Searching for the Traces of Greek Civilization in the Iberian Peninsula

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ABSTRACT

The main aim of this study is to highlight the deep relationship between Greek and Spanish culture in order to form the basis for the development of future policies that will lead to the further strengthening of relations between the two countries. In the modern era, countries are increasingly focusing on the creation of specialized mechanisms to shape their cultural policies. The development of cultural policy is an area of countries' foreign policy and is based on one of the pillars supporting their soft power: culture. The aim of this study is to search for traces of Greek civilization in the Iberian Peninsula starting from the 8th century B.C. when the Greeks were found in ancient Iberia for commercial reasons. Our research then led us to Catalonia, a region of Spain that bases its diversity on its Greek roots. One question we must answer is whether the historical past linking Catalonia and Greece has contributed to the formation of its national identity. Finally, the aim is to look at the dissemination of the Greek element in Spain today, focusing on the dynamics of the learning of the Greek language in Spain, mainly in the field of higher education, since language is an important element of a country’s culture.

In this context, an analysis is presented based both on bibliographical research on the evolution of the Greek element in the Iberian Peninsula and primary research on the Greek element, especially in the region of Catalonia. The present study aims to capture the traces of Greek culture in Spain and the ties that unite the two countries from antiquity to the present day in order to lead to new initiatives in the future for the further strengthening of relations between the two peoples.

Keywords: Catalonia, Greek culture, Iberian Peninsula, Spanish education system.

1. Introduction

The Greek presence in the Iberian Peninsula in the period of antiquity began around the 8th century BC and extended until the Roman conquest of Iberia. The Greeks found themselves at the western end of the Mediterranean for purely commercial reasons and never moved with expansionist aspirations. It was in this context that the Phocaeans founded the city of Emporion on the Northeastern coast of the Iberian Peninsula, today's Catalonia. The decline of the city of Emporio, which led to its abandonment, began with the arrival of the Romans in the Iberian Peninsula. After systematic excavations that began in 1908, evidence of Greek colonization in Spain began to gradually come to light. The detection of the ancient Greek colony of Emporio on the outskirts of the 20th century was a national affair for the Catalans, as they tried to base their Catalan identity on their deep Greek roots. The Catalan intellectual world had begun to turn its attention to Greek culture with the development of the Noucentisme movement. For the followers of this movement, it was very important to demonstrate that a part of their ancestors came from classical Greece. The intellectuals of the time took the initiative to support this turn towards Greek culture. A typical initiative was the creation of the Bernat Medzé Collection, which aimed to translate and publish the Greek and Latin classics. Towards the end of the 20th century, various organizations were created in Spain that aimed to expand cultural relations between Greece and Spain. The most important of these were the "Spanish-Hellenic Cultural Association" in Madrid.
the “Centre for Byzantine, Neohellenic and Cypriot Studies” in Granada, the “Hellenic Iberia” in the ancient city of Emporio, and the “Catalan Association of Neohellenists.”

2. **Greek Civilization in the Iberian Peninsula**

The ancient history of the Iberian Peninsula includes mainly influences from the Celtic and Roman civilizations. This fact, however, did not prevent the emergence of Greek civilization in ancient Iberia, in the context of colonies created by the Greeks, for mainly commercial reasons. The Greek presence in the western end of the Mediterranean begins around the 8th century BC and extends until the Roman conquest of Iberia. It is essentially a history of commercial exchanges and cultural contacts between two different worlds located at geographically opposite ends connected by the Mediterranean Sea. The Greeks never attempted to invade the interior of Iberia but remained on the coast because their interest was in commercial exchange, not conquest. Systematic colonization was carried out by the Crimeans of Euboea, the Rhodians, who founded the city of Rhodes in the 7th century BC in the Northeastern Iberian Peninsula, under the Pyrenees, but above all, the Phocaeans, who owned the powerful and pioneering ships of the time, the *pentekontoroi* (Buscato, 1999). The indigenous population readily accepted the influence of the Greeks and became involved with them. The colonies they had established on the Mediterranean coast stretched from the Herculean Columns to the Middle East and Phoenicia (Cabrera, 2001).

