

MISSIONARY ATLAS PROJECT

Central and Eastern Europe

Greece

Snapshot

Country Name:

Greece (official name—"Hellenic Republic")

Population:

10,688,058 (July 2006 est.)

Government Type:

Parliamentary Republic (monarchy rejected by referendum in 1974)

Geography:

- Greece is located in southeastern Europe on the Balkan Peninsula.
- It is roughly the size of the state of Alabama.
- Greece is a peninsula, bordered on the east, south, and west by the Aegean, Mediterranean, and Ionian seas; it has over 13,000 km of coastline. Greece also shares borders with Turkey, Bulgaria, Macedonia (FYROM), and Albania.
- The interior lands of Greece are mountainous with plains along the coast. No part of Greece's mainland is more than 100 km from water.
- Greece has an archipelago of over 1,400 islands (about 1/5 of the country's land mass).
- Mediterranean climate (mild, wet winters and hot, dry summers)
- Susceptible to severe earthquakes

Capital City:

Athens

Picture of Flag:

Official Religion (recognized by the Greek government):

Greek Orthodox (95%)

All Religions:

Muslim (3.3%)

Non-Religious/Atheist (1.7%)

Other (0.7%)

Official Language:

Greek (99% of the population speaks Greek)

Missionary Atlas Project**Central and Eastern Europe****Greece****Basic Facts****Country Name:**

Greece (official name—"Hellenic Republic")

Demographics

In 2006 the population of Greece was estimated at 10,688,058 with a low population growth rate of 0.18%. Greece has a high life expectancy; the average life expectancy in 2006 was 79.24 years. The median age is 40.8 years.

Greece is an ethnically homogenous country; 98% of the population is Greek. While the Greek government official states that there are no ethnic divisions in the country small, but distinct, Turkish, Albanian, Macedonian, Pomak (Bulgarian Muslim), and Roma (gypsy) minorities are scattered throughout the country. The members of each of these groups combined only makes up 2% of the country's population.

Greece has become increasingly urbanized since the conclusion of World War II with large migration from rural areas. Over 60% of the population now lives in cities; more than 1/3 of the population lives in the greater Athens area (population 3,566,060). Thessaloniki, a major port city and international shipping hub, is Greece's other major city (population 1,057,825).

<http://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/print/gr.html>
<http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/3395.htm>
http://encarta.msn.com/encyclopedia_761572872/Greece.html
<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Greece>

Language

Modern Greek is spoken by 99% of the population. Modern Greek is very similar to ancient Greek; the same alphabet is still in use. As any language that has been in existence for centuries, Greek has changed over the years. In the 19th century Greek scholars attempted to purify the language. Their goal was to make Modern Greek as close to ancient (“pure”) Greek as possible. This scholarly endeavor produced the *Katharevousa* form of Greek, a much more formal form than the spoken vernacular form (*Demotike*). For a time most of Greece’s books and newspapers were published in *Katharevousa* but in 1976 *Demotike* was declared as the official language of Greece.

English is widely spoken as trade languages and taught in most schools. Many Greeks also speak German due to a large immigration of Greeks to Western Germany in the 1950s and 60s. During that time about 10% of Greece’s population left Greece to live as guest workers in Western Europe. Western Germany was the most popular destination. Many immigrants and their families have since returned to Greece, bringing a new language with them. It is also not uncommon to hear the heart languages of Greece’s ethnic minorities (Turkish, Slavic Macedonian, Vlach (Roma dialect), Albanian, and Pomak (Bulgarian dialect)).

http://encarta.msn.com/encyclopedia_761572872/Greece.html

Society/Culture

Greece suffered greatly during World War II; much of it was destroyed by battles and foreign occupation. In the rebuilding process Greece has transformed itself from a relatively poor agricultural society to a prosperous capitalistic society with a high standard of living (at least by south Europe standards).

The status of women has also improved in recent decades. Traditionally, Greek women were expected to totally submit to their husbands and be dedicated to home and family. In the past all coffee shops (*kafeneia*) were male-only; many coffee shops still do not serve women. Women did not have suffrage until the mid 1950s. Advances in the status of women have become more and more evident since the 1980s. Family law has been amended to increase equality between the genders and the dowry system that required a bride to give money/property to her groom before their wedding has been legally abolished. Also abolished at that time were the laws which demanded chastity in unmarried women and total fidelity in married women. No such laws were in existence to govern the sexual behavior of men.

Family structures are tight in Greece; there is a great sense of responsibility to/for ones family. Parents are not only devoted to their children, but their own parents, as well. It is extremely rare for the elderly to spend the last years of their lives in nursing homes as they are usually taken in

by their own children. It is also very rare to see homeless people living on the streets or the poor begging for money since families feel an obligation to care for poorer relatives. Marriage is a respected institution in Greece; typically, both men and women are in their mid- to late twenties when they get married. Greece has a higher marriage rate and lower divorce rate than northern European countries. Usually, grown children live with their parents until they marry and young married couples live with one spouse's family until they are ready to move into their own home.

