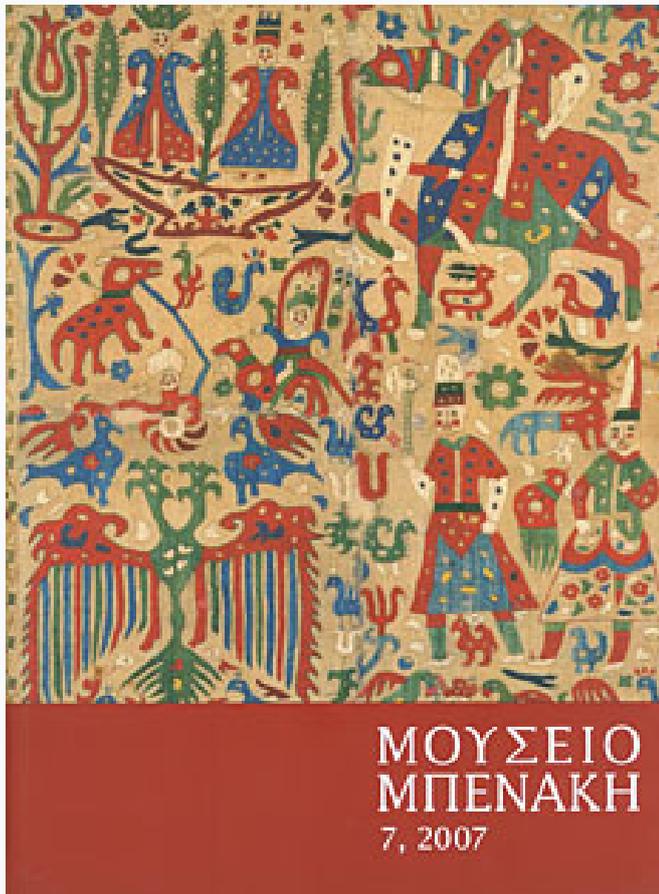


## Μουσείο Μπενάκη

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Ο ερωτικός λόγος στο θεματικό ρεπερτόριο της ελληνικής “λαϊκής τέχνης”

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## Erotic discourse in the iconography of Greek ‘folk’ art

*Κόκκιν’ ἀχεῖλι ἐφίλησα κ’ ἔβαψε τὸ δικό μου,  
καὶ ’ς τὸ μαντῆλι τὸ συρα κ’ ἔβαψε τὸ μαντῆλι,  
καὶ ’ς τὸ ποτάμι τὸ πλυα κ’ ἔβαψε τὸ ποτάμι,  
κ’ ἔβαψε ἡ ἄκρη τοῦ γιालοῦ κ’ ἡ μέση τοῦ πελάγου.  
Κατέβη ὁ αἰτὸς νὰ πιῇ νερὸ κ’ ἔβαψαν τὰ φτερά του,  
κ’ ἔβαψε ὁ ἥλιος ὁ μισὸς καὶ τὸ φεγγάρι ἀκέριο.*

I SHALL NOT GET ENTANGLED in the twists and turns of theoretical justifications for putting inverted commas around the epithet which qualifies the artistic production featured in the title and text of this study.<sup>1</sup> Rather I shall discuss at some length the summary of conclusions in the final chapter of an unpublished essay on secular art of the Post-Byzantine period, which systematically investigates the relationship of male to female figures and the notional space of their encounters. I should stress, however, that a new kind of approach to the subject is required and a new way of looking at the works dealt with here. Because the demonstrative force of my argumentation will only be seen once the implicitly pejorative use of the word ‘folk’ in our intellectual approach to artistic production in general has been left behind. If, in other words, one circumvents the subjectivity of *a priori* judgements which underrate the importance of aesthetic values, overlooking the decisive role of consciousness in the formative process of expression.<sup>2</sup>

Because deliberations on problems of this kind have, in Greece at least,<sup>3</sup> failed to engage the interest of scholars working in folklore, anthropological and ethnographic studies, I sought the help of an essay by Roland Barthes with a similar title to that of this article.<sup>4</sup> Yet neither the

linguistic starting point which determines his orientation, nor the aphoristic semeiology and semantic fixations of his structuralist analyses bear any relation to the material under consideration; nor, of course, do the insufferably sentimental transpositions and romantic outbursts of Berther’s airy-fairy psychology. Making a systematic collection of the encomia of female beauty from the Greek folk song, as offered to us in Aristeidis Doulaveras’ precious anthology,<sup>5</sup> was much more helpful for my own approach. And this was not so much because it provided a poetic counterweight to the visual discourse,<sup>6</sup> as because the overtly erotic mood, even when expressed through the mouths of women, allows the male element to appear the subject, as George Seferis’ *Erotikos Logos*, written in 1930, insistently reminds us. It is also thanks to Doulaveras that I discovered an article with a somewhat analogous theme, to which I shall refer below.<sup>7</sup> And now, in order to facilitate the reader, I shall start by defining the parameters of the research field, as an introduction to its idiosyncracies.<sup>8</sup>

The presence of the human figure in the various manifestations of Greek ‘folk’ art poses, in any case, stimulating questions for even the most untrained observer. From there on, egged on by curiosity and the fascination of increasingly refining one’s observations, the urge to discover draws us ever deeper into unexplored areas of cognition concerning the nature of the figures depicted. We want to know whether they have been conceived and whether they are rendered in accordance with the absolute morphological dictates of a specific repertoire; whether their artistic rendering reflects the deep-seated convictions of established mentalities; whether their ideological value corresponds to

given historical and social factors; whether their evocation in other, better-studied expressions of the same culture, such as poetry or song, has similar starting points (and to what degree); and finally, whether the transformations, or rather the transmutations, they underwent up to the Second World War or thereabouts, when the creative impulse of this art finally breathed its last, followed the successive stages of the historical process in evolutionary fashion.

Yet any investigation of the anthropocentric spirit of 'folk' art, or more correctly of the secular art that flourished during the post-Byzantine period, comes up against insuperable obstacles. I stress again the limited access to the surviving material, or in other words our extremely inadequate knowledge of the subject, for lack of essential aids such as catalogues raisonnés of museum collections, specialist monographs, and relevant bibliography.<sup>9</sup> Indeed, it is not without significance that the scholarly interests of those who study this kind of artistic creation are expressed almost exclusively in reviews of a general nature, producing a literature devoid of publications on specific works and of observations on the artistic autonomy of these individual works.

By underlining the inevitably superficial character of any attempt at research in this direction, I do not understate the challenge of the venture, nor do I underestimate the lurking danger of the necessarily schematic – not to say simplistic – nature of any conclusions which may be drawn. This is because – as I hope has already become evident – coherence in the logical development of an argument will depend on a knowledge of such testimony as has managed, quite by chance, to break through the barrier of unforgivable indifference to the material remains of Neohellenic culture. In any case, the selective highlighting of certain creations, which re-appear with tedious regularity in the current literature, without the reinforcing authority of the statistical frequency of related and analogous works, leads only to generalizing maxims and pronouncements that are inclined to miss their mark.<sup>10</sup>

Most of the problems facing anyone who takes a serious interest in Greek 'folk' art spring from the very nature of the subject: the fact that it is primarily art on a small scale and of the private domain, not so much because it continues the Byzantine tradition, as because it developed in a protracted period of foreign occupation, which did not favour the monumental, usually extrovert, artistic creations, related to public life. The strictly symmetrical organization of this art's individual morphological elements, expressing

a deeply-rooted need for good order at least in the arrangement of things domestic, articulates an unbreakable law of decisive importance, which directly influences the rendering of the human figure and its setting. The symmetry and the frontality of the compositions set the dimensions of a world without movement, in such a way that it could never illustrate the mutability of contemporary historical circumstances. The world of Greek 'folk' art, shaped in difficult times, turned more towards the future than the past – steeped in prayers for the fulfilment of unrequited desires – does not represent reality but a dream. That is why, even when the enchantment of naturalistic magic leads it astray, it has difficulty in crossing the dividing line of realistic accuracy.

In the picture field, the female figure is either idealized and geometrically perfect,<sup>11</sup> or more voluptuous but with a highly stylized vitality.<sup>12</sup> More rarely it appears together with other female figures in scenes of dancing,<sup>13</sup> imaginary feasts or other social occasions.<sup>14</sup> In several cases it is accompanied by the male figure, highlighting clearly the expectation of a marriage, to which I shall refer in more detail below. By contrast, the male figure occurs in a wider range of iconographic types, though tellingly genre scenes from everyday life, with any hints at the professional, economic or social status of the figures depicted are absent from this more extensive iconography.<sup>15</sup> Regardless of the semeiotic roots of these representations, and others which may have escaped me, in other words, independent of the specific drivers of the artistic event, the man in Greek 'folk' art always appears to be of heroic inspiration. That is why whether he is presented as a horseman, a freedom-fighter or hunter, as a sailor or singer, he reminds us subconsciously of the prince in the fairytale and the awaiting of his coming.<sup>16</sup>

It has been stressed time and again that the blossoming springtime of the imagined space surrounding the human figures expresses the optimism of a profound affirmation of life. Yet there is no doubt that this vibrant sustainability, the vast range of imaginative variations which orchestrate the optimism of the flora in every expression of Greek 'folk' art veils an easily discernible procreative symbolism.<sup>17</sup> This symbolism, over and above any artistic debt it may owe to Ottoman aesthetics, is associated with the meaning given to the flower in all cultures since time immemorial and finds its fullest expression in the otherwise inexplicable efflorescence of decorative systems in the Neohellenic house. However, its semeiotic value can be more clearly



Fig. 1. Embroidered hem from Crete. London, Victoria and Albert Museum, Dawkins Collection, T.706-1950 (© V&A Images/Victoria and Albert Museum, London).



Fig. 2. Embroidered cushion cover from Skyros. Athens, Benaki Museum, inv. no. 11332 (photo: K. Manolis).

understood from the almost exclusive recourse of female adornment to an endless renegotiation of the inexhaustible forms of floral motifs. In any case, as I have noted on many occasions, jewellery, by enhancing female beauty, arouses the interest of the male, ensuring perpetuation of the species. Indeed, together with the floribunda of the bridal costumes, jewellery essentially transmits a procreative prayer, which in some inexplicable, magical way seems to ensure in advance its fulfilment.<sup>18</sup>

These clarifications were considered necessary in order to shed fuller light on a numerically small group of exam-

ples of indubitable documentary value, which have been selected on the basis of the clearcut nature of their subject matter and its completeness from an artistic point of view. I refer to the pairing of the male with the female figure as climax of their expressive autonomy, that is, in an intensification of the emotive skin-tingling that the prospect of marriage stimulates. Indeed, lest it be thought that I have allowed my imagination to run away with me as regards the direction I am proposing to follow in this research, I repeat that all the works discussed relate to the furnishing of the house, that their use is associated exclusively with nuptials, and that the figural compositions are surrounded by a profusion of blossoming flowers as filler motifs that are equally important in meaning.

