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Professor Minas Al. Alexiadis and the Greek Folkloristics. By M. G. Varvounis. Athens: Institute of Book-Kardamitsa, 2016. Pp. 172.

This book examines the folkloristic, research and writing contribution of Minas Al. Alexiadis, Professor Emeritus of Folkloristics¹ at the Department of Philology, School of Philosophy, of the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens. It is written by Manolis G. Varvounis, a close collaborator of Alexiadis and a distinguished Professor of Folklore as well as the Chairman of the Department of History and Ethnology of Democritus University of Thrace.

In his *Preface*, Varvounis explains the reasons that led him to the writing of the present volume, and he highlights, among other critical factors, the following: “*In this concise study, the folkloristic, both through his research and his writing, contribution of the Professor of the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, Minas Al. Alexiadis, is examined and analyzed. This contribution manifests itself on several different levels, as it has encompassed both the local studies regarding Karpathian and Dodecanese Folkloristics in general, as well as the fields of History of Folkloristics and the Literary and Modernist Folkloristics, a term which he himself has introduced in Greece*” (p.7).

The inaugural chapter presents thoroughly the life, studies, career and the entire academic oeuvre of Professor Alexiadis where one can discern both his excellent training, with studies in Greece (University of Ioannina) and abroad (University College of London, London School of Economics, School of Oriental and African Studies), and his rich instructional, research, publication and administrative work.

The remainder of the book is divided in six different sections and each one of them examines Alexiadis' contribution to the following fields and areas of study: A. History and Theory of Folkloristics. B. Modernist Folkloristics. C. Literary Folkloris-

tics. D. Customary Folkloristics. E. Folk Culture of Karpathos. F. Folk Culture of Dodecanese.

In the first section, the author acknowledges the systematic and lengthy bibliographic involvement of Alexiadis mainly with the Folklore Literature of Epiros, and the publication of essays about contractual documents, remembrances of old religious books from his homeland, essays about the biography of eminent Greek folklorists as well as tributes to them (Dem. S. Loukatos [1908-2003], M. G. Meraklis [born 1932]). Alexiadis wrote essays as well on the work of other great Greek and foreign academic folkloristics, such as N. G. Politis (1852-1921), St. Kyriakidis (1887-1964), Dem. V. Economides (1909-2010), Samuel Baud-Bovy (1906-1986), Richard M. Dawkins (1871-1955) and Alan Dundes (1934-2005). He, moreover, investigated the life and work of non-folklorist scientists, who had dealt, however, with folkloric themes, such as G. Michaelides-Nouaros, Kon. Minas, Zach. Tsirpanlis, Gerasimos Rigatos, I. M. Hatzifotis, Costas Sahinidis, Kon. Melas and Zoe Samara. In addition, Alexiadis was engaged in a book of his, with the study of the *Elliniki kai Diethnis Epistimoniki Onomatotesia tis Laografias (Greek and International Scientific Naming of Folkloristics)*² (1988, 2010), in which he systematically examines Greek and international names of Folklore Science. Furthermore, Alexiadis in another essay of his discussed the term *Folkloristics as replacement of the term Folklore*, a proposal which incited discussions in Greece. He also published numerous other essays on folkloric studies in Greece from 1907 to 2003, while he organized annual seminar lectures, dedicated to eminent Greek and foreign folklorists.

In the second section, titled "Modernist Folkloristics", Varvounis presents the original involvement of Professor Alexiadis with contemporary folklore themes, e.g.: *Laikes Epigrafes kai Onomata se Ellinika Autokineta: Simvoli stin erevna sygxronon laografikon fainomenon (Folk Inscriptions and Names in Greek Cars: Contribution to Phenomena of Modern Folklore Research)*³ (1989), and *Neoteriki Elliniki Laografia (Modern Greek Folkloristics)* (2006, 2013). He also stresses Alexiadis' contribution to the emergence of the popular autobiographical interviews as sources of Folkloristics, to the printed folk poetry of Karpathos and the surrounding islands as well as to systematic

study of some contemporary folk poets and folk-like poets. The author of the book also investigates the research opportunities offered by the traditional Press in the study of popular culture and he refers to the book of Alexiadis *Entypa Mesa Epikoinonias kai Laikos Politismos. Neoterika Laografika (Printed Media and Folk Culture. Modern Folkloristics)*⁴ (2011), a book that highlighted many cases of new folklore sources, including the proverbial discourse in printed media. We also need to mention here Alexiadis' essay "O paroimiakos kai Gnomikos Logos ton Ellinon Politikon. Deigmata apo ton Elliniko Typo" ("The Proverbial and Gnostic Discourse of Greek Politicians. Samples of the Athenian Press") (2009) that demonstrates the widespread survival and use of proverbial discourse by Greek politicians. In another one of his essays entitled "Anti-paroimies se Athinaikes Efimerides" ("Anti-proverbs in Athenian Newspapers") (2010), Alexiadis perceptively notes the modification of the form of traditional proverbs and sayings for mainly advertising mainly reasons. This is in fact the first essay on the subject in Greek Proverbial Literature. Exceptional is also his book *Entypi Diafimisi kai Laikos Politismos (Printed Advertisements and Folk Culture)* (2014), that brings together examples of advertisements by the Greek Press, which are interesting as evidence of the modern urbanized life and as survival elements of traditional life. In the aforementioned book, Alexiadis talks about proverbs and sayings in advertising, which constitute 36.4% of the printed material. In the same book there is a very interesting chapter on "Anti-paroimies se Diafimiseis tou Paradosiakou Typou" ("Anti-proverbs in Advertisements of the Traditional Press") (2015), presenting several printed examples. I would like to finally mention here an essay by Professor Alexiadis bearing the title "Dimosiografikos Logos kai Paroimia ("Journalistic Discourse and Proverb") (2001), in which he highlights for the first time the dynamic function of proverbial speech in newspapers and magazines.

