



Meet the New Committee



Pictured from Left to Right: Theo Dimarhos (Vice-President), Maria Efkarpidis (Director), John Efkarpidis (President), Nick Karagiannidis (Treasurer) and Fila Karagiannidis (Secretary).

The Presidents Word

Dear Friends,

The Canberra Pontian Club has become an official reality after many years of informal presence in the person, the vision and actions of the late Tom Efkarpidis.

As you would be aware the Pontian Greeks come from a world in exile and a people dislocated. Nevertheless, three generations and ten thousand kilometers away from home, the customs are rejuvenated and the spirit remains alive.

In Canberra our presence may be limited and our resources inadequate. Nevertheless, in the spirit of the 'necessity that becomes history' we come to get together in the hope and the belief that what we have deserves to

be retained and communicated. In the spirit of unity, our Club has joined with the Federation of Pontian Associations of Australia. By doing this, we have contact with the fellow Pontians around the country and a link with the happenings in Greece.

As a first step, the Canberra Pontian Club will start arranging social events that will give us the opportunity to establish a sense of community. Afterwards, we will be articulating a cultural agenda, which will be the result of your suggestions and initiatives. Throughout, we maintain that the only prerequisite for joining us, is - to quote from our forefathers - "to think like us".

With all this in mind, I invite you to join the Club and become part of a tradition and a memory that will be forever living.

With Pontian Greetings

John Efkarpidis

Pontian Dance Costumes



Up coming Events

29 March - Pontian Dance at Bankstown Hall, Sydney, 7:00pm. Tickets \$45.00 includes dinner and drinks.

August - Ski Trip

September - 3 days fishing trip

The details for the Ski Trip and 3 day fishing trip will be available closer to the date.

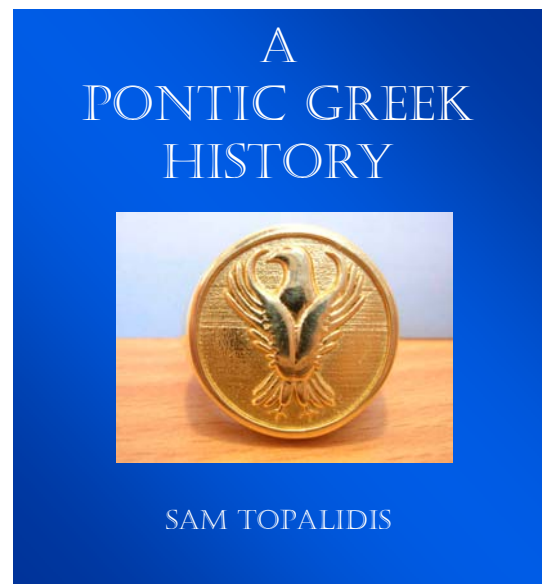
For information on the Pontian Dance, please contact John on 0414 444 788.

'A Pontic Greek History'

'A Pontic Greek History', is a book written by Sam Topalidis and published right here in Canberra. The book was written primarily to allow Pontic Greeks to know more about their Pontic Greek heritage. "I wrote the book to further Pontic Greek culture and to describe my mother's stories of her family roots".

Several copies of the book are in the Canberra Libraries and in the Australian National Library. Sam has also setup a book display with some Pontic Greek items in a display case at the Civic Library which can be viewed during February.

If people are interested in purchasing copies of the book, orders and can be made through the Canberra Pontian Club website. The total cost including postage (in Australia) is \$23.50.



Pontians Like Us



Pictured: Omer Asan

The Turkish writer, **Omer Asan** was born in 1961 in Trebizond, a city in Pontos where even today one can find many Greek speaking inhabitants. It is where an aging community still speaks the Pontian language.

Omer Asan, an economist turned writer, is a Greek-speaking Turk who was driven to write *Pontos Kultura* in 1996. He said, "I began to search for my identity because of the fact that the language my ancestors spoke was not Turkish. Because in the village in town, at school, they taught us that we were Turks. In the neighbourhood, at school, at work we spoke Turkish. But at home, in the village, my grandfather, my grandmother, everyone in the family spoke to each other in the language

we called "Romaika" (which is what is also known as "Pontiaka"). So what were we, "Romioi" or Turks? Now we speak Turkish."

In my village the old people speak Pontiaka, but they are the last to use the language. The coming generations will not be able to bear it and learn it. Let's say that we have agreed, as far as the present is concerned: We speak Turkish, therefore we are Turkish. But who were we until now, what happened to make us become Turks? By asking "Who am I?" I plunged into the unknown. I had to find the answer to this question at any cost. And that is how this adventure began.

"There are still people in Turkey today who speak and understand Pontian which is the oldest surviving Hellenic dialect. The members of this community come from Trebizond and are scattered throughout Turkey or have emigrated to other countries Pontian spoken in 60 villages in the Trebizond region, most of them in the Of area. At a conservative estimate. I would say this dialect is spoken by around 300000 people."

Originally, Asan's book was published in Turkey where it met its fate by confiscation and condemnation and its author was condemned to imprisonment of

possibly between 14 months to 4 years. Asan was accused of being a 'traitor', a 'friend of Greece' and a supporter of those who wanted Orthodox Christianity restored.

Omer Asan was acquitted in September 2003 as a result of the abolition of Article 8 of the Anti-Terror Law. His book found a new life when it was published in Greece under its new title, *The Civilization of the Pontos (Ο Πολιτισμός του Πόντου)*. It became one of the most important books sold in Greece.

Omer Asan described the traditions of his people from the north eastern part of Turkey known as Pontos. He vividly described the customs and "forbidden language" spoken only in the home-of traces of an ancient Greek culture that Mustafa Kemal's new "democratic" military government prefers that the world should not know about. By now, Turkey had hoped that when the survivors are no longer with us that future generations would not know Turkey was originally inhabited by Greek, Armenian and Assyrian Christians, who were either massacred or forcibly converted into Muslims. Omer Asan comes from that background. He is indeed a Pontian like us.