

LULLABIES OF THE CYCLADES ISLANDS

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1

From the end of September to mid-December, 1977, as a member of the Research Group for the Mediterranean at Hitotsubashi University I stayed on Naxos and Syros, two of the Cyclades Islands in the South Aegean Sea. One of my purposes in visiting these islands was to collect Greek folk songs there. Owing to the world-famous hospitality of the Greek people I succeeded in recording on tape a considerable number of songs of various genres, of which lullabies will be published here.¹⁾

Naxos is the largest of the Cyclades Islands with about 14,000 inhabitants (1971). Young men of this island have long been accustomed to leave home to work in Asia Minor in former days, in Athens and other countries throughout the world nowadays: the agriculture and stock-breeding of Naxos cannot afford to support the whole population. The tourist industry, at present making remarkable progress in the port town Chora, as it is called by Naxiotes, may change this pattern somewhat.

Syros, on the other hand, though much smaller in size and population, is equipped with prospering ship-building yards and other manufacturing factories which attract young workers from outside the island. Syros forms a striking contrast to Naxos in religion, too, with Catholics accounting for about half of all the islanders, while less than five percent of the population are Catholic and all the rest Greek Orthodox on Naxos. The differences between the two islands, belonging to the same *nomos* (prefecture), reveals itself in the temperament of the inhabitants as well as in their oral tradition.

2

In modern Greek a lullaby is called *nanourisma* or *nanarisma* (pl. *-rismata*). The word is believed to have come from *na-na*, the sound used to lull a baby to sleep. The singers of *nanourismata* whom I recorded on Naxos and Syros were:

A. Margarita Moustaki, female, 56, Filoti – a mountain village of Naxos, recorded on October 29, 1977.

B. Rodathi Cheroubim, female, 59, Moni – also a mountain village of Naxos, recorded on November 2.

C. Sofia Fragkiskou, female, 82, Apeiranthos – a village near the above-mentioned Filoti, recorded on November 4.

D. Sofia (surname unascertained), female, 82, Ano Syros — suburb of Ermoupolis the principal town of all the Cyclades, Syros, recorded on November 11.

E. Name unascertained, female, about 45, Catholic (?), Ano Syros, recorded on November 11.

F. A. Maragkos, male, about 45, Catholic, Ermoupolis, recorded on November 11.

Because some of the lullabies these people sang for me display some overlapping in phrases and words, I will begin by giving the full texts of the songs sung by A, B and F: these songs seem to be the most typical.

(A) Margarita or Rita, as she is called by all the villagers, old and young, was born and married in Filoti, and is an Orthodox. She has brought up four children, two sons and two daughters. She runs a coffee-house in the centre of the village with her husband Costa and is a talented singer with a wide repertoire of folk songs and tales.

- I Κοιμήσου, πού νά σέ χαρῶ, καί νά σέ δῶ μεγάλο,
καί νά σέ δῶ τῆς παντρεϊᾶς, κι' ἀκόμα πιό μεγάλο.
- II "Ελα, ὕπνε, καί πάρε το, καί γλυκά ἀποκοίμησέ το.
- III 'Ο ὕπνος θρέφει τά μωρά, κι' ὁ κάμπος τά βοσκάδια,
καί μένα τό παιδάκι μου, τό θρέφουνε τά χάδια.
- IV Νάνι νάνι νάνι νάνι, κι' ὅπου τό πονεῖ νά γιάνει.
- V Κοιμᾶται τό παιδάκι μου, κ' ἐγώ τό νανουρίζω,
καί τήν κούνια του κουνῶ, καί τό γλυκοκοιμίζω.
- (II) "Ελα, ὕπνε, καί πάρε το, καί γλυκά ἀποκοίμησέ το.
- VI "Υπνε μου, ἔπαρε μου το, κι' ἄμε το στά πρεβόλια,
Καί τήν ποδιά του γέμισε τριαντάφυλλα καί ρόδα.
- VII Τά ρόδα νά 'ν' τῆς μάνας του, τά μήλα τοῦ μπαμπᾶ του,
καί τ' ἄσπρα τριαντάφυλλα νά εἶναι τῆς νονάς του.
- VIII "Ελα, ὕπνε, ἀγαλι-ἀγάλι στοῦ παιδιοῦ μου τό κεφάλι.
"Ελα, ὕπνε, ἀγκάιασέ το καί γλυκά ἀποκοίμησέ το.
- IX Κοιμήσου καί παράγγειλα στήν Πόλη τά προικιά σου,

στή Βενετιά τά ροῦχα σου καί τά χρυσαφικά σου.

