

DELtos

Vol 34, No 52 (2024)

Deltos

DELtos JOURNAL FOR THE HISTORY OF MEDICINE
Athens • June 2024 • Volume 34 • Issue 52 • ISSN 2945-1205



σοινύζεις

Deltos ΠΕΡΙΟΔΙΚΟ ΤΗΣ ΙΣΤΟΡΙΑΣ ΤΗΣ ΙΑΤΡΙΚΗΣ
Αθήναι • Ιούνιος 2024 • Τόμος 34 • Τεύχος 52

Multum in parvo. Eight examples from the Louros Archive

Athanasiros Diamandopoulos

doi: [10.12681/dj.38293](https://doi.org/10.12681/dj.38293)

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To cite this article:

Diamandopoulos, A. (2024). Multum in parvo. Eight examples from the Louros Archive. *DELtos*, 34(52), 91–102.
<https://doi.org/10.12681/dj.38293>

Multum in parvo*

Eight examples from the Louros Archive**

Athanasiros Diamandopoulos¹



Figure 1. Nikolaos Louros (the Multus), the Academician, the Court Physician, the President. Oil painting. Dimitris Mytaras painter, 1975. National Galery, Athens.



Figure 2. The little (parvum) Nikolaos, the “Nikaki”, two years old, in the arms of his father Konstantinos. Black and white photograph, 1900, in N. Louros' Book “Pera smena Chronia” (Past Years), p. 196, in Greek, Athens, 1958

Abstract

This paper begins with a brief overview of the late Professor Nikolaos Louros' life, his residence, the eponymous Foundation for the History of Medicine, and his Archive. The main focus is the presentation of eight short entries from the Archive, which initially appear to concern medical matters. However, further research reveals their significance in shedding light on major political, social, and cultural events in Greece. The content of these eight notes includes: One and two - Louros' instructions concerning the fate of his Archive after his death. Three - the peculiar circumstances surrounding the delivery of Queen Geraldine of Albania's first son. Four - Louros' appointment as director of the Evangelismos Hospital's Department of Gynaecology. Five - a case of hymenorrhaphy. Six - events coinciding with the delivery of the Argentine Ambassador's wife, Seven and eight - The tracing of Louros' tomb.

Key Words: Constantinos Kavafis, Constantinos Logothetopoulos, Queen Geraldine of Albania, hymenorrhaphy, Alexandra Maternity Hospital

* Literally, 'Much in a little'. This phrase encapsulates our method of attempting to uncover an extensive narrative from a small fragment in the Archive. Figures 1 and 2 illustrate this concept: Nikolaos Louros is depicted in his advanced age (the multus), and as a two-year-old infant (the parvum), in whose genes the emergence of a genius was destined.

** This article is an expanded version of a lecture about the Louros Archive delivered at the Foundation's premises in a joint Meeting of the Louros Foundation and the European Association of Professors Emeriti on 26 November 2023.

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Figure 3. The burdensome inheritance: Views of the Foundation's premises before (above) and after (below) its restoration.

Introduction

1. Nikolaos Louros (1898 – 1986), his life and his bequest

Nikolaos Louros was one of the most creative cultural persons in medicine in Greece during the 20th century. He was the son of Konstantinos Louros (1864-1957) a prominent figure in the medical, social and academic life of the country. His father's name was synonymous with medical reform in Greece, although, as he himself wrote, the challenging conditions of his era prevented him from achieving all he had wished. He was also the uncle of the renowned singer Maria Callas. Nikolaos Louros was born in Athens and died there at the age of 88. He was childless and married twice, with his second marriage to Ioanna Lourou – Mitsotaki.

Like his father, he served as a personal doctor and adviser to the Greek Royal Family, having assisted in the birth of four kings, two queens, and a dozen of princess and princesses of Greece, Romania, Italy and Spain. He was a multifaceted figure, excelling as a medical doctor, academic teacher, art enthusiast, social persona, and historian of medicine. In 1966, he became a regular member of the Athens Academy and in 1976, its President.¹ In his will, he established the Louros Foundation for the History of Medicine, bequeathing to it his grand residence with all its contents, along with two additional flats. Among its contents was his extensive archive. The residence, located at 5, Semitelou Street, Ampelokepoi, Athens, comprises the top floor of a listed five-floor build-

ing. It was designed by the progressive architect Nikos Valsamakis (1926 -) in the early 1950s and contributed to the renewal of modern Athens's architectural image.²

2. The inheritance.

Thus we, as the second Board of Directors*, inherited both the Foundation and the Archive. It was indeed a burdensome inheritance. Figure 3 depicts the view of the flat when it was taken over by the Board and its eventual transformation, not achieved by parthenogenesis! A noteworthy aspect of the refurbishment is that it was just a tiny silk sample, salvaged from the original upholstery, which served as a guide, leading us to the discovery of many metres of similar material in an Athens workshop, just before it closed down, more than eighty years after the residence's original decoration. This material was then used for the new upholstery.

