

*Urban Ethnomusicology in the City of Thessaloniki (Greece):  
The case of rebetiko song revival today*

Dissertation submitted to the Music Department, Goldsmiths College, University of  
London for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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Date: November 2002



## Abstract

This thesis is an ethnography of contemporary rebetiko music performance contexts in the city of Thessaloniki. It is the outcome of a research experience I underwent during the years 1997-98 in Ano Poli, a state-declared 'conservation' area of the city. The ethnography is organized in three case studies, each one representing a different performance context: (a) rebetiko concerts held in an 'ethnic' café bar, (b) a rebetiko *taverna* and, (c) a special rebetiko *ghlendi* ('revelry') event. These case studies are current expressions of rebetiko entertainment, upon which my discussion of the ongoing revival of the genre in Greek society today is primarily based.

My main concern in the thesis is to discuss how people make sense of and communicate rebetiko music culture as a lived experience in different contemporary rebetiko venues. To that extent, the knowledge of revivalist culture is grounded on the aesthetics and discourses which are 'other-ing' rebetiko music today. Eventually, such discourses and aesthetics provide the means for the theoretical discussion of the ways the genre is experienced as 'world music' in certain entertainment settings. These questions are explored within the broader framework of postmodern socio-cultural transformations, which appear to condition variously the contemporary revivalist culture. The ethnography is additionally underpinned with an introductory part that aims to describe the genre and provide a brief review of rebetiko history and associated rhetorics.

Overall, there are two main ethnographic orientations featured in this ethnography concerning the processes of doing fieldwork, as well as thinking and writing

about it. One is the fact that I am a native researcher, born and grown up in the 'field'; the other being that this is an urban ethnography bearing the particularities and complex networks of city culture. <sup>Finally</sup> (this thesis is not just a current ethnography of rebetiko music; it becomes an ethnographic embodiment of the multiple dynamics of reflexivity defining the process of doing urban ethnomusicology at home.

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Notice: The dissertation is accompanied by a compact disc with music examples attached at the back cover.

## *Introduction*

My relationship with rebetiko music stretches back long before I decided to start this doctoral research. Rebetiko song is part of my childhood memories. I can still recall the several tapes of rebetiko music we used to listen with my parents during long journeys by car. I also remember my mothers' voice singing along with the songs of Marika Ninou or the ritualistic care with which my father used to put on the record player his favorite live recording of Tsitsanis' performances at *Tzimi tou Hondrou taverna*. Later on as a university student, I used to spend the night out with friends listening to rebetiko songs in smoky *tavernes* filled with smells of breath soaked in wine. I was brought up in the echoes of the first rebetiko revivalist era. From early on, I was familiar with the genre and experienced the transforming rebetiko scene next to the piano lessons and the rock revolution of my teen and student years; in a way, I knew the music before studying it.

I came back to rebetiko five years ago; I was writing a proposal for a doctoral thesis. Now, I was about to become an ethnomusicologist and rebetiko was the subject of my research. Apparently, a cycle had been completed: I was born and grew up in the years the genre became a fashionable getaway amongst certain intellectual groups in Greek society and was successively revived and patronized by the state cultural politics; now I had committed myself to fieldwork on and theorizing about rebetiko. In a way, this study is not just a contemporary rebetiko ethnography; it embodies a life course. Behind the discussion on revivalist culture, there is the shadow of the ethnographer's lifetime, myself.

The present thesis is an ethnography of contemporary rebetiko revivalist music culture based on field research I conducted in the city of Thessaloniki, the capital of Northern Greece. The fieldwork was carried out in two phases: (a) a short period of preliminary research (November - December 1997) and, (b) a period of research during which I concentrated on particular rebetiko performance contexts (December 1997 - December 1998). The second period of research was interrupted by a three-month interval that is, the 'summer season' of music making - stretching from June to early September 1998 - during which the rebetiko venues I conducted my research were closed down. I spent these three months organizing the field data gathered so far and transcribing various tape-recorded discussions.

The thesis consists of two parts. Part A involves a brief introduction to the culture, social status and historical eras of rebetiko song. As such it provides the basis for communicating more thoroughly the understandings of current rebetiko revival discussed in the second, longer part of the thesis. The study of current rebetiko revival in Part B (the main part of the thesis) – focuses on three case studies, each one corresponding to a different performance context: an 'ethnic' bar venue, a 'traditional' *taverna* and a *ghlendi* ('revelry', 'a merry-making event') specially organized in a local café.

The first part may appear to be an autonomous section in relation to the second one. Indeed, the first part has basically an informative character: it provides information on what rebetiko song used to be, where it was performed and by whom, its relationship with other musical genres and how various groups of urban society used to think and produce discourses about it. It is based on various written accounts

on rebetiko music, rather than on field research. Part B, in contrast, has a performative character: it is a textual performance of the knowledge *made* in the field and the ways I came to understand and know current rebetiko culture as an ethnographer – a performance and interpretation of the ‘lived experience’ of contemporary rebetiko realities taking place in the Ano Poli area of Thessaloniki.

The informative Part A grounds the performative Part B. Part A speaks briefly of the rebetiko culture and associated beliefs and practices that preceded the rebetiko culture discussed in the main ethnography, Part B. It talks about the past, more specifically the past taking place before the present recounted in the ethnography. Part A familiarizes the reader with this past aiming at informing the understandings of the present suggested by the ethnography. Besides, this is an ethnography that focuses on contemporary rebetiko revival; it is essential, thus, to describe *what* is actually revived and how certain notions conditioning the ways people experience rebetiko song in particular contexts today, were developed and transformed over the 20<sup>th</sup> century. This invites the reader to share comprehensively the meanings embodied in the discourses and aesthetics defining rebetiko revivalist culture today.

Part A concludes with a review of the rebetological debates of the 1960s and a brief discussion of the first and second rebetiko revivalist periods. This way, it ultimately bridges both parts by bringing the discussion up to the contemporary rebetiko world represented throughout the second part. Part B is structured in four chapters. The first chapter is overall concerned with the ‘urban ethnomusicology at home’ approach featuring the present study. It discusses critically the concept of ‘urban’ music culture and, thus, the perception of rebetiko song as an ‘urban’ genre,

by looking at the ways it was traditionally defined and studied as antithetical to ‘rural’ music. Secondly, it is intended to question the kind of approach, which may be called ‘ethnomusicology at home’ - adopting the already well-established term ‘anthropology at home’: what happens when ‘home’ becomes the field of research? And, moreover, what does it mean to be a native ethnographer engaged in a reflexive research ‘at home’?

The second chapter aims at illuminating the theoretical frameworks featuring both the processes of practicing and writing ethnography. First, it discusses the area of ideas known under the term ‘reflexive ethnomusicology’ and the recent understanding of ethnomusicological fieldwork as a ‘special ontology’ with respect to the postmodern approach to ‘writing culture’ and the emphasis on the notions of ‘subjectivity’ and ‘experience’. The second part of the chapter is devoted to the poetics of ethnography and the strategies of ethnographic writing. The process of deciding what to write and how to write it is represented in terms of film ‘editing’. As in the case of making a film, the ethnographic narratives included in the final text are selections I purposefully made having assessed the total amount of ethnographic material I had gathered. I perceive these selections as a series of ‘shots’ recounting certain situations and incidents occasionally lived in the field, which in the final editing process are represented as continuous ‘sequences’.

The three case studies that overall constitute the representation of the research experience (chapter 10) are interconnected and form a network of contemporary rebetiko realities happening in the area of Ano Poli in Thessaloniki. More specifically, the *Amareion* ‘ethnic’ bar performance context - that is the central case study -

becomes an ethnographic ‘allegory’ speaking of understandings that emerged within the ongoing revivalist culture. The *taverna* event and the rebetiko revelry involve ‘traditional’ music making contexts depicted here as peripheral case studies that are intended to illuminate alternative ‘rebetiko-ways-of-being’ . Overall, the three case studies represent a rebetiko world made of diverse worlds; it is an *ethnographic* world that appears both homogeneous and differentiated featuring common and divergent rebetiko perceptions, practices and aesthetics.

The ethnographic narratives are represented in the form of a dialogic narrative that aims at communicating the reflexive dynamics of the research experience. Beyond the ethnographer’s voice there appear the voices of the people in the field: this invites the reader to share the poetics of ethnographic knowledge as a multi-subjective process. My main concern in this chapter is to communicate the ways people perceive, practice, feel and imagine rebetiko song today. In fact, the present thesis is not strictly about rebetiko song, in the sense that I was not interested in analyzing musical structures and modes, dissecting the structure of improvisation, transcribing songs, or investigating organological issues. Rather than a musicological account of rebetiko music, this ethnography is about the human encounters happening in certain rebetiko venues of the Ano Poli area in Thessaloniki. It explores the ways people experience rebetiko and the ways they re-define rebetiko song today by re-viving it.

It is exactly this approach that disengages the present thesis from the tradition of rebetology (*rebetologia*), that is a field of rebetiko knowledge to which a number of local and foreign scholars are variously attached. Rebetiko in the majority of

rebetological writings is perceived as a musical category, a closed system of songs lyrics, musicians, instruments, and recordings associated with certain historical periods. While local rebetologists have often participated in ideological debates regarding the nature of Greek folk song and have provided useful insights to the study of rebetiko, they overall fail to understand it as a music culture and, consequently, to study rebetiko culture; they are not interested in knowing rebetiko as a 'lived experience'. In that sense, the present thesis is differentiated from the rebetological tradition, because it involves an ethnomusicological study of current rebetiko revival – an ethnography that is based on field research.

In the last chapter I discuss particular theoretical ideas suggested by the ways the ethnographic experience is represented. Here, I address various specific issues: How the concept of revival is connected to the 'world music' movement and the recent interest in promoting 'ethnic' music making? And, moreover, how the current understanding of rebetiko as 'world music' is generated within the broader context of postmodern culture? By touching upon these topics I am primarily interested in looking at the ways rebetiko is 'other-ed' today. The discussion of the contemporary phenomenon of rebetiko 'other-ing' is grounded on four bodies of discourses and aesthetics that are intended to organize the ethnographic narratives upon which the theoretical discussion is further elaborated. Each body supports the investigation of particular concepts: the perception of rebetiko song as a descendant of Byzantine chant invested with nuances of postmodern orientalism, the monumentalization of the genre and its authentication as 'ethnic-art' music and the current politics of performing 'authentic' rebetiko. Finally, I suggest an understanding of the rebetiko revival in the light of Foucault's concept 'heterotopia', considering rebetiko

performances as musical heterotopias that define postmodern urban spaces and the ways urbanites shape their musicality today.

To what extent, can this theorizing speak of current changes and directions followed by Greek music culture at large? The ideas elaborated in the final chapter are based on three case studies. The rebetiko performances they describe stand as ethnographic paradigms I have considered as suitable and powerful to communicate certain cultural realities happening in Greek society today. They are not supposed to reflect all cultural realities currently associated with rebetiko song; rather, I understand them as instances of rebetiko culture that are constantly changing. In that sense, the present case studies do not serve as evidences of a rebetiko cultural truth: they express their own truths, which may differ from truths illustrated by other case studies. Inevitably, they are 'fictions' that is, they are subjective cultural accounts made to communicate knowledge. Ultimately, this ethnography is primarily concerned with illuminating exactly this process: namely, to invite the reader to share the poetics of ethnographic 'fiction' and interpretation and, through this, the gradual 'making' of the researcher - ethnomusicologist in the field.

### *On references*

The writing of Part A is based on various kinds of references, from the available academic essays on rebetiko song (philological, anthropological, historical and sociological) to rebetological books, biographies of musicians and articles published in the local press. The kind of literature that supports the second part involves the

study of ethnomusicological writings on urban music, music revivals, the ‘world music’ phenomenon, Greek folk music, anthropological writings on Greek culture, as well as that of recent theoretical writings addressing the nature of ethnomusicological research and ethnographic representation. The ideas elaborated in the final chapter were grounded on theoretical writings addressing critically issues associated with the concept of postmodernity with respect to that of modern culture serving to locate the discussion of rebetiko revivalist culture in the broader frame of cultural orientations and ideas conditioning postmodern Greek society at large.

The format followed in the presentation of bibliography adheres to that recommended in *Guidelines for the Presentation of Essays and Dissertations*, Goldsmiths College, Department of Music (1999). Translations of titles in Greek are given.

#### *Translations – transliterations- italicizations*

All transliterations and translations of Greek words, phrases and lyrics to English are my own unless another source is stated. The translation of song titles and lyrics has raised certain difficulties regarding the rendering of the meaning of slang words and phrases in English. They basically aim at providing understanding of the content; they are mainly denotative translations. The transliterations are intended to correspond as far as possible to the pronunciation of certain Greek consonants (*dh* is used for δ and *gh* for γ). Non-English words appear in italics (according to *Guidelines for Presentation of Essays and Dissertations*, Goldsmiths College, Dept of Music, 1999).

The occasional use of italics in English words is intended to highlight the meaning of the word in text. The word 'rebetiko' appears in regular fonts throughout the text, since it is commonly used in the context of the thesis and is considered this way as part of the English language.

*List of audio examples. Discography. Photographic material*

References to audio examples are cited in the text in numerical order that corresponds to the order of recorded tracks found on the CD attached on the back cover. The list of audio examples placed after the bibliographic references aims at providing further comments on the audio examples. The comments were written with respect to the textual section of the main thesis that the example serves to illustrate. The information provided was mainly sourced in the booklets accompanying the CDs. Accordingly, the information on the identity of performers and the dates of recordings is based on the notes of the CD booklets (when available). A description of the contents of the lyrics is given when it is essential for supporting the thesis text to which the audio example refers. Full reference on discographic information about the audio sources is given in the following section. The reader can readily access the thesis page where each track is discussed.

References to the photographic material are also cited in the text in numerical order which corresponds to that of the photographic material placed at the back of the volume. The notes that accompany the illustrations are intended to correspond to the thesis text each photo is used to illustrate.

## *Acknowledgments*

May thanks to Ourania Rapti, Mitsos Mihalopoulos and Haris Drizos, the musicians of the *Amareion kompania* for their help, support and response to my research interests over the entire period of fieldwork and writing up. I am also indebted to all the people I met in the rebetiko venues, held discussions with and shared the music making experience, among them Kostas Trentsios, 'Aetna' (nickname),<sup>1</sup> Amalia Anatolaki, 'Bekris' the taverna-owner. My thanks to the musicians of the *Bekris' taverna* the bouzouki player, Menelaos Petkos, the guitarist, Vangelis Karatzas, and the *baghlamas* player, Antonis Karakasidhis, the musicians of the *Loxandra* ensemble, especially the *kanonaki* player Dimitris Vasiliadhis, and the musicians of the event held at *Kath'Odhon* café, the bouzouki players Nikos Stroutopoulos, Nikos Zaparas and the guitarist Apostolis Tasoglou.

I would also like to thank the Archive Department of the Hellenic Society for the Protection of Intellectual Property and, especially, Sotiris Lykouropoulos for providing me information regarding the discography of the songs referred in the text.

I am grateful to Dr. Pavlos Kavouras, my co-supervisor and associate professor in Ethnomusicology at the Music Department of University of Athens. With his thorough knowledge of anthropological theory and expertise in Greek culture, he has offered me his earnest support, criticism and encouragement. In the course of innumerable discussions and exchanges of ideas, he has fueled my interest towards new areas of knowledge and approaches to cultural studies.

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<sup>1</sup> Full names are not given according to personal requirements.

Many, many thanks to my supervisor and tutor since 1995, Dr. John Baily, who supported my interest and inspired my enthusiasm to become an ethnomusicologist. With his long experience and dedication to the field, he guided me to the world of research and theoretical thinking and has ever since encouraged my initially rudimentary endeavors in the field of ethnomusicology. Especially, over the final stages of writing up he has generously devoted his time offering me valuable support, both as a tutor and as a friend.

Finally, I would like to thank my family for funding my studies and research and encouraging my aspirations.

## PART A

### Chapter 1. On rebetiko pre-history: oriental music at the end of 19<sup>th</sup> century

#### *The available sources: hindrances and constraints*

Because a knowledge of the past constitutes a necessary tool for understanding the present, I find the investigation of the rebetiko pre-history an essential prerequisite of a thesis aiming at exploring contemporary aspects of rebetiko music in Greek society.<sup>1</sup> The early stages of rebetiko are chronologically located in the years before the Balkan Wars (1912-13), namely the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century during the period in which a member of the *Βαυαρικόν* royal family, King Otto and his successor, King George I, ruled the newly constituted Greek state.<sup>2</sup> Due to the scarcity and the character of the currently available sources on urban popular music of those years, my attempt to reconstruct rebetiko prehistory was complicated and perplexing.

One of the basic problems concerns the absence of sound recordings of Greek music dated in the latter half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. According to Ilias Voliotis Kapetanakis, a Greek rebetologist, the first recordings were made in 1896 by the Berliner Record Company, NY, USA (see Kapetanakis 1999:67-68). Many recordings of Greek music took place during the first two decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century in Constantinople and the urban centres of Asia Minor, as well as among the

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<sup>1</sup> The Greek word *ρεμπέτικο* is transliterated as 'rebetiko' instead of the 'rembetiko' form followed by Holst (1975). My transliteration follows Gauntlett's argument: 'I would argue that the *mb* pronunciation of the word is not only rare but stylistically marked: it is affectedly puristic and consequently ironic, given that the word denotes songs connected with low life' (1991:7, n.1).

diasporic communities in USA by foreign record companies. From 1921 until 1929 various record companies (photo 1), such as Gramophone, His Master's Voice, Odeon, Columbia, Pathe, Polydor, Parlophon, Decca, Brunswick and Victor, established their agencies in Greece.<sup>3</sup> In the city of Thessaloniki the first recordings were undertaken by the British Gramophone in the years between 1905 and 1912 and they mainly involved Greek, Turkish, Armenian and Jewish songs.

Likely, the examination of the character of posterior recordings may illuminate aspects of the musical culture of earlier years; it may be, though, at the same time, dangerous. The formulation of conclusions based on musical recordings made in the years that followed the historical period we seek to reconstruct may risk, to a great extent, the comprehensive understanding of rebetiko prehistory. Nonetheless, it is reasonable to assume that the recordings dated from the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century may also include musical compositions from earlier years. However, for a number of reasons related both to technological constraints, as well as to musical performance, such a hypothesis may mislead the scholar and need to be examined cautiously.

It is important to bear in mind that sound recordings differ from the ways a song was actually performed in urban entertainment places of the latter half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. First, the high price of wax cylinders used for records constrained the

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<sup>2</sup> Thessaloniki and the rest of Northern Greece were still under Turkish rule; the city was incorporated in the Greek state in 1913.

<sup>3</sup> The first Greek record company, Panhellenion Record, was founded in 1919 in the USA; a few years earlier, in 1914, the Orion Greek record company reissued and distributed in the USA folk songs of Asia Minor (see Kapetanakis 1999:79). The first Greek record company based in Greece was Columbia, founded in 1930. Kapetanakis is based on Spotswood's account of ethnic recordings (1990). See also Kounadhis (2000:251-254, 271-307).

recording takes to one or two which, in turn, determined the character of the musical product finally issued. As a result, musicians were anxious to perform as accurately as possible; this, in turn, created a tense atmosphere in the recording 'studio' that inevitably affected the performance quality, especially the improvisational parts. Moreover, the allowed duration set by early recording technology extended to a maximum of 3-4 min. for each performance. This forced the completion of song performance within strict time limits, which are absent when music is practiced within the 'live' performance context.

It is noteworthy that the early recordings were made by small teams of foreigners who would visit the country for a few days and employ small performing bands of well-known professional musicians. Because the chosen musicians were required to perform different musical genres, the various musical styles were, to a great extent, homogenized since they were overall played by the same instrumentalists, sung by the same vocalists and orchestrated by standard professional ensembles employed in recording studios. This way, the recorded items were de-contextualized from the special aesthetics and playing techniques that characterized each musical idiom.

Until today, musicologists and music experts have not unearthed any musical scores deriving from the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century that could in any way supplement our information about the sound documents. Besides, local music making, as well as music in the broader eastern Mediterranean, was primarily based on oral tradition. Greek folk music was not textualized; it was traditionally conveyed in time and space through collective memory – the sound of the words and the sound of the music. Folk music traveled in the memory of humans who were the agents for

its existence, enhancement and perpetuation. Early rebetiko music, however, was an oral tradition that developed within an urban culture characterized by the written word. Written accounts of urban pre-rebetiko music and culture appear, therefore, occasionally, whenever agents of the written word – urban literate people - decide to write about it. Besides, as a result of the generalized non-literacy of the times, there are no written accounts from the people defining the performance context of folk music. Inevitably, the voices of the humans sharing folk song culture of the latter half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century were muted.

The main, not to say the exclusive, source of knowledge about early rebetiko music are, therefore, the written accounts that were published in the contemporary press - mostly the Athenian – which were composed by various authors deriving from the urban educated class. The relevant articles either reject or praise what they call ‘oriental’ music – the predecessor of rebetiko song - performed in the latter half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century in various venues in the city. Despite, however, the character of the approaches, the fact that the relevant writings derive exclusively from a specific social group suggests *a priori* a hermeneutic approach: the texts ought to be understood as biased constructions advocating further ideological disputes among authors who write within a specific historical and cultural context.

To that extent, it is essential to bear in mind that in those years education was restricted to the economically privileged groups of Greek society, who represented a social minority demarcated from the majority of the urban people (identified as *o laos*).<sup>4</sup> However polarizing this may appear, it describes the segmented cultural

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<sup>4</sup> The term *o laos* refers to the majority of non-literate people of low economic and social status from which the well-off and educated groups of Greek society were socially distanced.

context within which the written word on pre-rebetiko was developed - a written word that embodied cultural anxieties, stereotypes, prejudices, and interpretations of the 'other', in this case, the deprived urban social groups. The nature of the written sources generates further hermeneutic dilemmas: what prompted urban scholars at the end of 19<sup>th</sup> century to write about 'oriental' music? And, moreover, should we interpret the absence of relevant references as evidence for the absence of music making practices?

*The ideal of europeanization in Greek society at the end of 19<sup>th</sup> century*

Within a newly constituted Greek state that was anxiously looking to identify itself with an 'enlightened' Europe, the educational values of the economically privileged groups were primarily dictated by western European cultural values. Paul Dumont, in his archival research on *Journal de Salonique*, a popular local francophone newspaper from the end of 19<sup>th</sup> century, stressed the vivid impact of French culture on the lifestyle, habits and worldviews of the well-off social groups of the city of Thessaloniki. French language proliferated in the local press.<sup>5</sup> The curriculum of the majority of the Jewish, Turkish, Greek and French schools established in the city included courses in French. In fact, the first francophone school was established in 1873 by the *Alliance Israelite Universelle* (AIU), a Jewish charitable organization based in Paris. French education soon became a necessary luxury for the prosperous groups of the city, who were anxious to dedicate themselves in the cultural values imported from the 'urbane' West.

Next to familiarization with the French language, urban wealthy groups were eager to practice anything that would identify them with what was broadly considered as 'European high culture'. The process of europeanizing the local cultural profile was basically pioneered by the privileged groups of the Sephardic Jewish community of Thessaloniki which were the greatest among the ethnic populations settled in the city. The ideal of europeanization was also apparent in architectural styles employed in public buildings, as well as in wealthy family residencies and villas of the city.<sup>6</sup> By the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century Thessaloniki was widely considered as 'the most European city of the [Ottoman] Empire' (Yerolymbou and Kolonas in Veistein 1994:180). The desire to live like Europeans was, moreover, manifested in the musical preferences of the educated groups: in the organization of western classical music concerts, the performances of numerous philharmonic orchestras invited by local cultural associations and clubs, and the proliferation of western dance schools as early as 1879 (see related announcement in *Faros tis Makedhonias*, 9.10.1897).