Certain representations suggest the idea that the love affair was sparked off at some festive celebration, by a chance encounter favoured by the social freedom and the open-air setting. In this respect the dance on a Cretan textile, with the abstract geometry of its alternating male and female figures, and the rhythmical pulse of a disarming simplicity, is imbued with a general impression of equality between the sexes in the context of an event sanctioned by convention.<sup>19</sup> Similarly boys and girls dance together on an embroidered hem from Crete, but the different movements in the dance and the delightfully naturalistic figures impart a surprising charm to the aesthetic result (fig. 1).<sup>20</sup> On the two edges of another embroidery, a cushion cover from Skyros, it seems that only one man endowed with exceptional vigour has the unexpected audacity to



Fig. 3. Front of a carved wooden chest from Mani. Athens, Benaki Museum, inv. no. 37911 (photo: M. Skiadaresis).



Fig. 4. Drawing of a gilded cup. Athens, Museum of Greek Folk Art, inv. no. 3114 (drawing: K. Mavragani).

break into the exclusivity of the women's dance (fig. 2).<sup>21</sup> However, in order to decode the scene depicted, as well as the differentiated role of the two sexes in actual dance performances and their diverse local versions, I would have to get into the fine details of a subject that "has not been paid particular attention by researchers".<sup>22</sup> Consequently, instead of attempting to identify the visual transcriptions of these performances – which is in any case difficult –, I shall give a fuller account of the dance episode, which is illustrated in inimitable fashion in the carving on a damaged wooden chest from Mani (fig. 3).<sup>23</sup>

Three musicians with their shawms (*zournades*) and drum (*daouli*), placed at the right-hand side of the composition, set the beat for the women's dance.<sup>24</sup> But the smooth succession of figures is interrupted by the prominence given to the first of two men, the one in front must surely be the bridegroom and the one behind a friend of his, perhaps the best-man. Interposed between them are three rosettes, underlining their leading role in the unfolding of a narration which is developing from right to left (anticlockwise), opposite to the dictates of the flow of speech in script but consistent with the rhythmic move-

ment of Greek dances. In this respect, the recording of the successive episodes is more rationally constituted in another narrative, which runs around the inside of a well-known gilded cup, where a male dance provides the starting point and further details (fig. 4).<sup>25</sup> The representation unfolds from left to right, with first a musician playing his pear-shaped *lyra*<sup>26</sup> and then a group of four dancers, the one in the lead holding a kerchief.<sup>27</sup> A fifth man follows, alone, with his hands on his waist as if dancing, having broken away from the others. Perhaps he is the same figure as the one who, at the end of the episode, expresses his amorous feelings by embracing the sole female figure in the representation. Indicative of the propitious symbolism of the subject is the depiction of the couple in front of a cypress tree topped by a bird.<sup>28</sup> The relationship between the two figures is indicated by the positioning of the man on the left, the place of honour, which denotes that the prospective bridegroom has already chosen his bride.

It should be noted that from here on the handling of the subject takes into account the fundamental rule of precedence, which applies in a general way to the organization of compositions throughout the history of art. This rule



Fig. 5. Embroidered hem from Crete. Private Collection.



Fig. 6. Fragment from an embroidered hem from Crete. Athens, Benaki Museum, inv. no. 26110 (photo: M. Skiadareisis).

emerged from the study of certain creations of Antiquity, and, as is easily ascertained, also applies to so-called 'folk' art.<sup>29</sup> According to the principles of the rule, the position of the figures in a representation, on the left or right side – and of course at the centre –, gives an indication as to the picture's meaning. A second equally important rule defines the semeiotic priority of the seated over the standing pose and this has also been studied by scholars specializing in the study of ancient art.<sup>30</sup> These two rules meet not only in the representation being examined (fig. 4) but also in the whole range of material under discussion, affecting the tone of the erotic discourse being pronounced.

Returning to the cup with the image of the dance and attempting to fill in what is only implied in visual terms one can imagine that the 'bridegroom' was initially taking part in the dancing, but left in order to meet his future 'bride'. However, whereas he occupies the most important position in the first part of the narrative field, she takes on added significance in the second, occupying the dominant position on the left in the more developed scene with the hookah. These subtle nuances of signification can scarcely be dismissed as meaningless. This is because the second part of the picture, with the conclusion of the narrated event, which is bounded by the cypress tree with the bird and the other cypress tree behind the seated man, obviously alludes to the felicitous outcome of a marriage. Their life together in the now relaxed atmosphere of the house is,



Fig. 7. Embroidered cushion cover from Crete. Newcastle University, Hatton Gallery, Bosanquet Collection (photo: Neville Taylor).

in fact, evoked by the depiction of the husband seated in the place of honour opposite his wife, reminding us of the semeiotic precedence given to the seated over the standing pose from ancient times.

As is known from many examples, the act of smoking, semeiological correlative of a man's leisure and happiness, is usually indicated with a pipe,<sup>31</sup> with which the hookah is related in meaning, even though I have not managed to find a similar image for cross-reference. Certainly it is interpreted in this way in the internal discourse of the scene, that is in the relationship between the two figures: i.e. the more important seated pose of the male figure, albeit in the secondary position in the composition, simultaneously balanced according to the rule of precedence by the standing pose of the female figure. And thus we can read a welcome message of equality transmitted by the conver-

sation between the two figures. Despite the refinement of the iconographic elements, the ambiguous vocabulary of expression seems nonetheless to prohibit even the most hypothetical interpretation of the two entwined, small-scale figures between the cypress tree with the bird and the woman. In these figures I intuitively see two boys playing and wrestling, that is the children who have completed the couple's familial harmony.<sup>32</sup>

But the amorous discourse of Greek 'folk' art is heard much more melodiously and clearly in a considerable number of other creations in which the man sings of his love to the woman, to the accompaniment of the *lyra*, the tambour or the lute.<sup>33</sup> Eloquent examples are encountered once again in Cretan embroideries, indeed on one hem the positions of the figures alternate in such a way that the repeated scenes show the *lyra*-player sometimes in front



Fig. 8. Part of painted wood revetment from Rhodes. Athens, Benaki Museum, inv. no. 8726 (photo: M. Skiadarexis).

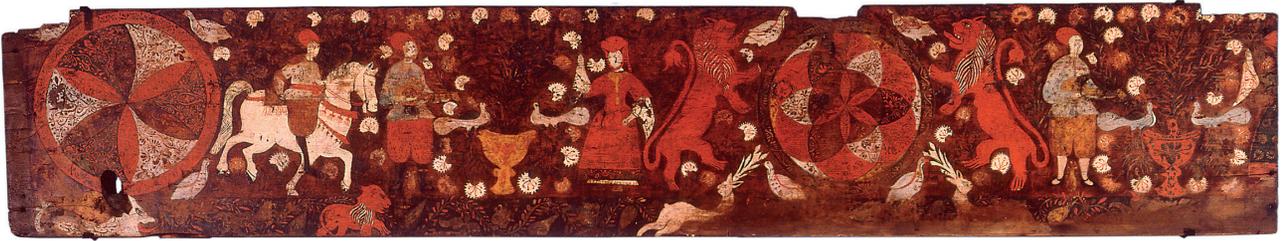


Fig. 9. Part of painted wood revetment. Athens, Benaki Museum, inv. no. 8728 (photo: M. Skiadarexis).



Fig. 10. Part of painted wood revetment, possibly from Patmos. Athens, Benaki Museum, inv. no. 39281 (photo: Sp. Delivorias).



Fig. 11a-b. Details of painted wood revetment, possibly from Patmos. Rhodes, 4th Ephorate of Byzantine Antiquities, Rhodes Decorative Arts Collection, inv. no. ΕΛ235.



Fig. 12. Painted leaf of cupboard from Patmos. Rhodes, 4th Ephorate of Byzantine Antiquities, Rhodes Decorative Arts Collection, inv. no. ΕΛ236.



Fig. 13. Painted leaf of cupboard from Patmos. Athens, Benaki Museum, inv. no. 41080 (photo: Sp. Delivorias).



Fig. 14. Detail of painted wood revetment, possibly from Patmos. Rhodes, 4th Ephorate of Byzantine Antiquities, Rhodes Decorative Arts Collection, inv. no. ΕΛ233.

of and sometimes behind the woman (fig. 5).<sup>34</sup> On a fragment from what must have been an exquisite embroidery of this kind, the missing figure would probably have been female and not male (fig. 6),<sup>35</sup> as on a similar but complete example with alternating same-sex couples.<sup>36</sup> The most spectacular and boldly rendered, I would say the most emblematic depiction of the subject, is on a bridal cushion cover from a private collection in the UK, formerly part of the Bosanquet collection of Greek embroideries, which has rightly led earlier research to read it as 'an idyll' (fig. 7).<sup>37</sup> As happens in other examples from the same group,<sup>38</sup> the depicted youth is not playing the violin but the Cretan *lyra*, while the cypress tree with the bird here too refers directly to the happy outcome of the amorous tryst.

Young men in love from the Dodecanese appear as troubadours playing their *laouta* in a whole series of pictures painted in egg tempera on wood, which, thanks to the glory of current scholarly responsibility, remain unpublished and neglected in the mansions of Patmos and in the Rhodes Decorative Arts Collection.<sup>39</sup> Most come from decorative elements related to the bridal bed, as well as from long narrow chests that were used as settles, or from the door leaves of cupboards. Three of these fared better and found refuge early on in the Benaki Museum, where they mesmerize visitors with the quality of the drawing, the impressive coloration and the sometimes recondite semeiology of their imagery. Of interest with regard to the subject in hand are the repeated couples in two compositions, with the men occupying first place on

the left, and wearing, like the women with kerchiefs opposite them, western-style clothes (figs 8, 9).<sup>40</sup> The same thing is observed in one more example on which the paint surface is better preserved (fig. 10).<sup>41</sup> Even the details are clear on another piece in the Rhodes Decorative Arts Collection (fig. 11),<sup>42</sup> and even more so in the male figure that dominates the left-hand leaf of a closet door in the same collection (fig. 12).<sup>43</sup> Here the female figure will certainly have been depicted on the lost right leaf, as can be seen from a related example (fig. 13)<sup>44</sup> and is confirmed by intact examples from Patmos.<sup>45</sup> In some cases of stylistically similar creations, always with the same hierarchical sequence, the amorous discourse is not expressed in musical terms, but is captured and epitomized in a delightful gesture of greeting (fig. 14).<sup>46</sup> It cannot be ruled out that these variations render an invitation, perhaps to dance, if the symbolism of the kerchief can be interpreted as having such a meaning.

The subject of the 'idyll' with the young man wooing the girl he loves, to the accompaniment of some musical instrument, is repeated isolated within a wreath, as on the cushion cover from Crete (fig. 7) and on the inside of the lid of a chest, most probably from Patmos (fig. 15).<sup>47</sup> On Patmos there are more related examples, with minimal variations, one of which has been rescued, once again thanks to the Benaki Museum's policy (fig. 16).<sup>48</sup> However, the most spectacular elaboration of the same basic idea, animated in its painting with the intensity of an unsurpassable directness, is encountered on the lid of



Fig. 15. Lid of painted chest, possibly from Patmos. Rhodes, 4th Ephorate of Byzantine Antiquities, Rhodes Decorative Arts Collection, inv. no. ΞΛ237.