From the end of the 7th century BC, the Phocaeans headed towards the northeastern coast of the Iberian Peninsula (Catalonia), south of Rhodes, and founded a new city, Emporion. According to evidence from the early stages of the settlement, which was unearthed by archaeological excavations, the old city of Emporion, which dates back to before 850 BC, was an indigenous settlement and not the commercial center founded by the Phocaeans. The presence of the Phocaeans is documented in the last years of the 7th century BC, while the creation of a new Greek settlement begins towards the middle of the 6th century BC and constitutes the urban part of Emporion, known today as Nea Polis (Aquilué & Cabrera, 2012).

This city soon expanded due to the commercial activities that its inhabitants developed with the indigenous communities. The consolidation of Iberian culture coincided with the maximum development of Greek trade in the region, so the eastern region of the peninsula became a new market that attracted merchants from the Mediterranean regions, Carthage, and the Greek cities. This led to the massive importation from Greece in the 5th and 4th centuries BC of Attic vases, bronze objects, and oil. The Emporion was essentially the main entry point for imports from Attica and a key point of shipment of Iberian products to the central and Eastern Mediterranean. From the dispersion of Greek products in Iberian territory, one can deduce the great commercial activity that the city had developed. The creation and use of the city’s own coinage with the city’s insignia from the 4th century BC is a characteristic fact of the city’s commercial prosperity (Sánchez Balaguer et al., 2018).

The influence that the Iberian communities received from the Greek culture was direct and continuous. Both the areas near Emporion and the rest of the regions managed to assimilate Greek cultural elements and adapt them to their own standards. Greek cultural expressions influenced the artistic expression of the Iberians, but they introduced the Greek element with great originality in their works. The Iberians adopted artistic and iconographic expressions of Greek, and more broadly Mediterranean, origin, as well as the models of Greek sculpture. Another important cultural phenomenon that resulted from the activity of the Greeks was the development of a writing system in the 4th century BC, the so-called Greco-Iberian writing system, which was found around present-day Alicante but was not widespread. The influence of the Greek element in the cultural development of Iberia gradually widened over the centuries and contributed to making the Iberian Peninsula a factor in shaping the history of the Mediterranean in the period of the pre-Roman Empire (Pérez Ballester, 2012).

The city of Emporion maintained its great commercial activity, and the prosperity and economic power derived from it until the end of the 2nd century BC. However, at this time, the presence of the Romans in the area was becoming more and more noticeable, a fact that would, in the future, lead to the beginning of the end for the Greek city. In 218 BC, during the 2nd Carthaginian War, a strong military force from Rome landed in Emporion and gradually succeeded in establishing a Roman presence in Iberia. When Spain was completely conquered by the Romans, and especially after 48 BC, Emporiae, which was now the Roman city of Emporiorum, began to decline. Three centuries later, the city was completely abandoned by its inhabitants. It took five centuries, and the Franks dominated the region before the name of Emporia was heard again. From the 8th to the 11th century, it became a county capital, and later, with the emergence of new neighbouring towns as commercial and economic centers, the town of Emporion finally declined and was left to fade into obscurity for many centuries (Cabrera, 2001).
At the beginning of the 20th century, and specifically in 1908, systematic archaeological excavations began in the city of Emporion, which continued uninterrupted until the beginning of the Spanish Civil War. With the end of the civil war, excavations continued and provided a solid archaeological basis for the reconstruction of Greek colonization in Spain. Within a short period of time from the beginning of the excavations, on October 25, 1909, came the first major discovery, that of the statue of Asclepius. Initially, some marble fragments were raised and retrieved, which, when placed in their proper order, revealed that it was an oversized statue of Asclepius, the god of medicine and health. This statue was two meters and twenty centimeters high and weighed eight hundred kilograms. After its complete assembly, it was exhibited at the Archaeological Museum of Catalonia in Barcelona, and since 2008, on the occasion of the centenary of the beginning of the excavations, it was transferred to the Archaeological Museum of Emporia and is the largest ancient Greek statue ever found on the western side of Europe. The archaeologists, after a thorough study of the material from which the statue is made, concluded that the upper part is made of Parian marble, while the body is made of Pentelic, and the date of construction was estimated to be the 2nd century BC. It is likely that the statue of Asclepius was made in Greece, perhaps in Delos, and transported to the city of Emporion (Olmos & Cabrera, 2012).

