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The Wreck of the *Mentor* on the Coast of the Island of Kythera and the Operation to Retrieve, Salvage and Transport the Parthenon Sculptures to London (1802–1805)

Introduction

The current study attempts to shed light on the actions, initiatives, and decisions of the inhabitants of Kythera Island to retrieve the Parthenon Marbles after the vessel *Mentor* was shipwrecked on September 5, 1802, off Kythera's Port Avlemonas (Port of San Nicolò). The *Mentor*, a vessel owned by the Earl of Elgin (Thomas Bruce, 7th Earl of Elgin and 11th Earl of Kincardine, 1766–1841), the British Ambassador in Constantinople from 1799 to 1803, was used to transport to England his collection of Parthenon marbles; the vessel's first scheduled stop was Malta.¹ As things stood, the Port of Avlemonas became the base of operations for the decisions and activities of the individuals involved in the task of retrieving the marbles up to the point the Parthenon Marbles were loaded onto vessels commissioned by the British Government that were first destined for Malta. The shipwreck itself, with its ensuing consequences and local, and international, repercussions, is incorporated in the historical framework of the period and its effects appear on the local, national and European level from the moment it occurred up to the end of the operation to retrieve the marbles from the depth of the waters of Avlemonas Bay (September 5/17, 1802–February 4/16, 1805)² and transport them to London.³

1. The *Mentor* carried seventeen cases in its hold, containing fourteen sections of the Parthenon frieze, four pieces of the frieze of the Temple of Athena Nike, and many other marbles, including an ancient throne, which had been given by the Archbishop of Athens to the parents of Mary Nisbet, Lord Elgin's wife (St. Clair 1998: 116).

2. On October 24, 1804, i.e., two years after the shipwreck, Giovanni Battista Lusieri was able to inform Hamilton that everything had been salvaged from the shipwreck.

3. The dates quoted for the facts and events sometimes follow the old and sometimes the new calendar, depending on the source of the historical information. Documents which were dispatched or received by British citizens are dated according to the popularly known 'New' or 'Gregorian' calendar, adopted by Pope Gregory XIII in 1582. Documents composed by and

This study examines the prevailing social and political reality (early 19th century) and the activities of the British Vice-Consulate on Kythera that were related to the shipwreck; the operation's main co-ordinator was the Vice-Consul of Great Britain, Emmanuel Kaloutsis. Based on the intrinsic social and political dynamic of the Kytheran community, a large portion of this current historical approach is linked to the role and intervention of British and, in general, European diplomacy and its influence on the region's various inhabitants and institutional vehicles. An extended version of this study will include archival material concerning the various local activities and the initiatives that took place after the shipwreck and until the conclusion of the salvage operation. The originality of the study is located in its critical approach to these initiatives, to the actions and decisions of the local elements of the island and other Greek territories, which occurred during the lengthy process of salvaging the marbles, accompanied by the intervention of the consular authorities of Great Britain on Kythera, many other Greek territories, and in Constantinople.

1. *Chronology of Events—Conditions at the Shipwreck Site—Immediate Decisions and Desperate Actions to Save the Cargo—Operation to Retrieve the Marbles from inside the Sunken “Mentor” and the Sea-bottom.*

Lord Elgin's private vessel the *Mentor* sailed from Piraeus⁴ on September 15, 1802, with a total of twelve men aboard, crew and passengers.⁵ It transported sixteen boxes which contained Elgin's collection of antiquities. Its first port of call was

exchanged among persons within the broader Greek sphere (elected dignitaries, community elders, parish priests, etc.) are dated according to the Julian calendar. At the time of the shipwreck, there was a 12-day difference between the two calendars.

4. Details regarding the conditions under which the shipwreck took place are in the A.I.E.E.E. (Ἀρχεῖο τῆς Ἱστορικῆς καὶ Ἐθνολογικῆς Ἑταιρείας τῆς Ἑλλάδος [Archive of the Historical and Ethnological Society of Greece]), N. S. Kaloutsis, No. 6960, Kythera September 18, 1802.

5. These passengers are mentioned in the deposition provided by Captain William Heglen of the *Mentor*: the Ambassador's secretary, William Richard Hamilton, Captain William Leake, Lieutenant John Squire, three servants and a sailor named Ross (A.I.E.E.E. (n. 4 above), N. S. Kaloutsis, no. 6960, Kythera September 18, 1802). After the shipwreck, Leake and Squire went to Corfu and from there returned to England. Hamilton remained on Kythera, overseeing the salvage of the antiquities until December 1802; he returned in September 1803 in order to expedite the salvage of the sunken antiquities. In March 1804, he returned home via Vienna (Gennadios 1930: 28–29).

Malta. Apart from the crewmen, the ship carried passengers who were returning to England: these were Lord Elgin's secretary, William Richard Hamilton,⁶ John Squire a captain in the artillery, and the topographer and archaeologist William M. Leake. A favourable wind on the next day, September 16 at 18:00 brought them to Cape Matapan (Tenaro). A strong easterly wind forced them to spend the night there. On the morning of September 17, they set off with a mild north-easterly wind. However, the moment the captain realized that his ship was taking water, he and the crew decided to make for harbour on the nearest Peloponnesian coast. However, because neither Captain William Heglen,⁷ nor Manolis Malis, his pilot from the Isle of Melos, had any knowledge or experience of the Peloponnesian coast, they decided that the safest solution was to seek port on Kythera.⁸

On a stormy sea, they reached the shores of Cape Avlemonas on September 17 at 14:00. They cast two anchors, which, however, failed to catch bottom. After this attempt, they performed various manoeuvres in order to avoid striking the rocks on the coast. The ship's prow crashed violently onto the rocks of Port Avlemonas (San Nicolò), and plummeted into the depths of the sea. The shipwrecked men were gathered up by the crew of the vessel *Anikitos*, sailing under the Austrian flag, and which, at that time, was anchored off the port's coast. Along with all other personal items, we know that Captain Giovanne Biscucia's licence and diary were lost, along with all the individual health certificates the British Consulate in Athens had issued. However, while their travel documents were necessary to obtain passage off Kythera, their loss made it even harder to travel to any foreign country. The same was true for all the ship's passengers. Then only items salvaged from the bottom of the sea were some oars off the ship's boat and the top-gallant mast with its sails. Hamilton, writing to Emmanuel Kaloutsis from Zante on March

6. William Richard Hamilton had been given the overall responsibility for the operations and had been asked to oversee the loading of the cargo onto the *Mentor*. His instructions from Elgin were to load onto the ship everything the captain could be persuaded to transport without endangering its safety and, if possible, to hire additional ships to remove the marbles from Ottoman jurisdiction as swiftly as possible (St. Clair: 116).

7. It is worth mentioning that in Piraeus, before the *Mentor*'s departure, Elgin had ordered the captain to enlarge the hatches to permit the loading of the larger sculptures, the pediment figures. Heglen, despite Elgin's insistence, refused on safety grounds. Had he complied, those sculptures would have been abandoned for ever on the sea-bottom, since their retrieval would have been impossible (St. Clair: 137–138).

