

Egyptiot benefactors constituted the ruling social elite of the Greek community. At the same time, they cultivated friendly relations with the Egyptian people and made an effort to diffuse the inevitable tensions arising from the colonial status quo. Outside Egypt, diaspora benefactors also worked as organic intellectuals, being members of the dominant Greek and international bourgeois elite, and acting as organisers of cultural institutions and initiatives. Among many other cases, we cite those of Ioannis Athanasakis, who was Minister of Defense in the Venizelos government between 1918 and 1920, and president of the Hellenic Red Cross; Alexander D. Kassavetis, who served as Minister of Transport under Venizelos; Antonios G. Kartalis, Minister of Welfare in the government of Dimitrios Gounaris; and also the founders of the Panteion University, Alexander Pantos (1888-1936) and Georgios Frangoudis (1869-1939). Georgios Frangoudis also established the Association for Educational Regeneration, aimed at the “revival of the Greek State through education,” and a “Univer-

sity of Political, Social, and Economic Sciences.”²¹ As he notes in his autobiography, Frangoudis had also been offered the Ministry of Education three times during the government of Eleftherios Venizelos.²² The ideology of benefaction, a major component of bourgeois ideology since the late 19th century, was the motivating factor for Alexander Pantos and Georgios Frangoudis in their role as benefactors. They both had experienced community life (we/collective work; I/individual role), in other words the conditions which gave rise to diaspora benefactors in the communities abroad. After leaving Egypt they lived for many years in Europe, predominantly in France, as cosmopolitan immigrants. In France they were inspired to create a school of political sciences in Greece, which would operate on the model of the *École Libre des Sciences Politiques* of Paris, by educating the cadres of the state apparatus. The realisation of their youthful dreams was the establishment of the Panteion School, a benefaction aimed at the administrative modernisation of Greece.

An outstanding example of the hegemonic function of the benefactor is provided by Emmanuel Benakis. His role as an organic intellectual in the world of ideas and culture is clearly evident through his involvement in the “Athenaion” Scientific Association of Alexandria, the Benakeios Library, Athens College, the Nursing School of the Evangelismos Hospital, his contribution to plans for the creation of a Practical School of Poultry Farming, as well as his activity in the political arena.

During the period he lived in Egypt (1865-1910), Benakis maintained excellent relations with the Egyptian ruling classes and British financial capital. At the same time, he occupied many leadership positions within the Greek community. “...Lord Cromer (the British High Commissioner in Egypt) listened to his advice and shook his hand. And matters were settled. And when the brilliant Consul General I. Gryparis requested an audience to discuss the same affair, Cromer commented: The Consul General does not have to take the trouble to come. Benakis has explained the situation and his word is good enough for me.”²³

Emmanuel Benakis maintained this role after settling in Athens. He was elected Liberal member of parliament for Attica and Boeotia in 1910 and served as Minister of Agriculture, Commerce and Industry from 1911 to 1912. He was then elected mayor of Athens in 1914 and remained a close friend and supporter of Eleftherios Venizelos until his death. He was formally awarded the title of the National Benefactor.

4. The ideology of benefaction

The ideology of benefaction was developed in the Greek diaspora communities over the course of the 18th, 19th and 20th centuries. This ideology overcomes the tension between subjectivity, on the one hand, and the specific features of the historical and cultural environment surrounding subjectivity at the time, on the other. In so doing, the ideology of benefaction integrates itself into the evolution of society in an historically efficient manner in terms of class dynamics.

Generally, this tension derives from the structural asymmetry and incompatibility characterising the relationship between the individual and the ambient culture. Specifically, the abandonment of some instinctive inclinations and demands (personal passions and fantasies) is the inevitable price each person pays for his/her integration into his/her cultural environment and, in general, into the collective life of the community to which he/she belongs.²⁴ Additionally, a partial insufficiency and imperfection of every culture in reference to each individual's subjectivity, is the necessary condition so that the ambient culture embraces all its members without inducing absolute uniformity and finally alienation of individuals.

In the case of benefaction, the dialectical relationship between subjectivity and culture constitutes the relevant ideology at the meeting point and intersection of a number of dipoles, including:

- Personal imaginary and collective imaginary: personal fantasies and ambitions on one side, and collective projects and recognition criteria on the other.
- National ideology and cosmopolitanism, combined in a sort of

personalised syncretism, the formation of which is dominated by a notion of reciprocity, referencing both the benefactor's place of origin and hosting country.