The Asklepion was the most important of all the buildings, and it was both a place of worship dedicated to the god of medicine and a therapeutic center where believers gathered to find a solution to their health problems. The spaces included three worship temples, waiting and prayer areas for patients, and the sanctuary of the priest of the god. Among the other parts of the city, the market, the arcade, the cisterns, the salt processing workshops, and the breakwater on the beach were all built in the 1st century AD and were always visible. What is remarkable about the breakwater is the fact that for centuries, it continued to perform the task for which it was built, showing great durability over time, a fact that is attributed to its dimensions, with a total length of 82 meters, a thickness of 6 meters and a height of 6.5 meters. Particularly impressive are the parts of houses that have been found in the southern part of the archaeological site where the Roman state of Emporiae extends. In one of the houses, which possibly belonged to a senior official of the Roman Emporiae, a mosaic was found in the southern part of the archaeological site where the Roman state of Emporiae extends. The mosaics are, to date, the only commercial colonies in Iberia that have been identified. For Rhodes, however, the evidence that has come to light is scant, making Emporion the only archaeological site in the Iberian Peninsula where both the evolution of the ancient Greek city and its Greek cultural heritage can be seen. The only certainty about Rhodes today is that it was a port settlement of indeterminate dimensions, founded in the early 4th century BC. During the investigations, some buildings attributed to residences and parts of the defensive wall were found bearing technical characteristics of the Greek building tradition. The city of Rhodes was considered by some archaeologists to have been a Rhodian colony, but it is a legend created by the ancients in order to give the city prestige and uniqueness. Although its foundation must be placed in the context of the influence of the Trade sometime in the early 4th century BC, it is speculated that in the 3rd century BC, the city of Rhodes gained political independence, as evidenced by the minting of its own coins entitled ‘Rhodite’ and the production and trade of its own products. However, this period of prosperity was short-lived, and from 218 BC onwards, Rhodes lost its independence as a city and was definitively linked to the city of Emporion, becoming a fortress of the northern area of the Gulf of Rhodes. From the beginning of the 2nd century BC and after the Romans had landed in the area, it seems that Rhodes, according to the archaeological material, ceased to be inhabited (Aquilué & Cabrera, 2012).

After the influence of Greek civilization on the Iberian Peninsula was interrupted by the arrival of the Romans, relations between the peninsula and Byzantium were re-established in the mid-6th century, with the foundation of the Byzantine province of Spain, which came about as a consequence of Justinian I’s campaigns to re-establish the Roman Empire in the West. The Byzantines remained in the region until 624, but there is no significant historical evidence of this period (Ayensa, 2015).

Moving into the more modern history of Spain and reaching the outskirts of the 20th century, the archaeological research and the identification of the ancient Greek colony of Emporion, which was the most important ancient Greek colony both in Spain and in the entire Iberian Peninsula, was for the Catalans a national affair, since it was the cornerstone of the effort to support the Catalan identity. After Barcelona’s submission to the Crown of Castile, Catalan institutions gradually disintegrated. However, in the intellectual world of Catalonia, artists, writers, and icons began an attempt to regain
some of their self-confidence and lost social cohesion. The role of archaeologists in this effort was particularly important since, thanks to their work and their important archaeological finds, Catalonia was able to support its different roots from the rest of Spain. Within a relatively short period of time from the beginning of the excavations in 1908, it was not until 1909 that they came across the statue of Asclepius, which boosted everyone’s confidence and led to the continuation of the archaeological excavations and the foundation of the Hellenist movement in Catalonia.

