

This book is a must for anyone interested in Anatolia College and American missionary activities in the Ottoman Empire. But it also has a wider reach, offering often intriguing reflections on the Ottoman Greek and Armenian communities while the insistence of the school on continuing its existence in Greece provides us with encounters with Greek politics and society we would not have met elsewhere.

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Peter Mackridge and David Ricks (ed.), *The British Council and Anglo-Greek Literary Interactions, 1945-1955*. Abingdon: Routledge, 2018. Pp. xii, 261.
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In line with my predecessors, I was keen as ambassador in Athens to support the activities of the British Council. In my time (2013-16), all the staff except for the director were locally employed Greeks. They were committed and capable, and the modern offices on Kolonaki Square in Athens and off Tsimiski Street in Thessaloniki were busy places. The old question – *What is the British Council for?* – had long since been settled. In Greece at least, the British Council was a well-oiled factory for teaching and certifying skills in the English language, with the profits repatriated to London and exported to other ‘markets’ overseas. Cultural and non-linguistic educational activities still happened but were secondary; the prevailing temper was of bureaucratic utility and competence, and of control exercised tightly from London.

Things had once been different. In a remarkable decade, from 1944 until 1955, when British strategic weakness and the Cyprus crisis changed forever Britain’s relationship with Hellenism, the British Council in Greece was a hub of significant cultural and creative activity and exchange: staffed by intellectuals and literary artists – men of the calibre of Steven Runciman, Rex Warner, Louis MacNeice – and deeply immersed in Greek intellectual life, through organs such as the *Anglo-Greek Review*, edited first by the famous ‘Colossus of Maroussi’, G.K. Katsimbalis, and then by G.P. Savidis. The British Council, which had been founded in 1934 by the efforts of Reginald (Rex) Leeper, an Australian member of the British Diplomatic Service, opened up shop in Athens in 1939; it was evacuated before the Nazi Occupation. From 1943 onwards, Leeper found himself the British ambassador to the Greek government-in-exile in Egypt, and he returned to Greece with Papandreou and the British Army in October 1944. Perhaps inevitably, given Leeper’s responsibilities and the importance of securing hearts and minds in Greece, the British Council reopened its doors in Greece shortly after.

This important collection of essays, originating in a 2012 conference held at the British School at Athens, surveys the achievements and personalities of the Council in this crucial post-war decade. In addition to a valuable introduction by Peter

Mackridge, there are eleven substantial chapters and two shorter pieces; all bar the final chapter deal with the British Council itself. The approach taken by the editors and contributors is penetrating, shedding light on Greek and British motives.

In chapter 1, Robert Holland provides a summary of British-Greek political and military relations from 1939 to 1955, plotting the twists and turns of British commitment and ambivalence towards Greece and the Aegean. The post-war decline of British power and engagement was marked and would reach its nadir in the Conservative Government's mishandling of Cyprus. Cultural activities compensated for some of this decline but were insufficient to the anger, emotions and violence unleashed in Greece by the Cyprus crisis. The tale is sobering and Holland tells it fairly, if with asperity. Chapter 2, by Gioula Koutsopanagou, summarises the British Council's activities in Greece from 1945. Characteristically, the French reorganized their institute first and the evidence suggests that Leeper had to push hard to overcome British dilatoriness. But the scale of what was established surprises those of us who know today's British Council: language institutes in Athens, Thessaloniki, Corfu and Patra; sponsorship of university chairs; a big increase in scholarships to British universities; the stocking of libraries (since, regrettably broken up) in Athens and Thessaloniki; work with Greek educationalists; the formation of a 'two-way' cultural programme. As part of this, efforts were made to secure personnel of the highest calibre. In chapter 3, Michael Llewellyn-Smith examines the part played by Steven Runciman as the post-war British Council representative (or director); in chapter 11, David Ricks takes a look at the activities of Louis MacNeice, seconded from the BBC to direct the British Institute in Athens for 18 months from 1950; chapter 4, by Avi Sharon, explores Katsimbalis' contribution as first editor of the *Anglo-Greek Review*. These are among the most rewarding chapters, since they animate and transcend the purely bureaucratic side of the story with creative and intellectual achievements, and, in the case of Runciman at least, with first-class gossip. Different aspects of class, culture and sexuality emerge in the consideration of lesser figures too, such as the art historian Roger Hinks and the novelists Francis King, Rex Warner and Daniel Nash (chapters 9 and 10 by David Roessel and Jim Potts respectively). The cultural and propaganda roles of the British Council's publications – the *Anglo-Greek Review* in Athens; *Prosperos* on Corfu; *The Record* in Thessaloniki – are interestingly explored by Dimitris Tziovas, Dimitris Daskalopoulos, Theodosios Pylarinos and Dinos Christianopoulos (chapters 5 to 8). In chapter 12, David Holton analyses the intellectual failure of Nikos Kazantzakis' 1946 visit to England, his second trip there at the invitation of the British Council. The volume closes with Lucile Arnoux-Farnoux's account of the competing activities of the *Institut Français d'Athènes*; a more systematic intellectual endeavour was possible there under leaders who were not continually moved from post to post by their home organization as a matter of policy.

Despite its price, this volume deserves to be on the shelves of all who are seriously interested in the development of British-Greek cultural and political relations. No doubt, post-war conditions were unique and cannot be repeated. But British philhellenes and Greek anglophiles are always on the look-out for the next renaissance in relations. Perhaps the miseries of Brexit will provide motive, if not opportunity.

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Nicolas Argenti, *Remembering Absence: the Sense of Life in Island Greece* Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2019. Pp. 352.
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Having carried out doctoral research in the kingdom of Oku in Cameroon in the early 1990s, initially on the relationship between material culture and political systems, Nicolas Argenti later realized that it had shown him ‘an embodied past in the absence of discursive history’ (7). As a result, he decided to visit the Aegean island of Chios, his father’s family’s place of origin. Local people used the word ‘return’ for his visits – on a number of occasions between 2010 and 2015 – although he had never previously been there. Nicolas had grown up as a member of the Chiot diaspora with a jigsaw-like knowledge of the family’s past. During his visits, he found the family surname everywhere he went on the island on plaques and monuments (his great-uncle, Philip Argenti, is well-known for writing about the history and folklore of the island). Indeed, Nicolas had the experience of seeing his very own name (because of Greek traditions of naming after relatives), and those of other living family members, represented in inscriptions recording the five-generations-earlier execution of these men following the events he had come to investigate – the ‘massacres’ of 1822.

These had occurred at the time of the Greek war of Independence, when Chios was reluctant to rise up against the island’s Ottoman authorities. The Chiots thought of themselves not as ‘Greek’ but as ‘Romioi’ (citizens of the Eastern Roman Empire, Byzantines) and had established close ties with the Sublime Porte. Indeed, the mastic groves on the island (one of the sources of its great wealth) were a holding of the Sultan’s mother. However, a flotilla from the island of Samos encouraged a rebellion. As a result, an Ottoman fleet engaged in a punitive expedition and 68 (some sources say more) heads of families, who had been imprisoned as hostages for the islanders’ good behaviour, were hanged. These included the author’s four-times great-grandfather and other relatives. In the six months that followed, nine-tenths of the island’s population of 120,000 were killed or sold into slavery, and many other Chiots left. Over the next one hundred and fifty years or so, the island experienced other forced departures resulting from natural disasters and from political events, and also forced arrivals (the Asia Minor refugees of 1922/23), the Occupation, and the