When we took over that derelict flat, we also encountered a "mountain" of 43 large cardboard boxes filled with papers, photographs, and notebooks, all in disarray. We did not know how to manage this obstacle, which covered the entire floor of the second bedroom. Therefore, we moved it "temporarily" to the sitting room and began the restoration work in the bedrooms. Subsequently, this "mountain" was transferred to the

*The Board Members were: President, Constantinos Trompoukis, Vice President and Curator, Athanasios Diamandopoulos, General Secretary, Stephanos Geroulanos, Treasurer, George Antonakopoulos, Member, The Dean of the Athens Medical School.

University of Crete, where our President, Constantinos Trompoukis, was serving as an assistant professor and was given access to some storage space. Later, when he was promoted to Associate Professor and moved to Ioannina, the 43 crates returned to Athens. Still, there was no appropriate place for them, so the old servants' apartment in the loft was used as a makeshift storage area.

Because the latter was derelict, after eight years, it was decided to refurbish it. Hence, the crates were moved once again, this time into the dining room downstairs. At that point, I thought, "enough is enough," and undertook the task of roughly sorting and classifying their contents, while also seeking a proper resting place for them.

It was at that point that a treasure trove emerged. Tens of thousands of handwritten, typed, and printed pages, photographs, and ephemera, all half-classified or loose, were discovered. These had been managed by the late Mrs. Foteini Kotsi, the legendary faithful secretary to Louros for decades. She was his trusted confidante in every aspect of his activities, his alter ego, storing all his papers and materials in her little enclave in the basement of Louros' flat.

What was stored? The late Louros kept, like a magpie, literally everything. His collection ranged from all his mother's affectionate and instructive letters to him, dating back to 1916 (Fig. 4) until her death, to his correspondence with royalty and eminent politicians, giants of science and the arts, as well as patients and colleagues from Greece, Germany, the UK, the USA,

and France. He even saved bus tickets and restaurant menus. The collection included volumes of scientific articles, manuscripts for extensive books yet to be published, and lectures delivered at every type of gathering. There were also films of pioneering surgical operations for that era, receipts for his smallest expenses, telephone bills, and telegrams on various social events.

Reading through all this, nearly a century of life comes back to life. The correct court etiquette sits alongside a "thank you" note to a peasant who sent him a turkey as a Christmas gift. His numerous law drafts from his tenure as Minister of Education sit next to recommendation letters for his servants. Overall, we catalogued 300 pages of titles from his stored documents, with some titles corresponding to hundreds of pages. Surprisingly, not a single letter was found between him and his first wife, Lilika Christomanou—descendant of the old aristocratic Benizeloi family—or his second wife, the beloved Ioanna Mitsotaki, daughter of a wealthy wine merchant from Constantinople and London and eventual donor to our Foundation. However, there were some naughty erotic notes from an extramarital affair with the mysterious lady L.F.

Louros did not adhere to Frederick Forsyth's dictum: "*Commit nothing to paper, and certainly not to a computer or a cell phone. Keep it in your head. It's the only private place we have left*". By writing down everything, he gave us the opportunity for benevolent gossip. Personal archives reflect not only what a

