

Anastasios Myrodis Tamis, *The Aegis of Hellas. The Continuing Vigour of Philhellenism*. Hellenic Parliament Foundation: Athens 2022.

Reviewed by Constantine G. Hatzidimitriou

Professor Tamis has written a unique and important book which is based on his lifetime of research on the experiences and histories of the Greek diasporas around the world, on which he is acknowledged to be the international authority. Although the subject of philhellenism has been dealt with in connection with the Greek Revolution, and sporadically for subsequent periods focusing on specific persons and countries, no one else has conceived of, let alone executed a study of this phenomenon related to so many countries and also related it to their Greek diasporas. Its comprehensiveness and meticulous research make it the standard reference work for anyone concerned with knowing how the influence of Hellenism has survived into modern times and gained the support of cultures and individuals well beyond modern Greece. The subtitle: "The Continuing Vigour of Philhellenism," is well chosen and underlines the fact that the contributions and relevance of ancient and medieval Hellenism to the arts and sciences of all civilizations continues to be appreciated and acknowledged.

The book begins with a detailed discussion of the historical roots of Philhellenism and its various phases and changes over time, what Tamis calls its typology. The impact of the phenomenon upon the Greeks and others, both positive and negative is also included. For example, Tamis points out that during the nineteenth century in some cases it "gave rise to an intellectual obsession with ancient Greece and the Greeks, a cultural tyranny over the intellectual and artistic elite of countries such as Germany, which many scholars perceived to be *Grecomania* and/or *Graecophilia*" (p. 33). His study, however, treats the subject beyond the periods usually studied and challenges the notion that it has ceased to exist after 1945. As he states: "It will be argued that the philhellenic movement as an ideology was not eroded after 1945; it was rather transformed and transmuted under the sway of globally emerging new socio-pedagogical conceptions,

trends, and political values...and [that] *Hellas*...maintained its sway as a world heritage-carrier country via its language and culture." (p.39) Tamis argues that during this period "*Hellas* was not conceived by the world intellectuals as a country-nation, but rather as a model-perception, an ideology, and a socio-cultural movement." (p.40).

The author's highly original thesis is that this contemporary global Philhellenism (1945-2021) has been trans-territorially developed during the last seventy years in different countries around the globe and that a new basic element shaping it is the global Hellenic Diaspora, estimated to be almost five million. In order to demonstrate the validity of this thesis, his book presents a detailed overview of Philhellenism and ardent philhellenes in the Americas, Asia, the Pacific and Oceania and its continuing impact on these cultures and the role that the Greek Diaspora has played in each one. This monumental survey includes both the highly effective ways that global Philhellenes have been active in supporting modern Greek national issues and the prejudice and negative ways have treated Greece including the impact of so-called "culture wars."

Chapter two is entitled the "Contemporary Vigour of Philhellenism: An Appraisal" (pp. 95-162) and serves as an overview of specific aspects of the cultural phenomenon discussed geographically in subsequent chapters. Tamis identifies three types of Hellenism that are part of this phenomenon: what he calls 1) *Ethnic Hellenism* incorporating those who identify themselves as ethno-culturally Greeks by, race, tribe, heritage or descent; 2) *Homodox Hellenism* incorporating individuals of non-Greek background who identify themselves as Greek Orthodox...also those who other than faith, who adopt certain cultural elements of Orthodox Christianity and/or Byzantium, including music, literature, architecture, and scholarship; and 3) *Cultural Hellenism* incorporating those individuals of non-Greek background who either practice Hellenism or identify themselves with the Greek culture, the Greek life, and ideas... (p. 97).

One can do no more in a brief review than to mention the chapter headings that follow in order to give the reader a sense of the scope of the ambitious geographic survey of Philhellenism discussed in this important book. Chapter Three (pp. 163-264) concerns Australasia; Chapter Four (pp. 277-428) deals with the Far Orient and the Pacific; Chapter Five (pp. 445-509) concerns Latin America; and Chapter Six (pp. 513-589) covers North and Central America. In each chapter, Tamis covers a wide array of philhellenic cultural, educational and political movements and institutions as well as highlighting specific important philhellenes and providing an overview of diaspora communities in each geographic area. His discussions and analysis of the support of Greek national issues in each region is also of particular interest. Suffice it to say that the documentation professor Tamis provides related to each country covered is an important resource for anyone

wishing to investigate the impact of Hellenism on each one, the diaspora community that exists there and their relations with their wider societies.

Noticeably absent from this ambitious geographic survey is the impact of Hellenism, the existence of Philhellenism and Greek diaspora communities in the Middle East and Africa. Perhaps, professor Tamis intends to discuss them in a subsequent volume. One can only hope that he contributes to our understanding of these additional regions based on his profound knowledge and copious research in the same way. An index of the major names and places contained in this fine volume would have also assisted the reader in finding information of particular interest. It must however be emphasized that these limitations do not diminish the value and spectacular achievement of professor Tamis' contribution in any way. The Hellenic Parliament Foundation is to be congratulated for publishing this important resource on international Philhellenism since the Second World War, which I am certain will be the gold standard on the subject for generations to come.

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