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The export of people: emigration from and return migration to Greece

Abstract

Most studies of migration have been studies of immigration. This has happened for a number of reasons - the receiving countries have more resources for research, the research has often been problem oriented, and prevailing theoretical frameworks may have limited rather than extended our understanding of migration. Classics such as Thomas and Znaniecki's memorable work "The Polish Peasant in Europe and America" have shown how important it is to see migration as a continuing process of constant interaction between homeland and the country of immigration. The assumption that people leave home as "permanent" migrants has always been a dubious assumption. Many emigrants return home, and many others would like to. Even where immigrants remain in another country as satisfied settlers, ties with the homeland may have great significance. And the political, economic and social forces that create emigration must also be taken into account. An understanding of migration, therefore, requires the broadest of perspectives. People do not, for example, carry a culture with them. They carry what Bourdieu calls "habitus", sets of "durable, transposable, dispositions" (p. 72, 1977). Culture is historically created and recreated under specific conditions. We need some historical analysis of those conditions. We also need to place migration within an international framework. This has been done over the last decade by writers interested in the political economy of migration (cf. Berger and Mohr 1975, Castles and Kosack 1973, Paine 1976, Piore 1979). Their publications have provided a valuable reorientation of migration research, linking 20th century migration to processes of industrialization and the uneven development accompanying industrial capitalism.



THE UNIVERSITY OF WOLLONGONG
CENTRE FOR MULTICULTURAL STUDIES

THE EXPORT OF PEOPLE: EMIGRATION FROM
AND RETURN MIGRATION TO GREECE

by

Dr. Gillian Bottomley

Occasional Series No. 1

September, 1984



P.O. BOX 1144, WOLLONGONG, N.S.W. 2500, AUSTRALIA

Illustration: Greek-Australian Shop in Galata,
Peloponnesos, Greece

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Dr. Gillian Bottomley

INTRODUCTION

The Centre for Multicultural Studies was established in the University of Wollongong in 1978 to pursue applied research and to provide a teaching and research programme concerned with multicultural Australian society including the role of Aboriginal and ethnic minorities in Australian society. Formally, the role and functions of the Centre are:

- (i) To be the focus for teaching, research and service in the University, and to inform the region and the wider Australian society, of the multicultural nature of Australian society.
- (ii) To investigate the social, cultural, and economic barriers experienced by ethnic communities in Australia and the means by which barriers may be removed.
- (iii) To concentrate research expertise in the study of the experience of ethnic minorities in Australian society so as to develop as an international centre of excellence.
- (iv) To provide and participate in teaching programmes to meet the needs of students:
 - a) working with ethnic communities; and/or
 - b) wishing to investigate issues relevant to multicultural Australian society.

We believe that a valuable service can be performed by keeping people, interested in Australian society, informed of each others thoughts and writings. To this end we have established this Occasional Series to which we invite contributions (and also requests for being added to the circulation list are invited).

Our first contributor Gillian Bottomley is well known in the field on multiculturalism. A senior lecturer in comparative sociology at Macquarie University, Gill has been researching, teaching and writing on the sociology of migration since 1969. She has published numerous articles in Australian and international journals, is the author of After the Odyssey: A Study of Greek Australians (University of Queensland Press, 1979) and co-editor, with Marie de Lepervanche, of Ethnicity, Class and Gender in Australia (George Allen and Unwin, 1984).

Please let us know what you think of the series.

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THE EXPORT OF PEOPLE: EMIGRATION FROM AND
RETURN MIGRATION TO GREECE

Most studies of migration have been studies of immigration. This has happened for a number of reasons - the receiving countries have more resources for research, the research has often been problem oriented, and prevailing theoretical frameworks may have limited rather than extended our understanding of migration. Classics such as Thomas and Znaniecki's memorable work "The Polish Peasant in Europe and America" have shown how important it is to see migration as a continuing process of constant interaction between homeland and the country of immigration. The assumption that people leave home as "permanent" migrants has always been a dubious assumption. Many emigrants return home, and many others would like to. Even where immigrants remain in another country as satisfied settlers, ties with the homeland may have great significance. And the political, economic and social forces that create emigration must also be taken into account. An understanding of migration, therefore, requires the broadest of perspectives. People do not, for example, carry a culture with them. They carry what Bourdieu calls "habitus", sets of "durable, transposable, dispositions" (p. 72, 1977). Culture is historically created and recreated under specific conditions. We need some historical analysis of those conditions. We also need to place migration within an international framework. This has been done over the last decade by writers interested in the political economy of migration (cf. Berger and Mohr 1975, Castles and Kosack 1973, Paine 1976, Piore 1979). Their publications have provided a valuable reorientation of migration research, linking 20th century migration to processes of industrialization and the uneven development accompanying industrial capitalism.