There is no hereditary aristocracy in Greece but those who are related to "the right people" usually get what they want. For example, Georgios Rallis, a former Greek Prime Minister, was the son of a former Prime Minister. His paternal and maternal grandfathers had been Prime Ministers, as well. In Greece, success depends in large amount upon who you know. Family rivalries are also prominent in Greek life; feuds can pop up over land/property, political allegiances, etc. These feuds can manifest themselves in many ways including insults, ridicule, theft, and even murder. Only a few decades ago in 1980 approximately 2/3 of the murders and attempted murders in Greece were attributed to disputes between families.

Greek culture is very relaxed and moves at a slower pace than most western cultures. Also, Greeks are known around the world for their boisterous, fun-loving nature. Much of their time is spent with friends. All Greeks enjoy eating out, particularly in the hot summer months when *tavernas* (informal restaurants) are full of patrons dining in the cool of the late evening. Many Greeks frequent pastry and coffee shops on a regular basis, simply sitting and enjoying a lively discussion of politics. Taking a *volta* (stroll) around town or along the seafront is a popular evening activity in villages. It is common (and culturally acceptable) to see two heterosexual women or men walking arm in arm as a sign of friendship.

As stated earlier, the people of Greece have a very long life expectancy and much of this has been contributed to the foods they eat. The traditional Greek diet still eaten by most in rural areas consists of vegetables, beans, cheeses, olives, olive oil, and grainy bread and is considered to be very healthy because of its lack of meat or animal fat. Other traditional Greek dishes show Turkish influence—*souvlaki* (skewered meat), *doner kebab* (spit-roasted meat), and *baklava* and *kadayifi* (honey-based sweetmeats). *Retsina* and *ouzo* are the traditional Greek beverages. *Retsina* is a wine-flavored drink that dates back to ancient Greece. *Ouzo*, an alcoholic beverage distilled from grape stems and flavored with anise seed, is traditionally served before meals. Both *retsina* and *ouzo* have declined in popularity in recent years as bottled wine and imported Scotch whiskey has become more readily available. Also, as the standard of living has increase in Greece so has the consumption of meat and other fatty foods. The Greek diet is not as healthy as it once was and that is evident in the rise of heart-disease.

Soccer (called "football" in Europe) and basketball are popular sports in Greece. Greece's national football team won the EURO cup in 2004, defeating Portugal, the hosts and clear favorites of the event. The country was in pandemonium for weeks. And of course, Greece is the home to the Olympic Games. The first modern Olympic Games were held in Athens in 1896 and the summer Olympics returned to Athens in 2004.

The history of Greece spans thousands of years and, over those years, the Greek people have assimilated aspects of many different cultures, usually the culture of which ever nation was

ruling in the area at the time. The most notable examples of this are the Turkish influences in Greek culture, absorbed during the 400-year rule of the Ottoman Empire. Relationships between Greeks and Turks have always been strained but Greek music, art, food, and architecture all show definite signs of Turkish influence.

The Greek Orthodox Church is a central part of Greek culture, not only because almost 95% of Greeks belong to the Greek Orthodox Church but also because, historically, the church has been the transmitter and preserver of Greek history, art, literature, and music. As mentioned, 98% of Greeks belong to the Orthodox Church but there are remarkable differences in the church's role in urban life and village life. Only about 1/5 of urban-dwellers attend church weekly but village life completely revolves around the local church. It is not uncommon for the very devout to maintain a sort of altar in their homes. They set aside a special place for a religious icon and keep holy oil, holy water, and a special lamp nearby. Pilgrimages to holy sites are common. It is also not unusual for these religious traditions to contain elements of paganism and superstitions, carryover practices from earlier times.

Greeks celebrate many holidays each year, most of which are associated with the Greek Orthodox Church.

Greek National Holidays (in 2006):

January 1: New Year's Day

January 6: Epiphany

March 6: Clean Monday (marks the start of Lent, observed 40 days before Easter)*

March 8: Ash Wednesday*

March 25: Independence Day (celebrates Greece's victory in the war of Independence against the Turks, resulting in the overthrow of the Ottoman Empire's 400-year reign)

April 22: Holy Saturday*

April 23: Easter*

May 1: May Day

June 12: Pentecost*

August 15: Assumption Day (observance of the day on which it is believed that the Virgin Mary was taken to heaven)

October 28: Ochi Day (National Day—celebrates the Greek's refusal of Italian occupation during WWII)

December 25: Christmas Day

December 26: Second Christmas Day

(Holidays marked with * are observed on different dates each year.)

By far the most important holiday on the Greek calendar is Easter (and the other holidays connected with it). The Orthodox Church observes Easter a few weeks after it is observed in Western countries; the Orthodox Church also places most of its emphasis on the Resurrection of Christ (rather than the Crucifixion).

