

CASSIA, PAUL SANT/BADA, CONSTANTINA: *The Making of the Modern Greek Family: Marriage and Exchange in Nineteenth-Century Athens*, Cambridge: University Press, 2006. - 282 p.

When I was a kid, I was listening my father, who was spoken, as a notary, too often about «prikosymfono/matrimonial contract» and «proika/dowry». It was common sense till 1982, when a girl was born to escort her birth a feeling of concern or even of despair, because of the poverty of the father and his obligation to give dowry, in order to marriage her daughter at the proper time. With relief too many people with their daughters welcomed the law 1329/1983, about the annulment of dowry. It is exactly the origins of this subject, which the book of C's and B's examines, in parallel to other relevant elements, at the free Greece of 19th century, as the first post-colonial modern nation in Europe.

At the extended and quite insightful introduction, where under the general title «History, family and the 'other' in Greece», we can learn quite interesting things about the sociology and folklore (laographia) of the under examine period of 19th century and further more.

According to the introduction the study has two aims. «The first is to highlight the nature of property transmissions within...Athenian society». (13) The second aim...is to insert, as it were, the features of family life in Athens ... in order to «show how these features subsequently interacted with, and influenced, regional patterns of family organisation...» (15)

It is also remarkable the point of the w.'s that «urbanisation and the political and economic significance of the city are perhaps the main keys for an understanding of the evolution of the Greek family, its ethics and its concerns from the 19th century» (9).

The second section examines «Men and houses, women and households». Especially for the houses, we read the position that «contrary to contemporary Greek society, the house does not appear to have been important in late eighteenth -and early nineteenth-century Athens» and that means, among others that «a separate house was not a necessary precondition to marriage...» (34).

The third part of the book presents «Marriage, women and land in nineteenth-century Athens». Among terms as matchmaking (proxenia) and social stratification we learn about the ruling group (urban arkhontes) and the committee of elders (dimogerontes). In the end of the chapel (77) we find a comparative list about what was the major dowry component between 18th and 19th century, such as visible markers of social distinction (clothing etc) versus cash.

The forth section is dedicated to «Gifts and commodities, cash and trousseaux». Here we can attend a very interesting «conversation» about the worth of cash endowments and trousseaux in comparison to the land, olive trees and the like, as well as the entirely examination of the formula 'dowry=part of the inheritance', included some very interesting tables.

It follows the fifth unit «'For one's soul': adoption, fosterage and the growth of koumbaria». Here we can find interesting clues about fosterage and adoption, the spiritual kinship according the Orthodox Theology (146), as well as foster brotherhood (155) and of course «koumbaria» (godparenthood) (158).

At the sixth chapter the writers deal with «The family and emotional life», where except of the ethics of marriage we can also learn interesting things according to the popular literature but also the laographia (folklore), which is linked to the construction of the national (Greek) identity, of the late 19th century.

Finally, the Conclusion is valuable because it gathers many data about exchange, marriage and the person, and even more about the «sins», such as the will for even more profit (pleoneksia) and the dowry hunting (prikothiria).

The «touch» and, in general, the spirit of the Greek writer is obvious, especially when the text refers to the most proper Greek word to declare a fact, and, from the other side, the translation of Greek terms into English is very accurate.

It has been written that the under review book promises far more than it delivers. This is, among other reasons, because «the authors should have become more deeply conversant with the relevant social historical literature before wading into the archives» (T.W.Gallant, Journal of Social History, Fall 1993). Furthermore, it is really odd, on behalf of the writers, to draw most of their comparisons only with contemporary Tunisia and renaissance Florence or to make correlations to Catalonia, Malta etc. Instead of these, we should expect some more general examples and wider comparisons.

In addition to, we have to mention another deficit. The w.'s claim that «agreements be record in special registers and drawn up either by the papas or by notaries, where they existed» (20). It isn't referred that when notaries were nonexistent, tribune judges (irinodikes) were also able to register the contracts.

The fact that the case 'marriage' has changed enough at the Greece of 21st century, it is also obvious by the practice, of a little, for the time, spouses, who sign a pro-marriage contract about the lack and the division of their fortune, in case of a divorce.

As an epilogue we can say that the authors successfully co-operated to present their valuable material relying on matrimonial contracts, memoirs and traveller's accounts, on Greek marriage at the 19th century. There are brilliant insights, which are 'waiting' the meticulous reader to pinpoint them.

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