

Modern greece essay



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“ People can only live fully by helping others to live. When you give life to friends you truly live. Cultures can only realize their further richness by honoring other traditions. And only by respecting natural life can humanity continue to exist (“ Culture Quotes”). ” The culture and civilization of Greece, rooted in ancient Mycenaean and Minoan tradition, has developed over thousands of years. The Roman, Byzantine, and Ottoman empires have significantly influenced modern Greek culture, but the Greek War of Independence is what has given present day Greek culture its identity.

Greeks feel proud of the rich culture they have created because they see it as a depiction of their nationality and ethnicity. The location of Greece as a gateway to three continents- Europe, Asia, and Africa- has also had a remarkable impact in shaping Modern Greek culture. Furthermore, the mountainous terrain and more than 2, 000 islands contribute to the strong and distinguishing cultural traditions that have developed in Greece.

The assimilation of music, Greek Orthodox religion, festivals, innovations in technology and science, politics, education, and delectable cuisine compose the rich and multi-faceted culture and civilization of Modern Greece. Music The creation and performance of music is one of the most essential activities for the human mind, body, and soul. Greece’s location has played a role in creating the uniqueness and individuality of Greek music from its position centered between oriental and occidental traditions.

Occasionally, however, this combination of diverse elements has been disputed because of the rejection of Asia Minor musical forms and its presumed detrimental effect on the Greek character. Dormant for just about

two milleniums, Greek music encountered a musical revival in the 19th century. Opera composers such as Nikolaos Mantzaros (1795–1872), Spyridion Xyndas (1812–96), and Spyros Samaras (1861–1917) contributed to the revival of Greek music (“ Greek Music”). Cafe musicians created Rebetika songs during the 1920s and 1930s wars.

Rebetika was the music of the urban working class. George Lembalet (1875-1945) and Manos Hadjidakis (1925-94) introduced elements of nationalism in their folklore (“ Greek Music”). Serial music uses a specific order of notes as a thematic basis for a piece of music and was first introduced to Greece by Nikos Skalkottas. It was later composed by Yorgos Sicilianos and by Iannis Xenakis, who also writes electronic music (“ Greek Music”). Music and politics have been inseparably linked in Greek culture from ancient times to the present day.

During times of political crisis and turmoil, debates regarding the function and effects of particular music are deemed as important as the music itself. The most notable of these debates revolved around the works of Mikis Therodorakis, likely Greece’s most popular composer during the late 20th century. His resistance to military rule in the 1960’s and 1970’s led to his imprisonment for several years and “ the banning of his operas, symphonic works, film scores (most particularly for Zorba the Greek), and hundreds of songs” (“ Greek Music”).

He and his music became an international symbol of resistance to the dictatorship during the four years of his French exile (Holst-Warhaft, Gail). The close relationship between music and politics in Greece was focused on

Athens and the large-scale public entertainment it provided. The theater, where many of the dramatic performances took place, was a part of a complex of buildings that formed the political, religious, and judicial heart of the city. Furthermore, dance beginning in the Minoan period still remains a fundamental element of Greek culture.

Dance was of importance to the Greeks because they believed it promoted physical and mental well-being and it was thus integrated into the educational system. Syrtos and Mantilia were popular folk dances of ancient Greece and these forms of dance are still performed today. In present day Greece, folk dance is an essential part of daily life and also involved in many celebrations such as weddings and Easter. Additionally, regional characteristics in dance have developed because of the variations in climate, land morphology, and people's social lives.

It is surprising why contemporary Greek music has not had a mass international audience compared to other ethnically diverse artists who have become a significant part of the American music scene. For example, Sinead O'Connor and U2 both from Ireland and Andrea Bocelli from Italy have "exploded onto the American music scene" (Kurop, Marcia). Perhaps it is because modern Greek music remained inwardly focused, more musically separate from the rest. Also, Greece has not had the type of exposure that has made other popular European artists more accessible and well known.

For instance, Eros Razomotti from Italy uses the same session players as Celine Dion, making the marketing a lot easier. It was not until 1998 that well-known Greek pop artists with record labels such as Polygram, EMI, and

Sony were pushed toward American audiences ("Greek Music"). Religion In contrast with the pagan and polytheistic religion of ancient Greece, the majority of Greeks today are Orthodox Christians. Even under Turkish rule and recurring attempts at conversion by Jesuits and Protestants, the Orthodox Christian faith has survived and flourished.

Both in ancient and modern times, religion is considered a very significant part of society and culture. "In present day Greece, there are sixteen separate Orthodox churches and patriarchates; the Orthodox Church of Greece is selected as the official national religion ("Modern Greek Culture and Traditions of Greece")." Church officials from the Orthodox Church of Greece have some authority in state affairs and the church is financially supported by the state. The Holy Synod, "whose president is the archbishop of Athens," oversees the church ("Modern Greek Culture and Traditions of Greece").