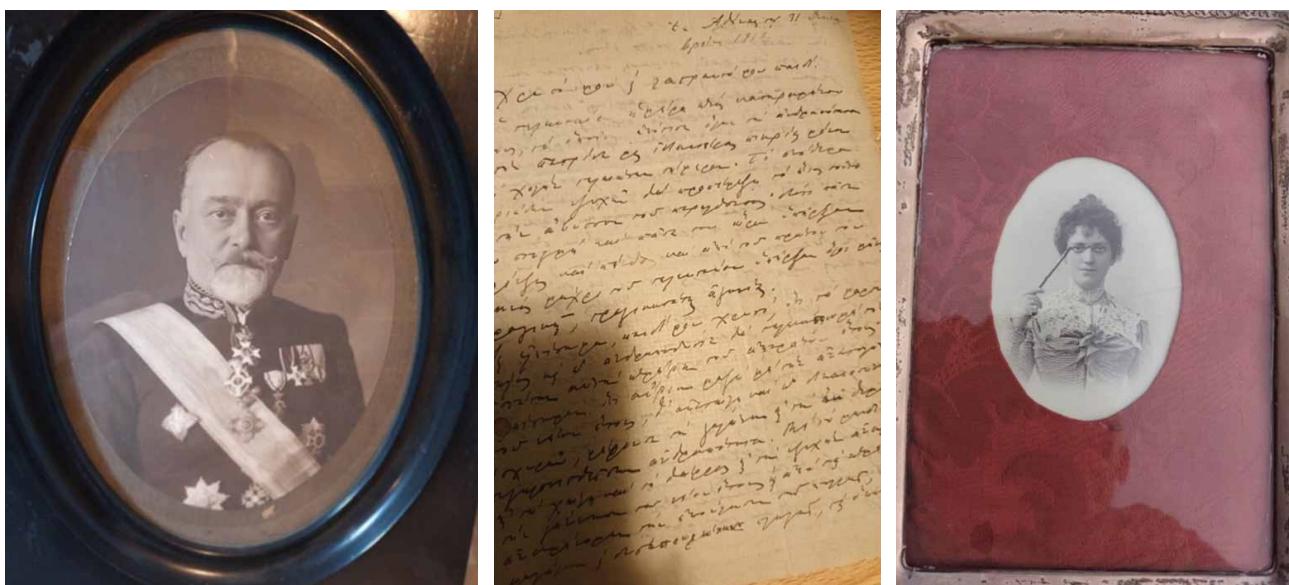


Figure 4. On the left, a photograph of Konstantinos Louros, the father. On the right, Euphrosyne, the mother. In the middle, a hand-written letter by his mother to "Nikaki" in 1916. All three are displayed in the Foundation.

person does or thinks but who they are and how they envision and experience their lives. In summary, we unearthed a gold mine of information from the archive classified in Table 1.

But unearthing anything requires extensive digging. For hours, for days, for months. Not alone, however. Like a *deus ex machina*, a collaborator appeared in the form of Mr Christos Marinis, a philologist. Initially employed by the Foundation on an hourly wage, he and I gradually became so enthralled by the Archive's contents that we worked together as a team, driven by enthusiasm and stamina. As George Eliot said, "*It is hard to believe long together that anything is 'worthwhile,' unless there is some eye to kindle in common with our own, some brief word uttered now and then to imply that what is infinitely precious to us is precious alike to another mind*".³ Thus, like Robinson Crusoe and his man Friday, we toiled for endless periods on the deserted Archive Island, striving not for our own survival, but for the preservation of the invaluable information hidden within the Archive.

Two of the eight documents discussed in this article emerged almost at the end of our task, revealing the late Louros' aspirations for the fate of his Archive. The first is a letter to Mrs Kotsi, his devoted secretary, written in 1967. In it, he implores her to collect all his papers and other documents stored in her office, his study at Alexandra Hospital, and his private house, foreseeing that they will be of assistance to future re-

Table 1.

a. His Ancestry
b. His father and mother
c. His early years as a student in Germany and Switzerland
d. His career in Greece
d1. His life as a professor
d2. His life as a clinician
d3. His life as a man of the society
d4. His life as a dreamer
d5. His life as a man of letters and arts
d6. His life as doctor to the Royal Family
d7. His personal life
d8. His Legacy (House, Archive)

searchers. The letter was written in a very sentimental and personal tone.

The other document is a letter to the President of the Athens Academy, instructing him to collect all the contents of the Archive immediately after his death, store them in the Academy, and, after twenty years, appoint a researcher to classify, study, and publish the materials (Fig. 5). Mrs Kotsi tried to fulfil her duty, but the Academy ignored his wish altogether. Thus, Mr Marinis (who vividly describes his feelings about his work with the Archive in another article in this issue of *Deltos*) and the author of this article undertook this

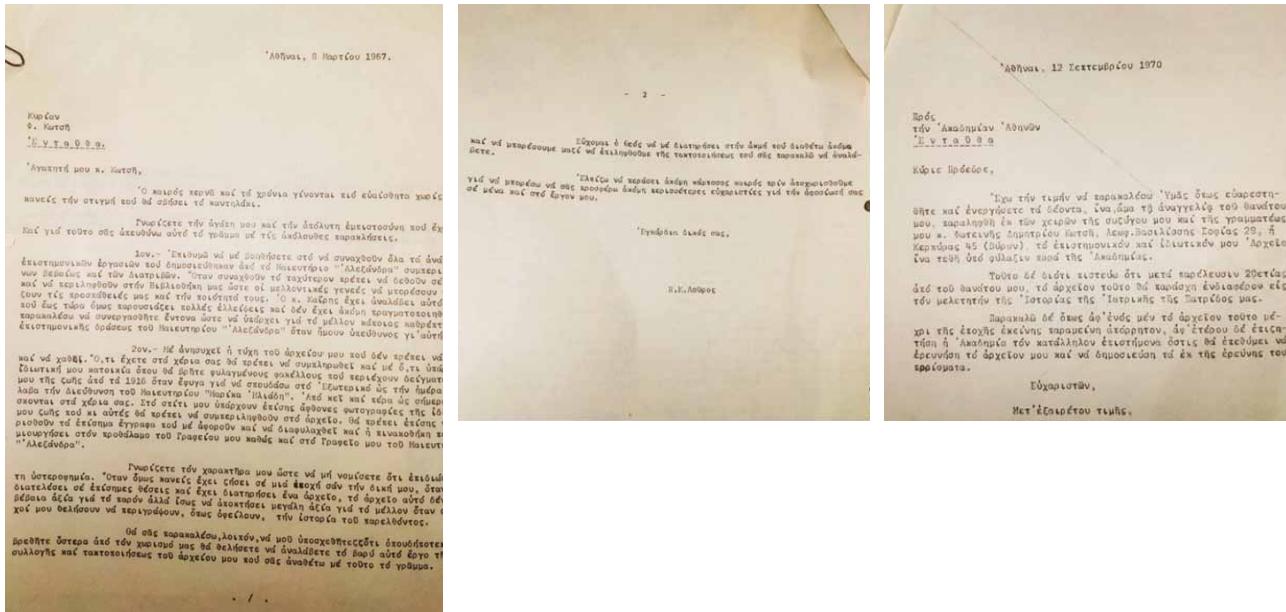


Figure 5. The two pages on the left are from Louros' letter to his secretary, Mrs. Kotsi, and the one on the right to the then President of the Athens Academy. In both, he expresses his wishes about the fate of his Archive.

obligation. When the high and mighty fail, humbler workers take over.