8. The Kytheran chronicler, Grigorios Logothetis, included the event in his Chronicle: "*because people were asleep, it struck upon a shoal and broke open, the marbles in their cases all went to the bottom of the sea, only the men escaped, naked*" (Stathis 1923: 357).

4, 1803, commented on the difficulties he faced travelling without his travel documents, saying that after the loss of all his papers on Greek soil, it was impossible for him to return without making some efforts to replace them, since all their efforts to retrieve them had been unsuccessful.⁹ Hamilton, regardless of where he might physically be, whether off or on the island, during the extended period of the operation to retrieve the marbles, considered the problem presented by the shipwreck on Kythera one of his priorities, and therefore, during the critical periods of the efforts to retrieve the marbles he was on Kythera with Kaloutsis, coordinating, until the end, the cargo retrieval operation.

On the day of the shipwreck, Emmanuel Kaloutsis, after being informed by Hamilton of the event, composed letters to the *proestoi* (elected dignitaries) both in Chora and in the countryside, to the vice-consuls of the other countries on the island, and to the leadership of the Political Administration of Kythera.¹⁰ The amount of time required for Kaloutsis to travel, as quickly as possible, to Port Avlemonas, the site of the shipwreck, is noteworthy (“...*I left Chora at two-thirty in the morning, heading towards Avlemonas, accompanied by two individuals and arrived there the following morning of 18/9–new calendar*”¹¹). The port of Avlemonas was approximately 20 kilometres from Chora, given conditions at the time. The road leading to it was not particularly accessible. Chora was primarily served by the Port of Kapsali (its harbour), while Avlemonas possessed garrison headquarters, and, because of the port, maintained a customs and quarantine station, operating at a substandard level. It also had a church (“monastery”), honouring Saint Dionysios, the patron saint of sailors, which resonated deeply with the religious sentiments of the island’s inhabitants.¹² Apart from a few permanent residences, the port had mostly storage facilities serving the requirements of the port, the fishing industry, the transportation of merchandise, and the storage needs of the necessary tools and machinery, the “*argasteria*” that belonged to the local government or to private individuals residing in the nearby villages (Metata, Frilingianika), known as “*argasteriaraeoi*”.¹³ It lacked, however, the conditions to provide long-term for anyone not residing permanently in the community. The

9. M. K. Petrocheilos, “Τὸ Ἀρχεῖον Καλοῦτσῆ”, *Ionios Echo*, pp. 91–92 (Letter from Hamilton to E. Kaloutsis, March 4, 1803).

10. A.I.E.E.E. (n. 4 above), N. S. Kaloutsis, no. 6957, Kythera September 5, 1802.

11. This is recorded in Italian in Kaloutsis’ hand on a copy of his letter to the island *proestoi*, *ibid.*

12. Leontsinis 1987: 365 ff.

13. *Ibid.*: 397–398.

great distance dividing the community from the rural villages, as well as from Chora and Potamos (a small urban centre on the north side of the island), greatly hampered the work of the operation.

With these letters, Kaloutsis informed the governmental and diplomatic authorities of the island about the shipwreck, conveying the information he chose to make public, while simultaneously requesting that all necessary and legal measures be taken to raise the ship, ensure the safety, continued security, satisfactory treatment and care of the shipwreck victims, and also recover any portion of the cargo the sea might wash up on the shore. He stated he was leaving immediately for the site of the shipwreck, while underlining that should anything go amiss, it would be extremely damaging to the island and that even the most extreme penalty should be imposed on anyone acting in an unethical or illegal manner in anything relating to the shipwreck. The island's political administration, through the *proestoi*, responded to Kaloutsis as regards the course of action they initiated to handle the problem, informing him that they had notified the inhabitants of the event as well as of the potential consequences should anything go wrong. *"...according to our duty, we did not neglect to immediately make the necessary and required public proclamation to the inhabitants so that no one should dare, if by chance the slightest thing should be cast from this brig into the surrounding waters and rocks, either seize or lose it, upon penalty of death..."*¹⁴

As regards the conditions of the shipwreck, Captain Heglen of the *Mentor* made an extremely revealing deposition before Vice-Consul Kaloutsis.¹⁵ This deposition, made on the second day after the shipwreck at Avlemonas, revealed to Kaloutsis the nature of the cargo. The captain described it as "cases of ancient marbles". This is what Elgin, in his first letter of October 25, 1802, to Kaloutsis (which, due to the distance involved, the latter received some forty-eight days later) refers to as "rocks" of no value to third parties. Moreover, no reference was made to the other objects comprising the ship's cargo.¹⁶ The operation to retrieve the cargo, concentrated primarily on Elgin's collection, while it appears—something we will deal with later—that no list of the remaining cargo existed, or evidently, was officially declared or recorded anywhere. The text of the inquiry proceeding refers exclusively to a collection of "sixteen boxes of marbles". The measures Kaloutsis

14. A.I.E.E.E. (n. 4 above), N. S. Kaloutsis, no. 6959, Kythera September 6, 1802.

15. Ibid. no. 6960, Kythera September 18, 1802.

16. Ibid. no. 6969, Kythera October 13/25, 1802.

took to deal with the problem of the shipwreck were, from day one, based on orders from Hamilton and Leake.

Elgin, in his letter from Constantinople, forwarded to Kaloutsis through the offices of the British Consul of Athens, his friend and trusted professional collaborator, Spyridon Logothetis-Chomatianos, gave the Vice-Consul instructions and expressed his great worry regarding the potential loss of the cargo. On November 18, the letter was presented to him in person on Kythera, by Petros Gavalas, a trusted ally. Gavalas informed Kaloutsis that he had been appointed by Elgin to send back to him in Constantinople, at regular intervals, progress reports on the cargo retrieval and salvage operation. He also informed him he would obey any orders they gave requiring his help on the project. Specifically, Elgin introduced Gavalas as the person to request assistance from, should any need present itself on the site of the shipwreck.¹⁷ Kaloutsis, naturally, had already, on his own initiative and before receiving Elgin's letter, hastened to notify by "public declaration" all the island residents of the shipwreck.¹⁸

In Chora, the *proestoi*'s reaction was immediate and administratively coherent. From the first moment, the Vice-Consul of Great Britain became a central figure in the administration of the operation. One day after the shipwreck,¹⁹ the *proestoi* (Vrettos Prineas, Petros Masselos, Panagiotis Kourmoulis, Pavlos Kassimatis, Theodoris Aronis, Panagiotis Samios, and Georgis Karydis) notified Kaloutsis of their actions. Their announcement contained instructions to the inhabitants, requiring them to attend to safely lodging and feeding the shipwreck victims on Kythera, to securely preserving any items they retrieved, and to sending a military detachment to the location of the shipwreck.²⁰ The consular authorities of all the other nations on the island were equally willing to contribute in any means and manner possible. On September 20, three days after the shipwreck, Hamilton signed a contract²¹ on Kythera with Gioanne Biscucia²² and "Gioanne, son of Dimitris",²³ defining their responsibilities as regards the raising of the *Mentor*.