(IV) Νάνι νάνι νάνι νάνι, κι' ὅπου τό πονεῖ νά γιάνει.

- I Sleep, that I may delight in you, that I may see you grow up and marry.
- II Come, Hypnos, take this baby and lull her to sleep.
- III Sleep nourishes babies and a field feeds sheep. My child grows bigger with each caress.
- IV Hushaby, may your pain heal, if any.
- V My child is going to sleep and I sing a lullaby, tenderly rocking the cradle to make her sleep.
- (II) Come, Hypnos, take this baby and lull her to sleep.
- VI O Hypnos, take my baby to the garden, and fill her apron with many roses.
- VII The red roses are for your mama, the apples for your papa, and the white roses for your godmother.
- VIII Come, Hypnos, come gently into the head of my child, embrace and lull her to sleep.
- IX If you sleep, I'll order your dowry from the City, and your clothes and jewellery from Venice.
- (IV) Hushaby, may you pain heal, if any.

(B) Rodathi who sang the next song for me is an Orthodox, too. With her old husband Georgios she keeps a souvenir shop for foreign tourists, who seldom visit her small village even in the tourist season, because it is situated off the main route. The couple have no children, but Rodathi told me that she sang lullabies for the children of the others.

I "Ὑπνε πού παίρνεις τά παιδιά κι' γειά τά μεγαλώνει,
κι' ἡ Παναγιά κι' ὁ Χριστός τά καλοξημερώνει.

II "Ἐλα, ὕπνε, πάρε το, καί στήν Πόλη πήγαινε το.
Πήγαινε το στούς μπαξέδες νά μαζεῦει μενεξέδες.

- I O Hypnos, take and nourish children. May the Holy Virgin and Christ favor them with many happy days!
- II Come, Hypnos, take the baby to the City to gather violets in the gardens.

(F) A. Maragkos has a *pitta* shop in a back street of Ermoupolis. *Pitta* is a sort of grilled pie with stuffing of roast meat, onion, tomato and so on. According to his wife he often sang the following lullaby to their only daughter, who is now a junior-high girl. He is not unconscious of his own sweet voice and when he gave a performance for me at this shop, customers had to wait forming a long queue. He is a Catholic.

I Δυό στό πλάϊ, σύ στή μέσου, τή ζωή μας ἔχεις φέξει,
ναί μωρό μου, ναί χρυσό μου, ναί γλυκό, γλυκό μου.

II Ἡ μαμά σάν σέ κοιτάζει, ὁ μπαμπᾶς τήνε θαυμάζει,
ναί μωρό μου, ναί γλυκό μου, ναί μικρό, μικρό μου.

III Πού σέ ἔφερε νά ζήσεις, τή χαρά νά μᾶς χαρίσεις,
ναί μικρό μου, ναί γλυκό μου, ναί χρυσό, χρυσό μου.

I May baby, who is lying here between your parents, has brought light to our life. O my baby, my gold and sweet!

II Your mama and papa are gazing at you in raptures. O my baby, my little child!

III Who is it that brought you to life and gave us joy! O my baby, my sweet and gold!

Comparison of these texts makes clear how the words overlap: for example, A-VI is similar to B-II.

The lullaby recorded in Apeiranthos (C) consists of four stanzas which resemble B-I, A-III, B-I and A-VI respectively. The second and third stanzas of the one collected in Ano Syros (D) correspond to A-IX and A-V, only the first being rather unique running as follows:

I Ἔλα, ὕπνε μου, πάρε το καί ἄργησέ μου το.
Σάν μοῦ τό φέρεις, ὕπνε μου, φέρε το μέ τή γειά του,
φέρε το μέ τά γέλια του καί μέ τήν ὁμορφιά του.

I Come, Hypnos, take this baby now. And bring her back later sound and

safe, with smiles and with beauty.

(E), also recorded in Ano Syros, has five stanzas, of which the second, third and fifth are almost identical to A-VI, A-IX and B-I respectively, while the first and fourth are distinct to a certain degree from other lullabies:

I Νάνι νάνι νάνι νανά του.

"Ελα, ὕπνε, καί πάρε το καί ὅπου θές νά τό ὑπάγεις,
κι' ἄντε το ἐδῶ, κι' ἄντε το ἐκεῖ, κι' ἄντε το στούς μπαξέδες.

IV Παναγιά μου κι' Ἄγια Ἑλένη, ὄμορφο θέλω νά μοῦ γένει.