The first letter to Mrs Kotsi revives the almost lost figure of the devoted secretary who adored her boss and dedicated all her energy to resolving not only secretarial matters but anything that might disturb him. Interestingly, Nikolaos, in his will, ordered a life-long allowance to be paid to her. The second letter, addressed to the President of the Academy -and the total indifference shown to it -, highlights the arcane system by which even the most acclaimed organisations operate, allowing time to pass them by.

In the following part of the article, a few more examples will be presented to illustrate how documents from the Archive shed light on broader issues. In Box A1, containing medical essays, drafts for articles, and books, under serial number 23, there was the typographic proof of an article with the intriguing title "Chasing the Queen of Albania".⁴ In this article, Louros vividly recalls an urgent call from the then Greek Prime Minister Ioannis Metaxas, urging him to rush to Tirana and assist in the delivery of Queen Geraldine's first son. He hurried to the frontiers on an old-fashioned train—no airplane was available—but en route, he was informed that just two days earlier, Italy had invaded Albania. King Zog, after broadcasting a patriotic address to his people,

Unfaithfulness (English)

*At the marriage of Thetis and Peleus
Apollo stood up during the sumptuous wedding
feast and blessed the bridal pair
for the son who would come from their union.
"Sickness will never visit him," he said,
"and his life will be a long one."*

When later their brave son Achilles was killed in his prime at the Trojan War and Thetis (his mother) in her grief, recalling that wedding scene, asked what the wise Apollo was up to,

*where was this poet who holds forth
so eloquently at banquets, where was this prophet
when they killed her son in his prime.
And the elders answered that Apollo himself had
gone down to Troy
and together with the Trojans had killed her
son.⁵*

Eighty-three years later, Louros' report was verified. In April 2023, the Albanian General Directorate of Archives published a document signed by Gjon Lusha, stating that on 8 April 1939, King Zog crossed

had escaped with the Queen and his entourage to Greece. Louros took another train, and the two trains ended up chasing each other, eventually meeting at midnight in Larissa, Central Greece. Under all this heavy stress, the Queen had prematurely delivered the baby on a carpet on the floor of the Tirana Royal Palace, without any doctor or midwife in attendance. Louros expressed his and the Greek government's sympathy but could not help noticing that another wagon of the royal train was filled with crates of gold, the royal family's security for their lives in exile.

This little-known story aroused my curiosity, so I conducted a search on the web. I discovered that the beautiful Geraldine (Fig. 6), a scion of a very old noble Hungarian family, married King Zog in Tirana on 27th April 1938. Lavish celebrations followed, with Count Ciano, Mussolini's Foreign Minister and son-in-law, serving as the couple's best man (Fig. 7). He wished them and their descendants every happiness. Less than a year later, on 7th April 1939, Mussolini invaded Albania, ousting the couple and the two-day-old Prince Leka into exile (Fig. 8). As Ciano wrote in his memoirs, they waited for the baby to be born before they attacked. The whole story echoes Konstantinos Cavafy's poem "Unfaithfulness."

Απιστία [1904]

*Σαν πάντευναν την Θέτιδα με τον Πηλέα
σηκώθηκε ο Απόλλων στο λαμπρό τραπέζι
τον γάμου, και μακάρισε τους νεονύμφους
για τον βλαστό που θα 'βγαινε απ' την ένωσί των.
Είπε· Ποτέ αυτόν αρρώστια δεν θ' αγγιξει
και θα 'χει μακρινή ζωή.*

Και όταν αργότερα ο γενναίος γιός τους Αχιλέας σκοτώθηκε στο άνθος της ηλικίας του στον Τρωικό Πόλεμο, η Θέτις ολοφυρομένη ανακάλεσε τη γαμήλια σκηνή:

*Και μες στον οδυρμό της τα παλιά θυμήθη·
και ρώτησε τί έκαμνε ο σοφός Απόλλων,
πού γύριζεν ο ποιητής που στα τραπέζια
έξοχα ομιλεί, πού γύριζε ο προφήτης
όταν τον νιό της σκότωναν στα πρώτα νιάτα.
Κι οι γέροι την απήντησαν πως ο Απόλλων
αυτός ο ίδιος εκατέβηκε στην Τροία,
και με τους Τρώας σκότωσε τον Αχιλλέα*

the border with Greece, and during an inspection, the following were found: 250,000 napoleons of King Zog's gold; 60,000 of Abdurrahman Mati; 40,000 of the General and 40,000 of Minister Musa Juka (Fig. 9).



