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**GREEKS AND ITALIANS IN THE ITALIAN PENINSULA  
DURING THE NAPOLEONIC PERIOD, FROM THE  
STANDPOINT OF THE SEPTINSULAR REPUBLIC**

**Abstract:** In this paper, the author made an analysis of the political and patriotic activities carried by Greeks from the Ionian Islands during the Napoleonic period. In the context of Napoleon's foreign policy, Ioannis Kapodistrias emerging as a key figure in the foundation of the Septinsular Republic and become the prominent representative of the Ionian Greeks. Thus, he gained the experience in international diplomacy and the reputation for his skills which were to become his passport to a political career in more important positions. It is on the basis of the events concerning the Ionian Islands and the first experience of collective activity with a common perspective by persons such as those described above that it is contended that the Septinsular Republic was for Greeks a foretaste of national independence.

**Keywords:** Ionian Islands, Ioannis Kapodistrias, Septinsular Republic, international diplomacy, Greeks, 19<sup>th</sup> century.

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Historiography of the Unification of Italy, the so-called *Risorgimento*, and particularly the most recent publications, has detected the beginnings of the processes that would lead to Italian national independence in the dissemination and subsequent implementation of the ideas of the French Revolution in the Italian Peninsula during the twenty years between 1796 and 1815, the period of the Napoleonic Wars<sup>1</sup>. Re-evaluation of the influence of Napoleon's policies in the long term and in the international context has indicated that these changes meant something more than the preparation for the *Risorgimento*: here were established the bases for the formation of the modern civil democratic state and the guarantees for individual and collective liberties<sup>2</sup>. What happened in Napoleonic Italy had repercussions on other population groups present in the Italian states and closely involved with the people of the peninsula, among which were the Greeks.

Main aim of this paper is not to compare the evolution of national independence in Greece and Italy, but to propose the study of the history of this

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<sup>1</sup> Carlo Capra, *L'età rivoluzionaria e napoleonica in Italia, 1796–1815* (Turin, 1978), p. 11–13.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 12–13.

period from a standpoint neglected by and in part unknown to historians. In other words, focusing on Napoleonic Italy, we shall try to examine the activities of the inhabitants of a state born in the islands of the Ionian Sea during the fury of wars, and to assess the importance of these activities for the preparation of the Greek War of Independence. The state in question is the Septinsular Republic, founded in March 1800 thanks to a temporary alignment of interests between the Ottoman Empire and Russia, and with the consent of Great Britain.

The historical footprint of this state in the archival material, written almost entirely in Italian, remains strong, but this material is usually studied from the viewpoint of local history, which does not allow the substantial positioning of these phenomena in their wider historical and geographical framework<sup>3</sup>. Moreover, the history of the Septinsular Republic has been left largely outside the official historical narrative of the Greek nation. This fact could be attributed *inter alia* to the choice of Greek historians in the 19<sup>th</sup> century to emphasize only those events in the history of the Ionian Islands that were related to the Ionians' struggles against their foreign rulers<sup>4</sup>. Consequently, the joint activities of the Ionian islanders and the Russians within the Septinsular Republic, which aimed at preparing the ground for Greek independence, have remained almost outside the scope of the official historical narrative of the Greek nation<sup>5</sup>. With the exception of some issues, such as the maritime trade of Greeks and their presence in southern Russia, the relationship between Greeks and Russians is usually studied from the time the Greek revolution broke out in 1821, in the Danubian Principalities, led by the officer of the Russian army Demetrios Ypsilantis. However, this skips a crucial step in the maturation of the material and ideological conditions that led to this revolution.

The Ionian Islands, thanks to their geographical proximity to the Italian Peninsula and to the long period of Venetian rule, were a privileged territory with regard to the spread of new ideas to the Greek Mainland. But they were also a region that had experienced historical changes similar to those of other Italian states, passing from Venetian dominion to the French revolutionary experience until the creation, in 1800, of a republic of questionable political autonomy, more or less as had happened in the Napoleonic kingdoms of Italy.