17. Ibid. no. 6960, Kythera October 13/25, 1802.

18. Ibid. no. 6958, Kythera September 8, 1802.

19. On September 6 (old calendar).

20. A.I.E.E.E. (n. 4 above), N. S. Kaloutsis, no. 6959, Kythera September 6, 1802.

21. Ibid. no. 6961, Kythera September 20, 1802.

22. Captain of the *Anikitos*, a vessel under Austrian flag, which played a leading role in the recovery of the shipwreck victims.

23. Captain of the ship *O Aghios Nikolaos*, under Russian flag. His surname is unknown.

Gioanne Biscucia, the captain of the Austrian vessel *Anikitos*, had played a leading role in collecting and rescuing the *Mentor*'s shipwreck victims. Leake and Squire served as witnesses to the signing of the project contract, while copies of the contract were certified by Emmanuel Kaloutsis' signature and consular stamp.

The Kytheran Ioannis Tzannes, son of Manolis Klironomos, was sent to Nauplion from Kythera with referral letters from Hamilton to retain divers, after consulting with local consular authorities. While returning to Hydra, Tzannes engaged two divers from Kalymnos, with whom he made certain financial and other arrangements regarding the responsibilities they would assume on Kythera as regards the cargo's recovery.²⁴ The contracts,²⁵ signed on Kythera on October 8 (New Calendar) between Hamilton and five, ultimately, Kalymnian divers²⁶ to recover the *Mentor*'s cargo proved decisive. The agreed upon compensation was exceptionally high, apparently due to the Kalymnian divers' great experience in similar circumstances. It was set at 7,000 *grossi*, while a list of the items which needed to be retrieved was put together, with one additional term, added at the very end of the main body of the agreement.

This provision specified that should any other objects be retrieved from the seabed, they would be delivered to Hamilton and would belong to him. For this provision to have been included in the contract, it must have been particularly important to all interested parties. The greater part of the operation centred, at least according to what the parties chose to make public, on the Parthenon Marbles, which were exclusively Elgin's concern. The brief statement ("*...should other objects be discovered, they will, in any case, belong to Mr. Hamilton*") protected the rights of the British passengers, since, as I will mention below, other items, exceptional examples of the sculptor's art, were recovered, which were not listed as part of the Elgin collection. These were not entered in any manifest and it was never discovered whether they had been loaded onto the ship in Athens, or whether, which is almost impossible, they were discovered by chance and were not linked to the shipwreck on the seabed of Avlemonas Bay. Regardless, the information we are given is that they were retrieved after the end of the Parthenon Marbles salvage operation.

Kaloutsis sought to manage the matter discreetly, keeping both Elgin and

24. A.I.E.E.E. (n. 4 above), N. S. Kaloutsis, no. 6964.

25. Ibid. no. 6965, Kythera October 8, 1802.

26. The names of the divers were: M. Papailis, Michael Sklapas, Yannis Kourtis, M. Kathopoulis, and D. Katzavis.

Hamilton informed and ensuring that the means existed to send the objects safely by sea to London, where Hamilton would receive them. The contract signed with the divers catalogued the Parthenon's marble sculptures which were retrieved from the seabed. They had been included on the list put together in Athens, which was not recovered. The list that was put together on Avlemonas included these sixteen boxes. Mention of these same boxes is always included, wherever appropriate, every time a contract was signed with the divers or other parties. The list of items that was released, as identified and recorded in the first contract, is as follows: *"sixteen cases containing marbles, one marble seat [this was the throne of the 'Prytanis of Athens', an identification they evidently did not want recorded], and one case with tables, one case of white wood with the inscription 'L.E.' that contained cords and ropes, two twelve-pound cannons, twelve cases with various objects, one horse's saddle, eight spars, one black valise, one black case, another trunk of the captain, the ship's munitions (rifles, etc.), four cast cannons located on the bridge of the vessel, one iron stove, one other seven and one half hundredweights, another weighing less than one, sails for the mast, eight skiffs tied at the stern of the vessel"*.²⁷ Regarding the rest of the marbles retrieved from the seabed, apart from the Throne of the Prytanis (*"a marble seat"*), they were never recorded in any contract. The phrase employed in the contract and its attached list was as follows: *"...should other objects be discovered, they will, in any case, belong to Mr. Hamilton"*.²⁸

The day after the signing of the first contract, Ioannis Mormoris, the secretary of the Civil Administration of Kythera, informed Kaloutsis of the initial developments in the effort to retrieve the marbles.²⁹ On October 10, a new contract³⁰ was drafted and signed between Hamilton and two other Kalymnian divers, whom Elgin's secretary promised 1,500 *grossi* more,³¹ relative to the original contract, under the condition that they retrieve the requisite objects from the sea. Should the outcome be unsuccessful, they would not be entitled to a fee. The agreement expected all seven Kalymnian divers to coordinate their efforts and collaborate, not only amongst themselves, but also with Hamilton and Kaloutsis, the parties responsible for the general coordination of the enterprise. Nevertheless,

27. Ibid. no. 6965, Kythera October 8, 1802.

28. Ibid.

29. Ibid. no. 6967, Kythera October 9, 1802.

30. Ibid. no. 6968, Kythera October 10, 1802.

31. From what was agreed in the previous contract of October 8, 1802 (document 6965).

on October 16, Hamilton and the divers signed a new contract. Under its terms, it was agreed that the divers' remuneration would depend each time upon the boxes retrieved from the sea.³² Once Kaloutsis received Elgin's letter,³³ the pace of the efforts to salvage the cargo intensified. Contracts began multiplying. On November 3, a contract was signed³⁴ between Hamilton and Panagiotis Andridakis of Spetses, which documented an agreement by which Andridakis and his boat would provide all possible assistance to the seven Kalymnian divers. Andridakis had offered his services for ten days only, and was paid 450 *grossi*. His contract was cancelled and he was let go on December 14, 1802.³⁵ On December 18, a contract³⁶ signed between Hamilton and the Kalymnian divers suspended the retrieval operations because of the winter season, while the divers were paid an additional 1,535 *grossi*, since they had salvaged one fourth of the cargo.