The western-educated urban wealthy elites were stereotyped in the persona of 'aristocrat' featured in the *komeidhylio* drama genre (see Hatzipantazis 1981), a type of comic musical theatre (photo 2, 3) that flourished in Greek urban centres in the 1890s. The figure of the 'aristocrat' was often illustrated as an eccentric and untrustworthy person of loose morals and an arrogant and effeminate attitude. By

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<sup>5</sup> By 1900 there were three francophone newspapers published in Thessaloniki, *L' Independent*, *Le Journal de Salonique*, *Le Progrès de Salonique*, and one youth magazine, *L' Ecole et la Famille*. (see Dumont 1994:234).

<sup>6</sup> The multi-ethnic structure of the Thessalonikian population resulted in the co-existence of several architectural styles that emerged in association with particular ethnic groups. Apart from the Western European architectural types, favored by the Jewish community, Greek residencies usually adopted the neo-classical style, while prosperous Turkish groups maintained the eclectic Ottoman baroque. For more details see Kolonas (1991).

employing French words and expressions in his vocabulary and dandy-like behaviour the 'aristocrat' sought to attract the attention of and make an impression on other people. In addition to the 'aristocrat' there was the figure of the 'scholar', who represented the urban-educated man. The 'scholar' used ancient Greek phrases and words in his vocabulary in order to show off his educational background. Often, he enjoyed commenting on and correcting the syntax and grammar used by non-literate figures in the play. Nonetheless, overall he was satirized for puritanism and absurdity. On the opposite side of the 'aristocrat' persona stood the 'oriental' character (photo 4), who was depicted as a ludicrous, clumsy, naïve, voluptuous, callow and cowardly person.

#### *The press as a field of debate; European versus oriental music*

The earliest reference to performances of so-called 'oriental' music involves an announcement made in *Alithia*, an Athenian newspaper, in 3.07.1873:<sup>7</sup> 'apart from the lyrical coffee shops, where the capital [Athens] entertains itself, we also have *café-santour* where entertainment takes place every evening'.<sup>8</sup> Although the information provided is quite limited, it is noteworthy that oriental coffee shops are presented here as a type of *café chantant* which were coffee shops with European music and dance performances already flourishing in the city - an analogous type of

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<sup>7</sup> I use the term 'oriental' the way it is employed in the written sources under discussion. In that sense, the term is antithetically defined to the notion of 'western' music: 'oriental' describes age-long local musical traditions, while 'western' refers to the recently imported European musical trends. Consequently, the constructed dichotomy 'oriental' / 'western' music becomes a display of what Said defined as 'imaginary geography' ([1978] 1996:71); they represented imaginary poetics of space that reverberate local evaluations of cultural difference.

<sup>8</sup> The naming of coffee shops hosting oriental music as *café-santour* (based, apparently, on the leading instrument of the associated ensembles, the *santouri*, a local type of zither) implies an early attempt to distinguish them from the westernized *café-chantant* (before the broader application of the term *café-aman*).

show to that of French cabaret venues. Interestingly enough, among the faithful customers of this oriental venue are church cantors who ‘learn the sounds and the ascendances and descendances of *amanes* and other songs’ (audio example 1).<sup>9</sup>

In a more extensive article published the following year (17.07.1874) in *Efimeris* newspaper, there is a detailed description of the performance place, the performing group (*kompania*), as well as the audience’s reactions. The following intensification of the debate - in which *Efimeris* newspaper adopted a trenchant pro-europeanization policy – is already anticipated in the ironical nuances of the ways a typical patron of oriental music venues is here portrayed.<sup>10</sup> The author - unknown, but who may well have been of Constantinopolitan origin (see Hatzipantazis 1986:29) – also quotes a couplet of *amanes* music that ‘comes out of the deep bowels with passion’:

Το πληγωμένο στήθος μου πονεί μα δεν το λέει  
Τα χείλη μου κι αν τραγουδεί, μα η καρδιά μου κλαίει

(translation)

My wounded chest is in pain, but it doesn’t speak of it,  
although my lips are singing, my heart is crying.

Nevertheless, the typical patron of an oriental coffee shop is described as an exponent of local music and dance traditions engaged in ‘national and greeksome [sic]’ aesthetics, who favours ‘the flexible gutturalizations of the Asian Minor cantor from Smyrna and the overall harmonic sound of Arab and Turkish instruments’. The visitor to the *Pananthon* oriental coffee shop ‘feels as if the entire population of the city is transferred there; the true city, the pristine, the city of the past, which... the

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<sup>9</sup> *Amanes* concerns a vocal improvisational musical genre, often accompanied by a single solo instrument, where the singer chants couplets in fifteen-syllable verse in free rhythm. See Holst (2000); Kounadhis (2000:363-381).

French theatre has not corrupted yet'.<sup>11</sup> The clientele of *café-santour* is described as 'peaceful people' of working class families: 'musing housewives, ...relaxed family men, young women accompanied ...and brave and chivalrous sergeants'.<sup>12</sup> The band performs on a wooden stage and attracts the interest and the admiration of the customers; the main drink consumed in oriental coffee shops is beer. The *kompania* features two violin-players, a guitarist, a male singer and a *santouri* player, all referred to by their full names and commended for their musical mastery (audio example 2). Moreover, according to the same article in *Efimeris*, the closing time is the twelve o'clock at midnight and admission costs around twenty-five *lepta* (cents of drachma).

In the next twelve years there occur a few scattered written references to *café-amans*, which further complicate the attempt to reconstruct rebetiko prehistory.<sup>13</sup> While we may somehow detect the ways oriental music was introduced and gradually diffused within entertainment places in the centre of the city, it is still difficult to draw conclusions about the overall activity of oriental *kompanies* (pl.), especially regarding how often they performed, whether they were popular, the structure of the clientele and the mobility of the performing groups. Nevertheless, the performance of oriental music in urban entertainment practices stimulated a series of debates regarding the nature of Greek folk music. Rather than being generated by the

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<sup>10</sup> The typical patron is described as an old-fashioned person who 'recalls with melancholy the past, being disappointed by the current state of things and imagines the former simplicity of things...'

<sup>11</sup> French troupes were frequently invited to perform in Greek theatres during the last decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. In 1871 performances of French operettas sponsored by the Greek State took place in specially designed open-air theatres (see Hatzipantazis 1981:52-54).

<sup>12</sup> The use of dots in quotations (...) is used to denote words of the original text that are omitted in the reference.

<sup>13</sup> The word *aman* is a plaintive and wistful exclamation of Turkish origin commonly associated with the *amanes* song style. For Greek café music see also Conway-Morris (1980).

performing musicians or people associated with oriental musical culture in general, the relevant debate originated and prospered exclusively among local intellectuals.

For the aficionados of *café-amans*, oriental music represented a descendant of Byzantine chant that preserved elements of Byzantine psalmody.<sup>14</sup> Several Athenian newspapers, such as *Ethnofylax*, *Avghi*, *Stoa* and *Aion*, supported strenuously local musical and dance traditions and used to highlight the danger of the extinction of *kalamatiano(s)* and *tsamiko(s)* (local dance and musical genres).<sup>15</sup> The author of an article published in *Ethnofylax* (14.06.1874) appears obviously annoyed by the performance of European music by local military bands: 'Music is performed four times weekly, and, especially on Sunday, in two different [central] squares. Who, however, is going to believe that not even one national song is played? ... Some people tend to condemn unduly anything Greek, costume, music, custom, even...language...Oh, what a corruption, indeed, what a humiliation! Nothing of a noble and brave nature can be expected from those who are ashamed of their national habits and customs'.

In order to validate further the qualities of oriental music, many of its adherents criticized the westernised *café-chantans* where the music performed 'generates embracing, kissing, chuckles, kicking, howling and all that - unusual in Greece - storm of debauch and orgies that adorns famous dives of Paris' (Synadhinis 1929:207). Recent folklorist accounts on the city of Thessaloniki (see Tomanas 1991) describe *café-chantans* as luxurious places, fully illuminated, where aristocrats and rich

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<sup>14</sup> This also explains the special emphasis (cited above) placed on the presence of church cantors in *café-amans*.

<sup>15</sup> Several names of dances or song styles are used in Greek either as masculine (with the *-os* ending) or neutral nouns (*-o*).

people used to entertain themselves sitting in small marble tables and drinking beer, wine or *apsenti* (a strong alcoholic sweet beverage made of absinth). The music usually performed there featured operettas of Leckoc and Offenbach, Viennese waltzes of Lannere and J. Strauss, next to shocking erotic songs, French chansons, Italian *canzonettas* and German folk songs. The performing young female singers and dancers, of French, German, Austrian and generally Western European origin, used to wander among the patrons half-naked carrying a tray to collect customers' tips. Apparently, then, the artists of *café-chantants* were also professional prostitutes (see Tomanas 1991:97-98). According to Tomanas, who studied mainly the Thessalonikian press of the latter half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the majority of *café-chantants* were located in Francomahalas, that is the French neighbourhood of the city.

At the same time, the *café-amans* of the city hosted local music and dance traditions. Babis Aninos, a contemporary scholar, suggested that the term *café-aman* was coined after the plaintive Turkish expression *aman* (*Estia*, 30.10.1888). Tomanas (ibid.) argues that *café-amans* appeared in Thessaloniki much earlier than in the Greek capital, although he stresses the absence of related references in the local press. It seems that the journalistic interest was monopolized by the concurrent performances of western classical music and drama. His argument is primarily based on evidence traced in the memoirs of the Turkish traveller Evliya Celebi of the 17<sup>th</sup> century (1668). Celebi refers to wine taverns (where narghileh was also served) which were subsequently, according to Tomanas, transformed to a kind of small theatre. *Kompanies* of Jewish, Armenian and Smyrna musicians playing *kanonaki* (kanun), *laouto* (lute), *santouri* (zither) and *klarino* (clarinet) used to perform on the

stage together with female dancers.<sup>16</sup> The latter notably appeared much later than the male musicians. For the author of the article published in the Thessalonikian newspaper *Estia* (2.05.1880) those ‘bawdy dives ...constitute a public offence’, a ‘wound’ which local authorities should ‘heal’; ‘especially at night, the entire execrable face of the shame unravels, whence prurient voices and songs fill the atmosphere of the area with stench and malodour’.

The debate flourishing between the exponents and the opponents of *café-amans* found fertile ground to prosper further within the dispute raised around the issue of europeanization of Orthodox Church music. Already in 1870, the composer and later first director of the Athens conservatory - instituted in 1871 - Alexandhros Katakouzinis, encouraged by Queen Olga, attempted to introduce choral polyphony in the service of the palace chapel in Athens. Despite the objections expressed by the Holy Synod, several other churches of the capital soon followed his innovation. A few years later the author of the article published in 1889 in *Nea Efimeris* appears strongly annoyed by the musical ‘schism’, as he calls it, developing among the churches of the Greek kingdom that threatens the perpetuation of ‘this very valuable heir [Byzantine chant], which for nineteen centuries long now was respected and honoured as immaculate’. He moreover rhetorically questions: ‘Which music are we going to have in our churches, the music of the theatres or that of the church?’ (*Ekklesiastiki Mousiki* ‘The Church Music’, *Nea Efimeris*, 21.07.1889).

For the opponents of oriental musical traditions, europeanization was seen as the process of emancipating local culture from ‘barbarian influences’. In a lecture

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<sup>16</sup> For Greek popular instruments see Anoyianakis ([1976] 1991).

given in 1874, Isidhoros Skylitsis, a prominent local scholar, suggested the replacement of traditional Byzantine chant with European choral polyphony.<sup>17</sup> Inspired by the ideals of the Enlightenment – besides, he was one of the still living agents of the Greek Enlightenment movement – his ideas were clearly influenced by his adherence to ancient Greek cultural ideals. Skylitsis regarded polyphony as an ‘authentic child’ of ancient Greek music, while he viewed Byzantine chant as a core of ‘barbarian influences of Jewish, Arabic and Turkish origin’ (*Peri Eklisiastikis Mousikis*, ‘On Church Music’, *Efimeris*, 12.06.1874). In the following years, the author supported the idea of ‘purifying’ Greek musical tradition from ‘repulsive’ oriental influences.

In the same spirit, a few years later, in 1880, Alexandros Katakouzinis attempted to anticipate the future of Greek music, which will finally ‘kick over the traces of Ottoman tradition’. For Katakouzinis, who published his article anonymously, it was about time for Greeks to abandon ‘nasal’ and ‘barbarian’ songs and develop the art of ‘good’ music that befits ‘noble and well-mannered people’. Under the term ‘good’ music, he implied western classical music taught in the Athens Conservatory, polyphonic church music chanted in the Queen’s chapel, imported melodrama performances, the music of *café-chantants* and of local military bands (*En Elladhi Mousiki*, “Music in Greece”, *Theatriki Epitheorisis*, 25.05.1880).

In fact, both the aficionados and the opponents of oriental music attempted to substantiate their theoretical arguments by developing evolutionist schemes. Within the relevant texts, Byzantine musical tradition was seen either as an undesirable heritage or a precious monument of Greek history. On one hand, oriental music was

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<sup>17</sup> Despite his Asia Minor (from Smyrna) origins.

validated as a descendant of Byzantine chant; in this case, oriental music was sanctioned as the current agent of the Hellenic-Orthodox musical ideal conditioning Greek culture. On the other hand, exactly this argument (concerning the origins of oriental music in Byzantine chant) justified the disassociation of the genre from ancient Greek music. In this case, Byzantine chant and its offspring, oriental music, were identified as 'barbarian' elements, in contrast to the 'pure' Greek music of ancient times. Because 'urbane' European music was perceived as a development of the polyphony supposed to be a feature of ancient Greek music, it was necessary to familiarize Greek music with the western European musical idiom in order to re-orient local music making towards 'true' Greek musical traditions. Interestingly enough, the latter approach also suggests an antithetical scheme opposing Byzantine chant to the music of the 'glorious' ancient past. Besides, until the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century the Greek academic community used to underestimate and depreciate Byzantium as an 'obscure' historical era associated with the decay of ancient Greek civilization. Music produced within this decadent period of Greek history was accordingly regarded as an alienated product of low artistic value.<sup>18</sup>

Moreover, the debate on oriental music became a metaphor of nationalist claims that, depending on the author's standpoint, bears a binary character. The descent of oriental music from Byzantine chant justified its nativity; as a part of a longitudinal musical tradition, oriental music was, in this case, regarded as a unique local product. Because it was native, it was 'sacred': it deserved to be honoured as a Hellenic-Orthodox tradition Greeks ought to protect, preserve and disseminate. In that sense, oriental music was regarded as a vital agent of 'our national identity'.

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<sup>18</sup> Academic politics appear to change with the publication in 1874 of 'The History of Byzantine Empire' by Konstantinos Paparighopoulos, one of the academic historians who pioneered the

Oriental music *qua* 'ours' was, moreover, identified as being superior to western music. Western music was seen as 'foreign' and, as such, it threatened to corrupt local tradition which should remain 'pure' and 'unalloyed' by extrinsic cultural influences.

For the opposite side - the opponents of oriental music - this very process of europeanization was envisaged as a *deus ex machina* that might ensure the expurgation of local music from the so-perceived Ottoman stigma. In this case, the 'barbarian' influences were identified with Byzantine chant, which was denounced as a syncretic, 'non-clean' musical product. 'Authentic' Greek music was found in the 'golden' ancient past, out of which contemporary European music had developed. Appropriating local musics to western musical 'achievements' was seen therefore as a process of re-familiarization with 'our' remote past – that is, the supposed ancient Greek polyphony crystallized in current European musical tradition. 'Thinking west' was seen as the way to construct a 'pure' national musical profile and harmonize Greek culture with the 'progressive' part of the world.

#### *The validation of oriental music by the Nikolaos Politis intellectual circle*

The status of oriental music was decisively advanced by the ideological orientations of the literary and artistic circle of Nikolaos Politis, considered as the founder of Greek folklore studies, and the *Parnassistes* literary group (a name borrowed from the respective French literary movement, Parnassism) that prospered in Athens in the

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validation of Byzantine culture among Greek scholars and supported the so-called 'Great Idea' project (that is the re-establishment of the Hellenic Empire with Constantinople as its capital city).

1880s.<sup>19</sup> Many of ‘the suitors of the imaginative Asian poetry and music’ used to frequent *café-amans* and ‘divert themselves in the sounds of *amanes* with *kefi* [‘high spirits’] and voluptuousness’ (*Nea Efimeris*, 6.07.1882; see Hatzipantazis 1986: 41-49). Their ideas for Greek culture were mainly published in the pages of *Estia* and *Rabaghas*, a political-satirical magazine edited in the years 1878-79 by Kleanthis Triantafyllos and Vlassis Gavriilidis, both of Constantinopolitan origin. *Estia* and *Rabaghas*, together with *Mi Hanesai* magazine, became the arenas where prominent philologists and novelists (such as Nikos Kambas, Georghios Drosinis, the young Kostis Palamas, Angelos Vlachos and Ioannis Polemis) developed their criticism against the romantic literary tradition. In the place of exaggerated sentimentalism and lyrical pseudo-heroism, they advocated the need for simplicity of expression and the employment of familiar topics inspired by everyday life. To that extent, they strongly supported the replacement of the *katharevousa* (‘archaic’) with *dhimotiki* (‘colloquial’) language that was thought as more appropriate to express their interest in the ‘local’ and the ‘folk’.<sup>20</sup>

Under the influence of Nikolaos Politis and the growing interest in folklore studies local literati were attracted to the world of folk traditions and developed a vivid interest in local musical traditions. In the following years, Politis published his anthology of Greek folk songs (*Ekloyai apo ta Tragoudhia tou Ellinikou Laou*, ‘Selections of Greek Folk Songs’, 1915). In fact, oriental music was in this case somehow associated with avant-garde aesthetics and ideology emerging in Greek

<sup>19</sup> On *Parnassistes* see Politis (1974). Later several *Parnassistes* were attracted to Symbolism (such as the poet Kostis Palamas; see Beaton 1994:84).

<sup>20</sup> In 1880, Psycharis published his novel ‘*Journey*’ (*Taxidhi*) considered as the manifesto of the use of *dhimotiki*. It is characteristic that Palamas’ first collection of poems was titled ‘Songs of My Country’ (*Tragoudhia tis Patriδας Mou*, 1886).

society.<sup>21</sup> Beaton describes the kind of fiction published during the last couple of decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century as ‘folkloric realism’ that is the ‘detailed depiction of a small, more or less contemporary, traditional community in its physical setting’ (1994:72).<sup>22</sup> By re-discovering local customs, morals and, of course, music the literary circle of Politis aimed at opposing western cultural ideals. Once more, the attitude of certain Greek intellectuals towards oriental music embodied, beyond aesthetic preferences, further ideological biases and cultural anxieties of Greek society. In the following decade, the 1890s, the *Techni* youth intellectual circle launched a criticism towards the folklorist turn: oriental music, for the *Techni* adherents, was associated with retrogressive cultural dynamics. Again, the literati of the *fin de siècle* treated oriental music either as a conservative element - a bond with past traditions that hindered cultural progress - or, as a dynamic vehicle for building the Greek cultural future.

One of the most passionate exponents of the pro-orientalist movement, Ioannis Kambouroglou, also of Constantinopolitan origin, further supported oriental music by introducing local terminology associated with music-making (such as *derneki*, *houzourlidhissa*, *hanedes*, *defi* etc.) in his articles on *café-amans* published in *Nea Efimeris*, a newspaper edited by himself. His initiative was enthusiastically followed by various authors; as a result, vernacular words of the Asia Minor dialect partly entered Greek press language. In 1883 the poet Georghios Drosinis described romantically his experience of a performance of a *kompania* from Smyrna: ‘I feel

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<sup>21</sup> The literary generation of 1880s, inspired by the concurrent French political events, supported democracy and the parliamentary system. See Linos Politis ([1973] 1980:189).

<sup>22</sup> He preferred this term to the *ithoghráfico diighima* (‘ethographic novel’) one employed by Linos Politis ([1973] 1980:200). For Beaton, Greek literature at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century is defined by an extrovert and an introvert trend. The first is represented by those writers experimenting with the French Parnassian movement; the latter, on the other hand, by those who turned towards Greek oral

these voluptuous, sybarite oriental tunes...denoting all the secrets of Asian palaces: the erotic sighs, the passionate tears, the fragrant narghilehs...[they] penetrate the heart and transmit there the strong shudder of drunkenness and commotion' (*Tris Imeres En Tino*, 'Three Days in Tinos', *Estia*, 24.04.1883).

What the rhetorics applied by the enthusiasts of oriental music, however, clearly indicated was the influence of orientalist ideological orientations - already flourishing in Western Europe - in the ways they approached local music making. In fact, orientalism involves one of the main ideological movements within which the 'discovery' of Greek folk song in the 19<sup>th</sup> century was framed (see Alexis Politis 1999:233). The orientalist ethos of the relevant accounts is exemplified in the use of words such as 'voluptuous', 'passionate', 'ritualistic', 'sybarite' and 'mysterious' describing musics performed in *café-amans*, next to the appropriation of non-Greek, 'oriental' words. This way, the 1880s literary generation romanticized the culture of the opposite - Asia Minor - Aegean coast and the recent familiar historic past was now transformed to an alluring, primitive 'other'.

Meanwhile, the performance of an Armenian operetta in an Athenian theatre in 1883 led Greek educated groups to re-assess the supposedly <sup>UN</sup>bridgeable cultural distance separating oriental from western European music making in Greek society of the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century (see Hatzipantazis 1986:49-53). Initially, the advocates of musical europeanization ~~condemned~~ the announcement of the forthcoming show by an oriental troupe that was about to take place at a theatre, which was the realm of French vaudeville *par excellence*. For the wealthy urbanites, who were anxious to

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folk poetry. Regardless of how opposing those trends may appear, he identifies cross currents between them (see Beaton 1994:68).

about their Eastern Mediterranean and Balkan cultural heritage, oriental dramatic performances represented, at least, an anachronism, if not a menace to their own 'civilized' aspirations. Ieroklis, a well-known scholar and columnist, appeared overtly annoyed by the oriental shows:

Isn't it an offence to the intellectual and aesthetic progress of the capital, the performance of this troupe in New Faliro area, where the ~~flower~~ of our society resorts? I do not understand why our public morals and upbringing and the refined needs of our socially superior class should be sacrificed in favor of profiteers. I request the honest audience that resorts every day at Faliro to reject that entertainment that is unworthy of them and of the capital's culture and suitable only for the Constantinopolitan crowd (*Efimeris*, 12.07.1883).

It seems, however, that the music performed by the Armenian troupe was highly instructive for Greek academic composers, who appear to <sup>be</sup> frustrated by their attempts to develop a Greek version of French vaudeville. The Armenian operetta performance offered a vivid paradigm for a working solution: by mixing oriental with western musical language the *Beghlian* troupe of musicians demonstrated the ways local vaudeville could combine effectively the two, seen as opposite, musical traditions. In fact, the programme structure of the show combined then popular French vaudeville pieces by Leckock and Offenbach, played with 'exceptional virtuosity',<sup>23</sup> together with Armenian works, such as *Hor-Hor Agas*, *Arif* and *Zeibekoi*. Actually, the composer of the Armenian operettas simply embellished with short oriental tunes an otherwise entirely European musical project; in the end, the Armenian operetta involved music in the European tradition spiced with oriental musical sounds (see Hatzipantazis 1986:50-51).