In the third section, Varvounis examines the contribution of Professor Alexiadis in "Literary (Philological) Tradition" and refers to his doctoral dissertation on the Greek tales of "Killing the Dragon" (Aa Th 300, 301A and 301B), which was an original, systematic and exhaustive study on paramythology. Also, in this same section, the author presents works of Alexiadis on folk

songs, riddles, ethnographic approach of the tale, and his very important book *O Agapitikos tis Boskopoulas (The Lover of the Shepherdess)* (1990), that has adapted the fifteen-syllable verses of the Zakynthian folk theater and has as model for its plot the dramatic romance of Dem. Koromilas (1891) with the same title. Finally, to be especially noted, is the contribution of Professor Alexiadis to the emergence and systematic study of Karpathos' printed folk poetry and that of surrounding islands as a kind of modern Greek folk discourse and folk-artistic discourse.

In the fourth section, entitled "Customary Folklore", the author is referring to "Customary Ecclesiastical Auctions", to the reciprocity between the divine and the human, which is governed by the principle of *do ut des*, to the "Praises of the Epitaph of the Virgin Mary", to the "History and Miracles of Our Lady of Menetes" and to relevant essays on the work of contemporary ecclesiastical men like Archbishop of Thyatira and Great Britain Gregorios and the Metropolitans of Karpathos and Kasos Ambrosios and of Kos and Nisyros Nathanael.

The fifth section highlights the contribution of Professor Alexiadis to the study of the folk culture of Karpathos, since Karpathos is his homeland. The book is titled *Karpathiaki Laografia. Opseis tou Laikou Politismou (Karpathian Folkloristics. Aspects of Folk Culture)* (2001), 455 pages, and contains 19 essays, which are related to the folklore heritage and research of Karpathos (1948-1998), but also to the relationship of Professor Richard Dawkins, one of the main researchers of Karpathian Folkloristics, with Greek folklorists of his time. Here are also included works on Karpathian folk songs, printed folk poetry and folk poets of the island, riddles, tales, the jocular narratives of Karpathians, customary auctions, and two ancient proverbs about the island. Various other folkloric themes are also included as well as a work in the English language about the modern aspects of folk culture of the island. Regarding Karpathos there is one more published book by Professor Alexiadis bearing the title, *I Karpathos se Archaious, Latinous kai Byzantinous Syggrafeis (Karpathos in Ancient Greek, Latin and Byzantine Writers)* (Athens 2013), and a new voluminous one is in press right now entitled *Karpathos. Istorika Stoixeia. Laikos Politismos (Karpathos. Historical Elements. Folk Culture)*. He moreover had the editing care of the literary and historical supplement "SEVEN

DAYS” featuring *The Island of Karpathos*, in the widely circulating newspaper *Kathimerini* (June 22, 1997, p. 29). Varvounis in his book also emphasizes the extensive contribution of Professor Alexiadis to the folk culture of Kar-pathos, by organizing five international conferences and by editing their proceedings. Finally, Alexiadis’ contribution is consolidated with the establishment and the operation of the *Institute of Folk Culture of Karpathos*, in the Department of Philology, at the University of Athens. The Institute’s purpose is to promote basic theoretical and applied scientific research of folk culture in the Greek world, with emphasis on the Dodecanese and other Aegean islands. Until presently there have been offered by the Institute seminars on Folklore, three cycles of postgraduate courses on the Folkloristics of Karpathos, while ten books have been already published by it.

In the sixth section the author discusses the contribution of Alexiadis in the folk culture of the Dodecanese, with central reference to his book *Dodekanisa. Laikos Politismos (Dodecanese. Folk Culture)* (2005²). The book offers a valuable bibliography for the years between 1980-2001 (949 entries) with essays on folk songs and elements on the contribution of Paulos Gneftos (from Rhodes) to them, as well as folk autobiographical interviews from Soroni of Rhodes. It also incorporates research of the folk culture of Kos, customary rituals of birth and remembrances of ecclesiastical books from Karpathos, printed folk poetry of Kasos (1962-1994), and the contribution of Antonis Sofos to the study of the folk culture of the island.

The book is accompanied by related photographic material (15 photos) from the career of Professor Minas Al. Alexiadis at the Universities of Ioannina and Athens.

In conclusion, we should acknowledge that the author, M. G. Varvounis, organized methodically the rich folklore writings of Professor Minas Al. Alexiadis and made efficiently all the necessary classifications and evaluations. The book is not only a tribute to a great university Professor, as Minas Al. Alexiadis really is, but it is also a very valuable contribution to the history of Greek Folkloristics.

Notes

¹ Professor Minas Al. Alexiadis introduces the term *Folkloristics* instead of *Folklore* and has published a relevant article: Minas Al. Alexiadis, “‘Folkloristics’. Mia alli protasi gia ti diethni onomatotesia tis Laografias” (“‘Folkloristics’. Another Proposal for the International Naming of Folklore”), *Scientific Yearbook of Philosophical School of University of Athens*, v. 42 (2013), 57-66.

² Review: Charles Stewart, *Journal of American Folklore*, 102 (1989), 510-511.

³ Review: Walter Puchner, *Österreichische Zeitschrift für Volkskunde*, XLIV: 93 (1990), 491-492.

⁴ Reviews: Wolfgang Mieder, *Proverbium* 29(2012), 381-384; Maria A. Kastrinou, *Folklore* (London), 124:1(April 2013), 108-109; Walter Puchner, *Südost-Forschungen*, (Germany) 72 (2013), 554-556.

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