I. The essential meaning of the changes that took place in Napoleonic Italy is described perspicaciously by Carlo Capra in the concluding remarks of his book

<sup>3</sup> On the historiography of the Septinsular Republic, older and recent, see in Gerassimos D. Pagratis, "Shipping and Trade in the Ionian Islands: The Merchant Fleet of the Septinsular Republic (1800–1807)", *Journal of the Oxford University Historical Society*, 8 (2011), p. 1-21 ([www.ouhs.org](http://www.ouhs.org)).

<sup>4</sup> Aliko Nikiforou, "Η σημαία της Επτανήσου Πολιτείας" ["The flag of the Septinsular Republic"], in the proceedings of the conference *Επτανήσος Πολιτεία (1800–1807)* [*The Septinsular Republic*], edited by A. Nikiforou (Corfu, 2001), p. 117-130.

<sup>5</sup> It is impressive that the exceptions to this rule include studies done usually by non-Greeks who pointed especially to politics and sometimes on military cooperation. See in James L. McKnight, *Admiral Ushakov and the Ionian Republic. The genesis of Russia's first Balkan Satellite* (Ph.D. Diss., University of Wisconsin, 1965); Norman Saul, *Russia and the Mediterranean, 1798–1807* (Chicago, 1970); Nicholas Ch. Pappas, *Greeks in Russian Military Service in the Late Eighteenth and Early Nineteenth Centuries* (Thessaloniki, 1991), p. 86-88. Kahraman Şakul, *An Ottoman Global Moment: War of Second Coalition in the Levant* (Ph.D. Diss., Georgetown University, 2009).

*L'età rivoluzionaria e napoleonica in Italia, 1796–1815* (Turin, 1978). According to him, Napoleon's legacy in Europe had more impact on the state, which from that moment entered the path of modernization, than on society.

Although this statement may seem paradoxical, considering that in precisely this period the bourgeoisie was allowed to materialize its old desire for political dominance, nonetheless it enhances the field to which the French attached greater importance. The state was equipped with instruments and institutions which, through an extensive administrative reorganization, set not only clear limits between the three distinct powers, but also the rules for the participation of citizens in political affairs, largely based on the Napoleonic Code, which guaranteed civil rights.

The primacy of changes in the function of the state rather than in society is particularly evident in the institution of a new and almost separate social group, the bureaucracy. This was formed by political personnel, proud of their studies at the reformed universities of Italy, who, thanks to their role as mediator between the powerful state and its citizens, had acquired inordinate authority, usually at the expense of other dynamic elements of society, such as merchants and entrepreneurs<sup>6</sup>.

Nevertheless, important steps were taken also in the social sphere, such as the abolition of privileges and the subsequent adoption of criteria for a more equitable distribution of taxes, the reform of the feudal system where it was still in force, the organization of public education, the emancipation of the Jews, and so on. With all these innovations, social representation in political life was expanded and social consensus increased. But there were dark clouds too in the activities of the French, such as heavy taxation, forced loans, more or less compulsory conscription – which in the case of the Napoleonic campaign in Russia had tragic consequences –, the emigration of dissidents, the transportation of works of art to France, and so on<sup>7</sup>.

Beyond the foundation of the modern state, the imposition of quite similar institutions in almost all the kingdoms of Italy had other repercussions. It led to a homogenization of the peninsula, which would become the basis for the Italians' belief in the feasibility of their liberation from the foreign oppressors<sup>8</sup>. Very significant in strengthening this belief was Napoleon's grouping of many Italian satellites into a few large states, which demonstrated to the Italians that it was possible to break down the old political and economic barriers and create an independent nation state. With the introduction of military conscription, the French trained the Italians, after centuries of military decadence, to use weapons and to prove their worth. As a result of these achievements, a good part of the Italians would certainly agree with what Carducci wrote about the French in 1884: "They armed us, disciplined us and permit us to look in the eyes our old masters"<sup>9</sup>.

However, the international environment for the implementation of all these changes was highly unfavourable to Napoleon. In the twenty-year duration of the so-

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<sup>6</sup> C. Capra, *L'età rivoluzionaria e napoleonica in Italia*, p. 320.