Elgin hastened to Kythera on February 4, 1803 (New Calendar), and from his vessel, the *Diana*, moored in Cape Avlemonas, he sent two letters to Emmanuel Kaloutsis. In the first, he thanked him extensively³⁷ for his assiduous efforts to salvage the boxes, while in the other, he requested that Kaloutsis make no further attempts to retrieve the cargo of the *Mentor*, pending new instructions from him.³⁸ He remained only for a short single-day period in port, without disembarking and visiting the settlement. He received Kaloutsis for a short time on the boat and spoke with him. The ship-owner, Bazilio di Antonio Manochini, was called from Spetses to assume control of the effort to raise the cargo. Elgin appointed Manochini Vice-Consul of Great Britain in Spetses, so that he might be of service in the effort to raise the shipwreck, on October 29, 1802, just four days after Elgin learned of the event, evidently because he had agreed to be of assistance in handling the problem of salvaging the marbles.³⁹ On February 3, he signed a contract to assume responsibility and head the effort to raise the vessel. Immediately after the contract was signed, Manochini left for Kythera, arriving on February 11, and oversaw the coordination of the start of the project, which winter soon interrupted.⁴⁰ Work

32. A.I.E.E.E. (n. 4 above), N. S. Kaloutsis, no. 6970, Kythera October 16, 1802.

33. Ibid. no. 6969, Kythera October 13/25, 1802.

34. Ibid. no. 6972, Kythera November 3, 1802.

35. Ibid. no. 6985, Kythera December 14, 1802.

36. Ibid. no. 6984, Kythera December 18, 1802.

37. A.I.E.E.E. (n. 4 above), N. S. Kaloutsis, no. 6989, Kythera February 4, 1803.

38. Ibid. no. 6990, Kythera February 4, 1803.

39. Ibid. no. 19866, Constantinople October 29, 1802.

40. Ibid. no. 19889, Kythera February 12, 1803 (new calendar).

began again in September 1803,⁴¹ and by December of the same year eleven boxes had been retrieved, while one box and the throne of the “Prytanis of Athens” had yet to be located (the others had been located on the sea-bottom, but had yet to be retrieved). In the list given to the Kalymnian divers when their contract was signed, the Throne of the Prytanis was listed as “*one marble seat*”. The subsequent winter interrupted the work once again. The divers were recalled to the retrieval operation in April 1804. On June 9, 1804, the divers located and retrieved the sixteenth and final case from the sea-bottom. In that same year, the Throne of the Prytanis was also retrieved. The cases remained on the shore of Avlemonas, covered with seaweed, brush, and large rocks to shelter them from winter and the rays of the sun, under stringent constant guard, assigned to trusted collaborators held in high regard by Kaloutsis and the local administration. On February 16, 1805, the captain of the British vessel *Lady Shaw Stewart* collected the last boxes retrieved from the wreck of the *Mentor*.⁴² The loading in Port Avlemonas on February 16, 1805, of the Elgin collection’s final boxes containing the Parthenon Sculptures onto a vessel bound first for Malta was chronicled in the following summary:

“...Mr. George Parry of London, Captain of the British Royal transport number 99, called the *Lady Shaw Stewart*, received from Emmanuel Kaloutsis, Vice-Consul of Great Britain on that island, and loaded onto the same vessel, which was commissioned for precisely this purpose by Alexander Ball, Commander of Malta, the following items, which were salvaged by the aforementioned consul and belong to His Excellency the Earl of Elgin, for transport to the aforementioned island, according to his orders, accompanied by the British Royal vessel *Il Renard*, and for delivery to the aforementioned commander, agent and proxy of the Earl of Elgin”.⁴³

41. Ibid. no. 6991, Kythera September 20, 1803 (new contract between Kaloutsis and the divers).

42. Ibid. no. 6998, Kythera February 16, 1805.

43. Ibid.

2. *Elgin and his Collaborators Are Anxious—Kythera, the British and other Consular Authorities of the Septinsular Republic and the Broader Territories Are Alarmed*

On October 25, 1802, Elgin, as previously noted, dispatched Petros Gavalas to Kythera, with a letter to Kaloutsis, informing him of the contents of the *Mentor*'s cargo. Elgin was confident that William Hamilton and William Leake were capable of developing a relationship with the Kytheran Vice-Consul. Nevertheless, he considered it necessary to communicate with Kaloutsis in regard to the incident and inform him personally how significant the potential loss of this particular cargo was to him. In any case, given the general impression we have regarding this matter, he also intended to avert any attempt to overestimate the value of the objects on the part of the inhabitants of the island and the surrounding areas. Therefore, the text of Elgin's first letter to Kaloutsis was strictly conventional and centred tactfully on the contents of the cargo. This extract of his letter to Kaloutsis is characteristic:

*"A report having reached me, that my brig the Mentor has foundered in attempting to enter the port of Cerigo. I hardly request that you will afford every possible assistance for the recovery of the said relief and her cargo. She had on board a quantity of boxes with stones at no value of themselves, but of great consequence for me to rescue".*⁴⁴

The Vice-Consul and local authorities took immediate action, which was sanctioned by the local central government that, in any case, operated in the name of the Septinsular Republic, Kythera being one of its administrative districts. It officially announced that out of solidarity, in order to assist the operation to retrieve the marbles, it would contribute via any means necessary. From the day the shipwreck occurred, Emmanuel Kaloutsis was certain the Septinsular Republic would react in this way, and therefore lost no time. Notifying the central administration on Corfu took as many days as it did to receive approval back on Kythera. Kaloutsis took the initiative and included in his first actions a written appeal to the local authorities on Kythera (*proestoi*), whereby he requested their assistance in the matter that had arisen. He appealed to the inhabitants of Kythera, underlining their interests and calling upon them to make available any assistance the Septinsular Republic required of them all. The contribution of Kythera's community

44. Ibid. no. 6969, Kythera October 13/25, 1802.

self-government proved to be of decisive importance to the retrieval, salvage and safekeeping of the marbles on Kythera. Many of the island's *proestoi* were also extremely eager to render effective assistance.

3. *Repercussions of the Shipwreck—Central and Secondary Characters in the Context of the Operation to Retrieve, Salvage, and Safeguard the Parthenon Marbles.*

The political circumstances in the Septinsular Republic, the first constitutional independent Greek state (1800–1807), appear from the very beginning to ally themselves with the campaign undertaken in Port Avlemonas on Kythera to salvage the cargo of the shipwreck. In the state's name, given its anticipated approval, local political authorities took various initiatives and took immediate measures. The endorsement of the political decision by the Corfu government was obviously considered a given, since it took a great deal of time for the news to arrive on Corfu, and for the government's reply to come back, because of the great distance between Corfu and Kythera. The effort to retrieve the cargo began immediately. Without informing the inhabitants of Kythera and the central political administration of the actual contents of the shipwrecked vessel, local authorities immediately mobilized on their own initiative. The person who moved the strings of the operation, as we have already demonstrated, was Emmanuel Kaloutsis, since it was from him that Hamilton and Leake sought help.

