek state . In 1976 , however , the Hellenic Parliament voted to make the spoken Dimotiki the official language , making Katharevousa obsolete .

Modern Greek has , in addition to Standard Modern Greek or Dimotiki , a wide variety of dialects of varying levels of mutual intelligibility , including Cypriot , Pontic , Cappadocian , Griko and Tsakonian (the only surviving representative of ancient Doric Greek) . Yevanic is the language of the Romaniotes , and survives in small communities in Greece , New York and Israel . In addition to Greek , many Greeks in Greece and the Diaspora are bilingual in other languages or dialects such as English , Arvanitika / Albanian , Aromanian , Macedonian Slavic , Russian and Turkish .

= = = Religion = = =

Most Greeks are Christians , belonging to the Greek Orthodox Church . During the first centuries after Jesus Christ , the New Testament was originally written in Koine Greek , which remains the liturgical language of the Greek Orthodox Church , and most of the early Christians and Church Fathers were Greek @-@ speaking . There are small groups of ethnic Greeks adhering to other

Christian denominations like Greek Catholics , Greek Evangelicals , Pentecostals , and groups adhering to other religions including Romaniot and Sephardic Jews and Greek Muslims . About 2 @, @ 000 Greeks are members of Hellenic Polytheistic Reconstructionism congregations .

Greek @-@ speaking Muslims live mainly outside Greece in the contemporary era . There are both Christian and Muslim Greek @-@ speaking communities in Lebanon and Syria , while in the Pontus region of Turkey there is a large community of indeterminate size who were spared from the population exchange because of their religious affiliation .

= = = Arts = = =

Greek art has a long and varied history . Greeks have contributed to the visual , literary and performing arts . In the West , classical Greek art was influential in shaping the Roman and later the modern Western artistic heritage . Following the Renaissance in Europe , the humanist aesthetic and the high technical standards of Greek art inspired generations of European artists . Well into the 19th century , the classical tradition derived from Greece played an important role in the art of the Western world . In the East , Alexander the Great 's conquests initiated several centuries of exchange between Greek , Central Asian and Indian cultures , resulting in Greco @-@ Buddhist art , whose influence reached as far as Japan .

Byzantine Greek art , which grew from classical art and adapted the pagan motifs in the service of Christianity , provided a stimulus to the art of many nations . Its influences can be traced from Venice in the West to Kazakhstan in the East . In turn , Greek art was influenced by eastern civilizations (i.e. Egypt , Persia , etc .) during various periods of its history .

Notable modern Greek artists include Renaissance painter Dominikos Theotokopoulos (El Greco) , Panagiotis Doxaras , Nikolaos Gyzis , Nikiphoros Lytras , Yannis Tsarouchis , Nikos Engonopoulos , Constantine Andreou , Jannis Kounellis , sculptors such as Leonidas Drosis , Georgios Bonanos , Yannoulis Chalepas and Joannis Avramidis , conductor Dimitri Mitropoulos , soprano Maria Callas , composers such as Mikis Theodorakis , Nikos Skalkottas , Iannis Xenakis , Manos Hatzidakis , Eleni Karaindrou , Yanni and Vangelis , one of the best @-@ selling singers worldwide Nana Mouskouri and poets such as Kostis Palamas , Dionysios Solomos , Angelos Sikelianos and Yannis Ritsos . Alexandrian Constantine P. Cavafy and Nobel laureates Giorgos Seferis and Odysseas Elytis are among the most important poets of the 20th century . Novel is also represented by Alexandros Papadiamantis and Nikos Kazantzakis .

Notable Greek actors include Marika Kotopouli , Melina Mercouri , Ellie Lambeti , Academy Award winner Katina Paxinou , Dimitris Horn , Manos Katrakis and Irene Papas . Alekos Sakellarios , Michael Cacoyannis and Theo Angelopoulos are among the most important directors .

= = = Science = = =

The Greeks of the Classical era made several notable contributions to science and helped lay the foundations of several western scientific traditions , like philosophy , historiography and mathematics . The scholarly tradition of the Greek academies was maintained during Roman times with several academic institutions in Constantinople , Antioch , Alexandria and other centres of Greek learning while Eastern Roman (or Byzantine) science was essentially a continuation of classical science . Greeks have a long tradition of valuing and investing in paideia (education) . Paideia was one of the highest societal values in the Greek and Hellenistic world while the first European institution described as a university was founded in 5th century Constantinople and operated in various incarnations until the city 's fall to the Ottomans in 1453 . The University of Constantinople was Christian Europe 's first secular institution of higher learning since no theological subjects were taught , and considering the original meaning of the world university as a corporation of students , the world 's first university as well .

As of 2007 , Greece had the eighth highest percentage of tertiary enrollment in the world (with the percentages for female students being higher than for male) while Greeks of the Diaspora are equally active in the field of education . Hundreds of thousands of Greek students attend western

universities every year while the faculty lists of leading Western universities contain a striking number of Greek names . Notable modern Greek scientists of modern times include Dimitrios Galanos , Georgios Papanikolaou (inventor of the Pap test) , Nicholas Negroponte , Constantin Carathéodory , Manolis Andronikos , Michael Dertouzos , John Argyris , Panagiotis Kondylis , John Iliopoulos (2007 Dirac Prize for his contributions on the physics of the charm quark , a major contribution to the birth of the Standard Model , the modern theory of Elementary Particles) , Joseph Sifakis (2007 Turing Award , the " Nobel Prize " of Computer Science) , Christos Papadimitriou (2002 Knuth Prize , 2012 Gödel Prize) , Mihalis Yannakakis (2005 Knuth Prize) and Dimitri Nanopoulos .

