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John T. A. Koumoulides (ed.), *Hellenic Perspectives: Essays in the History of Greece*, Lanham, Md., University Press of America, 1980, pp. xxii + 376.

In editing this interesting anthology, Professor Koumoulides has initially stated that it is not a complete account of Greek history from ancient times until the present era, but rather it is a basic collection of essays that examine some specific aspects in this long chronicle of historical events. As a result, the editor has selected ten essays which were originally presented during a three-day conference on Greek history and society by some foremost scholars in this curious field. While linking elements among all these essays will not be necessarily discernable, such common themes as the Greek struggle for the preservation of their Hellenic heritage against foreign influences, or the Greek inability to adequately handle the contemporary challenges of the modern world, will be found within the pages of *Hellenic Perspectives*.

Along these particular lines, in his essay on Greece and the Near East in ancient times, Jack Balcer examined the historical theme concerning the Hellenic struggle against foreign influences. In this long struggle, Odysseus serves as the Homeric personification of lost dreams and world-weariness by both leaving his homeland and wandering through foreign lands; a literary theme so eternal that John Rexine has accurately traced it in the modern poetry of George Seferis. Nevertheless, despite the endless conflict with alien races, the Greeks were attracted to certain elements possessed by their cultural enemies, thus accepting, as Father Gill noted in his essay on the religious divinity of Eastern Rome, some beneficial aspects as paved roads, maritime peace, and common languages that were imposed by such foreign conquerors as the Romans. Consequently, the reluctant acceptance of such foreign benefits promoted the rapid spread of Christianity among the Greek people; however, despite this particular situation, they generally attempted to either expell, or ignore, most foreign influences. In this respect, by retaining their own cultural preferences, especially on such important matters like the essential cooperation between the church and the state, the Greeks eventually found themselves seperated from the western regions of the Roman Empire. Although ignoring the West, the Greek people now faced new cultural threats which originated from the East, but as related by Father Gill, the Greek emperors of East Rome merely devised some psychological solutions to officially excuse the successful incursions and military victories of the barbaric intruders. This mild strategy was not an adequate solution for such a grave situation and, although assuming another form, the major threat to Hellenic culture and civilisation persisted. In his essay on Islamic sources and the Greek people, Speros Vryonis accurately observed that, through the linguistical medium of Syriac translations, such barbaric

invaders as the Islamic tribes benefitted from the classical knowledge of Greek antiquity a threatening situation that did not please the culturally-jealous Greeks. Unfortunately, despite the cultural advantages gained from this ancient wisdom, the Islamic incursions were not deterred and the inevitable victory of the Ottoman forces against the Greek people occurred at Constantinople in May 1453.

