Commentary on Solomos video

<http://webtv.ert.gr/ert2/epoxes-kai-sigrafeis/22okt2017-epoches-ke-syngrafis/>

2.50- 3.35

Solomos , the national poet of Greece , was born in the Ionian island of Zakynhtos. The Ionian islands during the 18th and the 19th century belonged for different periods to the French , the English and the Venecians . As a result we have the fascinating paradox of Dionysios Solomos who although was born Greek , had a French then English and later Italian citizenship . He spoke Italian most of his early years and eventually became a great romantic poet writing in Greek.

6.04 – 7. 10

His mother was a 15 year old maid working for a 60 year old aristocrat . An out of marriage affair like that was not uncommon at the time . Solomos , an illegitimate child , lived in his father’s house where Italian was spoken but learnt the common Greek language from his mother.

11.04 – 11.45

The first teachers of Solomos were priests . His father at the age of 70 , just one day before he dies marries his mother and so recognizes Solomos as his legitimate child.

13.22 – 15.50

During the second decade of his life Solomos is in Italy. At the age of 10 he is sent to Venice , to Santa Katarina College , accompanied by Don Santo Rossi ,his Italian teacher from Cremona.

Far away from home and his mother , Solomos lived for ten years in Venice, Pavia, Cremona and Milan. He attended the Lyceum of Cremona and started writing his first poems in Italian. Later he was a law student at the university of Pavia and he frequently sent letters to his mother . He expressed his love , sent his regards , asked her to take care but also asked to secretly borrow small amounts of money.

16.05- 18.10

Solomos was really not interested in law but in literature. Students of that time were encouraged to write poems so he does write in Italian , belongs to literary clubs where he meets Italian poets and is highly estimated by them. During the crucial early years of his life Solomos is shaped by the Italian language , culture , society.

A Cremona road , near the park where he used to stroll carries his name.

23.58- 25.25

Greece is under Ottoman occupation , there is no organized educational system . Solomos was educated in Italy but learned Greek from his mother . It was the language of the common people , the language of lullabies and tradition. So , when Solomos returns to Zakynthos , he connects with his roots again and writes popular poems that become songs.

41.00- 46. 10

The Greek people’s fight for independence inspires Solomos who in the same way as Dante would like to express through language the soul of his people. In 1823 , in just one month , the 25 year old Solomos completed the 158 verses of the Hymn to Freedom.

The Hymn first appeared in parallel text , Greek – Italian , then was translated into French and English. It was accepted with positive reviews . It was not only the first great poem written in the modern Greek language but it is considered a great European poem about freedom.