My own interest in the sociology of migration began with studies of Greek settlers in Australia. In 1969, I began research among Greek settlers in Sydney in an attempt to understand the effects of Australian policies of assimilation and the modes of resistance developed by this large and highly structured ethnic population. It quickly became obvious that I must also make some attempt to learn more about Greece itself. Furthermore, the patterns of interaction between Greek Australians and their country of origin are complex and fluid. In the last ten years, the flow of Greek migration to Australia has reversed. Since 1972, more people have been returning than arriving. My current research is now focused on Greece as well as Australia. In this paper, I would like to look at Greece as a country that has exported people for almost

100 years and is now experiencing a large inflow of repatriates. Most of these have been emigrants to Northern Europe, but some are Greek Australians, and there are interesting differences between these two categories of repatriates. I hope to throw some light on the consequences of emigration for Greece, as well as the experiences of migrants themselves. In so doing, I want to maintain an international perspective on migration, to view the mass movement of people towards more industrialised countries as part of the flow of resources from poorer to wealthier sections of the world capitalist system.

1. MIGRATION AND GREEK HISTORY:

Migration has always been a part of Greek history. Large Greek settlements have flourished around the Mediterranean, from Asia Minor to Italy and Egypt. Trans-oceanic migration, however, began in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, first to the U.S.A., then to Australia and Canada. The largest wave of emigrants has been that to Northern Europe, especially to Germany.

These movements, of course, are very different in kind. The establishment of Greek settlements around the Mediterranean was a kind of imperialism, especially in the wake of the conquering armies of Alexander. Nevertheless, the Greek populations of those settlements were surrounded by non-Greeks and, presumably, confronted the problem of maintaining "Greekness" at a distance from some perceived "centre" (which was Constantinople for hundreds of years). The Orthodox Church, the establishment of koinotites¹ and the Greek language were the three pillars of Greekness in the diaspora. During the 400 years of Turkish rule, Greek culture and social organization were to some extent protected by the system of indirect rule and the authority given by the Turks to the Greek ethnarchs. The Turks wanted no change and the ethnarchs were held responsible for their communities, so the hegemony of the Church was un-questioned. Religious and secular power reinforced each other.

Undoubtedly, Greeks have been influenced by neighbouring populations, and there are considerable regional variations among Greeks themselves. But there are also marked similarities across a wide area, including a mutually comprehensible language and a shared religion. Figures vary, but over 90% of modern Greeks are Orthodox Christians.

1. In the Diaspora, a koinotis is a Greek community, usually with a church and at least one Greek language school (see Tsounis, 1975).

The Greek War of Independence, which began in 1821, marked a watershed in the country's political history. The so-called "exchange of minorities" with Turkey in 1920-22 marked another. One and a quarter million refugees from Asia Minor came to join a population of less than five million. Many of these refugees emigrated further, to North and South America and to Australia. Those who stayed in Greece changed the political and social landscape. Many of them were urban people,² some well-educated, some with experience of other countries and customs. In a small and rather parochial city like Athens, these refugees made a considerable impact. Literature and music record that impact, especially on the form of popular music called rembetika (see Holst, 1975). But they also influenced the political direction of Greece, voting overwhelmingly to abolish the monarchy in 1924 and introducing socialism to the more conservative Greeks (cf. Clogg, p.123-3). At the same time, the refugee influx placed a greater strain on the Greek economy and forced more and more people to emigrate.

As I said earlier, Greeks have always been mobile, shifting villages to avoid attacks, moving house to avoid earth tremors, sailing throughout the world and trading by land and sea. Craftsmen such as carpenters and masons have traditionally gone to other regions to earn a living, returning home after long periods away. There are poems and songs attesting to the trials of living in xenitia, in exile from one's home.

2. INTRA-EUROPEAN MIGRATION:

Superficially, the recent emigration to Northern Europe is similar to traditional temporary movements. But the seasonal migrations were always to and from a home base, relatively limited in time span. Emigration to Northern Europe was often further afield, for a longer period and could entail movement of families. The Northern Europeans also controlled the conditions of migration. The ideal of German employment and policy, for example was to fulfil immediate labour needs, then send the migrants home.

The prevailing ideology was that the recycling of workers from less industrialised areas of Europe into German industry would be beneficial for both, supplying wealth and trained workers to the former and labour to the

2. Older Greeks, especially refugees from Asia Minor, may still refer to Constantinople as Polis, the City.

latter.³ This widely accepted model of labour migration has been heavily criticised by recent writers, who demonstrate that the inequalities between the industrialized core and the labour-providing periphery have not been reduced. The peripheral countries have exported their most energetic citizens who are then sent home when they are no longer productive, to be maintained by the same society who bore the cost of their education and preparation for the workforce. I will return to this argument later, in the section assessing the effects of emigration on Greece.