Figure 6. Queen Geraldine of Albania (nee Apponyi).



Figure 7. Photograph of the royal wedding between Geraldine and King Zog on 27 April 1938 in Tirana. Count Ciano (on the left) served as a witness, while the couple drove away in a luxurious car gifted by Hitler.



Figure 8. Front page of the News Chronicle on 8 April 1939, announcing Italy's invasion of Albania.

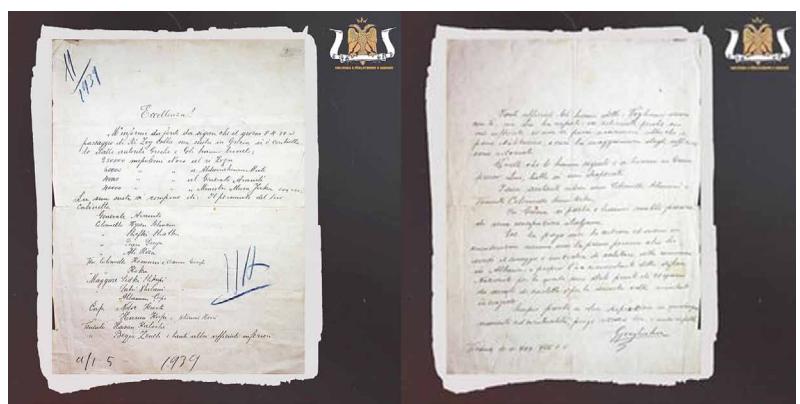


Figure 9. The document of the General Directorate of Archives in Albania, published in April 2023, reporting the sums taken from the National Bank by the departing King Zog.

Another very interesting small piece written by Louros begins with an urgent call he received on 17th November 1936 while he was at the golf course. He was summoned to deliver the baby of the Argentine Ambassador's wife. He hurried and successfully completed the delivery just in time to join the huge crowds gathered to witness the solemn procession (Fig. 10) of the coffins containing the mortal remains of King Constantine, Queen Sophia, and Queen Mother Olga, which were being transferred from the Russian Orthodox Church crypt in Florence to the Tatoi Royal

Cemetery. The entire Royal Family, the Government, Orthodox prelates, generals, ambassadors, and others, all in full ceremonial attire, participated in the procession. As an ardent royalist, Louros could not miss the event. However, in a prophetic mood, he wrote shortly afterward: *"This was not just the funeral of the royals. It was the funeral of this kind of pomp. Gilded swords, plumes with feathers, morning suits—all these will disappear."* His foresight echoed another poem by Konstantinos Cavafys, on the coronation of Cleopatra's children in Egypt:



Figure 10. Scenes from the pompous return of the remains of King Constantine, Queen Sophia and Queen-Mother Olga from Florence to Athens, on 17/11/1936.

The Alexandrian Kings

*The Alexandrians were gathered
to see Cleopatra's children,
Caesarion, and his little brothers,
Alexander and Ptolemy, whom for the first
time they lead out to the Gymnasium,
there to proclaim kings,
in front of the grand assembly of the soldiers.
[...]*

*Caesarion stood more to the front,
dressed in rose-colored silk,
on his breast a bouquet of hyacinths,
his belt a double row of sapphires and amethysts,
his shoes fastened with white
ribbons embroidered with rose pearls.
Him they named more than the younger ones,
him they named King of Kings.*

*The Alexandrians of course understood
that those were theatrical words.
[...]*

*and the Alexandrians rushed to the ceremony,
and got enthusiastic, and cheered
in greek, and egyptian, and some in hebrew,
enchanted by the beautiful spectacle --
although they full well knew what all these were worth,
what hollow words these kingships were⁶.*

In a typographic proof of a naughty little article in the Archive titled “Caesarean section and Hymenorrhaphy”, Louros relates an incident involving a mother and daughter who visited his private office seeking verification of the daughter’s virginity. Louros refused, as he discovered that the daughter was three months pregnant, much to the shock of both mother and daughter. Despite much crying, they declined an abortion to preserve the vaginal membrane, deemed vital for a respectable marriage. They left, but the daughter returned six months later, still pregnant. She

Οι Αλεξανδρινοί Βασιλείς (1912)

*Μαζεύθηκαν οι Αλεξανδρινοί
να δουν της Κλεοπάτρας τα παιδιά,
τον Καισαρίωνα, και τα μικρά του αδέρφια,
Αλέξανδρο και Πτολεμαίο, που πρώτη
φορά τα βγάζων έξω στο Γυμνάσιο,
εκεί να τα κηρύξουν βασιλείς,
μες στη λαμπρή παράταξη των στρατιωτών.
[...]*

