



A GREEK DIPTYCH:

*Dionysios Solomos
and
Alexandros Papadiamantis*

by
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This volume is the result of the Sixth and Seventh Annual Celebrations of Modern Greek Letters at the University of Minnesota honoring, respectively, the Greek national poet Dionysios Solomos (1798–1857) and the prose writer Alexandros Papadiamantis (1851–1911), two major men of letters whose contributions to modern Greek culture are as profound as they are different. In a remarkable way they supplement each other, thus attesting to the diversity and cultural complexity characteristic of the Greek experience. They form a distinguished and distinctive diptych prompting the Nobel Prize poet Odysseus Elytis to single them out in his major work, *To Axion Esti*, as models for assurance and inspiration in moments of personal and national crisis:

*Wherever evil finds you, brothers,
whenever your minds become muddled,
remember Dionysios Solomos
and remember Alexandros Papadiamantis.*

Solomos and Papadiamantis represented the archipelagic world of Greece, the former the Ionian, the latter the Aegean. But their concerns were panhellenic and dealt with political and cultural matters—the question of national identity and the modern Greek’s relationship to his cultural heritage and to the rest of the world. Solomos tended to view Greece in its European, indeed, world context, reflecting thus the European, especially Italian influence on the environment of his upbringing. Papadiamantis, too, was concerned with the question of cultural interaction and modernity, but he viewed the whole phenomenon through the tradition of the Greek Orthodox Church, to which he remained devoted to the end. Also different was their form of artistic expression, especially their use of the language. Solomos wrote in the demotic, Papadiamantis in his idiosyncratic *katharevousa* or puristic modern Greek. Yet, without Solomos, modern Greek literature, especially poetry, as it has evolved would have been unthinkable, and without Papadiamantis, modern Greek prose would have been infinitely poorer. In short, they are symbols of major political and cultural issues confronting the modern Greek state and society.

Louis Coutelle is a professor of Modern Greek at the Université de Provence in Aix, where he has been teaching since 1971. A frequent visitor to Greece and an astute observer of modern Greek society and culture, he has been especially interested in the cultural connections between modern Greece and Europe. He is an acknowledged authority on the Greek national poet Dionysios Solomos. His publications include *Le greghesco: Reexamen des éléments neogrecs des textes comiques venetiens du XVI siècle* (1972) and *Formation poétique de Solomos (1815–1833)* (1977).

Theofanis G. Stavrou is professor of history at the University of Minnesota, where he has been instrumental in developing a graduate program in modern Greek studies and Greek-Slavic cultural relations in modern times. He teaches and publishes in both the Slavic and Greek fields. His publications include *Russian Interests in Palestine 1882–1914: A Study in Religious and Educational Enterprise* (1963); *Russian Orthodoxy under the Old Regime* (1978) with Robert L. Nichols; *Art and Culture in Nineteenth-Century Russia* (1983); *Kostis Palamas: A Portrait and an Appreciation* (1985); and *Russian Travelers to the Christian East from the Twelfth to the Twentieth Century* (1986) with Peter Weisensel.

David R. Weinberg received his Ph.D. in Comparative Literature from Michigan State University in 1978. His dissertation was on Alexandros Papadiamantis, a subject in which he has maintained a strong interest ever since. An international educator and scholar and recipient of several awards, Weinberg has also translated from Modern Greek *The Murderess* by Alexandros Papadiamantis and *Fifteen-and-a-Half or So Strange Tales* by P. Pamboudis.