Since Elgin's letter to Kaloutsis was received forty-eight days later, the regional authorities had not been informed by the people accompanying the sunken cargo of its actual contents. Kaloutsis kept secret the contents of the deposition the Captain made before him regarding this matter. We also saw that in this first letter to Kaloutsis, Elgin described the *Mentor's* cargo as a quantity of boxes with stones of no value to a third party, but of great consequence to him.⁴⁵ However, based on the captain's deposition, Kaloutsis had, from day one, learned of the "*boxes containing marbles*". Antonios Miliarakis would interpret Elgin's phrasing as due to fear, either of neglect on the part of local authorities, or that one of the items might be stolen, because as he himself pointed out "*during that period, everyone had learned that antiquities also had tangible value, and that they were in great demand*".⁴⁶ However, it is possible to provide an additional, broader

45. Ibid. no. 6969, Kythera October 13/25, 1802.

46. Miliarakis 1888: 717.

interpretation to the secrecy maintained regarding the cargo's actual objects. The sunken cargo was Elgin's personal property, even including the "stone objects" of his letter. During that period, the residents of Kythera valued classical Greek antiquity, as is revealed by references in the texts of their proclamations, their public political speeches, private and public correspondence, etc., especially since their occupation by the French Republic (1797 et seq.). They even, as we learn from Hamilton and Leake, attended in Chora the classes and lectures that the scholar and politician Theodoros Stathis-Birbilios gave before his students, admiring his dexterity in using the Greek language, as well as in teaching and interpreting the texts of ancient Greek writers.⁴⁷

What is not documented is whether the concept of "trading in illicit antiquities" in the Greek territories, as Miliarakis understands it in his own period (in 1888 he published an article in *Estia Magazine*), was something the inhabitants of Kythera and other regions knew or even understood during the period of the shipwreck. Miliarakis' unsubstantiated position is definitely extreme when he remarks that "*the English government had agents in all the cities of Greece, either English or Greek, working together in some type of coalition, who apart from their political activities, sought to collect antiquities*".⁴⁸ This will be discussed later and concerns the rhetoric that developed regarding the extent of the illicit antiquities trade that appeared in Elgin's era and resulted in the seizure of the specific marbles of the Parthenon. Nevertheless, on a broader scale, there were many who knew enough about "collectors" of ancient items and in general "*collectors of the remnants of glorious antiquity*" and other monuments and works of art. If Elgin feared the cargo containing the Parthenon Marbles was in danger of being stolen because of the potentially great value the marbles had for the local inhabitants of the island as well, he would not have called them "stones" because it would have aroused curiosity.

Elgin did indeed assign a rather nominal definition to the contents of the cargo (stones/marbles), but what he wanted to bring to the attention of the local authorities and to anyone he corresponded with directly, who might be involved in handling the aftermath of the shipwreck, was that the cargo was exceedingly valuable to him personally, regardless of how each recipient of the letter would interpret the meaning of his letter and the contents of the cargo. As long as the retrieval operation continued, no source used any phrasing resembling "Parthenon

47. Leontsinis 1987: 131 ff. and 1995: 107 ff.

48. Miliarakis 1888: 747.

sculptures” or “Parthenon marbles” or anything similar. Only the *Monitore Set-tinsulare* newspaper, when it announced the salvage of the *Mentor*’s entire cargo (December 8, 1804), and acknowledged Kaloutsis’ contribution to the successful completion of the efforts, printed the news as follows:

“...*The insurmountable difficulties did not discourage Mr. Kaloutsis, who finally, after three years, with the assistance of the renowned Kalymnian divers, finally succeeded in retrieving all ‘the cases’, as well as the throne of the Prytanis. Through this difficult and interesting project he proved useful, not only to the illustrious Englishman, but also to all Fine Arts enthusiasts, who could not have remained insensible to the loss of the most precious remnants of glorious Antiquity*”.⁴⁹

The entire mobilization and salvage campaign strategy was centred on the possessor-owner of the shipwrecked items. I do not think that any references to the Parthenon Marbles were deliberately suppressed, since during the retrieval operation the references to “marbles”⁵⁰ would begin, although they were never identified as “Parthenon marbles-sculptures”. Certain collectors of antiquities, whether on or off the island when this shipwreck occurred, were publicly very open and honest about their activities in this field. Local collectors of that period considered their rare finds to be more essential to other more illustrious, according to them, third parties, who were greatly, as they said, interested in these finds. These collectors readily offered them the items as gifts, undoubtedly seeking personal favours. Nevertheless, there does not appear to have been any major tendency to take financial advantage, whether on the part of the ancient artefacts collectors, or of those who gave them to third parties. The concept and subject of the trade in illegal artefacts acquired its current dimension in later years. Miliarakis, over eighty years (1888) after the shipwreck, in his article in the *Estia* is operating on the basis of a historic anachronism.⁵¹ He viewed the issue from a distance, subjectively and idealistically. He influenced, to a great degree, historical researchers and writers within the dimensions of what already was the positivist concept and methodology dominating 19th century historiography. The single-sided direction the “trade in illicit antiquities” followed during his era decisively

49. Published in full in the *Notizie del Mondo* newspaper, No. 8, January 29, 1805.

50. A.I.E.E.E. (n. 4 above), N. S. Kaloutsis, no. 6998, Kythera February 16, 1805: “*Twelve cases secured and well fitted containing ancient Marbles of Athens*”.

51. Miliarakis 1888: passim.

influenced various persons, whose romantic convictions demanded the return of the marbles.⁵² Ever since, there has existed a continuing rhetoric of condemnation towards Elgin's "seizing" of the marbles as well as a "national" demand for the Parthenon Marbles to be returned to their country of ownership from which they were taken. In the event in question, however, at the centre of the initiatives and actions of the local political authority, the island residents, and of the British and other diplomatic authorities, was the desire to take every necessary initiative to salvage, after the shipwreck of Elgin's private vessel, its sixteen boxes (cases), containing "a quantity of cases with stones of no value of themselves but of great consequence for me to be rescued".⁵³

Kaloutsis as the coordinator and "suzerain" of the island's political authority, at least in the matter of the management of this crucial event, devoted himself to the task, without ever revealing the actual designation of the objects the "cases" contained. From the moment of the shipwreck up until the loading of the Parthenon Marbles onto the vessel destined for Malta, the marbles were never referred to in any manner that revealed their true significance. The rhetoric employed in the entire affair, during the critical period of salvaging and safeguarding the marbles on Kythera, began and ended this episode with a neutral reference to certain "*cases with stones-marbles*". The packed boxes containing the Parthenon Marbles were loaded sealed onto the vessel, just as they had been retrieved intact and sealed from the bottom of the sea. Opening them on the beach had not been permitted, since this prohibition was contained within the parameters of the instructions regarding their safekeeping on the wharf in Avlemonas, i.e., the "*boxes are not to be opened*".