Fig. 16. Lid of painted chest, possibly from Patmos. Athens, Benaki Museum, inv. no. 35253 (photo: Sp. Delivorias).

an intact chest from Mytilene, which is indisputably a masterpiece of ‘folk’ art (fig. 17).<sup>49</sup> Here too the man woos the woman, to the accompaniment of a tambour, occupying, as in the previous examples, the hierarchically more important place on the left. We find the exact opposite on the reliefs adorning the jamb capitals of a doorframe in Amorgos, bearing the date 1730 (fig. 18).<sup>50</sup> Here the female figure is placed first on the left, carved in a naive style and in frontal pose, as she listens to the song of her companion, who is serenading her from the secondary position on the right. Both figures are represented on panels topped with

gables, which must symbolically represent the security of the house, and indeed next to cypress trees denoting the happy outcome of their courtship in their life together.

I do not know if there has been any serious research into the semeiology of the allusions in many images to the warmth of the home as the final stage in the evolving process of a love affair and the blessing of marriage. Yet I believe that this is what is signified by its altogether frequent presence in the form of a simple frame within which the figures are enclosed. Just such a panel, marked by the protective blessing of a cross, stands out on the right side of a

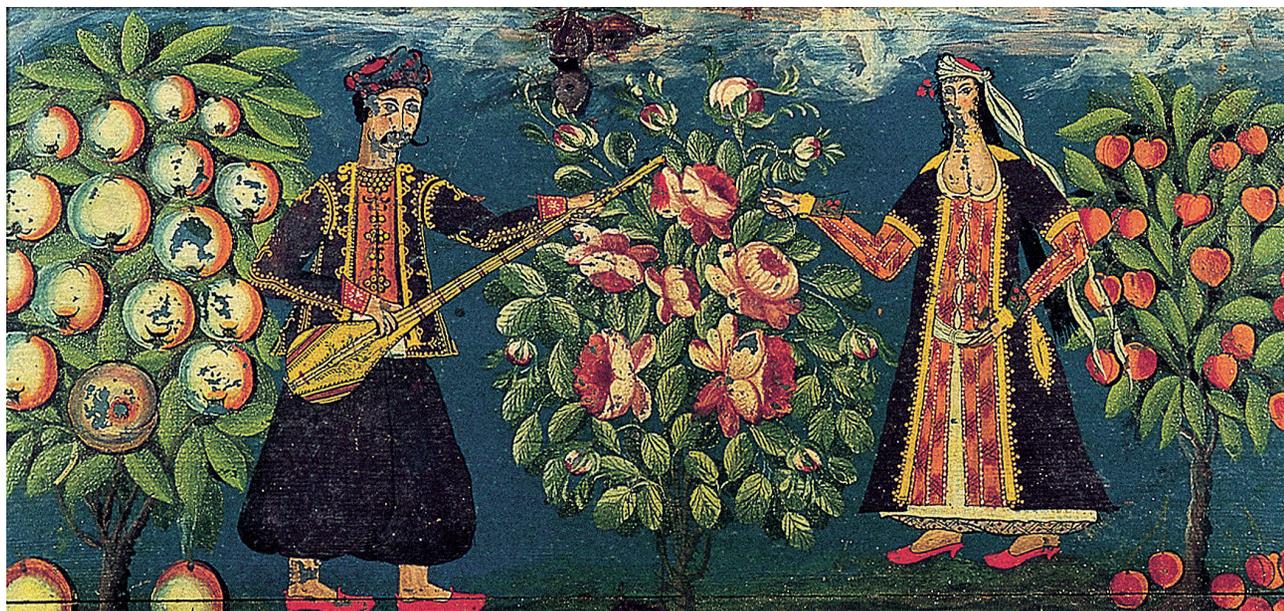


Fig. 17. Lid of painted chest from Mytilini. Athens, Benaki Museum, inv. no. 31165 (photo: M. Skiadaresis).



Fig. 18. Jamb capitals from marble door surround from the house of Sophia Theoloyitou, Amorgos (photo: G. Despotidis).

carved wooden chest from the Peloponnese, smothered in a riot of floral decoration (fig. 19).<sup>51</sup> The male figure thus surrounded is given prominence, indeed he is seated with his feet resting on a footstool, something like a pedestal or chest, just like on the jamb capitals from Amorgos (fig. 18), but mainly distinguished by his long pipe, an oblique reference to the relaxation that only the home can offer. The subject of the man smoking, forgetting the cares of the day, must have been a pointer to his superiority in both social and economic status, as borne out by the example with the hookah, referred to previously (fig. 4), as well as

by some other images that will be mentioned shortly (figs 20, 34, 35). However, the most easily readable version of this appears on a rare painted chest from Lesbos, with other iconographic connotations, the enigmatic meaning of which I tried to illuminate some time ago.<sup>52</sup>

What is more interesting in the representation on the Peloponnesian chest (fig. 19) is the way the female figure is placed in the place of honour on the left side of the decorative field, as in the case of the Amorgos doorjamb capital (fig. 18). The female is depicted on an appreciably smaller scale than the smoking male figure, and in



Fig. 19. Front of a carved wooden chest from Mani. Athens, Benaki Museum, inv. no. 35496 (photo: K. Manolis).



Fig. 20. Lid of painted chest from Mytilini. Athens, Apostolos Argyriadis Collection.

a strange pose suggestive of movement, which could be interpreted either as showing she is inclined to flight, or as a coy invitation to dance. Beyond the observed differences and the clear indication that the house belongs to the man, the precedence given to the woman cuts through the apparent contradictions in the craftsman's obviously conscious effort to denote their equality. The painter of a chest from Mytilini, now in a private collection, achieves this with much greater skill, by depicting first the female figure in European dress, apparently turning away from the man, likewise in European attire, who follows her (fig. 20).<sup>53</sup> The scene is set in some indeterminate bucolic landscape with a few trees, a shepherd and his flock, which take up the rest of the painted field. Indeed, since this genre scene is repeated with remarkable accuracy in the mural decoration of the well-known mansion of Vareltzidaina at Petra on Mytilini,<sup>54</sup> we can begin to form an idea, albeit a general one, of the production of a currently unknown craftsman with a relatively well developed range of creative activities.

In the examples enumerated so far it has been a rarity to find the female figure taking pride of place. But the established order is completely disrupted in a vertical arrangement on a curtain leaf from Siphnos, featuring a rhythmical alternation of subjects in which couples alternate, their arms imitating dance movements while their bodies remain frontal and abstract (fig. 21).<sup>55</sup> In my opinion the treatment of the same theme in relief at the two ends of the front of a carved wooden chest from Chios (fig. 22)<sup>56</sup> endorses the view that we are not dealing with isolated original conceptions, but with standardized artistic achievements which consciously underline the parity of the two sexes within the sanctioned boundaries of married life. This parity is reflected in the horizontal alternation of the male and female figures in the couples on a superb, white-embroidered curtain, perhaps from Mykonos, on which the dancers' hand movements are evocative of the island *balos*.<sup>57</sup>

The equality between the two sexes can also be seen in the painted compositions on the sides of a broken chest, again from Mytilini (fig. 23a-b),<sup>58</sup> with the man, in European dress, coming first on what was probably the left side, while on the right side the woman comes first and the man, moustachioed and fully armed, is represented in island costume. Indeed, because decoration of the sides is most unusual on chests in Greece, one may suggest that



Fig. 21. Leaf of embroidered curtain from Siphnos. Athens, Benaki Museum, inv. no. 6526 (photo: M. Skiadaresis).



Fig. 22. Carved wooden chest from Chios. Athens, Benaki Museum, inv. no. 35286 (photo: K. Manolis).



Fig. 23a-b. Adjacent sections of painted chest from Mytilini. Athens, Benaki Museum, inv. nos 25729 and 25728 respectively (photos: Sp. Delivorias).

the craftsman, by choosing such an arrangement, wanted to frame the central subject on the lost main face (surely some variation of the typically repeated Rococo compositions of flowers, fruits and ribbons), with women.<sup>59</sup> Consequently, the male figures defined the ends of the painting on the front and sides, with their promising stability of expectation. And I believe there is no doubt that a much more spectacular and semeiotically intriguing narrative scene would have adorned the inside of the now lost lid.

Whatever the case, I would say that in the rest of those works I succeeded in collecting in my quest for the rhythmic musicality of erotic discourse in secular Neohellenic art, it is difficult to find some fixed rule of composition.

For example, on a bridal pillow case from Skyros a couple featuring the man first is repeated unchanged twice in a vertical arrangement.<sup>60</sup> On the embroideries of Epiros, sometimes the man takes priority and sometimes the woman, something which may well have depended on the unexplored content of the imagery and their undoubtedly narrative but nonetheless mysterious nature.<sup>61</sup> In an easily readable composition on a cushion cover in Manchester, the woman is depicted first, between two cypress trees and holding a coffee pot (*briki*), symbol of future plenty (fig. 24).<sup>62</sup> By contrast on another cushion cover from Epiros now in the Benaki Museum, which is in a different style and technique, in addition to many other figures and a



Fig. 24. Embroidered cushion cover from Epiros. Manchester University, The Whitworth Art Gallery, T.8130.

Fig. 25. Embroidered cushion cover from Epiros. Athens, Benaki Museum, inv. no. 11214 (photo: M. Skiadaresis).

host of diverse symbols, the couple is rendered with the man first between three cypress trees (fig. 25).<sup>63</sup> However, in three of the five parts of what is perhaps the most spectacular embroidery to survive from the same region it is the woman who is given her due (fig. 26a-c).<sup>64</sup>

An embroidery – perhaps erroneously considered an Epirot sampler – which shows the house conspicuously sheltering the harmonious and fruitful marital life of the couple, is of particular interest (fig. 27).<sup>65</sup> Here the same subject is repeated twice between cypress trees with birds on the narrow seams of the textile, with the man in the dominant position to the left on one and the women taking this place on the other. This overt equality as a precondition for the successful marital relationship is abandoned, at least as far as I know, only in the case of certain embroideries from the Dodecanese. And, to be specific, on the *sperveria*, the curtains that protected the bridal bed, where, at the top of the central opening, the woman frequently emphasizes her absolute dominance within the home,<sup>66</sup> in a way that recalls the imagery on the jamb capitals of the doorframe from Amorgos described above (fig. 14). In the case of a Cretan textile where the primacy of the man is a constantly repeated motif, it could be suggested that the scene is not set inside the house but in a church and at the wedding rite, since the schematically depicted edifice that surrounds it is crowned by a cross (fig. 28).<sup>67</sup> Popy Zora has used more or less the same argumentation in attempting to interpret the square ‘shape’ inside which are inscribed the two leading figures (male this time) on some embroideries from Skyros.<sup>68</sup> Nonetheless, to the precedent of the Peloponnesian chest, where the symbol of the cross undoubtedly blesses the house (fig. 19), can be added the controversial representation on an embroidery from Skyros with a wedding scene (fig. 29).<sup>69</sup> Here we see three vaulted buildings, the central one of which is wider but lower than the other two and topped by a single cross. The two taller ones on either side have five domes topped with crosses and human figures on their balconies, which rule out the established interpretation of them as churches. Such an interpretation is in no way supported by the presence of analogous buildings in other Greek embroidery.<sup>70</sup> In any case, the secular significance of the central building is indicated by the three figures hovering above it, with a girl holding a flower in the honorific central position, flanked by a young man and a male friend of his.

