

Upcoming Events

Singing and Remembering Pontos: the Tradition of Parakathi in Contemporary Greece

On Sunday, October 15, 2017, Hellenic Link–Midwest presents Dr. Ioannis Tsekouras, in a lecture titled: “*Singing and Remembering Pontos: the tradition of Parakathi in contemporary Greece.*” The event will take place at 3:00 pm in Room 1610, at the Oakton Community College Des Plaines Campus, 1600 E. Golf Road Des Plaines, IL 60016. Admission will be free.

Dialogical singing and improvisatory poetry, especially the traditions of the Aegean islands and of Crete, have a special place in Greek culture. The poetic genre of “mantinades” and the Cretan “glendi” are highly celebrated in the context of various popular music movements—the post-1950s “entechno-music” and the 1990s continuing urban revival of Cretan music being the two most characteristic cases. In this lecture, a case of Greek folk dialogical singing will be resented that for a variety of reasons has escaped the attention of the broader public. This is the “epitrapezia” repertoire of the Pontic parakathi or muhabeti. Similarly to the Cretan and Karpathian glendi, Pontic parakathi describes practices of nightlong intimate socialization, social drinking, and most importantly dialogical singing of short poetic forms performed on the sounds of the Pontic lyra or kemence. Drawing from more than 16 months of fieldwork in Greek Macedonia during 2012 and 2014, Dr. Tsekouras will present the main characteristics of parakathi poetry and music repertoire (epitrapezia), the general norms that regulate parakathi socialization, and the ways that all these relate to the performers’ lives and to Pontic collective memory and identity. The lecture will conclude with a presentation of the dilemmas that the Pontians face in their effort to popularize the parakathi repertoire and of the puzzlement that the epitrapezia cause to Greek folklorists.

Dr. Ioannis Tsekouras studied in the National Conservatory of Athens, where he received a diploma on flute performance and in the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens from where he received his bachelor’s in music studies and musicology. He completed his graduate studies at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, School of Music, from where he holds both a Master’s of Music and a Doctorate on the Philosophy of Music, with a specialization in the anthropology of music or ethnomusicology. His dissertation, entitled “*Nostalgia,*

Emotionality, and Ethno-regionalism in Pontic Parakathi Singing” is a musical ethnography of the dialogical singing practices of the Pontic Greeks, the descendants of the 1922 Greek-Orthodox refugees from the Black Sea region of Turkey. His dissertation research won the 2012 Tullia Magrini Prize from the University of Bologna. Currently, Dr. Tsekouras teaches courses on music and culture at Columbia College Chicago and at Oakton Community College.

Single Currencies and Economic Development in Ancient Greece: the Evidence of Coinage.

On Sunday, November 19, 2017, Hellenic Link–Midwest presents Robert Wallace, Professor of Classics at Northwestern University in a lecture titled: “*Single Currencies and Economic Development in Ancient Greece: the Evidence of Coinage.*” The event will take place at 3:00 pm in Room 1610, at the Oakton Community College Des Plaines Campus, 1600 E. Golf Road Des Plaines, IL 60016. Admission will be free.

Did the ancient Greeks strike coins to promote economic development and trade? In a wide-ranging, illustrated discussion of Greek numismatics, Professor Wallace shall challenge the standard answer—“no”—to this question, which is based largely on Roman practices. The Romans struck coins to pay soldiers; Greeks fought for their own cities without pay. Coins were first struck in western Asia Minor as a way to stabilize the alloy and value of electrum, a naturally occurring but variable mix of gold and silver. Electrum coins were too valuable to use in local commerce, and did not circulate abroad. Striking primarily in silver, the Greeks quickly turned the invention of coinage to a series of other economic and political purposes, including day-to-day market transactions (eventually in fiduciary bronze coinages) and the creation of single-currency trading zones.