In regard to this important occurrence, it is, of course, certain that the inhabitants were aware of the true contents of the boxes (not simply "*stones*"), but they deferred to what circumstances determined and required. This is evident from the very beginning, from Kaloutsis' interrogation of the captain, as well as from the texts of the contracts, documents, and letters of Hamilton, Leake, and Kaloutsis. The descriptions alternated between "*marbles*" and "*stones*", while only certain consular authorities used the designations "*important antiquities*" and "*ancient marbles*"; mostly, however, the phrase "*boxes with marbles*" was employed. Despite the agreed upon phrasing, however one might want to interpret it, actual events allow us to assume that the island's inhabitants and authorities

52. Ibid.

53. A.I.E.E.E. (n. 4 above), N. S. Kaloutsis, no. 6969, Kythera October 13/25, 1802.

knew what was happening. However, the inhabitants seemed unconcerned during the extended retrieval period, evidently because the depth of their interest in, and appraisal of, the Parthenon Marbles did not match Elgin's. Nor were the Kytheran residents, authorities or other parties similarly capable of calculating how aesthetically and archaeologically significant these items (*"from Greece's glorious antiquity"*) were. They acknowledged that such sentiments belonged to collectors, even more so when they were well-known personages. Specifically, the "inconceivable" (to them) act of judging the artistic creations of the past was ultimately acknowledged to belong to the collector's pursuit, something they could accept in "lofty" personages, such as Elgin, for example, whose reputation and personality, in the context of the "Great Protector Power" was acknowledged as distinguished and representative of a group of "exceptional" people with related interests (collectors of important antiquities—creations of glorious antiquity).

It is worth pointing out that the entire incident has been one of the main issues that concerned Kythera's central political administration, local self-government, as well as the administration of the Septinsular Republic, via the representatives of Kythera's political authorities and the British and other consular authorities in the broader Greek territories. However, if the circumstances of there being a British Vice-Consulate on Kythera proved to be very advantageous for the fortunes of the shipwrecked cargo, relieving the anxieties of Elgin, Hamilton and Kaloutsis, the Septinsular Republic's return to a smooth flow of operations, after a period during which Kythera had deviated from the constitutional system of government (1800–1802), proved equally auspicious for handling the request to salvage the marbles. The restoration of Kythera's political regime (1802) favoured a more productive function of the vice-consulate, at a time when Kaloutsis was one of the main protagonists in a balancing regulatory function of the new political administration of Kythera (1802 et seq.). Kaloutsis officially announced to the *proestoi* and elders, the vice-consuls of the other nations on Kythera, as well as to the consuls and vice-consuls of many districts of the broader Ottoman domain, that he was acting in accordance with his official duty. He sought the assistance of the political authorities on Kythera in matters concerning the security and protection of the victims of the shipwreck and their room and board, as well as to ensure the existence of sufficient and constant protection around the broader region against any potential attempts to seize the sunken cargo or whatever objects from the shipwreck the sea would cast up. Protecting the marbles on the beach from the moment their gradual salvage began proved to be a very critical matter. At a certain point in time, the lack of security at the port's pier was extensively

discussed. It was subsequently proposed, in consultation with the garrison commander of the “Castle” (Kastelion-Avlemonas) that they should be moved inside the small castle. They were mainly afraid of the pirates, who frequently attacked the island. Nevertheless, the boxes of marbles that had been packed in Athens were not to be disturbed at any cost.

4. *Diplomatic Movements and the “Debt” to the “Glorious People of the Great King and Protector”*

The procedures followed and the decisions taken by the island’s political authorities did not include pressuring the inhabitants of Kythera or other regions into offering their services on this occasion. It also does not appear that there was any fear or suspicion that the island, or the Septinsular Republic in general, would suffer any political repercussions were the inhabitants indifferent or unresponsive. Pro-British sentiment was broadly disseminated in Kytheran society and existed long before the shipwreck took place.⁵⁴ The individuals, both on and off Kythera, who were sought out, whether or not they specialized in shipwrecks such as this one, were hired via written agreements/contracts, which included every financial and technical detail. In each case, the agreement was registered as a commitment to a project assigned by the kingdom of Great Britain, specifically described as a “Royal British service”. Various services were offered: divers’ remunerations, courier fees for transporting letters to distant regions, payments to guides escorting official and other persons, payments to people working to retrieve and safeguard the salvaged objects, payments to private individuals for additional protection of the marbles on the wharf, ensuring that everyone involved in the operation was housed and fed in the remote Avlemonas region, hosting people under difficult circumstances, and many other expenses. Elgin was responsible for discharging expenses, since it was almost at every opportunity emphatically revealed, the “ancient marbles” constituted Elgin’s personal property and by extension, the property of the “glorious British people”.⁵⁵ The services that were rewarded financially were described as services offered to the “British Nation” the “illustrious

54. Leontsinis 1987: 289 ff.

55. A.I.E.E.E. (n. 4 above), N. S. Kaloutsis, no. 7003, Kythera November 2, 1802 (“it is known to all that the marbles belong to Lord Elgin, and should they be loaded onto a neutral or hostile ship, their loss is inevitable, not only because they are an Englishman’s property, but due to their value as well”).

and glorious people", expressions emerging from the sentiments of the broader social body of Kythera.

Something deeper existed, which created these sentiments and shaped the wide-scale willingness of the inhabitants of Kythera to go so far as to make voluntary, unpaid contributions. The residents of Kythera and of the other Ionian Islands acknowledged the contribution of Great Britain to the establishment of the Septinsular Republic as well as the political protection it provided; this created a great deal of spontaneous pro-British sentiments in the residents of Kythera.⁵⁶ Kaloutsis was not alone in the mission he took on and considered, as he admitted, his duty to complete. A fair number of the people around him, variously related to him, supported him, sometimes simply, as it appears, because he was able to install effective local government mechanisms. Naturally, services to him did not pass unremarked; there was a tendency to call his attention to them in writing. Nor did any of the Kytherans who always participated in the salvage operation express any contempt for the work they were asked to do. The endeavour to salvage the marbles, whatever personal motives (political, governmental, financial, social connections, ideological) it may have served, presented an image of the inhabitants collaborating with those playing a leading role in the coordination of the effort to retrieve the marbles. The salvage operation was from the very first moment, and very expertly presented as, everyone's affair, which however, was recognized mainly to concern the "*British royal people*". The measures the inhabitants were obligated to take to retrieve the cargo were presented by Emmanuel Kaloutsis as a "*debt to the glorious Kingdom*", which he had the honour of serving, and its "*glorious people*" who helped and continued to help the Septinsular Republic (1800–1807). The Kytheran *proestoi* responded immediately. In documents and letters replying to Kaloutsis, and in proclamations to the inhabitants, they emphasized that they were obligated to offer "*appropriate honour and due assistance*" to the "*Great King*" and the "*famous British Nation*". In a letter to Kaloutsis, they stated that they considered the safety and continued security of the victims of the shipwreck, as well as the safeguarding of the cargo, their "*debt*" to "*the Most Glorious People of the Great King of (Great Britain) and Our Protector*".⁵⁷

The shipwreck and the management of the problem highlighted the general respect and political appreciation the inhabitants of Kythera felt towards the diplomatic representative of Great Britain on Kythera as well as towards Great

56. Leontsinis 1987.

57. Ibid. nos. 6957 and 6958.

Britain. The pro-British stance grew stronger with the passing of time, since the parties involved in the salvage operation (Hamilton, Leake, and representatives of the consular authorities of the broader territories) met the native element, which became personally acquainted with the sympathetic and friendly attitude and behaviour they demonstrated.⁵⁸ A mutual assistance network developed between a number of consular authorities in the broader Ottoman domain and individual diplomats and other persons. The efficient function of the network was due, to a large degree, to the assistance provided by the Sublime Porte, as well as by its various administrative divisions in the regions in which the consular authorities were based. Also, various individuals within its domain, conscious of what was needed to be offered, did so willingly, stressing their pro-British sentiments and their respect for the person of Vice-Consul Kaloutsis, who, they noted, had personally assumed the responsibility of handling the problem, since the shipwreck occurred in the sea district within his diplomatic responsibility.