With the quantitative component being dishearteningly

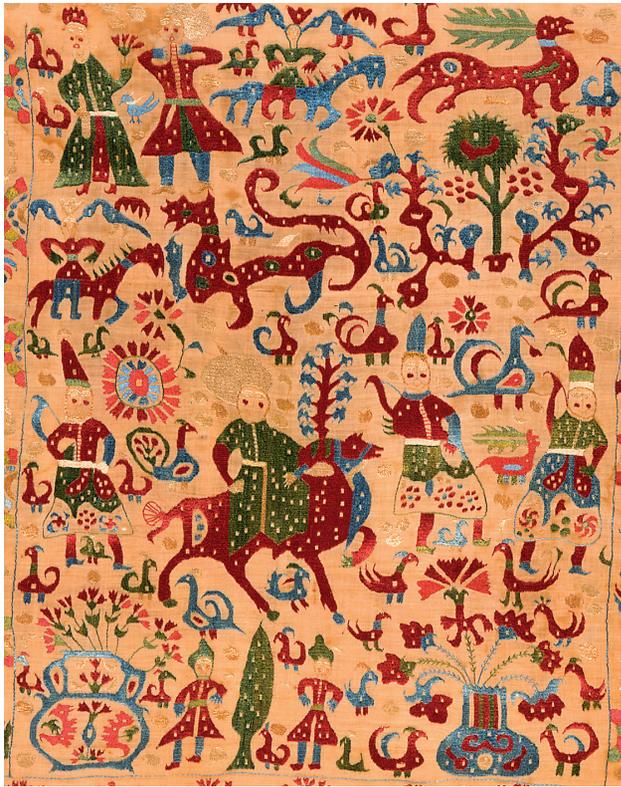


Fig. 26a-c. Details of a bridal bed valance from Epiros. Athens, Benaki Museum, inv. no. 6308 (photos: M. Skiadaresis).

limited and without the support of statistical verification, it is questionable whether the surviving evidence can be sifted through any further. In any case, in the few examples which have contributed to the development of this study, as well as in those that I have yet to investigate, the hierarchical precedence, whether given to the male or the female figures, seems to reflect rather a deeper deliberation concerning the relationship between the sexes and not the essence of an entrenched view. Such ambivalence is apparent not only in the double rendering of the couple on the famous bridal pillowslip from Lefkada, with the good fairy guaranteeing its protection,<sup>71</sup> but also in the frequent alternation in the hierarchical relationship between the figures, which is also observed in other cases. In the embroidery of Skyros, for example, the woman can come first, as in the repeated couples on a bridal bed-sheet (fig. 30),<sup>72</sup> while on a bridal pillowslip the man is represented first (fig. 31).<sup>73</sup>

Given the foregoing, I hope I may be forgiven for not knowing whether the dominant position of the man on the lid of the chest in fig. 17 has some specific meaning in relation to the social reality of Mytilini in the years before the Greek War of Independence. However, I ought



Fig. 27. Embroidered sampler, possibly from Epiros. Athens, Benaki Museum, inv. no. 6412 (photo: M. Skiadaresis).



Fig. 28. Detail of an embroidered towel from Crete. Kastelli, Olga Horeftaki Collection.

Fig. 29. Embroidered cushion cover from Skyros. Athens, Benaki Museum, inv. no. 6390 (photo: M. Skiadaresis).

to point out that, in as far as we know anything about the secular painting of the island, the same spirit can be seen to characterizes other analogous creations. For example, in the densely populated composition on the inside of the lid of a chest formerly in the Leonidas Fanourakis Collection, the couple is depicted with the man first on the left, flanked by two female figures (fig. 32).<sup>74</sup> On another chest from the same collection, the importance of the man is enhanced by putting him at the centre of the painted trio (fig. 33):<sup>75</sup> in an indeterminate landscape with low bushes, the moustachioed islander in baggy trousers offers his loved one a flower, while she responds by offering him a drink from the bottle in her left hand. If I have understood the meaning of this representation correctly, the clean-shaven youth behind the main figure should be considered as the girl's chaperone for the outing, indeed perhaps also as carrier of the drink in his knapsack. His depiction on a smaller



Fig. 30. Detail of embroidered sheet from Skyros. Athens, Museum of Greek Folk Art, inv. no. 38.



Fig. 31. Embroidered cushion cover from Skyros. Athens, Benaki Museum, inv. no. 11349 (photo: K. Manolis).



Fig. 32. Lid of painted chest from Mytilini. Athens, Private Collection.

scale to that of the two principal figures denotes not only his youth but also his secondary status in a composition in which the adult male element is given prominence.

The above mentioned pieces from the Eastern Aegean are dated to the beginning of the nineteenth century. However, an exceptional creation of 1804, in the possession of Olga

Karatza, shows that a comparable artistic climate also prevailed at that time in the Cyclades. I refer again to the left leaf of a cupboard from a mansion on Siphnos, on the upper part of which is painted the interior of an opulent building with tiled floor and tripartite colonnade in the background, from which hangs a candelabrum with six candles and two

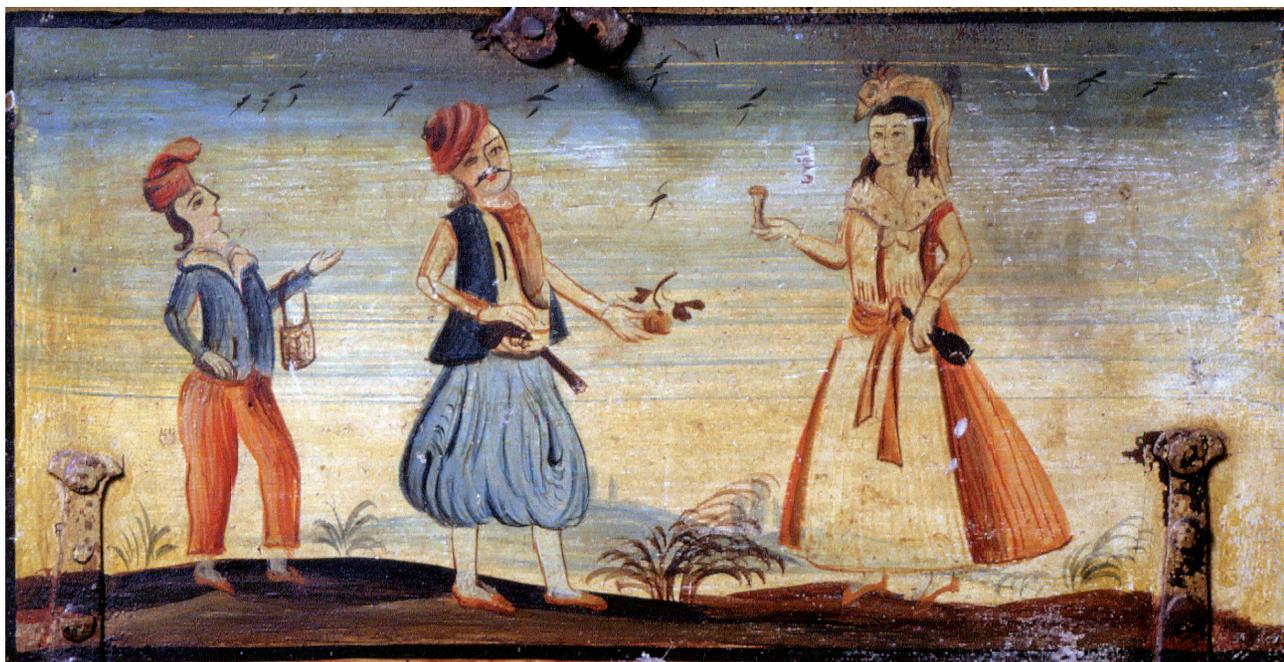


Fig. 33. Lid of chest from Mytilini. Athens, Private Collection.

cages with birds (fig. 34).<sup>76</sup> In the foreground of the image and on formal high-backed chairs the couple of principals sit facing one another. On the left is the man with a long pipe in his right hand and a flower in his left. Opposite him the woman raises her right hand to her bosom, as if thanking him for offering the flower, while in her left hand she holds a vessel that is difficult to identify, perhaps a *jarfi*, in a gesture which would seem to mean the same as that made by the girl on the chest discussed above (fig. 33).<sup>77</sup> The sense of serenity emanating from the balanced depiction of the two figures counteracts the way in which the man has been given the more important position on the left of the iconographic field. Indeed, in order to appreciate the parity of the conjugal relationship represented, it is worth comparing it with the related representation inside the cup in fig. 4, where the woman stands in front of her seated, pipe-smoking companion.

The equality of the two figures, as presented on the left leaf of a wardrobe door from Siphnos, automatically piques one's curiosity as to what would have been depicted (and how it would have been depicted) in the continuation of the imagery on the lost right door leaf. It is by no means impossible that a reversal of the symmetrical correspondence would have given precedence to the woman, as on

a later stone relief from Chios.<sup>78</sup> In other words we can imagine that the original composition on the two door leaves would have been fairly similar to the representation on a what is certainly a secular belt buckle of mother of pearl, on the left part of which the man, seated and smoking, occupies first place, while on the right the same representation in mirror image puts the standing woman first (fig. 35).<sup>79</sup> The inverted repetition of the subject on the two parts of the buckle signifies the equality of the figures, in accordance with the logic that likewise allows us to see them as equals in the arrangement on the sides of the damaged chest from Lesbos discussed above (fig. 23a-b).

It is possible to draw some conclusions (albeit with reservations) from the examples I have cited in trying to penetrate the mysteries of so-called folk art, and from those which might possibly yet be added, if we were to show a keener appreciation of our responsibility towards the neglected remnants of Neohellenic culture. First, the inclination towards an abstract or geometric tendency rather than a naturalistic-realistic rendering of the subjects is not associated with any demands made by the technique or the materials used. Second, the rhythmical flow of the repeated subjects with the alternation of male and female figures in the end cancels out the rule of precedence, since



Fig. 34. Leaf from door of painted cupboard from a mansion in Kastro, Siphnos. Athens, Olga Karatza Collection.



Fig. 35. Nacre buckle. Athens, Benaki Museum, inv. no. 33976 (photo: L. Kourgiantakis).

the man's leading role is frequently taken by the woman. Third, the representation of men is not driven only by their usual heroic form, but also by a notable courtliness of manner. When the amorous discourse is not expressed in dance, it is sung to the accompaniment of a musical instrument, sometimes with the offering of a flower and, more rarely, a glass of wine, to ensure the desired outcome of the conversation. Finally in some cases the promise of the warmth and harmony of marriage is conveyed by the man's man being depicted enjoying a relaxing smoke inside the protected space of the home.

