Unpublished Pontic stories: Collected by R.W.Dawkins

Mackridge Peter
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In the summer of 1914, having completed the preparation of his monumental work on the dialects and folklore of Cappadocia (*Modern Greek in Asia Minor*, Cambridge 1916), R. M. Dawkins set out on a field trip to Pontos. He had spent just over a month there collecting dialect and folklore material when he was forced to abandon his project by the outbreak of the First World War. «When I was caught up by the outbreak of the war in 1914,» he later reminisced, «I was beginning what I hoped to be a series of visits to Pontos for the purpose of a similar book on Pontic; it has always been a deep regret to me that this was made impossible»1.

The Dawkins archives at Oxford contain four notebooks that he kept during his visit to Pontos. Most of the pages are taken up with transcriptions of stories, which are interspersed with a large amount of linguistic material. It is clear from his later writings that at that time his interests lay more in ‘philology’ (in the English sense of the historical and comparative study of language) than in folklore, and that — as with his *Modern Greek in Asia Minor* — his collection of tales was primarily aimed at providing material for the study of traditional dialectal usage: the subject-matter of the Cappadocian tales in that book interested him so little at the time that he got his friend and mentor W. R. Halliday to contribute the chapter on subject-matter, and it is perhaps significant that the hand-written transcriptions and fair copies of his Pontos stories contain comparative references to Halliday’s chapter. It was however his collections of stories from Cappadocia and Pontos that eventually fired his interest in Greek folktales, an interest that bore fruit in a number of articles and books, culminating in another monumental volume, *Modern Greek Folk Tales*

1. Quoted from an unpublished memoir in the Dawkins archive, housed in the Taylor Institution Library, Oxford. For a general survey of Dawkins’s career, see Peter Mackridge, «'Some Pamphlets on Dead Greek Dialects': R. M. Dawkins and Modern Greek Dialectology», *Annual of the British School at Athens*, 85 (1990), pp. 201-212, particularly p. 206. I am grateful to the Rector and Fellows of Exeter College for granting me permission to publish material from the Dawkins archive.
(Oxford 1953). Sadly, however, in keeping with Dawkins's characteristic reticence, his Pontic notebooks contain no comments on his personal experiences, nor even on the landscape, the appearance of the villages, their inhabitants, and their way of life, with the exception of the occasional tiny pencil-sketch of some implement or utensil to illustrate the meaning of a certain word.

Each of the four Pontic notebooks is devoted to one region of Pontos: Sourmena, Ophis, Sanda and Imera. From the dates given in the notebooks we can conclude that he arrived in the Sourmena region on 11 July 1914; on the 16th he left for the Ophis region, where he stayed until the 21st. There follows a gap of ten days during which it is impossible to follow his movements with certainty, though we can suppose that he spent this period at Trebizond. On 31 July he went to Sanda, where he stayed until 8 August, and the following day arrived in Imera, where he stayed until he had to leave abruptly on or after 14 August. From there he made his way—with considerable difficulty—via Trebizond to Athens.

The notebooks contain twenty-three stories from Sourmena, nine from Ophis, six from Sanda, and twenty-eight from Imera. Each story is numbered but not titled; in some cases titles have been added subsequently, either in the notebooks or on the fair copies. The stories vary significantly both in quality and in length. Some are traditional folktales, while others are humorous anecdotes. Some of the anecdotes are only a few lines in length, while most of the other tales are much longer: at least twenty pages in the case of two of the Sanda stories. He tried as far as possible to find young men to act as his informants, because he felt that youths who were not long out of childhood yet had not achieved the sophistication of adulthood were both the most faithful and the most competent practitioners of traditional storytelling, neither reproducing parrot-fashion what they had heard nor attempting to re-cast the stories in an excessively personal style. The Pontic notebooks contain not a single story told by a woman; likewise, of the Cappadocian stories in *Modern Greek in Asia Minor*, only one was taken down from a woman (with the addition of a second tale that involved the collaboration of a man and a woman). While five stories from Pharasa in *Modern Greek in Asia Minor* were told by a Moslem, Dawkins had no contact with Greek-speaking Moslems in Pontos.

Dawkins normally employed the following procedure in recording the Pontic folktales. Having found a suitable informant, he would write down the story in pencil on the left-hand pages of the notebook, and afterwards he would write out a fair copy in ink on the facing pages; for this he would, if possible, seek the assistance of either the teller of the tale or some other informant, who

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would correct the transcription. In many cases, however, he was unable to make a fair copy until after his arrival in Athens, where he did not have Pontic-speakers to help him. At a later date (probably some years later) he wrote out a final fair copy of all the stories in traditional orthography. In the meantime he studied the texts of Pontic dialect plays as well as material in the Folklore Archive in Athens. The Dawkins archive also contains typewritten English translations of some of the stories (it may be that he translated them all, but that the rest of the translations were lost).