Emmanuel Mormoris, Vice-Consul of Russia on Kythera, who was, like Kaloutsis, rather popular in Kytheran society, considered Kaloutsis' anxiety over the salvage of the *Mentor's* cargo his own concern as well. The inhabitants of Kythera, and of the Ionian Isles in general, considered the two Great Powers, Russia and Great Britain, as their political protectors. Indeed, Russia and the Sublime Porte had already had the Septinsular Republic under their political protection (1800–1807). This was evident in many sectors of the inhabitants' social and political activities. In November 1802, the Russian Ambassador Tamara, in a letter to Georgios Mocenigos, the president of the Septinsular Senate, asked him to contribute with all available means to the retrieval of the marbles.⁵⁹

Great Britain was considered the island's political protector because it supported and continued to support the Septinsular Republic's existing political status quo, while at the same time appealing to the country's progressive politics in the Mediterranean. The selection of Kaloutsis, a progressive politician and diplomat very popular in Kytheran society, as Vice-Consul of Great Britain increased the islanders' the desire to participate in the salvage operation of the cargo of

58. Extracts from letters demonstrating this pro-British stance: "*I remain certain that you will perform with all the due diligence, which is indeed owed to the glorious kingdom I have the honour of serving*" (ibid. no. 6957, Kythera September 5, 1802), and "*given that our Septinsular Republic is obligated to the Great King Your Excellency has the honour of serving and to the famous British Nation for the assistance it has received, and I hope will continue to receive in the future*" (ibid. no. 6958, Kythera September 8, 1802).

59. A.I.E.E.E. (n. 4 above), N. S. Kaloutsis, no. 6978, Kythera November 7, 1802.

Elgin's vessel. The moment he was informed of the shipwreck, Elgin proceeded issuing an appeal for assistance to "*all the warships in the Aegean*", while in Constantinople, the ship-owner Vassilios Manokinis of Hydra signed a contract whereby he would undertake various measures to recover the vessel. On May 27, 1805, Spyridon Forestis, the British Ambassador on Corfu mentioned he was sending an envelope and small case from Hamilton to Kaloutsis and informed him of the efforts underway to free Elgin from the French.⁶⁰ Elgin's private vessel was considered a "royal" British vessel that required their assistance to retrieve and safeguard its "royal cargo". On September 13, 1802, Dimitrios Grigorakis from Porto-Vathi in Mani informed Emmanuel Kaloutsis that he was ready to offer every assistance in recovering the *Mentor*. The extent to which the news travelled appears to have caused confusion and uncertainty in the persons who had assumed the responsibility of coordinating the recovery and safekeeping of the vessel's cargo. Specifically, in early November 1802, a rumour circulated which had Emmanuel Kaloutsis and the British Consul-General in Patras conspiring with Dimitrios Grigorakis of Mani—mentioned above—to attack the island with three hundred men from Mani, and become its "master" and "governor", breaking away from the Septinsular Republic. Kaloutsis protested vigorously and informed the island's *proestoi* and elders, because it harmed the reputation of Great Britain, as well as the names of her two consuls. An investigation was immediately ordered,⁶¹ which summoned among others the Kytheran priest Theodoros Karydis, who was considered responsible for the dissemination of this unfounded rumour.⁶²

Antonios Miliarakis also found surprising a letter from Forestis to Giannettos Koutoufaris, the Bey of Mani on July 26, 1804, which did not deal with the archaeological issue, but with other political ones. Specifically, it stated: "*Receiving satisfaction and the same time affection towards my subjects, for the zeal and enthusiasm you demonstrate towards my Court, and for the harm and damage done to French interests*".⁶³ The case of Giannettos Koutoufaris may be explained if placed within the context of historical events. Great Britain had played a leading role in creating the existing anti-French coalition, while the Napoleonic Era had already begun in France. Already as of 1803 Napoleon had issued an edict calling for the arrest of all British subjects aged 18 to 60. In accordance with this edict of May 23,

60. Ibid. no. 6997, Kythera May 27, 1805.

61. Ibid. no. 6974, Kythera November 8, 1802.

62. Ibid. no. 6973, Kythera November 8, 1802.

63. Ibid. no. 6995.

1803, Elgin was arrested in Paris, and was only freed temporarily in 1806, under the condition that he presented himself in Paris whenever summoned by the Emperor. In 1807, the tension between the two countries reached a climax and Napoleon proceeded to institute the Continental Blockade, barring all British merchandise from the ports of Europe. England responded with a naval blockade of France.

5. *Rhetoric regarding the Return of the Parthenon “Marbles” and its Extent—Confusion over the “Illegal Antiquities Trade”*

The rhetoric surrounding Elgin’s removal of the Parthenon Marbles confirms that everyone who approaches the issue employs, as a rule, selective criteria. The period during which the disapproving references to the event were made (mid-19th century) explains this tendency. Commentators function under the parameters of a positivistic approach, assigning importance to the major event of the removal of the particular sculptures, and the political dimension of the events, with the dominant figure being the British ambassador to Constantinople. It is evident that other parameters are being neglected, such as, for example, an investigation into the circumstances of the historical territory of Athens, a critique of the practices in comparable incidents both inside and out of the Greek territories, the psychological parameters of the people and protagonists involved, the actual event of the shipwreck, and the multidimensionality of the retrieval and salvage operation.

What may also need to be stressed is the delay on the part of the Greek side to approach the event. The matter is broached, four decades later, by Alexander Rizos Rangabé in a speech he gave as Secretary of the Greek Archaeological Society during a meeting of the Board of Directors in front of the Parthenon on May 12, 1842. For the first time Elgin’s actions are officially condemned and the hope that the marbles will be returned is expressed. Elgin is presented as a “*cold trader in illicit antiquities*” who although he belonged to a “*noble and enlightened race... did what the Goths did not*”.⁶⁴ Deeply influenced by Lord Byron, Rangabé repeated the Philhellene poet’s epigrammatic phrase: “*What the Goths did not do, the Scots did here*”. Characterizing Elgin’s actions as a great desecration and insult to the Greek nation, which was considered outcast or non-existent among the living, he called upon England to return “*to this cradle of civilization its stolen jewels as a sign of respect*”.⁶⁵

Antonios Miliarakis revitalized the issue from the moment he was informed

64. Nisbet-Elgin 1989: 20–26.

65. Gennadios 1930: 142–146.

of the existence of the file of documents that Nikolaos-Sophokles Kaloutsis turned over to the Archive of the Historical and Ethnological Society of Greece.⁶⁶ In 1888 he noted the lack of Greek sources: “*only one anonymous Athenian chronicler, Elgin’s contemporary, left a very brief record... Apart from this note, no other scholar whether in Athens or anywhere else wrote anything about Elgin, or if this occurred, nothing was preserved for us*”.⁶⁷ Since then the issue has been variously approached as a problem of national importance by Greek scholars who, as a rule, rely on the testimonies and information of foreign scholars, primarily English, who were Elgin’s contemporaries and who experienced the aftermath of the removal of the Parthenon Marbles, their perilous transfer to London, and Elgin’s sale of this particular collection to the British Government.