<sup>7</sup> On the Franco-Italian relations during the Napoleonic period see in particular in Alain Pillepich, *Napoléon et les Italiens: République italienne et royaume d'Italie, 1802–1814* (Paris, 2003).

<sup>8</sup> Alfonso Scirocco, *L'Italia del Risorgimento, 1800–1871* (Bologna, 1993<sup>2</sup>), p. 27.

<sup>9</sup> Giosuè Carducci, *Confessioni e battaglie*, 1<sup>st</sup> Series (Rome, 1884).

called Napoleonic period, seven coalitions were formed against him. The first of these, signed in 1799 and lasting until 1802, comprised Great Britain, the Ottoman Empire, Russia and the Kingdom of Naples. Among the consequences of this first anti-Napoleonic coalition was the forging of an unexpected alliance between two traditionally hostile powers, Russia and the Ottoman Empire, which led in 1800 to the founding of the Ionian State, and to the conditions that allowed the active intervention of the Russians in the political affairs of the Italian Peninsula.

II. Relations between Russia and the Greeks were particularly close in the second half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, in the framework of what is known as the “Greek Project” of Empress Catherine the Great, which during the First Russian–Turkish War (1768–1774) included a Russian expedition to the Aegean Sea, headed by the Count Orloff in 1770<sup>10</sup>. Despite the mobilization of the Greeks, the “mission of the Archipelago” not only failed miserably but also exposed them to Turkish vengeance, generating a wave of refugees from the Peloponnesus and Epirus, part of which was enlisted in the Neapolitan army or the Russian one. These two environments were not indifferent to each other. Geographical distances were shortened not only by the Russian army’s involvement in Italian political issues, but also by the call for Greek officers of the *Reggimento Macedone* of Naples in order to train the Septinsular army<sup>11</sup>. There were, moreover, constant mediators between the Greeks in these two armies, such as Greek officers in the service of the Tsar<sup>12</sup>, who, exploiting their ability to move in the Ottoman Empire and the Italian Peninsula, were carrying messages and gathering information about everything that was going on and was of interest to the Russians. It was from these environments, but also from Greek merchants active in the ports of New Russia, that most of the consuls of Russia in the Mediterranean were selected, whose duties, beyond the service of their fellow nationals abroad, ran to espionage<sup>13</sup>.

After the founding of the Septinsular Republic the Russians acquired for the first time in their history a territorial basis, which the American historian James McNight has defined as the first Russian satellite in the Balkans<sup>14</sup>. For the Ionian elites, whose income from landownership was regulated by a particular feudalism of the Venetian era, Russia, an empire also based on a particular feudal system, seemed

<sup>10</sup> On the Russian ambitions in the Mediterranean see in Pantelis Kontogiannis, *Οι Έλληνες κατά τον πρώτον επί Αικατερίνης Β΄ Ρωσοτουρκικόν Πόλεμον (1768–1774)* [*Greeks during the first Russian–Turkish war*] (Athens, 1903), p. 298–308; N. Saul, *Russia and the Mediterranean*, p. 96 onwards; Apostolos Vakalopoulos, *Ιστορία του Νεότερου Ελληνισμού* [*History of Modern Hellenism*], vol. 4 (Thessaloniki, 1973), p. 457–464.

<sup>11</sup> Nikos Kourkoumelis, “Εμμανουήλ Παπαδόπουλος: διδασκαλία στρατιωτικά” [“Emmanouil Papadopoulos: Military instructions”], *Proceedings of the Conference on the Septinsular Republic (28–31 October 2000)* (Argostoli, 2003), p. 230 onwards; on the *Reggimento Macedone* see Konstantinos Nikas, “Πελοποννήσιοι στο *Reggimento Macedone*” [“Peloponneseans in the *Reggimento Macedone*”], *Parnassos*, 29 (1987), p. 276–290; N. Ch. Pappas, *Greeks in Russian Military Service*, p. 48–53.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 86–88; *Η Ρωσία και τα πασαλίκια της Αλβανίας και της Ηπείρου. Έγγραφα από τα ρωσικά αρχεία* [*Russia and the “passaliks” of Albania and Epirus, 1759–1831. Documents from the Russian archives*], edited by Grigoris Arsh (Athens, 2007), Introduction.