A number of the stories have been published. A selection of sixteen from Sourmena and seven from Ophis appeared in *Άρχείον Πόντου* in 1931 (vol. 3, pp. 79-122); one from Sanda and four from Imera appeared in various issues of *Ποντιακή Έστία* in 1951; while another one from Imera appeared as early as 1923 in *Ασκητη* (vol. 7, pp. 285-291). A further two Imera stories were published in English translation (see below). Some of the published stories, together with some of those never published, are referred to by Dawkins in various articles on Greek folktales, and particularly in *Modern Greek Folk Tales*; it is curious, however, that of the Pontic tales that appear in that book he included only those that had already been published in Greek, as if he had forgotten about the existence of the rest. As for the reason why Dawkins published a greater proportion of his Sourmena and Ophis stories than of those from the other places, it may be that he felt attracted by the particularly archaic dialect of these two areas. It may also be that Sourmena and Ophis were rather inadequately represented in the corpus of published stories from Pontos: it is indicative that all the stories from Sourmena and Ophis (two from each region) published in S. Lianidis's *Τά παραμύθια τοῦ ποντιακοῦ λαοῦ* (Athens 1962) are taken from the selection published by Dawkins in *Άρχείον Πόντου*. It seems, however, from the high quality of Dawkins’s final fair copies, that he may have intended at some time to publish the whole collection of Pontic tales; it would be pleasant to be able to publish all of them in book form at some future date.

A further word should be said about Dawkins’s informants. Although he was not always careful to record their names, let alone any further information about them, the majority of them seem to have been schoolboys, or recent school-leavers. For this reason they were both literate and fluent in non-dialectal Greek and were able to help Dawkins with the correction and interpretation of his transcriptions. It is clear from some of the texts that some of the tellers mixed standard or purist forms with the dialect, and Dawkins even notes in one instance that the young men who had been to school generally conversed with each other in standard Greek, reserving dialect only for their conversations with women (notebook «Sanda», p. 55)³. At Imera Dawkins was for-

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³ Examples of non-dialect forms include the following: ἁσκητής (Imera 3), ὅτι (Sourmena 1), να πάρουνε, ἐπαίνο (Ophis 2), and in Ophis 1 — aside from the «quotations» in katharevousa: —λέξεις, ὑψηλό, τελειώνει.
tunate to find an 18-year-old informant, Charilaos I. Photiadis, who must have had a prestigious fund of stories, considering that 27 of the 28 stories from that village were taken down from his mouth. At Ζουρνατσάντων Σάντας Dawkins collected four of his six stories from Aristidis I. Charitidis (both from Tsita), Pandelis Petrou Kazantzidis and 20-year-old Christos St. Ephraimidis from the nearby village of Karakandzi, and Leonidas Irakleous Adamidis (also aged about 18-20). As for Ophis, Dawkins notes that at the small villages of Krinita and Yiga on the Baltadzi-dere, where he recorded his stories, the men did not talk much, but were apt to speak «a mixed language of the dialect and school Greek» (notebook «Ophis», p. 165); he presumably had little or no converse with the womenfolk. The tellers of the Ophis tales published in 'Αρχείον Πόντου were Vasilis and Yorgos D. Mavropoulos (both aged about 20) from Yiga and Dimitris Soundoulidis (an old man) at Krinita.

The stories printed below have not been published before in Greek, although one has appeared in English translation only. They include some of the Sourmena and Ophis stories that were not published in 'Αρχείον Πόντου, followed by a selection of some of the best unpublished Imera stories. Reasons of time and space have unfortunately prevented me from presenting any of the Sanda stories.

The Imera stories published here are good traditional didactic tales4. Two of the pieces from Sourmena are stories involving animals, while one is an example of what Halliday and Dawkins termed «noodle stories» — perhaps the forerunners of the modern «ποντιακά άνεκδοτα». The stories from Ophis are humorous anecdotes. None of the stories published here has the kind of formulaic beginning and ending characteristic of Greek and Turkish folk tales. In fact, such formulas are largely absent from the Pontic stories published by Dawkins himself, with the exception of a couple from Ophis that end with a phrase containing the words, «Καί εγώ έρθα,» and another that finishes, «Έκείνος έζησε από τότε πολλά και έμειξ κι άλλο καλλιό ἀπές σο Γίγα» ('Αρχείον Πόντου, 3 [1931], p. 117).

Linguistically, the dialects of the Ophis and Sourmena stories are similar, not only because of the propinquity of the two valleys, but because (according to Patricia Fann for pointing out Pamboukis’s definition.)

4. Such didactic stories are perhaps close to the category that I. T. Pamboukis calls μύθος: «διήγηση μικρή, πότε κανονική και πότε παραβολική, πού θέλει νά δώσει κάτι». But these Imera stories, unlike the «mythas» from Inoi, are not generally humorous; on the contrary, their message is quite stern. I am grateful to Patricia Fann for pointing out Pamboukis’s definition.
to Avraam Papadopoulos5) the inhabitants of the Sourmena villages of Tsita and Karakandzi were descended from Christians who had fled the Ophis region when the latter area became largely Islamized in the eighteenth century. While the Greek-speaking Moslems of Ophis continue to this day to use the ancient negative particle οὐ rather than the general Pontic κί, and pronounce κατάθλα before a front vowel like the English ch (as do the Cypriots)6, Dawkins noted in 1914 that these usages were considered to be old-fashioned in Sourmena and Ophis —or at least in the Baltadzi-dere valley, which is the easternmost of the two Ophis valleys; he was informed that the Christians of Zisino, in the western valley which he seems not to have visited, still employed these features (notebook «Ophis», pp. 74 and 165-166).