I Hushaby, hushaby. Come, Hypnos, take my baby where you like. You may take her to and fro, or to the gardens.

IV May the Holy Virgin and St. Helena make my baby pretty.

As may be seen from the above, (F) is completely different and, as it were, isolated from others. It seems not to belong to the folk song genre in the strictest sense of the word.

It seems to me that none of the lullabies A–E is a single song. Rather, each stanza is independent, at least as far as the words are concerned. Singers choose any one or more stanzas in accordance with the circumstances. For example, a woman who happened to be present at the recording of lullaby (D) in Ano Syros explained that the first stanza (D-I) was to be sung to sick babies and the second (D-II = A-IX) to girls exclusively. Stanzas such as A-II, A-IV or E-IV, judging from their shortness, may be defined as refrains.

The present writer noted that, although songs A–E have much in common from the viewpoint of the texts, their tunes are very different from each other: the same song is often sung to the different tunes. This appears to be true not only of lullabies, but also of *kotsakia* distiches and *moirologia* lamentations for the dead, which are exceedingly popular among the islanders of Cyclades. One might go so far as to say that every island or village or even every singer has a favorite tune and, the situation permitting, any song may be sung to this tune. The first few bars of the melodies of all the lullabies are shown below in musical notation.





3

The lullaby has a happy history in the folkloristic study of Greece. When Nicolaos Polites, father of Greek folklore, compiled his classic *“Eklogai apo ta tragoudia tou ellenikou laou”* (Anthology of Greek Folk Songs) in 1914, he assigned a special chapter to the lullaby, acknowledging it as an independent genre of the folk song. His model has become an honorable tradition. It may be said that every collection of Greek folk songs without exception treats this most tiny and lovely kind of song as a grown-up group.

In 1953 a special collection of lullabies compiled by F. Saregiannes was published.²⁾ Although it contains 84 Greek lullabies chosen from diverse sources, beginning with academic collections and ending with periodical publications, no lullabies gathered in Naxos or Syros can be found there. To my knowledge, Naxiote and Syrian lullabies are recorded only in the following books:

1. G. Zevgoles, *“To synchrono laïko tragoudi sten Apeiranthos tes Naxou”* (The Modern Popular Song in Apeiranthos of Naxos), Athens, 1937, p.13. The text runs as follows:

- I Νάνι, τοῦ ρήγα τό παιδί, τοῦ βασιλιᾶ τό ἄγγονι
πού τῶχει ἡ βασίλισσα χρυσό σταυρό κι ἄμῶνει.
- II Νάνι ντου, πόπαράγγειλα στήν Πολή τά προικιά ντου
στό Γαλατᾶ τά ροῦχα ντου καί τά διαμαντικά ντου.
- III Νάνι ντου, πόπαράγγειλα παπούτσα στό τζαγγάρη
νά τοῦ τά κάμη κόκκινα καί μέ μαργαριτάρι.
- IV Ὁ νῦπνος θρέφει τά μωρά κι ἡ ἑλιά τά μεγαλώνει
καί ὁ Χριστός καί ἡ Παναϊά τῶνε χαρίζει χρόνοι.

It is worth while to note that the words are not like those of any of the songs that I collected.

2. G. Spyridakes and S. Peristeres, "*Ellenika demotika tragoudia*" (Greek Folk Songs), vol. III, The Academy of Athens, 1968, p.385–387. Two lullabies, also from Apeiranthos, appear, one sung by Maria Blakou (55), the other by Mar. Zevgoli (48), both written down in 1953.

(No. 2)

Νάνι τοῦ Ρήγα τό παιδί, τοῦ βασιλιᾶ τό ἴγγονι
 ἄ, ἄχ πού τό 'χει ἡ βασίλισσα χρυσό σταυρό κι ἄμόνει.
 Ὕπνε, πού παίρνεις τά μωρά, ἔπαρέ το καί τοῦτο
 εἰς μικρό σοῦ τό'δωσα, μέγαλο φέρε μού το.
 Ὕπαρέ τό μου, ὕπνε μου, καί φέρε μού το πάλι,
 νά τό χαρῆ ἡ μάννα του καί νά τό 'δῆ μεγάλη.
 Ὕπαρέ μού το, ὕπνε μου, κι ἄμε το στά περβόλια
 καί ἔμωσε τόν κόρφο ντου τριαντάφυλλα καί ρόδα.
 Ὅρες πολλές σοῦ τραγουδῶ μά σύ ὄλο γκρινιάζεις,
 δέν ἔχεις τήν καλογνωμιᾶ τῆ φαμελιᾶς πού μοιάζεις.
 Κοιμήσου, χαδεμένο μου, καί κάμε νάνι, νάνι,
 πού θέ νά βγαίνωμε μαζί τ'ἀπόγεμα σεργιάνι.
 Κοιμήσου, χαδεμένο μου, καί κάμε τραλαλά σου,
 γιέ μου, πού νά σέ χαίρουνται ἡ μάννα κι ὁ μπαμπάς σου.
 Ὁ θεῖος ἀπ' τήν ξενιτειά πολλά φιλιᾶ σοῦ στέλνει,
 μέγαλος ὅτινα ἔνης μαζί του θά σέ παίρνει.

