

Venise après Venise: official languages in the Ionian Islands, 1797–1864¹

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Even though the Ionian Islands (Heptanese) were removed from Venetian control in 1797, it was not until 1852 that Italian ceased to be used as an official language there. My article examines the official use of the three relevant languages (Italian, Greek and English), as laid down by statute and carried out in practice, and traces the stages leading to the final replacement of Italian with Greek for all official purposes. My study is based on the minutes of Ionian parliamentary debates and on despatches between the High Commissioner and the Colonial Office as well as constitutional documents and published Acts of Parliament.

The first part of my title is a variation on the title of the book by Nicolae Iorga, *Byzance après Byzance* (1935), which examines the legacy of Byzantine institutions and culture in south-east Europe after the Ottoman conquest. The three most important and enduring legacies that Venice left to the Ionian Islands were language, law, and the formalized social stratification that underpinned the other two. In the Islands the continuing presence of Venetian law was a major obstacle to any effort to replace Italian by Greek – spoken as their sole language by the majority of the inhabitants – as the sole official language after Venetian rule ended in 1797.²

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2 Gaetano Cozzi, among others, links together 'the posthumous fortune of Venetian law and the fortune of the language whose voice it had been' (G. Cozzi, 'Diritto veneto e lingua italiana nelle Isole Jonie nella prima metà dell'ottocento', in *Omaggio a Gianfranco Folena* (Padua 1993) II, 1533–48 [1534]).

In Ottoman-occupied lands, the Ottoman authorities allowed the Greek Church to deal with matters of private law, whereas in Venetian-occupied lands, where the highest level of the Orthodox Church hierarchy was abolished, such matters were subject to Venetian law. Venetian criminal and civil law continued to dominate the Ionian Islands until the new Ionian codes were published – in Italian – in 1841. Another factor that encouraged the continuity of Italian in the law was that most Ionian lawyers continued to study at Italian universities. Beyond these factors, however, the social prestige of Italian as the language of law, medicine, international commerce and ‘polite society’ ensured its longevity for many decades after the end of Venetian rule.³

Until the end of the Venetian period the fundamental official language was Italian, although Greek was used in documents drawn up by notaries concerning relationships between individuals in matters related to family, property and inheritance. However, from 1797 onwards the linguistic situation became more complex. Official language policy in the Ionian Islands after 1797 has two chief aspects:

1. Official policy as laid down in constitutional and legislative texts.
2. The language actually used in official documents:
 - (a) which languages were used (Italian, Greek or English)?
 - (b) in the case of Greek, what kind of Greek was used (colloquial, archaized, regional)?

The second of these aspects consists of two components. In this article I shall say little about the kind of Greek that was used and about the debate concerning which variety of Greek *should* be used (i.e. the rivalry between varieties *within* the Greek language). Instead I shall focus on the question as to which languages were supposed to have been used in theory and which of them were used in practice (i.e. the rivalry *between* languages).

Greek ethnocentric approaches to the history of the Ionian Islands have tended to emphasize their relationship with the wider Greek nation rather than focusing on the conditions that made them different from the rest of the Greek world. These approaches stress the fundamental Greekness of the islanders in terms of language, religion, folklore and customs, and they highlight the widespread support among the Heptanesians for the Greek revolution of 1821 and, later on, for political union with Greece. The issue of official language policy and practice in the Islands has often been viewed teleologically, as leading triumphantly to the eventual establishment of Greek, both by law and in practice, as the sole official language. Such an idealized view of Ionian society as a single entity that shared the same aspirations ignores divisive factors such as class allegiance and personal

3 According to M. Cortelazzo, ‘Vicende storiche della lingua italiana a Corfù’, *Lingua Nostra* 8 (1947) 44–50, the majority of the population of Corfu town in the eighteenth century were bilingual in Greek and Italian/Venetian, and Italian continued to be spoken there by Jews until they were expelled by the Germans during World War II, and by Italian nationals until they were expelled by the Greek state immediately after the Occupation.

interest. It fails to view the Ionian Islands as a society that had its own internal dynamics, and it fails to take account of differences between each island and the rest. My article examines the use of the three relevant languages (Italian, Greek and English), as laid down by statute and carried out in practice, without taking for granted that Greek was the only natural and proper language of administration.

In Greece itself during and after the Revolution of 1821, the choice of Greek as the official language was uncontested, since the purpose of the Revolution was to set up an independent Greek state, and Greek already enjoyed higher prestige in the region than any of the other languages spoken by local Christians (Albanian, Aromanian and Slav languages). In the Ionian Islands, by contrast, the fundamental choice was between Greek and Italian. When the islands were removed from Venetian domination, they did not become a fully independent state, but were passed from one more foreign power to another until they were finally incorporated into the Kingdom of Greece in 1864. Italian had been used in the islands for half a millennium; it was a ready-made language that was easily capable of being used for all official purposes, whereas Modern Greek was still in the process of being developed for such uses, and there were radical differences of opinion among the Greeks in general about which variety of their language was most appropriate for these purposes.

Three momentous events in Greek mainland history especially influenced language attitudes in the Ionian Islands. First, the Revolution of 1821 heightened the Ionians' sense of patriotism and solidarity with their Greek brothers and sisters on the mainland. A number of Ionians went to take part in the Revolution, while those who remained behind witnessed an influx of bereaved and destitute refugees from the insurgent areas. Secondly, once Greece had become independent in 1830–2 it became less clear what or who the British were 'protecting' the Ionian Islands from. At the same time, the fact that Greek had become the language of the Greek state encouraged and gave a boost to its use in the Ionian Islands. And finally the granting of the first constitution in the Greek state in 1843 increased the determination of many Ionians to achieve proper constitutional rule – with Greek as the sole official language – in their own homeland.

Dimitris Arvanitakis has pointed out that in the Ionian Islands 'this struggle for the language was also a struggle for the new national consciousness', adding however that 'it wasn't the language that led social groups to an awareness of their identity', but national consciousness that drove the move for the replacement of Italian by Greek.⁴

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Official language is mentioned in three constitutional documents of the Ionian Islands, dating from 1799, 1803 and 1817. I will now briefly look at each of the relevant provisions in turn.

4 D. Arvanitakis, 'Εισαγωγή', in D. Arvanitakis (ed.), *Μουστοξύδης-Τυπάλδος, Αλληλογραφία* (Athens 2005) 100, 103.

1799

The first document that specifies an official language is the manuscript provisional constitution of May 1799, drafted by Angelo Orio, the Veneto-Lefkadian president of the first Heptanesian government after the capture of the islands from the Revolutionary French by the Russians and Ottomans, and approved by Admiral Ushakov:

Translation from Greek

PROVISIONAL PLAN FOR THE GOVERNMENT OF THE EX-VENETIAN ISLANDS (LIBERATED FROM THE FRENCH) AND THE ORDER TO BE ESTABLISHED IN THEM

[...]

24. All judgments in the respective islands shall be rendered and made in the Greek language so that every inhabitant shall know his own affairs.⁵

One remarkable aspect of this document is that it was apparently drafted in Greek, though the original Greek text has not been discovered. Article 24 specifies Greek as the sole language of all judicial judgments, though it does not specify a language for any of the other areas of administration. However, chapter 12 of the 1800 constitution specified that the laws would be ‘the same as those of the ex-Venetian government’, and Venetian law continued to operate under imperial French administration (1807–14).⁶

1803

The ‘Costituzione della Repubblica Settinsulare’ was intended to be the first permanent constitution of the Septinsular Republic. In its printed version, the Italian text of the constitution is preceded by a long preamble entitled ‘Rapporto della Commissione Conferente al Corpo Legislativo sopra la Costituzione’.⁷ This includes the following statement:

5 My translation from Italian. For the original text see supplementary online material, 1 (<http://www.maneyonline.com/doi/suppl/10.1179/0307013113Z.00000000038>). A transcription of one of the copies of this manuscript document, housed in the French state archives, is published in A. D. Nikiforou, *Συνταγματικά κείμενα των Ιονίων Νήσων* (Athens 2008) 663–71, with variant readings from other copies. On this copy the phrase ‘liberate dai Francesi’ has, for obvious reasons, been crossed out. The text was first published by E. Lunzi, *Della Repubblica Settinsulare* (Bologna 1863) 249, but he seems to have tacitly ‘standardized’ the language. According to Nikiforou (*ibid.*, 101–2) the ‘plan’ was in force from 24 May 1799 to October of the same year. It is not included in the collection of constitutional texts published in Anon. [N. B. Manessi], *Le tre costituzioni (1800, 1803, 1817) delle Sette Isole Jonie* (Corfu 1849).

