



Historical Figures . Benefactors

GREECE

KING PYRRHUS



When asked once who is the best of the known military commanders Antigonos replied “Pyrrhus, if he grows old”. Hannibal placed Pyrrhus first due to his experience and skills, Scipio second and himself third.

Pyrrhus the 1st (318 - 272 B.C.) was the king of the Molossoi, a Hellenic tribe that lived in Epirus, and one of the greatest leaders of the early Hellenistic period. He is considered an exquisite strategic mind, one of the brightest in the world’s strategy history. He is the only one to be compared, for his strategical abilities and his heroism, to Alexander the Great, to whom he was related.

His thirst for expansion led him to the famous campaigns against the Romans, though they did not have the results the great leader expected. He won the battles but his winning came with great losses for his army in South Italy and Sicily. Thus, his attempt was not enough to establish his supremacy in the new land and that is how we inherited the famous expression “a Pyrrhic victory”, namely a victory with so many losses that it feels more like a defeat.

Nevertheless, Pyrrhus had more than just ambitions for expansion. He also worked towards the prosperity of the cities of Epirus, he transferred the capital of the state

to Amvracia and built temples, theatres, monuments and statues. As the capital of his kingdom, which started from Epidamnos – today’s Durrës – and included Corfu and the entire Epirus, Amvracia flourished for decades.

Although his plans to conquer territories in Italy failed, Pyrrhus expanded his kingdom in Greece, thus becoming the kind of power that had to be taken into account. Nevertheless, after his death the short role played by Epirus in the Hellenistic history ended.



His real name was Michael Trivolis and he was born in Arta around 1470 A.D. The Trivolis were a family of intellectuals and at the age of 14 Michael was sent to Corfu in order to continue his education.

In 1492 he gets to Florence to go on with his studies under the guidance of the great Greek philologist of those times -Ioannis Laskaris. After a short stay at the Monastery of Saint Marco in Florence, Michael goes to the Monastery of Vatopaidi at Mount Athos.

As a simple monk he dedicates his time to studying the Christian writings in the rich library of the Monastery until 1515 when he goes to Moscow to translate the Holy Bible and the Books of the Holy Fathers from Greek into Russian.

In time he got acquainted with the most outstanding figures of the Russian intellectual elite, but at the same time he also made enemies.

In 1524 - 25 Maximus was arrested. He was forced to a "spectacular" trial where he was accused of heresy, witchcraft and plotting

MAXIMUS THE GREEK

against the Emperor and sentenced to confinement in a monastery as a heretic.

It was only in 1548 that he was set free and took refuge in the Monastery of the Holy Trinity outside Moscow, today's Zagorsk, where he lived till his last days in 1560.

In 1988 Maximos was officially declared a Saint by the Russian Church. In 1997 His Excellency the Bishop of Arta Ignatios the 4th was offered by the Patriarch of Moscow Alexios a piece of the Holy Remains of Saint Maximus. The inhabitants welcomed with great honours the relics of their beloved



Saint, which are nowadays kept inside the Holy Church which is built as a homage to his name in the Trigono district of Arta.

Thus Maximus the Greek - "the Educator of the Russians"- returned to the city where he was born.

SAINT THEODORA

Saint Theodora, the Patron of the city, was born sometime between 1212 and 1214 A.D. in Salonica. At the age of 17, she married Despot Michael the 2nd Angelos Komnenos and came to Arta as his Queen. She was a noble person who tried to get to know the city and its people from the very first moment and showed interest and sympathy to their problems.

Indicative of her kindness towards the locals, regardless of their religion, was the fact that she offered the Jewish community a piece of land for the building of the “Greka” Synagogue. The synagogue was built in front of the castle, where nowadays visitors can see the monument of the Holocaust.

Unfortunately, his duty called Michael away from his home, sometimes even for months. He would leave Theodora alone while he yielded to temptations. He even got to the point where, for the sake of another woman, he threw Theodora out of the palace while she was pregnant with their first child.

Theodora wandered here and there for some time until, a few months later, she gave birth to her son Nikiforos (meaning “the one who bears victory”). Meanwhile Michael regretted for his behaviour and started seeking Theodora, until he found her and brought her back to the palace. After the death of her husband and until her own

death in 1281 the Queen of Arta lived as a nun at the Convent of Saint George, which, after her being declared a Saint, honours her name.