I have adhered as closely as possible to Dawkins’s original transcriptions, taking into account both the corrections he made when writing his fair copy with the help of a native-speaker and any interpretative notes he made in the margins. I have used the historical orthography. (The only symbols that require comment are: ä, which represents a vowel between a and e; the dotted τ and π, which represent voiced d and b when not preceded by a nasal; δ, which represents the English sh and often originates from χ before a front vowel; and the accent on the negative particle κί, which distinguishes it from the contracted form κι from καί.) As far as the language is concerned, the final result is, I hope, representative of the speech of the informants (including their use of «school Greek»), and I have been reluctant to «correct» Dawkins’s readings except in the few instances where he has clearly made a serious error; a few uncertain forms have been printed in upright instead of slanting type. I should however record my thanks to Mr. Chrysostomos Savvidis, whose mother tongue is σουρμενίτικα and who suggested a number of emendations to the Sourmena texts; I have adopted the most important of these.

The numbers in brackets at the top of each story are the numbers used in Dawkins’s notebooks; the titles, where given, are also due to Dawkins. Instead of giving either a full translation or a glossary I have preferred to provide a summary in English of each story. Some of these summaries are by Dawkins himself; the rest are mine.

"Ενας πασάς είσεν εν αν κορίτσ'. Άβου το κορίτσ' κρυφά 'σόν κύρ'ν άθες είσεν είναι άγαπητικόν. "Ονταν ο πασάς έπέγνεν στη βασιλέα τα κονάκα, έκούζεν τον παιδάν σ' όσπιτ', κι έκαλάτσεβεν μετ' έκείνον.

"Έναν ήμέραν πού το κορίτσ' είδεν σ' όσπιτ' άπες τον παιδάν, έντάκιν την πόρταν ο άρίθ άτς. "Ατέ έφοεθε, και είπεν τον παιδάν να έμπα' άπες σ' έναν σαντούχ'. 'Εκείνος έσέβεν άπες σ' ου σαντούχ', και η κουτσή έπήγεν ένοιξεν τον κύρ'ν άτς. "Ο πασάς έσέβεν απές, και κατά την ώραν έπήγεν εκάτσεν απάν σο σαντούχ'. Ποιος έξερ' ένας άρίθ κάτσεν, δύο άρες έκάτσεν. "Οντες άλων όστερ έξεβεν και έπήγεν σην δουλείαν άτ', ή κουτσή άνοι' το σαντούχ'. Και τα να έλεψ, ο παιδάς έτον αποθαμένον, άνασμάν άσον κ' έπόρεσεν να παρ.'

"Η κουτσή έρχενεν να κλαίει· άμα να έφταει; Άτωρα θά τερεί και κάπου θά κρύφτ' το λείμψανον. Έκούξεν τον αράπατσήν άτουν και είπεν, «Ιντάν θέλτς δίγω σε και άβοΰτο το λάσ' ας πάμε φασίζομε;». Έπαραν άτο ή κουτσή και άραπατσής έκάτσεν άπάν σο σαντούχ'. Ποιος έξερ' ένας άρίθ; ή κουτσή έσέβεν άπες να πάγει φέρ'. Και κατά τήν ώραν έιναν ποπάν και έπιναν ρακίν. "Ο ένας έλεγεν, ήν έπορώ και το δείνα κορίτσ' φέρω άδά και χουσμετεύ'μας". Έπειναν απ' ειναν. "Ατότε και τη κορίτσι καί άραπατσής έγέντον ό αράπατσής. Ό ποπάς είπεν άτεν, 'Δέβα καλόν κορίτσ', άσον κύρ'ν άθες, άκολούθως στην παιδί, καμένος άσο θάνατον άθες, έκούξεν με τον τελάλ' παιδί, και άραπατσής έκατσέν άπάν παιδίν άτ. "Ατέ έκσεν άτο και άραπατσής και, δάβολι κάλτσαν πού έτον, έχαντυλλαν γιά τά δάκόσα λίρας. "Επήγεν σην κύρ' τή παιδί και λέγατον πώς άτες κι άτες έντον το παιδίν άτ. "Ο μαύρον άρίθ τή παιδί ου έκαλεί ατώρα το κορίτσ', φοάταί άσον κύρ'ν άθες, γιατί πασάς άν. "Εφέκεν και έπήγεν σην
A pasha’s daughter had a secret lover whom she summoned whenever her father was away. One day the father unexpectedly knocked at her door, and she hid the lad in a trunk. The father stayed so long that the lover died of suffocation. In despair, the girl called her coachman to help her bury the body. One day, while the coachman was sitting drinking in a tavern with his colleagues, he boasted that he could get the pasha’s daughter to come and serve them raki. When the coachman threatened to reveal her secret, she had no alternative but to obey. But she happened to find a can of paraffin in a back room and she set fire to the tavern, burning all the revellers to death. The girl then went to a priest to confess her misdeeds, and he assured her God would forgive her. But when the dead boy’s father announced that he would give two hundred pounds to anyone who had information about his son, the priest revealed the whole story to him. The father brought a court case against the girl in Russia, bringing the priest forward as a witness. The girl confessed, but accused the priest of denouncing her for gain. The court decided the fault lay with the priest and ordered him to be shot and the girl to be acquitted. Such is the punishment reserved for those who divulge secrets that have been confided to them. [Dawkins (Forty-Five Stories, p. 470) states that the priest was burned; my reading of the text suggests that he was either shot dead or shot out of the barrel of the canon.]

