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Towards the urform of a Greek folk theatre *dromenon* at Naxos island

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ABSTRACT: The performative *dromenon* with the Kordelatoi / Kordelades / Foustanelades / Leventes / Tsoliades that we meet in Naxos island (Cyclades, Greece) belongs to the carnival festivities that took place on the island. It is part of the primary forms of the Greek traditional folk theatre. More specifically, during the week before Lent, a group of men, dressed in a characteristic ritual costume (the name of the event comes from a constituent of this costume, namely, *kordeles*, 'ribbons'), used to visit the neighbour villages, where its members enjoyed the hospitality of their inhabitants, danced, exchanged wishes and promised to return the hospitality. In this study, I trace the archaic character of this festivity, its nowadays forgotten old staging and, most importantly, its deeper meaning and goal-setting: I interpret it (on the basis of some symbols and symbolic acts) as a folk theatrical performance of women abduction (the well-known archaic practice) from the neighbouring villages they visit.

KEYWORDS: Naxos, Cyclades, Kordelatoi, Kordelades, Foustanelades, Leventes, ritual costume, women abduction, carnival customs, *dromenon*, fairy's kerchief, custom's «authenticity».

RESUMEN: La representación (*dromenon*) de los Kordelatoi / Kordelades / Foustanelades / Leventes / Tsoliades que se hace en la isla de Naxos (Cíclades, Grecia) pertenece a las festividades carnavalescas que se celebraban en la isla. Forma parte de las variantes primitivas de teatro griego tradicional. En concreto, durante la semana que precede a la Cuaresma un grupo de hombres ataviados con una vestimenta ritual (el nombre de la representación deriva de un componente de esta vestimenta, los *kordeles*, 'cintas') solía visitar las aldeas vecinas, en las que recibían la hospitalidad de sus vecinos, bailaban, intercambiaban deseos y prometían corresponder la hospitalidad. En este

artículo sigo el rastro del carácter arcaico de esta festividad, su antigua escenificación, actualmente olvidada y, sobre todo, su significado más profundo y sus objetivos. Basándome en diversos símbolos y actos simbólicos la interpreto como una representación teatral popular del rapto de mujeres (antigua práctica bien conocida) de las aldeas vecinas que visitan.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Naxos, Cíclades, Kordelatoi, Kordelades, Foustanelades, Leventes, vestimenta ritual, rapto de mujeres, costumbres de carnaval, *dromenon*, pañuelo de hada, «autenticidad» de la costumbre.

This study¹ constitutes the first scientific interpretation of the *dromenon* Kordelatoi / Kordelades / Foustanelades / Leventes / Tsoliades² that I deliver to our scientific community. Some thoughts are expressed in this study that refer to its «authenticity»³, in other words, to another «archaic», unknown character and function of the *dromenon* for which we do not have any sources or evidence but some fragmentary information embedded in the already existing recordings of it. I do not at all deal with the current function of the *dromenon* but I attempt to «restage» it in its older form and highlight its functions in the past which have been put into oblivion. This is the reason I use simple past in my descriptions and analyses.

The Naxian performative *dromenon*⁴ with the Kordelatoi / Kordelades / Foustanelades / Leventes / Tsoliades is part of the carnival feasts that took place on the island of Naxos (Cyclades, Greece). It belongs to the primary forms of the «traditional» Greek folk theatre. During the week before Lent until the last carnival Sunday, a group of men, dressed in a characteristic ritual costume, visited (after having arranged the meeting) the neighbouring villages in most cases, where its members enjoyed the hospitality of the residents, danced, exchanged wishes and promised to pay back the hospitality. The return of the group to the village constituted, as its departure also did, a very important event.

¹ This study is a first publication on the issue. A longer version of this study will be launched at the beginning of 2020 in the form of a book.

² In this study, the name Kordelatoi will be used most of the time to represent all the different names attributed to this custom.

³ For this thorny issue see indicatively J. Linnekin, «Cultural invention and the dilemma of authenticity», *American Anthropologist* 93: 2 (1991) 446-449; W. Puchner, *Δοκίμια λαογραφικής θεωρίας*, Αθήνα 2011, p. 76 onwards, where previous bibliography can be found.

⁴ For this term see indicatively W. Puchner, *Συγκριτική λαογραφία Β΄. Δημώδη βιβλία και λαϊκά θεάματα στη χερσόνησο του Αίμου*, Αθήνα 2009, p. 117, footnote 9.

In the evening of the last Sunday of the Carnival they boiled the eggs they had collected as gifts from their visits, completed the festive table with more food and enjoyed themselves⁵.

I draw information about the *dromenon* from the Naxian villages Melanes, Kinidaros, Agersani, Glinado, Filoti, Kaloxilos, Potamia, Damarionas and Sagri, because they can provide most of it.