Nowadays her relics are kept in a silver coffin inside the temple so that believers can get her blessing. The celebration of the Patron Saint Theodora on March 11th is an official holiday for the city. Tens of thousands of pilgrims from all over Greece flock to the Patron Saint’s temple to pay their respects to her relics which are taken around in a procession to the streets of the town for everybody to get her blessing.



Giannis Moralis was born in Arta on the 23rd of April 1916. He lived in Preveza until 1922 because his father worked there as a philologist, and in 1927 the whole family moves to Athens. His artistic inclination was obvious ever since his adolescence. In 1931 he succeeds in the exams of the Faculty of Fine Arts, he gets accepted and studies painting and engraving next to great artists of those times.

In 1936 he graduates from the Faculty of Fine Arts and goes to Rome and Paris, but in 1939 he returns to Greece because of WW2. In 1949 he participated to the foundation of the artistic group “Armos” together with

GIANNIS MORALIS

other Greek famous painters (Hatzikyriakos Ghikas, Tsarouchis, Nikolaou, Engonopoulos). In the 50s he started collaborating with the Artistic Theatre Karolos Koun and the National Theatre, while his first personal exhibition was realized as late as 1959.

His works include books illustrations, disks covers, sculptures, murals, theatre décor and costumes for the National Theatre and the corps de ballet of the Hellenic Choreodrama.

One of his most representative works is the decoration of the Hilton Hotel in Athens while some of his finest works can be found also at Athens Metro, Panepistimiou Station.

Giannis Moralis is considered as one of the



top figures of Greek art in the 20th century, a great teacher, painter and engraver who became the main representative of the 30s generation.

Arta honoured this great artist by naming the Public Art Gallery after him. The “Giannis Moralis” Art Gallery opened in December 2010 and is housed in the renovated building of the former Fire Station. It has two central halls, one for the permanent exhibition and one for the periodical ones.



KOSTAS KRYSTALLIS

Kostas Kroustallis was born in Syrrako, Epirus in 1868 where he lived until the age of 12. In 1880 he enrolled to Zosimaia School in Ioannina and in 1887 he published the poem “The Shadow of Hades” with references to the episodes of the Revolution in 1821. He was prosecuted for this reason by the Ottoman authorities and had to run to Athens as the Ottoman Court condemned him to exile in absentia.

In Athens he changed his name to Krystallis and started working in a printing shop while at the same times he published poems. His hard life caused him to get tuberculosis. He

moved to Corfu hoping that his health would improve there, but it worsened and he died on April 22, 1894 in Arta - where his sister lived.

His first poems have an epic style, but as time goes by he starts showing influences from folk songs and popular themes. Apart from poetry his passion was to collect historical and folklore material; customs and traditions, popular songs.

He satirizes Greek political habits, describes wedding traditions and offers detailed information about the clothing of those times. His prose has the style of the 1880 generation;

popular language, description of the lifestyle in rural areas, storytelling.

Kostas Krystallis, the “poet of the mountain and of the shepherds”, is not just the first who wrote using the popular language. He may not have lived long but it was enough for him to leave us examples of writings who prove the innate prose writer, a plethoric artist with a taste for descriptions and texts that keep the simplicity but also the wisdom of the popular language.



Giorgos Kotzioulas (1909 - 1956) was a poet, prose writer, playwright and critic, with an important contribution to the National Resistance. He was born in Platanoussa (Rapsista) in Epirus. He attended primary school there, secondary school at Ioannina and gymnasium in Arta.

At the age of 17 he started attending courses at the University of Athens, while at the same times he worked as a proof reader and translator for newspapers and magazines. His hard work, his poverty and shortages weakened him and caused him to get tuberculosis which gave him a hard time his whole life.

In 1938 he graduated and returned to his native town. He was part of the National Resistance and organized the artistic group of the 8th Division which he conducted for 3 years (1943 - 1945). In 1944 he founded a theatre company,

the "Popular Scene" with which he toured the free part of Epirus, thus creating a praiseworthy theatre in the mountains.

As a poet Kotzioulas stands out for his abundance of metric verse and his inspired rhymes. His prose writings are based on his own experience and show extreme interest. The same stands for his translations, with one of the most characteristic examples being Victor Hugo's "Les misérables".

After his death, family and friends collected his works. His "Complete works" were printed in three volumes. The first volume comprises the poems of the period before the war (1928 - 1942), the third volume the poems inspired by the National Resistance (1943 - 1956) and the second volume his prose.