They had no interest in the shipwreck and the progress of the operation to retrieve and salvage the marbles in Kythera’s Avlemonas Bay. Even the psychological aspects of the activities and initiatives of the protagonists and managers of the enterprise and its repercussions were not considered. They were either incapable of imagining or could not assess the importance of the domestic social and political situation on Kythera and in the other Greek territories, or the diplomatic manoeuvring required by the salvage operation.⁶⁸

With regard to Elgin’s motives, research must include a study of beliefs, sentiments and attitudes, as well as of the historical circumstances that generated them. Lord Elgin testified in 1816 before a British Parliamentary Committee that he removed the Marbles from the Parthenon in order to preserve them and to improve British taste. However, in 1801 he had written to Giovanni Battista Lusieri that he would like to gather as many marbles as possible since there were many locations in his home that needed them and the decorative elements of beautiful marbles could be multiplied without overdoing it.⁶⁹

66. G. N. Leontsinis (ed.), *Ημερολόγιο Νικολάου-Σοφοκλή Καλούτση και Γενεαλογία οικογένειας Καλούτση*, forthcoming.

67. Miliarakis 1888: 681–682.

68. According to the website of the Hellenic Institute of Marine Archaeology (<http://www.ienae.gr>), an underwater excavation was organized in 1980 at the site of the shipwreck of the *Mentor*. The investigation discovered a large section of the vessel’s hull and located remains of the retrieval effort, including crew implements and items, among them a watch, stopped around 1:10 or 2:05. This must have been the time the vessel sunk, since William Richard Hamilton mentioned in his diary that the vessel began sinking in the early morning hours.

69. David Rudenstine, “Did Elgin Cheat at Marbles (Lord Elgin and the Parthenon Marbles)”, *The Nation*, May 29, 2000.

However, since the late 17th century one may speak of two main types of travellers with archaeological interests from England and France. Individuals devoted to the study of ancient evidence and objects are encountered from the last third of the 17th century, with the voyages of Charles François Olier, Marquis de Nointel,⁷⁰ and of Jacob Spon. In 1676, the local archaeological investigations of Jacob Spon and Sir George Wheeler led to various publications, which with their analytical descriptions of the treasures of Athens would direct the attention of art lovers and intellectuals to that city: Athens would gain entry into the index of the historical centres of European civilization. From 1680 on, the visits, studies, evaluations and descriptions would multiply. Important authors kept public interest for a revival of Greek antiquity alive during the entire 18th century, while not only the French and the British, but also the Genoans, Venetians, Catalans, Dutch and Russians would devote themselves to the hunt for Greek antiquities during their stay on Greek soil.⁷¹ Additionally, the great events that took place in the Levant appear to conspire in Elgin's favour. In May 1801, all Ottoman military commanders in the European territories were ordered to place their fortresses on a state of alert. The Disdar of Athens forbade Lusieri and Elgin's other artist access to the Acropolis to draw and mould the sculptures, even though that same month the first *firman* regarding the work on the Acropolis arrived. On June 17, the international situation became very favourable to Elgin's additional demands. General John Hely-Hutchinson accepted the surrender of Cairo and the success of the British Expedition against the French in Egypt was guaranteed. Lord Elgin, the ambassador of the nation that made this triumph of the Ottoman Empire possible, became the most important foreign representative with the greatest influence in Constantinople. The second *firman*, so decisive to the course of events, arrived on July 6, 1802, adding to the flood of gifts the Turks were giving their British allies, along with the crests, the fur pelerines, the horses, the tobacco boxes and the medals.

Moreover, one must not forget Elgin's concurrent activities in the diplomatic arena and its reciprocal relationship with the shipwreck retrieval operation. Hamilton, a central figure in the events of the shipwreck, was sent to Egypt in June 1801 to oversee the removal of the French. One year later, he would return to Piraeus on the *Mentor* in order to play a leading role in the transport of the another cargo,⁷² while the

70. See Tolias 1996: 13.

71. Ibid.: 17.

72. December 26, 1801: Elgin, afraid that perhaps the French would attempt to hinder

“work” of Elgin’s people on the Acropolis was already completed.⁷³ One-sided generalities regarding Elgin’s involvement in trading illegal antiquities have, as previously mentioned, their origins in Alexander Rizos Rangabé’s speech, when the Archaeological Society of Athens sought to retrieve one of the “masterpieces of art”. This particular reference cannot avoid an anachronistic quality, since the related rhetoric developed because of certain activities and actions that related to the trading of illicit antiquities during the period this critique was formulated. If we ignore historical circumstances and persist in unsubstantiated characterizations, we essentially project on a past society our contemporary values, and, while speaking for ourselves, believe we are giving voice to the population of other eras.⁷⁴

The issue of the mutilation of the Parthenon, once liberated from the anachronistic parameter of the act of trading in illegal antiquities, may function more meaningfully by establishing the necessary criteria to approach that specific time period. Historical anachronism weakens the historical weight of the problem. Based on the actual events, the demand for the marbles return to their natural location is more fully demonstrated.⁷⁵ An anachronistic and idealistic approach to the issue is of no assistance.

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Leontsinis, G. N. 1987: *The island of Kythera: a social history (1700-1863)*. Athens.

him, ordered the immediate dispatch of the sculptures on the *Mentor*, which he had brought for this reason. Twelve cases of marbles and casts would be transported from Piraeus to Alexandria.

73. On June 2, Lady Elgin wrote: “We yesterday got down the last thing we want from the Acropolis so now we may boldly bid defiance to our enemies” (St. Clair: 108).

74. Offenstadt, Dufaud & Maruzel 2005: 23.

75. The following events should be acknowledged as pivotal points in the development of the rhetoric related to the fortunes of the Parthenon Marbles:

In 1981, Emmanuel Komnenos assembled, under the auspices of AHEPA, the first committee in the world calling for the return of antiquities, and especially of the Parthenon Marbles to Greece.

In 1982, Melina Merkouri, then Minister of Culture, would officially present the issue of the return of the Parthenon Marbles to the competent organs of UNESCO.

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