



Clerics and Ambiguity: Social Control and Religious Identity Formation in Greek Traditional Culture

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I. The Ambiguity and Liminality of Folk Religious System

The need to examine the relationship between clerics and “the vernacular culture” is based on the premise that the two represent two different, contradictory/antithetical or even complementary systems of religious behavior. The relationship between these two categories, one which is usually deployed during the process of changing the religious system of a society, is the outcome of the new system striving to prevail and predominate over the pre-existing structure. In the course of this transitional process the line between these distinct categories is often blurred, thus resulting in the fragility of boundaries of this liminal space, as van Gennep ([1909]1960: 21) has termed the intermediate space between two categories. This ‘*between and betwixt*’, according to Turner’s (1987: 9) terminology, transitional space, characterizes the peculiar unity, and, at the same time, the ambiguity of folk religious systems of societies in a state of change: that which conforms neither to the officially recognised religious system nor to the unofficial one, and yet somehow seems to conform to both.

The approach to folk religion as “the totality of all these views and practices of religion that exists amongst people apart from and alongside the strictly theological and liturgical forms of the official religion” (Yoder 1974: 14) represents the merging of opposite categories in a single representation. It also constitutes an attempt to exert social control and practice discrimination as well as define unacceptable modes of conduct by establishing an acceptable religious identity. It is not a coincidence, after all, that the term “folk religion” was “first coined by a German Lutheran minister, Paul Drews, whose concern was to investigate religious folk life so that young ministers could be better equipped to deal with rural congregations, whose conception of Christianity was radically different from the clergy’s official version” (Bowman 2004: 4).

In the Greek tradition the elements of this liminal and ambiguous space constitute in the first place the surviving elements of the ancient Greek tradition, that is, of the pagan



substratum, and, in the second place, the officially recognised ecclesiastical position. This relationship between the pagan pre-Christian and Christian system represents and mediates, as we shall eventually come to see, relationships between different categories, such as magic and religion, Greek and Christian beliefs, sinfulness and chastity, piety and impiety, good and evil, literacy and illiteracy, religious and national identity, but, in the final analysis, between secular and ecclesiastical authority and control.

The administrators and principal agents of this relationship are clerics, who as bearers and advocates of the formal religious system and as controllers of all the customs pertaining to the human life cycle (birth, marriage, death), regulate the antithetical, competitive/antagonistic and, often complementary, relationships of the elements comprising this liminal space, thus undertaking an intermediary, but, at the same time, ambiguous role, aiming both at social control as well as at establishing an acceptable religious behavior and identity. This regulatory role was enhanced within the frame work of the Greek traditional culture, within which literacy corresponds to a “high status state” (cf. Goody 1983: 82), by virtue of the fact that clerics and the Church constituted virtually the only purveyors of education not only during the time Greece was under Turkish rule, but also at a later time, extending that role up until the beginning of the 20th century¹. It is little wonder, then, that most of the clerics who reviewed folk tradition and worked on collecting and recording popular folklore were highly literate people and, in numerous cases, also teachers.

II. Clerics and the vernacular in greek traditional culture

Early observations, dating back to the establishment of the Christian religion, on affairs pertaining to matters relating to vernacular, were made by clerics and church members of the clergy in general. In an effort to convince believers to renounce the old pagan customs surviving within the realm of folk tradition clerics as well as distinguished advocates of the Christian religion, such as St. Basil of Caesarea (4th c.), St. John Chrysostom (4th c.), St. John of Damascus (7th c.) among others, provided comprehensive descriptions of folk issues and customs in their works (Λουκάτος 1992: 36). The persecution on the part of clerics of the pagan remnants continued -- mainly due to

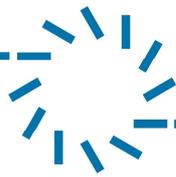
¹ It worth noting that clerics were also constituting part of the judicial authority during the same period (Μερακλής 2004: 269; Μιχαηλίδης-Νουάρος 1979: 7-23).



resistance mounted by the customs themselves -- also during the early Byzantine period and was recorded in the Ecumenical Synods (*ibid.*), by scholars and religious reviewers of theological issues, including Theodore Valsamon (12th c.), Mathew Vlastaris (13th c.), as well as during the Turkish occupation by the later Fathers of the Church (bishops and preachers) such as Pachomius Rousanos (16th c.), Cosmas of Aetolia (18th c.) etc. who addressed fierce criticism at the pagan remnants of the folk culture (*ibid.* 44).

The official view of the church on popular prejudices was also reflected in the collections of the Ecclesiastical canon (Nomokanones), which constitute the manifestation of the official Ecclesiastical law defining acceptable religious conduct (Πολιτης 1911-12: 383). A large part of these laws concerned prohibitions imposed on participation in unacceptable folk events and laid down harsh punishments and penalties which were to be imposed on the practitioners, such as fortune tellers, charmers, astrologers and folk healers (*ibid.* 382). The response effected by the stance of the Church is recorded and corroborated by ethnographic interjections such as: “*Ἡ γυναίκα που έκαμνε γητειές και το ξομολογούντανε στον παπά, ο παπάς την έριχνε κανόνα (τιμωρία) να νήστευε δύο μήνες κάθε πρωί και βράδυ να 'καμνε από σαράντα μετάνοιες, να βάπτιζε ένα δύο παιδιά, δεν την μεταλάβαινε και την έδινε αντίς Αγία Κοινωνία ένα χουλιεράκι Μεγάλο Αγιασμό. Ένα χρόνο δε θα κοινωνούσε*” [“To the woman who cast a spell or performed a charm and who confessed her evil deed to the priest at confession, the priest would impose severe punishment, demanding of her to fast for two months, to kneel forty times every morning and night or to stand godmother to one or two children. In addition, he (the priest) would refuse to administer communion to her, giving her instead a spoonful of holy water, which had received holy blessing during the Feast of Theophany. Last but not least, she would be denied communion for a whole year”] (Σαραντή-Σταμούλη 1951: 223). This kind of evidence corroborates the religious exclusion of the offenders, an act virtually effectuating social exclusion.