My scientific proposition for the unveiling of the «archaic» character of this theatrical *dromenon* is based first on the Kordelatoi's disguise, which is their ritual costume. I believe that this can contribute to my attempt to uncover the older dimension of the *dromenon*, a form of its «authenticity» in other words as already mentioned, and not in order to generalize this principle as more complex or more important.

Since the last weekend of the Carnival the women dressed the selected to be the Kordelatoi young and unmarried men belonging to their family / fiancés / husbands⁶ in a strange to the givens of the island costume, which had nothing to do with the local dressing code tradition: An hybrid costume, «misleading» aiming at hiding its carrier's identity.

Their costume was almost identical; the micro differences were intentional to stress the locality of each village, its peculiarities which it wished to project continually and by all means. Its constituents were as follows⁷:

1.- The red **fez** (decorated with pins or the wedding wreath in the case of a newly married man).

2.- The offhand **foustanela** (kilt)⁸ (from the cloth surrounding the bed), **skirt** at Potamia, trimmed with lace⁹.

3.- The **pants** (female underwear, at Melanes this was what the Kordelatos' grandmother was wearing at her wedding day).

⁵ M. G. Sergis, *Λαογραφικά και εθνογραφικά από το Γλινάδο Νάξου*, Αθήνα 1994, p. 431; St. Spiliakos, «Χορευτικά δρώμενα της Αποκριάς στη Νάξο, Φουστανελάδες ή Κορδελάτοι», in: M. G. Varvounis & M. G. Sergis (eds.), *Δρυς υψικάρηνος. Τιμητικός τόμος για τον Δημήτριο Β. Οικονομίδη*, Αθήνα 2007, pp. 589-590.

⁶ At the village of Kinidaros, it is not a relative of the woman but a person familiar to her.

⁷ See photo 1.

⁸ For this see Ioanna Papantoniou, *Η ελληνική ενδυμασία. Από την αρχαιότητα ως τις αρχές του 20^{ου} αιώνα*, Αθήνα 2000, pp. 207-208; A. Keramopoulos, «Η φουστανέλλα», *Λαογραφία* 15 (1953-1954) 238-243; K. Bada, «Η παράδοση στη διαδικασία της ιστορικής διαπραγμάτευσης της εθνικής και τοπικής ταυτότητας. Η περίπτωση της “φουστανέλας”», *Εθνολογία* 4 (1995) 127-148.

⁹ N. Kephalliniadis, *Ποταμιά. Το καταπράσινο παραδοσιακό χωριό της Νάξου*, Αθήνα 1996, p. 260.



Photo 1



Photo 2

4.- The **shirt** (white with buttoned sleeves, with or without a collar).

5.- The **tie** (decorated with a golden pin in some villages)¹⁰.

6.- The **vest** (without sleeves and double breasted), decorated with **colourful ribbons** hanging from the Kordelatos' back (this is where the name comes from, ribbon = *kordela* in Greek). The costume at Sagri¹¹ presents certain peculiarities: There are no ribbons, the men are dressed as *tsoliades* (= *evzones*¹²). At the villages of Melanes and Kinidaros, the ornament of the vest was supplemented by the **small kerchiefs** (folded as squares), sewed at its front part.

¹⁰ This accessory is not found during the 20th century at Glinado.

¹¹ D. Aggelis, *To Σαγκρί Νάξου στο διάβα του χρόνου*, Αθήνα, p. 75.

¹² Once a distinctive body of Greek soldiers. Nowadays they participate in ritual celebrations. See photo 2.

A wealth of valuables (golden saint Constantinata coins, bunches of florins, «átsia» [= jewels] at Agersani¹³, etc., imported from Constantinople and Smyrna) were attached on it and decorated Kordelatoi's chest and hands. The people from Sagri presented again a different option: their costume was not decorated by the above mentioned valuables. Also, the Kordelatoi from Kinidaros carried a knot of a ribbon or a kerchief.

7.- The **belt / girdle**, a protection means found at Filoti's Leventes which looks as if holding «old pistols and big knives with heavily decorated handles»¹⁴.

8.- The **socks**, usually colourful, knit with a knitting needle and trimmed with a *dako* (= garter decorated with a knot)¹⁵.

9.- The **garters** (colourful, woven) with tufts (in a knot¹⁶) at their edge.

10.- A small **purse**¹⁷.

11.- The **shoes** (traditionally made of leather).

It is noteworthy that the mask does not constitute a *sine qua non* element of the disguise, even that of a beast-like form¹⁸. I, however, recorded an important information from writings about Kordelatoi at Agersani which has been confirmed by my own investigation at Glinado. The Kordelatoi «painted their face and became beautiful as if they were women»¹⁹. Painting the face is a likely substitute of the mask²⁰.