According to a recent report from Greece (Papantoniou, 1982), migrants return without special skills, "their only qualification being the acquisition of the work ethic and a familiarity with work in industry" (p.10). Furthermore, they often have impaired health because of their living and working conditions in Germany. A number have returned with "serious economic problems at survival level" (p.10) and even those with some savings have found that these rapidly disappear to pay customs duties, costs of resettling, and to cover a period of unemployment. Many have been unemployed for long time spans (cf. Papantoniou-Frangoulis, 1982).

Despite the limitation on migration to Germany, Greeks did establish families there. By the mid '60s, the preponderance of single males had given way to a more balanced sex ratio. Fakiolas suggests that emigrants invited family members to join them because they could not integrate socially in Germany. The family probably made integration more difficult, and children became the principle reason for repatriation (cf. Fakiolas, 1982, p.18).

With the exception of Sweden, Northern European countries have not encouraged naturalization of immigrants and opportunities for self employment are limited. Immigrants have been confined in a non-citizen status and in specific occupations, such as construction and manufacturing. There has been little attempt to integrate them into the receiving society.

In Australia, the migration programme has developed differently. Citizenship has been available to immigrants, as has access to social services, trade union membership and working conditions comparable to those of indigenous workers. (All this at least in theory: in practice there have been

3. Rhoades, 1978 for a detailed analysis of the history of this programme.

discrimination and inequalities, but these have not been as systematically built-in to the migration programme as in Northern European countries. The post-1947 Australian migration programme specifically sought settlers as well as workers).

Despite the short term intentions of the Northern European policy makers, there are still large Greek communities settled in the countries of immigration. Immigrant labour has become essential to some industries and the indigenous population often prefers not to do the kind of work done by migrants. In West Germany, for example, Fakiolas estimates some 200,000 Greeks in 1980. There were, however, twice that number in 1972. With the economic recession and rising unemployment, in Germany, the migrants have been "pushed" home. Fakiolas states that nearly 10% of the population of Greece are now repatriates. Some of these have returned from Australia and North America, but the overwhelming majority have worked in Northern Europe.

3. RETURN MIGRATION TO GREECE:

It is understandable, then, that most of the information about return migration to Greece is information about returnees from Northern Europe, especially Germany. Emigration has been a kind of solution to Greek governments as well as to the Northern Europeans. It has alleviated unemployment and underemployment and has allowed Greek governments to avoid certain pressing needs at home. At the same time, emigrants' remittances have helped to sustain the Greek economy. It is an often-cited fact that remittances, along with shipping and tourism, provide the three main sources of "invisible earnings". Now that the emigrants are returning in large numbers, they are adding to and suffering from problems of unemployment and underemployment, rural under-development and inadequate social services. Not all returned migrants are experiencing difficulties, but many do. In 1978, the Reintegration Centre for Returning Migrants was established in Athens, under the auspices of the World Council of Churches. Branches in Thessaloniki and Kavala began operating in 1980 and 1981. The Centre deals almost entirely with repatriates from Europe, offering information, counselling, legal and other assistance, and translation facilities. They have produced two informative reports (1978 and 1982). Workers at the Centre have concentrated on economic, educational and legal aspects of return migration. These were the three main

sets of problems with which the returnees have been confronted.

The first report from the Centre collected information from 500 returned emigrants in Macedonia, the province that showed the heaviest rate of emigration to and return from West Germany over the last 15 years. Unemployment was high among the returnees, and those who were employed were not usually satisfied with their jobs. They compared working conditions and industrial relations in Greece unfavourably with those in Germany. There were also problems with social insurance, because the Greek insurance agencies would not take into account the money they had paid in Germany. In general, the technical skills acquired in Germany were now irrelevant.

Socially, there seem to be fewer problems, though they did report family tensions, difficulties with children and conflict arising mainly from the changes in the emigrants' notions of family and community life. The motivation to emigrate was primarily economic, but the motivation to return was often social - e.g. to do with the education of children. One could expect a higher degree of social than economic re-integration.

A more recent report from the Centre (1982) confirms the earlier findings. Unemployment remained high among returnees from Germany, partly because they are unwilling to accept jobs with much lower wages than they earned abroad. (Fakiolas, 1982, p.30). Some, however, find their overseas experience an asset in gaining employment in the tourist and construction industries or with multinational firms.

Remittances were often deposited in credit institutions and helped to finance investment projects. Some others have formed limited liability companies with capital and labour coming from repatriates or those still living abroad.