The enmity on the part of the Church towards folk tradition was not limited merely to condemning magic practices, but spread over to other manifestations of the folk tradition linked to the pre-Christian pagan substratum. Therefore, ceremonial customs and events pertaining to the life cycle, such as the funeral songs (Alexiou, 2002: 74, 84), as well as to cylindrical collective rituals (Γκίνη- Πανταζόπουλος 1985: 446,



ΧΠΔ')², such as carnival, the surviving elements of the ancient Dionysian rituals, were regarded as manifestations of an objectionable as well as immoral hedonism. What was deemed, in these cases, as blasphemous thus substantiating a reproach, was likened to anything akin to impurity, impiety, profanity, and, by extension, to anything antithetical to spirituality, morality, sanctity, purity and hence in dire need of punishment³.

The dynamics of resistance prevalent in these pagan remnants unavoidably led to numerous elements being incorporated in the official religious system, either due to the tolerance shown by the clerics, or, in some cases, consciously effected through a diplomatic act of altering or shifting of the semantic field, that is by maintaining their form and modifying their symbolism and their meaning (Λουκάτος 1992: 34-35; Παπαδόπουλος 1925). The incorporation of the elements prevalent in the old religious substratum into the succeeding Christian one was so extensive that we can assume that it was not just the outcome of conscious interventions on the part of the Church (Alexiou 2002: 84) aiming at converting the Greek civilization to Christianity, but also part of a reverse, unconscious and perhaps natural process of modeling the Christian religious conduct and identity upon the Hellenic principles, a process stemming from the dynamics of the pre-Christian substratum itself (Παπαδόπουλος 1925: 229).

It is to be noted that condemning and prohibiting supernatural practices relating to divination (Πολίτης 1911-12: 385), healing ailments through charms (ibid. 385), casting spells (ibid. 386), bearing amulets or pentagrams (ibid. 387) do not appear to have exerted considerable influence not only upon the common people, but also upon the

² Cf. a question (recorded in 1915) addressed by the confessor to the person confessing: "Did you, by any chance, eat any of the food, kourbani (meat with cereal offered during religious commemorative events) or sacrificial offerings prepared by the sacrilegious infidels in the course of their weddings, feasts and their profane remembrance days and obituaries?" (Αικατερινίδης 1979: 177, σημ. 3).

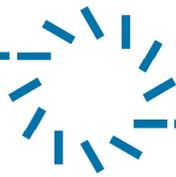
³ The various punishments and penalties imposed upon those who participated in folkloric events systematically validated the identification of these customs with sin and evil: "Αυτά όλα τα αμαρτήματα ο διάβολος μας παρακινάει και τα εργαζόμεσθεν και αλίμονον εις τον άνθρωπον οπού να μη διορθώσει του λόγου του έως ζει εις τον κόσμον τούτον, να εξομολογηθεί να μετανοήσει να κλαύσει και να κάμει τον κανόνα του οπού να του δώσει ο πνευματικός του πατήρ, διότι θέλει κολασθει" ["all these sins we commit are incited by the devil and woe betide anyone who fails to correct themselves during their lifetime in this world, to confess, to repent, to weep and to fulfill their religious duty in the way it has been handed over to them by their religious confessor, because they will be committing a sin"] (Πολίτης 1911-12, 388). The above identification of these categories as religiously unacceptable, offensive, blasphemous and, therefore, punishable was facilitated by the structure of the religious system itself permeating the traditional communities, a system based upon the bipolar relationship between the sacred and the profane, according to which misfortunes stem from offences that must be punished.



clerics themselves, particularly the lower ones, who, by means of exploiting the Christian element of this hybrid system, legitimized, either consciously or unconsciously, their participation in these practices. Such inconsistencies between the official point of view of the Church and the priests “who were more than willing to take the initiative or even benefit from practicing certain unmistakably pagan, in their origin, customs” (Alexiou 2002: 106), is substantiated by numerous ethnographic data. A characteristic example demonstrating the mixture of pagan and Christian elements has to do with a recorded testimony in the early part of the 20th century regarding the performance of sacrifices, - which were fervently opposed to and fought by Christianity (Μέγας 1992: 18)-, inside a church in front of the holy temple involving the participation of the priest in the area of Pharason in Asia Minor (Λουκόπουλος- Πετρόπουλος 1949: 46-47; Αικατερινίδης 1979: 62-63).

The 19th century as well as the early part of the 20th teem with evidence indicating that the priests themselves were the performers of these practices and that they were also the holders of black magic scripts (Solomonics) as well as medical manuscripts the reading matter of which pertained to a mixture of magic and methods based on herbs (Argenti-Rose 1993: 516-7; Ήμελλος 1965: 40 not. 4). There is a characteristic recorded case referring to the priest Manolis Furlanos (1784-1842), a priest in the village of Vournikas on the island of Lefkada (Κοντομιχης 1985: 61), who along with certificates of birth, death, marriage and christening he also recorded popular remedies, charms and superstitions. Furthermore, according to the evidence, his son Anthimos Furlanos, also a priest, followed in his father’s footsteps and went on to add more charms in his father’s book (ibid. 211-13). It is also worth drawing attention to evidence portraying priests as performers of oracular practices as well as participants in the concoction of amulets or talismans and love potions (Φραγκάκι 1978: 224 note 40; Παπαδάκης 1936, 68). These priests, although they were condemned by the official Church as it is evidenced by the canon (they are excommunicated, Γκίνης- Πανταζόπουλος 1985: 446 ΧΠΔ’) and by recommendations stemming from their superiors (Παπαδάκης 1936: 68), were the executives of numerous mixed practices and enjoyed the esteem, respect and admiration of the traditional community members.⁴

⁴ Cf. “περισσότερος γνωστός για τη σολομωνική του και αυθεντία στο είδος του ήταν ο ιερέας Λυμπιών, χωριό της επαρχίας Λευκωσίας (Κύπρου). Σ’ αυτόν κατέφευγαν από όλες τις περιοχές για τη θεραπεία της τρέλας, του τύφου τις νευρικές ασθένειες, τις ασθένειες που προέρχονταν από έρωτα αλλά και για κάθε ανάγκη” [“The priest of Limpion, a village in