== Symbols ==

The most widely used symbol is the flag of Greece , which features nine equal horizontal stripes of blue alternating with white representing the nine syllables of the Greek national motto Eleftheria i Thanatos (Freedom or Death) , which was the motto of the Greek War of Independence . The blue square in the upper hoist @-@ side corner bears a white cross , which represents Greek Orthodoxy . The Greek flag is widely used by the Greek Cypriots , although Cyprus has officially adopted a neutral flag to ease ethnic tensions with the Turkish Cypriot minority ? see flag of Cyprus) .

The pre @-@ 1978 (and first) flag of Greece , which features a Greek cross (crux immissa quadrata) on a blue background , is widely used as an alternative to the official flag , and they are often flown together . The national emblem of Greece features a blue escutcheon with a white cross surrounded by two laurel branches . A common design involves the current flag of Greece and the pre @-@ 1978 flag of Greece with crossed flagpoles and the national emblem placed in front .

Another highly recognizable and popular Greek symbol is the double @-@ headed eagle , the imperial emblem of the last dynasty of the Roman Empire and a common symbol in Asia Minor and , later , Eastern Europe . It is not part of the modern Greek flag or coat @-@ of @-@ arms , although it is officially the insignia of the Greek Army and the flag of the Church of Greece . It had been incorporated in the Greek coat of arms between 1925 and 1926 .

== Surnames ==

Greek surnames were widely in use by the 9th century supplanting the ancient tradition of using the father ? s name , however Greek surnames are most commonly patronymics . Commonly , Greek male surnames end in -s , which is the common ending for Greek masculine proper nouns in the nominative case . Exceptionally , some end in -ou , indicating the genitive case of this proper noun for patronymic reasons . Although surnames in mainland Greece are static today , dynamic and changing patronymic usage survives in middle names where the genitive of father 's first name is commonly the middle name (this usage having been passed on to the Russians) . In Cyprus , by contrast , surnames follow the ancient tradition of being given according to the father ? s name . Finally , in addition to Greek @-@ derived surnames many have Latin , Turkish and Italian origin .

With respect to personal names , the two main influences are Christianity and classical Hellenism ; ancient Greek nomenclatures were never forgotten but have become more widely bestowed from the 18th century onwards .

== Sea ==

The traditional Greek homelands have been the Greek peninsula and the Aegean Sea , Southern Italy (Magna Graecia) , the Black Sea , the Ionian coasts of Asia Minor and the islands of Cyprus and Sicily . In Plato 's Phaidon , Socrates remarks , " we (Greeks) live around a sea like frogs around a pond " when describing to his friends the Greek cities of the Aegean . This image is attested by the map of the Old Greek Diaspora , which corresponded to the Greek world until the creation of the Greek state in 1832 . The sea and trade were natural outlets for Greeks since the Greek peninsula is rocky and does not offer good prospects for agriculture .

Notable Greek seafarers include people such as Pytheas of Marseilles , Scylax of Caryanda who sailed to Iberia and beyond , Nearchus , the 6th century merchant and later monk Cosmas Indicopleustes (Cosmas who Sailed to India) and the explorer of the Northwestern Passage , Apostolos Valerianos also known as Juan de Fuca . In later times , the Byzantine Greeks plied the sea @-@ lanes of the Mediterranean and controlled trade until an embargo imposed by the Byzantine emperor on trade with the Caliphate opened the door for the later Italian pre @-@ eminence in trade .

The Greek shipping tradition recovered during Ottoman rule when a substantial merchant middle class developed , which played an important part in the Greek War of Independence . Today , Greek shipping continues to prosper to the extent that Greece has the largest merchant fleet in the world , while many more ships under Greek ownership fly flags of convenience . The most notable shipping magnate of the 20th century was Aristotle Onassis , others being Yiannis Latsis , George Livanos , and Stavros Niarchos .

= = Physical appearance = =

A study from 2013 for prediction of hair and eye colour from DNA of the Greek people showed that the self @-@ reported phenotype frequencies according to hair and eye colour categories was as follows : 119 individuals - hair colour , 11 was blond , 45 dark blond / light brown , 49 dark brown , 3 brown red / auburn and 11 had black hair ; eye colour , 13 with blue , 15 with intermediate (green , heterochromia) and 91 had brown eye colour .

Another study from 2012 included 150 dental school students from the University of Athens , and the results of the study showed that light hair colour (blonde / light ash brown) was predominant in 10 @.@ 7 % of the students . 36 % had medium hair colour (light brown / medium darkest brown) , 32 % had darkest brown and 21 % black (15 @.@ 3 off black , 6 % midnight black) . In conclusion , the hair colour of young Greeks are mostly brown , ranging from light to dark brown with significant minorities having black and blonde hair . The same study also showed that the eye colour of the students was 14 @.@ 6 % blue / green , 28 % medium (light brown) and 57 @.@ 4 % dark brown .

= = Timeline = =

The history of the Greek people is closely associated with the history of Greece , Cyprus , Constantinople , Asia Minor and the Black Sea . During the Ottoman rule of Greece , a number of Greek enclaves around the Mediterranean were cut off from the core , notably in Southern Italy , the Caucasus , Syria and Egypt . By the early 20th century , over half of the overall Greek @-@ speaking population was settled in Asia Minor (now Turkey) , while later that century a huge wave of migration to the United States , Australia , Canada and elsewhere created the modern Greek diaspora .