At the same time, at the beginning of the 20th century, with the development of the Noucentisme movement, a large part of the Catalan intellectual world turned to Greek culture, and the growing interest in Greece reached its peak. For the followers of this movement, it was very important to show that part of their ancestors originated from classical Greece. The ideology of this movement was reflected in various areas of life, including art and architecture. A characteristic fact is the reproduction of Greek models through numerous artistic works, as well as the reproduction of Greco-Latin models of buildings with classical motifs. The movement’s name, Noucentisme, is attributed to the ideologist of the movement, Eugenie d’Ors, who drew up the program of this movement, which claimed a return to a cultural reference model based on Greco-Roman-inspired classicism, which would act as a guide, not only for the intellectuals but for the entire Catalan people on the road to the conquest of the supreme value of humanism. According to Eugenie d’Ors, ‘Any classicism that was not motivated by a humanism was a wrapping without content.’ However, it was a great challenge for Catalan culture to acquire a mature discourse—a fact that presupposed the assimilation of the values of Greco-Roman humanism—without the existence of good translations of the classical authors. It was in this context that the collection of Greek and Latin writers was born, named after the first representative of humanism in Catalan letters, Bernat Medzé (1340–1413) (Catasus & Puigdollers, 2016).

The Bernat Medzé Collection (Colección Bernat Medzé) was created in 1922 by the intellectual and politician Francesc Cambó (1876–1947), with the writer, journalist, and intellectual Joan Estelrich as its general director. The aim was to translate and publish the Greek and Latin classics, and he brought as a symbol the ancient Greek statue of Asclepius, which had been found a few years earlier during excavations in the ancient Greek city of Emporion. With almost a century of history and more than 430 published volumes, the Bernat Medzé Collection was one of the most ambitious cultural projects of Catalan culture of all time and was instrumental in asserting the social, literary, and cultural importance of the classical tradition advocated by the Noucentisme movement.

An important personality, both for his contribution to the Bernat Medzé Foundation and, more generally, for his special relationship with classical Greece and later with important modern Greek writers, was the Catalan poet, writer, and Hellenist Carles Riba (1893–1959). Carles Riba made very important translations of classical works written in ancient Greek, such as those of Aeschylus, Sophocles, Euripides, Plutarch, and Xenophon. His crowning work is his iconic translation of Homer’s Odyssey, realizing a poetic yet very precise version of the original text. At the same time, Carles Reba was the first translator of Cavafy’s poems-66 poems in particular—into the official Catalan language. His interest in modern Greek literature came late in his life, while his interest in Greek folkloric songs in general, Cavafy, Seferis, or Kazantzakis, are the first examples of the growing interest in modern Greek literature in Catalonia. Carles Rimba is also the author of the most important poetic work of 20th-century Catalan literature and one of the most important in European literature, The Elegy of Bierville, which is closely linked to Greece and has been translated into many languages, including Greek, by the great Greek Spanish writer Julia Iatridis (Riba, 2019).

Carles Rimba’s magnificent relationship with Greece is highlighted through his work The Elegy of Bierville, which emerged after a process of deep introspection by the author during a difficult period for him, which led him to his beloved knowledge of ancient Greek culture in all its manifestations (history, philosophy, fine arts, literature) and its harmonious combination with his old experiences from a trip he made to Greece in 1927. At the same time, however, it was not long before he began to take an interest in modern Greece, which he had despised when he was younger. Kavafis aroused his enthusiasm, and from that point on, he became involved in translating his poems. In 1959, he was at the University of Barcelona to read some of Cavafy’s poems and assess their impact. This was followed by the enthusiasm of both the audience and Carles Reba himself. The public reading of Cavafy’s poetry was openly perceived as a breath of life and freedom—almost an act of resistance—in the midst of tyranny. In 1962, three years after Rimba’s death, the first edition of 66 of Cavafy’s poems was published in Catalan. In this way, Carles Riba had paid his debt to Greece. He paved the way for the reception of Cavafy’s poetry in a country where interest in Cavafy continues to grow while translations into all the official languages of the country (Castilian, Catalan, Basque, Galician) are multiplying rapidly (Ayensa, 2015).