6 Cozzi, ‘Diritto veneto e lingua italiana’, 1538 (including quotation from 1800 constitution) and 1540.

7 According to P. Chiotis, *Ιστορικά απομνημονεύματα Επτανήσου*, VI (Zakynthos 1887) 430–2, the Report was written by the commission’s secretary, the Cephalonian physician and composer Giovanni Francesco Zulatti (sometimes spelled Zulati). He is named as ‘Segretario Redattore’ at the end of the Report and at the end of the text of the Constitution.

The noble, rich and harmonious Greek language, banished by the long dominion of the Venetians, should be recalled and rendered the language of government and the interpreter of the active citizens.

The penultimate article of the constitution (Article 211) reads:

From the year 1810, no one may be appointed for the first time as a public functionary if he cannot read and write in the national vulgar Greek language. From the year 1820 this language will exclusively be used in all public acts.⁸

This article seems to have expressed a genuine intention to introduce Greek as the sole official language, and those who drafted it no doubt believed that a complete change from Italian to Greek would be feasible within the proposed timescale. However, the constitution ceased to operate in 1807, when French imperial forces captured the Ionian Islands and abolished the Septinsular Republic, with the result that Greek never came to be used as its official language.

The 1803 constitution was soon translated into Greek by Dimitrios Venieris, a native of Constantinople. It is not known who commissioned the translation, but it was possibly the Greek merchant community of Trieste, where he had settled a few years earlier.⁹ At all events, Venieris' translation does not seem to have enjoyed any official sanction.

Venieris dedicates his translation thus: 'Τοις συγκεκλημένοις Πατράσι της Υψηλής Γερουσίας της Γαληνοτάτης Επτανήσου Πολιτείας, Δημήτριος Βενιέρης ο Βυζάντιος την προσήκουσαν απονέμει προσκύνησιν'. In the last paragraph of this dedicatory epistle he states that he has translated the text of the constitution from Italian 'εις την των καθ' ημάς Ελλήνων διάλεκτον'. In the translation of the preamble, the Greek language is referred to as 'Ελληνική διάλεκτος', and the translation of Article 211 specifies that functionaries must be able to read and write 'τη του Γένους κοινή Ελληνική γλώσση'.¹⁰ In these passages we might note Venieris' use of 'Ελληνες' to refer to the inhabitants of the Heptanese and 'Ελληνική διάλεκτος' to refer to their language, at a time when Ελληνική was still being used primarily to refer to Ancient rather than Modern Greek.

8 *Costituzione della Repubblica Settinsulare* (Corfu 1803) 13, 68. The English translation of these two passages is mine. For the original see supplementary online material, 2.

9 Venieris has the doubtful of honour being mentioned (as 'ποστειλνικοβενιεροδημητράκιος', i.e. the *post-elnic* [minister of foreign affairs] Dimitrakis Venieris) in the anonymous satirical text that K. T. Dimaras named 'Ο Ανώνυμος του 1789' (see K. T. Dimaras, *Νεοελληνικός Διαφωτισμός*, 4th edn (Athens 1985) 425, 452). This would place Venieris in Bucharest at that time. His grammar of Modern Greek (*Επιτομή γραμματικής εξηγηθείσα εις την απλήν ρωμαϊκήν διάλεκτον με την μετάφρασιν εις το ιταλικόν...* (Trieste 1799)) was the first grammar of the modern language to have been published by a Greek; it was published at the expense of the Greek merchants of Trieste. The reason why the initiative for the Greek translation of the 1803 constitution came from Trieste is probably that this town was the sea-port of Austria, which had taken over Venice and its hinterland under the provisions of the Treaty of Campo Formio in 1797.

10 *Κατάστασις της Επτανήσου Πολιτείας* (Trieste 1804) 3–4, 17, 74.

The authorities of the British protectorate, at least in the early years, were more circumspect about using the term ‘Ἕλληνες’ to refer to Ionian subjects.¹¹

1817

In 1817, two years after the United States of the Ionian Islands were established under British protection by the Treaty of Paris, a constitution was approved, in Italian, which remained in force, subject to a few amendments, until the union of the islands with Greece in 1864. The drafting of the constitution was supervised by the first British High Commissioner in the Ionian Islands, Sir Thomas Maitland, who did not know Italian, yet it had to be presented to the Ionian Senate in Italian for its approval. It is therefore likely that it was drafted bilingually, each successive stage having both an English version and an Italian version. Immediately after it was ratified by the Prince Regent in the name of the mentally incapacitated King George III, it was published in both English and Italian versions, in separate editions. However, when in 1834 a British Parliamentary Select Committee was discussing a certain discrepancy between the two versions, it stipulated that ‘the English translation is that which is recognised by the Colonial Department’.¹²

In contrast to the 1803 constitution, the articles referring to the official language appear almost at the beginning of the constitutional text. We may also note that the language is described as ‘national’ in the Italian text of the 1817 constitution, in contrast to the rhetorical adjectives ‘noble, rich, harmonious’ used in the 1803 text. The following is the English text of the relevant articles:¹³

Chapter I.

GENERAL ORGANIZATION

ARTICLE IV.

The established Language of these States is the Greek, and in consequence it is hereby declared to be an article of primary importance, that the language of the nation should become, as soon as possible, that in which all the records of government should be held, all process of law alone conducted, and, in fact, the sole recognized language for official proceedings within these States.

ARTICLE V.

11 The satirist Andreas Laskaratos recalled, with obvious reference to the High Commissionership of Lord Nugent: ‘It must have been after 1830 that England began to change its policy in our islands, and, from being a mistress, she became something else. The English – governors and others – putting aside contempt, began to treat us politely and even to call us Hellenes ... a brave people...’ (A. Laskaratos, *Ἀπαντα*, ed. A. Papageorgiou and A. Moschovaki (Athens 1959) I, 438).

12 Statement by Robert William Hay, in House of Commons, Parliamentary Papers [henceforth P.P.], 1834, VI (570), ‘Select Committee on Military Expenditure...’, 69–71.

13 ‘Constitutional Chart of the United States of the Ionian Islands, as agreed on and passed unanimously by the Legislative Assembly, on the 2d of May 1817. Colonial Department, 17th March 1818’, P.P., 1818, XVII (132), 1–2.

It being impossible, however, from the circumstances of the case, to carry the above principle into immediate effect, the whole business of the country having been hitherto conducted principally in the Italian language, it is ordained, that during the first Parliament¹⁴ the Italian shall be the language in which all public business is to be conducted, save and except in the instances of the minor Courts of Law, where it may be judged expedient by the Government to introduce the native language, with a view to its encouragement and general propagation.

ARTICLE VI.

With a further view at once to encourage the propagation of the languages of the protecting and protected States, His Highness the President of the Senate shall be bound, within six days after the first meeting of any Parliament, to send down to the Legislative Assembly a *projet* of a law, to be therein discussed, relative to how far it may be possible to extend the native language to other departments, or to the whole of the Government; and it is to be clearly understood, that whenever a law is passed, declaring the Greek language to be the sole official language, that the only other language that can be made use of in copies or otherwise, is that of the Protecting Power, viz. the English.