Unsurprisingly the above observations generate a number of new questions. However, more serious preliminary work will be needed before even surmises can be made as to the answers. And this is all the more true when increasingly complex creations, such as the densely populated picture painted on the lid of a chest in the Athens Concert Hall – with which I shall deal on another occasion – are put under the microscope of the research method.<sup>80</sup> Here ends, in any case, an investigative endeavour whose ultimate aim has been to encourage a wider collaboration among researchers in the much needed effort to decode the messages that Greek 'folk' art continues to send out. Despite the unavoidably oblique style of this essay, and the conscious avoidance of any ramifications in the domains of social anthropology, I hope it has been understood that this endeavour has confined itself to what Christos Karouzos would have called 'excuses for unwrapping': to attempting to provoke a dialogue more constructive than that which [currently] drives Greek scholarship.

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## ABBREVIATIONS

- Delivorrias 1997: A. Delivorrias, Traditional Art on the Aegean Islands, in: *The Aegean. The Epicenter of Greek Civilization* (Athens 1997<sup>2</sup>) 281-360.
- Delivorrias 2001: A. Delivorrias, Carved wooden chests from the Peloponnese: Questions of stylistic and thematic singularity, *Μουσείο Μπενάκη* 1 (2001) 111-26.
- Delivorrias 2002: A. Delivorrias, Παραστάσεις χορού στην ελληνική λαϊκή τέχνη, in: E. Moser-Karagianis – E. Yiakoumaki (eds), *Κανίσκιον φιλίας. Τιμητικός τόμος για τον Guy-Michel Saunier* (Athens 2002) 133-56.
- Delivorrias 2003: A. Delivorrias, Decoration of Houses, in: D. Philippides (ed.), *Aegean Islands Architecture* (Athens 2003) 50-67.
- Delivorrias–Georgoula 2005: A. Delivorrias–E. Georgoula (eds), *From Byzantium to Modern Greece. Hellenic Art in Adversity, 1453-1830. From the Collections of the Benaki Athens* (exhibition catalogue, Alexander S. Onassis Public Benefit Foundation, New York 2005).
- Ioannou-Yannara 2006: T. Ioannou-Yannara, *Greek Embroidery 17th-19th-century Works of Art from the Collections of the Victoria and Albert Museum* (exhibition catalogue, Angeliki Hatzimihali Foundation, Athens 2006).
- Johnstone 1972: P. Johnstone, *Victoria and Albert Museum. A Guide to Greek Island Embroidery* (London 1972).
- Polychroniadis 1980: E. Polychroniadis, *Greek Embroideries, Benaki Museum* (Athens 1980).
- Taylor 1998: R. Taylor, *Embroidery of the Greek Islands and Epirus* (New York 1998).
- Zora 1993: P. Zora, Συμβολική και σημειωτική προσέγγιση της Ελληνικής Λαϊκής Τέχνης, *Λαογραφία* 36 (1990-1992 / 1993) 1-77.
- Zora 1994: P. Zora, *Ελληνική Τέχνη – Λαϊκή Τέχνη* (Athens 1994).

## NOTES

\* This text was translated by Alexandra Dumas and edited by Valerie Nunn.

1. I consider enough has been written on the subject since 'folk' art was classified as either 'rural' or 'urban' by A. Hatzimihali, *Ελληνική λαϊκή τέχνη. Σκύρος* (Athens 1925) 53-63; S. A. Papadopoulos (ed.), *Greek Handicraft* (Athens 1969) 13-29; A. Delivorrias, Παράδοση και πρωτοπορία, στα όρια της ταλάντωσης των εννοιών, in: *Τέχνη και Παράδοση* (Thessaloniki 1997) 9-16; D. Philippides, *Διακοσμητικές τέχνες, Τρεις αιώνες τέχνης στην Ελληνική αρχιτεκτονική* (Athens 1998) 12, 52-66. Cf. E. Skouteri-Didaskalou, Η λαογραφική έρευνα στην «επαναστροφή του αιώνα»: Προβληματισμοί, κατευθύνσεις και προοπτικές, in: E. I. Kontaksi (ed.), *Οι Νεότερες Εξελίξεις στην Ελληνική Λαογραφία, Πρακτικά Επιστημονικής Συνάντησης στη Μνήμη του Κίτσου Μακρή, Βόλος 10-12 Ιανουαρίου 1997* (Volos 1998) 49-63; M. G. Meraklis, *Η συνθηγορία της Λαογραφίας* (Athens 2004) 11-12, esp. 15-16 n.8.

2. "[...] *the poverty of the material which has been preserved, or rather published, is also due to the limited interest shown by scholarship in the artistic output of this period – an output condemned in advance on academically questionable, if not improper, grounds of anonymity and naiveté, crude workmanship, unsophisticated design and mere decorativeness, rigid symmetry in the handling of the motifs and*

*dearth of narrative content, immobility and disregard for the achievements of perspective*", Delivorrias 2001, 111. And see Delivorrias 2002, 133-36 nn. 2-5, 7.

3. In terms of non-Greek publications Mihalis Meraklis pointed me towards the studies by F. Loux, *L'homme et son corps dans la société traditionnelle* (Paris 1978), and M. Segalen, *Mari et femme dans la France rurale traditionnelle* (exhibition catalogue, Musée national des arts et traditions populaires, Paris 1973). Sophia Handaka recommended individual contributions in: J. Coote – A. Shelton (eds), *Anthropology, Art, and Aesthetics* (Oxford 1992) and the article by C. Severi, Pour une anthropologie des images. Histoire de l'art, esthétique et anthropologie, *L'Homme* 65 (2003) 7-10.

4. R. Barthes, *Fragments d'un discours amoureux* (Paris 1977). And see the Greek translation by V. Papavassiliou: *Αποσπάσματα του ερωτικού λόγου* (Athens 1977). I am most grateful to Platon Mavromoustakos for bringing this to my attention.

5. A. N. Doulaveras, *Η ανδρώπινη ομορφιά στο δημοτικό τραγούδι* (Athens 2007).

6. G. M. Sifakis' book, *Για μια ποιητική του ελληνικού δημοτικού τραγουδιού* (Athens 1998<sup>2</sup>) is also useful in a more general way with regard to some issues.

7. E. Georgiadou-Koundoura – Z. Godosi, Η απεικόνιση της

γυναίκας στη λαϊκή ζωγραφική, in: C. Hatzitaki-Kapsomenos (ed.), *Ελληνικός Παραδοσιακός Πολιτισμός: Λαογραφία και Ιστορία. Συνέδριο στη μνήμη της Άλκης Κυριακίδου-Νέστορος, Θεσσαλονίκη 6-8 Νοεμβρίου 1998* (Thessaloniki 2001) 334-42.

8. See A. Delivorrias, Η ανθρώπινη μορφή στην Ελληνική λαϊκή τέχνη, newspaper *Η Καθημερινή* (Επτά Ημέρες), (11.6.1986). These same issues have continued to concern me repeatedly ever since. On the sensuality at the heart of imaginative development in the arts in general, see Delivorrias 2002, 136-37, 149 n. 36, where “*the questionable judgements relating to the diminished status of the woman in male-dominated structures of traditional society*” are emphasized.

9. A. Delivorrias, Οι λαογραφικές συλλογές του Μουσείου Μπενάκη, in: *Λαογραφικά Μουσεία στην Ελλάδα: Μορφές – εξέλιξη – προοπτικές, Επιστημονικό Συμπόσιο Μουσείου Ελληνικής Λαϊκής Τέχνης, Αθήνα 30 Νοεμβρίου-2 Δεκεμβρίου 1997* (Athens 1998) 21-23. And cf. quotation in n. 2 (above).

10. Consequently we welcome the relatively recent publication of some private collections, such as that of Vassilis Korkolopoulos: Y. Kaplani, *Παλάσκες και μεδονάρια* (Athens 2000) and by the same author, *Ταμπακοθήκες: κοντιά καπνού και αρραβώνα* (Athens 2004); and that of Konstantinos Notaras: K. Korre-Zografou, *Χρυσικών Έργα 1600-1900* (Athens 2002). The pioneering contribution made by the monumental publication of the Eleni Stathatos collections must be mentioned, as must the series of publications by the Historical and Ethnographical Society and finally E. Pitsari-Magioletti’s *Τα Λαΐνια. Συλλογή Έφης Μιχαήλ. Μουσείο Ελληνικής Λαϊκής Τέχνης* (Athens 2008).

11. As on a blouse from Skyros: Delivorrias 1997, 288, 298 fig. 77. Cf. the relief on a slab embedded in the wall of the church of Ayios Nikolaos in Vassiliki near Kalambaka (dated 1818): L. Gouryiotis, *Λιδανάγλυφα και μαστόροι της πέτρας στη δντική Θεσσαλία. 19ος - αρχές 20ού αι.* (Athens 2001) 65 fig. 26.

12. As for example on a wooden jewellery box in the Benaki Museum, inv. no. 8722: A. Delivorrias – D. Fotopoulos, *Greece at the Benaki Museum* (Athens 1997) 427 fig. 735. Cf. the mural portrait of Agnes D. Hatzimihail (1806) in the Kanatsouli mansion in Siatista: Georgiadou-Koundoura – Godosi (n. 7) 333-34 fig. 1; and the wall-painting of the woman holding a branch from the Krallis mansion in Molyvos on Mytilini (1833): M. Garides, *Διακοσμητική ζωγραφική. Βαλκάνια – Μικρασία 18ος - 19ος αιώνας. Μπαρόκ και ροκοκό, ανατολίτικη και βυζαντινή κληρονομιά* (Athens 1996) 100 fig. 132; Delivorrias 1997, 302 fig. 113; and Georgiadou-Koundoura – Godosi (n. 7) 336.

13. See in general Delivorrias 2002, with examples.

14. Two fragments (Benaki Museum, inv. nos 8908 and 8909) stand out: Delivorrias 1997, 302 fig. 117; Delivorrias 2003, 58 n. 57 fig. 61; A. Delivorrias, Some thoughts on the secular art of Hellenism under foreign rule, in: Delivorrias

– Georgoula 2005, 137 fig. 13. Cf. the wall-painting from the Krallis mansion: Delivorrias 1997, 302 fig. 114, and another in the same mansion with three oriental women dancing and two men playing pipe (*zournas*) and drum (*daouli*), which remains unpublished: Georgiadou-Koundoura – Godosi (n. 7) 336 fig. 10. On the lid of a chest from Samos (Benaki Museum, inv. no. 21005), the gathering takes place in front of some houses, Delivorrias 1997, 302 fig. 115; Delivorrias 2003, 62 n. 61 fig. 71; Delivorrias, Some thoughts (see above) 137 fig. 10; and, on a rare embroidery from Asia Minor (Benaki Museum, inv. no. 6736), in an imaginary garden: Delivorrias 1997, 298 fig. 97; Delivorrias – Georgoula 2005, 173 no. 88 (E. Georgoula).