The most comprehensive study of re-migration to Greece has been made by Klaus Unger, a sociologist at the University of Bielefeld, who interviewed 574 returnees in Athens, Salonica and Serres during 1980. Unger's evidence confirms that emigration had a primarily economic motivation, and that the rate of emigration was higher in areas where health services were limited, where water and electricity were not freely available, and where the population was mainly employed in the primary sector. In many cases, moving to Athens or

Salonika preceded emigration: 47% of the Athenians interviewed had lived there before emigration, but only 15% had spent the first 15 years of their lives in Athens (1981, p.12): 56% of the returnees in Athens and Salonika had been living in the provinces before emigration. Thus, return migration increased the tendency to urbanization. One in five had previously returned to Greece and re-migrated to Germany and 53% of all respondents stated that they would prefer to re-migrate to Germany "if they were allowed to" (p.13). The main motives for emigration were to save money, to improve their lives and because of unemployment in Greece.

The motives for re-migration had to do with the education of children, either those in Germany or those left behind in Greece. They also included health problems, homesickness and other family reasons: four out of ten rated their return as misjudgment or not worthwhile.

Seventy-six percent said that they were unemployed after their return, for an average period of 9.5 months (Greek unemployment benefits are available for only 5 months): 36% were now self-employed, but most of those worked by themselves, i.e. they had created no jobs: 46% said they would prefer to work in a factory as they had in West Germany, but 28% were satisfied with their current job. Unger estimates the average amount of money saved abroad was c.\$US 35,000 much of which was used to build or buy a home. But large sums also went in customs duties, re-establishment - buying furniture, etc., and also setting up businesses.

Klaus Unger's report was part of a larger research project he has been undertaking in Greece. His orientation is clearly different from that of the sociologists at the Reintegration Centre, who normally see only returnees with problems. Nevertheless, the 53% of people who would re-migrate must be dissatisfied to some extent. It would be interesting to know more about the social and cultural reintegration of the respondents.

4. THE GREEK-AUSTRALIANS:

Information about returnees from Australia is much more limited. If they have problems (and undoubtedly some do) there is virtually no provision for them. The International Social Services agency in Athens can accept referrals from Australian social workers but otherwise the repatriates take their chance

with the rest of the population. This can be difficult where, for example, there are legal problems involving Australian as well as Greek law. The Australian Government greatly increased the problems of a number of repatriates during the recent Social Security scandal, when hundreds of Greeks were suspended from pensions and benefits while an alleged conspiracy network was investigated.

The rate of return from Australia has been relatively high, though it is difficult to obtain accurate figures. Lianos estimated that, between 1968 and 1972, 39% of returned migrants came from Australia. From Australian figures, we know that between 1947 and 1978, the ratio of settler loss/settler arrival of people born in Greece or Cyprus was 27%, i.e. 220,494 arrived and 59,634 left during those years (Price 1979, p.A25).

Many of the returnees have been pensioners retiring home to Greece, but others from Australia have established themselves in small businesses, e.g. taxis, shops, restaurants, hotels, real estate in cities and tourist areas. A number have connections, both social and economic, in Australia and Greece, and follow a pattern of alternating migration, spending several years in each place. They do share some problems with the repatriates from Germany, however.

For one thing, there is the problem of the education of their children. Where children have been brought up overseas, they may not have adequate Greek to cope with the higher levels of the Greek education system. Furthermore, children used to the more permissive Australian schools often find the Greek system authoritarian and over-formal. The Greek system is extremely competitive, including the widespread use of private coaching to push the children along. Some Greek-Australian children rebel against this pressure and perhaps idealise their days at Australian schools. There is no Greek-Australian school to form the kind of bridge formed by British and French schools in Athens. The pattern of alternating migration naturally exacerbates these problems.

There are some difficulties shared by most returnees. There may be a kind of culture conflict, because of the acquisition of different standards of efficiency and performance, perhaps ideas about punctuality and public service. There are other aspects, as well, to do with the behaviour expected of women and children. Many of the women I have spoken to would prefer to be in Australia,

where they had more freedom and independence, perhaps their own income and access to a car.⁴ Women with children can be extremely isolated in Athens, and school hours offer mothers little opportunity for free time. One child may go to the morning session of school and another to the afternoon session; a mother is expected to be at home to provide a cooked lunch. The bourgeoisie have access to maids and au pairs to help them, and established families may have an invaluable grandmother on hand. But rural migrants to Athens often leave the old people in the country, and Athenian mothers can be very hard-pressed.

Apart from educational problems, young unmarried people to whom I have spoken generally preferred Greece to Australia because they enjoy themselves more in Greece. Especially in the summer months, social life is intense in Greece, and hours of work allow far greater sociability than in Australia.⁵ In the islands and in many coastal towns, the constant influx of tourists also creates a holiday atmosphere during the summer.