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<sup>23</sup> The performance impressed Greek music experts such as Ioannis Skylitsis, who commended the 'rapid progress' Armenians displayed in European music and drama (*Efimeris*, 7.08.1883).

The fact, however, that oriental instruments, costumes and lyrics appeared for the first time on a theatrical stage devoted, until then, to imported or French-like local operettas, re-oriented the attitudes of Greek intellectuals towards oriental music in Greek society. For the first time, urban educated groups, even the most conservative, identified artistic qualities in a musical genre that incorporated elements of oriental origin. The syncretic nature of this musical crossbreed was particularly encouraging regarding the future of Greek national music: it exemplified the ways a local musical idiom could be appropriated by European tradition. Oriental elements could be vividly incorporated within the work of local composers and contribute to the construction of a Greek musical ethos. This was supposed to be liberating local musics from the undesirable Ottoman heritage or the barren imitations of western compositions. In the same spirit, Greek literature capitalized upon folk poetry, proverbs and tales,<sup>24</sup> academic musicians decided to capitalize upon folk song in order to construct the physiognomy of a national music school. Although a number of ambitious attempts took place during the following years, there were still, however, rigid objections on the part of the opponents of oriental music (*Nea Efimeris*, 4.10.1893). Those westernist intellectual voices insisted on nurturing the debate regarding the nature of neo-hellenic folk song and finally, succeeded in discouraging further analogous efforts.

Nevertheless, the politics of shaping a national musical profile inspired by the paradigm of the very nature of the Armenian operetta reveal an interesting process employed in Greek musical politics: the use of syncretism as a way of bridging

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<sup>24</sup> See the novels by Georghios Vizyinos, Alexandhros Papadhiamantis, Alexandhros Karkavitsas (see, Linos Politis 1974:201-207; Beaton 1994:74-82). Note that the literary contest conducted in 1883 by *Estia* magazine preset as a condition for candidates that the submitted work should involve a 'Greek topic'. This way, *Estia* supported the turn of Greek fiction towards traditional, rural settings (see Beaton 1994:70).

musical polarity. However, the rationale under which the oppositional sides, oriental and western music, were mixed privileged the European part. The resulting musical style was in fact a product based on western compositional techniques that encompassed a discreet 'ethnic' flavor. Oriental music was considered to be a primitive musical tradition that would have to compromise with the 'advanced' style of Western composition; eventually, the emerging musical genre represented rather western music making instead of cross-fertilizing creatively different musical traditions.

*The 1880s: the flourishing of café-amans*

The well-off urban groups enthusiastically welcomed the performance of Armenian operetta in the New Faliro theatre and appeared to develop a special interest in oriental entertainment. Henry Holland, a traveller who visited Thessaloniki in those years, described in his memoirs a reception organized by the Austrian ambassador, during which the ambassador's daughters and wife, of Greek origin, sang Turkish and Greek tunes, in order to please their guests.<sup>25</sup> A few months after its debut in Athens, the *Beghlian* troupe visited Thessaloniki (*Faros tis Makedhonias*, 28.01.1884). In the following year, a local newspaper announced the performances of the 'favored and praiseworthy by our audience' *Koureyian* Armenian-Turkish troupe at the Italian Theatre (*Ermis*, 16.11.1885). It seems that Armenian-Turkish troupes appeared in Thessaloniki even earlier than they did in Athens according to information drawn again from the local press: already in 1881, the *Faros* newspaper (16.12.1881)

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<sup>25</sup> See Anastasiadhou, *Οι Δυτικοί της περιοχής* ('The Westerners of the Area') in Veinstein ([1993] 1994:158).

advertised the premiere of the show given by the Armenian-Turkish troupe of *Agop Nikodasian*.

The cultural cosmopolitanism and political conditions in Thessaloniki promoted the flourishing of oriental music making. Until 1912 the city was still under Ottoman rule and the Muslim community was estimated to make up approximately one third of the total population. Since the city was under Ottoman rule, the Turkish community included administrative officers, merchants, lawyers and various liberal intellectuals, who were keen supporters of traditional cultural values and held strong anti-Europeanist aspirations.<sup>26</sup> This ideological context, inevitably, benefited oriental music.

References in the Athenian press are more detailed regarding aspects of performance events, such as the artistic quality of the female singers, the instruments used, the musical genres included in the programme, the character of the dances and the clientele of *café-amans*. It appears that the clientele frequenting *café-amans* in Athens came from diverse social groups. Babis Anninos, in his attempt to define differences between *café-amans* and *café-chantans*, argued in 1888 that, in contrast to the vivacious atmosphere of the westernized coffee shops, oriental places reverberate 'Asian indolence and solemnity' (Hatzipantazis 1986:79). In the same spirit, the author writing in *Nea Efimeris* suggested that those who were not pleased with the boisterous shows of *café-chantans* should visit 'the hermitage of Geraniou garden' (29.06.1889). The female singer *Kior-Katina* was famous for threatening the audience to leave the stage if they did not respect the 'ritualistic silence' she

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<sup>26</sup> In 1908, Thessaloniki became the cradle of the Young Turks' Revolution. For further bibliography on the genesis of Turkish Socialism in Thessaloniki see Veinstein ([1993] 1994:303-304).

demanded of them in her performance (see *O Laos Diaskedazei*, 'The Folk Entertains Itself', *Rabaghas*, 27.07.1886). This suggests that music making in *café-amans* might bear the character of a formal musical concert. Significantly, oriental singers would avoid carrying about the tray their European colleagues used for tips - an attitude that indicates, moreover, a more rigid morality and social appearance on the part of the oriental singers.

The above rhetorics regarding the dynamics of sound in urban entertainment places reveal the authors' attempts to evaluate the ethos of urban musical entertainment. The 'ritualistic silence' and 'solemnity' dominating the *café-amans* indicate a sober and respectful place, in contrast to the disquietude and vivacity featuring the carnal and prosaic atmosphere of *café-chantants*. In that sense, the portrayed dynamics of sound embody further a metaphor about the nature of the relevant music making: silence featuring spirituality is regarded as sacred; it demands devotion, whereas the secularity echoed in the noise is identified as earthly and, therefore, profane.

Later accounts, such as the one provided by the ~~short story~~<sup>after</sup> Mihail Mitsakis, undermine this impression of tranquility featuring oriental music making conveyed by previous writers. Mitsakis describes the people frequenting *café aman* as seamen, workers, shop assistants and coachdrivers and the overall atmosphere as 'choking': 'a mingled noise of shouting, shrieks, swearing and babbling covers the place' (*Athinaike Selidhes* 'Athenian Pages', *Estia* 24.05.1887). In 1894, the novelist Konstantinos Hatzopoulos wrote of his visit to a central coffee shop that 'every night was literally screaming out of bacchanal fury' (*Ai Diaskedhazousai Athinai* ('Entertainment in Athens'), *To Asty*, 6/7.05.1894). Nonetheless, the rhetorics of such

novelistic accounts should be examined carefully, since they were written in the echoes of European naturalist and symbolist literature movements; this way, such accounts should be primarily understood as fiction inspired by *café-aman* entertainment rather than evidence of the musical reality they so vividly depict.<sup>27</sup>

The contradictory accounts on *café-aman* performances – either represented as a hermitage or as a pit of debauch – provided by the urban Press of the end of 19<sup>th</sup> century, further attest to the practice of oriental music making in diverse social contexts. While, on one hand, *café-amans* prevailed in impoverished areas of Athens, at the same time, oriental entertainment practices gained popularity among the wealthy urban groups. The co-existence of various social groups in the context of *café amans* - from family men, workers, provincial visitors and *koutsavakidhes* to church cantors, students and intellectuals – implies primarily that oriental music transcended a specific social setting.<sup>28</sup> It would be, therefore, a simplification to assume that the entertainment offered in *café-amans* appealed exclusively to particular low-life groups of Greek cities.<sup>29</sup>

The study of press reports may illuminate the mapping of *café-amans* in urban space. The information provided suggests the increasing concentration of *café-amans* in the centre of the capital, designating a shift in time and space from the outskirts to central areas of the city (see Hatzipantazis 1986:95). In Thessaloniki, the *café-amans*

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<sup>27</sup> Hatzopoulos (1868-1920) is one of the pioneers of the symbolist movement in Greek literature that flourished at the end of 19<sup>th</sup> century (see Beaton 1994:84). Mitsakis himself admitted that the scenery of a *café-aman* he describes resembles texts found in novels by Théophile Gautier (see *Athinaike Selidhes*, 'Athenian Pages', *Estia* 24.05.1887, p. 342).

<sup>28</sup> The word *koutsavakis* (sing.) describes the urban gangster persona.

<sup>29</sup> Interestingly, by the end of 19<sup>th</sup> century local shadow theatre, *karagiozis* - also an oriental tradition - gradually increased its popularity, attracting educated and wealthy groups of Greek society, such as journalists, scholars, cosmopolitans and respectable family men (see *Skrip* magazine, 2.07.1898).

referred to in various sources are mainly located in the heart of the city - on Eghnatia Avenue and the Vardharis region (see Tomanas 1991:12).

Of special interest are those accounts that provide aesthetic evaluations of the performing female singers' mastery. Fotini from Poli (Istanbul) was described as one of the virtuoso musicians of *café-amans*: '...her male voice has deep and mysterious tones... the gutturalization of a nightingale...and a sweet, sweet hoarseness, deep, deep as the voice of a dervish *ney*' (*Rabaghas*, 26.07.1886). Her antagonist, Kior-Katina from Smyrna, a famous prima donna, has a voice which '...is not something exquisite, it has an unpleasant hoarseness...but, what draws your attention, is the exceptional technique of her singing' that '...imposes a dervish silence, such that you can even hear a mosquito buzzing around a lantern in the garden" (*Rabaghas*, 27.07.1886). Kior-Katina first appeared in *Perivolaki* at Geraniou Square - a place that soon became the main stage for oriental shows - located in the Omonoia area of central Athens, close to where Fotini was singing.

It is noteworthy that most of the singers, commonly referred to in the local press by their first name, are of Armenian, Jewish, Smyrnian or Turkish origin. Male musicians are mostly instrumentalists and there are special references to violin virtuosos (*violitzidhes* pl., *violitzis* sing.), like Yiovanikas from Smyrna and Dimitrios Rombos from Peloponnese, or others known by their first name only (Marinos, Mihalakis, Panayiotis, Tzortzis, et al.). There are far fewer references to other instrumentalists such as *santouri* and lute players. Violinists had the leading role in these performing ensembles (see Hatzipantazis 1986:64-66).

Overall, the written accounts of the musical genres performed in *café-amans* indicate that the programme included musical genres from the entire eastern Mediterranean area: Turkish and Arab tunes with Greek, Turkish or Arab lyrics, Greek demotic songs (from Ioannina, Morias, *kleftika*, etc.), urban folk songs of the great Mediterranean ports, *arvanitika* (of the Arvanites ethnic group), Rumanian (of the Roumanovlahoi ethnic group, also known as Gekidhes), Bulgarian and Egyptian music.<sup>30</sup> The majority of the musicians employed in *café-amans* were either Greeks from Asia Minor or Armenians, while there are many references to Jewish and Gypsy musicians, too. Besides, from Ottoman times onwards most of the professional artists came from these particular ethnic groups and were competent to perform a diverse, multi-ethnic repertory (see Hatzipantazis 1986:67-69).

In addition, the mobility of *kompanies* throughout urban centres and great ports of the eastern Mediterranean strengthened the interchange among musical cultures operating within this musical network. Especially in the case of Thessaloniki, a cosmopolitan city at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the diversity of the repertory of *café-amans* was necessary in order to satisfy the multi-ethnic nature of the clientele.<sup>31</sup> The co-existence of several musical styles in the context of *café-amans* promoted the construction of a broader eastern Mediterranean musical repertory.

Today, the titles and lyrics of the songs performed in those years are largely unknown. Only a small number were recorded in the contemporary press.<sup>32</sup> Although

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<sup>30</sup> For the demotic tradition and *kleftiko* see Beaton (1980a:102-111).

<sup>31</sup> The population of the city consisted of Turks, Jews, Greeks, Armenians, Western Europeans, Romanians and people from Balkan countries (see Tomanas 1992; see also fn. 4).

<sup>32</sup> There are a number of references to Greek songs, which are either of the so-called *dhimotiko traghoudhi* ('demotic song') genre or pseudo-demotic songs. Single titles of songs are occasionally cited, such as *Paparouna* ('The Poppy') *Paraskevoula* ('Paraskevoula'), *To Kopsimo tou Mantiliou*

dispersed and fragmented, those references may, at least, support assumptions regarding the character of the repertory played by local *café-aman* ensembles. For example, *Akropolis* newspaper published in 1891 an *arvanitiko* song in order to please its Arvanites readers (see *O Piraiefs Kata ti Nyhta*, ‘Piraeus in the Night’, *Acropolis*, 25.08.1891). The oldest *amanes*’ lyrics preserved in written documents are those quoted in the issue of 1874, while there is a later *amanes* couplet cited in *Asty* newspaper in 1891 (see *Peiraiikai Nyhtes* ‘Nights in Piraeus’, *To Asty*, 11.05.1891):

Κλαίω κι από τα δάκρυα τη γη που στέκω βρέχω  
Κι άνθρωπος δεν ευρέθηκε να με ρωτήσει τ’ έχω

(translation)

I cry and I wet with tears the earth I stand on  
And no man was ever found to ask me why

The philologist Angelos Vlachos quoted the lyrics of *Yiannoula*, sung by a Smyrna female singer, Eirini, in 1879 (*Athinaikai Epistolai*, *IB* ‘Athenian Letters, *XV*, *Estia*, 2.09.1879), while in 1887 the singer known as Kaliopi was famous for her performance of the song *Hira* (‘The Widow’, *Nea Efimeris*, 16.07.1887). Interestingly, written accounts described the success of two songs recounting extramarital relationships that were especially popular in the Piraeus area. Finally, in his novel *Para tin Dexameni* Mihail Mitsakis described a revelry taking place at a small coffee shop, where a company of students coming from a Greek province sung next to the *kalamatiana* (pl., *kalamatiano(s)* sing.), the *kleftika* (pl., *kleftiko* sing.), and the *yianniotika* (pl., *yianniotiko* sing.) songs, ‘all the popular repertoire of the usual urban songs...disgusting and sickening’.<sup>33</sup>

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(‘The Cutting of the Handkerchief’), *Kavoukos* (‘Kavoukos’), *Tsiribidhas* (‘Tsiribidhas’); see Hatzipantazis (1986:72-73).

<sup>33</sup> See Mihail Peranthis, *Mihail Mitsakis, To ergo tou* (‘Mihail Mitsakis: His Work’), Athens, 1956:113-22.

Interestingly, regardless of their bias, most references highlight the vivid existence of *dhimotiko traghoudhi* in the repertory of *café-amans*. Actually, in *café-amans* the *dhimotiko traghoudhi* genre was performed in an entirely different context to that in which it originated and developed, namely the local rural communities in the Ottoman years. Transferring, therefore, the genre to an urban entertainment environment had inevitably promoted the re-assessment of its cultural identifications: the performance of *dhimotiko traghoudhi* in the city redefined the music as an urban tradition. Away from its original rural realities and the historical and cultural conditions it came from, *dhimotiko traghoudhi* was urbanized: it was performed and shared within a new communication framework in the city.

References related to dance activity in *café-amans* are also scarce; the relevant texts involve descriptions of various genres that attracted the attention of contemporary scholars. The absence of dance references between the years 1873-1885 might be related to the modest and solemn atmosphere prevailing in *café-amans*. Moreover, public dancing in entertainment places was, in general, associated with the widely disdained shows of *café-chantants* and was, therefore, considered as an immoral act. Since, however, *café-amans* became a popular type of urban entertainment, professional dancing was gradually accepted as an indispensable part of oriental music making. There are references to skilful female dancers that describe the mastery of their dancing, such as the detailed and vivid account of Mitsakis on the performance of a young fourteen-year old Jewish girl at a *café aman* in Piraeus:<sup>34</sup> when she dances ‘immediately all noise stops’ and ‘the crowd attends delighted... stamping their feet on the ground’ (*Athinaikai Selidhes*, ‘Athenian Pages’, *Estia*, 24.05.1887).

According to the available accounts, dance performance in *café-amans* was exclusively a female practice (see Hatzipantazis 1986:74-78). Indeed, professional dancing in urban entertainment places of the broader eastern Mediterranean area was traditionally monopolised by female artists or effeminate young male performers. Besides, gender specific practices appear strictly determined within the musical community of oriental coffee shops: skilful instrumentalists were mainly males, whereas prominent singers and widely acclaimed dancers were mostly females.

The dances performed are generally considered as 'oriental', although, sometimes, they are more specifically referred to as 'Arab', 'Turkish', 'Greek' or 'Romanian' (ibid.:76). There also occur particular descriptions of *hasapiko(s)*, *karsilamas*, *tsamiko(s)* and *zeibekiko(s)* styles.<sup>35</sup> The 'manly' *zeibekikos* was regarded as the most spectacular dance, since it required special costumes and, sometimes, the use of knives as accompanying attributes. The following description, provided by Georghios Vokos, shows that *tsamiko(s)* dance awakened further ideological aspirations: 'when she dances the wild and furious *tsamiko* and the *santouria* [pl.] and the *violia* [pl.] sound loudly and it is as if they echo the screaming of the battle and as if cannonballs blast off...their soul [of the audience] is awakened as if this is a sweet lullaby of national traditions' (*I Polis ton Patron* 'The city of Patra', *To Asty*, 10.07.1894) Beyond, however, envisaging nationalist claims, there is a sensualist bias veiled in the author's writings on Efthalias' dance performance. The militarist feelings echoed in his patriotic rhetorics and the use of the battle metaphor for rendering Efthalia's dancing artistry may also embody nuances of Mediterranean

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<sup>34</sup> None of the relevant references describe the dance practices of the patrons of *café-amans*.

<sup>35</sup> For further discussion on the genres see Baud-Bovy (1984: 34-35).

machismo; in that sense, it involves an aggressive expression of the intellectual attraction to the sensual female dancer – that is an ‘other’, exotic female the author desires to capture.

*The Techni and Dionysos youth intellectual groups: the answer to the folklorist trend*

During the 1890s the youth intellectual circles associated with *Techni* and *Dionysos* magazines developed a critical response towards the values advertised by the folklore realism movement. They ventured to debase the concept of ‘authenticity’ identified in folk culture that was promoted by Politis’ literary circle as the cornerstone of Greek national identity. According to the *Techni* youth ideology,<sup>36</sup> folk ethos may well be corrupted: ‘folk’, for the new wave of intellectuals, was even identified with ‘sordid crowd’ or, a ‘drove of blind [people] and primitives’ (Hatzipantazis 1986:84).

Overall, definitions of the concept of ‘folk’ people are directed by the ideological orientations driving local cultural politics echoed in the attitudes of various intellectual groups. Thus, understanding ‘folk song’ as a ‘true’ and ‘pure’ musical product in the 1880s was associated with the mythicization of local culture promoted by the circles appealed to folklorist interests. In the following decade, the *Techni* circle - under a strongly Europhilist orientation - described ‘folk’ people as ‘the common herd’ and thus the associated musical tradition, the ‘oriental’, was devalued as an ‘awkward’ and ‘rough’ product. The ‘folk’ and, accordingly, ‘folk

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<sup>36</sup> *Techni* was edited in the years 1898-99 by Dimitris Hatzopoulos and had welcomed symbolist writers, such as Lambros Porfyras and Miltiadhīs Malakasis. (For the symbolist writers see Beaton 1994:84).

song' became historically variable concepts manipulated by local intellectuals with respect to ideological positions periodically taken within Greek society.

Meanwhile, the term *koutsavakis* appeared more and more often in local press accounts by authors attempting to describe the structure of the audience of *café-amans*.<sup>37</sup> According to an article of the *Estia* published in 1897, *café-amans* 'were full of ...the *koutsavakides* of Plaka and Psiri, the *adamidhes* of Metaxourghio and the *iff* of the Market with the wide blue waistbands' (see *Mataiotis Mataiotiton*, 'Vanity of Vanities', *Estia*, 26.01.1897).<sup>38</sup> Does the increasing press interest in the *koutsavakis* persona imply the emergence of a particular socio-cultural group as a result of economic deprivation and abrupt urbanisation of Greek society by the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century? One cannot be certain about it; it might simply indicate the negative attitude developed by Greek intelligentsia against oriental music. In fact, illegal activities in *café-amans* appear exaggerated and were used as a strategy for undermining oriental musical entertainment. A number of articles published in the 1890s described oriental music as 'raffish' and 'materialist' and, therefore, 'corrupting' for youth's morality.<sup>39</sup> Sporadically, there is a nationalist bias apparent in texts that condemn the *amanes* genre for its Turkish origin or attempts to correlate *café-aman* with hashish consumption (*Acropolis*, 30.07.1893).<sup>40</sup> Although the kind of entertainment practised in westernised *café-chantants* - the dances, dresses and attitude of European female performers ever since its appearance in Greek urban life - could respectively inspire

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<sup>37</sup> The type of *koutsavakis* has been stereotyped in Greek shadow theatre in the character of 'Stavrakas' (see Hatzipantazis 1984). *Koutsavakidhes* formed a specific cultural group, they were usually engaged in illegal activities, observing their own moral system, slang idiom, dressing and behavioral codes and, of course, the associated musical genres, namely urban popular music of *café-amans*. A later development of the *koutsavakis* persona is the urban *mangas*, the celebrated hero of rebetiko song.

<sup>38</sup> The *adamidhes* and *iff* are slang words describing marginal urban groups; they are synonyms to the term *mangas*. For Zachos, *adamis* comes from the word 'adam' that means human in most oriental languages'. On this basis, the term denotes a 'real', 'perfect man' ([1981] 1999:58).

<sup>39</sup> *Acropolis*, 7.07.1890 & 25.05.1893; *Estia*, 15,16 and 18.08.1898.

negative rhetorics, the scholarly attack is directed exclusively against oriental musical practices.<sup>41</sup>

*The beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century: europeanizing politics in music*

The Balkan Wars of 1912-13 generated various anxieties regarding the cultural identities of the various ethnic groups settled in the area, which had, inevitably, a great impact on local musical traditions. Inspired by nationalistic ideals on one hand, and threatened by the assimilating power of europeanization on the other, performing musicians developed a somehow chauvinist ideology that demarcated Greek folk songs from those of Bulgarian, Romanian, Albanian or Turkish origin. The desire to sustain and disseminate regional folk music led them to transcribe folk song in western notation that would allow the performance of *dhimotiko traghoudhi* with piano accompaniment, a musical symbol of wealthy urbanites.<sup>42</sup> In addition, from 1907 onwards, western musical genres, and more particularly Neapolitan *canzonetta* together with Austrian waltz were introduced successfully to urban popular entertainment through the flourishing *athinaiki epitheorisi* drama genre (see Hatzipantazis 1977), that is the Athenian revue (photo 5); at the same time commercially successful European songs were appropriated and adapted to Greek lyrics.

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<sup>40</sup> 'Oh, when...will Greek population be civilized, in order fully to get rid of the kingdom of Turkish-worship...!' (*Acropolis*, 25.08.1891).

<sup>41</sup> Several contemporary *epitheorisi* plays satirised the abduction of artists and assassinations taking place in *café-chantans* (see the 3<sup>rd</sup> Act of the play *Liga Ap' Ola* ('A Bit of Everything', 1894) by Mikios Lambros, reprinted in Hatzipantazis 1977, 2:111-143).

<sup>42</sup> In 1891 the director of the Music Conservatory in Athens suggested that church cantors and folk music ensembles should represent Greek musical tradition in the Vienna International Exhibition; others opposed scornfully his proposal (*Elliniki Mousiki kai Poiisis en ti Vienaia Ekthesi*, 'Greek Music and Poetry in the Vienna Exhibition', *Nea Efimeris*, 11.10.1891).