In 1833, **foustanela** was legalised by law as the national dress and the Greek army's uniform²¹. It goes without saying that it preexisted as several ethnotic and social groups' wear, it was shaped during the 18th and 19th centuries and was connected to the wider Balkan area²².

¹³ N. Kephalliniadis, *Ποταμιά...*, p. 282.

¹⁴ M. I. Psarras, *Οι παλιές απόκριες στο Φιλώτι της Νάξου*, Αθήνα 1994, p. 63.

¹⁵ M. G. Sergis, *Λαογραφικά και εθνογραφικά...*, p. 113.

¹⁶ M. G. Sergis, *ibid.*, p. 113.

¹⁷ O. Vilaeti, *Τελετουργία, επιτέλεση και τοπικότητα: Το εθνογραφικό παράδειγμα των Κορδελάδων στις Μέλανες Νάξου*, unpublished M. A. dissertation University of Thessaly, Volos 2007, p. 89.

¹⁸ W. Puchner, *Κοινωνιολογική Λαογραφία. Ρόλοι, συμπεριφορές, αισθήματα*, Αθήνα 2010, p. 123, footnote 96.

¹⁹ N. Kephalliniadis, *Αγερσανί Νάξου. Το παραγωγικό, παραδοσιακό και τουριστικό Λιβαδοχώρι*, Αθήνα 1987, p. 282.

²⁰ W. Puchner, *Μια εισαγωγή στην επιστήμη του θεάτρου*, Αθήνα 2011, p. 103.

²¹ See A. Keramopoulos, «Η φουστανέλλα», p. 238.

²² K. Bada, «Η παράδοση...», p. 135 onwards.

The informations about fustanela in the *dromenon* under investigation from the village of Melanes are recorded in this study as important: The brim (= *gyros* in Greek) of the «sacred» bed (from which the foustanela is made) and the pants of the costume were given as dowry by the grandmother of the maternal side to her granddaughter (who took her name according to the name giving custom of the village) and she, in her turn, offered them, as wife now, to the male members of her family or her brother for the *dromenon* of Kordelatoi. Accordingly, the man was taking the socks, the vest and other constituents of the costume. There was of course the case that all parts of the costume be delivered to the elder son or daughter as well as to anyone intensely interested and considered able to possess it. In the case of childlessness, the parts were handed to the relatives²³. In other words, these two characteristics of the Kordelatoi's costume are related (at least at Melanes) with the dowry from the mother relative side, and could thus be named female jewels given by the grandmother to the granddaughter, with a pre determined future receiver. This certainly constitutes a peculiar cross-gender disguise in this specific village.

At Kinidaros of the 20th century, however, this typicality of the disposition of the elements of the Foustanela's costume did not exist²⁴. I believe that we need to interpret in the same vein the acute remark made by M. Psarras: «All these aimed at showing off not only the gallant young fellow of their home but also the wealth of female jewels that once a year during carnival he was carrying to other villages...»²⁵. As far as the fez is concerned, to the same author, it is a more recent and imported part of the Naxian dress. It was brought by the immigrant Naxian women from Constantinople at the mid 19th century and was abolished in 1916, and was thus in use for a short period of time. The inhabitants of the village of Melanes used for a longer period the fez-heirloom kept by some families as a memory from the Balkan Wars²⁶. I remind nonetheless that the fez constituted part of the bride's wedding dress in other areas of Hellenism where we met it (in older times) decorated with pins. Let us add to the above remarks the presence of the knots made of ribbons (or of kerchiefs) on their shoulders

²³ See O. Vilaeti, *Τελετουργία...*, p. 90.

²⁴ Information provided by St. Spiliakos.

²⁵ M. I. Psarras, *Οι παλιές απόκριες...*, p. 63.

²⁶ See O. Vilaeti, *Τελετουργία...*, p. 88, footnote 170.

and the purse mentioned in the case of Melanes: they held it using a rope on their shoulders and put inside it various valuable objects. In other words, this is not a modern addition.

The colourful ribbons refer to the desired colorfulness of Nature, which it will gain during springtime when, being reborn, it will deliver all sorts of fruits, mainly those connected with the human survival. The fertility of the earth, animals and humans were the aim of the *dromena* that are analysed in this study. The illiterate, wise, «traditional» person made theatre to guarantee all year round well being, fertility, and happiness.

I conclude that almost all the constituents of the above described ritual costume are purely female garments and jewels, positional and social showing off goods, since gold is included. In the evolutionary course of the custom the focus was mainly on them and nowadays they are showed to the neighbouring hosting villages, gain their praise along with their whole presence and dancing dexterity.

In other words, we are dealing with Carnival, since young men through their costume are disguised to women²⁷: They go disguised (we have a case of anthropomorphic disguise) to another neighbouring place. They entered disguised to another society, obviously for another reason, different to the modern one. Let us take into consideration in our discussion the thoughts to follow.