My own research among Greek-Australian returnees is still somewhat exploratory, because it has only recently become a focus of my interest. In short visits over the last 8 years, I have been to several areas of heavy out-migration to Australia. I have also talked with members of two Greek-Australian associations in Athens. One of these was founded in 1975, and the other formally constituted in May, 1982. The former association has approached both Greek and Australian governments for recognition and support for a Greek-Australian school and a cultural and information centre in Athens. There was also a newsletter, The Greek-Australian, edited by the man who is now secretary of the new association, The Greek Australian Professionals.

The Greek Australian Association organise social activities in Athens, including an annual ball where debutantes are presented, as they are at the balls of the Greek Orthodox Community of N.S.W. This particular activity seems to be an Old British tradition, perhaps almost extinct among British Australians. If this is so, it is an interesting transposition of a colonial custom from Britain to Australia and back to Greece!

4. Comitas and Bernard (1978) and Fakiolas (1984) report the same feelings among women emigrants returned from Germany.
5. Working hours are from 8.00am. to 2.30pm. (or thereabouts) followed by lunch and a siesta. This schedule leaves time and energy to enjoy the beautiful summer evenings. It is a schedule doomed to disappear as Greeks are pressed into industrial work patterns.

In some rural settlements of returnees from Australia (e.g. in the area of Akrata, in the northern Peloponnesos), the "Australianoï" have group outings, perhaps chartering a bus to travel together. They sometimes encounter a certain hostility from people who did not emigrate, or at least a sense of being slightly foreign. In a village on Kythera, where I stayed in 1974, this separateness was compounded by conflicting interests over property. A man and his Australian-born wife had rather strained relations with many of the other villagers, and the wife felt isolated as a result. She was even worried that some of the old women of the village might cast the evil eye on her young children.

In other cases, the Australian connection may be a source of pride, with koalas, kookaburras, waratahs, etc. on display. Such a display may have more than symbolic value, as for example in the "Hotel Sydney" in Rhodes. In the heart of the medieval walled city, near an old mosque and away from the main tourist spots, the Hotel Sydney has an interior that could be found in a south-western suburb of Sydney. Its proprietor, who lived in Sydney for 15 years, welcomes a number of Australian tourists each year and benefits from the extensive information network that operates among Greeks in Australia.

In general, returnees from Australia are unlikely to suffer the same difficulties as those Greeks who emigrated to Germany. Migration to Australia took place over a long period of time and through a system of chain migration that enabled networks to be constructed and maintained at both ends of the migration process. As a result, those who return have usually come back to kin and friends in Greece, but also retained contact with kin and friends in Australia. As I mentioned earlier, this can lead to a kind of alternating migration. Some of the families I have interviewed, with business and kinship ties in both countries, spend several years in one and then the other. Others, especially older emigrants, have offspring in Australia and move backwards and forwards if they can afford it. If they are Australian citizens, they have, of course, a very different status from those emigrants to Germany who remain aliens.

A short case study of one of the areas that provided emigrants to Australia might allow further discussion of some aspects of the migration process. The island of Kythera, off the southern tip of the Peloponnesos, was the source of some of the earliest Greek settlers in Australia. When I visited Kythera in



Illustration: Ayia Pelayia, Kythera - depopulated by emigration to Australia

November, 1974, the effects of depopulation were immediately obvious. Some villages appeared completely deserted, others in a bad state of disrepair. Windows were boarded over, gardens unattended. Though the young and the old formed the majority of the population, the age structure changed with the seasons. Secondary school children and younger workers spend the winter in Athens-Piraeus, returning only for summer visits (or, when I was there, to vote). The summer influx brings some life to these neglected villages, including some of Kythera's long-lost sons and daughters and their offspring. In winter, the population contracts to a few thousand. Kythera shares many of the rigours of the Southern Peloponnesos: winds from the north blow across the Spartan snow and the cold brilliant waters of the Laconic Gulf, and there is little shelter in the northern half of the island. Aphrodite's foam-flecked scallop shell must have reached Kythera in summer - or perhaps that is why she left so quickly for Cyprus!