The strong impact of western European music on the local musical culture was discussed in an inquiry that was conducted in 1911 by *Athinai* newspaper.<sup>43</sup> The series of published interviews taken from musicians and music experts that was underpinned the ongoing debate. Despite the existence of several different, or even contrasting, approaches, the common argument, variously promoted by the majority of musicians and music experts, was that *amanes* - a genre representative of oriental music - was dead. Declaring the death of *amanes* became an allegory for propagating European traditions. However, the *café-aman* entertainment type reappeared triumphantly in the same year in Athens. Although the structure of the *kompania* was now modernised, with the incorporation of western instruments, such as the guitar and the double bass, oriental music still seemed to attract a great number of enthusiasts (see Hatzipantazis 1986:105-7). As was to be expected, the westernist local press attacked this prosperous revival, condemning it disparagingly as an anachronism (see M. Georganti, *Athinaika*, Vol.55, Sept. 1973).

For a few years, as a result of Euro-phile propaganda, the prevailing impression was that oriental music was definitively supplanted by European music; it belonged to the past. Kostis Palamas in his poem *Anatoli* ('Orient') (*I Kaimoi tis Limnothalassas*, 'The Sorrows of the Lagoon', 1912) remembered with nostalgia the oriental 'sorrowful' songs, while few years earlier Drosinis romantically reminisced about oriental 'lascivious kisses' and 'exotic harems' (*Αγροτική Επιστολή*, 'Peasant Letter' 1883).<sup>44</sup> Nonetheless, this nostalgic remembrance of the past indicates a return

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<sup>43</sup> *Athinai*, 16.07 – 20.08.1911.

<sup>44</sup> The nostalgic and melancholic ethos of Palamas' poem reveals the influence of symbolist writing that identified in the nature of poetry transcendental qualities (see Beaton 1994:84).



to the myth of the 'sensual' and 'passionate' Orient, now desperately considered as a lost paradise. Interestingly, the new attempt to fictionalise oriental culture and musical traditions, involved, in this case, a safe literate expression that was harmless for the promotion of europeanization. Since oriental music was officially denounced as dead, the re-visiting of oriental stereotypes supported, in fact, the process of its monumentalization; the music of *café-amans* was, therefore, seen as a memory of the past. However, the advent of a new wave of refugee musicians from the Aegean coast following the Asia Minor War in 1922 was about to question the anticipated funeral of oriental musical traditions. Refugees were agents of oriental musical traditions supporting the development of a new genre that was about to flourish in Greek cities in the following decades: the rebetiko song.

## Chapter 2. The term ‘rebetiko *traghoudhi*’

### *Rebetiko traghoudhi as genre*

Before any attempt to discuss the term ‘rebetiko *traghoudhi*’ (‘rebetiko song’) it is essential to clarify that the concept of ‘genre’ is a construction. It represents a method for naming and defining what *is* and what is *not* the music under study traditionally employed by folklorists and musicologists. Scholars engaged in making categories – genres, here the *rebetiko traghoudhi* genre – often tend to justify their endeavors as a way of facilitating the specialized and comprehensive study of the defined genre, which in turn substantiates their own specialization and status in the scholarly world. In the case of rebetiko song, the poetics of ‘bordering’ the music as a corpus of songs lyrics, musicians, instruments, and recordings promoted the establishment of ‘rebetology’ (*rebetologia*) as a specific field to which a number of local and foreign scholars are variously attached. Defining and discussing rebetiko in terms of a set of pre-determined characteristics influences the musical tradition itself, since it tends to impose in turn specific standards that are projected in the ways musicians perform, which songs they perform and how they understand the music they play.

The concentration on the study of rebetiko as genre – reflected in rebetology – often resulted in myopic understandings and theories that disregarded the dynamic cultural processes within which humans experienced and performed the music. To that extent, rebetology failed or avoided to study rebetiko as musical culture: rebetiko was often regarded as a product, a core of data, rather than as a music actually lived.

For this reason, I do not consider the present thesis as a rebetological text, since it involves an ethnography - an attempt to understand current rebetiko music making as a lived experience.<sup>1</sup>

Although rebetology as a literate tradition offered and may offer useful insights, at the same time, it tends to obscure the horizons of rebetiko study. Rebetologists were not interested in exploring and illuminating the historically and culturally sensitive nature of the music the term *rebetiko* described: who applies the word and who are the people that actually share this music and when, what the term serves to describe and what are the meanings people ascribe to it, or, how the music and the musical writings were respectively received and further communicated. Instead, rebetiko studies have traditionally considered the genre as a closed, 'autonomous system' structured with well-determined, indeed non-negotiable, musical and cultural features. In that sense, rebetiko song was perceived as a piece in the 'mosaic' of musical styles that form Greek music in general. This understanding discouraged the exploration of the ways rebetiko may interact with and embody other musical cultures. The generic term *rebetiko traghoudhi* corresponded, consequently, to the needs of a nomenclature system, still dominant in musicological research, that is 'too narrow and too shallow as an explanatory principle for the dynamics of tradition' (Ben-Amos 1976:xii).

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<sup>1</sup> The ethnography of musical performance as the prime methodological tool that distinguishes ethnomusicology from other fields of music studies is broadly discussed by Blacking (1981). A general review of the approaches to the ethnography of music is given by Seeger (1992). The concern with knowing a music by exploring the ways people ascribe meanings to it has been largely promoted by the 'ethno-theory' approach to music culture and the focus on the native point of view (Zemp 1978; Berliner 1978; Feld 1982).

What does the word *rebetiko* mean? The search for the etymological origins of the term became one of the favorite fields of study for rebetologists. Stathis Gauntlett, a philologist and one of the few academic analysts of rebetiko lyrics, traced the earliest evidence for the application of the term 'rebetiko' in gramophone record labels pressed in USA and England during the second decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, although the songs it described have little in common with each other in terms of musical style and themes employed (1982/3:77-102). The earliest usage of the word *rebetis* in literary sources dates from 1925 - in a feminine form, *rebeta*.<sup>2</sup> It is remarkable, however, that it rarely appears in the exhaustive descriptions of urban low-life in Greek realist prose writers. The absence of the word in the lyrics of the songs designated as *rebetika* (pl.) until about 1935, further sustains the hypothesis that it has been recently introduced in mainland Greece, during the years of commercial success and popularization of the genre.<sup>3</sup>

Smith argues that the word 'rebetiko' appears for the first time in Greek recordings in 1931, later than its application in 1928-29 in two discs which Marika Papaghika recorded for US record companies (see Smith 1991:318-324). On this basis, he concludes that the term was imported to Greece via American recordings, which had, anyway, a strong influence on the local record market. Apart from the general association of the term with low-life characters, the meanings and usage

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<sup>2</sup> In Petros Pikros, *Balanda sto Fegari, San tha Ginoume Anthropei* ('Ballad to the Moon', 'When we Become Humans', Athens, 1925; see Gauntlett 1982/3:85,n.37). Pikros is also the author of a collection of short stories that portray the urban subculture (*Hamena Kormia*, 'Lost Bodies', Athens 1922; *Toubeki*, 'Keep Your Trap Shut', Athens, 1927; see Beaton 1994:107).

<sup>3</sup> Gauntlett argues that the first occurrence of the word *rebetis* is found in the lyrics of a song composed by Markos Vamvakaris (Gauntlett 1985:266) titled *Harmanis Eim' Ap' to Proi*, ('From Early Morning I'm Yearning for a Smoke'): *σ' αυτόν τον ψεύτικο ντουνιά ρεμπέτης θ' αποθάνω* meaning 'in this fake world I'm going to die as a *rebetis*').

contexts of the word 'rebetiko' at that time appear today rather inexplicit and vague. In addition, the popularization of the word later on, especially after the commercialization of the music, further generated and established diverse meanings depending on the user's worldview.

Consequently, because of the semantic complexity of the term, an etymological analysis of 'rebetiko' would not suffice at present to provide an understanding of rebetiko musical culture. Even if scholars were to suggest a persuasive and commonly accepted theory, it would still be dangerous to assume that the archaeology of the word would comprehensively illuminate the culture of rebetiko. Knowing the origins of a word may of course support the attempt to understand early rebetiko culture. However, without knowing the context of its usage, namely whether the broader groups – mostly illiterate people – associated with rebetiko song used to employ the term and how, reaching a satisfactory etymology is useless. It involves a meaningless archaeology yet one that becomes a more interesting endeavor if seen as an allegory. An allegory for ideological premises, hidden behind etymological approaches: since etymology involves an argument on origins, the relevant theories may further encrypt perceptions regarding the nature, history and, possibly the ideal future of Greek music.

*What is rebetiko and what is not?: an unresolved dispute*

Regardless of its chronological origins, today the term is commonly used to describe an urban folk song style that originated in the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century in the

great ports of the Aegean Sea and was associated with low-life culture. Still though, there is a dispute among various scholars and music experts about what is 'proper' or 'authentic' rebetiko or not. Especially in the 1960s and 1970s, a number of controversies took place questioning its special features, whether its tradition is alive or dead, how it is connected with a marginal subculture and the criminal underworld and, finally, its place in Greek music history (see chapter 5). Rebetiko *tragoudhi*, consequently, functioned as 'a clearing-house for broader cultural political and moral issues' (Gauntlett 1989:10). Indeed, the debates often ended up in dogmatic and judgmental arguments. Rebetiko was either acknowledged as 'the only proof of the existence of Greek culture', or, conversely, 'a product of decadence' that 'cannot be classified within the body of modern Greek culture'.<sup>4</sup>

Similarly, the discussion of the upper chronological terminus of rebetiko history inspired analogous disputes; again there was a discord among various scholars, since they appear to perceive in different ways what rebetiko music is. Those who acknowledge the genre as 'dead' dated its demise in early 1950s, the time when the *laiko* ('folk') song style emerged and soon became very popular (see Hatzidhakis 1978). Scholars of the other side argue for the continuation and metamorphosis of <sup>the</sup>tradition in post-war Greece. Finally, there are a few who take into account the revivalist movements of the 1960s and the so-described 'meta-rebetika' musical scene (compositions influenced by rebetiko tradition; see Gauntlett 1989:33). Despite its ambiguous nature, what is important in rebetiko necrology is how it emerged as an interesting arena for ideological conflicts codifying perceptions of authenticity and tradition in Greek folk song.

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<sup>4</sup> The first argument comes from Yiannis Tsarouhis, a Greek left wing painter (published in Petropoulos [1979] 1991:244), while the latter from Alekos Paridhis, a Greek left wing scholar (in L. Zenakos, *Ena Rebetiko Apo Plastiko*, 'A Rebetiko Made of Plastic', *Tahyhromos*, 1970, Vol. 835, p.54).

Beyond debates on chronology, the rebetologists' endeavor to structure a broadly accepted definition of the genre was further confused by the broader discord about the place of rebetiko in Greek music history and its social context. Questions of whether rebetiko song was associated or not with urban marginal social groups, or, subsequently, whether it could be classified as urban folk song or as popular song, or even as the urban descendant of rural folk song, fired the rebetological literature. An all-pervasive dichotomy that appears in the relevant writings - especially in the 1960s - involved the distinction between 'rural' and 'urban' music. This perceptual duality conditioned, to a great extent, the ways Greek music was approached and is still approached by several scholars. In fact, it echoed and, in turn, nurtured the development of static and schematic perceptions of Greek music history, which was understood as a spectrum of various well-defined eras moving on a single evolutionary line that connected directly Ancient Greece with Byzantium and the rebetiko tradition. This way, the relevant ideas celebrated a transforming yet consistent profile for Greek music via a conscious attempt to relax the anxieties of cultural identity troubling postwar Greek society at large.

### Chapter 3. The world of *mangas* in rebetiko lyrics

The heroes of rebetiko song are basically the *mangas* people (*manges*, pl.). *Mangas* represents the dominant male persona described in rebetiko lyrics, the legendary outlaw who embodies the 'ideal rebetiko 'way-of-being' in the world. The word *mangas* stands often as a synonym for *rebetis*; it is a generic term used to describe rebetiko musicians, as well as male agents of rebetiko culture in general. The *mangas* person is identified with a particular behavioral system, ideology, music – the rebetiko song - dressing codes and special attributes, which feature the condition of the, so-called, *mangia* that defines the personality of a 'genuine' *mangas*.<sup>1</sup>

In order to be acknowledged by the rebetiko community as such, someone should undergo a special rite of passage. This involves the 'making of *sefte*', that is, the public insult, attack and defeat of a well-established *mangas*.<sup>2</sup> This way, the novice *mangas* is invited to prove his competence and is recognized, eventually, as a dignified, well-respected person of the rebetiko community. Having demonstrated his ability to dominate in gang affrays and defeat the toughest rivals in the case of a successful *sefte*, the new *mangas* deserves to be associated with famous, long-established *manges* (pl.) and enter the community of *mangas* people. The incorporation of the new member in the *mangiko synafi* (the *mangas* community), is often validated via special nomenclature practices, since the novice is usually given a nickname that additionally credits his *mangas* identity.

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<sup>1</sup> Marginal subcultures are often related to a particular musical genre. Baily (1988b), for instance, refers to the criminal subculture of the *pailucha* of the city of Kandahar in Afghanistan. See also Merriam and Mack (1960) for similar practices in the jazz musicians' community.

<sup>2</sup> The phrase 'making a *sefte*' literally means 'making a start' and is used to describe a trader's first transaction in the market, where he earns his first money (Zachos [1981] 1999:441). For the world of *mangas* see Dhionysis Tzakis, *O Kosmos Tis Mangias': Parastaseis tou Kalou Andra sto Horo ton Rebeton* ('The World of Mangas: Representations of the Good Man in the Rebetis' Domain') in Kotaridhis (1996:33-69).

Beyond initiation, frequent displays of *mangia* are necessary to justify a person's competence to claim rightfully the name *mangas*. Consequently, a *mangas* ought to perform his identity constantly, ready in any situation where he is invited to defend his *mangia*, in order to protect and maintain it socially: not only to 'be', but also to 'show' that he is a *mangas*.<sup>3</sup>

Είμαι ένα λεβεντόπαιδο  
... ..  
Αν δεν πιστεύεις ρώτησε  
Και πες για τ' όνομά μου  
Με δείχνουν με το δάχτυλο  
για την παληκαριά μου

(*An den Pisteveis Rotise*, 'If You Don't Believe, Ask'. Composer, Yiannis Papaioannou; singers, Sotiria Bellou and Spyros Efstathiou. Recorded in 1951, HMV AO 5027/OGA 1681).

(*translation*)

I'm a brave man  
... ..  
If you don't believe me, go and ask others,  
And ask about my name  
They point at me with the finger  
For my bravery

The social scenery for *mangas* performance defines and, thus, legitimates the limits of his deviant activity via a regulative mechanism that involves a core of norms defining *mangas'* practices and illegal activities, which are either deemed as acceptable or not. This way, the community establishes a normative system of expected behavior that aims, to a certain extent, at controlling *mangas'* activity. Consequently, the community manages to prevent, as far as possible, extreme manifestations of *mangia* that deviate dangerously from the moral dictates of *mangiko*

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<sup>3</sup> Vamvakaris in his autobiography noted that 'people used to recognize us who were *manges* by the way we used to dress' (Vellou-Keil 1978:123).

*sinafi* ('the *mangas*' social group').<sup>4</sup> Accordingly, a *mangas* is expected to perform *bessalidhika* (in a dignified, self-respected way) his *mangia* corresponding properly thus to the 'real' *mangas* ethos as prescribed by the overall community.<sup>5</sup>

Today, a basic tool for approaching *mangas*' culture and, more broadly, the rebetiko worldviews, are the lyrics of the songs and the themes employed. There are numerous rebetiko songs describing, for instance, lethal conflicts among famous *manges* (pl.), such as the one recounting the assassination of the legendary Sarkaflias:

Στα Τρίκαλα στα δυο στενά  
Σκοτώσανε το Σαρκαφλιά

Δυο μαχαιριές του δώσανε  
Και χάμω τον ξαπλώσανε

(*O Sarkaflias*, 'Sarkaflias'. Composed by Vasilis Tsitsanis; singers Stratos Payioumtzis and Vasilis Tsitsanis. Recorded in 1939, HMV AO 2626/OGA 980).

(*translation*)

In Trikala at the two narrow passes  
They killed Sarkaflias

They stabbed him twice  
And they laid him down

Another favorite topic is that of death, such as in the following example:<sup>6</sup>

Άντε, σαν πεθάνω τι θα πούνε;  
Πέθανε ένας μπεκρής  
Αμάν μπεκρής  
Πέθανε κι ένας ντερβίσης, άντε, ένας νυχτογυριστής,  
Αμάν, αμάν

(*Elliniki Apolafsis*, 'Greek Enjoyment'. Singer, Giorghos Katsaros. Recorded in 1927, Victor 68829/CVE 38934).

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<sup>4</sup> The word *sinafi* comes from the Turkish term *esnaf* that denotes a specific professional group, a 'guild', a social class (see Teghopoulos – Fytrakis 1993).

<sup>5</sup> The term *bessalidhika* means 'with *bessa*' that is an *arvanitiki* word (of the Arvanites ethnic group) for 'dignity', the given 'word of honour' promising allied action (Zachos [1981] 1999:351).

<sup>6</sup> For the concept of death in rebetiko tradition see Nikos Papahristopoulos, *Parastaseis tou Thanatou sta Rebetika Tragoudhia* ('Representations of Death in Rebetiko Songs') in Kotaridhis (1996:125-172).

(translation)

*Ade* [exclamation], when I die, what are they going to say?  
That a boozer died  
*Aman*, a boozer  
That a dervish died, *ade*, a night-wanderer  
*Aman, aman*

Death in rebetiko lyrics is commonly discussed in various ways. There is, for example, the perception of death as a tyrant who is determined to exterminate the *rebetis*, against his own will to stay alive:

Γιατρός εμένα δε μπορεί  
Κανείς να με γιατρέψει  
Ο Χάρος πια την πόρτα μου  
Την έχει σημαδέψει

(*Kafte Yiatroi tis Syntaghes*, 'Doctors, Burn the Prescriptions'. Composed by Giorghos Rovertakis and Giorghos Fotidhas; singers, Kostas Roukounas and Eleni Lambiri. Recorded in 1948, Odeon GA 7491/GO 4106).

(translation)

No doctor can  
Heal me  
Haros <sup>Death</sup> has already  
Marked my door

Often enough the *rebetis* may wish to die in order to relieve himself from what he perceives as the merciless life. In this case, death is desirable as a healing condition, in contrast to life, which is antithetically illustrated as ungenerous and frustrating. The underworld appears as a fatal escape from the hardships of earthly life:

Ο Χάρος μόνον ημπορεί  
Να γιάνει την πληγή μου  
Να μ' αναπάψει το κορμί  
Να σβήσουν οι καημοί μου

(*Piraiotikos Manes*, 'Amanes from Piraeus'. Singer, Stellakis Perpiniadhis. Recorded in 1934, Columbia DG 6112/CG 1209).

(translation)

Only death can  
Heal my sore  
Rest my body  
Blow away my worries

Death is moreover described as an ultimate condition under which all human beings are equal. Death, the final state of human existence, flattens all the social differences featuring the earthly, futile life:

Ανοιξάτε τα μνήματα  
Τα κόκαλα σκορπίστε  
Τον πλούσιο απ' τον φτωχό  
Να δούμε αν θα γνωρίστε

(*Sabah Manes*, *Anoixate ta Mnimata*, 'Sabah Amanes, Open the Graves'. Singer, Stratos Payioumtzis, Odeon GA 7046/GO 2763).

(translation)

Open the graves  
Spread about the bones  
Let's see, whether you may find  
Who's the rich, who's the poor man

Nonetheless, the *rebetis* is not afraid of dying. Instead, a 'true' *mangas* defies Haros (Death), the ruler of the underworld; his contempt is vividly exemplified in the dashing and exhibitionist way he uses weapons, more particularly the pocketknife. This is a common accessory that a *mangas* often arrogantly demonstrates in public space. Threatening behaviour is directly associated with expressing moral values (a quite common attitude encountered among delinquent groups in the Balkans) such as bravery, boldness, aggressiveness and tolerance of heavy pain. Moreover, the provocative display of the *kama* ('pocketknife') becomes a constant, imminent

offence that may threaten the communal order, which amplifies the *mangas*' status and masculinity. Carrying weapons concerns thus a way of performing *mangia*, as in the following example:

Αν είσαι φίνος μάγκας  
που είν' τα μπεγλέρια σου  
αν είσαι αλανιάρης  
που είν' τα μαχαίρια σου

(*Manolakis o Hasiklis*, 'Manolakis, the Hashish-Addict'. Composed by Yiannis Draghatsis. Singer, Kostas Dousias. Recorded in 1932, Columbia (USA) 56319/W 206585).

(*translation*)

If you are a fine *mangas*  
where are your worry beads  
If you are a vagabond  
where are your knives

It is noteworthy that carrying weapons involves a practice that the customary law of *mangas* people legitimates. Such a legitimation may often oppose or invalidate the official, state-imposed, law. This way, within the *rebetika* sense of justice, illegal activities such as drug trading or smuggling and being persecuted by the police are regarded as proper activities of being a true *mangas*. See, for example the following lyrics that refer to hashish trading:

Δε μου λέτε δε μου λέτε  
Το χασίσι που πουλιέται  
Το πουλούν οι ντερβισάδες  
στους απάνω μαχαλάδες

(*De mou Lete, to Hassisi pou Poulietai*, 'Tell me, Where is Hashish Sold'. Singer, Lefteris Menemenlis. Recorded in 1928 or 1929, Polydor 45114).

(translation)

Tell me, do tell me,  
Where is the hashish being sold?  
Dervishes sell it  
At the Upper Districts

Or,

Να ξεφύγω δε μπορούσα  
καθώς γύριζα 'π' την Προύσα  
με προδώσαν κάτι μπράβοι  
και με πιάσαν στο καράβι

Είχα ράψει στο σακάκι  
Δυο σακούλες με μαυράκι  
Και στα κούφια μου τακούνια  
Ηρωίνη ως τα μπουνία

(*Iroini kai Mavraki*, 'Heroin and Sweet Hash'. Composed by Sotiris Gavalas. Singer,  
Stellakis Perpiniadhis. Recorded in 1935, Columbia DG 6126/CG 1103).

(translation)

I couldn't get away  
On my way back from Proussa  
Betrayed by thugs  
They caught me on the boat

Sewn in my coat  
There were two bags of grass  
My hollow heels  
Were full of heroin

Or,

Τα 'κονομούσα έξυπνα  
και πάντοτε στη ζούλα  
Γιατ' ήμουνα λαθρέμπορας  
και τα πουλούσα ούλα

(*O Lathremboras*, 'The Bootlegger'. Composed by Vangelis Papazoglou. Singer,  
Stellakis Perpiniadhis. Columbia DG 6066/CG 1106).

(translation)

I used to earn shrewdly  
and always sneakily  
Because I was a bootlegger  
and I used to sell everything

In addition, the *mangas* liked to dress eccentrically and exhibit his *mangia* via a special dress code:<sup>7</sup>

Ποιος ασίκης ποιος λεβέντης στο παζάρι περπατεί  
Με κουμπούρια δυο στη μέση με γαρύφαλο στ' αυτί;

(Gauntlett 1985, 2:230)

(translation)

Who's the dashing and brave man walking in the bazaar  
With two pistols on his waist and a carnation behind the ear?