*Ο Καισαρίων στέκονταν πιο εμπροστά,
ντυμένος σε μετάξι τριανταφυλλί,
στο στήθος του ανθοδέσμη από νακίνθους,
η ζώνη του διπλή σειρά σαπφείρων κι αμέθυστων,
δεμένα τα ποδήματά του μ' άσπρες
κορδέλες κεντημένες με ροδόχροα μαργαριτάρια.
Αυτόν τον είπαν πιότερο από τους μικρούς,
αυτόν τον είπαν Βασιλέα των Βασιλέων.*

*Οι Αλεξανδρινοί ένιωθαν βέβαια
που ήσαν λόγια αυτά και θεατρικά.
[...]*

*κι οι Αλεξανδρινοί έτρεχαν πια στην εορτή,
κι ενθουσιάζονταν, κι επενφημούσαν
ελληνικά, κι αιγυπτιακά, και ποιοι εβραϊκά,
γοητευμένοι με τ' ωραίο θέαμα -
μόλι που βέβαια ήξενωραν τι άξιζαν αυτά,
τι κούφια λόγια ήσανε αυτές οι βασιλείες.*

demanded a caesarean section, suggesting that the inevitable scar could be easily explained to any future husband as the result of an appendectomy⁷. The article was eventually published in the same book detailing Queen Geraldine’s misfortunes. Although an intact hymen is not generally considered a prerequisite for marriage nowadays, the practice is surprisingly still practiced on a smaller scale in Greece and thrives in some Muslim countries and in Albania. There, men who work abroad and are disillusioned by the perceived promiscuity of local women return home to marry an

innocent virgin. Gynaecologists in these regions often accommodate this demand.

An apparently unimportant postcard dated 19 August 1928, addressed to Nikolaos Louros and written in very poor handwriting, was about to be classified into the “ephemera” section when a passage caught our attention (Fig. 11). It read, “[...] *I was pleased by the assignment of Evangelismos' affair to your father. I'll write him tomorrow.*” What was this “assignment” that the senior friend, Spyros Dasios (1870-1943), deemed significant enough to intervene on behalf of the Louros son to Louros father, while ignoring the general elections held in Greece on the same day that brought Eleutherios Venizelos, the archenemy of the Louros family, to office? Suddenly, a letter, retrieved with some difficulty a few months ago and stored in the Eleutherios Venizelos Archive, came to mind.

This was a four-page handwritten letter dated 31st October 1928 from Konstantinos Louros, Nikolaos' father, to Eleftherios Venizelos, requesting that Nikolaos be appointed Head of the Gynaecological Department at "Evangelismos" Hospital (Fig. 12). Through this letter, the labyrinth of political manipulations surrounding senior medical appointments is revealed. Although Nikolaos was eventually appointed director of the department, he did not accept the position for complicated reasons. He was succeeded by Konstantinos Logothetopoulos, an excellent gynaecologist. This marked the beginning of an endless rivalry between the two, further exacerbated by their political differences. Louros was a humanist conservative, while Logothetopoulos was an ultra-right supporter, bordering on fascism.⁸ At one point, Logothetopoulos was appointed Prime Minister by the German occupational authorities in a short-lived cabinet. Conversely, Louros was arrested and imprisoned at Averof Prison, reportedly due to Logothetopoulos' interference. However,

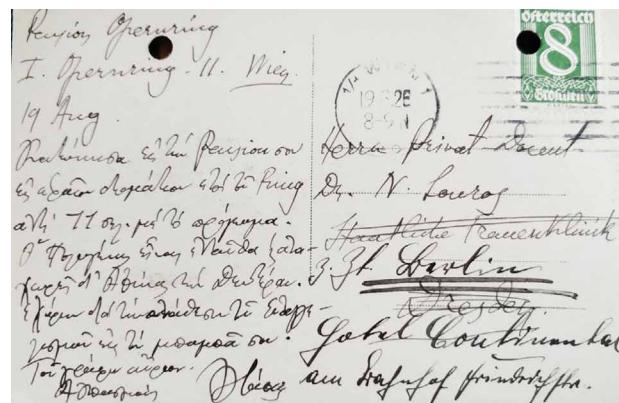


Figure 11. Postcard sent to N. Louros from Wien on 19 August 1928 writing, between other items, “I was pleased by the assignment of Evangelismos’ affair to your father. I’ll write to him tomorrow”. Although the signature is difficult to decipher, the name is probably that of Spyros Dasios, a well-known lawyer, journalist and politician, friend of the Louros family.

after Greece's liberation, when Logothetopoulos went on trial as a Quisling, Louros stood as a witness in his defence.⁹ Despite this, their rivalry continued, especially over positions of power at the Marika Iliadi and Alexandra Hospitals. Logothetopoulos, in an attempt to justify himself, published the book "Idou i Alethia"¹⁰ (This is the Truth), presenting his side of the events (Fig. 13). By then, however, Louros had triumphed in every endeavour he had undertaken.