15. In addition to the small-scale images in *View of Rethymnon* in the Rethymnon Town Hall: Delivorrias 2003, 62 n. 71 fig. 77; Delivorrias, Some thoughts (n. 14) 136 fig. 8, the carved depiction of a man working the land can be counted among the rare exceptions: A. Florakis, *Η λαϊκή λιθογλυπτική της Τήνου* (Athens 1980<sup>2</sup>) 156 fig. 190. Cf. some bucolic scenes with shepherds and their flocks from the Natzi-Aivazi mansion in Kastoria (dated 1796): Garides (n. 12) 59-60 fig. 75. See also Philippides (n. 1) 12 fig. 1; 30 fig. 50; 47 fig. 455, and a wall-painting from the Vareltsidaina Mansion in Petra on Mytilini (dated c. 1790-1800), whose design is repeated in its entirety on the lid of the chest shown in fig. 20: Delivorrias 2003, 62 n. 73 fig. 73; Delivorrias, Some thoughts (n. 14) 136 fig. 6. The reliefs depicting the liturgy, carved by Milios Zoupaniotis (1795) in the Monastery of St Athanasios in Lafkos in the Pelion belong to the same category: Zora 1994, 215-16 figs 42, 44; as do those of the master, the deacon, the herdsman and the cook from the bell tower of the Panayia Tourliani church in Anomera on Mykonos (1806): Zora 1993, 46 fig. 66; Zora 1994, 215 figs 38-41; Delivorrias 1997, 312 fig. 149. The reliefs by the barber and self-taught dentist Stefanis Prinias in the Aryentis Ethnographic Collection, Chios, Korae Library: Zora 1993, 44 fig. 62; Zora 1994, 213 fig. 29, and in the pharmacy in Vassilikari Street by the apprentice pharmacist, also in Chios: A. P. Stephanou, *Δείγματα Νεοελληνικής Τέχνης, Α: Γλυπτά* (Chios 1972) 16-18 pl. 3; Zora 1993, 43-44 fig. 61, are inscribed with the dates 1849 and 1857 respectively, while the tombstone of the tailor Ioannis Makrakis in Siphnos cathedral is dated to before 1874: Zora 1993, 45-46 fig. 65. They are representative of a bourgeois tendency which emerged around the end of the 18th c., the date given to the wall-paintings from the Triantafyllou house in Drakia, in the Pelion, with the master and mistress and their maidservant: K. Makris, *Η Λαϊκή Τέχνη του Πηλίου* (Athens 1976) 21 figs 166, 171; and to the stone-carving depicting the gentleman with the string of beads [*komboloi*] in the Mykonos Ethnographic Museum, inv. no. ΓΛ30: A. Vathylopoulou-Haritonidou, *Νεοκλαδικά λιθογλυπτα Λαογραφικού Μουσείου Μυκόνου* (Thessaloniki 1989) 19 fig. 24; Delivorrias 1997, 312 fig. 35.

16. There are countless examples, cf. an embroidery from Milos, Victoria and Albert Museum, T.346-1950 (Dawkins Collection): Johnstone 1972, 18, 64 fig. 53; Ioannou-Yannara 2006, 268 no. 84, with another example from Skyros, Victo-

ria and Albert Museum, T.77-1927, and its counterpart in the Benaki Museum, inv. no. 6385: Polychroniadis 1980, 23, 82 fig. 73; Zora 1994, 224 fig. 80; Ioannou-Yannara 2006, 260 no. 64. For wood carvings depicting hunting scenes (in this case with lions) see the front of a chest from the Mani, Benaki Museum, inv. no. 21777 and an example in the Dionysis Fotopoulos Collection: Delivorrias 2001, 116 n. 25 fig. 7; 116 n. 33 fig. 8. Cf. a wall-painting from the Manoussis mansion in Siatista (dated 1762-1763): Garides (n. 12) 48-50 fig. 56; Philippides (n. 1) 12 fig. 1; Delivorrias, *Some thoughts* (n. 14) 135 fig. 4. Sailors are depicted mainly on island embroideries, and on the famous schooner from Skyros, Benaki Museum, inv. no. 6389: Delivorrias 1997, 295-96 fig. 91 (and see the white-embroidered towel from the Cyclades, inv. no. 6570 in fig. 102 on 296); Delivorrias – Fotopoulos (n. 12) 438 fig. 761; Delivorrias 2003, 66 n. 88 fig. 78; Delivorrias – Georgoula 2005, 168 n. 83 (K. Synodinou). On the unconvincing dating of this work to the 19th c. by Zora see Zora 1994, 224 fig. 79; and cf. Taylor 1998, 97. See also the image on a rare tile, Benaki Museum, inv. no. 8682: K. Korre-Zografou, *Ta κεραμεικά του ελληνικού χώρου* (Athens 1995) 104-06 figs 175-76; Delivorrias 1997, 307 figs 133-34; Delivorrias – Fotopoulos (n. 12) 404 fig. 694; Delivorrias 2003, 62, 66 n. 79; and the examples given by K. Makris, *Marine Motifs in Popular Art*, in: S. A. Papadopoulos (ed.), *The Greek Merchant Marine (1453-1850)* (Athens 1972) figs 190-96. Depictions of musicians are found on embroideries from Epiros and Skyros, e.g. Benaki Museum, inv. nos 11224 and 6398 respectively: Polychroniadis 1980, 19 fig. 23; 24 fig. 74; Delivorrias 2002, 142 n. 22, 23 figs 5-6. And see below for many of the works in question.

17. J. Chevalier – A. Gheerbrant, *Dictionnaire des symboles. Mythes, rêves, coutumes, gestes, formes, figures, couleurs, nombres* (Paris 1999<sup>20</sup>) 447-49 (*fleur*).

18. A. Delivorrias, *Greek Traditional Jewelry* (Athens 1980) esp. 22-24. In this study I misinterpreted a rare gem from a headdress from Halkidiki, Benaki Museum, inv. no. Ea 1739, maintaining that it depicted two male figures (18 fig. 70): the first is undoubtedly a woman, as is evident from the careful delineation of the hair and the costume. Cf. a similar example in the Museum of Greek Folk Art, inv. no. 8828: Y. Kaplani, *Modern Greek Silverware. From the Collections of the Museum of Greek Folk Art* (Athens 1997) 54, case 220 no. 5 fig. on 156-57. On the coded meaning of expectations of fruitfulness, see more generally Delivorrias 2002, 136-37 nn. 9-10; Delivorrias 2003, 66.

19. R. Stathaki-Koumari, *Ta υφαντά της Κρήτης, Διακόσμηση και σύμβολα* (Athens 1987) 89 fig. 88; Delivorrias 2002, 150 n. 38 fig. 14. On the difference in size between the dancers on a blouse from Arachova, Benaki Museum, inv. no. EE 106, see Delivorrias 2002, 148-49 n. 33 fig. 13; Ioannou-Yannara 2006, 249 no. 37.

20. Victoria and Albert Museum, T.706-1950 (Dawkins Collection): Ioannou-Yannara 2006, 286-87 no. 132. And see the same subject repeated on a similar example in the same Museum, Victoria and Albert Museum, T.2047-1876

(Sandwith Collection): Johnstone 1972, 28, 101 fig. 125; Zora 1993, 22 n. 71; Delivorrias 2002, 150-52 n. 40 fig. 16.

21. Benaki Museum, inv. no. 11332: Delivorrias 2002, 150 n. 39 fig. 15.

22. This was pointed out to me by Rena Loutzaki, who recommended a large number of texts relating to the subject, but which do not touch on the issues I am exploring here. See in general terms E. Antzaka-Bei – R. Loutzaki, *Ο χορός στην Ελλάδα*, in: *Εκπαιδευτική Εγκυκλοπαίδεια* (Athens 1999) 28, 327-41. I nevertheless note the observation made by E. P. Alexaki that “*Dancing in a communal setting is one of the most ‘legitimate’ and acceptable methods of courtship*” (see E. P. Alexaki, *Χορός, εθνοτικές ομάδες και συμβολική συγκρότηση της κοινότητας στο Πωγώνι της Ηπείρου. Μελέτη μιας περίπτωσης*, *Εθνογραφικά* 8 [1992] 77).

23. Benaki Museum, inv. no. 37911: Delivorrias 2001, 115-16, 121 n. 22 fig. 5; Delivorrias 2002, 137-39 n. 11; 153-55 fig. 1.

24. F. Anoyanakis, *Greek Popular Musical Instruments* (Athens 1991<sup>21</sup>) 117-31, 162-66 n. 302; Delivorrias 2002, 154-55 n. 48.

25. Museum of Greek Folk Art, inv. no. 3114: Kaplani (n. 18) 50 case 216 no. 7 fig. on 146; Delivorrias 2002, 156 n. 51 diag. 2. In redrawing the sketch, I think I was right to change the order of the scenes.

26. Anoyanakis (n. 24) 256 fig. 190. A musician is leading the way again in a men's dance on a stone carving embedded in the wall of the bell-tower of St Athanasios in Psychiko, near Larissa (1865): Gouryiotis (n. 11) 21 fig. 25 n. 41.

27. On a bed valance from the Cyclades embroidered in white thread, where a woman carrying flowers goes in front of the man leading what is perhaps a four-man dance troupe, see T. Ioannou-Yannara, *Greek Threadwork: Lace* (Athens 1989) 71 fig. 44.

28. On this and for further bibliography see Delivorrias 2001, 116 n. 29; Delivorrias 2003, 51 nn. 2, 3, 4, figs 44, 46; Ioannou-Yannara 2006, 237 no. 3 n. 1; 256-58 no. 56 n. 19. And cf. the pieces depicted in figs 7, 18, 26, 27 (below), and Chevalier – Gheerbrant (n. 17) 334-35 (*cyprès*).

29. A. Delivorrias, *Γύρω από την αισθητική των κεντημάτων της Σίφνου, Πρακτικά Α' Διεθνούς Σιφναϊκού Συμποσίου, Σίφνος 27-28 Ιουνίου 1998* (Athens 2001) 3, 318 n. 37; Delivorrias 2001, 114-15 n. 18; A. Delivorrias, *Μία αιγιματική δημιουργία της κυκλαδίτικης κεντητικής, Πρακτικά Β' Διεθνούς Σιφναϊκού Συμποσίου, Σίφνος 27-30 Ιουνίου 2002* (Athens 2006) 3, 197 n. 24 fig. 4.

30. P. Kranz, *Frühe griechische Sitzfiguren: zum Problem der Typenbildung und des orientalischen Einflusses in der frühen griechischen Rundplastik*, *AM* 87 (1972) 1-55 pls 1-24; H. Jung, *Thronende und Sitzende Götter: zum griechischen Götterbild und Menschenideal in geometrischer und früharchaischer Zeit* (Bonn 1982). On the significance of the seated position see also the pieces depicted in figs 19 and 34-35 (below).