<sup>14</sup> James L. McKnight, *Admiral Ushakov and the Ionian Republic*.

to be a reassuring prospect for maintaining their property and their social status. It seemed too to offer a solution to the national question, because the widespread hope among Hellenism that the liberation of the Greeks would be achieved with the help of the Russians had existed for some time. This policy change was undoubtedly a relief for the Ionian nobility after the difficult days they had lived through during the brief interlude of French rule in the islands (1797–1799). Thanks also to the common faith and to the interventions in their favour of the Ecumenical Patriarch Gregory V, the Russians had won the support of the powerful local Orthodox Church<sup>15</sup>.

Soon, however, the splendour in the image of the Russians was clouded. And this because in 1802 they established in Corfu their naval base in the Mediterranean and took on the full military defence of the islands. The Russian fleet on its voyage from Naples to Corfu had transported Count Georgios Mocenigos, appointed by the Tsar as his plenipotentiary to the Septinsular Republic. In this capacity Mocenigos was to have a decisive influence on the choices of the new state, removing much of its political autonomy<sup>16</sup>. Mocenigos was a scion of one of the aristocratic families of Zakynthos (Zante). His father Demetrios had fought with the Russians in Orloff's campaign against the Turks, after which he entered the diplomatic corps of Russia<sup>17</sup>. Georgios, following the tradition of the Ionian nobility of the Venetian period, studied Medicine in Padua and then pursued a career that seemed almost predestined: member of the Russian diplomatic corps and in 1790 representative of the Tsar in the Duchy of Tuscany. When the time came for the formation or/and the administration of the Ionian consular network, Mocenigos held one of the two most important positions; the other, that of secretary of foreign affairs, was to be taken, at Mocenigos' suggestion, by his protégé Ioannis Kapodistrias.

**Ioannis Kapodistrias, first governor of the Greek State (1776-1831)**



<sup>15</sup> Eleni E. Koukkou, *Ιστορία των Ιονίων Νήσων από το 1797 μέχρι την βρετανική κυριαρχία* [History of the Ionian Islands from 1797 to the British dominion] (Athens, 1999), p. 52-58.

<sup>16</sup> Spyridon Loukatos, *Ο Ιωάννης Καποδίστριας και η Επτάνησος Πολιτεία* [Ioannis Kapodistrias and the Septinsular Republic] (PhD. Diss, University of Athens, 1959), p. 45 onwards.

<sup>17</sup> Franco Venturi, *La rivolta greca del 1770 e il patriottismo dell'età dei Lumi* (Rome, 1986), p. 28-29.

Ioannis Kapodistrias belonged to the ruling class of Corfu. His family had acquired the title of nobility granted by the Duke of Savoy Emmanuel II in 1689. After studying Medicine in Padua, from 1799 to 1801 he was in charge of the military hospital of Corfu. His father, Antonios–Maria, a supporter of the pro-Russian faction, was a member of the Commission that negotiated the agreement with the Ottomans in 1800 which led to the establishment of the Septinsular Republic.

Ioannis's involvement in political life commenced in 1801, when he replaced his father in the commission set up to restore peace in Cephalonia, where there had been unrest for some time because the constitution of 1800 confirmed the interests of the old nobility. Two years after his entry into political life, Kapodistrias became secretary of foreign affairs. He resigned from this position in 1806, in order to reorganize public education.

Kapodistrias' relations with both Mocenigos and the Russians were very close. From his early days as secretary of foreign affairs his attempts to protect Russian interests and connect them to those of the Septinsular Republic were evident. So, it is no surprise that in 1804 the Ionian consuls in Italy, in their correspondence with Kapodistrias, define him as "member of the College of the Tsar". Since it is well known that Kapodistrias assumed offices in the Russian Empire only after the dissolution of the Ionian Republic, this is a significant change that could significantly affect the historians' interpretations of his person.