This “intermediary” role of clergymen as priests and magicians is, up to a certain point, to be expected in traditional communities, where times of crisis and malfunctions of the system are effectuated by the profane and necessitate one’s resorting to the realm of the sacred in order to redress the balance (Μερακλής 2004: 261)⁵. The dynamics of this intermediary position enables priests to reside in and identify with sacred as well as profane. A characteristic example of this identification has been detected in a mid-19th century account recorded on the island of Lefkas in the Ionian sea, according to which the residents of the village of Athani attempted to set the house of the priest Christos Rompotis, a highly skilled doctor and healer, on fire, along with all his family, on the grounds that he was held responsible for a prolonged drought in the area. The timely intervention of the priest’s wife, who threw the book of sorcery used by the priest out of the window, prevented the tragedy. The woman’s action appeased the wrath of the villagers who, instead of the priest, they burnt the book (Κοντομιχης 1985: 62). Moreover, the widespread common practice, in the folk Greek culture still in existence today, of touching something red in order to avert bad luck effected by accidentally bumping into a priest (Βαρβούνης 1992: 41) effectively demonstrates the equivocal position of the priests. The dynamics of this liminal position enabling them to move between and betwixt categories is further substantiated by their connection with taboos and fears. The power of a curse uttered by a priest is so potent that can induce illnesses, or, even worse, prevent the dead body from decomposing. Any priest is entitled to anathematize any Christian and his anathema is granted by God because he is the one who holds and carries the Holy Communion (district of Apokoron in Chania, Crete, Πάγκαλος 1983: 355-356).

Nicosia of Cyprus, was well known for his skills at black magic and highly acclaimed as an authority on the practice. It was to this priest that people from the area resorted in order to treat madness, typhus, mental disorders, love induced conditions as well as any other need”] (Κυριαζής 1926: 65).

⁵ The role of the priests as bearers of sacredness legitimized numerous other practices aiming at restoring order, such as *krifolitourgia/sarantalitourgo* (having the priest celebrate mass for 40 consecutive days either in the same church or in different ones (Βαρβούνης 1992: 116-17), the *mikro diavasma (minor reading)* (the reading/recital of special wishes as well as of excerpts from the Gospel (ibid. 116), having the priest stepping over the patient (ibid. 118).



III. Religious and national identity: from the late 18th up to the first decades of the 20th century

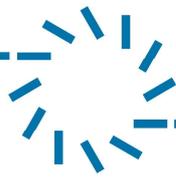
The historical circumstances together with the ideological, intellectual and political processes already in progress in Europe – their arrival to Greece having been delayed due to historical circumstances (Turkish occupation of Greece) – a period spanning from the late 18th century, throughout the 19th century (Κυριακίδου-Νέστορος 1997: 35-36) up to the first decades of the 20th century, influence and redefine the relationship of the Church and the clerics with the folk culture. During this crucial period, the demand for the advancement and elaboration of the sciences, the natural ones in particular, the development and elaboration of the ethnic languages, the quest for the antiquity, the convergence of the folk customs and the ancient Greek tradition as well as the cultivation of a concept promoting a separate ethnic over the common Christian sacred past (Δημαράς 1975: 165-66) put forward anew, and on a new base, the issue of the surviving remains of the ancient religion (Κιτρομυλίδης 1996: 123). During this period the antithetical pairs of good-evil, magic (witchcraft) - religion, profane-sacred, impurity-purity etc were turned into the newly-formed pairs of knowledge-ignorance, superstition-reason, literacy-Illiteracy.

The formation of an acceptable code of religious conduct was laid down by clerics such as Evgenios Voulgaris (1716-1806), who, having been exposed to the ideological currents of the time prevalent beyond the borders of Greece, emphasized the Christian belief of the people descending from the ancient Greeks in an effort to draw support for the Greek struggle for independence from European countries of the same orthodox faith. At the same time, however, they disapproved, within the framework of a theory propounding rational faith, of pagan practices and religious superstitions, which had infiltrated the folk mode of worship, as in the case of worshipping icons and miracles (Βούλγαρης [1801] 1991: 115).

Approximately two decades before the establishment of the independent Greek state, in 1812, the book of a Greek cleric Charisios Megdanos (1812) entitled *Ελληνικόν Πάνθεον: ή Συλλογή της μυθικής Ιστορίας των παρά τοις αρχαίοις Έλλησι μυθολογουμένων Θεών, και της κατ' αυτήν αλληγορίας, Επιμελώς φιλολογηθείσα εκ διαφόρων Ποιητών, και Συγγραφέων, και φιλοπόνως, και ευτάκτως συντεθείσα παρά Χαρισίου Δημητρίου Μεγδάνου[sic], του εκ Κοζάνης προς χάριν και ωφέλειαν των φιλομαθών νέων του γένους, και των την ποιητικήν μετερχομένων*