Nevertheless, even during the long period of Ottoman rule, the cultural heritage of ancient times was not completely lost and, in an important essay on the cultural renaissance of Greek antiquity, Richard Clogg has related that the Western scholars preserved this Hellenic legacy. In time, facilitated by mercantile communications and the increased use of printing presses, the ancient classics and modern translations became generally available for the scholars and interested readers, often from the commercial classes, of the Greek *diaspora*; however, lacking many socio-economic prerequisites, this popular revival of classical knowledge was not so available to the less-affluent residents in the ancient homeland of the Peloponnese. Unfortunately, this cultural renaissance possessed some rather unpleasant features as many Greek scholars and students, being possessed with ancestral obsessions, often overlooked the correct meaning and context found in most ancient works. At the same time, many literate Greeks focussed their attention on contemporary and frivolous works, thus neglecting all classical scholarship. Resultantly, the cultural trends of both Antiquity and the Enlightenment were strongly opposed by the monks and prelates of the Orthodox Church who, possessing a sectarian outlook, viewed the revival of secular knowledge from pagan and contemporary times as the evil threat of atheism. Of course, this particular fear never materialized, but as Clogg has paradoxically noted, it was the old pagan homeland of the Peloponnese, rather than the culturally-fertile *diaspora*, which was first-transformed as an independent republic. This particular situation would indicate that there were few substantial connexions between the concepts of political and cultural nationalism; yet, since the successful establishment of their first modern republic, the Greek people have combined the two concepts by actively striving for the political union (*enosis*) of all historically-adjacent lands where the native inhabitants speak Greek and profess Orthodoxy. This particular crusade, historically known as the *Megali Idea*, has not at all disappeared. During the post-1945 era, apart from the Greek struggle for Cypriote *enosis*, it was a defensive struggle against the Slavonic invaders of Macedonia; a very definite threat as related by Sir Edward Peck in his essay on the United Nations and the Hellenic-Slavonic conflict in Macedonia. Furthermore, even in contemporary times, as Charles Frazee has illustrated in his essay on the Orthodox Church in Greece, the basic philosophy of the *Megali Idea* is, in several forms, still valid as most Greek citizens regard Orthodoxy and Hellenic nationalism as being totally synonymous concepts. Apart from its external implications, the domestic situation in this particular light shows that Greece does resemble a theocratic state. Indeed, with the current democratic regime, the Greek synod is very reluctant to completely relinquish its strong attachment to the central government, especially as the former dictatorship of the military colonels deliberately misled the national synod with unfulfilled promises of moral regeneration and anti-communistic legislation. Sadly enough, despite the omnipresence of parishes and priests, thus initially indicating a strong religious following, the Greek church still hesitates to independently accept the new challenges to its conservative society made by the recent impact of modernization and urbanization.

Of course, the socio-economic trends of modernization have already affected several sectors of Greek society. For instance, among the rural population, the traditional institution of the marriage-dowry has experienced some important modifications. Although the

standard elements of cash and real estate still form the basic composition, in his essay on the changing dowry, Peter Allen has noted that the declining value of rural lands and the constant expansion of urban areas, accompanied by internal migration and an astronomical rate of economic inflation, has seriously affected the financial value of the marriage-dowry. As a result, urban flats and large amounts of investment capital, rather than the traditional elements of village huts and small sums of cash, now characterize most Greek dowries. Furthermore, to secure an adequate dowry, the younger generation need no longer wait for the legal death of the older generation in claiming its assigned inheritance; however, for all these particular modifications, the fundamental purpose of the marriage-dowry still remains unaltered, especially as the social and financial independence of most women in Greece is almost exclusively determined by a sizeable dowry.

Basically, as illustrated in the above instance concerning the marriage-dowry, there are certain aspects of modern society in Greece which show a relative adjustment to the important impact of Western influences. As a result, it can be confidently stated that the Greek people have often modified such influences to successfully serve within their own society. This particular thesis was earlier suggested by William McNeill in his study: *The Metamorphosis of Greece since World War II* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1978), and several contributors in *Hellenic Perspectives* have cited this recent study. Of course, as generally discussed by some other contributors to *Hellenic Perspectives*, there are certain tragical instances where the Greek people have not adequately adjusted their views and actions to successfully fit the actual situation. One such instance concerns the troublesome problem of Cypriote *enosis* as the Greek people and their political leaders have not, in good faith, ultimately accepted any real compromises on this particular issue. Furthermore, even after the official acceptance of several international treaties on Cypriote independence, the Greek government refused to honourably abide by these agreements and such conduct was rather futile because, as pointed out by C. M. Woodhouse in his essay on this particular topic, the Turkish government would not at all accept any proposals for a political union between Greece and Cyprus. Naturally, Cypriote *enosis* was an essential aspect of the *Megali Idea* tradition, but all such persistence proved to be rather detrimental, especially in light of the attempted coup (July 1974) when, as Victor Papacosma has noted in his essay, the Greek government found itself both diplomatically isolated and totally unprepared for war. In addition, as Woodhouse has tragically concluded, the demographical changes which have occurred on Cyprus since the last crisis now preclude any practical solution for the overall problem. Basically, as Papacosma has accurately related, the only constructive event which has occurred in the aftermath of the Cypriote fiasco was the re-establishment of the parliamentary system in Greece; however, as the author has admitted, such political abuses as patronage are, despite any possible modifications of political ideologies, most likely to continue. The Greek people can modify their views and actions in opportune situations; yet, the traditional characteristics and cultural precepts of their society have often limited the extent of these modifications.