How will the «war expedition» element of each moving of the Kordelatoi and their escorts be interpreted within this perspective?

The Kordelatoi troupe is an organized group by all means, with a hierarchical order in which all the participants have a predetermined well respected by all role to play. A testimony from Glinado suggests that they marched «in single file»²⁸, that refers to a well known form of marching from a different domain. M. Psarras informs us that the head of the troupe in this military like procession was a *levantis* (gallant young man) «with military qualifications of a reserve officer», who was signaled by the «distinctive symbols», golden or silver epaulets of an admiral or a general²⁹. The Kordelades at Melanes were under the orders of **Bayraktaris** and the protection of the so-called **Tsátsoi** or **Listés** (= Robbers). At Glinado and at Agersani these were called **Katsiveloi**, at Filoti, the

²⁷ In other words, this is an anthropomorphic disguise.

²⁸ M. G. Sergis, *Λαογραφικά και εθνογραφικά...*, p. 431.

²⁹ M. I. Psarras, *Οι παλιές απόκριες...*, p. 63. See D. Aggelis, *Το Σαγκρί Νάξου...*, p. 75.

neighbouring Kaloxylós and Potamia, **Listés** (= Robbers)³⁰, that were disguised in a black or white long shirt. They were armed (knives, guns and swords were hanging from their belt) with their primary aim to guard the *levantes*. Their leader was their oldest companion who carried a military uniform and a sword. When they reached the hosting village, selected the dancing place, pushed away the present people, safeguarded the area and focused on the dancing Kordelatoi.

I present in what follows (indicatively and in brief) the customary determined order of their procession at Kinidaros, since we are dealing with a military entity that determines the distribution of roles among the participants:

1.- The leader **Bayraktaris** with the **Bayraki** (= flag, *bayrak* in Turkish) of the village, a person that enjoyed the honour and the respect of the troupe members and the whole village. His rank, just like in the case of the wedding, was honorary and difficult³¹, it demanded responsibility. I, however, remind that the Bayraki at the Naxian wedding is not present³².

2.- The guardians of those dressed in Fustanelas, two **Clowns** / **Soldiers**, who carried small swords and were standing on the right and on the left of the Bayraktaris.

3.- The **Riflemen** who were shooting during the departure and the return of the Kordelatoi and during their arrival at the hosting village.

4.- The **Trumpeter**.

5.- The **remaining troupe** with the *paliomoskârous* (= bad masked men, disguised in women's clothes³³), those with tinted faces, those wearing traditional large breeches or some others who covered their faces with honey and chicken feathers stuck on them. At Glinado, apart from all these, they were escorted by the **Bear**³⁴ with its companion dressed in large breeches.

³⁰ M. I. Psarras, *ibid.* 63; St. Pararas, «Ήθη, έθιμα, γιορτές στο χωριό Καλόξυλος της Νάξου (β' μέρος)», *Ναξιακά* 36 (Apr.-June 1993), p. 35; N. Kephalliniadis, *Ποταμιά...*, pp. 236 and 260-261.

³¹ See El. Alexakis, *Η σημαία στο γάμο. Τελετουργία, εξέλιξη, προέλευση. Εθνολογική μελέτη*, Αθήνα 1990, p. 21; Z. Moutsos, «Ο γάμος παρά τοις Βλαχοφώνοις», in: Ev. Karamanes (Introd.-ed.), *Γαμήλια έθιμα των Βλαχοχωριών της Πίνδου. Πρώιμες λαογραφικές καταγραφές φοιτητών του Ν. Γ. Πολίτη*, Αθήνα 2017, p. 87.

³² See El. Alexakis, *Η σημαία στο γάμο...*, p. 27.

³³ St. Pararas, «Ήθη, έθιμα...», p. 35.

³⁴ See photo 3. For the fertility nature of this sacred animal see M. G. Sergis, «“Ιερά ζώα”: Ανάμεσα στη γονιμότητα και τη μαγική υπόσταση της “λατρείας” τους», in: *Ιερά Μητρόπολις Σάμου, Ικαρίας και Κορσέων, Κέντρον Εκκλησιαστικών Ιστορικών και Πολιτισμικών Μελετών, Ευκαρπίας αντίδοσις. Τιμητικό αφιέρωμα στην εικοσαετία (1995-2015) θεοφίλους αρχιερατείας του σεβασμιωτάτου μητροπολίτου Σάμου, Ικαρίας και Κορσέων κ.κ. Ευσεβίου*, Αθήνα 2015, pp. 763-786; see also W. Puchner, *Τα δρώμενα*



Photo 3

6.- The **takimi** (= group) of musical instrument players. They entertained the dressed in Foustanelas men, as a reward for the multifaceted good relationship that its members had developed during the whole year. Violins are traced only in the *dromenon* at Kinidaros (since 1890-1900 onwards), while in the other villages they used **tzabounodoubaka** (= sort of bagpipe accompanied by a tambour³⁵). At Melanes, in specific, *tzabounodoubaka* are mentioned as the musical instruments used, while at the mid 1920's the **violins**, which is an obvious influence from Kinidaros: To Olga Vilaeti, the clarinet, the tambour and the lute were used in the same village in older times³⁶.