Another interesting cultural note is that Greeks rarely celebrate their birthdays on the day of their birth. Instead they celebrate on their name day (the day dedicated to the saint for whom they are named). For example, September 17 is Saint Sofia day. So, regardless of when they are born, all girls named Sofia celebrate their birthdays on September 17.

http://encarta.msn.com/encyclopedia_761572872/Greece.html

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Greece>

One Europe, Many Nations, James B. Minahan, p. 300

Worldmark Encyclopedia of Culture and Daily Life

<http://www.greecetravel.com/holidays/>

Government

Historically, Greece's government has been anything but stable. When Greece was formally established as an independent state in 1830 it was established as an independent monarchy. Greece remained a hereditary institutional monarchy until 1923 when a republic was instituted for a short time (until 1935). In 1935 Greece returned to its monarchical system until 1967 when a junta (a group of military leaders) staged a coup and took over the country's government. (See the History section for more information.) Under the control of this military coalition, Greece ratified a new constitution in 1968 that abolished the monarchy. The junta remained in power until 1974 and, after its collapse, the people of Greece formally voted to abolish the monarchy, instead voting to become a republic. Their new republican constitution was ratified in 1975.

Although the Greek constitution officially guarantees freedom of religion in Greece, the exercise of that freedom is limited. As mentioned in earlier sections, converting to another religion is considered illegal and strict restrictions are placed on clergy; they are only allowed to minister to their parishioners. Proselytizing is frowned upon, sometimes even resulting in arrest.

Greece's national government has three branches, the executive, legislative, and judicial.

Executive

The executive branch includes the president and the prime minister (and their cabinets). The president is the official head of state and the prime minister is the head of government. The president's job has been mostly ceremonial since 1986 when a constitutional revision transferred most of the president's power to the prime minister and the cabinet. The president is still the commander in chief of the armed forces, however. The president is not popularly elected; he is elected by parliament and can serve no more than two consecutive five-year terms. The prime minister is appointed by the president. The president does not have free reign to appoint whomever he wishes, however; the political party that holds the majority of seats in the parliament recommends a prime minister to the president and he is obligated to appoint their candidate. The president also appoints the cabinet, but his selections are based on the recommendation of the prime minister.

Legislative

The legislative branch is made up of a unicameral 300-seat legislature (“vouli”). Members of parliament are popularly elected to four-year terms. Voting is compulsory for all Greek citizens 18 years of age or older.

Judicial

Greece’s judicial system is comprised of a hierarchy of courts, each with their own responsibilities and jurisdiction. There are courts that specifically hear cases related to civil, criminal, and administrative law and special courts that handle cases related to their specific area. For example, there is a labor arbitration court and a court that hears cases specifically related to social security. Civil, criminal, and administrative cases can be appealed to the Supreme Court and special courts appeal to a Council of State. The Special Supreme Tribunal is at top Greece’s judicial hierarchy. The Supreme Tribunal specifically rules on issues relating to the constitution. All judges are appointed by the president after consulting with the Judicial Council. All judicial appointments are for life.

On a local level, Greece’s government is broken into 13 administrative regions (peripheries). These peripheries are further divided to form 51 prefectures (*nomoi*). Each prefecture is governed by a prefect (*nomarch*); each prefect is popularly elected by the residents of that prefecture. Each town and city has its own popularly elected mayor and town council. Mount Athos, a monastic republic located in Macedonia, is an autonomous state that falls under Greek sovereignty. Mount Athos is administered by a council.

Greece is a founding member of the United Nations and became a member of NATO in 1952. Greece entered the European Community (now the European Union) in 1981 becoming the EC’s 12th member nation.

Separation of church and state is a foreign concept in Greece. The Greek Orthodox Church is under the protection of the Greek government; the government even pays the salaries of all clergy members. The Greek Constitution expressly states that Orthodoxy is the “prevailing” religion in Greece. The constitution guarantees freedom of religion but “proselytism” (converting to another religion) is officially illegal. Greece’s Muslim minority is its only officially recognized religious minority, given legal status by the Treaty of Lausanne in 1923. Those who are not members of Greece’s Orthodox majority maintain that Greece, despite its official stance on freedom of religion, still has serious problems in this area.

Governmental corruption is a large problem in Greece, a result of years of socialist rule. Since his election in 2004, Greece’s president, Konstantinos Karamanlis, has made it clear that ridding Greece of corruption is one of his primary goals. In a speech he gave soon after he was elected, Karamanlis shocked the country by saying that Greece is “effectively run by five *davatzides* (pimps)”. Recent investigations show that the previous socialist government gave the European Union doctored figures regarding Greece’s economy to expedite Greece’s process of transitioning to the Euro. Other scandals have surfaced as well, like match fixing among Greek soccer clubs, doctors taking bribes from patients to speed up their medical procedures, and army officials accepting bribes to exempt entertainers from mandatory military service.