It is significant that Article III states, in full: ‘The established religion of these states is the Orthodox Greek Religion; but all other forms of the Christian Religion shall be protected, as is hereinafter stated.’ The similarity of wording – together with the fact that the reference to the established language follows immediately after the reference to the established religion – shows that those who drafted the Constitution appreciated the importance of the connection between language and religion as components of collective identity in the British-protected Ionian Islands.

Article IV expresses the intention that Greek should be used in all areas of government as soon as possible, although the discrepancy between ‘al più presto possibile’ and ‘in fine’ (rendered in English as ‘in fact’) may have suggested the possibility that the change of language might be a long and gradual process. Articles V and VI stipulate a detailed timetable for commencing this process of substituting Greek for Italian. However, the timetable laid down in these articles was never followed in practice. Only the last part of Article VI, whereby, once a law was passed stipulating Greek as the sole official language, English was to be the only other language in official use (and then only for the purposes of translation), was put into practice according to the stipulation. Such a law, however, was not put into operation till 1 January 1852, thirty-five years after the constitution was approved and published.¹⁵

An official Greek translation of the 1817 Constitution, commissioned by the Ionian Senate, was printed at the government printing press in Corfu in the following year.¹⁶

14 The First Parliament lasted from 1818 to 1822.

15 All dates in this article are given in the Gregorian calendar unless two alternative dates are specified.

16 *Πολίτευμα των Ενωμένων Επαρχιών των Ιονικών Νήσων [...] μετηνεχθέν [...] εκ του αγγλικού εις το Νεοελληνικόν ιδίωμα παρά Π. Πετρίδου* (Corfu 1818).

The translator, Platon Petrides, like Venieris, was not a Heptanesian; he had been an interpreter in the British Embassy in Constantinople before settling in the Ionian Islands, where he worked as Maitland's interpreter and later served for many years as Secretary of the Legislative Assembly. Much of the official translation work during the early years of the British protectorate was carried out under Petrides' supervision. The Greek text of the 1817 constitution was never recognized as having legal authority. The translation was based on the English text rather than on the Italian original, although Petrides no doubt had the Italian text in front of him as he worked. As the years went by, educated Ionians came to realize that the language of the Greek translation was idiosyncratic, in terms of both its technical terminology and its grammar. To give one example of terminological confusion, Petrides systematically renders 'Senate' as Βουλή and 'Parliament' as Γερουσία – the opposite of the correct translation.¹⁷

After 1817

Greek scholars have talked about the constant postponement of the introduction of Greek as the sole official language of the Ionian state.¹⁸ For the most part, the British authorities were content to use Italian when communicating with the Ionians, which meant that, unless these communications were also translated into Greek, the majority of the population could not understand them. An indication that the British treated the Ionians as if they were Italians is the fact that, even when they wrote documents in English, they referred to Ionians using the Italian versions of their Greek names: thus anyone called Charalambos was known as Caralambo, Ioannis or Yannis was Giovanni, Spiliotis was written Spigliotti, and as late as 1863 – more than ten years after the introduction of Greek as the sole official language – Senator Spyridon Valaoritis was referred to as Spiridione Valaoriti in official English correspondence about him.

Nevertheless, the British published the official Gazette of the Ionian Islands in both Italian and Greek from 1814 onwards.¹⁹ From 1823 onwards Acts of Parliament were printed in the two languages, in two columns: first in Italian, then in Greek; however, from 1831 onwards the Greek version *precedes* the Italian. From 1836–7 onwards official material in the Gazette (such as Resolutions of the Senate and Acts of Parliament) was published in Greek, English and Italian, with Italian in third place. It is clear that the introduction of English was intended to be another stage in the gradual demotion of

17 For more on the Greek translation of the 1817 Constitution see P. Mackridge, 'Περί Βουλής και Γερουσίας: ο Πλάτων Πετρίδης και η «νεοελληνική» μετάφραση του Ιονίου Συντάγματος του 1817' (forthcoming).

18 For instance G. N. Leontsinis, 'Ελληνική γλώσσα και βρετανική πολιτική στα Επτάνησα', in his book *Ζητήματα επτανησιακής κοινωνικής ιστορίας* (Athens 2005) 559–83 [571].

19 It has been erroneously asserted (e.g. by A. Sfoini, 'Η διαμόρφωση της επίσημης γλώσσας των Ιονίων', in *Ζ' Πανιώνιο Συνέδριο, Λευκάδα (26-30 Μαΐου 2002). Πρακτικά*, I (Athens 2004) 395–411 [404]) that the Greek edition of the government Gazette was discontinued from 1819 to 1830 inclusive. In fact, an incomplete set of the Greek edition (*Εφημερίς των Ενωμένων Επαρχιών των Ιονικών Νήσων*) from 1822 to 1829 is housed in the British National Archives (henceforth TNA) CO 136/264.

Italian. During the last phase of the British protectorate, from 1852 to 1864, the Gazette was published only in Greek and English, in conformity (at last) with the stipulations of the 1817 Constitution.

In 1823, during the Second Parliament, the Primary Council of the Legislative Assembly determined that ‘the Project for extending the use of the Greek Language should be postponed for two years, during which period it was to be presumed that public instruction will make sufficient progress’.²⁰ The implication of this decision is that the Primary Council considered that Ionian government officials were not yet sufficiently competent in the Greek language for its use throughout the administration to be a practical proposition.

During the course of the following twenty-five years a number of efforts were made to introduce Greek gradually into various areas of the administration, beginning with the magistrates’ courts and criminal courts. The first of these measures was the 23rd Act of the Fourth Parliament (24 May 1833), which provided that after the vacation of 1835 Greek was to be used for all oral and written purposes in acts of the Supreme Council of Justice pertaining to penal justice, as well as in the proceedings of the criminal courts and the minor courts (which were presided over by Justices of the Peace).²¹

The passing of this Act was encouraged by the liberal and idealistic High Commissioner Lord Nugent, who, before his appointment, had served in Earl Grey’s reform ministry in London. Nugent arrived in Corfu to take up his post on 30 November 1832, a few months after the passage of the Great Reform Act.²² Nugent seems to have held the same view on the administration of justice in the Ionian Islands that Charles Napier, the former British Resident in Cephalonia, expressed in his book *The Colonies* (1833):

The trials are carried on in the *Italian* language, and the unhappy peasant who is tried, but speaks only in his native *Greek*, stands by, hearing the trial, (on the issue of which his life, perhaps, depends) without comprehending the language in which the process is conducted! In a foreign tongue he is accused, in a foreign tongue he is defended, and he learns the result by his lawyer turning round to tell him that he is to be hanged!²³

20 Legislative Assembly, 15 April 1823, TNA CO 136/220; cf. Primary Council, 13 April 1823, TNA CO 136/219.

21 The Act was published in Greek and Italian and reported in the Gazette no. 129, 3/15 June 1833, p. 9.

22 By an appropriate coincidence, it was Nugent that welcomed the newly appointed King Otto to Greek soil in Corfu on 18 January 1833.

23 C. J. Napier, *The Colonies, Treating of their Value Generally, of the Ionian Islands Particularly and Including Strictures on the Administration of Sir Frederick Adam* (London 1833) 119 (italics as in the original text). In his ‘Promemoria’ addressed in Italian to the Colonial Secretary in 1839, Andreas Moustoxydis, echoing Napier, wrote that ‘The citizen sees himself dragged before a tribunal, accused, defended, his property condemned, himself condemned in his liberty and his life, in a language of which he is ignorant, and by laws which have never been even translated to him’. In the same document, Moustoxydis writes that ‘those who have the monopoly of public affairs, the last relics of the Venetian school of education, only speak [...] the language of Harlequin and Pantaloon’ – not, be it noted, the language of Dante and Petrarch! He goes on

On 1 January 1833, only a month after his arrival, Nugent wrote to Lord Goderich, the Secretary of State for the Colonies in London, announcing his intention to put Articles IV, V and VI of the Constitution into effect by recommending to the Ionian Parliament that it pass a law introducing Greek into all legal proceedings. In support of his proposal, he argued that the introduction of Greek as the sole official language of the criminal courts would increase the popularity of the British among the Ionians, and would counteract the influence of the Russians, whose only advantage was that they shared the same religion with the Ionians.²⁴ In view of the short interval that had elapsed between Nugent's arrival in Corfu and his letter to Goderich, it is likely that Nugent had been planning this move before his arrival in Corfu.