It is worth mentioning at this point some remarks about the Naxian **Bayraki** to substantiate my argumentation. It was similar in all the villages discussed in this study: a long pole, which at Melanes (and only there) carried a

της Ελλάδας και της Βαλκανικής. Από το μαγικοθρησκευτικό έθιμο στη λαϊκή διασκέδαση, Αθήνα 2016, p. 227 onwards.

³⁵ St. Spiliakos, «Χορευτικά δρώμενα...», p. 582.

³⁶ See O. Vilaeti, *Τελετουργία...*, p. 94 and photo 4.



Photo 4



Photo 5

flag labarum with Markos Botsaris' figure depicted on it³⁷. It was usually made on the last Sunday of the Carnival. At Glinado (and Agersani) it is referred to as Bayraki, the Greek national flag³⁸. At Kinidaros it had the form of a colourful cloth at the top of which a cross was put and a decorated with flowers bitter orange or an orange was nailed³⁹. A kerchief was attached at the end of the pole at the Bayraki of Potamia⁴⁰. This is similar to the wedding Bayraki found at the Peloponnese and Macedonia (Northern Greece). Alexakis reports on that: «Then they decorate the cross with some sort of fruit, pomegranates, apples, oranges, lemons, bitter oranges, pears, quinces, figs that are nailed (...) at the peaked edge of the cross»⁴¹. The presence of fruit (fertility symbols) referred directly to the desired fertility of the couple.

I remind nonetheless that the **Bayraki**, the **Flammulon** (*flammulum*), similar to the modern banners in churches, used to be the flag of the military troupe during the Roman and the «Byzantine» period to mark its unity. The presence of the flag at the wedding, from the army that is in a rite of passage, is most likely observed during the «Byzantine» era. It was during that period that the wedding was still carrying its quality of a war expedition, as I analysed in the case of the Pontian custom. It was a «replication of the abduction» of the bride as is clearly signaled by the name of the custom (*nypheparman* = abduction of the bride): The armed and on horseback bridegroom and the troupe of his friends shooting seized the «castle» of the bride and were sometimes offered an amount of money as ransom for her, etc.⁴² Therefore, the Naxian Bayraki of the Kor-delatoi was a wedding one.

Some questions are raised for the depicted Markos Botsaris' figure (hero of the 1821 Greek revolution) on the Bayraki at Melanes. No informant of mine knows something specific on this variation. A scholar of the village, Gavrilis Kondylis, remembers, however, that Kalliope Xenaki (born in 1860) had in her

³⁷ See photo 5.

³⁸ M. G. Sergis, *Λαογραφικά και εθνογραφικά...*, p. 431. I meet this elsewhere as well (e.g. at Sagri, at Damarionas).

³⁹ St. Spiliakos, «Χορευτικά δρώμενα...», p. 587. At Melanes, O. Vilaeti, *Τελετουργία...* p. 93, mentions that by the cross they put a female kerchief and flowers. M. I. Psarras does not mention a Bayraki in the case of Filoti.

⁴⁰ N. Kephalliniadis, *Ποταμιά...*, p. 260.

⁴¹ See El. Alexakis, *Η σημαία στο γάμο...*, p. 15.

⁴² M. G. Sergis, *Διαβατήριες τελετουργίες στον μικρασιατικό Πόντο (μέσα 19^{ου} αιώνα-1922): Γέννηση, γάμος, θάνατος*, Αθήνα 2007, p. 138 onwards. At the Greek area the Bayraki has been attached more meanings. See at the Archive of the Historical Lexicon of the Academy of Athens.

possession one such Bayraki. My questions on the possible immigration of people from Epirus (birthplace of M. Botsaris) to the village and my continuous study of the Naxian culture (since 1980's until nowadays) have not been fruitful in providing an answer to this question.