One of the most serious issues in Greece today is human trafficking. Greece is a major destination and transit country for women and children trafficked for sexual exploitation and slave labor. These women and children come mostly from Eastern Europe, the Balkans, and Africa. Some Roma (gypsy) children are brought into the country for forced begging and stealing. In recent years, Greece's government has begun to pay more attention to this issue but still does not comply with the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking.

http://encarta.msn.com/encyclopedia_761572872/Greece.html

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Greece>

<http://gvnet.com/humantrafficking/Greece.htm>

http://www.economist.com/displayStory.cfm?story_id=3773765

Economy

Historically, Greece's economy has been dominated by agriculture. Until 1950 Greece survived on the export of a few key agricultural products, its shipping industry, and the money that Greek's living abroad sent back to their families. After World War II, however, Greece moved quickly toward industrialization under the influence of new government programs and international aid; by 1970 manufacturing had surpassed agriculture as Greece's primary industry for the first time. Greece's most notable economic development since WWII has been its emergence as a popular tourist destination.

Greece has a mixed capitalistic economy. Greece's economy still depends greatly on its shipping industry (Greece is the global leader in shipping) and tourism provides 15% of Greece's yearly GDP, with an estimated 16.1 million tourists visiting Greece in 2005. In 2005 Greece's GDP was an estimated \$225 billion (\$20,521 per capita); its economy was growing at a rate of 3.6% and inflation was relatively low at 3.5%. Greece has one of the highest standards of living in the world, ranking 24th on the 2005 Human Development Index and its economy has ranked far above the European Union's average since 1994. In recent years Greece's economy received a major boost when investment dollars began pouring in for the 2004 Olympic Games that were held in Athens.

Greece's economy is not without its problems, however. Unemployment is currently a high 10% and the country's social security and tax systems are in need of reform. Another major economic challenge for Greece is its black market which, according to some estimates, accounts for as much as 50% of Greece's economic activity. Black market transactions take place off-radar, outside the tax and social security systems and black market business owners rarely make improvements in their businesses or comply with new regulations. The substantial black market is one of the biggest obstacles to modernizing Greece's economy.

Greece has been a member of the European Union since 1981 (then called the European Community) and officially adopted the Euro as its currency in January 2001 and by January 1, 2002 the *drachma* (Greece's previous national currency) has been phased out.

http://encarta.msn.com/encyclopedia_761572872/Greece.html

<http://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/print/gr.html>

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Greece>
<http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/3395.htm>

Literacy

Greece reported an adult literacy rate of 98% in 2005. Male literacy was reported at 99% while female literacy was lower, reported at 97%.

Education is free and compulsory for all children aged 6 through 14. The remaining years of high school education are also free but they are optional. Even though high school education is optional, because Greek culture places such a high value on education, almost all Greeks choose to continue their education well after high school.

http://encarta.msn.com/encyclopedia_761572872/Greece.html
<http://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/print/gr.html>

Land/Geography

Greece is a peninsula located in southeastern Europe on the Balkan Peninsula. It is bordered on the east, south, and west by the Aegean, Mediterranean, and Ionian seas; Greece also shares borders with Turkey, Bulgaria, Macedonia (FYROM), and Albania. In landmass, it is roughly the size of the state of Alabama. Greece has an archipelago of over 1,400 islands; islands make up 20% of Greece's landmass. Greece's coastal areas are plains and its interior lands are primarily mountainous. No part of Greece's mainland is more than 100 km from water.

Greece has a Mediterranean climate with mild, wet winters and hot, dry summers.

Greece is susceptible to earthquakes; it is actually one of the world's most seismically active countries. Most of Greece's earthquakes are mild but there is always the possibility for severe activity. Greece's potential for earthquakes lies in the fact that a box of fault lines runs directly under it and its islands. Many of Greece's earthquakes originate under the sea and usually do nothing more than shake up the surrounding islands. Greece has several still active volcanoes that have the propensity not only for eruption but also for causing quakes. The most recent severe earthquake in Greece occurred just outside of Athens in 1999. The quake affected one of Athens' poorest suburbs, leaving 100 people dead and many more homeless.

<http://gogreece.about.com/od/newsmedia/a/earthquakes.htm>
<http://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/print/gr.html>
<http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/3395.htm>
http://encarta.msn.com/encyclopedia_761572872/Greece.html

History

Volumes could be written about the ancient history of Greece. One of the oldest known cultures in the world, Greece is thought to have been inhabited and established by as early as 3000 BC. The first civilizations in Europe—the Minoan and Mycenaean—emerged along the coasts of the

Aegean Sea. Around 800 BC Greek city-states began to pop up all along the Mediterranean. All parts of Greece were eventually united under Alexander the Great in the mid-300s BC, establishing the Greek Empire and beginning the Hellenistic era. Greece is recognized as the cradle of western civilization and the birthplace of Democracy, Western philosophy, literature, political science, and drama. Greece's history is long and rich and its culture has influenced other cultures around the globe, most notably in Europe, North Africa, and the Middle East.

After the death of Alexander the Great, Greece began to decline in military strength. Rome conquered the Greek Empire in 168 BC, making Greece a province of the Roman Empire. Greek culture was too strong to be suppressed, however, and it continued to dominate the eastern Mediterranean region. When the Roman Empire split in the 4th century, the Eastern Roman Empire, known as the Byzantine Empire, included Greece. Culturally, the Byzantine Empire remained entirely Greek.