Kythera is one of the areas of Greece most depleted by migration. Men and women now in their '50s remember 150-200 pupils at schools where there are now 20-30. In Ayia Pelayia, a port on the northern coast, I was shown a photograph taken in 1950 of 72 villagers. Ten had since died and 56 were now in Australia, South Africa, the U.S. and Canada. Most of the people I spoke with on Kythera had lived abroad themselves and/or had relatives and friends in other countries. Near the market town of Potamos, the main town of the north, a sign marks the spot where, some 50 years ago, local men set out for Australia. The sign reads, in literal translation,

"This place is joyful and weeps",

meaning, I was told, that those left behind wept while waiting for the joy of return. In most cases, the joy never arrived. Price has given some specific reasons for this mass emigration, and more can be suggested (Price, 1963, pp.24-82). The population of Kythera, like many other Greek populations, has always been relatively mobile. Kythera was visited by ships sailing between Crete and the Peloponnesos as early as the 3rd century B.C. There have been Byzantine and Roman settlers since then, possibly Arab and Slav pirates, before Kythera - as Cirigo - became part of the Venetian Republic in the 13th century. In 1537, the Turks made a devastating attack, after which the island never really recovered its former prosperity. Over the years, the population has fluctuated as people moved backwards and forwards to the mainland, to Asia Minor and to Egypt. Although the economy was basically agricultural, seafaring and commerce have also been important and men often spent long periods of time away

from their families. Temporary and permanent migrations have always been part of the island's history. Nevertheless, according to two archaeologists who have worked on Kythera,

"today the rapid decline of the population threatens a new dark age of emptiness, as emigration gains momentum."

(Coldstream and Huxley, 1972, p.310)

The emigration epidemic started early in Kythera. Both population and land under cultivation were greatly reduced by 1940 (see Price 1963,p.116). But the contagion has developed rapidly within this century, for various reasons. Greece has suffered wars, foreign occupations, political turmoil and economic depression. Large areas of rural Greece also have barely cultivable land. The Greeks, of course, have a word for it, describing their beautiful, difficult land in the words of an old legend. According to the legend, God created Greece by breaking off a piece of the rainbow, mixing it with a little soil and many stones, and blowing the mixture into the sea.

As if that beginning were not difficult enough, the system of equal inheritance has fragmented landholdings to a point where they often fail to sustain a household. And there has been minimal industrial development, especially outside the cities. As we have seen, the response to this dilemma of underemployment and poverty has been an acceleration of migration, to Athens-Piraeus and overseas.

Other factors undoubtedly spread the contagion of emigration. One of these is the Greek emphasis on improvement of the family name by social mobility: this emphasis partly accounts for the importance accorded to education. People rarely faced the choice of "perish or migrate" - the choice, if it can be so called, was "no improvement or migrate". Baxevanis describes a sense of hopelessness among many of those who remain in the villages, especially where there has been no noticeable agricultural improvement. To some extent, emigration relieves pressure on land, but many emigrants, by retaining their holdings, prevent their incorporation into viable economic units.

On Kythera, the question of absentee landlords and fragmented ownership has recently come under scrutiny of the Greek government and by those who want to develop tourism on the island. Olive producing land is now quite valuable, however, given the current price of olive oil on the world market. Olive groves actually facilitate emigration, in a way. They require minimal labour

and produce faithfully for years. Harvesting can be done over a period of several months by women, children and the elderly, if need be. The weekly Piraeus-Kythera boat in winter is full of women, children, elderly people and workers on leave, carrying baskets, olive oil tins and large plastic containers. They stay on the island until harvesting is completed, then return with their produce to the Athens-Piraeus area.

An associated factor that stimulates emigration is the traditional astifilia, literally the love of the city. Greek society has always been city-oriented, with inordinate value being placed on the pleasures of city life as compared with the "crudeness" of the countryside. The terms horyiatis (villager) and vlachos (literally describing a shepherd) are pejorative for Greeks. There is no tradition that corresponds to the British or German idolization of country life and yeoman stock. The Greeks would opt more readily for Marx's view of "rural idiocy". The increase in emigration to the cities and overseas has fed these ideas of rural inferiority as emigrants return weighed down with the trappings of urban life or communicate their urbanity by letter. The effects on village life have been profound and often destructive. The fine traditions of local craftsmanship have virtually vanished to be replaced by machine-made mediocrity. And prestige is increasingly evaluated according to a lifestyle which is believed to reflect urban sophistication. So the vicious cycle grinds on, neatly expressed by Evelpidis in this (roughly translated) quotation:

"Life in the country is dull and monotonous, conditions are rudimentary, social life is limited, leisure activities are almost non-existent. But, above all, there are no favourable prospects for an improvement of lifestyle. Young peasants, who see their parents worn out without having anything to show for their efforts, want to leave the village. The comparison of leisure and conditions of the towns reinforces this desire."
(1968,p.203)

This is a depressing view of the "choice" made by emigrants, a choice tailored by economic, social and cultural history. But it is not the end of the story, as I have tried to demonstrate. For one thing living conditions have begun to improve in rural Greece and the rate of depopulation has slowed (cf. Allen, 1981). From the point of view of emigrants, their homeland is not just a place which they have left behind. There has been continuing interaction, and it is important to view both ends of this process.