Conveniently for Nugent, his letter took a long time to reach London, and the reply from the Colonial Secretary, which was sent on 10 February 1833, did not reach him until after he had given the customary High Commissioner's speech at the opening of the Legislative Assembly on 6 March 1833. This speech initiated a long chain of events that, almost twenty years later, led to the institution of Greek as the sole official language of the Ionian Islands.

Speaking in Italian, Nugent began his maiden speech to the Assembly as follows:

In thus appearing before you to discharge one of the most important duties of the office I hold, it is doubtless a disadvantage, which I cannot but deeply feel, that I must do so in a language of which, till my arrival here, I was entirely ignorant. [...] I am now, for the first time, speaking to you in the language in which the business of these States has, for many generations, been conducted. But I trust that, before the connexion now established between us shall be dissolved, I may, in conformity with the Constitution and with my own wishes, have to address you in your own language – the language of a united Greek people.

He went on to recommend that the Assembly turn its attention to the administration of Criminal Law:

Nothing certainly can be more preposterous in principle, nothing more unjust, than that the people should be subject to be tried in a language which they do not understand. The laws of property are more complicated. Those who have property in litigation may, perhaps for the present, be supposed to be generally of a class, who may know the Italian Language [...], or who may perhaps be willing to entrust it entirely to the direction of their Advocate. I recommend you to turn your attention without

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to claim that 'for not more than thirty, who stutter Italian, is the national dignity and the interests of nearly 200,000 men sacrificed!' and that 'the public Acts of the Ionian Government, with regard to their style and translation, are subjects of derision for any one who knows Greek and Italian' (English translation quoted from P.P., 1840, XLVIII (401), 'Ionian States. Memorial to the Secretary of State for the Colonial Department by the Cavaliere Mustoxidi', 12 (henceforth Mustoxidi, 'Memorial')).

24 Nugent to Goderich, 1 Jan. 1833, TNA CO 136/65.

delay, to passing an Act by which, before the end of two years, every process of criminal law, from those before the Tribunals of First Instance to those in the higher Courts, shall be conducted, and judgement given, exclusively in the Greek Language. Every Lawyer and every Judge, who may now be but imperfectly acquainted with the Greek language, will, I trust, long before that time, have made himself competent to discharge his functions in the manner, which will then be demanded of him. I have no doubt that we may pledge ourselves that, before half of that time shall have expired, the Code which they shall have to administer will be prepared and completed in that language.

Nugent goes on to dismiss any idea that the Greek language is not adequate to the task – or at least that ‘a language of such fruitfulness and resource, and rich to an almost boundless extent in the power of its compounds’ cannot readily be rendered adequate. He expresses the hope that soon, with the assistance of the Supreme Council, he will lay before the Assembly a draft of a new Criminal Code.²⁵ This new criminal code would replace the existing code drawn up by the Venetians, who, as Nugent put it, were ‘your masters for centuries’ but who, ‘unhappily for you, never felt either an interest or a duty in distributing justice to the people.’²⁶ The condemnation of Venetian ‘tyranny’ was part of the customary rhetoric employed by the successive rulers of the islands; in Nugent’s case, however, it seems to have been heartfelt.

Towards the end of his speech Nugent adopts a personal note by saying that although his ancestors were Normans, he is ‘by descent, and birth, and affection, an Englishman’. Similarly, he continues, the Venetian families who settled in the Ionian Islands have become Ionians (who, by implication, speak Greek).

In his letter of 10 February 1833 Goderich diplomatically suggested to Nugent that he consider ‘whether it would be prudent to press the adoption of a law, for the purpose proposed, without previous concert with the Judges, and whether it would not be desirable to postpone the adoption of any practical measure, until the entire Codes of Ionian Jurisprudence shall have been completed.’²⁷

On 30 March Nugent, taking up the first component of Goderich’s advice, wrote to the Colonial Secretary enclosing a ‘Memorandum of opinion of the Supreme Council of Justice on the expediency of the introduction of the Greek language in proceedings of courts of justice, and the means of giving effect to that part of the Constitution’. In this document the Supreme Council expressed a positive view of the theoretical desirability of the use of Greek for legal purposes, but it argued that, in its present state of ‘primitive rustic poverty’, the Greek language was not yet suitable for these purposes.

25 In fact the 1817 Constitution (Ch. VI, Sect. III, Art. VII) stipulated that new codes of civil and criminal law should be adopted within three years.

26 Nugent’s speech is reported in the *Extraordinary Gazette*, 7 March 1833. Even though the speech was delivered in Italian, it was published only in English and Greek.

27 Goderich to Nugent, 10 Feb. 1833, TNA CO 136/322.

It recommended that an essential precondition for the introduction of Greek was the drawing up of a Greek vocabulary of legal terms. The memorandum concluded:

To carry into effect such an important work it is necessary to establish a Commission composed of persons possessed of the necessary knowledge for such an undertaking, because when such a work should once be completed, it is to be hoped that after two years with the assistance of it, the Greek language can be made use of with advantage in the Laws and judicial proceedings.²⁸

Shortly after Nugent's speech at the opening of the Legislative Assembly, the member appointed to act as secretary, Napoleone Zambelli, announced that henceforth he would be translating the Assembly's minutes into Greek. On 9 March 1833, at the request of his fellow members, Zambelli read out his translation of the previous session's minutes. This reading was apparently the first occasion on which Greek had been heard in the Assembly. However, some members found fault with his use of certain terms. A discussion ensued (in Italian, of course) in which some members argued that a Greek translation was unnecessary, and others that a Greek version alone should be produced (i.e. not an Italian one). Count Antonio Dandolo of Corfu opposed the use of a Greek translation, arguing that it was inappropriate for the Assembly to waste time on 'questions of Grammar' and that 'the Acts of Parliament [...] will be better understood and judged in an easier language' – by which he meant Italian. By contrast, Markos Tsarlambaras (Marco Zarlambà) of Lefkada, the youngest and one of the most combative members of the Fourth Parliament, argued: 'our language is the bond between us and the people; language is a sign of life and nationality for peoples. Let us recover our lost nationality and cast off the Venetian dress that poorly clothes Greek thoughts and feelings.'²⁹ Ten days later some members made further comments on the unsatisfactory nature of the Greek translations of parliamentary bills, and the matter was left there for the time being.³⁰

On 25 April the new Colonial Secretary, Lord Stanley, replying to Nugent's despatch of 30 March, wrote that the Supreme Council's Memorandum

gives, in my estimation, as little encouragement as possible to the prosecution of the scheme; for, though it points out the objections (which are sufficiently obvious) to the legal language of a country being different from that in popular use, it at the same time clearly shews, that the difficulties of preparing a vocabulary of legal terms from the modern Greek as spoken in the Ionian Islands, is even greater than might have been at first apprehended.

It is quite evident, that a length of time must elapse before either legal practitioners can be found sufficiently skilled in the language of the country to be able to carry on

28 This document, drawn up in Italian and accompanied by an English translation (from which I quote), is to be found in TNA CO 136/65.