Of particular interest is the fact that in Catalonia (and in Spain in general), the reception of Cavafy was marked by an implicitly political element in terms of its historical background, its bold subject matter for the time, and its interpretation. In 1975, the songwriter Lluís Llach set to music a very
free adaptation of Riba’s translation of Ithaca, entitled ‘Journey to Ithaca.’ This song became widely known and popular as a resistance song-anthem of the “Spanish post-communist revolution,” as an allegory to freedom, democracy, and anything else that could inspire the oppressed in rebellion. During the years of the absolute peak of Noucentisme, it would not be an exaggeration to speak of a Greek Catalonia, a bridge of blue sea that connected the land of Catalonia with that of Greece.

In the late 1920s, Greece contributed decisively to the development of more direct relations between Greeks and the Spanish nomads because of its passionate interest in the political and social changes in Spain under the Second Republic and its cultural renaissance. The pioneer of this movement was Costis Palamas, who promoted the first direct cultural contact between the two countries by founding the Spanish-Hellenic Union in the late 1920s. This move by Palamas, as well as that of other Greek writers in general, can easily be interpreted as the fruit of all the admiration for the great Spanish creator Miguel de Unamuno. Great Greek writers such as Kazantzakis, Uranis, Melas, and many others were associated with him. Greek intellectuals such as Uranis and Kazantzakis made sure to visit Spain, which contributed greatly to their knowledge of the country. Indeed, in 1936, Kazantzakis was in Spain as a war correspondent sent by Kathimerini, and Unamuno gave him the last interview of his life.

The contact that developed between Greek and Spanish intellectuals set in motion in Spanish universities after the Spanish Civil War, studies directly linked to Greek culture. In the context of the reconstruction of the Spanish educational system, modern Greek studies, which had been non-existent until then on the Spanish cultural scene, began to be cultivated. The visits to Spain by the two Greek Nobel Prize winners, Seferis in 1964 and Odysseus Elytis in 1980, gave a particular impetus to a better knowledge of Greek intellectual culture in Spain. In the 1960s, the first translations of modern Greek poetry appeared, which were a precursor to the publication of the anthologies of Cavafy and Seferis and the anthologies of Elytis and Ritsos, as well as translations of prose by Seferis, Roidis, Venezis, Sotiriou, Takhtsis, Chirkas and others that would follow in the 1980s. The same happened with the translation of modern Greek literature into Catalan (Bádenas de la Peña, 2012).