I strongly believe that we can associate the Kordelatoi's moving from one village to another with the hundreds of winter gatherings (= *agermoi*), which belong to the so called "stable and archetypical structures" of the Greek folk civilization⁴³, and, more specifically, with the well-known custom of **Rogat-saria**⁴⁴. I remind the following theoretical considerations of this custom:

a) The strict organization of the aforementioned group, its hierarchical structure, the older war character of the moving of the troupe that led the participant young men even to death, since the intended identification with the ideal man forced them to answer back to any provocative challenge. «One typical characteristic of these groups is the merciless collision among two such troupes who met accidentally in the street: in the place names of northern Greece the name Rogatsia (...) often appears as a place of such bloody collisions and burial of the dead», since the victims were buried on the spot⁴⁵. As time passed (for various economic reasons), the collective rationalism and the police interventions led to some solutions to the problem: Only duels between the leaders or organization of the processions in a way that secured the avoidance of unwished meetings as we know that happened at Naxos and had to do with this custom⁴⁶. My research from Glinado provided me with information that only the escorting the Kordelatoi Bears were fighting each other, while at the other villages their aforementioned guards-protectors. Olga Vilaeti's recordings from Melanes confirm this information:

⁴³ For the terms see W. Puchner, *Δοκίμια λαογραφικής θεωρίας...*, pp. 93 onwards, 107 onwards.

⁴⁴ The more recent functions-aims of this custom are: i) Economic; ii) Fertility (they perform magical-symbolic acts: stirring of the fire to boost the power of life, mimicry of animals etc.); iii) Religious (the religious justification, their connection with a specific date of the ecclesiastical calendar, after the replacement of the pagan festivities with the Christian ones of course. This is possibly the reason for the carols they sing); iv) Social (the public image of the youth, the ideal of the brave young man, masculinity, the celebrated presentation of the man's social role as aforementioned). See W. Puchner, *Κοινωνιολογική Λαογραφία...*, p. 114 onwards. For their regional naming and their suggested etymological interpretations, see *ibid.*, p. 157 onwards; see also W. Puchner, *Εθνογλωσσολογικές μελέτες. Μορφολογίες, σημασίες, ετυμολογίες*, Αθήνα 2013, pp. 129-139. This is an interesting, pragmatic interpretation of the purpose of the custom.

⁴⁵ W. Puchner, *Κοινωνιολογική Λαογραφία...*, pp. 113-114.

⁴⁶ See W. Puchner, *ibid.*, p. 119.

«In the old times, the group of Kordelatoi appeared as an army and the visit had a show off character as a proof of bravery and power and there existed an intense competition among the villages. One of the informants mentioned characteristically the phrase “we are not afraid of you, we are coming to your village”, aiming at stressing the power that the community had as a group and demonstrated it during the Carnival period through visiting the neighbouring communities and the following hospitality and rewarding. As already mentioned, while the Kordelatoi group is on the road, it must not meet another Bayraki, as the locals say, because a battle will follow to prove who is to prevail. To avoid this collision, the two Bayrakia need to “kiss each other” to meet in a cross-like fashion, and the Bayrakratis of both groups need to exchange coins. In this vein, the schedule that is made serves the organization of the visits to the neighbouring villages so as not to meet each other while their moving or in the village»⁴⁷.

b) The **fight** (in ancient Greek ἀγών, *agón*) is a *sine qua non* constituent of the «traditional» folk theatre and is not absent in our case⁴⁸ with the aforementioned conflicts between the groups (upon their meeting). Once this fight served magical / religious purposes, it was embedded in the whole atmosphere of the desired fertility and well-being: The victory signaled success in all the domains of the daily life for the village that would outperform the opponent or at a personal level. See the poetic competitions, the athletic events (e.g. at St George holiday at Arachova), the well-known *Pehlivanides* (= folk wrestlers, from the Turkish *pehlivan*), etc.⁴⁹, or the overcoming of the obstacles by the bridegroom during the *nyfeparman* (= bride abduction) at the Pontian wedding⁵⁰. When the competitions between the villages were based on real causes, apart from the symbolic ones I mean, the conflicts and collisions were extreme.

The same remarks (but blurred and their original aim forgotten in the passing of time, thus in their modern version) are put forward by Spiliakos along with the other precious information about Kinidaros, which consolidate what Olga Vilaeti had reported about Kinidaros (see earlier):

⁴⁷ O. Vilaeti, *Τελετουργία...*, p. 98 onwards.

⁴⁸ W. Puchner, *Θέματα συγκριτικής Λαογραφίας. Ελλάδα, Βαλκάνια, Ανατολική Μεσόγειος και Εύξεινος Πόντος*, Θεσσαλονίκη 2018, p. 145 onwards.

⁴⁹ See W. Puchner, *Λαϊκό θέατρο στην Ελλάδα και στα Βαλκάνια (συγκριτική μελέτη)*, Αθήνα 1989, pp. 46-47.

⁵⁰ M. G. Sergis, *Διαβατήριες τελετουργίες...*, p. 158.