Lastly, the presentation of two short letters exchanged between Nikolaos and his cousin John Simopoulos (1923-2015) in London, along with the latter's response concerning Nikolaos' burial site, signifies both the literal and metaphorical end of this article and Louros' life. Nikolaos was seeking permission from John, a very eccentric philosopher and professor at Oxford University, St. Magdalen's College (Fig. 14), to be buried in the Simopoulos family tomb at the



Figure 12. Four hand-written pages of the letter by Konstantinos Louros, Nikolaos' father, to El. Venizelos asking for Nikolaos to be appointed Head of the Gynecological Department at the “Evangelismos” Hospital, 31/10/28.

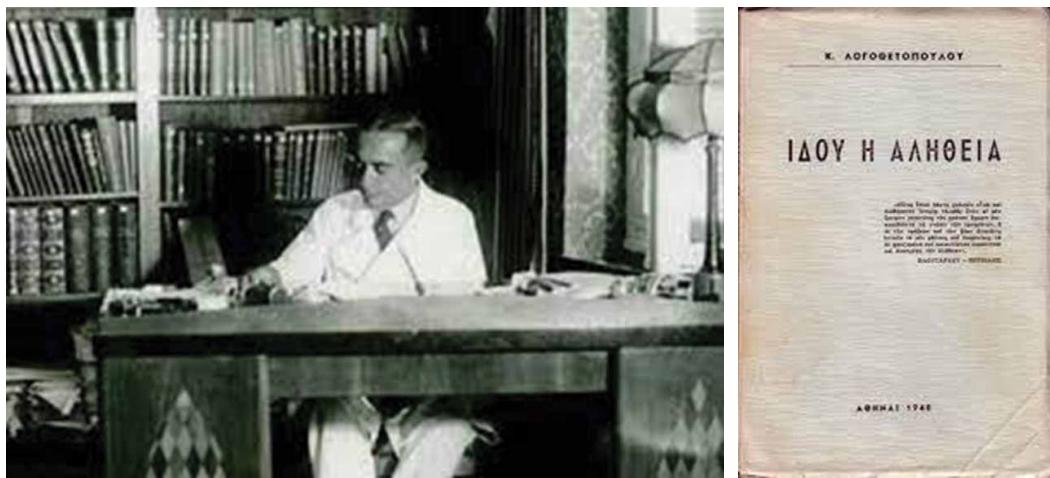


Figure 13. On the left, Konstantinos Logothetopoulos sitting at his desk. On the right, the cover of his book "Idou i Alethia" (This is the Truth).

First Cemetery in Athens, located in the section where many illustrious figures of the Greek state rest in peace (Fig. 15, left). Nikolaos Louros based his request on the fact that his mother, Euphrosyne, was a member of the Simopoulos family, and that his parents' remains were already interred there. He forwarded John a pre-filled application form to be signed and sent to the cemetery authorities, requesting that John also send a copy of the completed application back to Louros for safekeeping, to facilitate the formalities after his death. John responded vaguely and with some delay, stating that he had no objections, especially since he did not intend to occupy the tomb in the future.

This was a natural decision, as by then, that branch of the Simopoulos family had been Anglicised. John's

father, Charalambos, an Ambassador of Greece at the Court of St. James (Fig. 16), had married an English lady, and his funeral was conducted at St. Sophia's Greek Orthodox Cathedral, London, where he was also buried. John had become a permanent fixture at Magdalen College and was buried in London as well.¹¹ However, no copy of the completed form was found in Louros' Archive. These two short letters inspired the Board of Directors to locate the tomb where the founder's remains lay and to hold a religious service there. Then, a mysterious story unfolded. The Cemetery office informed me that Nikolaos Louros, his wife Ioanna, his father Konstantinos, and his mother Euphrosyne were buried in another, humble, tomb in



Figure 14. John Simopoulos (1923-2015), [credit: photo: Professor Roger Ainsworth] who has died aged 91, was a founding Fellow, Tutor in Philosophy and long-serving Dean of Degrees of St Catherine's College, Oxford; he was also the sort of old-school don whose manifold eccentricities live long in his students' memory. He never married....



Figure 15. On the right, the Simopoulos Family Tomb, number A/1/360, bought in 1887, stands between the neoclassical tomb-monuments of illustrious Greeks. On the right, Euphrosyne's and Constantinos' names are inscribed on the tomb's base.



Figure 16. Minister G. Simopoulos at White House, Washington, D.C., 12-12-24. Library of Congress. LCCN2016849850.

the most remote area of the cemetery. Since no fees for the site had been paid for decades, internal correspondence had begun regarding the removal of the bones to allocate the site for future use.

I was perplexed because the names of Konstantinos and Euphrosyne Louros were clearly inscribed on the marble base of the Simopoulos tomb (Fig. 15, right). After several exchanges of messages with Ms Ioanna Xera of the Cemetery's Finance Department and Ms Georgia Antonopoulou, archaeologist and Head of the Cultural

Heritage Department of the Athens Municipality,¹² the mystery was solved. Nikolaos Louros, perhaps in an act of defiance or following a family dispute, had removed his parents' bones from the Simopoulos tomb and buried them in the Louros tomb. He himself was buried there in 1986, along with his wife Ioanna later that same year (Fig. 17, left). The tomb was in a very neglected condition, with its plaque broken. The Board unanimously accepted my suggestion to renovate it, and on 31 March, the renovation was completed (Fig. 17, right).

