

same time constitutes a valuable source for the history of Byzantine Thrace, for the simple reason that the Chronicle of Ephraim of Ainos gives voice to a host of insights into ordinary life in the Thracian area at this time; it is also significant that comparable ideas, manners and customs, conduct and religious life still continue in exactly the same way in the wider modern Greek area, giving incontrovertible evidence of our race's direct progression from ancient times until the present day. Mr Varvounis has demonstrated this continuity by means of his science, folklore, just as, much earlier, did Dr Anastasios Georgiades-Lefkias of Philippoupolis with his book *A refutation of the commonly accepted beliefs and written works maintaining that no one now living in Greece is a descendant of the ancient Greeks*, Athens 1843; the book is written in ancient Greek and also in Latin. We remind the reader that with this book Anastasios Georgiades-Lefkias answered the accusation of Jakob Fallmerayer who had cast doubt on the continuity of Greek civilisation. For this same reason Mr Varvounis' book too has worth and significance in that by means of the Chronicle of Ephraim of Ainos it shows the progress of our race in Thrace through the tripartite schema of unity, Antiquity - Byzantium - Neohellenism.

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Ioannis D. Psaras, *Από τη Θεσσαλονίκη στη Βενετία. Ιστορία της οικογένειας Νιννή (17ος-20ός αι.). Συμβολή στη μελέτη του παροικιακού ελληνισμού* [From Thessaloniki to Venice: The History of the Ninnis Family (17th-20th cent.). A Contribution to the Study of Greeks Abroad], Thessaloniki 1997, published by the Society for Macedonian Studies, pp. 407.

The writer has been a Professor of Modern History in the University of Thessaloniki for some years and has published a number of studies in scientific journals. He is best known, however, for his monographs in Venetian rule on Tinos at the time of the Cretan War (1645-1669; Ph. D. thesis, 1985), on the institution of the civil guard in Venice's Greek dominions (16th-18th cent.; 1988), and on Andros at the time of the Cretan War (1993).

His latest book focuses on a different time and place. It deals with the presence and activity (commercial, economic, social, and scientific) of a many-branched family in Thessaloniki, Venice, and the Veneto over a period of 300 years, from the end of the 17th to the end of the 20th century. It is the Ninnis family, whose origins lie in Thessaloniki.

The Ninnises are not unknown, to be sure. But now, with the exhaustive investigations which Psaras has carried out in archives in Thessaloniki (the historical archive of Macedonia and the diocesan archive) and in Venice (the state archive, the Library of St Mark, and others), we have a clearer picture of events and people, inaccurate accounts have been corrected, and the private and public life of the family members has been pieced together with comparative certainty.

Psaras's involvement with a genealogical and prosopographical subject like this reflects a return on the part of historical science to restructured biography, though with no less an interest in socio-economic studies. Attempts are frequently made to combine the two trends, the biographical subject being examined within the economic environment of his/her time. Up to a point, this is what Psaras does; but he places more emphasis on constructing the portrait.

This is immediately obvious from the arrangement of the material into Part One, which is general, and Part Two, in which he describes the lives of fifty-five members of the Ninnis family. It is an unequal division, for Part One covers just twenty pages (15-36), while Part Two is close to 300 pages long (37-330) and constitutes the bulk of the book. A third part (pp. 331-335) identifies the Ninnises' houses in Venice and the Veneto.

This is the framework in which Psaras has worked. This was the focus of his research, and he has painted a vivid fresco full of active people in a period of decline both for the Ottoman Empire and for the Serenissima Republic of the lagoon and *Terra Ferma*.

My view is that Psaras has been successful in his efforts, for he starts with the distant written evidence of the 17th century, traverses the 18th and 19th centuries almost without blank spaces, and reaches the living testimony of the Ninnises who are alive today. It is of less concern, I think, for me to point out the contribution of certain members of the family to literature or science than to note the phenomenon of the movement, the action, and the vitality of the human factor in the Greek diaspora, particularly in the Greek community in Venice. In this respect, Psaras's contribution is a very positive and welcome one.

As regards methodology, the writer treads the sure, firm path of selecting and combining archival evidence. He avoids the vague generalisations that have lately been inundating books and conference papers on the Greeks abroad. Reference to the basic sources in its reconstruction of the past is another important aspect of this book.

I should now like to present a few thoughts of my own which may be useful.