29 Legislative Assembly, 9 March 1833, TNA CO 136/227. For the original see supplementary online material, 3.

30 Legislative Assembly, 19 March 1833, *ibid.*

their legal proceedings in that medium or that a new dictionary of law terms can be prepared for the use of the Ionian Bar; and, under these circumstances, however desirable may be the object which your Lordship has in view, as evincing a proper regard to the engagements provided for by the Ionian charter – yet I cannot admit that the time is arrived when the proposed experiment can safely be tried, or that any definite period can be fixed, without the risk of much public inconvenience, for carrying into effect the scheme which you have announced.³¹

In May 1833, before Stanley's letter had reached Corfu,³² Ioannis Anninos (Giovanni Annino) of Cephalonia proposed a motion in the Legislative Assembly that eventually led to the passing of the 23rd Act. During the debates on this motion, members were sometimes unsure whether they were discussing the introduction of Greek into the administration as a whole or only into the law courts. Anninos, who had served as a judge in Greece under Kapodistrias,³³ gave a number of speeches in favour of the immediate replacement of Italian by Greek throughout the Ionian administration. Anninos and others claimed that the Ionians needed to liberate themselves from Italian, which had been used as an instrument of oppression. In the words of Markos Tsarlambas, 'The Venetian oppressed our lands with the iron rod and the mystery of the language.'³⁴ At times Anninos' rhetoric got the better of his good sense, as when he asked: 'do we reject our native language [*la natia favella*], which is so rich and so admired by the civilized nations, that language, the remnant of the glories of our ancestors, which preserved our national character?'³⁵ This argument conveniently overlooked the fact that the language that he envisaged being used in the administration was not Ancient Greek but some unspecified variety of the modern language.

Those who argued for some delay in the introduction of Greek were not always clear as to whether they doubted that the relevant officials had gained a sufficient mastery of the language or whether they believed that the language itself was not ready to be used in

31 Stanley to Nugent, 25 April 1833, TNA CO 136/322. Stanley, perhaps disingenuously, uses as a chief argument against the introduction of Greek into the law the difficulty of finding or forming the technical vocabulary in the version of Greek spoken in the Ionian Islands rather than in the form of the language being developed for legal purposes in the newly independent Greek state. Nugent made this point in his reply: 'A neighbouring country, Greece, still in a state of civilization far inferior to the Ionian Islands, is yet much beyond them in this point. The technical terms used in the legal Proceedings in that country appear to answer every purpose, including that of being generally understood' (Nugent to Stanley, 30 May 1833, TNA CO 136/65).

32 Despatches normally took about four weeks to travel between London and Corfu. As we have seen in the previous note, Nugent's reply to Stanley's despatch of 25 April is dated 30 May.

33 I. A. Tsitselis, *Κεφαλληνιακά σύμμικτα*, I (Athens 1904) 9–13.

34 Legislative Assembly, 17 May 1833, TNA CO 136/227. For the original see supplementary online material, 4. The Proceedings of the Assembly in 1833 and 1836 were recorded in Italian; extracts are quoted in this article in my own English translation. On at least two occasions Anninos is mentioned in the minutes as having spoken in Greek during debates on ecclesiastical matters, though his words are reported in Italian (Legislative Assembly, 29 April and 7 May 1833, *ibid.*).

35 Legislative Assembly, 17 May 1833, *ibid.* For the original see supplementary online material, 5.

the courts because it was deficient in legal vocabulary. It should be noted that those who argued that in its present state the Greek language was inadequate only pointed to the lack of legal terms (which could easily have been remedied); none of them claimed that the *grammar* of Modern Greek was inadequate.

The member who spoke most vociferously against the precipitate introduction of Greek was Antonio Dandolo, who argued out that ‘the measure would be dangerous. The mature men who most deserve and enjoy the confidence of their fellow citizens, no longer being of an age to be able to study a language they do not know, would find themselves excluded from official business and would therefore be unable to communicate their advice and their ideas.’³⁶ Tsarlambaras responded by joking that since Dandolo was of Venetian origin, it was not surprising that he supported the continuing use of Italian.³⁷ However, Dandolo was far from being a conservative; indeed, in his newspaper *Ανεξάρτητος* (1849–50) he argued for the union of the islands with Greece.

Some members claimed that officials would soon improve their knowledge of Greek through education. By contrast, Aloisios Kourtsolas (Alvise Curzola) of Zakynthos argued that the language that should be used was ‘the language that we have suckled with [our mother’s] milk’ rather than ‘the corrupt Venetian language’, and that ‘we only have to regain the language spoken by the people’; what was needed in court, he declared, was a simple, natural language, not ‘rhetorical phrases’.³⁸ This implied that the Ionian courts should use the local colloquial spoken language and not the archaized version of Modern Greek that was already being used for official purposes in Greece. Ioannis Gennatas (Giovanni Gennatà) of Corfu assured the Assembly that in Greece (where he had served as Minister of Justice from 1829 to 1831) he had come across young men devoid of Greek who after ten months spoke it expertly.³⁹ This suggests that the need for Greeks to improve their Greek for professional purposes was not confined to the Ionian Islands alone.

During the debates Count Dionisio Flamburiari of Zakynthos argued that the Legislative Assembly had a duty to set an example by using Greek. Following his proposal, it was decided (by 36 votes to 4) that Greek should be used in the Assembly from its next ordinary session onwards (starting in 1834).⁴⁰ However, the fact that the Assembly made the same decision again in 1848 indicates that the decision to use Greek from 1834 onwards was not put into practice.

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It is clear that some of Nugent’s reforms were carried out more rapidly than the Colonial Office in London and the more conservative elements in the Ionian government would

36 Legislative Assembly, 13 May 1833, *ibid.* For the original see supplementary online material, 6.

37 *Ibid.*

38 Legislative Assembly, 17 May 1833, *ibid.* For the original see supplementary online material, 7.

39 *Ibid.*

40 *Ibid.*

have liked. Certain aspects of these reforms (though not those related to the language issue) precipitated a constitutional crisis, which led the king to dissolve the Ionian Parliament, for the first time in its history, in March 1834. Nugent decided to resign the High Commissionership after the fall of Earl Grey's ministry in July 1834, though in the event he did not hand over his duties to acting High Commissioner Alexander Woodford until 23 February 1835.⁴¹

Nugent had been trying to encourage the Ionian parliament to approve a new criminal code, and to have it translated into Greek so that criminal proceedings could be carried out in that language. It was impossible to achieve these two aims within the time-frame that he had proposed.⁴² In the event, the 23rd Act of the Fourth Parliament was annulled by an Act of Government (i.e. an executive decree of the Senate while the Assembly was not in session) on 24 September 1835.⁴³ Despite this, there is evidence that Greek was already being used in the minor courts in 1833.⁴⁴ By 1836, in the criminal courts 'the examination of the evidence is carried out in the language of the accused. The Charge is interpreted into Greek, and it is only the [legal] discussion and the sentencing that are carried out in Italian.'⁴⁵ It is obvious, however, that the fact that the discussion and the sentence were carried out in Italian was highly unsatisfactory from the point of view of the accused.

The annulment of the 1833 Act gave rise to a second series of debates on the language in the Legislative Assembly in January 1836.⁴⁶ The Secretary of the Senate in the Finance Department explained to the Assembly the reasons why the Senate had decided to annul the Act. In his statement he made some astute remarks about the Greek language:

It is true that the Greeks of every region understand each other, which is not the case among other nations. But as to the written language, there is a great diversity of

41 T. I. Papadopoulos, *Ιονική βιβλιογραφία: 16ος-19ος αι.* (Athens 1998) I, 318–19.

42 The 32nd Act of the Fifth Parliament (11 August 1834) provided for the adoption of a provisional penal code and for its translation into Greek. The provisional code was printed in English and Italian: *Penal Laws for the United States of the Ionian Islands: Adopted Provisionally in Conformity with the XXXII Act of the Fifth Parliament / Leggi penali per gli Stati Uniti delle Isole Jonie transitoriamente a termini dell' Atto XXXII del Quinto Parlamento*. The provisional code was published and put into effect by an Act of Government of 22 September 1834, but the promised Greek translation never materialized. See various documents in TNA CO 136/206. One of these shows that the text of the criminal code was already being discussed by a committee as early as 1829.