Regional bishops, monks, nuns, and priests of specific churches and monastic institutions are also on staff at the church. Priests are allowed to marry in Greece and furthermore, the divorced are permitted to remarry in the church. About a quarter of the population attends weekly services; however, annual rites such as the Sunday liturgy and the Twelve Great Feasts having greater attendance. For almost every Greek, their religious faith is deep and strong even if they do not go to church often

There are several Greek traditions associated with religion; in fact nearly all celebrations in Greece have a religious part. The end of Apokries, a 4 week Greek carnival, begins the 40-day feast preceding Easter. The feast, known

as Sarakosti, begins with Clear Monday, the first day of Lent. Although the Greeks will not feast for all 40 days, Clear Monday is a time of celebration where they will go to the countryside with special feast food including vegetables, pickles, taramosalata, grilled octopus, lots of wine and the flat bread made specially for this day known as the Lagana.

One of the children's favorite parts of the tradition is kite-flying. My Big Fat Greek Marriage is another popular tradition in Greece although the traditions vary by location. The celebration begins a few days prior to the wedding at the house of the new couple and involves making the marriage bed, a celebration in which the couple's fathers give the engaged couple money, followed by monetary gifts from their family and friends. " A baby is also placed on the bed to bring prosperity and fertility to the couple (" Modern Greek Culture and Traditions of Greece"). Families are an important part of Greek life because they bring support and identity to the couple.

The marriage ceremony consists of a small liturgy, the exchanging of vows, and the dance of Hisais led by the priest. Following the marriage ceremony is a lively reception with traditional Greek food, music, and dancing. For many Greeks, beliefs and traditions regarding death and grief are founded in the Greek Orthodox religion. According to Orthodox belief, life is eternal and your soul and physical body separate at the time of death.

Cremation is denounced because it signifies the destruction of the external physical body and organ donation was outlawed until recently. Orthodox followers believe that at the Last Judgment the physical body will be united with the spiritual soul. The church's designated period of mourning is forty

days, which is spent mostly visiting with friends and family.

Festivals/Commemorations Greek is known for hosting a wide variety of festivals and celebrations. Whether it is the sombre and moving rituals of the Great (Holy) Week or the military parades, there is definitely something for everyone.

Many of the traditions have ancient origins, such as the traditional carnival characters roaming the streets of northern and central Greece, which are based on the rituals of Dionysos, the ancient god of wine and ecstasy. The Feast of St. Basil is held annually on January 1st to celebrate the New Year. There is an old Byzantine tradition of slicing the Vassilopita and whoever receives the hidden coin in their slice will have good luck for the year. Easter is considered one of the most important holidays in Greece. Most consider it an even bigger holiday than Christmas. The celebration begins on

Good Friday, where they carry the Epitaph, the tomb of Christ, from the church to the cemetery. The Epitaph is beautifully decorated with flowers from the church. After Christ is laid to rest, everyone lights a candle and returns to the church to kiss an image of Christ. The next day is midnight mass, followed by a celebration with fireworks. Later, families return home for a delicious feast known as the " Resurrection Meal" (" Greek Festivals"). On Sunday, the feast and celebration continues long into the night. The Hellenic Festival is held annually in Greece during the summer months.

It includes other various festivals such as the Athens Festival, the Epidaurus Festival, and Musical July. The Athens Festival consists of performances by national and international artists held primarily in the Odeon of Herodes

Atticus theatre. The Epidaurus Festival is also a theatre festival, with many of the plays and performances held at the Ancient Theatre of Epidaurus and the Little Theatre of Epidaurus. The Thessaloniki International Film Festival is one of the top Greek festivals, attracting renowned directors and actors of both the cinema and theater.

The festival lasts ten days long and features screenings of films from around the world, distinguished guests from the contemporary cinema scene, tributes, master classes, and roundtable discussions. The International Trade fair is also held in Thessaloniki and is of importance because it is where Greece's Prime Minister presents a speech providing details of governmental plans for the upcoming year. Greece celebrates its' Independence Day on March 25th. Their Independence Day dates back to 1821, when the Greeks revolted against the Ottoman Empire, which had controlled Greece for almost 400 years.

The Greeks celebrate their anniversary with military parades, marches, and celebrations throughout the country, much like we celebrate the 4th of July in America. Innovations In modern day Greece, Greeks continue to contribute to science, mathematics, and technology. Constantin Caratheodory was a very well known modern Greek mathematician because of his important contribution to the theory of relativity in Thermodynamics. In addition, John Argyris, a Greek mathematician and engineer, contributed to physics with his invention of finite element analysis and the direct stiffness method.

Furthermore, Fotis Kafatos, a biologist, lead the way to the field of molecular cloning and genomics. Finally, Georgios Papanikolaou made major

contributions to cancer screening in the field of medicine with his Pap smear.

Politics The monarchy ended and was replaced by a republic in 1923 after an unsuccessful war against Turkey following World War I. Greece is currently a Parliamentary Republic with Karolos Papoulias serving as President and George Papandreou as the Prime Minister. The President is nominated by the Parliament to serve a five-year term and then the President appoints the Prime Minister.