A very similar story from Kos was published by Dawkins in Forty-Five Stories from the Dodekanese, Cambridge 1950, pp. 466-470, where he provides details of parallels in Greek and other cultures.

2. (Imera 5): Travellers and their mysterious guide

Τρί νομάτ’ ἀνθρώπ’ ἔπέγναν σ’ ἕναν στράταν κές. Και ἔρθεν ήρερεν ἄτς καὶ ἕνα παλικάρ’. «Καλὰ παίδια, ποῦ δέστε;» ἔρωτα τ’ς. «Πάμε σὸ δείνα χωρίον,» εἶπαν τὰ παιδία. «Ἐκείνη πάγω καὶ ἔγω. Ἐφάμε ἕναν καλὸν συντροφίαν.» «Ἄς ἐνί,» εἶπαν τὰ παιδία, «ἴλα μετ’ ἐμάς.»

Σὴν στράτα σίτα ἔπέγναν ἐπέντεσαν ἕναν χωρίον. Ἄσον ἐβράδυνεν κέλα ἐψαλφάμεσαν ἕναν ὅτι νὰ κοιμοῦνταν. Ἐκείνη κ’ ἐδώκαν ἄτς. Ἐδιεζαν ἄτς
Επέκες. 'Ατείν' οί μαύρ' έμναν οξώκα με τά πρόατα πά, κ' έθέλεσαν νά μονάζ'ν άτς. 'Αποπουρνού άτον έσκόθαν και τερούν έναν περβόλ' φουσκω-μένουν όλιγον έβελνυν νά χαλάται. 'Εκείνο τό παλικάρ' χαλάντο και σέ δύο λεβτά άπες εβγάλατο άπαν.

Έψαλάταν σήν στράταν και έβγασαν. Σήν στράταν σήν στράταν, σήν στράταν σήν στράταν, έσκόθαν καί τερούν εν αν περβόλ 'φουσκωμένον ολίγον εθελνεν νά χαλάεται. 'Εκείνο τό παλικάρ', χαλάντο καί σε δύο λεβτά άπες έβγάλατο άπαν.

Σήν στράταν έπηγαν, έρωτούνε τό παλικάρ', «Νέπρε, έσύ τό είν άτά τό έφτάς; Σ' έναν τό χωρίον πού έδίεξαν έμας, έσυ έφαίνες άτσος καλόν. Έχάλασες τό περβόλ' άτουν καί έσπίτ' άτο, Άλλο πά πού έδίεξαν άτες, έχτ' έσυ τό μοναχόν τό παιδίν τ' έκεινού τού καλού τ' άνθρώπ'. Άποπουρνού έσκόθαν καί τ' άλλα τά παιδιά, και άμοντο είδαν φουρκισμένον τό παιδίν έπαιραν καί τό παλικάρ' τόν σύντροφον άτουν, καί έφυγαν, γιάμ έποίκαν άτο.

Summary

“Three men going along a road met a youth. In the first village they reached, they were ill received: the youth before leaving built up a falling wall. So too in the next village, and there the youth repaired a tottering house. In the third village they were well received: before they left in the morning the youth strangled the only son of the house. The [youth’s] explanations were that under the falling wall a treasure would have been found; that the house would have fallen on some good people who lived next door;...”
that the son would have grown up wicked and ruined his father. Then the youth said: ‘Now, I am Christ. I came and did these deeds and now I shall go away to heaven. As for you, farewell.’ (Summary from Dawkins, *Forty-Five Stories*, p. 262.)

* In his translation Dawkins interpolates at this point: «Here the story has gone a little off the rails; the real reason for building up the wall is that the bad inhospitable villager should not get hold of the treasure. The avoidance of future bloodshed is a moralizing touch which spoils the regularity and the quite unmoral spirit natural to these folktales.»

The story was published in Dawkins’s translation in *Medium Aevum*, 6 (1937), pp. 181-182, and summarized in *Forty-Five Stories from the Dodekanese*, p. 262, where he published a similar story from Kos about Saint Elias. In both these publications Dawkins provides details about the remarkable dissemination of this type of story illustrating the inscrutability of divine ways, from the Koran (ch. 18) and the Talmud to western Europe.

3. (Imera 8)

Πρόκειται για μια ιστορία που περιλαμβάνει την ισχυρή στοιχείωση των μυστικών δραστηριοτήτων του ιερού στελεχούς. Αυτός έχει μεγάλη ισχύ και δεν αποτελεί ισχυρό πρόσωπο. Τα σόβια που περιλαμβάνονται στην ιστορία είναι διάφορα και περίπλοκα, ωστόσο, ο σύνολος τους παρουσιάζεται εν μέρει σαφώς και πραγματικά.

Στην ιστορία, ο στελεχός αναφέρεται ως ο πρωταγωνιστής. Με βάση την ιστορία, οι καθένας καθιστάται σημαντικό και ασπαζόμενος, καθώς η ιστορία περιλαμβάνει διάφορες δραστηριότητες που οφείλονται στην επικρατώσα δύναμη του στελεχούς. Η ιστορία είναι μια συνέχεια και καθίσταται μια μυστική μετάβαση από την προηγούμενη στην επόμενη δράση.