There are probably more Kytherians now in Australia than on the island itself. If one counts Australian-born, there are certainly more. The settlement began in the 1870s and by 1911, there were some 44 Kythera-born residents of N.S.W.: 70% of them either owned or worked in restaurants or fish-shops and c. 15% were grocers or green-grocers. By 1947, there were 2-3,000, with basically the same occupations (see Price, 1963 esp. pp. 166-68 for more details). These early immigrants were not government assisted but were sponsored by kin, friends and fellow villagers. Apparently, most of the Kytherians in Australia either knew each other or knew about each other at this time. Even now there is a complex interlocking of Kytherian friends and families. There was the first regional Brotherhood, established in 1923 and still flourishing. Moving into Australia at a time when industry was minimal, most Kytherians escaped the factories and worked long hours in shops where labour-intensive methods often meant great success. In their ecological niche, the Kytherians offered competition no Australian could match. The "Greek cafe" in country towns, open at all hours, became a tradition. Hard work indeed, but it had three advantages:-

- (a) most people could "be their own bosses", or at least work with and for their families;
- (b) the family could operate as something like a unit of production, as rural families have always done in Greece, and
- (c) the family could improve their position by their own efforts.

These three elements are missing in the lives of the vast number of factory workers who have migrated from Greece since the mid-50s. This important difference is too often overlooked by older settlers who criticise the new arrivals. Many of the latter also long for their own businesses, but opportunities are now much more limited, the economy is quite different, and they are forced to remain wage slaves, whether they like it or not.

Some of the Kytherians personify the migrant's dream of working hard and prospering. Those who promulgate this dream tend to neglect structural details such as economic conditions and opportunities. Nevertheless, there have been success stories, and so the dream maintains credibility. Perhaps the most well known success story was that of the late Nicholas Laurantus, who left Kythera as a penniless boy of 18. By his 80s he was at least a millionaire, having established greengrocers shops in country towns and bought real estate,

including sheep stations at a time when the country was "riding on the sheep's back". He endowed charities in Australia and established a Chair of Modern Greek at Sydney University. But Kythera was not forgotten. He financed the building of a jetty at the southern port of Kapsali, rebuilt the school in the capital of Hora, established a club to teach swimming to Kytherian boys and girls. He assisted indigent Kytherian students and helped to support a hospital on the island.

Mr. Laurantus' prestige, both in Greece and in Australia, was understandably high. He also felt himself to be a genuinely dual citizen. In his words, "I still love my old country, as I love my adopted country, Australia"⁶. Like many other emigrants, he had revisited Kythera - in 1932, 1962 and 1969. He also visited his sister and sister's daughters in South Africa. In fact, he represented a successful version of a commonly found pattern. Many long-established Greek settlers and their offspring keep up ties with kin and friends all over the world. As well as personal links, there are the Brotherhoods and even inter-national newsletters focussing on particular regions. Remittances to Greece probably sustain most of Kythera's residents, and the summer influx of residents certainly revitalises their world.

The pattern of alternating migration, which I have mentioned several times, is available to relatively few. The industrial workers who form the bulk of Australia's Greek population simply cannot opt to spend part of their lives in Greece and part in Australia. Nevertheless, people have been revisiting Greece more frequently in the last few years, memories have been refreshed and ties with those who remain in Greece have been strengthened. The depressing picture of depopulation and decay is not the whole picture. Those who have gone also remain on the scene, to some degree. In emigrating they have often drawn out and expanded some of the threads of the web of circumstances within which they were born.

This interaction between emigrants and homeland has some interesting side-effects. For example, the success of Kytherian emigrants has changed the traditional balance of status on the island. The south has always had higher status, administrative dominance and more cosmopolitan influences. But the emigrants from the north who have attained wealth and eminence abroad have reversed this pattern, partly by demonstrating their ability to sustain an

6. In a letter to the Editor of the Masonic Club Journal, February, 1969, p.14

affluent lifestyle. Links with Australia are also obvious on Kythera. Apart from the wattle, passionfruit, melons and bananas planted by returning emigrants, there are noticeable Australian accents, and even Australian currency in the markets at Potamos. Visiting Australians are well received and memories of Australia seem to be positive. Again, there is no simple acceptance of one country and rejection of the other. Nevertheless, the pattern of return migration suggests that many Greek Australians are voting with their feet, in favour of their homeland.