From these thumbnail sketches of Mocenigos and Kapodistrias, the nature of the Septinsular consular network can be easily understood<sup>18</sup>. Their selection of consuls of the Republic in Italian cities was based on criteria such as the availability of suitable persons for this office in each city, and special political circumstances. So, in some cases they preferred to appoint Italians, as a rule merchants involved in trade with the Russian regions (Antonio Genzardi, consul general in Palermo; Nicolò Manzo, chargé d'affaires in the royal court of Naples), whereas in other cities they chose Ionians, some of whom were officers and agents of Russia (Georgios Palatinos, consul general in Puglia based in Lecce; Ludovicos Sotiris, consul in Trieste) or even prominent representatives of local Ionian presence in Italy (Nicolò Rasis, consul in Genoa; Vincenzo Calbo, consul at Leghorn; Georgios Giorgulàs, consul in Venice; Cesare Pelegrinis, consul in Trieste from 1803 to 1807), while elsewhere the consulates were entrusted to merchants from Epirus, especially in those parts of southern Italy where Epirots had a massive presence, far outnumbering the Ionians (Stefanos Duramanis in Gaeta; Nicolò Varvessis in Messina; Cristoforo Papafilis in Barletta).

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<sup>18</sup> On the Ionian consular network and its formation, we are doing an archival research financed by The National and Kapodistrian University of Athens in the framework of the research project entitled "Kapodistrias".

### The consular network of the Septinsular Republic



The role of the Ionian consular network in the seven-year life of the Septinsular Republic was critical for the Greeks in Napoleonic Italy. The Greek communities in various parts of the peninsula played an important role too, but the special conditions of this period and the close surveillance, French or Austrian, of their activities left little leeway for movement. The French domination had also caused serious problems, especially to the Greek community of Venice, whose assets had been confiscated<sup>19</sup>.

Despite the “burden loaded on the shoulders” of the Septinsular Republic, its consulates met in an uncommon way the needs of Ionians resident in or in transit via Italy. For the first time in modern history Greeks were able to refer to an administrative centre that was not Venetian or Ottoman but Greek. Another novelty was the services provided by this institution, which were not limited to Ionians but were extended to Ottoman Greeks, regardless of whether or not an analogous Ottoman institution existed in the same city. So, for example, recorded in the archives of the Ionian consulate in Genoa are numerous acts of purchases of merchant ships by captains from the island of Hydra, including Andreas Vokos, better known as Miaoulis, another hero of the Greek *Risorgimento*<sup>20</sup>.

Thanks to all these consulates, a political personnel emerged, members of which, educated in very particular circumstances, acquired valuable experience for

<sup>19</sup> Artemis Xanthopoulou-Kyriakou, *H ελληνική κοινότητα Βενετίας (1797–1866)* [The Greek community in Venice] (Ph.D. Diss., University of Thessaloniki, 1978), p. 123 onwards.

<sup>20</sup> See in G. D. Pagratis, “The consulate of the Septinsular Republic (1800–1807) in Genoa” (paper presented at the 9<sup>th</sup> Annual Mediterranean Studies Association in Genoa, Italy, Genoa, 24–27 May 2006).

their future career. After the dissolution of the Septinsular Republic, some Greeks were appointed as consuls of Russia in the same cities, such as Georgios Mocenigos in Turin and Cesare Pelegrinis in Trieste, and similarly some of the Italian members of the Ionian consular network in Italy, such as Antonio Genzardi in Palermo and Nicolò Manzo in Naples, entrepreneurs active in the Ottoman and Russian markets, became consuls of Russia in their respective cities.

Others, however, continued their career in the Greek State, among them Ioannis Vaptistis Teotochis from Corfu, or were involved in the Greek revolution while residing in Italy, such as Stefanos Duramanis from Epirus, Septinsular consul in Gaeta. Teotochis, member of a noble family of Corfu and son of an officer in the Venetian army, followed a military career not only during the Venetian rule, but even after the arrival of the French and the foundation of the Septinsular Republic. He met Kapodistrias in the years 1801–1802, as a member of the commission that tried to restore peace in the island of Cephalonia. After this experience Teotochis took diplomatic offices in Malta and Palermo, trying to convince the British and the Russians to send an army to Corfu to deal with the peasants who were rebelling against the aristocratic regime based on the constitution of 1800. By becoming a member of the Philiki Etaireia, the secret society founded by Greek merchants resident in Russia and which played a decisive role in preparing the Greek revolution, he was actively involved in the wars for independence but also in political life. He kept a diary of all these events, in Italian, which continues until 1861. From 1822 until 1824 Teotochis served the Hellenic Government as Secretary of the Ministries of the Interior and of War, under the authority of Ioannis Kolettis. From 1824 until 1825 he was Minister of Justice. After the arrival of Kapodistrias in 1828, Teotochis became governor of Nafplion. He was prefect of the northern Sporades in 1831 and of Tinos in 1838, and from 1845 until 1862 he served as a senator<sup>21</sup>.