From the 4th to the 15th centuries the Byzantine Empire was constantly under attack from all directions. Barbarians (Avars and Slavs) attacked in the 7th and 8th centuries and Greece was almost taken over by Slavic peoples. In the 8th century the Empire began to repopulate Greece with Greek settlers from Sicily and Asia Minor, forcing the Slavs to either assimilate to the culture or leave. By the 9th century Greece was once again dominated by those of Hellenistic origin. Greece experienced a period of rapid growth in the 11th and 12th centuries, specifically in major cities (Athens, Thessaloniki, Thebes and Corinth).

This Golden Age was quickly squashed by the Crusades, however, as Greece was overrun by Byzantine, French, and Italian knights on their way to the Holy Land (1204-1458). Constantinople fell to the Ottoman Empire on May 29, 1453, bringing an end to the Byzantine Era; Greece was gradually conquered by the Ottomans during the 15th century.

Life really wasn't that bad for the Greeks during Ottoman rule. They were generally free, both politically and religiously. Many Greeks, however, chose to leave their homeland for Western Europe. Many Greeks, especially the intelligentsia, found their way to Italy; some even say that their presence there contributed to the start of the Renaissance. The Ottomans were unable to maintain a powerful presence on the Greek islands or in the mountains of the Greek inland so many other Greeks moved to these regions.

During Ottoman rule, all Greeks dreamed of the day when the Turks would be expelled and Greece would again be an independent state. Many Greeks believed that Russia, the only remaining Orthodox power in the world at that time, was their best hope for emancipation. After a few failed attempts, however, the Greeks began to realize that Russia was not going to save them. In the early 1800s, gaining inspiration from the French Revolution and the teachings of the Enlightenment, Greeks began to form secret societies with their eyes set on revolution. In 1821 Archbishop Germano of Patrai launched an uprising that began the Greek War of Independence. Greece declared independence on March 25, 1821, but their war for independence was a long one. Many *philhellenes* (non-Greeks who admired Greek culture and tradition) volunteered to fight but the "Great Powers" of the world at that time (Britain, France, Austria, Prussia, and Russia) refused to help, fearing that Greece's insurgency was a threat to any kind of established order in the region. For awhile, Greece and its volunteer fighters did well,

winning some substantial victories against Ottoman troops, relying solely on their own resources. As time went on, however, internal strife and increased pressure from Ottoman troops began to wear them down. The outlook was not good.

Eventually, the Great Powers took note of this volatile region. The conflict in the eastern Mediterranean was disrupting trade and creating general feelings of unrest. France, Britain, and Russia sent a fleet of ships to help in the conflict. Their fleet destroyed the Ottoman-Egyptian fleet in 1827. That defeat, as well as a separate war that the Ottomans were fighting with Russia at the time, forced the Ottomans to recognize the creation of an independent Greek state. Britain, France, and Russia issued the London Protocol in 1830, declaring the new kingdom of Greece and placing it under the protection of those powers. The Great Powers determined that Greece should be ruled by a monarch (but not a Greek monarch since the Great Powers didn't think that Greece was capable of governing itself). Greece's first king was Otto of Bavaria, a German.

Territorially, it took years for Greece to reach its present configuration. Greece fought a series of wars with the Ottomans in the early 20th century. Its goal was to incorporate lands populated by ethnic Greeks that were still under Ottoman control. Also, the Balkan Wars in 1912-1913 resulted in the Greek incorporation of Crete, Chios, Samos, Epiros, and southern Macedonia. It was not until 1947, however, that Greece became as we know it today.

Greece fought alongside the Allied powers in World War I. After the war, the Great Powers gave a small portion of Asia Minor to Greece. The Turks did not take this well, however, and in the Greco-Turkish War (1919-1922) the Turks regained control of Asia Minor. The Treaty of Lausanne was signed soon afterward, fixing the borders of Turkey and Greece to this day. The treaty also included provisions for a population exchange and soon about 500,000 Turks (including Greeks who had converted to Islam during Ottoman Rule) that were living in Greek territory left for Turkey in exchange for over 1.22 million Greeks who had been living in Asia Minor. These 1.22 million people were basically refugees; they had no homes, no jobs, etc. This created an enormous strain on Greece's economy and society.

Italy invaded Greece on October 28, 1940, catapulting Greece into World War II. Greece succeeded in driving the Italian troops back into Albania despite the fact that the Italians were superior to them in both numbers and equipment. Greece's aggression against Italy immediately sided them with the Allies; in fact, Greece's victory over Italian forces earned the Allied powers their first victory against the Axis powers. Eventually, however, German reinforcements arrived to help the Italian troops. German forces invaded Greece in April 1941. Greece was soon overrun by German soldiers and Germany occupied Greece until October 1944. Hundreds of thousands of Greeks died during the German occupation. Some died in combat, others died from starvation, and many were systematically executed or sent to concentration camps. Over 90% of Greece's Jewish community was killed during World War II despite the Orthodox Church's efforts to protect them.