3. Organizations in Spain for the Dissemination of Greek Culture

From the 1980s onwards, organizations were created in Spain that contributed to the expansion of cultural relations between the two countries and were aimed at promoting Byzantine and Modern Greek studies, the Modern Greek language, and Modern Greek culture in Spain. The organizations with the most important activities in Spain are the “Asociación Cultural Hispano-Helénica” (Spanish-Hellenic Cultural Association) in Madrid, the “Centro de Estudios Bizantinos, Neogriegos y Chipriotas” (Centre for Byzantine, Neo-Hellenic and Cypriot Studies) in Granada, the “Iberia Graeca” (Hellenic Iberia), with its headquarters in San Marti d’Empourias (the ancient Emporium), in the province of Girona in Catalonia, and the “Associació Catalana de Neohellenistes” (Catalan Association of Neohellenists). The Spanish-Hellenic Cultural Association began its activity in 1980 on the initiative of prominent figures in the field of culture and academic life. Its aim was to promote mutual knowledge of the history, culture, customs, and characteristics of the peoples of Spain and Greece. The Spanish-Hellenic Cultural Association wanted to contribute to the effective rapprochement of the Spanish and Greek communities. For this reason, it developed all kinds of initiatives that promoted cultural, spiritual, and material exchange between the two peoples. Emphasis was placed on the teaching of Modern Greek language courses, with the aim of creating and permanently training secondary Greek language teachers. In this context, agreements have been signed with the Ministry of Education, Culture and Sport and the Autonomous Community of Madrid. The center has also run specialized courses in Byzantine Studies in the past, and since 1982, it has been publishing the specialized scientific journal “Erythia,” a journal of Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies, which is an organ of expression of the Spanish-Hellenic Cultural Association. 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The objectives of this center were the creation and maintenance of a web portal where all relevant information on Greek material culture in the Iberian Peninsula would be available. This database included various objects that were the subject of Greek trade, such as ceramics, coins, inscriptions, sculptures, and architectural elements with the corresponding documentation, graphic representation,
and origin, with the aim of facilitating their research and dissemination through the Internet. Also, this portal provided information on the latest elements concerning Greek archaeology in Spain and Portugal, as well as on museums, collections, archaeological sites, and scientific publications related to Greek cultural heritage. The center also aimed to develop its own research projects that would promote knowledge about the Greek cultural presence and its interaction with the societies of the Iberian Peninsula in antiquity. In addition, the aim was to strengthen state research programs on Greek Mediterranean archaeology through the establishment of cultural cooperation with various scientific institutions and universities active in this field of research. At the same time, the aim was to prepare new researchers in the field of archaeology of Greek interest and to link them to the various documentation and research programs of the center, as well as to create a program of cultural and social dissemination of the common Greek heritage in the Mediterranean as an element of convergence of the Mediterranean cultural identity. In this context, the presence of “Iberia Graeca” is particularly important, and its work is essential for the development of research and dissemination programmes for the Greek cultural heritage (Aquilué & Cabrera, 2012).

In Catalonia, there is another Center, the Catalan Association of Modernists. This center started its activities in 2006, and its main objective was to contribute to the knowledge of the history, culture, and literature of modern Greece. The Centre's website plays a key role in this, through which the members of the association are regularly informed about new activities. The activities that have been developed since 2006 are very interesting, focusing on the work of Cavafy, Ritsos, Seferis, Gatsos, Kavvadias, and Karyotakis. Of particular interest is the publishing work of the center with the electronic publication of the magazine “Aereides/Torre dels Vents.” This magazine is a digital magazine of modern Greek culture that hosts a variety of topics related to the culture of contemporary Greece. The first issue was published in 2020. Overall, the activities of the Catalan Association of Modern Greek Studies have a great impact on the Catalan people and actively contribute to the dissemination of Greek culture in Catalonia.

4. The Dissemination of the Greek Language in Higher Education in Spain

Language is an important element of a country’s culture, and therefore, it is worth mentioning the dynamics of Greek language learning in Spain, which is mainly in the context of higher education. The systematic learning of Modern Greek in Spanish universities is relatively recent, and so far, there is no qualification in Modern Greek studies recognized by the Ministry of Education. The only relevant titles are those in Classic Literature and Interpretation-Translation. However, there are cases where Modern Greek is offered as an elective course in the context of classical studies. Initially, at the University of Barcelona, the course in Modern Greek was offered in 1928 by Antoni Rubio i Lluch, which was abolished after his death. Today, it is taught as an elective course. In the rest of Spain, interest in modern and contemporary Greece began to manifest itself in the university circles of fans of ancient Greek culture in Salamanca and Madrid. Modern Greek was introduced as an elective course, which still exists today at the Department of Classical Philology of the Complutense University of Madrid, while it is also taught at the Autonomous University of Madrid in the form of a seminar course. The National University of Distance Education (UNED) has also offered two levels of Modern Greek since 1991. The teaching of Greek has been included in the classical studies curriculum at the University of the Basque Country from 1985 to the present day, where it is offered as an elective course. At the University of Salamanca from 2003 to the present day, various levels of Modern Greek as a second and third language are offered in the specializations of philology. In addition, individual courses, always in the context of classical studies, have been offered or are being offered at the universities of Murcia since 1998, Cadiz from 1994 to 2000, Valladolid from 1994 to 2005, Oviedo from 2003 to the present day, and Almeria from 2000 to 2010 (Morfakidis, 2018).