[*Greek Pantheon: the compilation of the history of the mythological gods of the ancient Greeks and their allegories. ... Compiled by Charisios Megdanos from Kozani in aid and service of the inquisitive young people of the nation as well as those who delve into matters of poetics*] was edited. Although the educational aim of the endeavour is stressed, the religious orientation of the work is evident. In numerous instances throughout the text emphasis is being laid on the superiority of the Christian religion, since when referring to ancient Greek mythology it is stated that “εστάθη η βάσις της ελληνικής θρησκείας της τόσον πεπλανημένης, ήτις επειράτησε εις τόσους αιώνας εις τόσα σοφά έθνη και με τόσον ζήλον, οπου δεν ήθελε εξαλειφθη ειμή δια της επιλάμψεως της θείας αποκαλύψεως και της ουρανίου διδασκαλίας του κυριου ημών Ιησού Χριστου” [“it constituted the foundation of the Greek religion, however misguided it was, which predominated for so many centuries over so many wise nations and with so great zeal, that it successfully evaded abolition only to succumb to the enlightenment of the divine revelation and to the divine guidance of our lord Jesus Christ”] (ibid. Ειδησις p. [1,2]). The elements of the folk tradition, which are selectively and partly to be found in various parts of the work, such as the traditions referring to the fairies (ibid. 502), haunted caves and trees (ibid. 508), divination rituals of Klidonas (γλήδωνας, ibid. 510-512), are merely mentioned only to be rejected as pagan remnants, superstitions and prejudices of a misconceived religion. Their survival, despite continuous efforts for their eradication, according to the writer by enlightened intellectual members of the Church, is, on the one hand, due to ignorance and a lack of education characterizing their practitioners, and, on the other, to the intentional indifference on the part of the Church Fathers, since some of the remaining pagan practices, such as customs pertaining to divination (ibid. 512-13), are performed unawares by their practitioners aiming merely at entertaining. The fallacy of all these ancient traditions is accurately conveyed at the end of the work: “Και τα μεν περι των ψευδωνύμων θεών των αρχαίων Ελλήνων μυθεύόμενα, ιστορούμενα και αλληγορούμενα τοσαύτα το κατὰ δύναμιν έστωσαν. Τω δε μόνω αληθινώ θεώ, τω δια της επιλάμψεως της ευσεβείας καταργήσαντι την τοσαύτην πλάνην και ασέβειαν” [“And all that pertains to those myths about the false gods of the ancient Greeks has been duly narrated and analyzed; to the only true God, who with the blaze of piety abolished such a great fallacy”] (ibid. 576).



Additional references to elements of the folk culture are to be found in the two-volume work by Gregorios Paliouritis (1815) a cleric and a teacher descending from Epirus⁶:

Αρχαιολογία ελληνική: Ἦτοι φιλολογικὴ ἱστορία περιέχουσα τους Νόμους, την Πολιτείαν, τα Ἔθιμα της Θρησκείας, των Εορτών, των Γάμων, και Επικηδείων, τα δημόσια, και τα κατά μέρος Παιγνίδια των παλαιών Ελλήνων, εξαιρέτως δε των Αθηναίων. Συνεραμισθείσα εκ διαφόρων συγγραφέων παρά Γρηγορίου ιερομονάχου Παλιουρίτου του εξ Ιωαννίνων διδασκάλου του εν Λιβόρνω⁷ Ελληνομουσείου, τον γ' τόμον αποπληρούσα της αυτού Ελληνικής Ιστορίας. Επιστάσις και διορθώσει Σ. Β., τ. 1. και 2, Εν Βενετία: Παρά Νικολάω Γλυκεί τω εξ Ιωαννίνων, 1815 [Greek Archeology: id est the philological history containing the Laws, the Republic, the Customs pertaining to Religion, Festivities, Weddings and Funerals, the public as well as private games of the ancient Greeks, the Athenians in particular ... Compiled by Gregorios Paliouritis, a priest-monk from Epirus and a teacher at the Livorno school, deriving evidence from various ancient Greek authors, vol. 1 and 2, Venice, 1815].

The educational aim is stressed in the introduction and focuses on the study of the ancient Greek tradition (language, manners and customs), on finding similarities to those characterizing contemporary Greeks as well as on praising “quintessence” [“*σπουδαίων*”] and criticizing “baseness” [“*αχρείων*”] (ibid. vol. A', p. ιθ'). Evidence of folklore is presented mainly in the chapters on the surviving remains of ancient Greek games and contests (vol. B', 179-196), wedding (ibid. 197-211), childbirth (ibid. 216-225), funeral (ibid. 262, 263) customs, women's clothing and pursuit (ibid. 211-216). The elements of the Greek tradition that clash with the official viewpoint of the Church are directly equated with superstitions and prejudices and are, therefore, condemned.⁸

The need for clerics to take a more conscious and avid interest in the folk tradition arose during that period of time when the newly-founded Greek state was undergoing changes. The social and political developments throughout this period necessitated a closer as well as a progressively more scientific examination of the problem relating to the continuity and connection with the ancient Greek past on the one hand, and, on the other, they created certain problems in the way these two different traditions are linked (Herzfeld 2002: 162). These developments also disturbed the close relationship

⁶ A region in NW Greece.

⁷ A city of northwest Italy on the Ligurian Sea southeast of Genoa.

⁸ Cf. “ίχνη αυτών των δεισιδαιμονιών διατηρούνται και μέχρι σήμερα στους Έλληνες” [“traces of these superstitions are still in existence amongst the Greeks”], (ibid. vol. B', 151).



and connection between state and Church as well as between secular and ecclesiastical power, a state of affairs already well-developed since the Byzantine era (Μερακλής 2004: 269), and remained in power throughout the Turkish occupation of Greece, since religion acted as the medium through which the enslaved Greeks maintained their cultural cohesion. It is noteworthy that the Romioi (the Greek speaking Christians of the Ottoman Empire), acting primarily as Christians, entertained an ecumenical view of their history. The definition of the Greek identity in the early constitutions is indicative of this identification: “Οσοι αυτόχθονες κάτοικοι της Επικρατείας της Ελλάδος πιστεύουσιν εις Χριστόν, εισιν Έλληνες [Those indigenous people residing within the boundaries of the Greek State and believe in Christ are Greeks]”⁹.

Jakob Philipp Fallmerayer’s views were instrumental in revealing tendencies towards dissociating the religious from the national identity amid a transitional period following the dismantling of the Ottoman Empire¹⁰. In his first work «*Geschichte des Kaiserthums von Trapezunt*, Munchen: Anton Weber 1827», Jac. Ph. Fallmerayer put forward the view that the religious conscience of the Greeks along with the secular power being subjugated to the ecclesiastical one resulted, firstly, in the degeneration of the people descending from the ancient Greeks, and, secondly, in the decline of the Greek nation due to emasculation effectuated by the devotion Greeks showed to orthodoxy (Fallmerayer 1827: iii-xv).¹¹ Following the publication of his Trebizond study, he developed his theory that the ancient, "Hellenic", population of the south Balkans had been replaced during the Migration Period by Slavic peoples. The first volume of Fallmerayer's *Geschichte der Halbinsel Morea während des Mittelalters* appeared in 1830, and in it he expressed that not the slightest drop of undiluted Hellenic blood flows in the veins of the Christian population of present-day Greece (Fallmerayer 1830: iv)¹².