Vamvakaris, for instance, in his biography (Vellou-Kail 1978:122) argues that: 'I used to dress like a gadabout, but always prestigiously' (Vellou-Keil 1978:122). 'I was always dressed smartly...with English suits...People used to recognize us, the *manges*...' A standard stylistic expression of manliness was the moustache: shaving the moustache was regarded as a humiliating act, a symbolic practice of reprimand that erased the dashing and brave profile of *mangas* – 'a man without a moustache' was a metaphor for effeminacy (see Tzakis in Kotaridhis 1996:51, n.49).

Beyond dressing style, the *mangas* manifests his *mangia* by talking like a *mangas*, namely through the use of a slang idiom, the *mangika* and special

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<sup>7</sup> A case study of an eccentric musician – known as 'madman' - and drug user identified with the 'underworld culture' and acknowledged as a folk hero is discussed by Baily (1988b).

vocalization and pronunciation applied on speech.<sup>8</sup> Within this *mangas* argot there are words signifying in an evaluating way various degrees of *mangia*. The spectrum of associated terms represents a variation of meanings, from negative terms to others denoting the ‘original’, ‘true’ *mangas*. Ideal *mangas*, thus, is commonly described by words such as *rebetis*, *dhervisis* (‘dervish’), *mortis*, *bessalis*, *seretis* and *alanis*.<sup>9</sup> Conversely, the pseudo-*mangas* is often described by words ascribing the humiliating prefixes *psefto-* (‘fake’-), *kolo-* (‘arse’-), *kouradho-* (‘shit’-) or *pousto-* (‘fag’-) to the word ‘mangas’.

Although the *mangas* is pictured as the tough, dashing and often aggressive man, there are a great number of rebetiko songs describing his adventurous love affairs and catastrophic relationships with women. The most common image of woman illustrated in rebetika lyrics is that of the mistress.<sup>10</sup> *Rebetis*’ love affairs with females are often disastrous; the relationship becomes a power game that ends up with a victim - usually himself, who is rejected by the ‘heartless’ beloved:

Εγώ είμαι το θύμα σου  
Γλυκιά μου μαυρομάτα  
Κατάκαρδα με πλήγωσαν  
Τα ολόγλυκα σου μάτια

(*Prosfyghopoula*, ‘Refugee Girl’. Composed by Markos Vamvakaris. Singers, Soula Kalfopoulou and Stellakis Perpiniadhis. Recorded in 1949, Parlophone B 74174/GO 4159).

<sup>8</sup> Detailed attempts to organize dictionaries of *mangas* argot are found in Ilias Petropoulos, *Kaliarda* (‘Fag Slang’), Athens, 1971; Emmanouil Zachos, *Lexiko tis Ellinikis Argo* (‘Dictionary of Greek Argot’), Athens, 1981.

<sup>9</sup> These terms are synonyms to *mangas* describing the nature of *mangas*. According to Zachos’ dictionary ([1981] 1999), *mortis* describes a bold *mangas*; *bessalis* denotes a trustworthy person; *seretis* is the person with high standards of taste, a capricious *mangas*; *alanis* is the wanderer, the experienced *mangas* who may handle effectively any trouble.

<sup>10</sup> For the place of woman in rebetiko culture see Thalia Spyridhaki, *I Gynaika sta Matia ton Andron* (‘Woman in Men’s Eyes’) in Kotaridhis (1996:97-124).

(translation)

I'm your victim  
My sweet black-eyed woman  
Right in the heart  
Your sweet eyes have hurt me

Consequently, a woman in the eyes of <sup>a</sup>/*rebetis* is transformed either into a fairy or a witch. As a fairy, her sublime beauty may inspire him magical pleasure:

Μια φούντωση, μια φλόγα  
έχω μέσα στην καρδιά  
λες και μάγια μου 'χεις κάνει  
Φραγκοσυριανή γλυκιά

(*I Frangosyriani*, 'The <sup>Catholic</sup>/*Girl* of Syros'. Composed and sung by Markos Vamvakaris. Recorded in 1935, HMV 2280/OGA 236).

(translation)

A flaring, a flame  
I have inside my heart  
As if you put a spell on me  
Sweet girl from Venetian Syros

As a witch, she becomes a merciless seducer who leads him irreversibly to disaster. Her spellbinding means, the *kapritsia* ('flirty caprices') and *nazia* ('mincing'), together with lying (*psema*) and untrustworthiness (*babesia*, that is the opposite of *bessa*), eventually constitute and establish the nature of her femininity. This stereotypical female torments the *rebetis*, who is disorientated from himself and immersed helplessly in madness.

Μια όμορφη μελαχροινή  
Ναζιάρια και σκερτσόζα  
Τόσο πολύ με τυρανεί  
Και μου κρατάει πόζα

Θα τη ζυγώσω μια βραδιά  
Και θα την αρωτήσω  
Πως δείχνεσαι τόσο κακιά

Για σένα θ' αρρωστήσω

(*Mia Omorfi Melahrini*, 'A Beautiful Brunette'. Composed and sung by Markos Vamvakaris. Recorded in 1940, Odeon GA 7192/GO 3242).

(translation)

A beautiful brunette  
Mincing and playful  
She torments me so much  
And she is posing

I am going to approach her one night  
And ask her  
Why do you show such a mean face?  
I am going to fall ill for you

According to interviews and written biographies of rebetiko musicians, the majority of women associated with *rebetes* recounted in song lyrics were prostitutes. Pimping used to be a profitable activity practiced by *manges*, who occasionally were also sexually involved with the women protégées. There are numerous rebetiko songs celebrating the breathtaking beauty and coquetry of the beloved *tsahpina* ('saucy girl'). Also charming for a *rebetis* is the woman of loose morals, the *mortissa* (the female version of *mortis*) or *boemissa* ('bohemian'). She is, in a way, the female version of *mangas*, who is also attracted by revelry, drinking and drug consumption. *Mortissa* or the *mangiko mikro* ('the *mangas* little girl') represents an opposite to the housewife model, an anti-conformist female character who corresponds ideally to the original *mangas* male:

Είσαι φίνα και τσαχπίνα, αθηναίισα  
Στη ματιά σου κάτι έχεις, καλέ μποέμισσα

(*Athinaiissa*, 'Athenian Woman'. Composed by Vasilis Tsitsanis; singers, Stellakis Perpiniadhis and Vasilis Tsitsanis. Recorded in 1946, Columbia DG 6600/CG 2167).

(translation)

You're a fine and playful woman, Athenian woman  
You've got something in your gaze, you bohemian

Or,

Έλα γλυκιά μου βλάμισσα – αμάν, αμάν  
Να γίνουμε ζευγάρι  
Οι μάγκες θα μας έχουνε – αμάν, αμάν  
Το μόνο τους καμάρι

(*Vlamissa*, 'Mangas Woman'. Composed by Yiovan Tsaous; singer, Stellakis Perpiniadhis. Recorded in 1936; Columbia DG 6242/CG 1460).

(translation)

Come on my sweet *mangas* woman<sup>11</sup> – *aman, aman*  
Let's couple together  
*Manges* are going to be – *aman, aman*  
Proud only for us

While *boemissa* represents a female model that appears to participate in the *mangas* society, the female of the Orient is imagined as the fatal, sensual woman living in the imaginary *Anatoli* or *Arapia* ('Orient' or the 'Arab Countries' meaning Maghreb). The oriental (*anatolitissa*), the gypsy (*tsingana*) and the black woman (*arapina*), become, this way, the exotic fantasies that nurture *rebetis'* escapism:

Η μικρή του καμηλιέρη  
Αραπίνα απ' το Αλγέρι  
Όποιος θα την δει τη θέλει  
- γιαλελέλι!

(*I Mikri tou Kamilieri*, 'The Camel Driver's Little Girl'. Composed by Apostolos Hatzihristos; singers, Marika Ninou and Athanasios Evghenikos. Recorded in 1949, Columbia DG 6784/CG 2531).

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<sup>11</sup> The word used in the original, *vlamissa* (*vlamis*, masculine) is a synonym of the term *mangas* meaning a *mangas* 'comrade', 'friend' (see Zachos [1981] 1999:86).

(translation)

The camel driver's little girl  
An Arab girl from Algeria  
Whoever looks at her wants her  
- *Yialeleli!* [exclamation]

Or,

Μπρος στ' ασημένιο φεγγάρι  
Στην ανθισμένη χουρμαδιά  
Τρελάθηκα όταν σε είδα  
Κι έβαλα πόνο στην καρδιά

Μα τον Αλλάχ, αχ Τζεμιλέ μου  
Είσαι γκιουζέλ, είσαι κουκλί  
Τέτοια νεράιδα δεν ξανάειδα  
Σε όλη την Ανατολή

(*Tzemile*, 'Tzemileh'. Composed by Manolis Hiotis; singers, Litsa Harma and Tolis Harmas. Recorded in 1947, Columbia DG 6664/CG 2286).

(translation)

Against the silver moon  
The blossoming palm tree  
I lost my mind as I saw you  
And put a yearning pain into my heart

I swear to Allah, ah my Tzemileh,  
You're *giouzel* ['beautiful' in Turkish], you're a little doll  
I haven't seen such a fairy  
Anywhere in the Orient

Regarding the nature of his love affairs, the *rebetis* often displays erotic behavior that is socially condemned, such as ephemeral relationships with married women or widows:

Αγαπώ μια παντρεμένη,  
Όμορφη καλοντυμένη (x 2)  
Σπιτονοικοκυρεμένη

(*Aghapo mia Pantremeni*, 'I Love a Married Woman'. Composed by Vasilis Tsitsanis; singer Stratos Payioumtzis. Recorded in 1938, Odeon GA 7254/GO 3420).

(translation)

I love a married woman  
A beautiful and nice-dressed one  
A housewife

Or,

Σ' ένα μαχαλά  
βρήκα ένα μπελά  
με μια χήρα παιχνιδιάρρα  
μπλέχτηκα τρελά

(*Gia Mia Hira Pahnidhiara*, 'For a Playful Widow'. Composed by Panayiotis Tountas; singer Mario Markopoulou. Recorded in 1934, Columbia DG 6143/CG 1248).

(translation)

In a neighborhood  
I got into trouble  
With a playful widow  
I got madly involved

The ever-devoted woman, however, in the female realm of rebetiko song lyrics is rendered by the mother figure (*mana* or *manoula*), who offers unsparingly her love, contemplation and support to her son, the *rebetis* until his ultimate defeat by Haros.

Καημό μεγάλο απόκτησα  
Βαθιά μες στην καρδιά μου  
Έχασα τη μανούλα μου  
Που 'ταν παρηγοριά μου

(*I Manoula*, 'Sweet Mother'. Composed by Apostolos Hatzihristos; singers, Apostolos Hatzihristos and Yiannis Stamoulis. Recorded in 1946, Odeon GA 7360/GO 3689).

(translation)

I've got a great pain  
Deep in my heart  
I lost my sweet mother

Who was my solace

Or,

Μάνα μου βήχας μ' έπιασε  
Αίμα βγάζει το στόμα  
Πότε θεέ το σώμα μου  
Θ' αναπαυτεί στο χώμα;

(*I Moni mou Parighoria*, 'My Only Solace'. Composed and sung by Stelios Keromytis. Recorded in 1937, Columbia DG 6291/CG 1571).

(translation)

My mother I have a cough  
Blood comes out of ~~my~~ mouth  
When oh God will my body  
Rest in the ground?

Despite the strong maternal bonds, <sup>the</sup> *rebetis* is distanced from the home that functions as a spatial metaphor of the tightly bound family unit. This way, home becomes a symbol of differentiation from the socially prescribed life values; rejecting the ideal of family and household manifests the anti-conformist ethos of <sup>the</sup> *mangas*. On the contrary, *mangia* is performed and validated in public places, such as the street and in places that are closely associated with the *mangas* community, such as the prison:

Στο Παλαμήδι μ' έχουνε  
Γιατί με κατατρέχουνε  
Στα σίδερα με ζώσανε  
Κι ισόβια με χώσανε

(*Palamidhi*, 'Palamidhi'. Composed by Yiannis Draghatsis; singer, Kostas Roukounas. Recorded in 1933, Odeon GA 1668/GO 1848).

(translation)

They've locked me up in Palamidhi  
Because they're after me  
They put me in jail  
For my whole life

The spatial metaphor of *mangas* autonomy and departure from socially accepted values is *tekes*, the hashish-den, where the common practice of hashish smoking is performed.<sup>12</sup> Even the naming of the place, *tekes* underlines the ritualistic character of the collective activity. *Tekes* represents the space where the practices of preparing the narghile - and in more extreme cases the consumption of heroin and cocaine - are connected to the pleasure of playing the *bouzouki* or the *baghlamas* instruments.

Έπρεπε να 'ρχόσουν  
Ρε μάγκα στον τεκέ μας  
Ν' άκουγες το μπαγλαμά  
Με τις γλυκές πενιές μας

(*Karadouzeni*, 'Karadouzeni'. Composed and sung by Markos Vamvakaris. Recorded in 1933, Parlophone B-21654/101277).

(translation)

You should have come  
Hey, *mangas* in our *tekes*  
To listen to the *baghlamas*  
To our sweet *penies* <sup>plectrum</sup> [strokes]

The considerable number of prison songs, which are mostly dated from the first two decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, describe the illegal nature of *mangas*' activities and depict the marginal character of underworld culture. *Mangas* is often persecuted

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<sup>12</sup> *Tekes* is a term originally used to denote the monastery of Sufi saints, or more generally a place of worship, a shrine. The borrowing of the term from the Sufi religious context may imply a connection between *mangas* culture and that of dervishes (*dhervisis* is also a commonly used term among *mangas*' communities). According to Vladimiros Mirmiroglou, a Constantinopolitan scholar and author of one of the earliest Greek-speaking accounts on the dervishes (*Ai Dhervisai*), *tekes* is the coenobitic monastery of the various monastic orders of the Muslim world. For Mirmiroglou, it is a Persian word (meaning 'monastery'). He also provides an alternative etymology: 'for others the word *tekes* is Arab and the plural is *tekiayia* or *derkiah* (from the Persian word meaning 'gate', 'court', 'monastery of Dervishes')', (Mirmiroglou 1940:13-14).

by the police - described often as the *vlachoi*, the *batsoi* - for his involvement in gambling:<sup>13</sup>

Τούτοι οι μπάτσοι που ᾤρθαν τώρα, βρε  
Τι γυρεύουν τέτοια ώρα;  
... ..  
Και μας ψάξανε για ζάρια  
Και μας βρίσκουν δυο ζευγάρια

(*Tout' i Batsoi pou ᾤrthan Tora*, 'Those Cops Who Came Right Now'. Singer, Yiannakis. Recorded in 1928, Columbia (USA) 56137-F/W 206147).

(translation)

Those cops who came right now, hey  
What are they looking for at that time?  
... ..  
And they searched us for dice  
And they found on us two pairs

The *mangas* believes that the world is ruled by injustice and heartlessness; living in this *pseftikos dounias* ('fake world') drives him fatally to poverty and misery.

Στον κόσμο τον σημερινό  
Αυτό το ξέρουν όλοι  
Η δύναμη στον άνθρωπο  
Είναι το πορτοφόλι

(*To Portofoli*, 'The Purse'. Composed by Spyros Peristeris and Giorgchos Petropouleas; singers, Markos Vamvakaris and Apostolos Hatzihristos. Recorded in 1939, Odeon GA 7294/GO 3556).

(translation)

In today's world  
Everyone knows  
The power in man  
Is his purse

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<sup>13</sup> *Vlachoi* and *batsoi* are synonym slang words referring to policemen. For Zachos they are called *batsoi* (*batsos* sing. literally meaning 'slap') because policemen used to beat and slap quite heavily especially in the rural areas ([1981] 1999:347). As for the meaning of *vlachoi* (literally the 'vlachs'), I have not traced any reference. It is quite possible that it refers to the fact that several policemen were recruited from the rural areas of Peloponnesus and thus were *vlachoi*, denoting that they were 'gauche' and 'primitive' people.

The escape from the heartaches of misery is practiced in the making of *ghlendi* ('revelry') that is essentialized in the performance of rebetiko music. *Ghlendi* often takes place in the *taverna*, where the performance of rebetiko is basically experienced in association with alcohol consumption:<sup>14</sup>

Τα βράδια στο Βοτανικό  
Πίνω και γλεντάω  
Και τα δικά μου βάσανα  
Με πόνο τραγουδάω

(*Ta Vradhia sto Votaniko*, 'At Nights in Votanikos'. Composed by Spyros Peristeris, Minos Matsas; singers, Stratos Payioymtzis and Apostolos Hatzihristos. Recorded in 1938, Odeon GA 7193/GO 3244).

(translation)

At nights in Votanikos  
I drink and revel  
My heart aches  
I sing with pain

Or,

Κάποια μέρα θα τη χάσω  
Απ' τον κόσμο τη ζωή  
Και γι' αυτό θα την γλεντάω  
Με την κούκλα μου μαζί

(*Oloi Me Katighoroune*, 'Everyone Blames Me'. Composed and sung by Kostas Roukounas. Recorded in 1974 in 45rpm disc, Columbia SCDG 4162/7XCG 4578).

(translation)

One day I'm going to lose this life  
Away from the world  
And that's why I'm having fun  
Together with my doll

The *ghlendi* forms the context for the public performance of *mangia*, as well as an arena for the competition of social prestige. *Mangia* is bodily manifested in

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<sup>14</sup> *Taverna* is a Greek folk restaurant often frequented by companies of friends. In *taverna* food consumption is usually associated with alcohol drinking and listening to music (either mediated or performed by a *kompania*). *Taverna* has a standard decoration and offers a standard menu.

dancing the *zeibekikos*, a solo improvisational dance.<sup>15</sup> The name *zeibekikos* also describes the relevant rhythmic pattern (9/8, usually played as 2+2+2+3) of rebetiko music. *Zeibekikos* is a celebration of masculinity danced in movements and gestures expressing an authoritative yet introspective performance of pain and self-contained pride that eventually reasserts metaphorically the *mangas'* dominance of public space.

Να χορέψω μες στη ζάλη  
Όμορφα και ταπεινά  
Η καρδιά μου είναι μαύρη  
Απ' τα τόσα βάσανα

(*Paixe Christo to Bouzouki*, 'Christos, Play the Bouzouki'. Composed by Vasilis Tsitsanis; singers Prodromos Tsaousakis and Marika Ninou. Recorded in 1949, HMV AO 2890/OGA 1523).

(translation)

To dance into daze  
Nice and modestly  
My heart is black  
From so many heartaches

Rebetiko performances in a *taverna* are not necessarily merry-making events; they are also sites for releasing *meraki* – the deeply felt longing stimulated by the musical experience:<sup>16</sup>

Θα πάω πάλι να τα πιω  
Να σπάσω νταλκαδάκι  
Στου Φώτη μες στο καπηλιό  
Να φύγει το μεράκι

(*Mes stou Foti to Kapilio*, 'Inside Foti's Tavern'. Composed and sung by Kostas Roukounas. Recorded in 1933, Odeon GA 1698/GO 1971).

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<sup>15</sup> For *zeibekikos* see Stathis Damianakos, *Gia mia Koinoniologhiki Analsysi tou Laikou Horou. To Paradheigma tou Zeibekikou kai tou Hasapikou* ('For a Sociological Analysis of Folk Dance. The Case of *Zeibekikos* and *Hasapikos*') in Nitsiakos (1995); see also Cowan (1990:173-180).

<sup>16</sup> For the definition and etymology of *meraki* see Kavouras (1990:218-222).

(translation)

I'm going to drink again  
To break away the pain  
Inside Foti's tavern  
To let *meraki* go

*Ghlendi* practices associated with rebetiko music making are commonly understood as a counter-response to the frustrations of social reality:

Μια και η ζωή θα σβήσει  
Και θα λιώσει το κορμί  
Στις ταβέρνες το \*χω ρίξει  
Κι έτσι σβήνουν οι καημοί

(*Mia kai i Zoi tha Svysei*, 'Since Life is Going to Blow Away'. Composed by Stratos Payioumtzis; singer Stratos Payioumtzis and Vasilis Tsitsanis. Recorded in 1947, HMV AO 2772/OGA 1289).

Since life is going to blow away  
And the body is going to melt  
I spend my time in *tavernes*  
And so the pains blow away

The rebetiko *ghlendi* also involves *xenyhti* that is, spending the night out:

Μες στις ταβέρνες ξενυχτώ  
Μονάχος μου τα βράδια  
Και μες στους δρόμους περπατώ  
Και στα πυκνά σκοτάδια

(*Gia Mia Palia mou Aghapi*, 'For an Old Love of Mine'. Composed by Stratos Payioumtzis; singers, Stratos Payioumtzis and Stellakis Perpiniadhis. Recorded in 1947, Columbia DG 6630/CG 2225).

(translation)

In the *tavernes* I spend the night out  
All alone at nights  
And in the streets I walk  
And in the deep darkness

Finally, reveling in the *taverna* is the quintessential expression of *mangas'*

bohemian nature:

Όλα αφήφιστα τα παίρνω  
Και μποέμικα γλεντάω  
Όταν έχω τα ξοδεύω  
Και ρεζέρβα δεν κρατάω

(*Mia kai I Zoi tha Svysei*, op. c.).

(*translation*)

I take things thoughtlessly  
And I revel in a bohemian way  
When I have money, I spend it  
And I don't put aside any at all

## Chapter 4. On rebetiko past

### *Periodisation of rebetiko history*

In order to explore the question of *what* rebetiko song is, it is necessary to examine it in relation to its particular historical and cultural contexts, and more specifically, in relation to *when* and *by whom* the definition is produced, that is, who are the people setting the ideological frames for its various understandings. Because rebetiko was traditionally regarded as a specific musical *style*,<sup>1</sup> changes happening in the historical course of the genre were usually treated as alienating influences, or deviations from this so-perceived 'original' rebetiko character. On this basis, the delineation of rebetiko historical eras followed, until recently, evolutionary models. The transformations of rebetiko music thus, were examined in the same way as the evolution of biological organisms: the resulting scheme involves successive eras described as the 'genesis', 'culmination', 'decay' and 'demise' of rebetiko, perceived as concrete and non-interactive stages of a predetermined course of tradition.

Nonetheless, the periodisation of rebetiko music may facilitate the organization and examination of the vast number of recordings, photos and various relevant accounts available. Any attempt however, to designate the chronological *termina* of the various rebetiko eras, requires one to understand the interpretive and subjective nature of the attempt itself. How we define the beginning or the end of a particular era implies an understanding of the reasons for change, that is, for the

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<sup>1</sup> The etymological stem of the word 'style', *stylos* (ancient Greek), literally means a 'column', a 'pillar' and denotes something consolidated and static.

passage to a new historical era of rebetiko music. Here, I comply with the chronology proposed by Gauntlett (1985):

1. End of 19<sup>th</sup> century – 1920: Oral non-commercial tradition.
2. 1920 – 1936: First recordings and personal compositions.
3. 1936 (the imposition of censorship by Metaxas' regime) – 1941 (the invasion of Axis allied military forces).
4. 1941-1946: The occupation years (World War II) *and aftermath*.
5. 1946-1952: the popularization of rebetiko music (the emergence of *arhondorebetiko*, bourgeois-rebetiko style).
6. The 1960s-1970s. The first revival of early rebetiko music among urban intellectual circles.
7. Second rebetiko revival. 1980s-up to today.<sup>2</sup>

The era of the first revival is more thoroughly discussed in chapters 5 and 6. The era of the second revival that represents the main topic of the dissertation is discussed in chapter 7 and in Part B.

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<sup>2</sup> By which I mean the period I conducted my research and wrote the thesis.