GIORGOS KOTZIOULAS

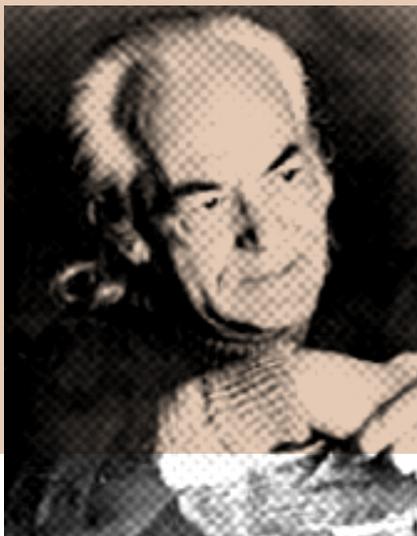
MICHALIS PERANTHIS

Born in Arta in 1917, Michalis Peranthis (aka Michalis Papadopoulos) was a poet, prose writer and critic, one of the best of the modern Greek literature.

He attended primary and secondary school in his native town and in 1934 he started the courses of the Law School at the University of Athens.

He published poems as early as 1933 in the newspapers “Students Print” and “Free Speech” in Arta and in 1935 he was awarded by the Epirus Association for collecting folklore material ever since he was a student. During his stay in Athens, he worked as a journalist, a director of various encyclopedias, and as an advisor over cultural affairs for the Government.

From 1949 he dedicated himself exclusively to literature. He wrote poems, readings, travel impressions, vignettes books, theatre and cinema reviews, historical and children’s novels, historical works, studies and anthologies. On the whole, Michalis Peranthis wrote more than forty books which, after being republished, go beyond seventy editions.





Nikolaos Skoufas was one of the founding fathers of Filiki Eteria, a brotherhood aiming at the liberation of Greece from the Ottoman Empire. He was born in 1779 in Koboti, Arta. The name Skoufas (Greek for cap) was a nickname because his previous job had been that of a cap maker in Arta.

In 1813 he moved to Odessa to take up commerce. There he met Athanasios Tsakalof and Emmanouil Xanthos. With these two he decided to found a brotherhood for the liberation of Greece.

Thus, the famous Filiki Eteria was founded in Odessa on the 14th of September 1814 and the three founders dedicated themselves to the preparations of the Revolution. Xanthos went to Constantinople to prepare the grounds for the initiation of the Greek expats to the brotherhood, while Skoufas and Tsakalof went to Moscow where they perfected the statute of the Filiki Eteria and tried to initiate the first members. At the beginning they had to deal with disbelief and denial as most people thought this attempt doomed to fail. The adherence though of Georgios Sekeris, the descendant of a wealthy family, for a moment seemed to turn the tables.

Tsakalof on the other hand, disappointed by the slow rhythm of the initiation process of the new members, suggested Skoufas to give up on the whole thing.

Skoufas thought wise to transfer the nucleus of the brotherhood to Constantinople believing that the great number of expats who also served at high positions would favour the preparations for the Revolution. Unfortunately, his poor health did not allow him to go on with his mission, since he died in 1818 in Constantinople.

His name was given to one of the four districts of the Prefecture of Arta, to one of the main streets in Arta (the building which housed his first business still stands), but also to one of the roads in the center of Athens, in Kolonaki.



NIKOLAOS SKOUFAS

MAKRIYIANNIS

Makriyiannis was one of the most famous figures of the Greek Revolution against the Ottoman Empire. He was born in 1797 in Avoriti, Dorida and his real surname was Triandafillou. During the Revolution people called him “Makriyiannis” (Greek for “tall John”) because he was tall and this nickname stuck with him throughout history.

In 1811 he came to Arta in order to work for one of the local officials. A few years later he takes up commerce and thanks to his diligence and zeal he becomes a wealthy merchant. His commercial activity in Arta lasted till 1820. That is when the army of the Sultan arrested him on the grounds of being Ali Pasha’s man.

He managed to escape though and followed

the general Gogos Bakolas. In 1820 he joins the brotherhood “Filiki Eteria”, gathers his first body of soldiers and goes to Athens where he won the Ottomans in numerous battles.