(No. 3)

Κοιμᾶται καί χαρίζω του τή Χιό μέ τή μαστίχα
 καί τήν Κωσταντινόπολη μέ ὄλα της τά σπίτια.
 Νάνι, νάνι, νάνι, νάνι
 ἔλα, ὕπνε, νά τό πάρεις.
 Ὅς πότε στέκουν τά βουνά κι ὁ Ζάς μέ τό Φανάρι,
 νά στέκεται κι ἀφέντης σας νά σᾶσε μαϊτζάρει.
 Νάνι, νάνι, νάνι, νάνι
 κι ὅπου τό πονεῖ νά γιάνει.
 Νάνι τοῦ Ρήγα τό παιδί, τοῦ βασιλιᾶ τό ἴγγονι
 πού τό 'χει ἡ βασίλισσα χρυσό σταυρό κι ἄμόνει.
 Νάνι, νάνι, τό μωρό μου,
 νάνι, νάνι, τό χρυσό μου.

Some stanzas of these songs correspond perfectly with those of Zevgolis' texts above. It is very interesting that the third stanza of No. 3 goes "May the Lord keep and preserve you, as long as Zeus and Fanari stand." Zeus and Fanari

are the highest mountains on Naxos, the former 1008 meters and the latter 883 meters above sea level, looking down upon the village from the south and the west. No other song shows such local reference. At the same time it is worthy of remark that the fourth stanza of the second song is quite analogous to A-IV, i.e. a part of the lullaby sung by Margarita Moustaki.

3. E. Frye, *The Marble Threshing Floor. A Collection of Greek Folk-Songs* (Publications of the American Folklore Society. Memoir Series. vol. 57), The University of Texas Press, 1973, p.223. The compiler recorded a lullaby in Ermoupolis of Syros sung by Evangelia Konitza (30).

Ἕπνε πού παίρνεις τά μικρά, ἔλα, πάρε καί τοῦτο.
 Μικρό, μικρό σέ τῶδωσα, μεγάλο φέρε μου το,
 μεγάλο σάν ψηλό βουνό, ἴσια σάν κυπαρίσσι
 κ'οἱ κλώνοι του ν'ἀπλώνονται σ'ἀνατολή καί δύση.

Frye's translation is as follows: "Sleep, you who take the little ones, come, take this one, too. Very small I give him to you, bring him back to me big – big as a tall mountain, straight as a cypress tree, and may his branches spread from east to west".

The tune of this lullaby is very similar to that of the above-mentioned (D), recorded by me on the same island.

Generally speaking it cannot be said that the Cyclades lullabies have any striking distinction from those of other regions of Greece contained in F. Saregiannes' and other collections. We may, however, discern certain hints of the history of the Aegean Sea in the recurring motif of ordering clothes and jewellery from Venice, while the dowry is ordered from "the City", i.e. Constantinople (A-IX, D-II, E-III). The Cyclades Islands were under the reign of the Venetians for more than three centuries, from the time of Marco Sanudo, a Venetian aristocrat and the Duce's nephew, who conquered Naxos and built his castle there in the beginning of the 13th century.

On the other hand, there is no slight danger that the mass communication media such as radio and television may be now rapidly weathering and fading the local color of the oral tradition pertaining to every region of the country, of course, including the Cyclades Islands.

Notes

(1) Other folksongs will appear in print soon in the *"Hitotsubashi Journal of Social Studies"* vol. 11, No. 1. Cf. also my articles (in Japanese) "Days in Filoti", *Gekkan Hyakka* 1978, May; "Under the Plane-tree", *Mado*, 1978, No. 25; "Gifts of the Mermaid", *Minzokugaku*, 1978, vol. 2, No. 3.

(2) F. Saregiannes, *"Nanourismata, tachtarismata, paichnidakia"*, Athens, 1953.