43 Published in the Gazette no. 248, 14/26 September 1835.

44 Legislative Assembly, 18 May 1833, TNA CO 136/227.

45 Legislative Assembly, 15 January 1836, TNA CO 136/234. For the original see supplementary online material, 8.

46 Another provocative action by the Senate was the publication of a Resolution concerning the administration of public education, in which it was stipulated that all acts and correspondence of the General Commission of Public Education, as well as all reports sent to it, should be in Italian, 'since this is the only language used officially in every other branch of public administration in these States' (Resolution of Senate, 7 February 1835, Article 19, published in the Gazette no. 216, 2/14 February 1835; for the original see supplementary online material, 9.). See also Legislative Assembly, 15 January 1836, TNA CO 136/234.

opinion among the Greeks. Because of this diversity, a single word is enough to jeopardize the final sentence [*giudicato*]. What was said by the previous honourable speaker, that we all speak Greek from our infancy, does not apply to us. The language of the Bar is a language apart, and he [i.e. the Secretary] explains how difficult it is to find terms capable of translating the ideas without betraying them. We face a significant obstacle that has been overcome in Greece: we lack books of laws in Greek, and they cannot be translated because they are not yet completed.⁴⁷

The fact that the Ionian legal codes did not yet exist in Greek (and they had not yet been finalized even in Italian) was perhaps the clinching argument that led to the annulment of the 23rd Act of 1833. This was one of the arguments put forward by the High Commissioner, Sir Howard Douglas, in his Message that was read out to the Assembly on 19 January 1836. In it he borrowed some of the discouraging phrases that Goderich and Stanley had used in their despatches to Nugent in 1833. He explained why he had concurred in the Act of Government annulling the 23rd Act, arguing that ‘the proposed measure of the general substitution of the Greek for the Italian language’ was premature – which implied misleadingly that the 23rd Act had specified that Greek should be used for all judicial purposes and not just in criminal cases. He expressed the hope that only through the education of Ionian youth, both at school and at the University – and in particular at the Faculty of Law – could the Greek language be ‘technically adapted’ for legal and other learned uses.⁴⁸

In the 1836 debates the proponents of the use of Greek made much the same points as they had in 1833: the Italian language as an instrument of oppression; the close connection between language and national identity; and the relationship between language and education. Anninos reminded the Assembly that language was specified in the Constitution immediately after religion.⁴⁹ Moustoxydis claimed that other Greeks ‘consider us almost as Italians’ and went on to argue that ‘it would be shameful for us to say that in our official business we are unable to avail ourselves of the language we use to address God in our prayers and in the service of our traditional worship’.⁵⁰ Just as in 1833 Anninos ignored the differences between Ancient and Modern Greek, Moustoxydis in 1836 implied that there was no difference between contemporary Greek and the archaic language used in the liturgy of the Orthodox Church. As for education, Anninos now proposed a motion that Greek be used in all classes and lectures (presumably at the University) from 1838, but the motion was defeated.⁵¹

47 Ibid. For the original see supplementary online material, 10.

48 The Message is attached to Douglas’s despatch to Glenelg, 26 January 1836. In the despatch itself Douglas was even more explicit in his misrepresentation of the provisions of the 23rd Act, which, he claimed, provided that ‘Greek should be the language of the Tribunals, without any exception’. These documents are housed in TNA CO 136/80.

49 Legislative Assembly, 15 January 1836, TNA CO 136/234.

50 Ibid. For the original see supplementary online material, 11.

51 Legislative Assembly, 19 January 1836, *ibid.*

The outcome of the 1836 debates was the 57th Act of the Fifth Parliament (11/23 January 1836) ‘to facilitate and increase the use of the National Language’, which provided that the Senate should award a prize of five hundred dollars ‘to whoever within six months should present the best Italian-Greek Technico-Legal Dictionary containing the legal words and phrases’. The dictionaries submitted were to be judged by a commission consisting of professors of Greek and law at the Ionian University and approved by Parliament. The winning dictionary should be published within six months after it had been submitted. Once the Dictionary was approved, a Greek translation of the Penal Code should be published, followed, six months later, by the publication of a translation of the ‘relative Procedure’. Three years after the publication of the Dictionary, all acts of the criminal courts should be written in Greek, ‘and the arguments of the public prosecutor and of the defence lawyers of the accused should take place in the same language’.⁵²

In reality this process took longer than the 57th Act had foreseen. The winning ‘Technico-legal Dictionary’ was published in 1840,⁵³ but the Ionian criminal, civil and commercial codes, which took some years to prepare⁵⁴ and which finally replaced the Venetian ones, were not published even in Italian until 1841,⁵⁵ with the publication of the Greek translation following ten years later in 1851.⁵⁶

52 As usual, the text of this Act was published in Greek and Italian (first in the Gazette no. 262, 1/13 February 1836). For the Italian text see supplementary online material, 12.

53 The adjudicators awarded the prize to the authors of two dictionaries but recommended that they amalgamate their dictionaries and publish them as one, which they did (S. Vlandis, ‘Η ελληνική γλώσσα εν Επτανήσω’, *Δελτίον της Ιστορικής και Εθνολογικής Εταιρείας της Ελλάδος*, new series, 1 (1928) 139–42). The result was *Λεξικόν νομοτεχνικόν ιταλοελληνικόν [...] Ανδρέου Βλαντή Λευκαδίου και Ιωάννου Οικονομίδου Κυπρίου. Εξετασθέν, κριθέν, επιθεωρηθέν και επιδοκιμασθέν κατά το 2.ον άρθρον της ΝΖ’. πράξεως της πέμπτης Βουλής των Ηνωμένων Επικρατειών των Ιονίων Νήσων* (Corfu 1840) [Italian title: *Dizionario tecnico-legale italiano-greco....*].

54 A ‘Progetto di Codice Civile’, largely based on the French Civil Code with some rectifications based on the Neapolitan code, had already been drafted by Girolamo Santorio, Principal Secretary of the Supreme Council of Justice, in 1835 and was discussed by a committee in the same year. Likewise, Santorio drafted a ‘Progetto di Codice Commerciale’ on a similar basis in 1835, which was discussed in committee the following year. The texts of these *progetti* are in TNA CO 163/229 and 231 respectively. It is likely that these formed the basis for the final versions of the respective codes, but this question is beyond the remit of my article. The discussion of the draft codes continued into 1837: see TNA CO 136/230 and 233. However, despite Douglas’s undertaking on 7 March 1837 that the Projects of the Civil and Commercial Codes would be submitted to the Assembly during the current session (which ended in June of that year), it was regretfully announced at the end of June that the codes had not been completed (Extraordinary Gazette, 7 March 1837 and 18/30 June 1837). In 1839 Douglas, claiming that the matter of the codes was the most important undertaking with which he had been associated during his whole career, again urged the Assembly to approve the codes, which (he rightly says) had been in preparation for ten years (Extraordinary Gazette, 5 March 1839; cf. n. 42 above).

55 Each of the three Ionian codes was published in a separate volume in Corfu in 1841 during the High Commissionership of Sir Howard Douglas: *Codice civile degli Stati Uniti delle Isole Jonie*; *Codice penale degli Stati Uniti delle Isole Jonie*; *Codice di commercio degli Stati Uniti delle Isole Jonie*.

56 *Πολιτικός κώδικς του Ηνωμένου Κράτους των Ιονίων Νήσων*; *Ποινικός κώδικς του Ηνωμένου Κράτους των Ιονίων Νήσων*; *Εμπορικός κώδικς του Ηνωμένου Κράτους των Ιονίων Νήσων* (all Corfu 1851).