31. As for instance in the examples in figs 19, 20, 34-35. Cf. the narrative on a painted chest from Mytilini, Benaki Museum, inv. no. 37951: Delivorrias 2003, 58 n. 58 fig. 68; Delivorrias, *Some thoughts* (n. 14) 137 fig. 12; A. Delivorrias, *Γύρω από την κοσμική ζωγραφική της Λέσβου κατά την περίοδο της Τουρκοκρατίας*, *Επίλογος* (2007) 325-30 figs 4-5. And the two confronted seated figures on the back of a chair from Skyros: Hatzimihali (n. 1) 167 fig. 202. In the depiction of a couple on a stone relief which forms part of a doorframe in the Rondiris house (dated 1847) I think the man is holding a pipe, not a sword: G. Rigopoulos, *«Άνθη της Πέτρας». Τα λιθανάγλυφα του Πλατάνου Ναυπακτίας και άλλα έργα τέχνης* (Athens 2007) 25 figs 18-19.

32. For general reference see: E. G. Avdikos, *Το παιδί στην παραδοσιακή και τη σύγχρονη κοινωνία* (Athens 1996).

33. Anoyanakis (n. 24) 207-10 (*tambouras*), 210-54 (lute), 256-71 (lyre).

34. A. F. Kendrick *et al.*, *A Book of Old Embroidery* (London 1921) pl. 62 (upper); Taylor 1998, 106-7, 112-13 (before 1720). Zoe Mitsotaki has pointed out to me another two examples with the same subject: A. J. B. Wace, *Mediterranean and Near Eastern Embroideries from the Collection of Mrs F. H. Cook* (London 1935) 65 no. 70 pl. 90; *idem*, *Broderies grecques des XVIe, XVIIe, XVIIIe siècles*, in: *Collection Hélène Stathatos, Les objets Byzantins et post-Byzantins* (Limoges 1957) 106 no. 191 pl. 45. But the deep border around the bottom of a *phelonion* is even more dazzling: *Κρητικό Κέντημα* (Athens 1993) figs 5-6.

35. Benaki Museum, inv. no. 26110: Delivorrias – Fotopoulos (n. 12) 439 fig. 762; Delivorrias 2003, 66 n. 87 fig. 79.

36. Museum of Greek Folk Art, inv. no. 2335: Anoyanakis (n. 24) 271 n. 439 fig. 129; Zora 1993, 21-22 figs 28-30; Zora 1994, 229 fig. 110.

37. A. J. B. Wace, *Catalogue of a collection of old embroideries of the Greek Islands and Turkey* (London 1914) XXIII (Introduction) 51 no. 191; Kendrick (n. 34) pl. 62 (lower); E. K. Frangaki, *Από την κεντητική στην Κρήτη* (Athens 1979) 15-16 n. 36; 45 fig. 7; Zora 1993, 22 n. 70. I am most grateful to Clare Browne, Caroline Whitehead, Belinda and Jean Goyder for locating the object and arranging for it to be photographed, and above all to Xenia Politou who mobilized their expertise.

38. Wace (n. 37) XXIII, refers to a skirt now in the Sandwith Collection which belonged at the time to Mrs Boys Smith, and two sections of borders in the R. M. Dawkins Collection, which Clare Browne, Curator of Textiles in the Victoria and Albert Museum, is currently unable to find.

39. In Nikos Sifounakis' day, thanks to a grant from the Ministry for the Aegean, a team of conservators from the Benaki Museum headed by Stergios Stasinopoulos began cleaning all the examples which had been collected in Rhodes during the Italian occupation. Unfortunately the work remains unfinished, as the grant was not renewed. Among

the pieces which were conserved is part of an «*αμπάταρον*» with an inscription dating it to 1790 (inv. no. ΞΛ234), which allows the whole piece to be securely dated: Delivorrias 2003, 58 n. 52 fig. 60.

40. Inv. nos 8726, 8728: Delivorrias 1997, 303-04 figs 122-23; Delivorrias 2003, 58 n. 51 fig. 57a-b. On the dating suggested see (in respect of the third example, Benaki Museum, inv. no. 8727) M. Vassilaki, in: Delivorrias – Georgoula 2005, 152-53 no. 68, which also features a couple in which the man is holding a musical instrument and drinking from a glass and the woman has a fan.

41. Benaki Museum, inv. no. 39281.

42. Inv. no. ΞΛ235.

43. Inv. no. ΞΛ236.

44. Benaki Museum, inv. no. 41080.

45. As for example a cupboard in the house of Efthalia Konstanidi: Delivorrias 1997, 304 fig. 125; Delivorrias 2003, 58 n. 55.

46. Rhodes Decorative Arts Collection, inv. no. ΞΛ233 (detail).

47. Rhodes Decorative Arts Collection: Delivorrias, *Some thoughts* (n. 14) 137-38 fig. 14.

48. Inv. no. 35253. My thanks to Marina Karella for the photograph of another example.

49. Benaki Museum, inv. no. 31165: Delivorrias 1997, 302 fig. 121; Delivorrias 2003, 58 n. 56 fig. 70. On the dating of this piece see also Vassilaki (n. 40) 151 no. 67.

50. From the house of Sophia Theoloyitou: Delivorrias 1997, 313 fig. 152; Delivorrias 2001, 115 nn. 19-21 figs 2-4, where I mistakenly stated that the figures were depicted naked. Delivorrias 2003, 51 n. 4 fig. 44.

51. Benaki Museum, inv. no. 35496: Delivorrias 2001, 111-15 nn. 15-16 fig. 1.

52. See n. 31. There may be a pipe in the hand of the small standing figure occupying the central position in an arched construction, which is flanked by a couple depicted on a larger scale where the woman has the dominant position on the left, in the wall-paintings of the Krallis mansion in Molyvos on Mytilini (dated to 1833). Georgiadou-Koundoura – Godosi (n. 7) 337 fig. 11.

53. Delivorrias 2003, 62 n. 60 fig. 66; Delivorrias, *Some thoughts* (n. 14) 137 fig. 11. Another couple dated to 1833 (this time with the man coming first) who stand on either side of the spectacular flower arrangement from the later mural decoration of 1833 in the Krallis Mansion, also wear European-style dress: S. V. Skopelitis, *Αρχονικά της Λέσβου* (Athens 1977) [no pagination]. Regarding the taste for both traditional and European dress at that time see the telling emphasis on the former, particularly in the male figure, in the impressive building depicted in the wall-painting of the 'master's throne' in the same mansion: E. Vostani-Koumba,

Lesvos, in: D. Philippides, *Ελληνική Παραδοσιακή Αρχιτεκτονική, Ανατολικό Αιγαίο – Σποράδες – Επτάνησα* (Athens 1982) 1, 90-91 fig. 69.

54. See n. 15.

55. Benaki Museum, inv. no. 6526: Delivorrias 1997, 298-99 fig. 100; Delivorrias, *Γύρω από την αισθητική* (n. 29) 314, 316-17 nn. 16, 30 fig. 7, with other similar examples; Delivorrias 2003, 66 n. 93 fig. 82; Delivorrias, *Some thoughts* (n. 14) 142 fig. 22. Cf. Victoria and Albert Museum, T.693-1919 (Wace Collection): Johnstone 1972, 18, 66-67 fig. 58; Delivorrias, *Γύρω από την αισθητική* (n. 29) 317 n. 35 fig. 10; Ioannou-Yannara 2006, 266 no. 79.

56. Benaki Museum, inv. no. 35286: Delivorrias 2003, 58 n. 40, 41 fig. 58, dated to soon after 1566; Delivorrias, *Some thoughts* (n. 14) 139 fig. 18; Delivorrias, *Γύρω από μια άγνωστη ομάδα έργων της νεοελληνικής ξυλογλυπτικής, Μουσείο Μπενάκη* 6 (2006) 93-94 figs 4-5.

57. Victoria and Albert Museum, T.402-1950 (Dawkins Collection): Johnstone 1972, 20, 73 fig. 73, and another fragment in the City of Liverpool Museum 56.210.119 (Wace Collection). Cf. the alternating precedence given to male and female figures on a metal bowl from Epiros, described as 'bridal' and dated to the 1850s: Korre-Zografou (n. 10) 140 no. T58.

58. Benaki Museum, inv. nos 25729, 25728: Delivorrias, *Γύρω από την κοσμητική* (n. 31) 324-25, 333-34 figs 2-3.

59. See examples in: Delivorrias 2003, 58, 62 nn. 56, 58, 59, 60 figs 66-68, 70.

60. Textile Museum, 81.99: J. Trilling, *Aegean Crossroads. Greek Island Embroideries in the Textile Museum* (Washington 1983) 106 no. 21; S. Belger Krody, *Embroidery of the Greek Islands and Epirus Region. Harpies, Mermaids, and Tulips* (exhibition catalogue, Washington Textile Museum, London 2006) 86 fig. 4.4. Cf. by contrast a cushion cover from Skyros, formerly in the Stathatos Collection, where the figures alternate in a dance arrangement: Wace, *Broderies grecques* (n. 34) 98 no. 149 pl. 32.

61. On this see Zora 1993, 1-4, 37-47.

62. The Whitworth Art Gallery, T.8130: R. Taylor, Greece, *The Greek Islands and Albania*, in: J. Harris (ed.), *5000 Years of Textiles* (exhibition catalogue, British Museum, London 1993) 248 fig. 310. On the coffee-pot and its symbolism see Zora 1993, 17-18. And for a woman on horseback leading the way see the Epirote cushion cover in the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston, 43.374: S. L. MacMillan, *Greek Islands Embroideries* (s.l. [1974]) pl. 1. And cf. the detail on a similar embroidery: M. Gentles, *Turkish and Greek Island Embroideries from the Burton Yost Berry Collection in The Art Institute of Chicago* (Chicago 1964) fig. 46. It is difficult for me to judge in this case whether the obviously affectionate gesture of the male figure behind the bride could indicate her father, as in other depictions of Epirote weddings, which I will not go into here. On this see Zora 1993, 16-17, 22 figs 20-21, 31-33;

Zora 1994, 221-23 figs 70, 73-74; Ioannou-Yannara 2006, 236-37 nos 1-4.

63. Inv. no. 11214.

64. Benaki Museum, inv. no. 6308. This marvellous example of Modern Greek artistic sensibility deserves a monograph rather than just a handful of references: A. Delivorrias, *A Guide to the Benaki Museum* (Athens 2000) fig. on 105, and see below. Similar subjects are repeated on another Epirote embroidery, Benaki Museum, inv. no. 6307: Polychroniadis 1980, 19, 34 figs 2, 20; Delivorrias – Georgoula 2005, 171 no. 86 (E. Georgoula); Yannara 2006, 238 no. 6. Cf. the alternation in the figures on the central part of a bridal sheet, Museum of Greek Folk Art, inv. no. 3134, featuring "narrative and symbolic depictions of the wedding ceremony": Zora 1993, 18-21, 25-30 fig. 25; Zora 1994, 222 fig. 72; and the bed-sheet, Benaki Museum, inv. no. 11211: Polychroniadis 1980, 23, 86 figs 79-80, whose provenance, according to Ioannou-Yannara 2006, 256-58 no. 56, is dubious.