A reaction to those theories which supported the purge of Christianity of all its Greek elements and which contributed to the immediate proliferation of folkloric studies

⁹ <http://www.parliament.gr/1821/anafora/xrono4c.asp>.

¹⁰ Of course J. Fallmerayer was one of many anti-Greeks ('Mishellenes') of this period of time. The list of anti greek proponents includes names such as Cornelius de Pauw (Dutch philosopher and diplomat), Jakob Bartholdy (Prussian diplomat), Alphonse Lamartine (French writer), Edmond About (French journalist). Fallmerayer, however became the most representative symbol of anti-hellenic propaganda, because he was the first who expressed the anti-Hellenic thesis in an historical monograph. See Veloudis 1970 and Σκοπεπέα 1999.

¹¹ In the same work Fallmerayer considers priests as the primary cause of human degradation (Leeb 1996: 49).

¹² “Denn auch nicht ein Tropfen ächten und ungemischten Hellenenblutes fließet in den Adern der christlichen Bevölkerung des heutigen Griechenlands“, cf. Leeb 1996: 55.



by affording vernacular culture political importance, thus transcending the limits of the academic field, was induced (and introduced) by scientific, philological, historical, linguistic and folk work carried out by scholars and clerics of the time. The liminal as well as betwixt and between space of the vernacular culture provided clerics, at this particular time, with a stepping stone to maintaining a balance between their religious faith and the paganism of their ancestors (Herzfeld 2002: 110) and, thus, managed to reestablish the connection between religious and national identity.

One of the most prominent proponents of this effort to establish a link between a national and religious identity was the priest and teacher P. Papazapfiropoulos, who, in 1887, published his work *“Περὶ συναγωγῆς Γλωσσικῆς ὕλης καὶ ἐθίμων τοῦ ἐλληνικοῦ λαοῦ ἰδίᾳ δὲ τοῦ τῆς Πελοποννήσου παραβαλλομένων ἐν πολλοῖς πρὸς τὰ τῶν ἀρχαίων ἐλλήνων, Ἐν Πάτραις τυπογραφεῖον Κᾶδμος* [*“A Collection of Linguistic Material and Customs of the Greek Nation, to be Found Mainly in the Area of Peloponnesus¹³ and Compared to those of the Ancient Greeks*]. The book includes various elements of the folk tradition, such as folk customs pertaining to the life cycle (marriage, birth, death), folk songs, proverbs, riddles, blessings, curses, greetings, legends, etc. It should also be noted that it is he himself that emphasizes the fact that his position as cleric enabled him to come into direct contact with superstitions, customs and other manifestations of the folk culture as well as identify similarities between ancient Greek customs and traditions (ibid. θ’).

The main objective of the writer is to reestablish the connection between modern and ancient Greek tradition, thus disproving views held by Fallmerayer as well as by others who call into question the premise that modern Greeks are descended from the ancient ones: *“να ἀφυπνίσουμε, τοὺς δὲ ἐπισήμους ἐκείνους ἱστορικοὺς ποὺ ἀνήκουν στὸν κύκλο τοῦ Φαλμεράερ ... νὰ τοὺς στενοχωρήσουμε ... ἀποδεικνύοντας μὲ σαφήνεια καὶ ολοκάθαρα τὸν παραλογισμὸ καὶ τὴν ἐμπάθεια τῶν ἀξιώσεων τοὺς ὅτι οἱ ἀρχαῖοι Ἕλληνες ἐξοντώθηκαν καὶ ἀντικαταστάθηκαν τάχα ἀπὸ τοὺς Ἀβαροσλάβους”* [*“to awaken those official historians who came under the influence of Fallmerayer ... to disconcert them ... proving beyond a shadow of a doubt how illogical and spiteful their claiming that the ancient Greeks were exterminated and replaced by Avaroslavs are”*] (ibid. 19)¹⁴. This

¹³ A peninsula forming the South part of Greece.

¹⁴ As well as *“δὲν εἶναι καθόλου λίγα καὶ ἀμελητέα τὰ στοιχεῖα ... ποὺ ἀποδεικνύουν τὴν γνησιότητα καὶ τὴν ἀρχαία ἐλληνικὴ καταγωγὴ τοῦ ἔθνους καὶ τῆς γλώσσας μας”* [*“the authenticity and the ancient descent of the nation and our language are in the possession of evidence that can be deemed anything but negligible”*] (ibid. ε’).



evidence is based on a comparison drawn between Modern Greek customs, recorded by the writer himself, and ancient ones derived from excerpts taken from Homer, Aristophanes, Euripides, Sophocles and other writers of the classical antiquity (ibid. 19-20, 30-31).

Attention should at this point be drawn to the practices of the folk tradition, which have been integrated either consciously or due to passive consent by the Church, into the official ecclesiastical system, such as the votive offerings and vows made in ancient times, (though still practiced in the folk culture), the offerings to the dead (ibid. 186-187), but also the official participation of the priests in numerous happenings and events of the life cycle. These include funeral (ibid. 86-88) and the wedding customs (ibid. 28, 29), which are related to the ancient Greek ones and they are employed not merely to substantiate the unbroken link with the ancient Greek tradition, but also to demonstrate the extent to which the folk tradition is permeated by the spirit of Christianity. The Christian philosophy, scholarship and education and the clerics as its representatives and practitioners are acknowledged for their contribution to the eradication of superstitions stemming from ancient Greek beliefs, such as the existence of vampires (ibid. 184 note), other spirits appearing in cemeteries (chamodrakia, ibid. 518), as well as customs pertaining to divination (ibid. 370). Traditions, however, as well as views endowed with the potential to resist, both of which are condemned by the Church¹⁵, are regarded as superstitions and pagan beliefs and are attributed to illiteracy and ignorance which needs to be eradicated by the clerics (ibid. p. 0)¹⁶. It should also be noted the glossary at the end of the book which includes the vernacular terms (dialectal words) used in the area, the definition of which is, however, given in scholarly language.