Almost as soon as Germany withdrew from Greece in 1944, civil war erupted. After German troops left, the Greek resistance movement that had been active during the war refused to disarm. Tensions between this group, which was controlled by communists, and the Greek government escalated into a full-scale civil war in 1946. Both the United Kingdom and the United States

provided military and economic help for the Greek Government. The Greek Civil War finally ended in 1949 when communist rebels were defeated at the battle of Grammos-Vitsi. The remaining members of the Greek communist party fled to the east, seeking refuge in Soviet territories. The Greek Civil War resulted in the deaths of around 160,000 combatants and civilians and left over 800,000 people without homes.

As peace was finally restored to Greece its economy began to grow rapidly. The 1950s were also a time of significant social development. Greece underwent a period of political change, as well, mostly due to the reconfiguration of the electoral system. In 1952 the conservative Greek Rally Party won the election and until 1963 Greece was ruled by conservative parties. Political instability began to increase after 1963 when other parties began to win elections culminating in a military coup on the eve of the 1967 elections (April 21, 1967). The coup was staged by a coalition (junta) of Colonels led by Colonel George Papadopoulos. The election planned for the next month never happened and in the following years this coalition arrested and tortured supporters of the left wing, as well as communists and other politicians. This junta remained in control for some time, eventually gaining recognition by King Constantine, as well as by the international community. In 1973 the junta abolished the Greek monarchy. Later that year students at Athens Law School and Athens Polytechnic School, frustrated with this so-called government, decided to take action against it. On November 17, 1973 the coalition stormed the gates of Athens Polytechnic School, killing twenty students. The Athens Polytechnic Uprising set off a chain of events that eventually ended Papadopoulos' rule.

Even after Papadopoulos was removed from power, stability did not come. Throughout the rest of 1973 and well into 1974, conflict reigned. Many leaders rose and fell in short amounts of time. Also included in the mix was a period of conflict with Turkey over the ownership of Cyprus. Finally, in July 1974, Greece began to move back towards stability and democracy. Greece's former Premier, Constantine Karamanlis, returned from political exile and was immediately appointed as interim prime minister. Karamanlis founded a new conservative political party, the Nea Dimokratia party (ND), that won in the elections later that year. In 1975 a democratic republican constitution was ratified; democracy had finally been restored. Also in that year, Greek citizens were allowed to decide for themselves the fate of the Greek monarchy; they voted to abolish it.

In the late 1970s a familiar face in the Greek political scene reemerged. Andreas Papandreu, a charismatic political leader from Greece's past, founded the Panhellenic Socialist Party (PASOK) and, in a landslide victory, was elected Prime Minister in 1981. Members of the PASOK party also became the majority in the parliament. For the first time in its history, Greece was ruled by a socialist government. In 1981 Greece was a newly admitted member of the European Community (now the European Union) and, during his electoral campaign, Papandreu had threatened to withdraw not only from the EC but from NATO as well. He never followed through with these threats, however, but focused most of his attention on sweeping domestic reforms. Papandreu's government legalized civil marriage (marriage outside of the Greek Orthodox Church), abolished the dowry system, overhauled the university system, and introduced a national healthcare program. Papandreu was elected to a second term as Prime Minister in 1985 but due to economic problems, government scandals, and scandals in Papandreu's private life PASOK lost its parliamentary majority to the ND party. Karamanlis

was reelected as president. However, in 1993, Papandreou returned to power when the PASOK party regained the majority in the parliament. This term of office was markedly different, however. Papandreou introduced very few new programs or policies. Illness forced his resignation in January 1996 and he died six months later. The PASOK party retained its power, however. Former Minister of Industry Constantine Simitis was named as Papandreou's replacement. To this day, the PASOK and ND parties dominate Greek politics. In the 2004 elections the ND party gained the majority in the senate and ND leader Konstantinos Karamanlis (nephew of the former prime minister) was elected prime minister.

http://encarta.msn.com/encyclopedia_761572872/Greece.html

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Greece>

<http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/3395.htm>

Christian History

Christianity came to Greece in the first century by way of the Apostle Paul. We know from Scripture of his ministry in Greece, particularly in Philippi, Corinth, and Athens. Despite persecution, the Church took root and grew in Greece.

When Constantine became emperor of the Roman Empire in the middle of the 4th century, establishing Christianity as the official religion of the empire he established his new capitol at Byzantium (which he renamed Constantinople). When the Roman Empire split after Constantine's death, the eastern part of the empire remained centered around Constantinople; its culture was essentially Greek. As the Western Roman Empire progressed toward Roman Catholicism, the eastern portions of the Empire (the Byzantine Empire) moved towards Eastern Orthodoxy. Even after the Byzantine Empire was conquered by the Ottomans the Orthodox Church continued to develop and thrive. The Greek Orthodox Church was not officially founded until the mid-1800s however, when the independent kingdom of Greece was established, bringing an end to the Ottoman domination of Greece.

The Orthodox Church (whether during Ottoman rule or after the Greek Orthodox Church was officially established) has always been an integral part of Greek life. Currently, well over 90% of the Greek population claim to be Greek Orthodox. The Greek Orthodox Church is a cultural force; it sets the holiday calendar each year, transmits and preserves Greek history, art, literature, and music, and affects the daily and weekly lives of its adherents. The Greek Orthodox Church is under the protection and authority of the Greek government and is expressly granted the status of Greece's "prevailing" religion by the Greek Constitution.