In his despatches to the Colonial Secretary after the passing of the 57th Act of 1836, Douglas claimed that he had found 'that a small number of the Advocates only, could undertake to plead in Greek – that a smaller proportion of the judges could understand the pleadings in that language – that this small proportion did not include some of the most efficient members of the Judicial Body [...]'. He stated that the Act he had eventually approved was founded on the opinion of the Supreme Council of Justice.⁵⁷ Tellingly, he recommended that the Colonial Secretary warn the British members of the Supreme Council and all other functionaries 'to prepare themselves for the change of language which must eventually take place', later clarifying that, despite the provisions of the Constitution, the two British judges on the Council had 'argued, in principle, against the introduction of the Greek language in any shape'.⁵⁸

During one of the debates in the Assembly it was reported that High Commissioner Douglas favoured the adoption of Greek, but that he was constrained by certain despatches from the Colonial Office (meaning those that had been sent to Nugent) to recommend certain amendments to the draft bill, which were eventually accepted by the Assembly and incorporated into the 57th Act.⁵⁹ In keeping with the spirit of the Act, Douglas wrote to the Colonial Secretary on 28 July 1836 stating his view that the Ionian public should learn English and that the British employees of the Ionian government should learn Greek.⁶⁰ English was introduced into the publication of Resolutions of the Senate in 1836, and into the publication of Acts of Parliament in 1837. On 28 January 1837 Douglas sent a circular to British officials in the islands drawing their attention to the recent Act of Parliament 'relative to the introduction of the Greek and English as languages of the State' and informing them that 'a knowledge of the Greek language will be required of the British functionaries whenever this measure shall be practically adopted or enforced, and that it is, consequently, incumbent on them, to make themselves masters of that language'.⁶¹ However, this 'requirement' seems not to have been implemented.

The freedom of the Press introduced into the Ionian Islands by High Commissioner Seaton in 1848 allowed for the establishment of privately owned newspapers and opened up the possibility of public debates on political issues. These debates very quickly increased the pressure on the government to make Greek the sole official language.

In the same year that press freedom was introduced, the Legislative Assembly decided that Greek should henceforth be spoken in its debates and that the official record of these

57 Douglas to Glenelg, 26 January 1836, TNA CO 136/80.

58 Douglas to Glenelg, 28 January and 26 April 1836, *ibid.* According to Chapter VI, Section II, Article IV of the 1817 Constitution two members of the Supreme Council of Justice were appointees of the British monarch and, although they could be either British or Ionian subjects, in practice both of them were usually British.

59 Legislative Assembly, 20 January 1836, TNA CO 136/234. The reason why the Assembly accepted Douglas's amendments was probably that otherwise the Act would not have been approved by the Senate.

60 Douglas to Glenelg, 28 July 1836, TNA CO 136/81.

61 Quoted in Viscount Kirkwall (ed.), *Four Years in the Ionian Islands: Their Political and Social Condition: With a History of the British Protectorate* (London 1864) I, 149–50.

debates should be published in Greek.⁶² This decision began to be put into practice at the first meeting of the 1849 parliamentary period, which took place on 2 April 1849. However, during this meeting, some representatives sought the Assembly's permission to speak in Italian. Of one of these, the official account records that 'although he ardently desires the general extension of the national language, he unfortunately confesses his inability to speak it freely, since he has had no cause to practise it. Consequently he appeals to the forbearance of the Assembly to permit him to express himself in Italian, for otherwise he will have to close his mouth completely.'⁶³ The Assembly resolved that members would be permitted to continue to speak in Italian for the current parliamentary period only.

A rare instance in which proponents of the official use of Greek expressed an explicit preference for a particular variety of the language can be observed in the Assembly's proceedings a few days after the use of Greek had been introduced into its debates and records. After the minutes of a previous meeting had been read out, some representatives observed that 'the style of the language in which the Record of the Assembly is written is too high, and not only can certain of the Honourable Members not understand it completely, but it is difficult for the people, for whom these matters are spoken and written, to comprehend them.' The same members urged that 'every effort should be made to ensure that [the language] becomes as comprehensible as possible [...], and clothed in the local idiom; some offering the example of the style of Christopoulos, others of Count Solomos, and others that of Vilaras.' Athanasios Christopoulos, Dionysios Solomos and Yannis Vilaras were famous for writing literary texts in the spoken language. However, although the Assembly ordered that henceforth the proceedings 'should be written as far as possible in the language commonly spoken by the people',⁶⁴ in practice they continued to be written in a somewhat archaized form of Modern Greek.

The final stage came when the 76th Act of the Eighth Parliament (21 May/2 June 1849) decreed that after 31 December 1851 Greek should be the sole official language not only of the Assembly but of the entire Ionian state, used orally and in writing in all tribunals, the Supreme Council of Justice and all other judicial authorities, and by all state authorities, public servants and offices, and all establishments of Public

62 The regular (as opposed to sporadic) publication of parliamentary minutes in printed form was introduced at the same time as the introduction of Greek into the debates and the written record. The fact that these two measures were decided upon simultaneously was probably not coincidental, since both of them promoted greater transparency.

63 *Πρακτικά των Συνεδριάσεων της Ευγενεστάτης Νομοθετικής Συνελεύσεως του Ηνωμένου Κράτους των Ιονίων Νήσων κατά την Τετάρτην Συνάθροισιν της Ογδόης Γερουσίας* (Corfu 1849) 9. The English translation of this and the following extracts is my own. For the original see supplementary online material, 13. According to N. I. Pantazopoulos ('Εθνικό φρόνημα, γλώσσα και δίκαιο στο Ιόνιο Κράτος πριν την ενσωμάτωση', in P. Moschona (ed.), *Το Ιόνιο Κράτος 1815-1864. Πρακτικά του Διεθνούς Συμποσίου Ιστορίας* (Κέρκυρα, 21-24 Μαΐου 1988) (Athens 1997) 359-83 [364]), the representative in question was Konstantinos Volterras Martinengos of Zakynthos.

64 *Πρακτικά των Συνεδριάσεων*, 18. For the original see supplementary online material, 14.

Instruction belonging to the State. It added that any advocate or professor who wished to use Greek might do so with immediate effect.⁶⁵

By this time the practical obstacles to the exclusive use of Greek had been removed, since the legal codes were published in Greek translation in 1851. In 1855 a new Greek translation of the 1817 Constitution, based on the Italian text, was published by Michail Idromenos.⁶⁶ This translation was more accurate than the one by Petrides, and its language conformed to the more archaistic linguistic norms that had become established in Athens.

When the High Commissioner, Sir Henry George Ward, came to give his speech at the opening of the Legislative Assembly on 3 March 1852, he decided that, in view of the legislation, he should not deliver it in Italian, as had been customary.⁶⁷ Instead, the attorney-general read out a Greek translation of Ward's speech, while the High Commissioner himself stood silently holding the original English text. As Ward wrote later, 'It would have been useless for me to read my speech in English, since not 10 persons out of the 800 present would have understood it.'⁶⁸

The Dalmatian-Venetian writer Niccolò Tommaseo was in Corfu at the time when the change of official language took place. He very much regretted this policy, and he expressed his distaste for the celebrations held in Corfu at the legal establishment of the Greek language and the 'death of the barbarous Italian language' (as placards displayed by those taking part in the celebrations expressed it).⁶⁹ Tommaseo realized that the aim of the new policy was as much the demotion of Italian as the promotion of Greek and that it had a xenophobic as well as a patriotic dimension. In 1853 an Italian was condemned to death in Corfu town for killing a Greek during a tavern brawl amid an atmosphere of intense anti-Catholic and anti-Italian feeling. Tommaseo was horrified that the Italian had been tried and condemned by a court whose members knew Italian but conducted the proceedings, as the law required, entirely in Greek. (If Tommaseo had read Napier's book, he would have realized that the proceedings in this case were the exact converse of the situation condemned by the Englishman twenty years earlier.) What intensified Tommaseo's disapproval of the replacement of Italian by Greek in official use and as the medium of education in schools in the

65 This Act was published in Greek, English and Italian (Gazette no. 26, 18/30 June 1849). One of the provisions of the Act was that Greek was to replace Italian as the language of instruction in schools controlled by the state.