Σημαντικό είναι να σημειωθεί ότι η ιστορία δεν παρέχει σαφή απάντηση για τις ερωτήσεις που αναφέρονται στην έκθεση. Αυτό σηματοδοτεί ότι η ιστορία περιγράφεται εν μέρει και είναι στενή με τις εμπειρίες και τις αποτυχίες του στελεχούς. Η ιστορία είναι μια συνέχεια και παρέχει περισσότερα στοιχεία για την εξέλιξη της καθεδρικής κατάστασης.

Η ιστορία περιλαμβάνει διάφορες δραστηριότητες που είναι συνδεδεμένες με την επικρατώσα δύναμη του στελεχούς. Η ιστορία είναι μια συνέχεια και παρέχει περισσότερα στοιχεία για την εξέλιξη της καθεδρικής κατάστασης.

Η ιστορία είναι μια συνέχεια και παρέχει περισσότερα στοιχεία για την εξέλιξη της καθεδρικής κατάστασης.
Έπήγεν ἀσκητής σήν δουλειάν ἄτ, καὶ ἐφτωχὸν μὲ τὸ παιδίν ἄτ σ’ ἐκεινέτε-ρον.

Ἐφτωχὸν μὲ τὸ παιδίν ἄτ σίτα ἐλάσκουσαν σή θάλασσας σήν ἄκραν κές, λέει τὸ παιδίν. «Πατέρα, ἀσὸ γού’ τῇ θάλασσας κι ἄλλο πολλὰ ποῖον ἐν;» «Παιδί μ’,» εἶπεν ἄτον, «ἀσῆ θάλασσας τὸ γού’ κι ἄλλο πολλὰ ἐν τῇ Θεοῦ ἐσπλαχνία». 'Ασκητής ἀποβραδίς ἐπῆγεν ἐκάτσεν σήν ἄκραν κές, λέει τὸ παιδίν, «Πατέρα, ἀσό γονμ ' τῇ θάλασσας κι ἄλλο πολλά ποίον εν;»

'Ασκητής, «Παιδίμ’,» εἶπεν, «ἄση θάλασσας το γούμ' κι ἄλλο πολλά εν τῇ Θεού ἐσπλαχνία». 'Ασκητής ἐπῆγεν ἐκάτσεν σήν ἄκραν κές, λέει τὸ παιδίν, «Πατέρα, ἀσό γονμ ' τῇ θάλασσας κι ἄλλο πολλά ποίον εν;»

Τοῦτο αὖπκον ἐρθεν ἄτο' ἀποπορνοῦ νά εν κακός καί ἄτωρα νά εν καλός.» Έσίρεψε καί ἐπήγεν σ’ ὁσπίτ’ν ἄτ, καί ἐνουντζεν πώς νά μαθάν’ ὁσπίτ’ν τό θάμαν. Έσκώθεν ἀποπορνοῦ καί ἐπήγεν εὐρέν τὸν ἐφτωχὸν. 'Ερωτά τον, «'Όγε τὸ καλὸν ἐποίκες;» «Τιδὲν καλὸν κ’ ἐποίκα,» λέγ’ ἐφτωχὸν. «Γ’όκ, τσάνουμ,» λέγ’ άςκητής, «κάτ καλὸν ἐποίκες. Π’ μ’ ἁτο.» «Τιδὲν καλὸν κ’ ἐποίκα,» εἶπεν. «Σὸν γιαλὸν κές σίτα ἐπέγνα, ἑρωτά με τὸ παιδί μ’, ‘Πατέρα, ἀσὸ γού’ τῇ θάλασσας κι ἄλλο πολλὰ ποῖον ἐν;’ ‘Ἐγὼ πά εἶσα 'τον, ἄτον. Παιδί μ’, τῇ Θεοῦ ἐσπλαχνία. Καλὸν ἄν ἐν ἄτο, ἄτο τὸ καλὸν ἐποίκα.» «Κανείται ἄτο,» εἶπεν ἄςκητής, καί ἐσίρεψεν σ’ ὁσπίτ’ν ἄτ. 'Ἐνούντζεν ἀπός ἄτ, «Τ’ ἐμέτερον ὁ παράδεισον μετ’ ἐναν λόγον παίρκεται, καὶ μετ’ ἐναν λόγον χάται.»

Told by Χαρίλαος Φωτιάδης at the Monastery of the Forerunner, Imera, 12 August 1914.

Summary

An ascetic was sitting by a well when he saw a horseman approaching. He hid behind a bush in fear. When the horseman had eaten and drunk by the well, he set off, forgetting to pick up his purse containing a thousand pounds. The ascetic saw another man come by and take the purse. Then a poor man sat down by the well to eat a crust of bread. The horseman returned and shot the poor man dead, convinced that he had stolen his purse. Puzzled, the ascetic came out from hiding and besought God to explain the justice of what he had witnessed. An angel came down and told him that the man who had taken the purse was the rightful owner, and had been deprived of it by the horseman; furthermore, the poor man had murdered the horseman’s father; so that now they were all quits. The ascetic then besought the angel to show him how to distinguish the good from the evil. The angel told him to wait outside the tavern door; the first man to come out in the morning would be the worst man of all, while the first to go in in the evening would be the best. To the ascetic’s surprise, the first to come out and the first to go in was one and the same man. The next day the ascetic went to ask the man what good deed he had done between leaving and entering the inn. He replied that he had done nothing good except to tell his son that God’s mercy was more abundant than the sand of the sea. The ascetic realized that the kingdom of heaven can be gained and lost with a single word.