Yet even more clerics concerned themselves with collecting and publishing folk material. In 1891 an article entitled “Παροιμια, φρασολογια, ανιγματα και δημοτικα ασματα της νησου Καρπάθου”, [Proverbs, phrases, riddles and folk songs on the island of Karpathos], by the priest Ioannis Manolakakis is published in the volume issued by the

¹⁵ Such as the ampodema (impediment) which renders the bridegroom impotent (ibid. 49, 50 ancient Greek Ορχιπέδης/Orchipedis) as well as resorting to witchcraft (“Ω της ανοησίας της κουφοτάτης”, [“Lo! Of the folly of the most deaf one”] (ibid. 51), which are also derived from ancient Greek customs.

¹⁶ It worth, however, noting that there is no no reference to folk happenings involving dressing up (carnivals), clues undoubtedly verifying the continuation of the ancient Greek tradition Furthermore, the dictionary entry, to be found at the end of the book, for “carnival” refers only to the time distinction and the names of the weeks in strict conformity with the established ecclesiastical tradition (Αποκριας [Carnival], ibid. 392).



Greek Philological Society of Constantinople titled: “*Ζωγράφειος Αγών ήτοι Μνημεία της Ελληνικής Αρχαιότητας ζώντα τω νυν Ελληνικό λαώ, τόμος Α', Εν Κωνσταντινουπόλει 1891*” [“*The Zografios Struggle or Monuments of Antiquity still Extant among the Greek Populations*”]. This article includes 43 riddles, 26 folk songs and 544 folk proverbs used on Karpathos, whose definitions are given in scholarly language in the event of their being used. The interest the cleric took in the folk proverbs is not incidental at all, as the didactic nature of this particular form corresponds precisely to and serves the educational and ethical purposes of the Church. The translation of Greek vernacular proverbs, on the other, in scholarly language it is not accidental at all. It worth noting that not only the priest Ionannis Manolakis but also all the afore mentioned clerics comments on vernacular culture using scholarly language¹⁷.

The movement and relocation of the Greek population in the main territory of Greece following the disaster in Asia Minor (1922) revived interest in folk tradition, encouraging and promoting the collecting, recording and publishing of folk material from the lost homeland. Clerics who come from these areas are also to be found among those collecting such data. The chairman of the committee for the Pontian Studies [Επιτροπή Ποντιακών Μελετών], who supervised the publication of the journal titled *Archion Pontou* (Αρχεῖον Πόντου¹⁸ [Pontus Archive]), was Chrysanthos (1881-1949), the former bishop of Trapezous (1913). The objective of the journal, as it is delineated by the same cleric, is to collect and record “τα δημώδη άσματα, τας παροιμίας, τα έθιμα και τα παραδόσεις ... την μουσικήν...” [“the folk songs, the proverbs, the customs and traditions

¹⁷ The most representative example of the ambiguity regarding the vernacular concerns the issue of translation of the Holy Bible. The need of translating the Holy Scriptures into a more understandable and vernacular form was recognized- much latter in Greece than it did in other European countries- during the nineteenth century following the establishment of new greek state (Connolly - Bacopoulou Halls 2001: 229-30). The question took, beyond the usual theological problems, on political and national dimension with the clerics connecting the language of gospels, a older form of language and not any more in use- with the religious and at the same time national identity (Δημαράς 1997, 408). Two diametrical opposed approaches to the subjects was expressed, one by the scholar and archimandrite Neophytos Vamvas (1770-1855) and another by the also cleric and scholar, Konstantinos Oikonomos (1780-1857). Vamvas, whose translation of holy Bible in 1850 was fervently criticized by the church and clerics, maintained that if the main purpose of the holy scriptures is to teach, then their diction and style must be in a more simple form. Konstantinos Oikonomos, however expressed the position that is not only impossible but also and pointless to translate the holy bible into vernacular greek since, on the one hand, these texts were written in a language which anyone could understand and on the other the common language (vernacular modern greek) was vulgar and will debase the holy dimension of the sacred texts (ibid.). Moreover it could eventually and gradually to false interpretations and to heresy (ibid.). The culmination of this debate was the Gospel riot (Evangelika) after the translation of the New Testament into modern greek by the poet Alexandros Palis in 1901 (Κορδάτος 1973: 142-145).

¹⁸ An area in NE Asia Minor, bordering on the Black Sea.



... the music”] (Αρχαίον Πόντου 1, 1928, 5) so as to “για να μην «συντελεσθεί η εξαφάνησις όλων των ιδιαίζόντων στοιχείων της γλώσσης των εθίμων και παραδόσεων του λαού εκείνου...” [“prevent the extinction of all those specific features characterizing the customs and traditions of the people...” (ibid.)], which demonstrate the unbroken continuity and the validity of the descent of the Black Sea Greeks from the ancient Greeks, as well as disprove Fallmerayer’s anti-Hellenic theory (ibid. 3).

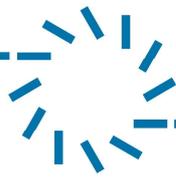
It should also be noted that several years later, in the 15th volume of the aforementioned Journal, the bishop of Nevrokopi, Agathangelos (Αγαθάγγελος 1959), recorded and published informative material (“Ποικίλα λαογραφικά του χωρίου Χόψα” [“Various folk events in the village of Chopsa”]) bearing direct relation to folklore. The article features distinguishing characteristics of local folklore present in various festivals commemorating Saints, in wedding as well as funeral and burial customs, in superstitions, fairy tales, blessings and curses. Also worthy of note is the writer’s unduly lenient treatment of instances involving not only an amalgamation of Christian and pagan customs initiated by priests (ibid. 151), but also pure pagan remnants, such as the worship of the sun (ibid. 145)]. The article is also characterized by a tacit tendency, either conscious or subconscious, on the part of the writer to stress the tenet that the Christian conviction, an integral part of which is one’s respect towards the priests (ibid. 144), has pervaded almost all aspects of the folk culture. It is also of interest to note, on the one hand, the complete absence of any reference to carnival customs and, on the other, the emphasis on the ascetic nature of practices intrinsic to the Christian religious system, such as fasting (ibid. 146).