«Bayraktarides then ought to greet each other by putting their Bayrakia crossed, embrace each other and handshake saying “many happy returns of the day, let us celebrate next year as well”. The one who is first to give his hand to the other also hands some money while the other has to give back the double sum. Some major collisions were caused by the bad crossing of the Bayrakia and the non retribution of the handshake or the money, which ended to beating and captivity of the latter by the former, their transfer and barring in the village school, breaking of their Bayraki and seizure of it until the priests’ or the police intervention to peace the situation. When such an incident occurs (...), the men who lose their Bayraki are never again dressed in Foustanelades»⁵¹.

Let us compare the above with the following observation by W. Puchner which refers to the winter gatherings (= *agermoi*) of Northern Greece: «Even in early 20th century, one of the two groups had to bow and pass symbolically under the crossed swords of the other group or else a merciless close fight burst. Since then the demonic brutality of the gatherings (...) has been lessened»⁵². It was, I repeat, a question of prestige for the young brave men of the custom: They would not allow to lose their individual or collective honour.

At this point I consider necessary to «pay a visit» to the naming of Kordelatoi at Filoti and Kaloxilos (the *Leventes*) to substantiate the above discussion. It was the name used by the crews of the Ottoman navy recruited by the Ottomans (composed by Greeks, Dalmatians, Albanians etc.). To Nikolaos Andriotis, the word originates from the Italian word *levanti* (a body of cannoner sailors), which comes from the older *levantes* that meant the pirates from the East (*Levante*)⁵³. To Konstantinos Sathas⁵⁴ the word has as its etymological origin the Latin word *levis* (miles), which meant the lightly armed soldier, like those who were used by the Byzantines and later the Ottomans, the Venetians etc. In Emmanouil Kriaras’ lexicon they are referred to as marines of the Ottoman fleet⁵⁵. Is it then by accident that the Filoti Kordelatoi were named *Leventes*?

As a last comment, how is the Kordelatoi *dromenon* different from that of the area of Elassona (Thessalia, Greece) described by W. Puchner as follows?:

⁵¹ St. Spiliakos, «Χορευτικά δρώμενα...», p. 588; O. Vilaeti, *Τελετουργία...*, p. 94. The latter reports the fighting between the Kordelatoi of Melanes and those of their neighbouring village Kourounochori which resulted to the interruption of the custom for almost 8 years.

⁵² W. Puchner, *Κοινωνιολογική Λαογραφία...*, pp. 139-140.

⁵³ *Ετυμολογικό λεξικό της Κοινής Νεοελληνικής*, Θεσσαλονίκη 1995, p. 183.

⁵⁴ *Ἑλληνες στρατιῶται εἰς τὴν Δύσιν*, Ἀθήναι 1885, p. 24.

⁵⁵ E. Kriaras, *Λεξικό της μεσαιωνικής ελληνικής δημόδους γραμματείας, 1100-1669*, τ. Θ', Θεσσαλονίκη 1995, p. 122.

«At the village Damássi in older times (during the New Year's Day gatherings) *tsoliades* and *kapetaneoi* (= captains) danced at the village square or the village cafes during the eve while on the New Year's Day they danced after the mess the *gaitanaki* (= may pole). At Amouri the informants reported (in a 1977 field study) that men in *foustanelas* and female clothes dance most of the times at the square with the accompaniment of musical instruments, but visited other villages as well, as other groups from other villages came to the village. They all together visit the houses one after the other *to collect money for the church and the school* (my emphasis)⁵⁶.

Can we ignore in the quotation the foustanela men's (Foustanelades) disguise to women?

To St. Spiliakos⁵⁷ i) the Kinidaros Foustanelades escorts, moving around to the houses of the hosting villages (and most importantly to those whose women did not participate in the reception ceremony), gathered eggs (and money). They called this procedure *davaéti* (from the Turkish *darvet* = invitation). The collected eggs were exchanged at a local shop with fasting food for the lent table; ii) the golden communion cup of the church St George at Kinidaros was purchased with money collected from this custom (*davaéti*). At Elati of Kozani (Northern Greece), for instance, the respective *gifts* (cheese, butter, beans, lentils, flour, bread) were called "honour" and were consumed in the evening. Money was included in these gifts⁵⁸. This is the meaning of exchange that has always existed in this *dromenon*, as happened with similar gatherings (= *agermoi*) at a panhellenic level: Wishes were offered and wishes and gifts were provided as retribution.

In this vein then, Kordelatoi is a typical case of «removable patterns / motifs», therefore a mixture of motifs from the cycle of the fertility *dromena* of *Dodekaémeron* (= the twelve-day period from the 23rd of December until the 6th of January) and the carnival period. This does not seem unlikely as experts in the field have previously suggested⁵⁹. The time span is short and thus any such «transfer» can be justified. It is mainly justified, however, by the fact that both

⁵⁶ W. Puchner, *Κοινωνιολογική Λαογραφία...*, p. 174.

⁵⁷ St. Spiliakos, «Χορευτικά δρώμενα...», p. 589.