The story was published in Dawkins’s translation in Forty-Five Stories from the Dodekanese, pp. 262-263 (cf. Imera 2).
'Ένας δάσκαλος έπαϊρεν έναν ημέραν τον μαθητήν ατ και έξέβαν σώλασιμον. Κατά τύχην έδέβαν σ' έναν χωρόφρο κές. Κατά τύχην έδέσαν σ' έναν χωρέτης τσίπ έψτωχός. Πλαγκαικά άπές α’ όρμιν είδαν ένα ξενγάρ’ τάπ γραμμένα ποστάλα. Ο μαθητής είπεν το δάσκαλον ατ, «Λελεύω σε, δάσκαλε, ας παίρομε τ' άβουτουν τά κουντούρας καί κρύψομες άκαικά σ' έναν καφούλ’ αρκα’ έκακα θα έχομε και έβόρα, και άς τερούμε, άμοντο έρται άραεύατα καί κ’ εύρίκατα, τό θα έφταει». «Καλόν παιδίν,» είπεν ο δάσκαλον, «τερώ σε, θέλτς ν’ έφτάς τό κέφι ς, σίτα τερεϊς εκείνον νά κρούει τά γόνατα γιά τά ποστάλα’. 'Εσύ ατώρα βάλον απές σά δύο πά απ’ έναν λίραν θά κρύψομες όπίς σό καφούλ’ καί ας τερούμε τό θά έφταει άμοντο εύρίκ’ τά λίρας. 'Ατότες έκείνος θα δαίρεται γιά τά λίρας, κι έμεΐς πά θα τερούμ’ άτον καί και δαιρούμες.» 'Ο μαθητής έποίκεν άμοντο είπεν άτον ο δάσκαλον ατ: έσέγκεν απές σά δύο ποστάλα απ’ έναν λίραν καί έκρύφτεν όπίς σό καφούλ’.

'Υστερον ασ’ έναν κάρτον τερεϊς τον χωρέτη νά έρται νά φορεϊ τά ποστάλα Ώστε βάλε τ’ έναν τό ποδάρ’ αν καί έξέγκεν τό λίραν νά χάν’ τό λιθάρ’. Μέ τό νά λέγω σας κ’ έπορώ να φανερώνω σας καλά πόσον έκείνον διέκολεν είδεν πωσότι έκείνον τό έντούνεν τό ποδάρ’ ατ έτον λίρα. Έχάρεν, και άση χαράν ατ σκούται έφταε έκες άμον παλαλά, καί τζαϊζ’, χωρίς να γροικάς τό λέει. 'Ο μαθητής καί ο δάσκαλον έτέρναν τή χαράν τη χωρέτα καί έσαίρουσαν καί έκείν’. «Έλεπ’ς,» λέει ό δάσκαλον τον μαθητήν ατ, «τ’ έμορφον εν νά σαίρεται εκείνος καί έμεϊς πά μετ’ εκείνον; Κι ουνιες πόσον άσκεμον θα έτον αν επαίρναμε τά ποστάλα τ’ εκείνον τό χαμπάρ’. Οί δύ’ πά, ό δάσκαλον καί ό μαθητής, χαρεμέν’ γιά τό καλόν π’ έστροικαν.»

Told by Χαρίλαος Φωτιάδης at the Monastery of the Forerunner, Imera, 12 August 1914.
Summary

A master and his disciple were out walking and they found a pair of shoes which a man had left at the edge of the field when he went to plough. At the master's suggestion they put some money into the shoes and hid themselves. What they wanted was to have the pleasure of witnessing the simple delight of the ploughman when he found this piece of good luck which had come upon him. (Summary by Dawkins, Folk-Lore, 59 [1948], p. 53).

With regard to this story Dawkins comments (ibid): «A most attractive trait we sometimes find in Greek stories is the unfeigned delight the narrators show in their hero's happiness and pleasure».

Stories from Sourmena

1. (Sourmena 16): The cock and his friends

The cat was on its way to foreign parts with a cock, a cow and a donkey. They spent the night in an empty mill. At dawn the cock crowed. Some jackals heard him and one of them boasted that he would go and snatch him. The cock made a sound like a pipe, and the jackal fled, thinking it was a piper. As the jackal was running away, the cat pounced at his muzzle, then the donkey kicked him, then the cow tossed him out with
her horns. When the jackal got back to his companions they asked him what had happened to the cock. He replied: «It wasn’t a cock, it was a piper, and he beat me with his pipe. Then when I was running away the miller’s wife hit me with her sponge, then the piper hit me three times with his pipe, then the miller tossed me out with his shovel!»

Dawkins published a similar story from Αχό in Modern Greek in Asia Minor, pp. 400-402; on this see Halliday’s commentary and references in the same book, pp. 243-244.

