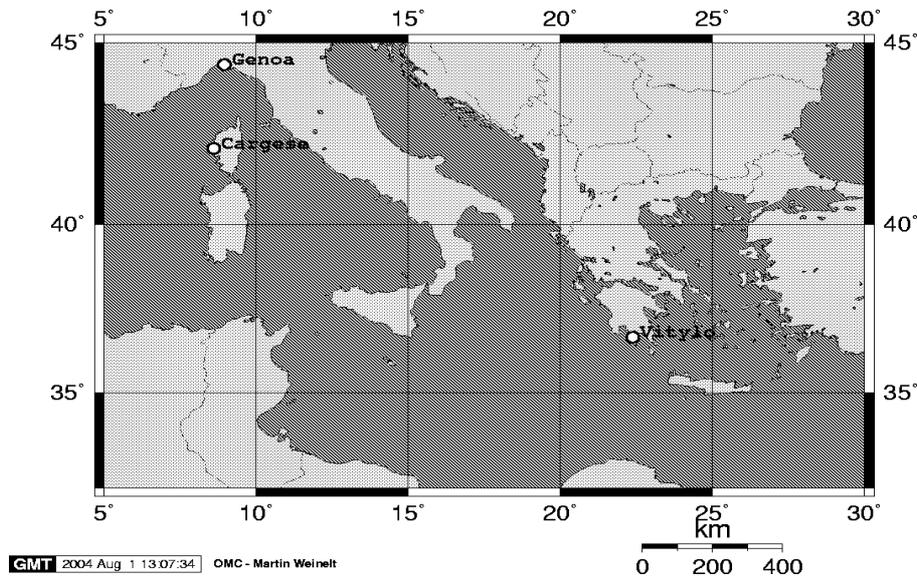


How Greek were the Greeks of Corsica?

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1. Potted History

Et les Genoïis disent qu'il faudroit que la Barbarie des Magnottes fust bien grande, si celle des Corses n'estoit capable d'y mettre un contre-poids. Il est certain que si par le cours des affaires ce dernier Traitté vient à réüssir, jamais aucune alliance de Nation n'a esté mieux assortie. Leurs Mariages communs doivent produire des enfans, qui seront autant de Chefs-d'œuvres de ferocité. (La Guilletière 1675)

- Mani in Peloponnese: chronic resistance to central authority.
- After fall of Crete to Ottomans in 1669, fears Ottomans would turn to Mani; Venetian protection no longer effective.
- Several waves of migration: Brindisi, Puglia, Tuscany.
- Genoa allows colony in Corsica, with intent of pacifying the locals.
- 1500 set out; 500 get there in 1676; settle in abandoned village of Paomia.
- Violent confrontations with Corsicans after first couple of years.
- Long-running confrontations with Catholic authorities over the requirement that they adopt (Greek rite) Catholicism.
- Crisis in 1694 over Gregorian calendar; 1715 over Orthodox church books.
- 1729: Corsican insurrection. 1731: Greeks chased out of Paomia.
- Greeks move to Ajaccio, where they serve as the city guard. 20% of the population, well-connected, and armed.

- 1745: Vendetta with surrounding villagers unplanned by Genoa; Genoa stops paying Greek soldiers.
- 1752: One party of Greeks forms abortive colony in Sardinia.
- Other Greco-Corsicans leave for Leghorn, Minorca, Florida, or are in negotiations with Tuscany and Spain.
- 1768: France takes control of Corsica. Count de Marbeuf, commander of island, takes personal interest in Greeks.
- 1776: Village of Cargèse founded. 3/4 of Greeks move there, under Capt. Georges-Marie Stephanopoli; a quarter remain in Ajaccio, under Capt. Costantino Stephanopoli.
- Greeks remaining in Ajaccio formed its elite: Costantino's son Demetrius sponsored a teenager called Napoleon Buonaparte in his first military academy.
- Troubles with Corsicans persist: raids on Cargèse in 1789, 1791, 1796 (after temporary British rule—Greeks expelled to Ajaccio for 3 months), 1814, 1830.
- Corsicans settling Cargèse from the 1790s. Latin rite parish established in 1804.
- Attempt to abolish Greek rite in 1822–29 by not replacing Greek priest.
- Violence between rites in 1830–1832. Lesser violence within Greek rite (personality clashes) 1860, 1865.
- By 1870s, young Cargesians mostly assimilated.
- Colonists leave for Sidi Merouan in 1874–76: 20% of village, all Greeks. Majority of village becomes Latin rite.
- Nicholas Phardys sent from Marseilles in 1885 to bolster Greek national sentiment. Fails.
- Greek priests since 1935 not indigenous. Greek rite now third of village, Msgr Marchiano alternates churches.
- Currently tourist trap; lots of summer schools, Club Med (paying protection money to FLNC).