Disappointed though by the government and the dissensions among the Greeks, Makriyiannis leaves behind his military and political life. When Kapodistrias becomes Governor, Makriyiannis is named chief of the Executive Authority at Moria, a position that was taken away when he used his power to force Constitutional Regime upon the Governor. He was so set on his conviction about attaining real freedom by all means that he was accused of conspiracy against King Otto, got arrested, trialed and sentenced to death. His sentence was reduced gradually and finally he was set

free in 1854.

Beyond his military and political achievements, Makriyiannis also left an undying monument of morality, attitude, speech and content – his “Memorabilia”. He began writing them in 1829 in an attempt to teach things to the following generations and he continued till 1851 – that’s when the episodes in his life forced him to stop.

His writings did not arise much interest at first. Except for Palamas almost nobody understood its importance. Years passed until writers and critics discovered him and brought him to our attention.



Georgios Karaiskakis was a main figure of the Greek Revolution of 1821 against the Ottoman Empire. He was born in 1782 in Skoulikaria, Arta. His mother, after the death of her first husband, retired to a convent and that is how he got his nickname “the son of the nun”.

His childhood years were difficult because he had to make it on his own without the help of his parents. As a result he quarreled all the time and he was foul-mouthed and blasphemous. Ali Pasha imprisoned Karaiskakis due to his deeds in the area of Epirus. Nevertheless during his time in prison he got his preliminary education.

In 1819 he joined the Filiki Eteria and in 1820 he tried to start a revolution in the area of Vonitsa, without much success though. In December 1821 he became a high commander in the region of Agrafa, but a short while after he was accused of having secret deals with the Ottomans. He was found guilty of highest treason and he was deprived of his offices.

In 1825 he attacked Kütahi Pasha who was trying to siege Mesolonghi. After the fall of Mesolonghi he becomes chief commander of continental Greece and sets his army camp at Elefsina. In April 1827 he attempts the liberation of Athens from Kütahi Pasha. He got help from the armies in the Peloponnese and from philhellenes. During the attack he got shot in the back and died the next day.

Before he died he managed to speak out his will, leaving his weapons to his fellow fighters, and his most valuable assets-his daughters, in the care of the state. His last words were “I am dying now but you stay together to keep the country alive”. He was buried with honours in Salamina where, even today, in the Holy Church of Saint George there is a mural of this brave fighter among the saints.

GEORGIOS KARAIKAKIS





SERAFIM XENOPOULOS



Born in Constantinople, Serafeim Xenopoulos was ordained bishop of Arta in 1864. He was an important ecclesiastical figure of the Greek Church and enriched the spiritual life of Arta with his pastoral and literature works. It is worth mentioning the “Historical Essay of Arta and Preveza” where he describes in detail the history of these two regions and offers important information about the presence of the Ottomans and the Romaniote Jews before and after the liberation.

He worked with zeal to make the best of the Holy Metropolis and gave particular emphasis to the education of the young people in his region and the restoration of monasteries, such as the ruined Byzantine

Monastery of Panagia Brioni. During his time the peaceful liberation of Arta from the Ottomans took place (June 24, 1881).

The Bishop Serafeim Xenopoulos had his name connected with the opening of the tomb of Saint Theodora.

The Chronicle of the disposing of the Holy Remains mentions that, since many doubted the existence of the Saint’s relics, claiming that they had been stolen by the Franks the bishop of Arta ordered the opening of her tomb.

That is why, on the 20th of March 1873, once they chanted the prayer of the Saint, the priests together with the people, the notables of Arta and the ambassadors of Russia and of free Greece, opened the tomb and respectfully collected the holy remains of the Saint.

GOGOS BAKOLAS

Georgios “Gogos” Bakolas (1770-1826) was a chief commander from Skoulikaria, Arta. He had been appointed armatolos (local commander) of Radovizi and Tzoumerka by Ali Pasha. He was 51 when the Greek Revolution of 1821 started. He dedicated himself to this purpose and liberated many areas, together with the Akarnanes chief commanders.

His military career is characterized by many victories but also by an episode that negatively marked his fame then, and is still linked to his name. It has to do with the Battle of Peta (4th of July 1822) where he was blamed for the Greeks defeat and accused of treason because he had left a main hill unguarded and the Turks managed to use it as a passing.

Even Krystallis in his work “Shadows of Hades” refers to “the dishonourable treason of Gogos Bakolas” to demonstrate that some things are not forgiven even after someone’s death. Makriyiannis on the other hand, appreciates his courage and his morals “He was an honest man, a courageous patriot and a kind person...The country owes a lot to this brave man”.