Napoleonic Italy was for the Greeks a privileged training-ground, not only political but also military, just as it was for the Italians. Some of the consuls of the Septinsular Republic in Italy were military officials, such as Georgios Palatinos of Cephalonia and Ludovicos Sotiris of Santa Maura. Both of them already had to their credit a significant career as agents in the service of Russia. However, in contrast to the army in the Italian Peninsula, where compulsory conscription was imposed, the Septinsular army continued to be salaried, formed largely by Greeks from the Ottoman-ruled mainland.

From Nicholas Charles Pappas's research we have acquired a profound knowledge of how important for the Greeks was their military recruiting in the Septinsular army<sup>22</sup>. The coordination of this army was in the hands of Russian

<sup>21</sup> Spyridon Teotochis, "Ο Ιωάννης Βαπτιστής Θεοτόκης και η δράσις του κατά την επανάσταση του 1821" ["Ioannis Vaptistis Teotochis and his activity during the revolution of 1821"], *Kerkyraika Cronica*, 11 (1965); Aristidis Sterghellis, "Το πολιτικό ημερολόγιο του Ιωάννη Βαπτιστή Θεοτόκη (1826-1864)" ["The political diary of Ioannis Vaptistis Theotochis (1826–1864)"], in *Anthi Chariton* (1998), p. 697-705.

<sup>22</sup> N. Ch. Pappas, *Greeks in Russian Military Service*.



officers, such as General Emanuil Papadopoulos<sup>23</sup>, evidently of Greek origin, who had the task of recruiting soldiers from among the armed irregulars of the Morea, Epirus and Roumeli, the so-called *Kleftes* and *Armatoli*, but also the refugees from Souli in Epirus, with the promise that everyone would be used not only in the defence of the Ionian State, but also in a possible war against the Turks for the liberation of Greece. However, despite the promises made by the Russians, most of those soldiers were transferred to Naples in 1805 to fight against Napoleon<sup>24</sup>.

Theodoros Kolokotronis, one of the protagonists of the Greek War of Independence, informs us of these facts in his memoirs. Although he refused to fight alongside the Russians against Napoleon in the Italian Peninsula, because, as he explains in his autobiography, he found no reason to do so, in 1806 he agreed to collaborate as a privateer, attacking French ships. A year later we find him defending Santa Maura against Ali Pasha of Tepeleni. There Kolokotronis and other Ottoman Greek soldiers had the opportunity to meet Kapodistrias, with whom they were destined to have a common future<sup>25</sup>.

Kapodistrias, Kolokotronis, Miaoulis, Botsaris, Boukouvalas, Katsantonis, Varnakiotis, but also Kleftes, Armatoloi, Souliots and Greek officers in the Russian army: here begins to come together the puzzle of the group of people involved not only in the wars of independence of Greece, but also in the first steps of the Greek State, officially founded with the London Protocol in 1830.

### The protagonists of the Greek War of Independence



<sup>23</sup> N. Kourkoumelis, “Εμμανουήλ Παπαδόπουλου”, p. 230.

<sup>24</sup> Theodoros Kolokotronis, *Ιστορία του Ελληνικού Έθνους από το 1770 μέχρι το 1836* [History of the Greek Nation from 1770 to 1836] (Athens, 1851); N. Ch. Pappas, *Greeks in Russian Military Service*, p. 221-225.

<sup>25</sup> Th. Kolokotronis, *Ιστορία του Ελληνικού Έθνους*, p. 15 onwards; see also in Sp. Loukatos, *Ιωάννης Καποδίστριας*, p. 79-92.