The growth of Protestant/Evangelical churches in Greece is slow. There are laws against proselytism which discourage the sharing of the Gospel and penalize Orthodox Church members who decide to convert to another denomination. Even the Roman Catholic Church, the world's largest Christian religious group, is sparsely represented in the Greek population. There are currently more Muslims in Greece than there are Roman Catholics and Protestants/Evangelicals combined.

Some statistics suggest that, even though the Greek Orthodox Church will remain the dominant religion of Greece, its numbers will decrease in the coming decades, while the number of Muslims in Greece is expected to increase.

World Christian Encyclopedia

http://encarta.msn.com/encyclopedia_761572872/Greece.html

Religions

Non-Christian

Islam

A small, but distinct, Muslim minority exists in Greece. Most of the Muslim population can be attributed to the population exchange between Greece and Turkey in 1923. In 1923, around 1.22 million Greeks who had been living in Turkey returned to Greece. While living in Turkey many of them had converted to Islam. Today it is estimated that 3.3% of Greece's population is Muslim. The Turkish population is concentrated in eastern Thrace (the area of Greece closest to Turkey). Muslims are Greece's only officially recognized religious minority.

Jewish

Greece has a very small Jewish population, as well. In 1943 there were approximately 75,000 Jews living in Greece. Almost all of that population was either deported or systematically executed during the German occupation of World War II. In 2000 it was estimated that only 5,000 Jews lived in Greece, accounting for only 0.1% of the population.

Non-Religious

Atheists comprise 0.2% of Greece's population while a more sizeable 1.7% of Greeks claim to be nonreligious.

Jehovah's Witnesses

Jehovah's Witnesses first entered Greece in 1900 and have grown steadily since that time. They have a strong presence in Athens and can also be found in many small towns and villages. Currently there are over 430 Jehovah's Witness congregations in Greece. 27500 members are claimed by the Jehovah's Witnesses. They outnumber any other non-Orthodox denomination, including the Roman Catholic Church.

Catholic/Orthodox Churches

The Greek Orthodox Church

The Greek Orthodox Church is the official state church of Greece; it is under the protection of the Greek government. Some estimates indicate that 98% of Greece's population is at least

marginally Greek Orthodox. A more accurate estimate would probably be 95%. The roots of Orthodoxy in Greece stretch back to the Byzantine Empire but the Greek Orthodox Church was not founded until Greece was free from Ottoman control on the mid 1800s. Today, Greece is the only country in the world that is officially Eastern Orthodox and has the Orthodox Church as its official state church.

Some statistics suggest that the Greek Orthodox Church will begin to lose some of its adherents in the coming decades. Islam, however, is expected to grow in Greece. The Greek Orthodox Church, while an important cultural institution, does not preach the true Gospel and is not a transforming force in the culture; that makes it defenseless against the spread of Islam.

Roman Catholic

Approximately 0.6% of Greece's population is Roman Catholic. Latin, Byzantine, and Armenian rites are all represented in Greece, the Latin being the most important. There are nine Latin ecclesiastical divisions and one each of Byzantine and Armenian. About 80% of the Greek Catholics belong to the worker and peasant classes. Catholicism is slowly increasing among students, intellectuals, and businessmen.

Protestants/Evangelicals/Pentecostals

Greece has two main Protestant denominations. The Protestant community in Greece is now estimated to be 4,000 constituents. The growth of all Protestant/Evangelical groups in Greece is slow partly due to the strict laws about proselytism in Greece. Protestants are sometimes arrested for sharing their faith with a member of the Greek Orthodox Church. Protestant ministers are only permitted to minister to members of their churches.

The Greek Evangelical Church

The Greek Evangelical Church was founded in 1858. The Church reports 32 congregations with over 2000 members.

The Free Evangelical Churches of Greece

The Church was founded in 1908 and has 63 congregations with over 4000 members.

The Free Apostolic Church

This Church has over 140 congregations with more than 10,000 members

Assemblies of God

The Assemblies of God report 14 congregations and around 500 members.

Other smaller evangelical groups exist, as well.

People Groups

814

Greek

The Greek population of Greece is considered unreached. Less than 2% of the population is evangelical (the Joshua Project estimates that only 0.4% of Greeks living in Greece are evangelical) but some church planting efforts have been made in the made two years. Multiple evangelical mission agencies are currently engaging Greeks and there is some evidence of the beginnings of a reproducing church planting movement.

824

Tosk (Albanian)

There are around 300,000 Tosks living in Greece. Tosks originate in Albania but speak their own language. Their primary religion is Greek Orthodox. Less than 1% of the population is evangelical and there have been no church planting efforts among this population in recent years although there are some evangelical resources available. A Bible translation in the Tosk dialect was completed in 1993.

811

Roma (Gypsy)

There are over 300,000 Roma living in Greece. Roma do not subscribe to any form of institutionalized religion and, spiritually speaking, are best described as animists. Less than 1% of the population is evangelical and there have been no church planting efforts among this population in recent years although there are some evangelical resources available.