⁵⁸ W. Puchner, *Τα δρώμενα της Ελλάδας και της Βαλκανικής...*, p. 284.

⁵⁹ W. Puchner, *Εθνογλωσσολογικές μελέτες...*, p. 129. «The *agermoi* (= gatherings) of *rougatsaria* etc. have as their typical characteristics the beastmorphic disguise or the festive costume. They are performed mainly during the period between the New Year's Day and the Epiphany, they can nonetheless be expanded in some cases until the carnival and be fused into it», the same author writes in *Τα δρώμενα της Ελλάδας και της Βαλκανικής...*, p. 281.

periods belong to the same teleological framework: They are «transitional periods» and are accompanied by rituals connected to the shift in seasons, the expulsion of winter and aim at the anew growth / resurrection of the entire nature, at the well being, the fertility of the earth, animals and people. These rituals start on the 23rd of December and run across all the summer solstice. The *Bear* at Glinado, the aforementioned *Moskároi*, *Paliomoskároi*, *Tsátsoi*, *Listés* belong to the well known carnival customs, which are common around Greece and existing in Naxos as well⁶⁰. They can easily therefore be «moved» to the «cycle of Kordelatoi».

I also suggest that the Kordelatoi *dromenon* refers to something else put into oblivion and in which my proposition traces its forgotten purpose: The archaic practice of women's abduction, this international and diachronic phenomenon, this male wedding exercise of violence aiming at intervening at the process of control over the social reproduction⁶¹; let us remember the mythical abduction of Europe by Jupiter, of the Sabine women by the Romans or those found in the songs of the border (the first one being that of Digenis' wife). In other words, my proposition for the interpretation of the *dromenon* is that the disguised to women Kordelatoi acted (M. I. Psarras calls this *maskaraliki* = disguise) and chose the representation of the archaic women abduction practice. The whole performance was supplemented with carnival «scenes» and symbolic actions of a fertility character.

I am led to this hypothesis by the aforementioned disguise and by the polemic character of the whole staging of the *dromenon*. The following saved «remains» of its older character also contribute to my argumentation:

a) Nowadays the newly-wed girls of the villages are said to select to hand their kerchiefs to someone known to them or to him who is dressed in the richest and most beautiful uniform and is keen on dancing. At Potamia, we are informed that the new bride gave her kerchief to the Kordelatos that offered her the first dance⁶². St. Spiliakos implies that those who wore the Foustanela invaded in older times the houses of the newly-weds to steal their kerchief, a

⁶⁰ For a detailed recording of them see St. Spiliakos, «Χορευτικά δρώμενα...», p. 581 onwards. For their panhellenic spread see W. Puchner, *Τα δρώμενα της Ελλάδας και της Βαλκανικής...*, p. 238 onwards.

⁶¹ See M. G. Sergis, *Διαβατήριες τελετουργίες...*, pp. 138-139.

⁶² N. Kephalliniadis, *Ποταμιά...*, p. 236.

⁶³ St. Spiliakos, «Χορευτικά δρώμενα...», p. 588.

fact that caused friction among them⁶³. This is how things were in older times. The newly-weds were the Kordelatoi's «victims» (as a reminiscence of the mythical or real abductions of their same gender one) and as an indication of their symbolic conquest they handed their kerchief to their «conquerors». The one who managed to steal / grab more kerchiefs (= more women) was considered the most respectable and earned a symbolic prestige.

b) The kerchief refers to the well known motif of the fairy and her kerchief⁶⁴. The veil / kerchief, when possessed by the fairy, guarantees her eternal freedom, while its loss (from a man who will manage to steal it from her) her eternal submission to him⁶⁵.

c) «Of a peculiar type» is also the local men's attitude when they are at the hosting villages during the theatrical performance of the *dromenon*. They watched but they did not dance. The custom, I suggest, wanted them to be «absent» from the whole staging: the abductions of the women took place mainly while their husbands were absent.

d) The «invaders» had, therefore, to show an aggressive, war-like and antagonistic to death tone while playing theatre. As centuries passed, this was forgotten and was transformed. The *dromenon* was certainly repeated but in a more free formation of its constituent parts, which satisfied newer needs. Its primary functions were completely forgotten. Rationalism and a more realistic confrontation of the problems among villages inflicted changes. As its primary function remained the performance of the local identities, as is still the case and will be further elaborated in a more extended version of this study to be launched in the near future.

⁶⁴ See N. G. Politis, *Παραδόσεις*, v. 1 (1904), pp. 414, 415, 460, 462, 464.

⁶⁵ N. Skouteri-Didaskalou, «Γυναίκες “οικόσιτες” και γυναίκες “έξωτικές”». Σκέψεις για τις ιδεολογικές εκκρεμότητες του “μέσα” και του “έξω”», *Politis* 96 (Dec. 1988) 52-65.

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