



HELLENISM CONTENDS WITH ISLAM AND THE CRUSADES

Professor Taiganides, Elissaios Paul
editor@greekethos.org

In 1977, at the middle of the inflationary spiral spawned by the **Arab oil embargo** of 1973, our houseguest for a week in Singapore was theology professor Anastasios Giannoulatos of the University of Athens. He is now **Archbishop Anastasios**, shepherding the survivors of 40-years of persecution Orthodox Christians in Muslim Albania. He had authored a textbook on **Islam**, a subject he began to teach. He gave me an autographed copy. I read it quickly and put it away; for **communism** was then our preoccupation after our withdrawal from Vietnam that spawned the “**boat people exodus**” to the shores of Singapore and Malaysia!

In 2001, right after **9/11**, I flew to Borneo, East Malaysia, to give the keynote address to a regional ecology conference where an **Imam** gave the invocation and a **Muslim** governor opened the symposium. To the dismay of many, I traveled with neither trepidation nor fear considering the global vigilance and my faith in **mainstream religion**. I was reading at the time novelist V. S. Naipaul of Trinidad who had written extensively on self-indulging clerics from Hindu gymnosophists to Muslim imams to Christian “**evangelicals**” exposing hypocrisies in their personal behavior, financial dealings, and political advocacies. I was reading his book about the Ayatollahs who presided over the repressive tactics and executions of political opponents of the 1979 revolution in Iran [see page 4], when it was announced that Naipaul was awarded the **Nobel Prize** for literature for **2001**.

Fanatic religious fundamentalists are challenging **secular democratic governance**; political hegemonies are curtailing **freedoms** to meet the challenge of religious terrorism. The atmosphere is in some way homologous to the period of the **Crusades**, 11th & 12th century, when **Pope Urban** of Rome promised absolution of sins for those who would march to retake **Jerusalem** from the **paynims** [*αγαρινοὺς*]. Religious zeal rather than **Platonic-Aristotelian** wisdom formulated political actions and even military expeditions.

IN THIS ISSUE:

You will find on an article on the tenets and a synoptic history of **Islam**, of which we know very little, yet there are as many Muslims as Christians. Muslims ruled India for 6 centuries, Spain for 9, Greece for 4. On page 8, there is a story on the unpredictable consequences when a **crusade** goes wrong, as most do. A fabulous depository of Greek epigrams found from Spain to India is at OSU, and its director has agreed to feed us with their wisdom. Lest we forget, we have a story about a pioneering leader of our ecclesia, and about pilgrimage to the Parthenon during Byzantium. See how poet Cavafy portrays the pain of ordinary people of **Byzantium** as the **Empire** is facing similar challenges 1000 years earlier.

In 1971, the passenger next to me on the flight from San Antonio to Dallas was a young, handsome air force Captain **Massoud** from **Afghanistan**. He had trained for a year to fly the fighter jets America was giving Afghanistan. Now he was on his way home. The flight was delayed. He was sad and agitated because he was afraid he might miss his connection to London and from there to **Kabul**. He missed his wife, he confessed, and lamented the fact that he lost much of his hair, blaming the low altitude of **Texas**. I helped him book a later flight, which, however, would make him miss his connection to Kabul. When I landed in Columbus 3 hours later, I heard on the radio that the Delta flight from Dallas to London, **the one Massoud had missed**, was **high jacked to Cuba**. Ever since, I began wondering about the fate of “**my lucky captain**” Massoud. With military coup d'états & counter coups, Russian invasion, civil wars, I lost track of him, but my interest in Afghanistan continued.

Afghanistan was a happy but poor country in the 1970s [see the movie *Caravans* with Anthony Quinn]. **Bactria**, as Afghanistan was known when **Alexander the Great** arrived 2300 years earlier, was a rich, fertile, fiercely independent land. The 20,000 gold pieces in cenotaphs excavated by **Greek-Russian** archaeologist V I **Sarianidi** [*Σαρριανιδης*] in the 1980s, which, miraculously survived the notorious Taliban “**cultural revolution**” [a la *Mao Zedong in China*], are a testimony to Asia's **Hellenic** hegemony of the **Greco-Bactrian** and **Indo-Greco** kingdoms that were ruled by Greeks up until the time of the **Greco-Roman** epoch. The **Kalash** people in the Hindu Kush

mountains of **Kafiristan** [*infidels land*], who use Hellenistic words, practice **polytheism**, cultivate grapes and drink wine, are the remnants of the Greek **Asian** legacy. Read about that legacy in this issue.

On **2001/9/9**, I noted the news of the assassination of **Massoud** by **Al-Qaeda** Arab operatives. I thought, for a moment, he was “*my lucky captain*”. It turned out to be **Ahmad Shah** Massoud, the Commander of the only active resistance to the Taliban in the 1990s; the American star of the **Jihadists** against the Russians in the 1980s. Handsome Massoud in his headgear in the style of the **Phalanx** hoplites of Alexander the Great had the look of a descendant of Greek King **Eukradides** of Πεντελεωνια [*Panjshir*] 2000 years earlier. Massoud’s removal was Osama bin Laden’s **gift** to the **Taliban** who were to pay the price of American retaliation after the **Al-Qaeda 9/11** monstrous act 2 days later. Their aim was to silence Massoud who, 4 months earlier in a speech in the European Parliament, had warned the West in general and USA in particular about Al-Qaeda plans for imminent attacks. CIA Director George Tenet was still analyzing Massoud’s prophecy as the Twin Towers crumbled to “**Ground Zero**”!

IN THE NEXT ISSUE: Fall of Constantinople, **1453**; Renaissance [*Αναγεννησης*], **1492**; Cenogenesis of Greece [*Ελλας*], **1821**.

