

Book Review: Vally Lytra (Eds.). 2014. *When Greeks and Turks Meet: Interdisciplinary Perspectives on the Relationship Since 1923*. Surrey: Ashgate. 342 pp. £ 75(hbk). Review by Peny Sotiropoulou.

When Greeks and Turks Meet is a collective volume, which seeks to examine the relationship between Greeks and Turks (including the Greek-Cypriot – Turkish-Cypriot populations), as this has evolved since the signing of the Treaty of Lausanne, in 1923, from an interdisciplinary perspective. The fundamental premise of this examination, presented as early as the book's introduction, is that the relationship between these peoples cannot be described in a unidimensional manner. This is due to the variety of relationships existing on different levels and ranging from the personal to the transnational.

The volume adopts a post-modern approach in an attempt to avoid the nationalistic approach previously employed to describe the interethnic relationship between Greek and Turks. Nation-based narrative models offer limited explanatory power, focusing on essentialist representations and stereotypical dichotomies between the benevolent 'us' and the evil 'them', silencing the populations' long history of coexistence. Eschewing this approach, the book narrates the Greco-Turkish relationship as a transition from an 'intercommunal' mode of coexistence (Doumanis, 2013:1) during the late Ottoman period, to one of a 'diminished contact' (Lytra, 2014:5), after the mandatory and forced population exchange introduced by the Lausanne Convention. This volume contains works dealing both overall and in equal measure with the personal, communal, national and international level, in order to provide a more nuanced understanding of the relationship between Greeks and Turks.

This book is a product of the fruitful collaboration between the Centre for Hellenic Studies at King's College London and the Turkish Studies' program of The School of Oriental and African Studies at the University of London. It begins by introducing the reader to the effect of the Treaty of Lausanne on the Greco-Turkish relations, through its re-determination of national borders, characterized by the establishment of the modern Turkish republic and the beginning of its nationalistic project, on the one hand, and the end of the irredentist Greek aspirations, on the other. From that point on, the institutions of both nations have persisted in representing the interrelationship between Greeks and Turks as contradictory, rather than complimentary, for the furtherance of their national narratives. The Cypriot issue has only further exacerbated this antagonistic climate. Within this context, the relationship between the two countries and their people has been analyzed from a predominantly nationalistic perspective. As previous mentioned, though, this book consists of the contributions of intellectuals from various disciplines, including History, Sociology, Anthropology, Linguistics, International Relations and Ethnomusicology. These individuals unite their respective expertise to reveal the true variety and complexity of the relationship between Greeks and Turks on the personal, communal, national and international levels.

Comprised of fourteen chapters, the book is divided into three thematic sections. The first section, entitled 'Rethinking, Remembrance and Representation', contains four chapters. Two of these examine the concepts of memory and loss, while the remaining two deal with issues of

representation and social categorization. The next section deals with 'The politics of Identity, Language and Culture'. Its three first chapters try to analyze the situation in Cyprus. One of them analyses the Cypriot issue from an international relation's perspective, emphasizing on the role of the EU and the USA in the process of reconciliation between Greeks and Turks. The remaining two present how deeply embedded the distinction between 'us' and 'them' is, in both the school textbooks and the mind of the students. The following chapter analyzes the mixed feelings of intimacy and shame engendered by the existence of Turkish linguistic features in the Greek language. The final chapter stresses the importance of the portrayal of the 'self' as a victim of the merciless enemy 'other' for the nation-specific success of two exemplary pieces of literature narrating the Greek-Turkish war and its aftermaths. The final section, 'Discourses of Inclusion & Exclusion revisited', contains five chapters. The first sets the historical and ideological background of the majority-minority relations developed between the two populations both in Greece and in Turkey, offering some explanations for the reasons both countries failed to smoothly integrate their minorities into their national narratives. The three following chapters deal with the Greek-Orthodox minority of Istanbul, specifically in terms of its relationship with three basic institutions of the Turkish state: Church, Media and Schools. The final chapter moves to the Greek territory and presents the actions of an educational program specifically targeted to empower and protect the rights of the Muslim minority in Western Thrace.

This collective volume seems to meet its goal of presenting a multidimensional understanding of the relationship between Greeks and Turks after 1923. Full of up-to-date citations, it is a noteworthy piece of reading for researchers and enthusiasts of the Greco-Turkish issue but also for those with a more general interest in the topic of nationalism.

References

- Doumanis, N. (2013). *Before the Nation. Muslim-Christian Coexistence and its Destruction in Late-Ottoman Anatolia*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Lytra, V. (Eds.). (2014). *When Greeks and Turks meet. Interdisciplinary Perspectives on the Relationship since 1923*. Surrey: Ashgate.