The Conflicts Vineyard: In the Footsteps of Symeonides



It is a real pleasure to share a new essay by Professor Symeon C. Symeonides, written on the occasion of his retirement after fifty remarkable years in the field of conflict of laws. The essay, eloquently titled *Reflections from Fifty Years in the Conflicts Vineyard*, was presented as part of a symposium held in his honor in May 2024 at Willamette University College of Law, and sponsored by the AALS Section on Conflict of Laws.

The abstract of the essay reads:

> *This essay was written on the occasion of a Symposium titled "50 Years in the Conflicts Vineyard," which was held in the author's honor in May 2024 at Willamette University Law School and sponsored by the Association of American Law Schools Section on Conflict of Laws. For this reason, the essay is inevitably autobiographical. The author reflects on some transformative events that occurred during his fifty-year labor in teaching, writing, and legislating in the field of conflict of laws, the teachers, mentors, and authors who have influenced him, and the lessons he has learned.*

The essay is inevitably personal — and all the more moving for it. Professor Symeonides takes the reader not only through some of the transformative

moments in his five-decade career, as described in the abstract, but also through the challenges, passions, joys, and moments of sorrow that have marked both his personal and professional life.

As he writes:

> *"Fifty years of anything is a long time. Fifty years in conflicts law, if you love this field as much as I do, feels like a walk in the park. That is how I feel about my fifty years of laboring in this vineyard. It's been a great ride."*

Reading this piece felt like yet another walk in the park with him, a chance to discover meaningful moments from his life and his extraordinary career as a giant in the field. Readers will undoubtedly find many passages that catch their attention or resonate with their own experiences.

On a personal note, I first discovered Professor Symeonides' work as a master's student in Tunisia. I remember copying Part II on jurisdiction and foreign judgments of his book *Conflict of Laws: American, Comparative, International – Cases and Materials* (St. Paul, Minn., 1998), co-authored with Wendy Collins Perdue and Arthur von Mehren, and trying hard to learn from it. It was difficult, since – as a Tunisian student – I was not used to the casebook style. But from that moment on, I began following Professor Symeonides' scholarship. His writings have long served as a source of insight and inspiration (see on this blog, Ralf Michaels, Symeonides' 30th (and last) Annual Survey of Choice of Law).

The essay offers much to reflect on, but one detail stood out to me in particular: Professor Symeonides – together with another Conflict "Gentile Giant", the late Professor von Mehren – once commented on a draft of the 1998 Tunisian Code of Private International Law (see p. 17, fn. 66). This is something I could not have imagined even in my wildest dreams. As someone with a deep interest in this area, that historical note meant a great deal to me.

My warmest thanks to Symeon for sharing this piece, and – more broadly – for the inspiration, kindness, and intellectual generosity he has shown throughout his extraordinary career.

Béligh Elbalti