In *Hellenic Perspectives*, as with his earlier anthology entitled *Greece in Transition* (London: Zeno, 1977), Professor Koumoulides has collected both significant and attractive essays which discuss the various historical aspects of Greek culture and society. Selected for their obvious uniqueness, these particular essays are well-written and, in several instances, well-documented. Furthermore, the enclosure in a special appendix of the English translation of the new Greek constitution is a thoughtful addition, especially as the opening preamble of this particular document openly alludes to the sectarian and the ethnic foundations of the

Greek republic. Unfortunately, apart from the inferred theme of the Greek struggle to continuously preserve its cultural heritage, the conspicuous absence of any real centralizing, or unifying, historical theme in this particular anthology will possibly reduce its general appeal to various readers. On the one hand, the excellent essays of Gill, Vryonis, and Clogg were written for academic specialists in Greek history while, on the other hand, the timely essays presented by Rexine, Frazee, Papacosma, and Allen were written for the contemporary observer of the Greek scene. Of course, in either instance, the serious reader will naturally consult additional sources, and this situation is also true for the two essays by Peck and Woodhouse as the former contributor, in his first-hand account of the Greek struggle against the Slavonic communists, has recommended that interested readers should definitely consult other secondary accounts while the latter contributor, in advising readers that the topic of his essay is rather unpleasant, has presented a semi-official apologia for the British failure to constructively resolve the Cypriote issue during the early years which followed the second World War. Overall, this anthology is for the discerning specialist; however, the deliberate collection of such specialized essays in one volume, the standard practise in presenting the official proceedings of most historical conferences, will save these specialists and others much labour and aggravation from resorting to numerous and, possibly, obscure journals of the various academic disciplines.

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Ethelyn G. Orso, *Modern Greek humor: a collection of jokes and ribald tales*. Bloomington and London: Indiana University Press, 1979. xxiii + 262 pp. \$ 14.95 / £ 9.00.

"Tell me what jokes you like, and I will tell you who you are" may be as good an aphorism as any. In this collection of modern Greek jokes we find ample evidence to support the various generalizations which the anthropologist and folklorist Ethelyn G. Orso makes about contemporary Greek culture. That some of her Greek readers might not agree with some of her generalizations may have more to do with defensiveness on their part than with Orso's scholarly integrity and powers of observation.

The 346 jokes which make up the body of the book are divided into nine categories, occupying as many chapters, according to a classificatory system outlined in the Introduction (xxi-xxii): 1. Political jokes; 2. The Bobos joke cycle (whose inclusion here, by the way, is one of the great pluses of the book); 3. The clever Greeks: esoteric humor; 4. Ethnic-slur jokes: Greek exoteric humor; 5. Humor directed at the Church and the clergy; 6. Transportation jokes; 7. Lunatic jokes; 8. Very *sókin* jokes (*sókin* 'bawdy, obscene', ultimately from English *shocking*, possibly via French); and 9. Light *sókin* jokes. Some of the chapters are subdivided into sections, some of which are in turn divided into subsections.

In addition, there is a preface and an introduction, both quite informative, and also a short conclusion, followed by three appendices (A. Index of tale types; B. Index of motifs; C. Illustrations of gestures (with eleven photographs — a splendid idea), a glossary, and a list of references.

Although the author herself is aware that her categories are not the only possible ones, one does not have to be a taxonomic hairsplitter to disagree with her sharply in a few instances