The utilization of the Christian element present in vernacular culture, which aims at proving how extensively folk culture was saturated by Christian belief, even in its unacceptable, by the Church, forms, appears to be legitimizing the collection and publication of folk customs and practices. In 1934-35 the journal *Κοπριακαί Σπουδαί* [Cypriot Studies] p. 697) published a number of vernacular verbal charms/incantations by the archimandrite Gregory in the monastery of Machera. It is by no means coincidental the fact that the published charms/incantations contain references to holy names found in the officially recognized religious system. It is also not accidental that this specific monastery, located in Cyprus, is renowned for its long standing practice of therapeutic methods.



In 1924 the monk and teacher K. Philaretos in the same monastery publishes the «*Ἱατροσοφικόν συνταχθέν υπό του Σκευοφύλακος της εν Κύπρω Ἱεράς Μονῆς Μαχαιρά Μητροφάνους 1790-1867*» [“*Practical Medicine compiled by the Sacristan in the Holy Monastery of Machera Mitrophanus in Cyprus 1790-1867*], which contains popular remedies for illnesses. The priest, who is also the publisher of this text of practical medicine, considers the content of this book to be “*αφελείς συνταγὰς αναγόμενας εἰς ἀρχέγονους μεθόδους τῆς ἰατρικῆς*” [“*naïve remedial measures stemming from primeval medicinal methods*”] (Φιλάρετος 1924: 8) and attributes their therapeutic effectiveness to faith and God’s help (ibid. 8)¹⁹. He also stresses the contribution made and the important role performed by the clerics and monks during the Turkish occupation, who “*ἦταν βάλσαμον παρηγορίας εἰς τὰ δεινοπαθούντα ἐκεῖνα θύματα τῆς Τουρκικῆς κακοδαιμονίας, καὶ ... ἀληθινοὶ ἰατροὶ τῶν ψυχῶν καὶ τῶν σωμάτων*» [“*brought solace to the suffering victims of the misfortunes imposed by the Turks, and ... were truly both spiritual healers and physical therapists*”] (ibid.). Attention should also be drawn to the historical, linguistic and folkloric merit of the published material brought to the fore by the monk-publisher and highlighted both in the preface: «*ἔχομεν τὴν πεποίθησιν ὅτι ἀποδίδομεν εἰς τὴν Λαογραφία βοήθημα ἐκ τῶν σπανίων. Ὁ Λαογράφος καὶ ὁ ἱστορικός θα ἀνακαλύψουν μέσα εἰς τὰς γραμμάς τοῦ πολύτιμου αὐτοῦ κειμηλίου μιαν σελίδα τῆς ἱστορίας τῆς ἰατρικῆς ἐν Κύπρῳ ἐπὶ Τουρκοκρατίας*» [“*we hold the conviction that we afford folkloric studies one of the rarest services. Both folklorists and historians are bound to encounter, amid the lines of this valuable script, pieces of the history of medicine in Cyprus during the Turkish occupation*”] (ibid. 8), as well as in the conclusion of this work: “*ἵνα μὴ τὸ ἔργον τοῦτο, παραμείνῃ ἐν ἀφανείᾳ καὶ ὡς τι ἀπόκρυφον, τουναντίον δὲ ἀποβῆ κοινὸν πρόωτιστα μὲν ἀπὸ ἰατρικῆς, ὅσον ἐνεστὶν ἀπόψεως, εἶτα δὲ ἀπὸ γλωσσικῆς καὶ λαογραφικῆς*” [“*in order to ensure that this work does not fade into obscurity as an occult practice, but play, instead, a prominent role primarily in medicine, but also in linguistics and folklore*”] (ibid.).

¹⁹ “Ὁ ὠκεανὸς ἐκεῖνος τῆς πίστεως καὶ τῆς ἀφελείας ἰατρῶν τε καὶ θεραπευομένων συνετέλει τὸ θαῦμα μετὰ τὴν βοήθειαν τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ οὕτω οἱ προ ολίγου ἀσθενεῖς καὶ καχεκτικοί, ευσταλεῖς τῶρα καὶ ῥοδοκόκκινοι χωρικοί, ἐπέστρεφον εἰς τὰ χωρία τῶν γεμάτοι ἀπὸ χαρᾶν καὶ πλημμυρισμένοι ἀπὸ εὐγνωμοσύνην πρὸς τοὺς Μοναχοὺς θεραπευτάς των” (ibid.) [“That ocean of faith and the naivety, characterizing both doctors and those in need of being healed, performed, God willing, the miracle and thus those villagers just previously sick and weakly, but now restored and healthy, returned to their villages filled with joy and a sense of gratitude towards the healer monks”].



The collection and publication of relevant material by the clerics does not, however, stem from an academic interest of a purely folk nature although it is more often than not projected as such. The subject position of the clerics as administrators of the recognized religious system unduly seems to influence their perspective and course of action.²⁰

IV. Conclusions

The “vernacular culture” constitutes a negotiating space for categorizations and taxonomies. It has been employed to make distinctions among categories which are not to be mixed, but also at the same time to create new hybrid structures²¹, when the existing ones prove inadequate for the mitigation of intensity and the restoration of a disturbed balance (cf. Turner 1991: 8-9). Clerics exploit and utilize this liminal space in order to substantiate unacceptable mixings and fusions connected with pre-Christian, pagan remnants of a national tradition, firstly by identifying them with unacceptable categories, such as those of the magic, the blasphemous, the sinful, the profane and the