Robert Wallace is Professor of Classics at Northwestern University. He is the author of some ninety articles on Greek law, history, intellectual history, literature, numismatics, and music theory. His books include “*The Areopagos Council, to 307 BC*” and “*Reconstructing Damon. Music, Wisdom Teaching, and Politics in Perikles’ Athens.*” He co-authored “*Origins of Democracy in Ancient Greece*” and “*Aristotle Constitution of the Athenians,*” and co-edited *Harmonia Mundi: Musica e filosofia nell’antichità; Poet, Public, and Performance in Ancient Greece; Transitions to Empire 360-146 BC*; and *Symposion 2001* on Greek law. Current projects include books on Sophokles,

Thucydides, and *Plato's Sokrates Project*. He has lectured widely in the US and Europe.

In Brief

Excellence is a Stain – Is Greece getting Reformed?

The first education minister of the party governing Greece, SYRIZA, was professor Aristides Baltas. Professor Baltas is teaching at the National Technical University of Athens the graduate course "History and Philosophy of Science and Technology". Minister Baltas has been famed by his statement in the Greek Parliament that "excellence is a stain."

According to the Greek newspaper Kathimerini, (<http://www.kathimerini.gr/925944/opinion/epikairothta/politikh/h-retsinia-toy-dikaioy-aristeidh>) some years ago, the wife of former minister Aristides Baltas, (Evangelia Baltas) was hired by the cultural organization of the municipality of Chania, from which she was transferred, as a loaned employee, to DEPANOM, a state-owned company in charge of hospital construction based in Athens. Mrs Baltas holds a degree in political science, irrelevant to hospital construction.

By order of the Troika, DEPANOM was closed and merged with the Organization of School Buildings and Themis Construction (a public company for the construction of prisons) into a single enterprise called Building Infrastructure (CYP). Mrs Baltas, as a loaned employee, and given that her original employer (cultural organization of the municipality of Chania) had closed, was expected to be fired after DEPANOM was merged with the other two companies to reduce operation costs in state owned companies. Instead, the new administration of the new state-owned company (CYP) promoted her to head the Real Estate Division of the company, responsible for the management of about 2,200 state properties throughout the country.

About a month ago, Mrs Baltas succeeded to get a raise in her salary, because, while working, she managed to get a postgraduate degree from the National Technical University of Athens in the "History and Philosophy of Science and Technology", the course that is taught by her husband. The postgraduate degree in the "History and Philosophy of Science and Technology" is completely irrelevant to the management position that was awarded to Mr. Baltas, and although the law provides that a salary raise is justified only if the postgraduate degree is relevant to the position, the Board of Directors of the state owned company Building Infrastructure decided that in the case of Mrs Baltas the postgraduate degree in the "History and Philosophy of Science and Technology" is relevant to her position and she is entitled of a raise retroactively since 1/1/ 16.

According to Kathimerini

(<http://www.kathimerini.gr/839549/article/epikairothta/politikh/otan-h-aristeia-Sewreitai-retsinia-kai-timwreitai>), public servants Stavros Stavropoulos, Grigoris Dimitriadis and Petros Misthos were fired by the SYRIZA government

because they excelled in their work, and excellence been considered to be a "stain" had to be expunged.

Mr. Misthos as Director of Education in the region of Peloponnese succeeded in five years to bring back 2,000 teachers (25% of the total) who had disappeared from the schools, serving in unproductive positions of the public sector taking advantage of the "clientelistic" political system still thriving in Greece. He was recognized by the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development for the great savings in public spending achieved under his leadership by drastically cutting the number of substitute teachers. He was removed from his post, as were removed all regional directors, by Minister of Education Baltas. They were replaced by people many of whom not only did not have the necessary qualifications but did not even have served as school directors.