## Rebetiko historical eras

### *End of 19<sup>th</sup> century – 1920*

During the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the first decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century an oral tradition of urban, non-commercial, folk song developed mostly among the economically deprived social strata of Greek urban centres; this is where the pre-history of rebetiko song should be located. The main performance contexts were the hashish-den, the gambling dives and the prison. At that time rebetiko music was practiced within a marginal community of bawds, gangsters, criminals and ex-convicts. The topics employed in song lyrics of this era discuss drug consumption, gambling, violent affrays, heroic adventures and prison life. Apparently, the playing style was quite relaxed, un-professional – in the sense that it was performed in private occasions loosely organized - and mostly improvised. It seems that lyrics, together with the melodic structure, were mainly composed *in situ*, on the spot, and the various tunes were formulated in the context of social interaction (see Gauntlett 1985, 1:55-73).

At the same time, *kompanies* that used to play in the *café-amans* incorporated in their performance programmes musical genres that had developed in the broader eastern Mediterranean area: Turkish instrumental music, *amanes* (a vocal improvisational genre), Greek *dhimotiko traghoudhi*, *tsamiko* and *yianniotiko* song (folk song from the city of Yiannena) as well as tunes of diverse ethnic origins, such as Armenian, *arvanitika* and Arab songs. According to the available accounts the exact time of the incorporation of rebetiko song in the repertory of *café-amans* is quite

obscure. Interestingly enough, the first commercial gramophone recordings (see Spotswood 1990; Signell 1997) pressed in USA had a considerable impact on the popularization of the genre and its gradual spreading outside the closed *mangas* community (see Smith 1991:324).<sup>1</sup> On this basis, we can estimate that rebetiko performance within *café-aman* venues began sometime during the first decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The performance of rebetiko on stage within a popular entertainment context, of course, greatly affected the musical style and influenced further developments of the genre. In *café-amans* rebetiko songs were orchestrated for a *café-aman* ensemble (the *santouroviolia*, that is the *santouri* and violin based ensembles, photo 6) and were played by professional musicians who were also competent performers of other musical styles. Inevitably, under the demands of rehearsed coordination required by professional music making, what was perceived as the original improvised and unshaped oral tradition gradually became standardized and fixed.

In fact, rebetiko songs in *café-amans* were being sung outside their normal context (see Gauntlett 1985, 1:73). Whereas the oral tradition developed spontaneously within an underworld experiential reality, in *café-amans*, on the

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<sup>1</sup> According to catalogue numbers, seven records made in Thessaloniki between 1908-12 are preserved (see Kalyviotis 1994). The musicians' stated names are: 'Mr. Nakis' who sings *dhimotika* and patriotic songs, 'Mr. Christos' accompanied by 'Mrs. Kamelia' who sing folk songs and *smyrniika* and 'Mrs. Roza', the 'queen' who sings only Turkish songs. There is an Armenian song titled *Memo* and a recording of the popular *smyrniiko* song *Bournovalia*. Unfortunately, no further information regarding the singers is available. It is possible that Kamelia was the actress Kaarit Elena Kalenia of the *Beghlian* Armenian troupe, who happened to be in the city that year. If it is the same person, it would be an important evidence of recruitment of *café-aman* singers from the theatrical artistic scene. It is also remarkable that *café-aman* musicians are called by their first name and are accompanied by honorific titles, such as 'Mr' and 'Mrs'. In contrast, the rebetiko communities used to apply, as already stated, nicknames or a slang version of the musician's original first name. Anestis Delias, for example, was known as 'Artemis', a name ascribed to him by Batis; Stratos Payioumtzis' nickname was Tempelis ('lazy'). Besides, the use of formal appellations, such as 'Mr.' or 'Mrs' have no place in the rebetiko anti-conformist culture.

contrary, rebetiko songs were played on purpose, to satisfy the customers' musical preferences. Rebetiko was performed there by professional musicians and was shared among people who might have nothing, or little in common with the *rebetes* (pl.) and the underworld culture. Those were people who came to know and enjoy rebetiko music mainly via the gramophone records already available in the market. This way, *café-aman* musicians who appropriated rebetiko song mainly due to its popular success, composed rebetiko style songs having the record industry in mind. Their distance from the *mangas* marginal groups is traced in the ways the relevant compositions fictionalize and illustrate stereotypically the *mangas* persona (see Gauntlett 1985, 1:70-73). *Mangas* lethal adventures, hashish consumption, gambling and imprisonment comprised, for *café-aman* people, an outlandish reality; they sensed rebetiko songs as romantic images of the inaccessible and dangerous low life. By appropriating the rebetiko oral tradition, *café-aman* musicians managed to gradually remove rebetiko from its socially offensive and immoral associations and, eventually, to support the shaping of a less threatening profile for the genre.

It is noteworthy that, at that time, *café-aman* musicians were touring artists who used to visit and perform in various urban centres of eastern Mediterranean. Together with them, rebetiko travelled and interacted with various traditions and urban popular genres that flourished in the beginning of 20<sup>th</sup> century, mainly in the seaports of the area. One of the most famous violin-players, Semsis or Salonikios (i.e. 'the Thessalonikian', photo 7, audio example 3) included in his repertory a broad variety of tunes – Turkish, Arab, Serbian, Spanish, Rumanian, Hungarian, Bulgarian and Gypsy - which he learned during his tours of the eastern Mediterranean, Middle East and Central Europe (see Torp 1993). *Café-aman* musicians, therefore, were the

vehicles that transported and communicated rebetiko song within a network of musical traditions featuring the broader circum - eastern Mediterranean area.

Professional *café-amans* musicians used to perform for disparate social groups on various occasions, including open-air village feasts (*panighiria*). They could modify their performance to satisfy different audiences and diverse preferences and musical tastes: their repertory combined rebetiko and *smyrniiko* (Smyrna urban folk song)<sup>2</sup> with light popular song, trendy European tunes and traditional *dhimotiko traghoudhi* of various areas. Roza Eskenazy, a popular female singer of *smyrniiko* (audio example 4) and *politiko* (from Poli, the Constantinopolitan folk song, audio example 5) recalls that she made her debut in Thessaloniki around 1925 (see Eskenazy 1982). She used to perform at a coffee-shop in Mevlane area (named after a Mevlevi dervish shrine located in the northwest part of the city). Marika the Politissa (from Constantinople), also a famous female singer, sang there, too. Tomanas (1990, 1991) mentions two local famous musicians of *smyrniiko* genre, Vezos and Aghapios, who used to play in the *Nea Ionia* coffee-shop by the seacoast area, while the neighboring *Alabra* introduced, according to press reports, the first gramophone in the city that entertained the customers.<sup>3</sup> Interestingly, in a newspaper dated in 1881 it is reported that the local philharmonic – that represented European-oriented urban music making - performed there, too.<sup>4</sup>

Next to *smyrniiko* and *politiko*, Western popular dances were also a fashionable trend among Thessalonikian people: notably, in the same year, there is an

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<sup>2</sup> For *smyrniiko* song see Kounadhis (2000:305-308, 363-382).

<sup>3</sup> The source of information about entertainment places cited in this chapter derives from Tomanas (1990, 1991). Christianopoulos (1999) also provides a list of rebetiko venues located in Thessaloniki.

advertisement for a local school offering European dance lessons. People could also enjoy Asia Minor and Turkish music in the Koule Kafe area (in Ano Poli region), while a certain number of *café-amans* were located in Kato Toumba, such as the *Yiosmas'* coffee shop where Marika the Politissa performed.<sup>5</sup> At *Yiosmas'* customers could enjoy music played by a gramophone. In addition, oriental music making accompanied by alcohol consumption – especially beer-drinking - used to take place in venues described as *byres* ('beers').<sup>6</sup> A famous beer-den that opened in 1880 was the *Simopoulos' byra* in Kamara (the Galeri us Arch area in central Thessaloniki). Most of the popular *café-aman* songs favored in those years by Thessalonikians were mainly compositions of Panayiotis Tountas: *Bolshevika* ('Bolshevik Woman'), *Kouklaki* ('Little Doll'), *Kakourgha Maghissa* ('Evil Witch'), *Hariklaki* ('Hariklaki') (audio example 6).

Next to the relatively respectable and cosmopolitan *café-amans*, there were also places that were frequented by the petty criminal and marginal *mangas* people, such as the *tekes* (photo 8) and *tavernes* of St. Fotini area: the *Stathis Kardharas' taverna* with a gramophone that used to play rebetiko records, the *Felouris' taverna* famous for the loud speakers hanging in the garden – that was an unusual, advanced technological facility for those days - or the *Mavri Trypa* ('Black Hole'), a place

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<sup>4</sup> The source of information for press reports in this chapter is Tomanas (1995). The author had collected press extracts (cited in chronological order) sourced in various newspapers of that period.

<sup>5</sup> According to the Turkish traveler, Evliya Celebi (*Narrative of Travels in Europe, Asia and Africa in the 17<sup>th</sup> c. by Evliya Efendi*, London 1834), already in 1668, there were numerous coffee houses in Thessaloniki, which provided, together with oriental music performances, popular entertainment including acrobatics and indecent joke-telling (see Vakalopoulos 1963:85).

<sup>6</sup> Roza Eskenazy recalls that beer-dens were humble places frequented by 'families, children, rich and poor people; everyone'. She also stresses that 'we used to work on stage in a modest way, without shaking our bodies, nothing...' underlining that in beer-dens and *ouzeri* ('ouzo-dens') professional dancing was not practiced, neither was glass-breaking allowed, in contrast to what happened in *café-amans* and *café-chantants* (see Eskenazy 1982).

favored mainly by 'heavy' Thessalonikian *manges*. The center of underworld culture was the Vardharis area, where most of the brothels and ill-reputed haunts were concentrated. Already in 1879 local newspapers reported violent affrays happening in brothels, which caused serious worries to local authorities. Ten years later, in 1889, the Ottoman rulers of the city attempted to exercise 'cleansing' politics and remove from the area 'troublemaking elements'. In a newspaper published in 1881 there is a disparaging report attacking *Alcazar di Salonico*, a scandalous brothel, 'where the dirty voices fill the atmosphere with malodor and dissonance' (Tomanas 1995).

There were, however, places of western entertainment character, too. According to an advertisement dated from 1893, a central Thessalonikian coffee shop used to provide, during the carnival feast, costumes previously used in a French theatrical play. This way, Thessalonikians would have the chance to dress, feel and revel in the same way as elegant Parisians. Notably, it was a Turkish coffee shop (*I Tourkia*, 'The Turkey' coffee-shop) that first introduced, in 1897, a cinema screen in the city. It is important to emphasize that Ottoman authorities and well-off groups of Turkish population warmly welcomed and encouraged the introduction of Western European practices and habits. Local governors actually promoted and supported European musical performance: in the summer of 1885, the Thessalonikian philharmonic orchestra played daily in public overtures and parts from French and Viennese operettas in the Behtsinar area, the luxurious open garden of the city (Tomanas 1996b:15).

Music making was also practiced on local drama stages.<sup>7</sup> Newspaper announcements from the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century invited Thessalonikians to attend plays given by Armenian touring troupes; the *Beghlian* troupe presented in 1894 the play *Zeibekoi*, which was apparently well received by the local audience (in 1890 there is a second press announcement for the same play).<sup>8</sup> Before then, the Turkish-Armenian troupe of *Agop Nikodasian* had played the *Epetai* and in 1885 the *Koureyian* troupe presented a number of plays including the *Hor-Hor Agas*<sup>9</sup> - that once raised an ideological debate in Athens – which was well received in the city in 1890 and again in 1919 when it was performed by the *Engel* troupe (*Makedhonia* newspaper, 11.05.1911).<sup>10</sup> Theatres as entertainment contexts hosted, together with ‘high art’ drama performances, various other more popular dramas and happenings. For example, in 1887, there is a show in the French Theatre of a wrestler, Koutalianos, a legendary figure famous for his ‘superhuman’ robustness throughout the country.

In 1888 the opening of the railway station that was about to connect Thessaloniki with Paris was celebrated magnificently as a project that would facilitate and accelerate direct communication with ‘civilized’ Europe. European music making had already numerous followers, especially among the privileged urban groups, who appear in those years as eager emulators of western lifestyle and art trends. Taking lessons in western art music conservatoires (see Tomanas 1996b:11-15), next to

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<sup>7</sup> The main source of information for drama performances is Tomanas (1996b).

<sup>8</sup> ‘A play with minimal dramatic quality, with peculiar music, though’ (Tomanas 1995).

<sup>9</sup> *Kiropoios* (‘Candle Maker’), *Tahydaktylourghos* (‘Magician’), *Horos ton Metamphiesmenon* (‘Masked Ball Dance’), *Don Kaisar kai Vazan* (‘Don Ceasar and Vazan’) are the titles of the other plays performed by the *Koureyian* troupe (see Tomanas 1995).

<sup>10</sup> The relevant announcement stresses that Gypsy dancers would be accompanied by *zournas* (‘shawm’) and *daoulia* (big double-sided frame drums). For organological details see Anoyianakis ([1976] 1991).

lessons in French language, constituted an indispensable part of a proper bourgeois education. The educational orientations of well-off urbanites encouraged the institution, in 1914, of the State Conservatory and, a few years later, the Macedonian and the National Conservatory. Apart from the Western classical musical scene, the city of Thessaloniki featured its own *mandolinata* ('mandolin ensemble'), and a municipal philharmonic orchestra,<sup>11</sup> while there were numerous performances of operas, choral and orchestral works.<sup>12</sup> Interestingly enough, the concerts organized by the local Greek community often incorporated in their programmes performances of demotic songs - orchestrated in the well-tempered system of orchestral instruments.<sup>13</sup>

Despite the increasing terrorist activity of 1903 by guerillas in the country, and the proliferating Macedonian <sup>Conflict,</sup> music making in the city and artistic activities in general continued to prosper undisturbed.<sup>14</sup> Only when the First World War started in 1914 were the various shows and musical performances suspended for several months. The concentration of international army troops (photo 9) at the port of Thessaloniki affected local habits, by bringing Thessalonikian people into direct contact with the cultural groups temporarily residing in the city and, accordingly, with various trends imported from Europe.<sup>15</sup> In addition, from around 1915 onwards the first massive wave of refugees from Asia Minor who settled in Thessaloniki carried together their own cultural traditions – including of course, music. This novel human transplant, coming from the 'nearby us Orient' (*kath' imas Anatoli*) considerably

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<sup>11</sup> It is noteworthy that a Western type of philharmonic orchestra was introduced by the Ottoman authorities of the city.

<sup>12</sup> For a complete list see Tomanas (1996b).

<sup>13</sup> Those strategies of musical performance may indicate an early appropriation of *dhimotiko tragoudhi* by the local Greek community in an attempt to consolidate their ethnic identity. In 1910 *Nea Alitheia* newspaper reported persecutions of Greek citizens by the Ottoman authorities (see Tomanas 1995).

<sup>14</sup> Extravagant revelries were often justified in the name of 'the futility of earthly life' realized in wartime years (see Tomanas 1995).

<sup>15</sup> The Allies used the local port as a center for coordinating their military campaigns.

enriched the local musical landscape with a number of musicians from the opposite coast. The same year, Thessaloniki was advertised by French newspapers as the ideal city for holidays and entertainment. Thessaloniki was represented as a resort with luxurious hotels and aristocratic villas, a merry making city where glamorous balls were organized, women were charming and beautiful, a place where music making was happening everywhere (see *J'ai vu* magazine, 18.12.1915, special issue on *Les Alliés à Salonique*). In the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Thessaloniki appeared as a cosmopolitan city, a metropolis where various musical traditions co-existed and interacted to a greater or lesser degree within a cultural network that stimulated the interplay among various musical cultures. It is within this multi-dimensional musical scenery that rebetiko song was developed: within a manifold urban musical reality featuring Western European light orchestras, tango and waltz dancing, French-cabaret music hosted in *café-chantans* local *dhimotiko traghoudhi*, and light popular song, and the eastern Mediterranean repertory of *café-amans*.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> In *café-amans* located by the seaport area there were also performances of revue theatre (*epitheorisi*). Also note that Attik, a prominent Athenian composer of light (*elafry*) popular song, debuted in Thessaloniki in July 1915 (see Tomanas 1996b:25).

The rebetiko music-making of the years 1920-1936 is basically framed by two historical events: the population exchange (1922) that followed the Asia Minor War and the Metaxas' dictatorship that imposed a censorship on rebetiko song (1936). With the advent of refugees from the opposite Aegean coast the population of Thessaloniki was doubled.<sup>1</sup> The then prevailing economic deprivation could not ensure the healthy integration of Asia Minor populations in their new area of settlement.<sup>2</sup> The majority were settled in humble houses around the ruins of the Byzantine castle area (including the Ano Poli region; see Laghopoulos 1998, 2.2.2). In the meantime, local labour associations organized strikes against unemployment and destitution. The widespread disillusionment with the political situation is characteristically discussed in Markos Vamvakaris' song *Osoi Ghenoun Prothypourgoi* ('Those who will become Prime Ministers') recorded in 1936, an exceptional case of rebetiko song lyrics where political protest is directly expressed.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> In certain cases the older population developed a negative attitude against the newcomers that is evident in made-up words, such as *tourkosporoi* ('Turkish seeds') or *pastrikiēs* (literally 'very clean' women, meaning 'women of loose morals'), which both imply a discriminatory disposition.

<sup>2</sup> In 1923 groups of starving people attacked food stock-houses, while there was a proliferation of organized crime against wealthy Greeks and Turks (see Tomanas 1996a).

<sup>3</sup>

Όσοι γενούν πρωθυπουργοί  
Όλοι τους θα πεθάνουν  
Τους κυνηγάει ο λαός  
Για τα καλά που κάνουν  
(Parlophone B 21869/GO 2505; see also Vellou-Keil 1978:287)

(translation)

Those who will become prime ministers  
They are all going to die  
The people are after them  
For the good they do [ironical expression meaning the troubles they cause]

Despite the turbulent socio-political conditions, people of Thessaloniki continued to frequent the various entertainment places of the city.<sup>4</sup> Anticipating a profitable local record market, the Gramophone Company of Hayes (Middlesex) initiated in Thessaloniki in the early 1930s commercial recordings of Greek music. Among the first recordings made there were rebetiko songs, both those known via oral tradition as well as others attributed to known composers. At that time, the agents of the German Odeon record company in Thessaloniki (between 1924 and 1928) were two Jewish entrepreneurs, Benveniste and Abravanel (see Kapetanakis 1999:107).

By then early rebetiko music - the orally transmitted tradition - was already widely performed by *café-aman kompanies*, which were still thriving in those years. Professional musicians from the *café-amans* were also the first who performed rebetiko song for early recordings, as well as the first to compose rebetiko for commercial purposes (see Gauntlett 1985, 1:76). The prominent *café-aman* violin player and composer, based in Thessaloniki in the years 1919-1926, Dhimitrios Semsis had mainly worked with Roza Eskenazy and Rita Abatzi, both highly

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<sup>4</sup> See for instance the song lyrics of the following song composed by Kostas Roukounas, recorded in the postwar years, in 1947:

Γλέντι τρελό εκάναμε  
Μαζί κάθε βραδάκι  
Χατζή-Μπαξέ πηγαίναμε  
Και στο Καραμπουρνάκι

Ζωή χρυσή περνούσαμε  
Τις νύχτες με φεγγάρι  
Στης Σαλονίκης τις δροσιές  
Μέσα στο Μπεξινάρι

(Recorded in 1947, HMV AO 2751/OGA 1227)

(*translation*)

We used to revel crazily  
Together every night  
We used to go to Hatzi-Bahtse  
And to Karabournaki

We used to spend a golden life  
At nights with moon  
In Saloniki's countrysides  
In Bexinari

esteemed female *café-aman* singers.<sup>5</sup> The topics usually discussed in rebetiko song lyrics were love affairs and incidents from urban low-life; a favorite topic for lyricists was tuberculosis, a disease which affected a great part of urban population.<sup>6</sup>

Beyond rebetiko song, several professional musicians were also engaged in composing and recording for local revue theatre songs (*epitheorisiako traghoudhi*). The dialogues that take place in the introductory part of some rebetiko songs is possibly a form borrowed from revue compositions (Gauntlett 1985, 1:78). Nevertheless, regardless of the interplay between rebetiko and revue theatre song, the *mangas* character was often scornfully satirized by revue shows. The fictionalized character of the urban outlaw persona (*koutsavakis*, photo 10) occurred for the first time, at revue shows in the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (see Hatzipantazis 1977, 1:170). *Mangas* as a revue character became increasingly popular during the 1930s due to the blockbuster operetta shows of *Apahidhes ton Athinon* (written by Hatziapostolou, 1921). Consequently, although the two musical realms were, to a certain extent, associated via the people who were engaged in both genres, they independently shaped social profiles oriented towards different aesthetics, which appeared to be almost oppositional. Throughout their overall time span, the revue and operetta music making remained strongly Eurocentric genres, with strong inclinations

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<sup>5</sup> See Torp (1993). Semsis was a successful professional musician who had traveled a lot as a performer. He is also famous as an *amanes* composer and was musically literate (he knew the western notational system). In 1927 he moved to Athens where he worked as a recording director for the Columbia Record Company. Later, in 1936, he was appointed by the Greek State Radio as a supervisor of the folk music broadcasting programme.

<sup>6</sup> See, for example, the following song composed by Iakovos Montanaris and performed by Kostas Roukounas:

Μάνα, μου το \*παν' οι γιατροί  
πως έχω φθίση

Δεν μπορεί, μανούλα μου, ο βήχας να μ' αφήσει

(Recorded in 1935, Parlophone B 21801/101525; see also Gauntlett 1985, 2:265).

(translation)

My mother, the doctors told me  
That I suffer from consumption [tuberculosis]  
The cough cannot, my little mother, leave me

towards western popular musics, such as Neapolitan chanson, *tarantella*, Viennese operetta, and mazurkas. Even in the 1950s, when rebetiko music was broadly popularized, Greek revue music composers insisted on neglecting rebetiko song – at least publicly. *Epitheorisi* ('revue theatre') remained the musical propagator of europeanization, displaying a deliberate rejection of local musical traditions – seen as the reminders of an Ottoman and Balkan historical burden (see Hatzipantazis 1977, 1: 157-171).

Conversely, the local shadow theatre, *karagiozis*, constituted an important carrier of oriental musical traditions; *karagiozis*' performances sheltered and secured the perpetuation of oriental musics. Not surprisingly, since it appears that both rebetiko and *karagiozis* were originally performed in similar entertainment contexts (see Hatzipantazis 1984:39) and were both associated with and promoted in the context of the local Ottoman cultural past.<sup>7</sup> Evghenios Spatharis, for instance, a famous *karaghiozopaihtis* ('*karagiozis* puppeteer') mentions in his memoirs Ghriminas as having 'the best type of gutturalization singing of that period' (Spatharis 1960:166, 187). Another puppeteer, Kontos, was also broadly acknowledged as a competent *amanes* singer. The apparent cultural affiliation between the two genres was inevitably faced with condemnation by the Europhile part of the urban intelligentsia. Gradually though, shadow theatre attracted the interest of a broader audience – a development similar to that of rebetiko song – and fictionalized and satirized the *mangas* character through standard puppet figures (*Stavrakas*, *Nontas*, *Kotsarikos*).<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> An advertisement published in *Embros* newspaper (29.06.1991) pointed that the shows of shadow theatre also included performances of 'various Ottoman songs and six dances' (Hatzipantazis 1984:72).