Discussion

But was all this worth doing? What is the value of an archive? Records preserved in archives—unlike books and other forms of multiplied and recycled data in today's world—have one extremely important aspect: their uniqueness and irreplaceability. The vast majority of archive content consists of primary sources. Unlike secondary sources, which are typically published in some form, these primary sources are unique, existing only in a single or very few copies. The oldest known collection primarily comprising written literary works (poetry, stories, travelogues, etc.) is the Library of Ashurbanipal, King of the Neo-Assyrian Empire (688–631 BC), assembled at Nineveh (in present-day Iraq) by Ashurbanipal. However, the use of archives for research is a relatively recent development, beginning with the



Figure 17. Louros' humble tomb, number A/12/802, bought in 1950. On the left, before its renovation and on the right after. Euphrosyne's, and Konstantinos' names are inscribed (again!) on the top of the plaque, followed by Nikolaos' and his wife Ioanna's names. The latter two died in the same year, 1986.

French Archives' Law of 1794. Since then, a broad organisation of archives, both public and private, has developed worldwide. Their goal is not just to collect and store materials and information but also to make them accessible. Archives are crucial for exercising the right to access information, the right to know, and the freedom of expression in a free society. Open access to archives is one of the pillars of the Universal Declaration on Archives,¹³ which explains the role of archivists as skilled professionals who care for and provide access to archives. To close the gate to such a unique source of information, often stored in a single archive, is to close access to it altogether. That would be a cultural crime. The Board of the Louros Foundation is committed to preventing such an outcome. Therefore, we are earnestly seeking serious sponsorship to digitise the Archive in the near future and make it accessible to the public.

Conclusions

The eight documents from the Louros Archive presented here serve as excellent examples of how private letters, part of personal history, can enrich Mainstream History. Each time we discovered an important document that captivated us, we resisted the temptation to be swayed by its rarity and charm. Instead, we diligently connected it with other similar

documents and contextualised it within the broader social, scientific, and political climate of its time, thereby creating a holistic picture of the period.

We hope the examples presented illustrate our method, which in scientific terms is a fractal—i.e., a never-ending pattern. Fractals are infinitely complex patterns that are self-similar across different scales, created by repeating a simple process over and over in an ongoing feedback loop. Driven by recursion, fractals are images of dynamic systems—the pictures of Chaos.¹⁴ The Louros Archive, when first encountered, resembled Chaos, and the repetitive, simple process that created it was Louros' tendency not to throw anything away. Our similar tendency to relate minor notes in the Archive with significant events in the country mirrored this approach. For instance, we used a small rug as a guide for renovating Louros' grand residence, while two short letters led to the renovation of his final resting place. In a more minimalistic way, we can claim that our method resembles a Babushka, the Russian nesting doll, but opened in reverse—from the smallest document to the larger picture.

Acknowledgements: Sincere thanks are due to Ms Xera and Ms Antonopoulou for their valuable assistance in tracing Louros' tomb, to Professor Katerina Gardikas for identifying and photographing the tomb and to Mr Vasilis Markakis, the restorer of Antiquities and Works of Art, for his smooth and punctual cooperation in restoring it.

ΠΕΡΙΛΗΨΗ

Πολύ εν σμικρώ

Αθανάσιος Διαμαντόπουλος

Μια βραχεία περίληψη περί της ζωής του Νικολάου Λούρου, της κατοικίας του, του ομώνυμου Ιδρύματος της Ιστορίας της Ιατρικής και του Αρχείου του προτάσσονται του κυρίως περιεχομένου. Αυτό αφορά στη παρουσίαση οκτώ συντόμων εγγράφων στο Αρχείο του που μετά επιπολής ανασκόπηση αναφέρονται σε ιατρικά θέματα. Κατόπιν περαιτέρω έρευνας, αναδεικνύεται ο ρόλος τους σε μεγαλύτερα πολιτικά, κοινωνικά και πολιτιστικά γεγονότα στην Ελλάδα. Το περιεχόμενο αυτών των οκτώ εγγράφων σχετίζεται με τη τύχη του Αρχείου μετά τον θάνατο του Λούρου, με τις παράξενες συνθήκες του τοκετού της Βασίλισσας Γεραλδίνης της Αλβανίας, με τον διορισμό του Λούρου ως διευθυντού της Γυναικολογικής Κλινικής του Ευαγγελισμού, με μια ιστορία παρθενορραφής, με γεγονότα σύγχρονα με τον τοκετό το 1936 της συζύγου του Πρεσβευτού της Αργεντινής και τελικά με τον τάφο (τους τάφους) του Λούρου.

Λέξεις Κλειδιά: Κωνσταντίνος Καβάφης, Κωνσταντίνος Λογοθετόπουλος, Βασίλισσα Γεραλδίνη της Αλβανίας, παρθενορραφή, Μαιευτήριο Αλεξάνδρα.

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