Mr. Dimitriadis, the 37-year-old CEO of the Public Transportation Organization of Athens (OASA), specializing in international negotiations, in 2013 managed to persuade the Troika to not raise the ticket price to euros 1.80 and not fire 850 employees. He reorganized and unified the public transportation system of Athens (Tram, Metro, Buses, etc.), improved the financial position of OASA, reduced the ticket to euros 1.20, and convinced the Troika to recruit 450 new employees. He was asked by SYRIZA transportation minister Spirtzis to resign. Mr. Dimitriadis had many times pointed out to Minister Spirtzis that the free transportation policy of SYRIZA for a number of categories of citizens would have catastrophic consequences for the finances of the transportation system. According to Kathimerini the policy was established to mollify the public for the capital controls imposed to avert the collapse of the banks. To avert the collapse of OASA the ticket price was later raised to euros 1.40

In a country where crime is thriving, Mr. Stavropoulos proved to be a very successful head of the Internal Affairs Division of the Greek Police. He was suddenly transferred by the SYRIZA government to an invented administrative position. Mr. Stavropoulos had sent dozens of suspicious cases to be investigated by the Justice system, many of which (e.g., smuggling) are still pending. He had managed to have no kidnapping case in Greece left unresolved, and had sent to prison dozens of criminals.

According to Kathimerini, these are only a few indicative cases of the failure of the country to reform and of its backsliding to practices of political "clientelism" for the governing party to place "its own people" regardless of qualifications to even top administrative positions.

It was recently reported that at the University of Patras, Greece, at the Department of Business Administration 106 students were caught to cheat. They all submitted the same paperwork in four separate coursework

exercises that accounted for 30% of the grade in the course “Dynamic Mathematical Paradigms.”

The university banned the 106 students from taking part in the exams of the courses that the students had transferred to the exam period of September (a peculiarity of the Greek University system where student organizations have a great influence on how the university is run). The incident has grown into a controversy, involving the university, student organizations (affiliated with political parties), political parties, and the minister of education.

From Our History

A Personal Account of the Catastrophe of Smyrna

By Nicholas Tsoulfanidis, Professor Emeritus, Nuclear Engineering

What follows is a translation of a handwritten account of the catastrophe that took place in Smyrna in August 1922, written by Stephen Tsoulfanidis (1911-1983) and translated by his son, Prof. Nicholas Tsoulfanidis .

“It was Saturday, 2 pm when Nouredin Pasas with the saber at hand came...”, thus starts the song of the “Destruction of Smyrna.”

I do not remember the exact date, but I believe it was the 20th or 22nd of August 1922, a Saturday. I was 10 years old. Summertime, we were getting ready to take a bath; my seven-year old brother and I were in our underwear, barefoot. Suddenly we see coming my uncle Panayiotis holding his military rifle. He was a soldier in the Greek Army and was retreating. He brought his rifle, he said, in order to hit the Turks when they would come to our house. Of course, my parents persuaded him to hide the rifle, because if it was found it would count against us. So, he threw the rifle at a corner behind a wall in an empty lot.

In a little while, a roaring noise and children’s cries could be heard coming from everywhere. Across from our house, in the neighborhood of St. Constantine, lived a family with Italian citizenship; they had raised their flag. Thinking that this house would not be touched, the whole neighborhood went there including all of us: My grandparents, my parents, my brother and myself. My mother was seven months pregnant to my youngest brother who was born in Giannina in December of 1922.

The rumors reaching us from time to time were such that even the owners of the house who were Italian citizens were scared. So, we were obliged to leave the house and spread into the neighboring fields, the whole neighborhood staying together. My grandmother just took from home a blanket and two sweaters for the night, expecting that the next day we would be back home. But, we were never able to go back to our house again.

In the morning we learned that major catastrophic events took place in villages and small towns around Smyrna. They did not leave alive (the Turkish soldiers) any

Christians or any woman and young girl without raping them. Raging with hatred they entered the city (Smyrna). Not finding any people in the houses, they started looting taking away any valuable they could find. The third day, my grandmother went to our house to get money and other valuables left behind; but, she found nothing valuable and came back empty-handed. We stayed in the fields between 8-10 days, I believe.