2. (Sourmena 17): The chain of requests


Ἑκείν’ τὸ βράδο ἐρτάε ἄντρας ἄτς καὶ λέει ἄτενα, «Ποῦ ἐν τὸ κρέας;» Ἐτότε ὁ γυναίκα εἶπε, «Ἐ ἄντρα μ, νὰ ἔξερνες τ’ ἐπαθὰ τῇ δουλείᾳ. Σὸ κρέας ἀπάν ἔρθε ἕνα τρανό μυία καὶ ἐγέννησε ἀπάν ὅβγα, κι ἐγὼ ἐνεράστα ἡ το καὶ ἐγάσα το, κι ἄντα ἐλέπο ἐκεῖν ἡ μυία ἐγὼ νὰ σκοτών’ ἄτο.» Ἀτὸ σίτ’ ἐλέγανε ἑρθ’ ἕνα τρανό μυία κι ἐκάτσε σ’ ἄντρα σατς σὸ κιφάλ’ ἀπάν. Ἐτέ ἐπήρε ἕνα αξίναρ’ καὶ τεάμ νὰ ἡτυπά τῇ μυία ἐντωκε ἐδκισε τ’ ἄντρα σατς τὸ κιφάλ’. Told by Χρίστος Εύφραιμίδης, Τσίτα, 14 July 1914.

Summary

There was a woman who used to buy meat and feed it to a bird (later a nightingale). One day she asked her husband to buy meat and promised not to give it to the bird. Her husband bought the meat, but she fed it to the bird. Then she became afraid of her husband, and asked the bird to give it back. But the bird refused to give her the meat...
unless she brought it a chick. She went to the hen, but the hen refused to give her a chick unless she brought her a corn-cob. The corn-merchant refused to give her a corn-cob unless she brought him a sponge. The sponge-seller refused to give her a sponge unless she brought him a bill-hook. The bill-hook-seller refused to give her a bill-hook unless she brought him some coal. At this, she gave up and went home. When her husband asked where the meat was, she told him a huge fly had laid its eggs in it; she had thrown the meat away and was now waiting to kill the fly. As she spoke, a huge fly settled on her husband’s head. The woman grabbed a pickaxe as if to kill the fly, and split her husband’s head in two.

3. (Sourmena 20)


Told by Λεωνίδας 'Ηρακλέους Α'Δαμίδης (18-20 years old) at Sourmena school, 15 July 1914.

Summary

Two men got drunk. During the night one of them woke up and started scratching the other man’s head. The other one woke up and asked him what he was doing. «I’m scratching my head», he replied. And the other one asked, «So where’s mine then?».

Stories from Ophis

1. (Ophis 4): Γλωσσικόν ζήτημα

"Ενας Σουρμενίτες επέγινε σὸ Χολό μεζέρεσι. Ένταμωσε ἕνα Ὄφλη, παλτούρι τσιπλάκ, καὶ ἔρωτεσεν ἄτονα, «Π’ εἶ’ ταί πάς, Ὄφλη;». Ὅφλης πάλ εἶπεν ἄτονα, «Ἐγώ τ’ ἐδ’ ταί πάγω σ’ ὄρος. Ἐχω ’τσείνε ἕνα ἐνοικο· μετ’ αὐτό τὸ λυτάρ’ να πάω παίρ’ ἄτο.» Ὅ Σουρμενίτες τίπο ’κ έγρίκεσε ἅσά λόγια Τ. "Ἀντα ἐγύρεσε πάλ σ’ ὅσπιτ’ τὸ βράδ’ εἶπε τὸ παιδίν ἄτ, «Παύλο, ὀσήμερο σιτ’ ἐπέγινα σὸ Χόλο μεζέρεσι ἐτςάτεψα ἕνα Ὅφλη. Ἐρώτεσα ’τονε γιά μασκαραλούκ, γιὰ τ’ γλώσσα’ τοῦνα. Εἶπα ’τονα, ‘Οφλή, π’ ἐδ’ ’αι πάς;’ Ἐκείνος πάλ εἶπε με, ἑδ’ αἰ πάω σ’ ὄρος. Ἐχω ’τσείνε ἕνα ἐνοικο· μετ’ αὐτό τὸ λυτάρ’ να πάω παίρ’ ἄτο’.’ Ἀμ’ ἅσα λόγια τ’ τίπο ’κ ἐγρίκεσα. Ἑνι γιὰ ἐξήγεσο τὰ λόγια τ’. Τὸ παιδί ἐπειδῆ ἐμαθάνε σὸ σκολείο σὸ Χάν’, κάποια ἐγρίκεσα. Εἶπε τὸν πατέρα τ’, «Ἀτός Ὅφλης παλάδα ἐλληνικά λέξεις ἔλεγε, γιὰ τ’ ἐκείνο κι ἐγρίκεσες ἅτα. Ὅρος ἐλληνικά, λέγει, ἔμείς τὸ λέγουμε ύψηλό ρασί. Ἐδ’ ’αι πάω σ’ ὄρος τεμέκ ἑδ’ καί πάω σὸ ρασί.» Εἴπεν ὁ κύρης ἄτ, «Τὸ εἶπεν ‘Ἐχω ’τσείνε ἕνα ἐνοικο, ἐκείνο πῶς ἐν;’ Ὅ παιδίας ἔσταθεν,
έσυλλοϊστε πολλά, τὸ ἐνοικο κι 'πόρεσε νά εὑρίσκ'. Ἐπήρε κά τὸ λεξικό, ἕταραξε ᾠδά, ἕταραξε ἀκεί τὰ φύλλα, εὑρὲ τὴ λέξη ἐνοικο. Ἐρχίνεσε τῇ γραμματικῇ. «Τὸ ἐνοικο, σύνθετον ἀπὸ τὴν πρόθεσιν ἐν καὶ οἶκος, ἕγκατοικος· οὐρρικα δενλίκ.» Εἴπε τὸ παιδί, «Σὸ ραδί ἀπὰν κάτι δενλίκ πράμα ἐν.» Εἴπεν ὁ κύρος ατ, «Τὸ λυτάρ’ τὸ πράμα ἐν;» Τὸ παιδὶ ἐπῆρε τῇ γραμματικῇ. «Λυτάρ’ ἀπὸ τὸ ρήμα λύω ἔλυσεν, παράγων λυτήριον λυτάριον, δήλαδὴ τὸ ὅραμα μὲ τὸ ὅποιο λίθον καὶ δένουνε, τεμέκ τὸ σκοινί. ὁμον τὸ φαίνεται, σὸ ραδί ἀπὰν μὲ τὸ σκοινί ν’ ἐπάρινε ἐνοικο, τεμέκ τὸ λέγωμε γουρνία, μελεσιαδά, ν’ ἐκατέβαζε γουρνί ἀσὸ ραδί.» 'Ετότες εἴπεν ὁ κύρος ατ, «Κρίμα σ’ ἑδόνα, Παῦλο, κρίμα τ’ ἑποίκα ἐξοδα αἰτοπία ζ. Τὸ σκολεῖο τὸ Χάν’, ὄρφος τελείωνες, καὶ εἴχε χατεσκόλυκ ν’ ἑστείλινα σε σὴν Τραπεζούντα σὸ τρανὸ σ’ εἰκελείο. Ἀτώρα έπεκαρδίγα, ἀντζάκ ἵσα μ’ ἐνα Οφλή χωράτε ἐμαθὲς. Εκεῖνο πάλ μὲ τὰ λεξικά καὶ μὲ τῇ γραμματικῇ ἀντζάκ ἐπόρεσες εξήγεσες τὰ λόγια τ.’.