66 Anon. [M. S. Idromenos], *Σύνταγμα του Ιονίου Κράτους των 1817 ως νυν υπάρχει μετερρυθμισμένον, μεταφρασθέν εκ του ιταλικού πρωτοτύπου* (Corfu 1855).

67 The text of Ward's speech was published in the Extraordinary Gazette, 3 March 1852. By contrast, the informal farewell words addressed to the Ionians by the last High Commissioner, Sir Henry Storks, on 2 June 1864 were in Italian (*The Times*, 14 June 1864).

68 P.P., 1853–3, LXII (226), Ionian Islands..., Ward to Grey, 5 March 1852.

69 N. Tommaseo, *Il secondo esilio* (Milan 1862) 167, quoted in C. Carpinato, 'Il supplizio d'un italiano in Corfù: un caso di intolleranza etnica nell'Eptaneso della seconda metà dell'Ottocento e la fallita mediazione di Dionisios Solomós', in G. Giraud and A. Pavan (ed.), *Integrazione, assimilazione, esclusione e reazione etnica* (Oradea [Romania] 2013), II, 272–93 [279–80].

Ionian Islands was that it was not vernacular Greek but an archaized version of the language that was being used for these purposes. He believed that the language of the Greek people should receive creative nourishment from Ancient Greek in the form of vocabulary and expression rather than being pedantically 'corrected' according to the grammar of the ancient language, as was the case with *katharevousa*.⁷⁰

The considerable effort that had been put into the drafting of the Ionian legal codes and their translation into Greek now seems somewhat futile when we consider that once the Ionian Islands were incorporated into the Kingdom of Greece in 1864, their inhabitants were expected to abide by the laws of the Greek state. From this time onwards, the Ionian codes were considered unsuitable, both because they were drawn up under foreign domination and because the Greek versions were translations of Italian texts that were in turn based on French codes. Nevertheless, the Italian text of parts of the Civil Code of the Ionian state continued in force as local law until 1946, when it was entirely replaced by the Civil Code of the Greek state.⁷¹

It is clear that the effort to replace Italian by Greek in the Ionian legal system and in the administration had a double aim: to rid the islands of the influence of Venetian social and political structures, and to rid them of the Italian language. Thus the process of de-Venetianization in the Ionian Islands (the dismantling of the social, political and legal structures of the *Ενετοκρατία*) was also a process of de-Italianization (the removal of all traces of what Idromenos in 1849 called *Ιταλοκρατία*, i.e. the hegemony of the Italian language).⁷²

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Given the stipulations in the 1817 constitution concerning the establishment of Greek as the sole official language of the United States of the Ionian Islands, we might ask why it took as long as thirty-five years for this to come about. However, in view of the persistence of English in official use in post-colonial states such as the Republic of Cyprus, perhaps thirty-five years for the complete eradication of the former colonial language of the Ionian Islands was not very long.

We might also ask why the initiative for the 1833 language reform proposals appears to have come from a British High Commissioner (Lord Nugent) rather than

70 N. Tommaseo, *Il supplizio d'un Italiano in Corfù* (Venice 2008 [1st edn, Florence 1855]). Among other things, Tommaseo wrote that 'the code will be translated into a Greek that will be for the Greeks harder than Latin for the Italians', and that 'the peasant of Greece will learn the legal jargon by dint of lost cases' (*ibid.*, 193). For Tommaseo's interest in the two interconnected language questions of the Ionian Islands see T. Ikonou, 'Le Isole Ionie, la Grecia e il *Supplizio*', *ibid.*, 277–340 [303].

71 Pantazopoulos, 'Εθνικό φρόνημα, γλώσσα και δίκαιο', 382. S. N. Troianos ('Ο Ιόνιος Πολιτικός Κώδικας στην ελληνική νομική φιλολογία', in Moschona (ed.), *Το Ιόνιο Κράτος 1815-1864*, 506–14 [505]) notes that because the Greek translation of the Ionian codes was never ratified by law, the Italian original remained the authentic text for purposes of interpretation.

72 Anon. [M. S. Idromenos], *Η εθνική γλώσσα εις την Επτανήσον* (Corfu 1849) 4.

from the Senate and the Legislative Assembly of the Ionian Islands. It seems that it was due to Nugent's encouragement that the Legislative Assembly began to debate the introduction of Greek into the minor and criminal courts. Article VI of the Constitution could have been construed as specifying that only the Senate had the right to initiate the relevant legislation. Since the Senate never did 'send down the *projet* of a law' on the matter, the Assembly was probably made to feel that it would be *ultra vires* for it to initiate such legislation itself until the go-ahead was given by the High Commissioner. Later still, in his 'Promemoria' of 1840 Moustoxydis wrote that, twenty-two years after the Constitution was ratified, the Senate, 'with evasive words', had refused to send down to the Assembly the '*projet* of a law' stipulated in Article VI, despite the fact that the Sixth Parliament had demanded it.⁷³

There is no doubt that there were portions of the British establishment, both in Britain and in the islands, that opposed the exclusive introduction of Greek. British officials in the islands found it easier to use Italian than Greek, and officials in London found it easier to keep an eye on official business in the islands if it was recorded in Italian than if it was recorded in Greek – Modern Greek being a language that very few British people were conversant with. Another factor must have been the inertia of various members of Parliament, the civil service and the legal profession, who were reluctant to make the effort to change their language of operation. An indication that the perpetuation of Italian as an official language was not simply due to British insistence is the fact that the Φιλαναγνωστική Εταιρεία (Reading Society) of Corfu – which was unconnected with the British administration – decided as late as January 1849 that its discussions and minutes should be in Greek rather than Italian.⁷⁴

An additional factor was the difficulty of choosing the appropriate variety of Greek at a time when the Greek language question was far from being resolved. During the nineteenth century a large proportion of the Greek elites, both in Greece and in the Ionian Islands, were in the grip of the delusion that 'better Greek' entailed the use of vocabulary and grammar that were as close to Ancient Greek as possible. Those islanders who supported the exclusive use of Greek were faced with a choice among several 'levels' of language: Ancient Greek, colloquial Modern Greek, or a mixture of the two. And if the colloquial level were chosen, to what extent would local Heptanesian features of vocabulary and grammar have been felt to be appropriate? What happened in practice was that the Greek used in official documents changed radically over the decades: the rough-and-ready translations of official documents (often carried out by non-native speakers of Greek) during the first few years from 1797 onwards, which contained a

73 Moustoxydis, 'Memorial', 12. Moustoxydis is referring to the fact that the Legislative Assembly asked the Senate 'to transmit to it a project of law to give effect to Article 6 of the Constitution regarding the Greek language', whereupon the Senate decided to draw up a reply 'to make the Assembly realize that at present it was not worth [*non essere il caso*] presenting the requested project, in view of what was decreed by the 57th Act of the 5th Parliament' (Senate, 13 March 1839, TNA CO 136/238); for the original see supplementary online material, 15.

74 See A. Glykofrydi-Leontsini, *Νεοελληνική φιλοσοφία: Πρόσωπα και θέματα* (Athens 1993) 242.

large number of colloquialisms, loan words and clumsy literal renderings of French or Italian phrases, gradually gave way to a variety that excluded loan words altogether and made the vocabulary conform to the morphological norms of Ancient Greek.

Finally, it is probable that some members of the Senate during the British protectorate felt that the use of Italian helped them preserve their social privileges at the expense of the common people, who did not understand that language. For this reason they obstructed efforts to abolish the official use of Italian. However, once freedom of the press was granted and radical politicians gained increasing influence in the Legislative Assembly, the momentum for the abolition of Italian very soon became unstoppable.