

# WHAT HAVE WE BEEN SINCE 'WE HAVE NEVER BEEN MODERN'?

A MACRO-HISTORICAL PERIODIZATION BASED ON  
HISTORIOGRAPHICAL CONSIDERATIONS ON THE HISTORY  
OF TECHNOLOGY IN ANCIENT AND MODERN GREECE

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*In this paper, I seek to outline a critical course for a mutually beneficial interaction between emerging historiographical concerns of a Greek history of technology on the history of technology in Greece and the experiences of those who participate in the formation of international professional communities of historians of technology (ICOHTEC, SHOT). I divide this paper into two sections dealing with the historiography of the history of technology in Ancient and Modern Greece respectively. Instead of starting from an historicist periodization that brings us from the ancient to the modern (after passing through the medieval), I introduce a periodization that is based on the changing articulation of the political dimension (dominant in Classical-Hellenic, Hellenistic and Roman Greece), the ideological dimension (dominant in Byzantine and Ottoman Greece), and the economic dimension (dominant in Greece during historical capitalism) in the process of formation of a social matrix.*

In this paper, I shall argue that the study of the history of technology in Greece presents us with a privileged case for challenging the form of evolutionism known as technological determinism, which grows spontaneously from essentialist macro-historical periodization. As historians of technology have shown, technological determinism is the prevalent form of evolutionism during historical capitalism, especially since the transition from merchant to industrial capitalism.<sup>1</sup> Instead of starting from an historicist periodization that brings us from the ancient to the modern (after passing through the medieval), I introduce a periodization that is based on the changing articulation of the political dimension (dominant in Classical-Hellenic, Hellenistic and Roman Greece), the ideological dimension (dominant in Byzantine and Ottoman Greece), and the economic dimension