First of all, the index. It could have included some commercial terminology, such as *cordonari*, *capotti*, *pello di lambello*, *salonicchi* or *salonikia*, *abades* (all on p. 33), *paneri bianchi di Salonichio* (p. 34), *lastra di vetro*, *vetriolo verdolino*, *cassa* (p. 35 —different from the *cassa* on p. 45, which is included in the index), or names of guilds and occupations, such as *abadzides*, *kepedzides* (*kebe*), *misirdziaslides*, *aktardes*, *zikerdzides-sekerce*, *kaftandzides*, *koïmdzides* (p. 37), though *parakendedes* is in the index. The names of ships are also omitted, in their Italian form or their Greek rendering, such as *Madonna della Pace* (pp. 27, 32), *Sant' Antonio di Padova* (pp. 27, 32), *San Zaccaria* (pp. 28, 33), *Gloria Celeste* (pp. 28, 29, 33), *Madonna del Carmelo e San Francesco di Paola* (p. 33). The index would also have been more complete had it included the names of early and modern writers (e.g. K. D. Merdzios, G. Veloudis, Sp. P. Lambros, Roberto Cessi, Félix Beaujour). I realise that the compiling of an index is a very difficult and laborious task. Automatic indexing on the computer doesn't meet all the requirements of historical or comparable theoretical treatises with their numerous footnotes and ambiguous meanings of words and terms. Although compiling an index that is as complete as possible is tremendously hard work, it does bring long-term rewards; for we all know that an index shows how rich a book is and ensures that it can be used properly.

I was also rather puzzled by the Greek rendering of some Italian words. *Balla una pello di lambello* (p. 33), for instance, is translated as "1 bale of complete pelts" (p. 27). I wonder if pieces of pelt are meant here (comp. *limbello: ritaglio di pelle o di stoffa*), or a lambskin? The "9 bales of white baskets" (p. 28 - or "basket-weaving equipment", p. 31), as the *balle nove paneri bianchi di Salonichio* (p. 34) are rendered, are a rare reference to a Thessalonian craft-trade product that I haven't found in Merdzios's *Monuments* or Svoronos's *The Commerce of Thessaloniki*. The "white baskets" could also be "white panniers", though this whole subject leaves me somewhat perplexed.

Two more points. One concerning Merdzios's book. Psaras understandably feels some dissatisfaction with the lack of method shown by the late corresponding member of the Athens Academy. I have the impression, however, that Merdzios is treated with undeserved harshness on p. 32. What Merdzios says on p. 316 n. 2 of his *Monuments* really cannot be described as "a naive admission", as Psaras alleges. The second point concerns Christodoulos I. Papachristodoulos's *History of Rhodes* (in Greek; Athens 1972), which is described as a "popularising work" (p. 226). I cannot agree. Papachristodoulos's book meets all the requirements of a serious scholarly work [cf. Zacharias N. Tsirpanlis, "Rhodes and its History: From the Byzantine Period

to Union with Greece" *Dodoni* 20 (1991=1994) 373-417; in Greek].

These comments don't detract from the fundamental qualities of Ioannis Psaras's historical volume, which is a serious, authoritative work characterised by thorough collation and documentation of archival sources, compositional facility, honestly stated opinions, and persuasive arguments.

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Antonio Scottà, *La Conciliazione ufficiosa. Diario del barone Carlo Monti, "incaricato d'affari" del governo italiano presso la Santa Sede (1914-1922)*, vols. 1-2, Vatican City 1997, pp. 550 + 659, 91 plates.

We have grown accustomed to addressing the existence and the problems of the Holy See through official, austere, and frequently sterile documents of an ecclesiastical, economic, or politico-diplomatic nature. There has been very little evidence of the private life of the popes, their personal concerns, their human, everyday face. If one focuses on the final document issued by the papal secretariat, one can have no idea of the stages of decision making, the labyrinthine negotiations, the mutual compromises, the underlying anguish and striving.

In complete contrast to all this is the two-volume work under review here. It's a source of possibly unique importance, because it gives the reader access to the Pontiff's immediate entourage, his own office, and the views of and confrontations between high-ranking representatives of the Italian government and the Holy See during a period that was critical for the entire human race, namely the First World War (1914-1918) and the two years of the peace conference (1919-1920).

What's so distinctive about this book? Not, certainly, the mere fact that it consists of diary entries; but primarily their author's position as the Italian government's unofficial link with the Vatican. It so happens that the Pope himself and the link in question had been at school together. So the relations between the two men were long-standing, close, and very cordial.

On the one hand we have Baron Carlo Monti (1851-1924) and on the other Pope Benedict XV (1854-1922; Pope from 3 September 1914 to 22 January 1922). In 1882, Monti had been appointed first class secretary in the Ministry of Justice's Department of Ecclesiastical Affairs. In 1908, he became head of the department. When the Archbishop of Bologna, Cardinal Giacomo della