Let us return, however, to Kapodistrias of the Septinsular Republic. His central role in the Ionian State allowed him to become a prominent figure in Ionian foreign policy. Thus, he gained the experience in international diplomacy and the reputation for his skills which were to become his passport to a political career in more important positions. In our endeavour to discern the real dimensions of his personality, beyond the haze that surrounds him in a historiography dominated by sanctifying intentions, our research on the society in which he lived and the comparison of his behaviour with that of other of his contemporaries have shown that he could be seen as a typical representative of the more conservative nobility of the Ionian Islands in the transition from Venetian rule to Russian protection. This aristocratic class perceived Russian protection as their last chance to keep their privileges, as well as the only means to carry on the national question in their best interest. In the charismatic personality of Kapodistrias are identified elements of his Italian culture but also of the administrative tradition of Greek subjects of Venice during the closing decades of life of the *Most Serene Republic*. These aspects of a multidimensional personality capable of combining different and even conflicting political tendencies in a unique perspective, based on experience gained in international diplomacy from the position of Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Empire (1815–1822), are the keys to interpreting the policy followed by Kapodistrias as first Governor of the Hellenic State from 1828 until his assassination in 1831.

A typical example of his legislative activity in the Septinsular Republic, which reflects not only Kapodistrias' cultural background but also his ability to adapt to different realities, is the law on the organization of the Ionian merchant marine, passed in 1803<sup>26</sup>. This was based largely on the spirit of the Venetian merchant marine code of 1786<sup>27</sup>, the first steps of the implementation of which Kapodistrias had the opportunity to observe as a student in Padua and Venice from 1795 to 1797. His law, however, was adapted both to the political choices of the new state and its "protectors" vis-à-vis the realities of the Mediterranean in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, while including articles reflecting the continuation of basic policies of the Venetian Republic, such as the protection of maritime entrepreneurship from outside competition, pirate attacks, etc.<sup>28</sup>.

The organization of the mercantile marine, the establishment of a military fleet and the devising of solutions to the problem of piracy, for which Kapodistrias had collaborated with Andreas Miaoulis, were some of his first legislative commitments in the Greek State. This new law also embodies ideas expounded previously by Kapodistrias, as well as changes incurred due to the particular needs of the new state, to the elapse of time in comparison to the so different conditions at the beginning of the "century of revolutions", and certainly to his maturation, which strongly influenced his views.

<sup>26</sup> *Regolamento della Marina della Repubblica Jonia, con la tariffa dei diritti da percepirsi dai consoli, vice-consoli ed agenti della Repubblica* (Corfu, 1803).

<sup>27</sup> See in Giorgio Zordan, *Il codice per la Veneta mercantile marina* (Padova, 1981).

<sup>28</sup> *Regolamento della Marina Ionica*, p. 17.

After the adventures of the Napoleonic period, Kapodistrias, representing a small state such as the Septinsular Republic, with many limitations in its policy options, believed, as many Italians did in these days, that the founding of a nation state was a feasible goal. What Bonaparte proposed and implemented with regard to the structure of the state, especially in the imperial phase of his Italian period, was adopted in large part by Kapodistrias and his connationals in the Ionian Republic.

It is on the basis of these events in the Ionian Islands and the first experience of collective activity with a common perspective by persons such as those described above that it is contended that the Septinsular Republic was for Greeks a foretaste of national independence<sup>29</sup>. But it was exactly the Napoleonic and Septinsular experience that convinced Kapodistrias, and probably also some Italian politicians, that for the creation of a national state, beyond the common belief in the idea of the nation, beyond a small or large popular mobilization, a favourable international situation and of course sufficient material bases, essential prerequisite was the coincidence of interests of the fledglings state with those of some of the great powers of the time. What implications this assumption would have for the quality and the character of the states that were established by both the Greeks and the Italians would be shown by the future, and is perhaps revealed by the present.

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<sup>29</sup> Spyros Asdracas, “Επτάνησος Πολιτεία (1800–1807)” [“Septinsular Republic (1800–1807)”], in *Επτάνησος Πολιτεία (1800–1807)*, p. 6.