One morning, an order came for all the men to go to a particular place. From that day, we did not see again my father and my uncle; they were gone too. Later we learned that they were taken to the interior of Asia minor and that many did not survive what they had to go through.

In the beginning of September (1922), an order came for all the Greeks to move to the harbor (pier) and from there go on ships that would take them to Greece. This is how our great tragedy of our refugee life started. On the 13th of September, the eve of the Holy Cross Holiday, we found ourselves in a house close to the harbor. I estimate we were about 100 people in two rooms, size about 3.5 by 4 meters. The adults did not close an eye all night. A woman who was literate was reading prayers to the Virgin Mary and from time to time they were chanting the hymn “*God save your people...*” (*Soson Kyrie ton laon sou ...*). From outside, the loud voices, the wailing, the crying were reaching our ears. It was a slaughter (massacre). In the meantime we learned that they captured the Metropolitan Chrysostomos who after being tortured he succumbed to his martyrdom. Like the patriarch Gregory V, he did not leave early as it was proposed to him by the consul Stergiadis. Thus the Christians lost their protector.

Finally on September 17 we go out to the harbor at sunset. Smoke in the beginning, flames later, the fire continued during the night, having started a week earlier. Around noon on the 18th of September we went aboard a ship and we never set foot again on our beloved home country (“*patrida*”).

Here I must mention an incident that took place in front of my eyes, an incident that stayed forever in my memory. A woman came aboard the ship who had a huge bag on her shoulder. As soon as she was certain that there was no danger, she opened the bag and out came a big man about 1.80 m tall. He was her husband whom she saved at the risk of losing her own life.

The ship was going to Thessaloniki, but they did not allow us to disembark there because a woman died and we were quarantined for three days. Finally we left Thessaloniki and we were allowed off the ship at Agia Marina of Styliis. There, they registered us and on our own decision we left Volos by ship for Hpeiros. We disembarked at Preveza. From there we went to Giannina, as we had planned, because my grandmother’s origin was from Zagori.

This is the story, in brief, of our family’s tragedy from Smyrna to Giannina.”

From the Riches of Our Cultural Heritage

Ποίηση του Λορέντζου Μαβίλη

ΛΗΘΗ

Καλότυχ' οι νεκροί, που λησμονάνε
την πίκρια της ζωής. Όντας βυθήσει
ο ήλιος και το σούρουπο ακλουθήσει,
μήν τους κλαις, ο καῦμός σου όσος και νά 'ναι!

Τέτοιαν ώρα οι ψυχές διψούν και πάνε
στης λησμονιάς την κρουσταλλένια βρύση.
Μα βούρκος το νεράκι θα μαυρίσει,
Σα στάξει γι' αυτές δάκρυ, όθε αγαπάνε.

Κι αν πιουν θολό νερό, ξαναθυμούνται
διαβαίνοντας λιβάδι' απ' ασφοδήλι,
πόνους παλιούς, που μέσα τους κοιμούνται.-

Α δε μπορείς παρά να κλαις, το δειλί,
τους ζωντανούς τα μάτια σου ας θρηγήσουν,
θέλουν -μα δε βολεί να λησμονήσουν.