2. How Greek?

- 1729: aligned with Genoa against Corsica: ἐμᾶς δέν μας ἐννοιάζει τίποτες διὰ τοὺς πολέμους τῶν Κορσῶν, ὁποῦ ἀδίκως κάμνουν ἐναντίον εἰς τὸν πρέγκηπέ μας· διὰ τὶ ἐμεῖς εἴμεσθεν ξένοι εἰς τοῦτον τὸν τόπον, καὶ κάνομε τὴν δουλειάν μας· καὶ ἂν ἔχετε ἐσεῖς λογαριασμοὺς μετ' αὐτὸν, ξεχωρίστε τους “*We do not care at all about the wars of the Corsicans, which they wage unjustly against our prince; for we are strangers in this land, and tend to our own business; and if you have issues with him, you sort them out.*”
- In 1760s, every man for himself—Georges-Marie negotiating with Pascal Paoli, Costantino joining him. Phardys found the Cargesians ‘Bonapartists’. Yvan Colonna, alleged assassin of Erignac, is Cargesian.
- Sporadic intermarriage since 1727, frequent since 1790s. Patrilinear transmission of creed, matrilinear transmission of language.
- Monolinguals in 1850s; passive knowledge among young already in 1870s. Phardys had hardly any native speaker students.

- Individual family initiative preserved Greek much longer: 30 speakers in 1934 (9 outside Cargèse), 4 speakers in 1964. Last speaker died 1976.
- Greeks stopped distinctive dress in Ajaccio—sitting ducks in their feuds.
- Some folksongs survived into 20th century—mostly religious carols.
- Distinct secular customs apparently died out by 1850s, though some families kept longer. *Mudza* (spread-palm) insult in 1921.
- Edward ‘Owl and Pussycat’ Lear told in 1868 by Italian-speaking Greek “*Questa è Franca*” (‘Frank’: Levantine term for West European). They called Italy *Frangia* and France *Frantsa*—but still did not consider themselves part of the territory.
- Surprisingly late survival of religious custom, despite nominal Catholicism: Wednesday fasts, older style of chant, priests buried seated, grumbles about church stautuary, congregation still omitting *filioque* in 1940s.
- During dispute over who was to be priest in 1865, some actually requested Greek Orthodox priest from Marseilles.
- 1964: δέ ἀρέπεσαι ἦρθε παδὰ νὰ περάση τὶς σκολάδε, ἀπέι πάει στὴ φράξιγκη ἐκκλησία “*You should be ashamed of yourself: you’ve come to spend the holidays here, and then you go to the Frankish church*”.

3. Why Greek?

- Privilege of creed as forming identity. Cf. Geg vs. Tosk Albanians in Italy.
- Sidi Merouan colonists refused to admit Latin rite Cargesians in 1880.
- But 1670s colonists in Italy, and Greco-Corsicans in Florida, assimilated readily.
- Maniots were warlike and proud; but that’s no explanation either.
- Colony felt beseiged by Corsicans. Explains later reticence to assimilate, and why a different state of siege pushed the Greeks and Minorcans in Florida together. Once peaceful relations (sort of) restored in 1820s, assimilation rapid.
- Does not explain why Greek rite was not stamped out when it could have been—in Paomia, as Genoa had declared it would in 1676.
- Colony large enough to have its own convent—institutional centre of anti-Catholicism. Kept going until 1724, Greeks confessed to them, rallied around their causes. Even in Ajaccio: 8 priests for 420 Greeks in 1773.
- Colony also large enough to be self-sustaining—not dependent on surrounding villagers or townsfolk of Ajaccio (until crops & livestock destroyed in 1745). Greeks constituted 20% of Ajaccio and armed: noone was suppressing their rite.
- Genoa treated them with kid gloves; sided with them on Gregorian calendar, having the (Greek) vicar dismissed, discouraged later vicar’s attempt to convert altars.
- 1820s attempt had the support neither of Rome (which by now approved of the Greek rite), nor of Paris (“*on voudrait dans une commune française, et sous l’empire de la liberté des cultes, placer les Grecs dans un situation analogue à celle des juifs sous Louis XIV*”).