The Constitution was entered into force in 1975 with 120 articles. It has been amended twice since, in 1986 and in 2001. In 1986 significant changes were made to the Constitution regarding the President's duties. Thus, the Prime Minister has acquired most of the political power in Greece. Furthermore, since the restoration of democracy, the liberal-conservative New Democracy and the social-democratic Panhellenic Socialist movement (PASOK) have dominated the Greek two-party system. George Papandreou's son formed the Panhellenic Socialist Movement and he is currently president of it.

Greek society actively and openly participates in the political process; however, the government has been criticized for excluding minorities in political debate and thus making their opinions seem secondary or unimportant. Greeks find it acceptable to discuss politics at social functions and also tend to be out-spoken about their support or disapproval of certain political parties or proposals.

Education Greek education is valued and of high importance. Children ages six to fifteen are required to attend school, however the education is free.

The educational system is separated into three levels, primary, secondary, and tertiary. Primary education involves kindergarten for one or two years, followed by primary school from ages 6-12. Secondary education includes Gymnasio and Lykeio. Gymnasio is a 3-year program and is similar to middle school and Lykeio is an academically focused high school. English language study is a requirement from 4th grade through high school. Tertiary education is considered college level and is provided by universities, technological educational institutes, and academies, which are primarily for the military and clergy.

Fortunately for Greek students, college education, including the books, is free for students able to meet the difficult entrance requirements. The Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs oversees all schools in Greece, managing the curriculum, competence of teaching staff, and funding. The fact that most of the decisions regarding education are made by a small group of officials in the Ministry of Education creates tension among the Greek society. This is because “ their educational decision-making process fails to take into account the interests of different stakeholders and broader societal need (Macar, Oya).

The Greek constitution does not allow the operation of private universities in Greece; however, there are some private college campuses in Greece, but their degrees are not recognized by the state. There is a demand for higher-level education in Greece mostly because students want the higher-level of knowledge, which creates career opportunities. Gender roles are also apparent in the Greek educational system. The first middle or junior high

school for Greek female students became available around the 1870s and it was known as Palada Girls' School (Macar, Oya).

Before the 1870s, no formal education existed for females except for primary school. In Greece, the education of girls was regarded as highly important because of the social change emerging in Europe and the Ottoman Empire in the 19th century, recognition of the significance of women, and the need to train teachers because of the enrollment in schools increasing on a daily basis. Food Greece is famous for its rich and diverse array of foods and wines. Modern Greek cuisine has traditions dating back several millennia and has evolved and absorbed numerous influences over the years.

The flavors of Greek cuisine change with the season and its geography. With numerous islands making up Greece, seafood is a popular favorite. Goat and lamb are the traditional meats for festivals and celebrations. Bulgur, pasta, and dolmades are popular grain items and common vegetables include tomato, eggplant, potato, green beans, okra, green peppers, and onions. Mezes is an array of small dishes or appetizers, usually served with wine or ouzo, anise-flavored liqueurs.

The “ Greek salad is known in Greece as the Village salad or Horiatiki” and consists of tomatoes, cucumber, red onion, feta cheese, and kalamata olives (“ Modern Greek Culture and Traditions of Greece”). Fasolada, a bean soup, is described by many cookbooks as a traditional Greek dish. Greece's climate is ideal for growing olive and lemon trees, producing two of Greece's most popular ingredients. Olive oil is not only used in Greek cooking, but it is also

tied to rituals, both folk and religious, that mark important events in the life cycle.

For instance, at a Christening, the priest anoints the infant with olive oil. In addition, olives have played a primary role in Greece's economy since 2000 BC. Greece is famous for its unique herbs and spices, which are used in almost every dish to add extra flavor and taste. Herbs and spices in Greece are of such high quality because of the long periods of sunshine during growth. Oregano, mint, garlic, onion, dill, bay laurel leaves, basil, and thyme are some of the common herbs and spices used. The Greek Orthodox Church has also helped shape Greek eating habits.

Religious and non-religious Greeks alike abstain from eating animal products such as meat, dairy products, and eggs during the numerous days of Lent preceding Easter, Christmas, and other religious holidays. Many foods such as stuffed vegetables or pies have 2 different versions of the recipe, one with meat or cheese and the other without to accommodate the people fasting during Lent. Until recently, the majority of Greeks were vegetarian by necessity, not by choice because it was not possible to pasture large enough herds to provide meat for everyone.

Therefore, meat was only consumed on special occasions including important religious holidays and family feasts. Going to restaurants is common in Greece, much like the United States. There is traditional Greek home cooking available in addition to fast food restaurants. Fast-food is gaining popularity because of its easy accessibility; however, Greeks are still mainly interested in the flavorful and extensive repertoire of Greek cuisine.

Conclusion Greece is a country of diverse and rich culture because of the influence from surrounding civilizations and because of its location at the junction between the East and the West.

The Greek War of Independence is responsible for reviving Greece culture and giving it an identity. The nation is bound together by traditions that they have adopted from ancient civilizations and adapted to create a culture unique of their own. Music and folk dance, devout religious belief, large celebratory festivals, innovations in science, politics, a rigorous educational system, and delicious cuisine contribute to the distinguishing and extravagant culture of modern Greece.