The proliferation of commercial recordings of rebetiko song in these years greatly affected its form, playing techniques, social status and appreciation in Greek society. The limitations imposed by recording technology inevitably standardized its musical structures and improvisational parts, particularly *taximi*, which became less elaborated and further stylized. The composition of rebetiko songs by professional *café-aman* musicians was an appropriation of the genre to the needs of a music market; these rebetiko compositions were made to satisfy an audience broader than the earlier *tekes* community. In this way, the *café-aman* style of rebetiko recordings differed considerably to that performed by rebetiko ensembles featuring *bouzouki* (-a, pl.) and guitar. *Café-aman* composers tailored rebetiko song to fit the instruments employed by a professional *café-aman kompania*, the so-called *santouroviolia*.<sup>9</sup> In addition, the voice delivery of the available recordings displays a high registered, richly melismatic style, in accordance to that typically employed by *café-aman* singers.

More important, though, *café-aman* artists formed a musical community of long-established professionals who, in a short time, were urged to defend their established status and exclusivity in the oriental music market against the emergent popularity of *bouzouki*-based rebetiko ensembles. In *café-aman* style of recording, we can recognize the metamorphosis of rebetiko from an oral, anonymous musical tradition - produced and consumed within the *mangas* community - to a tradition of songs composed by acknowledged professional musicians aiming at commercial and popular success. Thus, professional musicians were mainly concerned with preserving and protecting their position, which they felt was being threatened by ongoing

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<sup>9</sup> For a description of the *mangas* figures by Evghenios Spatharis see Petropoulos ([1979] 1999:268). Regarding the shadow theatre tradition see also Danforth (1983).

developments in the urban musical scene. The performance of rebetiko in *café-aman* places faced a binary role: its forthcoming success would attract newly-emerged audiences, while satisfying the interests of dedicated adherents of the 'Asian muse'; at the same time, it would enrich the *café-aman* repertory with a genre bearing a marginal appeal. Professional musicians wished, therefore, to hinder their rebetiko colleagues from entering the realm of professional musicianship; they thought that this would harm their own traditional status and generate antagonism with undesirable effects on their musical careers (see Gauntlett 1985, 1:90-91)

Consequently, although the *bouzouki* became synonymous with the rebetiko song, early recordings avoided the sounds of *penies* ('*bouzouki* strokes'), due to the association of the instrument with marginal groups of Greek society. This explains the absence of *bouzouki*-based *kompanies* from the early recording studios. Soon, however, the use of *bouzouki* and the Piraeus hoarse and flat style of voice delivery (the *mangiko* singing style) in recordings taking place in U.S.A. towards the end of the second decade of the twentieth century had a profound effect on Greek rebetiko recordings made in Greece (see Smith 1991:323).<sup>10</sup> The commercial success of American *bouzouki* records impelled local *maestri* (*maestros*, sing. – 'recording supervisor') to invite virtuosos of *bouzouki* to *make* rebetiko recordings (audio example 7). Markos Vamvakaris, Stelios Keromytis, Anestis Delias, Gheorghos Batis, Bayianderas, Yiannis Papaioannou and Mihalis Yenitsaris – the great names of the first generation of rebetiko musicians - were recruited to perform rebetiko with *bouzouki*, *baghlamas* (a smaller version of *bouzouki*) and guitar. During the 1930s the

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<sup>9</sup> The term is used to describe the kind of ensembles featured in audio example 2. The *santouroviolia* playing style differs to the Piraeus style - the rebetiko of oral tradition - whereby the voice is delivered in guttural and rhinal manner with minimal dynamic fluctuation and melodic embellishments.

<sup>10</sup> *Bouzouki* was not persecuted in the diasporic communities of U.S. and thus it was commonly used in rebetiko recordings. Besides, there were great rebetiko exponents living in U.S. those years, who used to

first generation of rebetiko musicians became popular performers who were gradually acclaimed by urban audiences for their musical artistry. By 1934, the famous *Tetras tou Pireos* ('The Piraeus Quartet', photo 11), the first professional rebetiko *kompania*, used to perform regularly in a Piraeus *taverna* and tour in various Greek cities, including Thessaloniki. By the early 1940s many Athens-based rebetiko *kompanies* performed successfully in Thessalonikian *tavernes* and coffee shops.

Around 1935, as a result of the popular success of rebetiko *kompanies*, *café-aman kompanies* sought to recruit *bouzouki*-players. By then the increasing popularity of the *bouzouki* and the Piraeus playing style fueled the antagonism between *café-aman* and *bouzouki* rebetiko ensembles. Despite the final dominance of the latter in the music market, *café-aman* ensembles continued to influence the genre and attempted to adopt various ~~modernizing~~ strategies.<sup>11</sup> In response, *bouzouki* musicians emphasized and romanticized their own underworld lifestyle, which was represented in their compositions as the glorious and legendary realm of *mangas* (see Gauntlett 1985, 1:95-99). The wider acceptance of rebetiko song is additionally evident in the first occurrence of the word *rebetis* in song lyrics (see chapter 2, *Early written uses of the term: a meaningless archaeology*)

By the 1940s rebetiko was a musical genre that someone could purchase at record shops or listen to in a *taverna* setting. From newspaper articles we learn that *taverna*-going was a favorite form of entertainment among university students of the city (see Tomanas 1996a:84). Despite its low-life profile, rebetiko was not excluded from the broadcasting programme of the first local radio station that opened in 1926

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perform in the so-called Piraeus style. Notably, drug consumption was quite limited among Greek migrant communities; there is only a small number of hashish songs recorded in the U.S. (see Smith 1995: 130).

<sup>11</sup> It is characteristic that the lyrics of the *café-aman* compositions in those years placed a great emphasis on extreme prodigality and sensualism.

(by Christos Tsingiridhis, photo 12) which focused on light popular song and classical music.<sup>12</sup> By 1929 most Thessalonikian houses owned a radio and had access to international broadcasting programmes. Western European popular music attracted the interest of many people in Thessaloniki. Apart from radio and gramophone records, an important medium for channeling Western popular song was cinema; in 1925 there were already two cinema screens in the city, while one of the best-selling movies in 1927 was 'The Jazz Singer' (by Alan Crossland), the soundtrack of which was particularly favored by local audiences. In addition, among Thessalonikian people there were also opera fans, who used to support enthusiastically the numerous concerts offered by Greek and foreign artists (see Tomanas 1996b). Therefore, it becomes obvious that musical communication via radio and film broadcasting, as well as the record industry, facilitated the direct distribution of Western popular genres within Greek urban networks. This growing familiarization of Thessalonikians with internationally popular genres constituted an early example of the musical globalization process, strongly supported by the ongoing interest in European-imported cultural practices, ideas and aesthetics.

Next to the fashionable foreign styles, the local musical soundscape also embodied the music and dance styles associated with the various cultural groups settled in Thessaloniki, such as Sephardic song of the local Sephardic community.<sup>13</sup> Sephardic musicians also had their own bands, which performed in culture-specific events.<sup>14</sup> Similarly, the various other groups, such as the Turks, Vlachs, Armenians, Sarakatsanoi, Slavs, Gypsies, Pontioi, supported culture-centered music making, too. Inevitably, this multi-dimensional urban musical spectrum promoted processes of

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<sup>12</sup> Radio *Tsingiridhis* was the first radio broadcasting in Greece (see Anastasiadis 1996: 77-108).

<sup>13</sup> By 'soundscape' I mean the totality of musical sounds defining a place or an event; the sonic landscape.

<sup>14</sup> A newspaper article dated in 1925 mentions that the musicians of *Makabi* and *Sperantza* (Jewish associations) played at the official opening of the *Modiano* public market.

cross-fertilization and interaction among various musical genres representing various cultural enclaves. For example, rebetiko in Thessaloniki had a considerable impact on Sephardic song, which is manifested either in appropriations of rebetiko tunes to Sephardic lyrics, or adaptations of rebetiko lyrics to Sephardic language (audio example 8).<sup>15</sup>

In 1936 the Metaxas' dictatorship imposed a censorship on recordings of rebetiko low-life song, regarded as dangerous for Hellenic-Orthodox customs and morals. At the same time though, Thessalonikian police authorities displayed a protective attitude that encouraged the disassociation of the genre from underworld culture and helped to promote a more open-minded reception by the local population.

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<sup>15</sup> For example, the lyrics of the Sephardic song *A Los Banjikos de la Mar* composed by the blind musician and great *amanes* singer Sadhik Gerson, reminds the rebetiko song composed by Vamvakaris *Sto Faliro Pou Plenesai* ('In Faliro Where You're Bathing'). Similarly, the *Decidi de me Kazar*, a Sephardic song is based on the same rebetiko tune as that of *Ego Thelo Pringipessa* ('I Want a Princess', composed by Panayiotis Tountas). However, references to exotic places and drug consumption are absent in Sephardic folk song which shaped a far less marginal profile. Finally, there are *café-aman* and rebetiko songs that refer to Jews (see Nar 1997:281-326).

As a result of Metaxas' censorship of rebetiko music, the *bouzouki* was stigmatized as a symbol of illegal and morally alienated groups in Greek society. Yiannis Papaioannou, the legendary rebetiko musician (photo 13), described his attempt to meet the Head of State, General Ioannis Metaxas, and persuade him to remove the prohibition:

For every song we wished to publish, someone had to play it in front of the Committee ...If they didn't like it, they would ban it...All they [the Government] worried about was folk song...because this was the heart of the people...Metaxas said 'Stop...No *bouzoukia*, no records!' I decided then to visit him in his office... 'We're going to die, Mr. President', I told him, 'this is our job'. 'You make hashish songs, that's why I won't let you' said Metaxas. 'I don't do hashish songs, let me play and you'll see'. 'The others do' he replied. 'Neither do they, they stopped, all our songs are nice now'...And I played for him...I was making a fool of him...He smiled. He permitted the songs to come out, without verses about hash, though (1996:75-77).

Regardless of whether Papaioannou described an incident that truly happened, his narratives exemplify an interesting case of the ways a prominent *bouzouki* player and composer of rebetiko performs a myth purposefully made. The making of a myth that describes the heroic dispute between a *rebetis* and the Head of State embodies ways of explaining musical change, the passage to a new era of rebetiko history and, moreover, illuminates how the broader rebetiko community perceived the application of censorship law, namely the harmful effects on their music making and actual living. These understandings of censorship metaphorically conveyed here portray the construction of an imaginary discourse with the Head of the State, the official representative of the restrictive law. The dialogue performed by Papaioannou illustrates, primarily, the encounter between two oppositional realms: the rebetiko culture and the official culture of the State. The marginal *rebetis* meets the ultimate authoritative man of Greek society; the dashing, proud *mangas* meets the socially

powerful and most renowned officer. In this mythical discourse, *rebetis* managed to deal and persuade, eventually, the head of Greek hierarchy, mainly by employing his talent and competence in *bouzouki*-playing. This way, Papaioannou's narratives embody the refusal of *rebetis* to acknowledge the censorship of 'socially offensive' songs as a defeat by the superior power. Besides, a 'true' *mangas* is never expected to retreat and comply with any power threatening his authority; he must demonstrate his *mangas* qualities and prove his ability to stand up against the direst rival. Despite the fact that, in the end, he compromised with the prohibition of hashish songs, his encounter with the Head of State is described as a triumph over the entire Greek *status quo*. Forces adverse to rebetiko song - personified by Metaxas - were, finally, charmed and captivated by the seductive sound produced by the instrument their politics attempted to suppress, namely the *bouzouki* and its associated musical domain.

Nonetheless, persecutions of *bouzouki* players by the police in those years forced many of them to seek employment outside Athens.<sup>1</sup> This way, the centre of rebetiko performance was gradually, during this period, transferred to urban Greek centres outside Athens, especially Thessaloniki, where Moushondis' (the chief of local police) protective attitude offered then a refuge for rebetiko song. Vamvakaris in his autobiography recalled: 'First time in Saloniki [slang version of Thessaloniki] I played with Batis...in *Papafi* [that is apparently the *Papafis*' garden]<sup>2</sup>...it was full of people. I stayed for a month. I was with Batis, a *baghlamas* and a *bouzouki* [ensemble]...' (Vellou-Keil 1978:162). During his second visit he performed at Ano

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<sup>1</sup> Some rebetiko musicians were sent into exile; in addition to communists and people with antiestablishment activity (Kostas Hatzidhoulis refers to Genitsaris' exile, see 1979b:157), there were also cases of deportations of drug addicts.

<sup>2</sup> See Christianopoulos (1999:32-40).

Toumba (apparently at *Paramagoula's* coffee-shop) together with Batis and Papaioannou for a month. Both of his visits in the city took place in the years 1936-1938. In Thessaloniki he met the local rebetiko experts Christos Mingos and Giorgchos Tsanakas. Vamvakaris also recounted his third visit in Thessaloniki, when he met the singer Prodhromos Tsaoussakis:

I played at Eirinis' Street, I and Papaioannou... the ill-reputed places were there [meaning brothels]...I liked Thessaloniki a lot. Beautiful city...I was impressed by Thessaloniki's market...beautiful things...And, most of all, the women were very *chic* [elegant]...and the men were well-dressed...A wealthy place...It was like Europe...I composed then a song about Thessaloniki:

Ωραία την επέρασα μες στη Θεσσαλονίκη  
Θυμήθηκα το '12 που πήραμε τη νίκη  
Μικροί μεγάλοι τρέζανε εμένα για να δούνε  
Ν' ακούσουνε γλυκιά πενιά και να \*χαριστηθούνε<sup>3</sup>

(translation)

I had a nice time in Thessaloniki  
I recall 1912 when we won  
Young and old they rushed to see me  
To listen to the sweet *penia* (sing.) to enjoy themselves

In Thessaloniki I met the famous chief of police, Nikolaos Moushondis...He liked us a lot...Everyone who used to go from here to Thessaloniki, [they] used to tell him that they come from Piraeus and Athens. Thieves, pickpockets etc. they used to go [to Moushondis]... And all of us, we used to wander free in Thessaloniki, with our wings open...We did not bother anyone...only women... We used to take them to the hotel...and we used to smoke narghileh...He was a *meraklis* [a person with *meraki*], he liked the instrument [*bouzouki*], but he didn't smoke...He used to take me and Batis to play for him. We used to go to a small remote coffee shop...to avoid being recognized. We smoked in front of him and he offered us stuff to smoke...He loved us... 'Come here everyday' he used to say... But could we go? It was a shame for *manges* like us... He loved us a lot... Together with Moushondis, we also met other policemen... [In Thessaloniki] I met the Bulgarian, the Salonikia, Elli.<sup>4</sup> I met her in Vardharis, in a house of ill-repute. She was a scarlet woman. She loved me crazily and I loved her too...I took her with me...I took her out of the gutter... She used to sing a bit...I put her on the gramophone [recorded a song with her voice] and she sang for me... (Vellou-Keil 1978:162-171).

<sup>3</sup> Recorded in 1936, Parlophone B 21883/GO 2570.

<sup>4</sup> She is the singer in the recording of his song *Sto Faliro pou Plenesai*. 'In Faliro Where You Go Bathing' (see Vellou-Keil 1978:171).

this period also described his visit in Thessaloniki:<sup>5</sup>

We had a great time... much money and great success...Then I met Moushondis...He liked *bouzoukia* a lot...He was a friend of ours...he would not let anyone hurt us... [In Thessaloniki] Markos [Vamvakaris] and Stratos [Payioumtzis] used to spend hours and hours in hash-dens...We first worked in *Kerkyra's* place, at Eirinis' Street...very wild people used to hang around there. Kerkyras used to be a wild *mangas*. Then we worked at *Kafandaris'* place, a bit further up...And there was an affray, one night, when some *koutsavakidhes* ['gangster outlaws'] came to wreck the place. They were ordered by Kerkyras himself<sup>6</sup>... [In Thessaloniki] we always had success, people used to like us a lot there (Papaioannou 1996:69-71).

Nonetheless, the censorship of 1936 profoundly affected rebetiko music making. There was a considerable decline in the number of compositions, since songs were produced in compliance with censorship regulations (see Gauntlett 1985, 1:101). Inevitably, songs associated with lumpen urban culture could only be played on stage. In addition, state control also affected the language employed in the lyrics, which avoided the use of underworld slang, especially those words associated with marginal practices and drug consumption. Accordingly, themes inspired by rebetiko low-life activities were rarely discussed in song texts. In the rebetiko lyrics of those years, the *taverna* replaced the marginal contexts of hash-den and prison cell and became the main setting of the rebetiko song stories. Still, however, in the censorship years the *tekes* communities were proliferating in many urban centers, such as the *Tekes tou Sidheri* ('The Sidheris' *Tekes*') in Thessaloniki.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>5</sup> For Papaioannou see his autobiography (Papaioannou 1996).

<sup>6</sup> Kerkyras was a legendary *mangas* convicted several times for murder, smuggling and other crimes. He was later associated with the right wing nationalist political party and was involved in terrorist attacks supported by the local Security Police during WWII (see Papaioannou 1996:81).

<sup>7</sup> An affray that took place in *Tekes tou Sidheri* is described in the song *Dhrosoula* ('Sweet Coolness') composed by Vasilis Tsitsanis recorded in 1946 (see Hatzidhoulis 1979a:210).

Under these restrictive conditions shaped by the Metaxas government and the broader rejection of oriental musical culture, *café-aman kompanies* needed to re-shape their public profile and the musical entertainment they offered (see Gauntlett 1985, 1:107). Besides, *café-aman* music making was traditionally regarded as an expression of the Ottoman entertainment heritage. In order to protect the genre from hostile state cultural politics, musicians sought to produce compositions of a syncretic nature that resulted from a combination of *café-aman* style with the *bouzouki*-based *rebetiko*, such as the compositions featuring the male singer Giorghos Kavouras.<sup>8</sup>

The Metaxas' censorship and the associated effects on the nature of *rebetiko* song tradition encouraged, however, the emergence of the second generation of *rebetiko* musicians, who gradually cultivated a more popular profile for *rebetiko* song. The most productive and popular composer of this generation, whose work epitomizes the changing character of *rebetiko* song from 1937 onwards, is Vasilis Tsitsanis (photo 14). With Tsitsanis' work *rebetiko* song was further 'expurgated' and disassociated from the repellent underworld practices. Tsitsanis is generally acknowledged as the one who established *rebetiko* among the economically privileged groups. First, the lyrics of Tsitsanis' compositions, which he often described as *kantadhes*, that is serenade-like love songs (see Gauntlett 1975:7-13), featured words of literate origin, even archaic phrases - also common in light (*elafry*) folk song (audio example 9). Most of the song lyrics were written by himself. Tsitsanis originally came to Athens as a student in law school - although he soon abandoned his studies and dedicated himself to *rebetiko* musicianship. Not surprisingly, his song

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<sup>8</sup> For the singer Giorghos Kavouras and his discography see Kounadhis (2000:66-103).

texts present a more sophisticated character in comparison to those of the preceding rebetiko eras. For example:

Κουράστηκα για να σε αποκτήσω  
Αρχόντισσα μου μάγισσα τρελή  
Σαν θαλασσοδεμένος μες το κύμα  
Παρηγοριά ζητούσα ο δόλιος στη ζωή

(Recorded in 1938, Columbia DG 6440/CG 1874).

(*translation*)

I wore myself out in order to possess you  
My noble lady, crazy witch  
Like a sea-tortured man in the waves  
I was looking, poor me, for solace in life

Most important, his melodic lines were primarily based on the well-tempered system. Besides, Tsitsanis himself described his songs as ‘*primo-secondo*’ (‘first – second voice’, meaning mainly intervals of thirds), ‘*majorakia*’ (meaning songs in major scales) or ‘*minorakia*’ (meaning songs in minor scales), while he extensively used in his compositions movements in parallel thirds. This way, the composer appears to perceive rebetiko melodic structure under the dual conceptualization of minor/major scales imported from Western musical theory. Consequently, he replaced the horizontal melodic structure traditionally employed by the first generation, with a vertical one (harmonic) by introducing chords. This development signaled the gradual modernization of the traditional system of modes (*dhromoi*); as Tsitsanis himself had stressed, ‘I had inside me my own big musical world’, that he considered as different to that of Vamvakaris (Gauntlett 1975:2).

In the person of Tsitsanis, the second generation of rebetiko musicians appears to be more sophisticated and, to a certain extent, more educated than the first

generation. While Vamvakaris shaped his dexterity and compositional artistry by experimenting empirically with *bouzouki* techniques in *tekes* contexts, Tsitsanis received violin lessons in the city of Trikala (his birthplace) by an Italian teacher. He also used to perform in school events, while his father owned an Italian *mandola* (a larger type of mandolin).<sup>9</sup> Most probably he was acquainted with the rebetiko tradition of the first generation of composers, but he himself categorically denied any influence of the *mangika* (songs associated with the *mangas* underworld communities) and *hasiklidhika* ('hashish-songs') on his own work. It is remarkable that he used to avoid describing his compositions as 'rebetika' (pl., see Christianopoulos 1994:12). Instead, he used to name them *laika* (*laiko* sing., 'folk') songs. Obviously, he preferred to dissociate his compositions from early rebetiko tradition and presented them as predecessors of the then emerging urban *laiko* song (a *bouzouki*-based style which thrived in the 1960s).

Written in the years of great misery and destitution, the themes discussed in his compositions focused on expressing frustration and the desire to escape to exotic and dreamful realms, away from the destitution and misery of the pre-war and, later, wartime years (audio example 10). He often glorified luxury and material wealth as the ultimate sources of pleasure that ensure erotic success and social ascent - the keys to an imaginary paradise located somewhere outside the futile reality of everyday life.<sup>10</sup>

Rebetiko places in Thessaloniki were scattered in various areas of the city. In the ill-reputed Vardharis area, the prostitutes' realm, there was the above-mentioned

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<sup>9</sup> For Tsitsanis' biography see Hatzidoulis (1979a).

*Kerkyras'* and the *Kafandaris' tavernes*. Several other rebetiko dens, more or less socially renowned, were located in Kamara and the seaport area, in Hatzi-Bahtse, Ano Toumba, Harilaou and Karabournaki. There were also a few hashish-dens, such as the *Sidheris' tekes* and the Behtsinar area (at Peraia region). Finally, a famous rebetiko stage was the *Koutsoura of Dalamangas*, again glorified in a Tsitsanis' song.<sup>11</sup> Dinos Christianopoulos, a Thessalonikian poet and rebetiko expert, stressed that the most lively rebetiko places in the city were in the area around the White Tower on the waterfront (see Christianopoulos 1999).

It is interesting to note that several places hosting *elafrý traghoudi* ('light song') were located close to those associated with rebetiko song. This way, the spatial distribution of entertainment places in that time illustrates the popularization of rebetiko music. For example, the *Astoria* coffee shop by the seaport (where several rebetiko venues were also located) was the place where Sofia Vembo, a female singer of light popular song, made her debut in 1933 (see Christianopoulos 1999:38). Similarly, in Karabournaki, the eastern seaside area, there was the *Kalamaki taverna*, where Vamvakaris and, later, Tsitsanis and Manolis Hiotis performed. In this area there were also *elafrý traghoudhi* stages (photo 15), where students and Thessalonikian youth used to dance to the 'hit' songs of Attik, Eduardo Bianco, Kostas Yiannidis and Tino Rossi. According to Tomanas (1996:114-122), the youth

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<sup>10</sup> See, for instance, his songs *Arapines* ('Arab Women') and *Serah* ('Serah', see Hatzidhoulis 1979a:94, 110).

<sup>11</sup> Πάμε τσάρκα στην Ακρόπολη στη Βάρνα  
κι από κει στα Κούτσουρα του Δαλαμάγκα

...

(translation)

Let's go for a walk in Akropolis, in Varna  
And from there to the *Koutsoura* of Dalamangas

...