In the translation and interpreting specialty curricula, Modern Greek was introduced at various levels. At the University of Malaga, they were introduced as a second foreign language in 1992 and still exist to this day, while they were introduced as a third language at the Universities of Alicante from 1997 to 2015 and Murcia from 2010 to the present. Various levels of new Greek are also offered to the public in the Language Institutes of the Universities of Zaragoza from 1987 to the present and Seville from 1994 to the present. Modern Greek is also taught in the Official Language Schools (Escuelas Oficiales de Idiomas), which are state-run non-university institutions that grant official language certificates. Such schools have been operating in Madrid since 1985, Barcelona since 1986, Malaga since 1991, and Alicante since 2002 (Morfakidis, 2018).

The University of Granada could be described as the most active in the field of teaching Greek. The teaching of Greek was introduced in 1981, initially as an elective within the Classics Department, and from 1992 to 2000, it was taught at three levels in the University’s Centre for Modern Languages. From 1995, it began to be offered in two annual courses in all disciplines of literature in the Faculty
of Philosophy. In 1997, he also entered the School of Translation and Interpreting, where he was well-received by the students. From 2003 to 2010, the only postgraduate programme in the Spanish-speaking world, entitled “La Grecia Medieval y Moderna: Estudios sobre su Lengua, Literatura, Historia y Civilización”, was in operation, with professors from universities in Spain, Greece, Cyprus, Germany and Belgium. In 1998, the autonomous government of Andalusia approved the establishment of a research group entitled “Byzantine, Modern Greek and Balkan Studies” at the Department of Greek and Slavic Philology. This research group has developed several research projects. From 2010 onwards, the Humanities discipline was reformed, and a new image emerged in Modern Greek Studies at the University of Granada. In the Faculty of Philosophy and Letters, a new specialization entitled “Modern Languages and their Literatures” began to be offered, in the context of which Modern Greek was offered, among other things, as a choice of second language. The same was applied to the School of Translation and Interpreting, where Modern Greek was recognized as a second language and, more specifically, six-semester language courses were offered, aiming at the acquisition of the C1 level of language acquisition. After the changes that took place in 2010 and the completion of the operation of the only postgraduate programme mentioned above, individual courses in Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies began to be offered in two postgraduate programmes, one of Classic Literature and Classical Tradition and in the one of Modern Languages and Cultures. Also, the new curriculum system of the University of Granada has introduced the doctoral programme “Lenguas, Textos y Contextos,” which includes the research direction “Byzantine Culture, Literature, and Modern Greek Studies,” a unique experience in the Spanish-speaking world. Finally, it is worth mentioning that since 1987, fourteen international scientific meetings have been organized for Greece, while since 2000, they have been held in collaboration with the Center for Byzantine, Modern Greek and Cypriot Studies. Overall, Granada is undoubtedly a reference point for modern Greek studies in the Spanish-speaking world.

5. Conclusion

The preceding analysis shows that the relationship between Greece and Spain is profound. They are two Mediterranean nations that, from antiquity to the present day, have developed several interactions. In modern history, and in particular, for the Catalan region, Greek culture has been linked to something much more profound, the very identity of the Catalan people, an element on which they have based their difference from the rest of the Spanish people. Catalonia still has its eyes on Greece, and it ensures that all this interest is expressed through organised movements that stem from its structured cultural policy.

In Spain, as mentioned above, interest in Greek culture remains lively and is expressed both through the initiatives undertaken by relevant specialized organizations that are active in the country and university departments that have Greek as a subject of study. The close and constantly evolving relationship between the two countries can only bring benefits for both peoples, and it is, therefore, advisable to pursue increasingly targeted policies in the future aimed at further strengthening the relationship between the two peoples. Spain is a country that has given particular attention to the development of its cultural policy and could be the basis for new initiatives in the future.

Conflict of Interest

The author declares that they do not have any conflict of interest.

References