5. THE CONSEQUENCES OF EMIGRATION:

Twentieth century emigration from Greece has been described as "a veritable epidemic ... which saps the countryside and deprives it of its best subjects." (Evelpidis, 1968, p.203). The recession of the 1980s helped to start this exodus, and between 1906-1914, more than one quarter of a million people had migrated to the U.S.A. Their remittances, together with the development of tobacco as an export crop, encouraged some economic growth before World War I. The 'exchange of minorities' increased the outflow of population as well as the rapid growth of cities. Athens, a city of less than 200,000 at the end of the 19th century, had a population exceeding one million by 1939. During the next two decades, emigration to the cities and abroad depopulated the countryside. By 1971, 53.2% of the Greek population were urban-dwellers (cf. Mouzelis, 1978, p.99).

The peak year for overseas migration was 1965, when 117,167 people moved out of Greece. One estimate suggested that 850,000 people emigrated between 1951-1970 (McNeill, 1978, p.117).

The signs of depopulation that I remarked in Kythera are common to many rural areas of Greece: abandoned houses, unused fields, even empty villages. Writing in 1974 about a village in Mani, Allen remarked that the few people left seemed to be either old people waiting to die or young people preparing to leave. Over 30% of this village were 60 years or more in age. Clearly they could not maintain the same level of agricultural activity as the younger and more able-bodied who had emigrated.

The rural population loss was accompanied by increased contact with the city and the rest of the world. Roads, radio and television have broken into the

smaller world of the village and disrupted traditional balances. "The comfort of certainty is lost and there are few standards which any longer limit expectations" (Campbell & Sherrard, 1968, p.363). Increasingly, the cities and the centres of industrialisation began to influence the lives of country people. New wants emerged - for more education, more services and a less difficult way of life. The movement out of villages is clearly related to these perceived inadequacies in lifestyle, as well as to the more pressing realities of poverty and underemployment.

Despite the recent improvement in living conditions, many rural areas of Greece remain underdeveloped. The present Government wants to "revive" the countryside, with an admirable programme of decentralisation, agricultural development, training and research, and some attention to agricultural economics. But the years of neglect will be difficult to reverse.

There are other, somewhat immeasurable, consequences. One of the functions of emigration is to serve as a safety valve, to siphon off possible political discontent. Certainly, successive Greek governments have been able to continue their neglectful policies without sustained opposition. There has been no landless peasantry or even a large unemployed proletariat to generate social revolutions. Some writers (e.g. Manganara, 1977) claim that returned migrants bring back more radical political ideas. Certainly, they bring back experience with different forms of political organizations, such as militant trade unionism.⁷

There is no doubt that Greek emigrants have served to enrich a number of other countries. Migrating as adult workers, they have provided the labour power to increase industrialization in the U.S.A., Australia, Canada and Northern Europe. Castles and Kosack have described international labour migration as "a form of development aid from poor countries to rich countries" (1973, p.8). In the European context, Greece and other Southern European countries have provided raw material (including labour) as well as markets for the Northern Europeans and remained dependent on their capital, and that of the U.S. Nikolinakos (1975) argues that the Northern European countries stabilize the Southern migrants by rotating migrant labour, thereby preparing them for

7. Right wing governments in Greece have supervised the registration of unions, developing "phantom unions". The trade union system is regarded by the current socialist government as a major focus for change.

their absorption into the European system. Without the constant circulation of labour, it would have been necessary to introduce a planning system for investment, thus heralding the end of the free market economy.

Recently, capital has been exported to the South where wages are lower. Either the capitalists secure monopolies or invest in the tertiary sector (especially tourism), set up assembly plants or light consumer industries. Although this kind of investment creates jobs for some Greek workers, it maintains the relations of dependency that have always characterised the "Southern problem".

Emigration to Australia cannot be interpreted in terms of core/periphery relations. Australia is wealthier and more industrialised than Greece, but also heavily dependent on foreign capital and semi-peripheral in the world economic system. Australian industry has been partly developed by the labour of Southern European migrants, but the products of this labour have not been marketed in Southern Europe, as have the Northern European products. The economic relationship between the two countries is more indirect, and partly created by the migrants themselves (e.g. with the import of Greek products to sell to the large Greek population in Australia).

Nevertheless, Australian industrial capitalism has profited from the decline of rural Greece, even though a considerable number of Greek individuals have also profited.

The political economy of international labour migration can demonstrate the part played by the export and import of workers. But, as well as such an analysis, we require a deeper understanding of specific conditions and of the ideological and cultural changes that accompany migration. By maintaining an international perspective, I have tried to capture some of the process of migration, the consequences of emigration for a country that exports workers, the personal and social forms that develop as migration becomes a norm, and the interrelation between countries that evolve partially linked traditions. Migrants are by no means "birds of passage". They are, especially in the 20th century, at the centre of history.

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