Military figure, founder of the National Republican Greek League and politician, born in Arta in 1891. He took part in the Balkan Wars (1912-1913) and graduated from the Hellenic Army and NCO School in 1914. He was on the same side with Venizelos in Salonica during the National Schism.



In 1925 he was appointed commander of Athens’ garrison and in 1926 adjutant of the President of the Republic.

On the 9th of September 1941 he founded the Resistance Organisation – National Republican Greek League.

Following the initiative of the British General Headquarters of the Middle East he collaborated with the Greek Peoples Liberation Army, under the command of Aris Velouhiotis and English saboteurs to blow up the Gorgopotamos Bridge on the 25th of November 1942.

NAPOLEON ZERVAS

BENEFACTORS

ΙΣΡΑΗΛΙΤΙΚΗ ΚΟΙΝΟΤΗΤΑ

The Israeli community of our town is one of the oldest in Greece as the first settling of Jews in the area goes back to the 3rd century. At its best it numbered 2000 members, two synagogues – Greka and Poulieza, a Jewish school and a cemetery.

The Jews in Arta were known for their quiet life and patriotism and some of their family names were Iohanas, Sambas, Mionis, Mizan, Besos, Eliezer, Ghanis, Sambethai, Chatzis, Giulis, Sousis, Tsandik, Salom, Ieremias, Zakar, Aaron, etc.

Before the WW2 the community had 400 members but was decimated during the Holocaust and eventually perished in 1959. Nevertheless, the Jewish community as a final act of appreciation towards the city's people, offered the Association “Skoufas” the piece of land that belonged to the Synagogue Greka.

The Israeli Community of Arta used to be the center of the Romanite Jews till the 19th century, since its members were the ones who created other communities in cities nearby such as Preveza, Patras, Ioannina and Agrinio. Thus the Israeli Community of Arta was the “metropolis” of other Jewish communities in

the area. Each year, on March 24 the Municipality of Arta honours the Jewish Community with events organized in their memory and in the presence of Jews originating from Arta and nowadays live all over Greece and abroad.

BENJAMIN ZEEV BEN MATTATHIAS

The Israeli Community of Arta had its role in history through emblematic figures such as Rabbi Benjamin Zeev ben Mattathias. He was born in Arta at the end of the 15th century, or the beginning of the 16th, and was a member of the local Beth Din (the Jewish Religious Court). His beliefs on religious justice are expressed in his work “Benjamin Zeev”, containing 450 legal decisions and responsa. “Benjamin Zeev” is of particular historical importance, since it constitutes a source of valuable information about the life and traditions of the Jewish communities of Greece as well as of the Ottoman Empire generally.



THE ZARRAS BROTHERS

The Zarras brothers (George and Alexander) offered an estate of 32 acres to the city of Arta. In that estate, also on their expense, a hospital bearing their name (Zarreio), was built.

The foundation was laid on the 6th of the April 1951, in the presence of Alexander Zarras, who supervised the whole construction of the building.

PETROS GAROUFALIAS

He was a Greek lawyer, economist, diplomat, writer and politician, who became a member of the parliament and minister, and he founded a political party, too. He was born in Arta in 1901. Born in Arta in 1901, Petros Garoufalias was a great benefactor donating his library, an office in Athens, and his parental home in Arta to the “Skoufas” Association.

The building was named “Garoufalias Mansion” and nowadays houses the Historical Museum of “Skoufas” Association.



Vasilios Agrafiotis was a merchant and a great benefactor of “Skoufas” Association, since the 50% of the revenues from his estates, domains and stocks was donated to the Agrafiotia Awards, for distinguished graduates, artists and writers, who set an example for the local community and contribute to the improvement of the moral and the cultural level of the locals.

VASILIOS AGRAFIOTIS

CHRISTOS AND SAPPHO BARBASTATHIS

Sappho Barbastathi, in the memory of her late husband, the Mathematician Christos Barbastathis, created the Barbastathia Awards. They are given to the best students who participate in the annual competition of Mathematics, organized by “Skoufas” Association in collaboration with the branch of the Mathematic Company of Greece in Arta. The award ceremony takes place every year on March 25, the day of our National Holiday.



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Periferiaki Odos & Afxentiou



+30 26813 62101
+30 26813 62115 (DEP. OF TOURISM)
FAX: +30 26813 62253



dimos@arta.gr
gr_tourismou@arta.gr

www.discoverarta.gr