65. Benaki Museum, inv. no. 6412: Makris (n. 16) fig. 195; Polychroniadis 1980, 19, 49 fig. 25; Delivorrias – Fotopoulos (n. 12) 445 fig. 770; Taylor 1998, 155 fig. Ioannou-Yannara 2006, 240-41 no. 13, questions both its provenance and its original use, distinguishing two phases in its production.

66. Cf. an example from Patmos, Benaki Museum, inv. no. 6654; Polychroniadis 1980, 22, 67 fig. 51; Zora 1993, 29 fig. 41; Zora 1994, 226 figs 88-89; Delivorrias – Fotopoulos (n. 12) 442 fig. 765; Delivorrias 2003, 66 n. 90 fig. 83. And from Wace, *Mediterranean* (n. 34) 59 no. 50 pls 64-65; Taylor 1998, 62-63; Victoria and Albert Museum, T.68-1902: Johnstone 1972, 11, 39-40 figs 10, 12; Washington Textile Museum, 81.3: Trilling (n. 60) 116 pl. 17; 128 no. 41. This is how I interpret the female bust between two columns on a carved wooden chest from Crete, Benaki Museum, inv. no. 8718: Delivorrias 2003, 52 n. 33 fig. 52; A. Delivorrias, *Some thoughts on unusual secular examples of Cretan woodcarving and the stylistic aspects of folk art, Μουσείο Μπενάκη* 3 (2003) 100-02 n. 43 figs 14-15.

67. Stathaki-Koumari (n. 19) 75 fig. 70.

68. Zora 1994, 223-24 figs 78-79. Another similar piece is recorded by Hatzimihali (n. 1) 113 fig. 110.

69. Benaki Museum, inv. no. 6390: Polychroniadis 1980, 23-24 fig. 86; Delivorrias – Fotopoulos (n. 12) 451 fig. 779; Taylor 1998, 20.

70. Contrary to what Polychroniadis 1980, 22 fig. 57; 25 fig. 97 has argued in respect of two embroideries from Astypalaia and Samos (Benaki Museum, inv. nos EE 2783 and 6430 respectively) and Johnstone contended in respect of another from Astypalaia (Victoria and Albert Museum, T.2-1923), Johnstone 1972, 14-15, 55 fig. 39. On a cushion cover from Kos, Benaki Museum, inv. no. 6658, Polychroniadis 1980, 22 fig. 58, sees a line of women in front of churches with crosses, adopting Johnstone's interpretation of a similar example, Victoria and Albert Museum, T.3-1909: Johnstone 1972, 11, 42 fig. 16. But the subject depicted is clarified by

another example from the same island in the same museum (Victoria and Albert Museum, T.550-1950 in the Dawkins Collection) with the “so-called lady-in-castle pattern”: Johnstone 1972, 11, 42 fig. 17. On this confusion see some comments in: *Κρητικό Κέντημα* (n. 34) 44-45 figs 43-44. Future attempts at interpretation will take into account the multi-storey construction featuring many figures but no crosses and with a prominently placed female figure which occurs on a sheet from Skyros (Benaki Museum, inv. no. 6379); especially as Hatzimihali (n. 1) 131 fig. 109, while noting the fact that local tradition calls it a “monastery”, prefers to call it a “one-off”.

71. Benaki Museum, inv. no. 6262: P. Zora, Embroidery, in: Papadopoulos (n. 1) 164 fig. 147; Polychroniadis 1980, 20, 38 fig. 9; Zora 1993, 25 n. 78 fig. 37; Zora 1994, 223 figs 76-77; Delivorrias – Fotopoulos (n. 12) 442 fig. 766; Taylor 1998, 118-19; Delivorrias – Georgoula 2005, 172 no. 87 (K. Synodinou); Ioannou-Yannara 2006, 242 no. 16.

72. Museum of Greek Folk Art, inv. no. 38: Hatzimihali (n. 1) 120 fig. 137, 142; Zora, Embroidery (n. 71) 176 fig. 159: “They depict human figures in elaborate and fantastic costumes. It seems likely in this instance that they symbolize the bride and groom, as one of the figures is male and the other female (‘xouna’): Zora 1994, 224-25 fig. 82. Cf. Hatzimihali (n. 1) 71 fig. 68.

73. Benaki Museum, inv. no. 11349. Cf. a cushion cover formerly in the Stathatos Collection: Wace, Broderies (n. 34) 99-100 no. 156 pl. 34, and the couple on a chest from the Mani in a private collection: Delivorrias 2001, 119 n. 34 fig. 9.

74. The bird in this composition must be a partridge, as on the cushion cover from Epiros (Benaki Museum, inv. no. 11203): Polychroniadis 1980, 19, 44 fig. 18, on which Zora 1993, 25 fig. 38-39, recognized birds. Cf. the pieces from the Dodecanese in figs 8-14. On the significance of the partridge

see E. Karagiannis-Moser, *Le bestiaire de la chanson populaire grecque moderne* (Paris 1997) esp. 189-91, 198-201, 216-25 and *passim*. See also Doulaveras (n. 5) 174-77.

75. Delivorrias, Γύρω από την κοσμική (n. 31) 332-33 fig. on 322.

76. Delivorrias 1997, 303 fig. 116; Delivorrias 2003, 62 n. 63 fig. 72; Delivorrias, Some thoughts (n. 14) 138 fig. 15. With regard to the suggested attribution of this work see the excellent recent study by N. Kastrinaki, Τέχνη και Ιδεολογία. Υποθέσεις σε δύο πίνακες του ζωγράφου Δευτερεύοντος Σίφνου (18ος-19ος αι.), *Μνήμων* 28 (2006-2007) 147-48 n. 167.

77. In this respect see the examples commented on by Korre-Zografou (n. 10) 413-19. On the – in any case later – chest, dated to the 19th c., which is unfortunately only partially illustrated (407 fig. 87), the female figure is seated on the left with a larger *jarfi* in her hand, but I cannot tell how the image was completed on the right-hand side.

78. Made in 1849 and from the house of Hatzı Konstantis Papazisis in Vrontado: Stephanou (n. 15) 15 pl. 1. Zora 1994, 214 fig. 30, inadvertently illustrates instead the undated stone relief from the house of Nikolaos Pittas, also in Vrontado: Stephanou (n. 15) 121 pl. 79.

79. Benaki Museum, inv. no. 33976, from heirlooms belonging to refugees from Asia Minor (T.A. 311). On belt buckles of this kind see Korre-Zografou (n. 10) 374-89 no. Κο15; E. Rizopoulou-Egoumenidou – L. Loizou-Chatzigavriiil, *Πούκλες και Ζώνες. Η συλλογή του Λεβέντειου Δημοτικού Μουσείου Λευκωσίας* (Nicosia 2003) 32, 79-82.

80. I am most grateful to Nikos Manolopoulos for permission to carry out this study, to Lambros Liavas for clarifications in respect of the musical instruments depicted and to Spyros Delivorrias for photographing them.

ΑΓΓΕΛΟΣ ΔΕΛΗΒΟΡΡΙΑΣ

Ο ερωτικός λόγος στο θεματικό ρεπερτόριο της ελληνικής “λαϊκής τέχνης”

Συνοψίζοντας πορίσματα μιας ανέκδοτης εργασίας γύρω από την κοσμική τέχνη των μεταβυζαντινών χρόνων, η μελέτη αυτή στοχεύει ειδικότερα τη διερεύνηση της σχέσεως των ανδρικών προς τις γυναικείες μορφές, όπως την αποτυπώνουν δημιουργίες κυρίως της προεπαναστατικής περιόδου. Το αντικείμενο ενός τέτοιου ερευνητικού προβληματισμού έχει ουσιαστικά διαφύγει από τα επιστημονικά ενδιαφέροντα των λαογραφικών, ανθρωπολογικών και εθνογραφικών σπουδών, προσκρούοντας και στην ελλιπή τεκμηρίωση των υλικών καταλοίπων του νεότερου ελληνικού πολιτισμού.

Σε μια σειρά έργων που έχουν να κάνουν με τον εξοπλισμό της κατοικίας και στις συνθέσεις τους δεσπόζει ένα πλήθος από παραπληρωματικά διακοσμητικά στοιχεία φυτικής προελεύσεως, οι εικονιζόμενες μορφές αφήνουν να προβάλλει ευδιάκριτα η γαμήλια διάσταση του νοηματικού της περιεχομένου. Με άξονα τον κανόνα της ιεραρχίας ο οποίος προτάσσει την αριστερή θέση ως ιεραρχικά πρωτεύουσα στη διηγηματική ροή των παραστάσεων από τα αριστερά προς τα δεξιά, η αντίθεση της εκφοράς του ερωτικού λόγου παίρνει ακόμα υπόψη της τη σημασιολογική προτεραιότητα της καθιστής έναντι της όρθιας στάσεως σε συνάρτηση και με το συμβολικό

αντίκρισμα των δεδομένων του περιβάλλοντος χώρου. Απ' όσα παραδείγματα αρθρώνουν την ανέλιξη της ερευνητικής διαδικασίας πιστοποιείται ότι ιεραρχικά προέχει άλλοτε η ανδρική μορφή (εικ. 4, 5, 7, 8-12, 14-17, 25, 28, 29, 31, 32, 33), άλλοτε όμως η γυναικεία (εικ. 18, 19, 20, 24, 26a-c, 30). Αυτό φαίνεται πως αντανακλά έναν βαθύτερο προβληματισμό γύρω από τη σχέση των δύο φύλων και όχι το καταστάλαγμα μιας αποκρυσταλλωμένης άποψης. Το επιβεβαιώνει άλλωστε τόσο η συχνή εναλλαγή της ιεραρχικής τους τάξεως (εικ. 21-23a-b, 27), όσο και η πρόταξη της καθιστής έναντι της όρθιας στάσεως (εικ. 4, 19) η οποία με την αντιθετική της ενίοτε επανάληψη (εικ. 35) πρέπει να αναδεικνύει μάλλον την ισότιμη εξομοίωση των εικονιζόμενων (εικ. 34).

Ο ερωτικός λόγος όταν δεν εκφέρεται χορευτικά (εικ. 1, 2, 3, 4), μελοποιείται με τη συνοδεία ενός μουσικού οργάνου (εικ. 5-12, 14-18) ή με την προσφορά ενός άνθους (εικ. 27, 29, 32-34), και σπανιότερα με ένα ποτήρι κρασί για την ευόδωση της συνομιλίας (εικ. 30, 33, 34). Σε ορισμένες μάλιστα περιπτώσεις τονίζεται από την υπόσχεση της θαλωφής και της άνεσης την οποία αναδίνει η ανάπαυλα του καθίσματος και το κάπνισμα στον ασφαλή χώρο του σπιτιού (εικ. 4, 19, 34, 35) ή σε ένα ειδυλλιακό τοπίο (εικ. 20).