807

Vlach

The Vlach people are a Balkan people that inhabit many countries in south Europe, including Romania, Moldova, and the former Yugoslav states. Their population in Greece is mostly confined to the northern part of the country. Their primary religion is Islam. Less than 1% of the population is evangelical and there have been no church planting efforts among this population in recent years although there are some evangelical resources available.

816

Macedonian

There are over 180,000 Macedonians living in Greece. Macedonians are primarily Orthodox in religion; around 90% of Greece's Macedonian population is Greek Orthodox. Less than 1% of the population is evangelical and there have been no church planting efforts among this

population in recent years although there are some evangelical resources available. Macedonians living in Greece are engaged by multiple missions organizations at this time. There is some evidence of a reproducing church planting movement.

808

Arvanite (Albanian)

There are over 160,000 Arvanites living in Greece. Arvanites, like Tosks, are immigrants from Albania but speak their own language. There are very few, if any, Arvanite believers; there are no known Christian clusters. Arvanites are currently unengaged by any evangelical missionaries. There are some evangelical resources available but a complete Bible translation is still needed.

818

Pomak (Bulgarian Muslims)

Approximately 30,000 Pomaks live in Greece. Less than 1% of the population is evangelical and there have been no church planting efforts among this population in recent years although there are some evangelical resources available. The Joshua Project (www.joshuaproject.net) considers this people group to be unreached.

The Pomak people are very resistant to the Gospel. There are no known Pomak believers living in Greece; most Pomak Christians live Bulgaria but Pomak Christians only make up around 1% of the total Pomak population in that area. The Bible has not been translated into the Pomak dialect (although it is available in Bulgarian and Greek) and there are currently no known evangelical missionary units working with Pomaks.

822

Serbs

Approximately 30,000 Serbs live in Greece. Their primary religion is Eastern Orthodox (80% of the population is known to be Orthodox). Less than 1% of the population is evangelical and there have been no church planting efforts among this population in recent years although at least one known evangelical missions organization is committed to reaching this people group. There are many evangelical resources available for this people group as well as a complete Bible translation.

806

Armenian

There are 20,000 Armenians living in Greece. Almost 85% of those are Orthodox adherents. The number of evangelicals is unknown but it is believed that less than 1% of the population is evangelical. There are multiple evangelical resources available and a complete Bible translation.

817

Meglanite

Meglanites speak the Megleno dialect of the Romanian language. Approximately 12,000 Meglanites live in Greece. Less than 1% of the population is evangelical and there have been no church planting efforts among this population in recent years although there are some evangelical resources available.

46763

Rumelian Turk

The population of Rumelian Turks in Greece is unknown, as is their status of evangelism. Their primary language is Turkish and their religion is Islam.

www.peoplegroups.org

www.joshuaproject.org

Missiological Implications

1. Evangelical Christians and Churches should seek to develop evangelistic approaches to persons in the Orthodox Church. These methods should be taught to Christians in Greece (and other areas dominated by the Orthodox Church).
2. Evangelical Christians and Churches should seek to evangelize the large numbers of immigrant peoples (over 500,000 Albanians live in Greece), Serbs (30,000), Roma (300,000), and Macedonians (160,000). Other groups who have sought safety in Greece could be open to evangelistic efforts.
3. Evangelical Christians and Churches should seek to evangelize the vast numbers of Greeks who live outside of Greece. These peoples are estimated at around 5 million in 88 different countries (almost 2 million in the USA and one-half million in Germany). These Greeks could be evangelized and encouraged to return to evangelize their country.
4. Evangelical Christians and Churches should seek means to reach out to the large segment of the Greek population that is suffering drug addiction (as many as 200,000).
5. Evangelical Christians and Churches should seek means to evangelize the peoples in the Greek Islands that are mostly unevangelized.
6. Evangelical Christians and Churches should seek to aid the Greek Christians in training leadership for the movement in Greece.
7. Evangelical Christians and Churches should introduce the strategies relating to small group evangelism and house churches to seek evangelization and church planting while avoiding legal action against them.

Greeks are very religious people; their lives revolve around the Church. However, they lack a true understanding of the Gospel and have no concept of a personal relationship with God through Jesus.

There are multiple people groups living in Greece, as well as large numbers of unregistered guest workers and countless tourists that visit Greece during peak vacation seasons. While the Greek government officially states that proselytizing is against the law, it is still possible to share the Gospel openly in Greece. Greece is an ideal location for evangelizing these minority groups and encouraging them to return to their home countries/people groups and become missionaries and church planters among their own people.

Links –

<http://www.greekembassy.org/press/facts/>

www.peoplegroups.org

www.joshuaproject.org

http://encarta.msn.com/encyclopedia_761572872/Greece.html

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Greece>

<http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/3395.htm>

<http://gvnet.com/humantrafficking/Greece.htm>

http://www.economist.com/displayStory.cfm?story_id=3773765

<http://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/print/gr.html>