²⁰ The sole, perhaps, exception to the rule is George Rigas (Γεώργιος Ρήγας 1884-1960), who gathered, following field research and recorded, involving no personal reviewing (Κυριακίδου-Νέστορος 1968: ι'), ample folk material covering all aspects of the folk culture on the island of Skiathos, where he served in his capacity as a teacher and a priest from 1920 onwards. The writer is particularly mindful of the research carried out by prominent Greek folklorists, such as St. Kyriakidis (Στ. Κυριακίδης). He is also aware of the novel scientific approaches in folklore prevalent in Greece and he faithfully observes them, as his classification of folk songs clearly demonstrates (Κυριακίδου-Νέστορος 1968: ια'). This material was published by the Institution of Macedonian Studies [Εταιρεία Μακεδονικών Σπουδών] in four volumes. The first volume (Ρήγας 1958) features the folk songs of the island of Skiathos, the melody of which is recorded in both Byzantine and European notation. The second one (Ρήγας 1962) presents folk tales, hilarious accounts, fables and traditions found on the island, whereas the third volume contains proverbs, songs, blessings, curses, oaths, riddles, puzzles, place-names and names (Ρήγας 1968). The fourth volume (Ρήγας 1970) is of particular interest since it records folk material, often supplemented with photographs and sketches, pertaining to the material and social life, religious worship, folk medicine as well as witchcraft and superstitions. The fact that certain practices and views are deemed witchcraft and superstitions should, under no circumstances, be ascribed to superstitions stemming from the theological education pursued by the cleric/publisher, but should rather be placed within the broader framework regulating the way the research on folklore was conducted at that particular time. The case involving the cleric Rigas is, however, exceptional since it concerns a cleric whose capacity as a researcher and folklorist predominates in the process of his recording the relevant material.

²¹ In exactly this possibility of continual redefinition and transvaluation of values of vernacular culture is to be found the dynamics of liminality, ambiguity and hybridity, since hybridity as a concept is identified with that of ambiguity: “a process and product of cultural mixing which articulates two or more disparate elements to engender a new and distinct entity» (Tenerelli 2006, 22). According once more to Werbner (2001: 141), the hybrid categories “... work to transform, to revitalise, to create new ordeals to be transcended. They create ... liminal spaces, betwixt-and-between tropes that render authority structure ambivalent”.

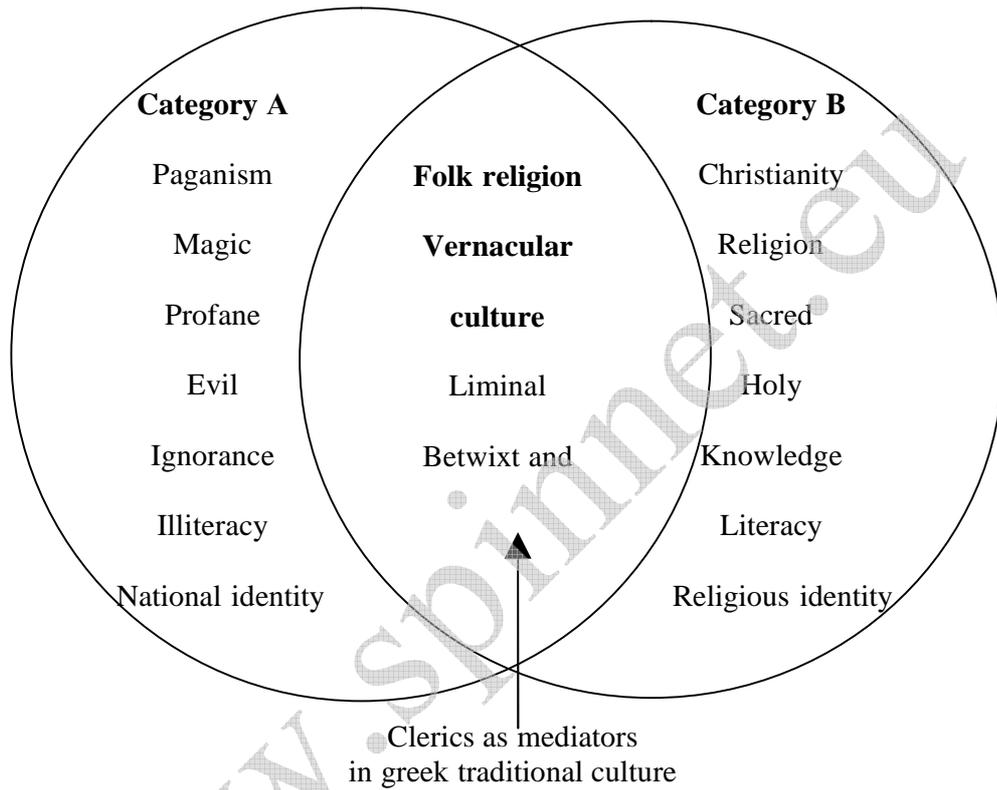


impious, and secondly by imposing penalties on those resorting to their use. Aiming, however, at restoring an imbalance, whose occurrence has disrupted the system in the process of enforcing of a new religious system upon the well-established earlier one, they become the quintessential carriers of an equivocal behavior themselves. On the one hand, they attempt to introduce and incorporate elements of a pre-Christian substratum by altering its signifying function and by thus legitimizing fusions and surviving elements that resist their polemics and opposition. On the other hand, unofficially, and despite the opposing attitude of the official ecclesiastical establishment, by exploiting the Christian elements of the mixed system they legitimize, either consciously or subconsciously, their own participation in these practices.

During the 19th century and up until the mid-20th century, clerics, mainly the educated ones, modify their attitude towards vernacular culture influenced as they are by the era's historical, political and ideological events, exploiting anew the possibilities of this liminal space. This process is gradual and it is unavoidably conditioned by historical developments. Under the influence of the ideas of the Enlightenment on educational issues and because of the need to re-establish a connection between vernacular culture and ancient Greek tradition, clerics gradually take full advantage of folk culture elements so as to restore a connection with the historical past, on the one hand, and, on the other, to criticize and condemn those elements which depart from the doctrines of the official church as superstitions to be fought through education. When the interconnection between a religious and a national identity has been disrupted, during and after the establishment of the Greece state, clerics in order to identify and reconnect the national with the religious, utilized again the vernacular culture to show the extent to which the realm of folk culture is saturated, not so much by popular prejudice, superstition and pagan elements that have to be eliminated or eradicated, but by the spirit of Orthodoxy which has prevailed throughout.



Figure 1.





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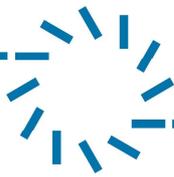
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