- Symbolic and practical strategies of prominence, distinction and influence, both at the personal and the collective (family, social, national) level.
- Traditional identities and solidarities, on the one hand, and modernistic transformation (progress) and redefinition of identities, on the other.

All in all, the ideology of benefaction emerges and unfolds as discourse at the verbal-representational level as well as at the level of praxis and material results, at the point of tension where the limitations and weaknesses of the national centre emphasise the strategic importance of personality within a transnational, transcultural environment. In this sense, the benefactor embodies the organic intellectual *par excellence*, according to the Gramscian definition of the term,²⁵ functioning within the framework of an expanding world as a singular carrier of intercultural connectivity and reference.

From this point of view, benefaction ideology represents an outstanding manifestation of the social, national and transcultural conscience, which bypasses the historically determined limitations of the state, and highlights the strategic significance of the subjective, anthropocentric dimension of social life.

The benefactor is a person who surpasses the traditional, collective "we" and defines himself as a *sui generis* individual, "I", who undertakes to deliver projects in the place of the state, collectivities and institutions in general. Moreover, he realises a personal epic through service and benefactions in the interest of public welfare, which constitute a crucial element in the formation of his personal identity and existence. For him, benefaction constitutes the essential passion which determines his individual and collective functioning.²⁶

Many Egyptian community members, including wealthy merchants, successful industrialists and powerful bankers, used significant por-

tions of their private fortunes to make up the financial deficits of the communities in which they lived. In attempting to set the example of ideal community leadership, they made repeated donations for a myriad of different reasons, for instance covering loans which the communities had contracted but were in no position to repay. At the same time, they donated stock and bonds in Egyptian and British currency to finance the creation of institutions which bore their name.

They also supported projects aimed at improving social welfare. They were extremely interested in promoting the educational advance of their compatriots. They provided funding which was used to establish educational institutions such as the Tositsaia School in Alexandria (1854); the Abeteios School in Cairo (1860), often compared to the *Megale tou Genous Schole* (Great School of the Nation) in Constantinople; the Averofeio Girls' School in Alexandria (1897), the Achillopouleio Girls' School in Cairo (1905); the Salvageios Technical School in Alexandria (1907), the Zervoudakeios School in Alexandria (1911), the Xenakeios School in Cairo (1922), and the Fameliadeios School in Alexandria (1925). The benefactor Theodore Kotsikas also showed concern for the education of Egyptian Muslims. In 1949 he financed the establishment of a mosque and kitab (elementary school) in Helwan, where the Kotsikas spirit factory was located.

Egyptiot benefactors also provided for the care and upbringing of orphans by creating institutions such as the Benakeion Orphanage for Girls in Alexandria (1909), the Kaniskereio Orphanage in Alexandria (1926), the Spetseropouleio Orphanage in Cairo (1928). In parallel, the Benakeio Soup Kitchen was established in Alexandria (1908) to provide daily meals to impoverished families, labourers and pupils. They also provided dignified living conditions for elderly members of the community by setting up the “Antoniadeio” Rest home in 1925.

Egyptiot benefactors paid for the establishment of hospitals, founding the Achillopouleio Hospital in Cairo in 1912 and the Kotsikeio Hospital in Alexandria in 1932. The maternity wing of Achillopouleio was created with a donation of Theodore Kotsikas in 1943, while funding from Constantine Choremis was used to set up the Choremeio Radiological Clinic in Alexandria in 1924. Benefactors also bequeathed large sums of money for the maintenance of beds for poor patients at the community hospitals, revealing another facet of their social conscience.

As far as expressions of their Hellenic identity and Orthodox religion are concerned, Egyptiot benefactors also funded the construction of churches. For example, Nestor Tsanaklis financed the building of the church of Saints Constantine and Helen in Cairo (1906). Theodore P. Kotsikas paid for the construction of the Church of St. Spyridon in Helwan (1928), the complete rebuilding of the offices of the Vicariate of the Patriarchate of Alexandria in the Hamzaoui district of Cairo (1932), and the three-storey building of the Sinai Monastery (1949). A year earlier, along with the entrepreneur Constantine Mouratiadis,

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Kotsikas financed the rebuilding of the Church of St. Georgios in Old Cairo, which had been destroyed by fire in 1904.