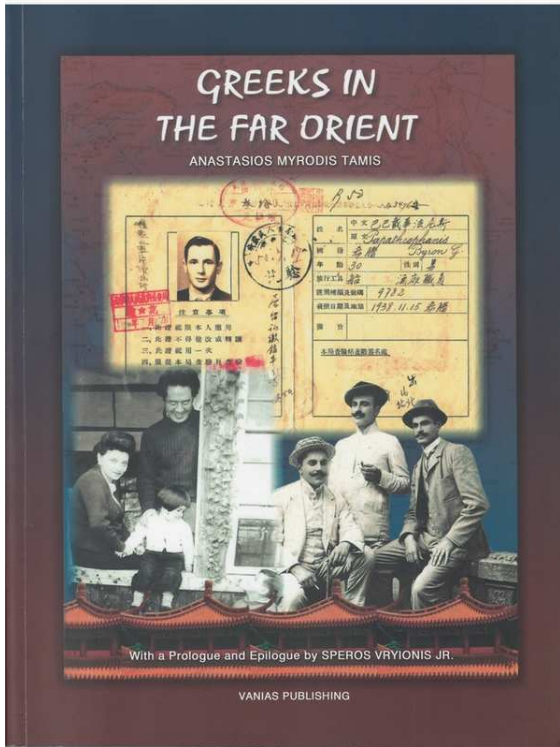


GREEKS IN THE FAR ORIENT



On Friday 16 March 2012 at Marrickville Town Hall the Sydney launch of Professor Anastasios Tamis’ new historical opus, *Greeks in the Far Orient*, took place as part of the Greek Orthodox Community’s 30th Greek Festival of Sydney. In the presence of over 150 people, including the Greek Consul-General Vasilios Tolios, the Right Honourable Bob Hawke, former Australian Prime Minister, referred to the “vast scholarship and painstaking research” evident in the book and to what was obviously a “labour of love” as Professor Tamis researched and documented the migration of some 40,000 Greeks to the Far East from the latter part of the 19th century.

As Professor Tamis explained, this aspect of Greek migration is not widely known, let alone documented, and it took more than five years of research, interviews, archival and diplomatic record searches, oral histories and writing to bring together this fascinating episode of the spread of Hellenism to the Far East.

A group of Greeks celebrate Greek Orthodox Easter in the countryside in Tianjin, China in 1932 (photo - below).

The book is indeed a weighty volume, almost 700 pages in length. Tamis chronicles the three phases of Greek and Greek-Cypriot migration to countries such as China, Japan, Korea and the Philippines from 1875 to the present day.

According to Tamis, the first Greek migrants to China in the late 1880s came from Macedonia, Constantinople/Istanbul, Epirus and the Ionian island of Cephalonia, and they mostly traded in tobacco, rugs, beverages and other Greek products. With the advent of communism some of the Greeks who were thrown out of China went to Japan, whilst the majority made their way to Australia and Canada.

Tamis also relates the life of perhaps Greece’s most famous export to the Far East, Lafkadio Hearn, the famous writer and poet who was born of a Kytherian mother and went to Japan in 1890 and proceeded to become the “best recorded and the most renowned westerner in Japanese soil”.

The book is a worthwhile addition to the Kytherian Association Library and comes with a signed inscription from the author dedicated to the “Tsirigotes”.

But the last word belongs to Bob Hawke. At a time when many in Australia are rallying to the cause of supporting Greece in its current financial difficulties, the former Prime Minister could not hide his admiration for Greek Australians for whom he confessed a great affection because they were “bloody good Labour supporters”. Bob Hawke praised the contribution of Greeks in the cultural enrichment of Australia.

Professor Tamis’ excellent work continues that cultural tradition.

George Vardas



Greek soldiers in post-war Tokyo (photo - above).