ΚΑΛΛΙΠΑΤΕΙΡΑ

«Ἀρχόντισσα Ροδίτισσα, πῶς μπήκες;
Γυναῖκες διώχνει μιά συνήθεια ἀρχαία
ἐδῶθε.» «Ἐχω ἓνα ἀνίψι, τὸν Εὐκλέα,
τρία ἀδέρφια, γιό, πατέρα, Ὀλυμπιονίκες·
νά με ἀφήσετε πρέπει, Ἑλλανοδίκες,
κι ἐγὼ νὰ καμαρώσω μες τὰ ὠραῖα
κορμιά, πὸν γιὰ τὸ ἀγρίλι τοῦ Ἡρακλέα
παλεύουν, θαυμαστὲς ψυχὲς ἀντρίκειες.
Μὲ τὲς ἄλλες γυναῖκες δὲν εἶμ' ὅμοια·
στὸν αἰῶνα τὸ σόι μου θὰ φαντάζει
μὲ τῆς ἀντρείας τ' ἀμάραντα προνόμια·
μὲ μάλαμα γραμμένο τὸ δοξάζει
σὲ ἀστραφτερὸ κατεβατὸ μαρμάρου
ὑμνος χρυσός, τοῦ ἀθάνατου Πινδάρου.»

Kallipateira was a Greek lady of noble birth, daughter of the famous Olympic Games champion, Diagoras of Rhodes, for whom Pindar wrote his celebrated VIIIth Olympian Ode. Pindar's ode was carved in golden letters on a marble slab of the temple of Athena at Lindos, Rhodes

ΠΑΤΡΙΔΑ

Πάλε ξυπνάει τῆς ἀνοιξης τ' ἀγέρι
στην πλάση μυστικῆς ἀγάπης γλύκα,
σὰν νύφ' ἢ γῆ, πῶχει ἄμετρα ἄνθη προίκα,
λάμπει ἐνῶ σβηέται τῆς αὐγῆς τ' ἀστέρι.
Πεταλοῦδες πετοῦν ταίρι μὲ ταίρι,
ἐδῶ βουίζει μέλισσα, ἐκεῖ σφήκα·
τῆ φύση στὴν καλή της ὥρα ἐβρῆκα,
λαχταρίζει ἡ ζωὴ σ' ὅλα τὰ μέρη.
Κάθε μοσχοβολιά καὶ κάθε χρῶμα,
κάθε πουλιοῦ κελάδημα ξυπνάει
πόθο στὰ φυλλοκάρδια μου κι ἐλπίδα
νά σοῦ ξαναφιλήσω τ' ἅγιο χῶμα,
νά ξαναἰδῶ καὶ τὸ δικό σου Μάη,
ὁμορφὴ μου, καλή, γλυκεῖα πατρίδα.

LETHE

Lucky are the dead who forget
life's bitterness. When the sun
goes down and twilight follows,
do not weep however you grieve.

At that hour, souls thirst and go
to oblivion's icy fountain;
but the water will blacken like slime,
if a tear falls from those they love.

And if they drink cloudy water they recall
crossing asphodel prairies and old pains
that lie dormant within them.

If you must weep at twilight,
let your eyes lament the living;
they long to but know not how to forget

KALLIPATEIRA

'Rhodian lady, how did you enter?
An ancient custom does not admit women.'
'I have a nephew, Eucles,
a father, a son, three brothers: all champions;
you must allow me, Judges,
to take pride in the fine bodies wrestling
for Hercules' wild-olive branch,
admirable manly souls.
I am not like other women;
my kin will shine down the ages
with the never-fading privileges of bravery.
Written in gold on bright marble
it is glorified by a golden hymn
of the immortal Pindar.'

KPHTH

Σειρήνα πρασινόχρυση, με μάτι
σαν της αγάπης, με λαχτάρας χείλια,
αχτιδομάλλα, ορθοβύζα, με χίλια
μύρια καμάρια και λέπια γεμάτη,

τραγούδι τραγουδάς μες τη ροδάτη
κατάχνια του πελάου, και στην προσήλια
του αγέρος πλατωσιά και στα βασιλεία
της γης πνοή το σέρνει μυρωδάτη :

«Σαν το γάλα της Αίγας Αμαλθείας
θρέφει θεούς και το φιλί μου εμένα.
Ελάτε να χαρείτε μες της θείας

αγκαλιάς μου το σφίξιμο ενομένα,
πρόσφυγες της Ζωής, δώρα άγια τρία·
θάνατο, αθανασία κ' ελευτερία».