Signed ΠαπαΙωάννης [Χατζή-Ιωαννίδης], priest at Κρινίτα, 19 July 1914.

Summary

A man from Sourmena meets a man from Ophis on the road and fails to understand anything he says. On his return home the man tells his son what has happened, repeating what the Ophite had said. The boy, who goes to the local school, explains that the reason why his father couldn’t understand the man from Ophis is that the latter was speaking Ancient Greek; with the help of a dictionary and a grammar he manages to interpret the Ophite’s words. The father considers the money he has spent on his son’s school fees is wasted. «You’ve hardly learned as much as a peasant from Ophis,» he declares; «you could scarcely explain his words even with a dictionary and a grammar!»

The story shows that Pontians take pride in the antiquity of their dialect not only vis-à-vis other Greeks, but in competition with people from other parts of Pontos.

2. (Ophis 6)

'Ἐναν καιρὸ ἔτους ἔνα γυναίκα καὶ εἶδε ἐνα παιδί. Καὶ τὸ παιδί ἐκόντεψε νὰ γυναικίζ’. 'Ενα ἀλλε γυναίκα, γιὰ νὰ εὑρίσκ’ κορίτσ’ γιὰ τὸ παιδί, εἰπὲ τοῦ παιδὶ ἢ μάνα, 'Νὰ πάμε σ’ ἔνα ὁσπίτ’. 'Εκεῖ ἔγω νὰ λέγω ἕνα, ἐαυ νὰ λές δύο. ’Επήγανε σὸ σπί, ἄπαπούθ’ νὰ πάρουνε κορίτσ’. 'Επήγανε εἰκεὶ ἐσέβανε σὸ σπί. 'Εκάτσανε καὶ καὶ ἐρχίνεσε ἡ γυναίκα νὰ ἐπαινά τὸ παιδὶ, καὶ ἐλεγε, 'Ταυτηνῆς τὸ παιδὶ ἔσ’ ἐκατὸ λιρῶν χόματα.’ Καὶ τὸ παιδὶ εἴπε, «Γιόκ, ἐδάκόδα λιρά εἶναι.» ' Ὑστέρ εἴπε ἡ γυναίκα, «Ἐδ’ ἐδάκόδα λιρῶν χτίματα.» 'Γιόκ, εἴπε τὸ παιδὶ, «Πετρακόδα λιρῶν.» 'Ὑστέρ’ πάλ εἴπε ἡ γυναίκα, «Ἐδ’ ἐκατὸ κεφάλα πρόβατα.» 'Γιόκ, εἴπε τὸ παιδὶ, «Ἐδάκόδα κεφάλα εἶναι.» 'Ὑστέρ’ εἴπε ἡ γυναίκα, «Ἐδ’ κ’ ἐνα κοοςοῦ’ τ’ ἔνα τὸ μάτιν ατ ἐν στραβὸ.» 'Γιόκ, εἴπε τὸ παιδὶ, «δύο ματὰ εἶναι στραβὰ.» 'Ὑστέρ εἴπε ὁ νοικοκύρης,
A boy was going to get married. His mother went to the prospective bride’s parents with another woman and the woman’s son. The woman instructed her son to say twice as much as whatever she said. The woman began singing the praises of the prospective bridegroom, saying, “This woman’s boy’s got land worth £200.” “No,” said her son, “£400.” “He’s got a hundred head of sheep.” “No,” said her son, “two hundred.” Then the woman said, “He’s got one defect: he squints in one eye.” “No,” said the son, “both eyes.” Whereupon the father of the prospective bride sent them packing.