Recorded in 1946; see Hatzidhoulis (1979a:132).

and student population of the city used to frequent both types of places: interestingly, it appears that both types of entertainment cost more or less the same.

#### *1941-1946. Suspension of commercial recordings during the Occupation years*

The Axis occupation in the years 1941-194~~4~~ suspended gramophone record production, since the German army used the local factory site of Columbia record industry as a reconditioning plant for military vehicles (see Kapetanakis 1999:138). The massive deportations of Thessalonikian Jews to concentration camps by Nazi forces affected the population structure profoundly: since, only few Jewish people survived the Holocaust, the hitherto dominant Sephardic community abruptly vanished.<sup>12</sup> In 1943 the Occupation government imposed a new censorship on rebetiko music, covering both recording and broadcasting activities (see Tomanas 1996:230). In contrast, the German authorities privileged western art and music: during their stay in the Greek mainland they permitted the Athens State Theatre to operate, as well as casinos and various music halls in Thessaloniki.

Under the new censorship rules, stage performance remained the sole medium for communicating rebetiko music. The ill-reputed rebetiko dens attracted marginal groups, such as smugglers, thieves and gangsters, namely the lumpen social groups emerging out of wartime impoverishment. The discussion of illegal activities - a topic

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<sup>12</sup> For the Sephardic Jews in Greece, see *Documents on the History of Greek Jews: Records from the Historical Archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs*, edited by Photini Constantopoulou, Thanos Veremis and Steve Bowman. Translated by Geoffrey Cox, John Solman. Athens: Kastaniotis, 1998.

that was avoided in the foregoing era – re-appeared in rebetiko songs (see Gauntlett 1985, 1:117). For example:

Με πιάσαν ένα απόγευμα  
Μες στο Μεταξουργείο  
Γιατί επούλαγα νερό  
Για λάδι ένα δοχείο <sup>injustice'</sup>  
(*Aghoronomikon Adhikima*, 'Market Inspection  $\lambda$ ', a non-recorded *zeibekikos* song

by Mihalis Genitsaris, written in 7.03.1944; see Petropoulos [1979] 1991: 208).

(*translation*)

They caught me one afternoon  
At Metaxourghio  
Selling water by the vase  
For olive oil

The prevailing frustration and destitution of the Occupation years attracted many urbanites, further than the above-described groups, to *bouzouki*-based music entertainment. Despite the fact that the majority of the population suffered as a result of the adverse economic conditions, rebetiko exponents could still earn their living, at a time when several city dwellers died out of starvation. 'It was the Occupation period and people were dying on the pavements every day...I, however, thanked God for being able to go on and earn a living for my family' argued Vamvakaris (Vellou-Keil 1978:194). The commercial prosperity of rebetiko song motivated musicians who were previously employed in European light orchestras to join *bouzouki*-based *kompanies* (see Gauntlett 1985, 1:118).

During the Occupation some of the prominent rebetiko musicians of the first generation died (Anestis Delias, Yiovan Tsaous, Giorghos Kavouras). Moreover, composers who had known commercial success during the pre-War era, felt now disappointed by the changing urban musical scene. Only a few songs by the first

rebetiko generation, which focused mainly on current topics, such as the black market and monetary inflation, date from this period. Thessaloniki, at that time, became the main centre of rebetiko music in Greece for two reasons. The first was the protective politics of the local chief of police, Nikolaos Moushondis, himself a rebetiko exponent.<sup>13</sup> He had allowed stage performances of rebetiko musicians in the years rebetiko was banned by Metaxas' censorship law. More importantly, during these years the rebetiko in Thessaloniki was led by the most famous exponent of the second generation, Vasilis Tsitsanis. In 1938 Tsitsanis did his military service in Thessaloniki:<sup>14</sup>

I was dismissed in 1940. In a few months the War started...I was recruited again and served as a telegraph sender...After the Germans arrived...I left immediately for Thessaloniki, where I settled. Then I met my wife and we got married there...I needed to work. I worked in Karabournaki, at *Barbalia's*, I worked at *Elato*, I worked elsewhere and at the famous *Koutsoura* of Dalamangas that was located in Nikiforou Foka Street, close to the White Tower. I didn't work for a long time in those venues, because, later, in 1941, I opened my own place, at 21 Pavlou Mela Street, next to the Moskoff Residency at Diaghonios in Tsimiski street. This was a small place, with a few tables, a great place that became historic. It was called *Ouzeri Tsitsani* and there I composed songs, which I recorded after the War and people loved them. In this city, during the Occupation years, I did a lot of work. Work that everyone later on would discuss, work that came out of the dramatic character of that period, work that enclosed my best musical world, work that was going to conquer later Greece.

The Occupation years were the most shattering period for folk song and this period, as it became clearer day by day, 'stigmatized' my career and the history of folk music. Because, if in prewar times I began as a folk composer in gramophone recordings - and this was a real revolution for folk song - the Occupation years was the period whence I gave the best I had inside my soul, the truest thing that came out of those tragic conditions. In a few words, the Occupation years are the heart of folk song...

Then I wrote the *Synnefiasmeni Kyriaki* ('Cloudy Sunday', audio example 11) based on the tragic incidents that happened then in our country:

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<sup>13</sup> When Tsitsanis got married to a Thessalonikian woman, Moushondis became his best man (see Christianopoulos 1994:14). According to relevant references (see Christianopoulos 1994;1999) it is not clear whether Moushondis retained his position as chief of the local security police during the German Occupation. It appears anyway that he was a highly influential person in Thessalonikian society. For example, Tsitsanis was offered a job at the well-respected taverna *Koutsoura* after his intervention (Christianopoulos 1994:15).

<sup>14</sup> His song *Sto Taghma Tilegraphiton* ('In the Telegraphers' Order') refers to his military service experience in Thessaloniki (see Hatzidhoulis 1979a:14).

starvation, misery, fear, depression, arrests, executions. The lyrics I wrote were inspired by this climate. The melody came out of the 'cloudy' occupation, out of the frustration we all suffered – then, when everything was shadowed under terror and was crushed by slavery.

All the songs I wrote in Thessaloniki, during the Occupation years, I recorded them after the Liberation, when the recording factory was re-opened. During the whole Occupation period, however, we used to play and sing them in my *ouzeri* ('ouzo den') and they became popular before they were recorded. Athens, Piraeus, the whole of Greece, learned them via the seamen, the traders, the smugglers, who visited Thessaloniki often and passed by my little shop (Hatzidhoulis 1979a:19-20).

Christianopoulos argues that the Occupation years represent the era of 'the Thessalonikian school of rebetiko' (1938-1946), that was highly influenced by the work of Vasilis Tsitsanis (1999:10).<sup>15</sup> Indeed, it seems that Thessaloniki became a symbolic locus of the second generation of rebetiko pioneered by the work of Tsitsanis. However, Petropoulos considers this to be an exaggeration promoted by Christianopoulos (see Petropoulos 2001:106-107).

Finally, the misery of wartime encouraged drug addiction; drug-songs - often employing underworld slang - became popular among the growing rebetiko audience. Realizing the influence of rebetiko on the morale of urban impoverished groups, the Greek Communist Party (K.K.E.) expressed publicly their rejection of the songs, considering them as an 'alienation of social consciousness'. During the civil war years that followed the withdrawal of the Axis forces, communist guerilla members of the left-wing resistance forces attempted to attack rebetiko song dens and threatened musicians to stop them performing the music 'that harassed the ethos of our folk' (see Vellou-Keil 1978:209).

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<sup>15</sup> Other musicians of this 'school' are Babis Bakalis, the guitarist Giorghios Tsanakas, the *bouzouki* player Christos Mingos, the singer Takis Binis, the guitarist Yiannis Kyriazis, the singer Prodhromos Tsaoussakis, the female Jewish singer Stella Haskil (see Christianopoulos 1999:26-28).

1946-1952. The emergence of the *arhondorebetiko* genre

After the War the Greek state maintained censorship of music recordings (see Gauntlett 1985, 1:128). This was less rigorous than the Metaxas' censorship that aimed primarily at banning songs bearing anti-establishment connotations; themes inspired by the *mangas* underworld were no longer considered as threatening Hellenic-Orthodox customs and morals. Post-1945 rebetiko song reality is characterized by expressions of antisocial, even misanthropic sentiments, next to pessimism and melancholy.<sup>1</sup> It is interesting that the increasing number of suicidal tendencies and psychological disorders reported then in Greek urban centres was explained by local experts as the pathological effects of listening to rebetiko music.<sup>2</sup> The rebetiko experience in the *taverna* appears in song lyrics as an escape offering a healing antidote to the prevailing postwar despair, sorrow and frustration.

The emergence in those years of, so-called, *arhondorebetiko* (audio example 12), a hybrid genre combining *elafry* (light) with rebetiko song, increased the popularity of rebetiko entertainment amongst wealthy urbanites.<sup>3</sup> Through *arhondorebetiko*, rebetiko was socially elevated and 'ennobled' – this is, after all,

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<sup>1</sup> See, for example, the following lyrics of a song composed by Vasilis Tsitsanis:

Μπροσ στο ρημαγμένο σπίτι  
Με τις πόρτες τις κλειστές  
Τον καημό μου σιγοκλαίω  
Και ματώνουν οι καρδιές

(translation)

In front of the ruined house  
With the doors closed  
I slowly cry my sorrow  
And the hearts are bleeding

(Recorded in 1947. The song is included in a digitally remastered collection of Tsitsanis' compositions, 'Discography of Tsitsanis, 1946-1955', EMI, 1994).

<sup>2</sup> For a psychological–sociological approach of cannabis users in Greece see Stefanis et al. (1975). Stringaris account on psychopathology and criminality of cannabis users was re-edited in 1964.

what the prefix *arhondo-* (literally ‘noble’) signifies. The central characters illustrated in the lyrics of *arhondorebetiko* song are the bohemian *rebetis*, who lavishes and revels in luxurious nightclubs together with his astonishingly beautiful female partner. The context of this extravagant revelry is the so-called *kosmiki taverna*, namely ‘the glamorous taverna’ (photo 16), where well-off urbanites used to spend their time splurging excessive amounts of money.<sup>4</sup> Giorghos Zabetas, a famous *bouzouki*-player of those years, argues that *Dianita*, ‘a highly-aristocratic place’ located in the wealthy Athenian suburb of Kifissia, was the first to introduce a *bouzouki*-based orchestra in 1951. In the same year, he played *bouzouki* together with his extended band for the Greek film *O Pyrghos ton Ippoton* (‘The Tower of the Knights’ scripted by Nikos Tsiforos), while a year earlier he started regular broadcasting on the State Radio of the Armed Forces (YENED; see Kleiasiou 1997:127;132-133;440).

Validated by the state and supported by well-off groups of Greek society, *rebetiko* was no longer considered as a ‘damned’ art. The bourgeois *rebetiko* places were usually referred to as ‘centres’ (*kentra* pl., *kentro* sing.), that is, clubs with luxurious interiors, or as *bouzoukia*, a novel way of naming venues that, notably, signified - and still do today - both the performance context and the leading instrument. In addition, because of the opulent and glamorous character of the revelry, to say ‘let’s go to the *bouzoukia*’ became an expression associated with reckless profligacy and exhibitionism (photo 17). Thus, the main instrument of music making, the *bouzouki*, was transformed to a symbol of the overall associated entertainment practices. This way, the word *bouzouki* acquired a meaning – still used amongst

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<sup>3</sup> One of the pioneers of *arhondorebetiko* was Manolis Hiotis. Hiotis added a fourth pair of strings to the *bouzouki* (see Pennanen 1997).

<sup>4</sup> Zabetas describes vividly the *arhondorebetiko* era in Kleiasiou (1997:209-338).

Greek people today - that stretches further than the signification of the stringed instrument itself to that of the related popular entertainment as a whole.

Inevitably, under these circumstances, playing folk music emerged as a profitable profession that was additionally sustained by the expanding local record market. The changing entertainment aesthetics of the bourgeois clientele during postwar years further motivated musicians previously employed in the 'European' ensembles (*elafrý* song orchestras) to seek employment in *kosmikes tavernes* (pl.), where they could work in the kind of luxurious performance context they once used to monopolize. The incorporation of *elafrý* song musicians in *bouzoukia orhistres* ('orchestras') brought even closer the European and the local musical traditions, through orchestration, structure of the repertory, playing techniques and, of course the behavioral and aesthetic encounters of the performing musicians (see Gauntlett 1985, 1:128-133).

The musicians who were former members of light song ensembles transplanted to rebetiko performance instruments and song styles previously exclusive to cabarets, ballrooms and revue theatre music. The development of a hybrid repertory that could satisfy diverse musical preferences transformed, in this way, *kosmiki taverna* to a site of interaction and cross-fertilization among various urban popular genres. At the same time, rebetiko composers employed hack-versifiers (*loghidhes*) who provided them with ready-made song lyrics, in order to cope with the growing demands of an expanding record industry (see Gauntlett 1985, 1:132).

Under the perplexing reality of postwar urban musical networks, the clear definition and distinction of specific urban genres was further confused: fundamental questions such as what is rebetiko, what is popular music, what is urban folk song, became areas of inquiry generating overlapping, sometimes even contradictory, definitions. Despite the fact that social and musical contexts of urban musical traditions were usually fluid and mutable, the hybrid tactics of urban musical reality in postwar years further reinforced processes of musical syncretism.

The second generation of rebetiko musicians appears to have had the flexibility and competence to deal with the rapidly changing conditions of the folk song market. They attempted to employ various adaptive mechanisms aiming at securing and displaying themselves as 'stars' (photo 18) following current European musical trends and commercializing strategies. There are, for instance, several songs mentioning the name of the composer himself, or verses that feature commercial brand names, such as the verses of song *Eviva Rebetes* ('Eviva Rebetes') composed and sung by Apostolos Kaldharas:

...  
με σαμπάνιες και «Μαρκό»  
τον κάθε πόνο σβήνω και ξεχνώ

(Recorded in 1947, Odeon GA 7385/GO 3755. Published in *Moderno Tragoudhi* magazine, Vol. 14, 1.11.1947; see Gauntlett 1985, 2:283).

(translation)  
With champagne and 'Marko' [that is *Markopoulo* wine label]  
I forget and blow away every pain

Several musicians composed music for Greek fiction films in which they also appeared as performers. Greek films of this era often incorporated a standard sequence taking place in a *kosmiko kentro*, featuring famous *bouzouki* virtuosos. Most

of these sequences were filmed in real locations, in fashionable *bouzoukia* places (see Soldhatos 1999:230-235). The starring musicians usually emulated European ideals in the image making and style of appearance as performers. Numerous photos and relevant Greek fiction film extracts illustrate a preoccupation with luxurious dressing and jewelry. Although their styling was inspired by European glamorous artists, it also depicts the broader Greek *nouveaux riches*' anxiety to exhibit extreme opulence. In addition, the body language and performance kinetics of the musicians expressed the consciousness of a celebrity personage that corresponds to the ideal of a musical legend - an already well-tailored performer's model in the western music industry. Moreover, in order to keep in touch with customers' occasional preferences, musicians were urged to develop a flexible attitude towards musical novelties – a 'truly' professional attitude that worked as a catalyst in those years promoting the modernization of Greek entertainment (see Gauntlett 1985, 1:135). Consequently, as long as musicians were able to conform to current musical trends, they could sustain and promote their musicianship and creativity in the musical market.

Regarding the topics favored in postwar rebetiko song, the lyrics describe various conditions of melancholy and despair (audio examples 13, 14), as well as the power of fate, or glorify the bohemian lifestyle.<sup>5</sup> They underline, in certain cases, a

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<sup>5</sup> See, for example, the lyrics of the following song *Mambo Me Treles Penies* ('Mambo with Crazy Penies') composed by Tsitsanis and recorded in 1959:

Στην τσέπη κάργα τάληρα  
Και πάει για τα Φάληρα  
Με την Μπέτυ την ομορφονιά  
Φουλ για τα μπουζούκια για πενιά  
(Melody Mg 53/MA 84; see also Gauntlett 1985, 2:207)

(translation)

With his pockets full of money  
He heads to the Faliro places  
Together with Betty, the beauty  
At full speed he heads to the *bouzoukia* to listen to *penia*.

misanthropic view and express anti-social sentiments. In addition, under the influence of melodramatic rhetorics typical of light popular song, love affairs were discussed somehow sorrowfully as lachrymose and passionate stories. The ways the wealthy clientele received themes describing underworld life are echoed in the romantic mythicization of the *mangas* figure. His deviant behavior and extraordinary practices awakened an interest in the unknown, mysterious otherness of the underworld that entertained the bourgeois boredom. Characteristic of the cross-fertilization with various popular urban musics is the occurrence in song lyrics, alongside the wide use of slang idioms, of words and phrases of literary origin, which are combined with fashionable, recently imported, words or exotic terms deriving from Middle Eastern languages.

While the second generation of *rebetes* enjoyed success and social acknowledgement, the first generation of musicians was forgotten; those amongst them who were still active as musicians sought employment in the provincial *tavernes* of the Greek mainland and the islands. Their compositions from those years express mainly feelings of frustration generated by the 'ungenerous' world and misfortunes of fate.<sup>6</sup> The first rebetiko generation fell into oblivion; they had to wait a decade for the so-called rebetiko revivalists to re-discover them and bring them back to the attention of the public.

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<sup>6</sup> See, for example, the following lyrics by Markos Vamvakaris:  
Μπουζούκι γλέντι του ντουριά που γλένταγες τους μάγκες  
Οι πλούσιοι σου κάνανε μεγάλες ματσαράγκες  
(Recorded in 1947, Odeon GA 7400/GO 3815; see also Gauntlett 1985, 1:148)

(translation)  
*Bouzouki* the reveling of the world that you amused the *manges*  
The rich people cheated you a lot

## *Postscriptum*

The changing rebetiko music scene stimulated new directions in the ways rebetiko was perceived and evaluated by the Greek intelligentsia. Many of them felt the urge to assess the ongoing developments in Greek music and define the character of folk song by suggesting a standard profile for what ‘proper’ Greek folk song should be. Already in 1936, contemporary critics accused Karolos Koun, a prominent theatre director, of impudence because he incorporated the rebetiko song titled *Lahanadhes* (‘Pickpockets’) in his experimental adaptation of Aristophanes’ play *Plutus* (see Rodhas 1936). Thereafter, the orientations of Greek folk song intrigued various intellectuals and fired several ideological debates that led to the first revival of the genre.

## Chapter 5. On rebetiko debates

### *Rebetology in the 1960s*

By the end of the 1950s the emerging discord among scholars regarding the nature and the status of rebetiko in Greek culture stimulated a furious controversy that developed mostly within left wing intellectual circles in the following decade.<sup>1</sup> While on one hand Alekos Xenos accused rebetiko of being ‘anachronistic’, ‘pornographic’, a ‘nursling of the decadent bourgeoisie’ (1947),<sup>2</sup> Foivos Anoyianakis - a music folklorist and contributor to the left-wing newspaper, *Rizospastis* - stood on the opposite side: while he disapproved of the association of rebetiko with drug consumption, he attempted to present the genre as a genuine expression of current social transformations taking place in major urban centres. Anoyianakis further suggested that rebetiko was linked with *dhimotiko traghoudhi* of the Ottoman era and Byzantine chant and was, therefore, an indispensable part of an age-long tradition.<sup>3</sup>

In the same political vein, Mikis Theodorakis, one of the most prominent Greek composers - as well as an ardent communist at that time - expressed enthusiastically his appreciation for the musical and social qualities of rebetiko by identifying in it elements of what he described as ‘proletarian chivalry’ ([1949] in Theodorakis 1974:163). Because of the negative connotations traditionally accompanying the word ‘rebetiko’, he preferred, however, to use instead of ‘rebetiko’ the more generic term, ‘folk song’ (*laiko traghoudhi*, *ibid.*:159). Theodorakis saw

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<sup>1</sup> The rebetiko debates are reviewed by Gauntlett (1989).

<sup>2</sup> Reprinted in Holst (1977:141-3).

<sup>3</sup> Reprinted in Holst (1977:139-141).

the 'folk song' (*laiko traghoudhi*) genre as a creative synthesis of *dhimotiko traghoudhi*, Byzantine chant and *kantadha* (urban serenade song); in this way, the notion of 'folk song' for him recapitulated the entire spectrum of Greek musical traditions. As such, it was acknowledged as a vehicle both of tradition and novelty, since folk song composition was seen as a creative arena 'for the making of a pure folk and a truly Greek Music School' (ibid.:169) (photo 19).

Theodorakis later on sought to appropriate rebetiko music elements in his highly controversial work *Epitaphios* (1960).<sup>4</sup> Interestingly, in *Epitaphios* the poetry of the renowned Greek poet, Yiannis Ritsos, was performed by Grigoris Bithikotsis, an urban folk singer who was recruited from the rebetiko tradition. Although *Epitaphios* represents a so-called 'art song' (*entehno*) style of composition, Theodorakis dared to make the innovation: while the songs belong to the *entehno* style, the style of voice delivery recalls *taverna* rebetiko performances.<sup>5</sup> In addition, he introduced the *bouzouki* as a leading instrument, which was thus incorporated within an art song orchestra (audio example 15). His musical experimentation, which sounded then somehow avant-garde, stimulated ambivalent responses. The composer's rivals dismissed the syncretic nature of *Epitaphios* as 'sacrilegious' (Theodorakis 1974:190); for Ritsos, Theodorakis' initiative was 'cheap' and 'folkish'.<sup>6</sup> Theodorakis himself was accused of profiteering and having besmirched poetry (see Hatzis 1961). Infuriated, the composer blamed in response his musical rivals for musical racism (see Theodorakis 1974:200-201).

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<sup>4</sup> Four 45 rpm discs Columbia (SCDG 2778 -2779- 2780 -2781).

<sup>5</sup> Greek *entehno traghoudhi* ('art song') is a term that describes song compositions based on achieved published poetry (see Beaton 1994:226-229).

<sup>6</sup> *Vima* 22.10.1978, p.5

In fact, *Epitaphios* was originally recorded featuring a female art song singer, Nana Moushouri and orchestrated (without *bouzouki*) by Manos Hatzidhakis.<sup>7</sup> The reactions expressed against the innovative ‘folk’ version of *Epitaphios* featuring Bithikotsis’ rebetiko voice further amplified the rebetiko debate among left wing intellectuals. Tassos Vournas, for instance, argued that ‘rebetiko songs are the lyrical expression of a proud, assertive, democratic and peaceful people’ which had also served the resistance against the Nazi forces (1961). His argument was strongly contested by more radical leftists such as Hatzis (1961) and Maheras (1961). In support of Theodorakis’ musical innovation, Foivos Anoyianakis elaborated an evolutionary theory regarding the origins of the *bouzouki* instrument, aiming at eliminating the low reputation of its name.<sup>8</sup> The predecessors of *bouzouki* were traced back to ‘pre-hellenic civilizations’ of the eastern Mediterranean, the ancient Greek *pandhouridha* and the Byzantine *tambouras*.

The recognition of rebetiko song as a valuable part of the Greek cultural heritage is generally ascribed to Manos Hatzidhakis in a lecture given in 1949,<sup>9</sup> where he also introduced the term ‘rebetology’.<sup>10</sup> Hatzidhakis substantiated his views by invoking Anoyianakis’ evolutionary scheme - that aimed at proving the Byzantine origins of the genre - and further recognized in rebetiko similarities with the ethos of ancient Greek tragedy. For Hatzidhakis, the essence of rebetiko music was found in its *partheniki psyhikotita*, namely, its ‘pristine spirit’; this ‘pristine’ quality of the rebetiko aesthetics represented for Hatzidhakis a romantic manifestation of the innocent and ‘non-refined’ nature of the folk musical expression. He also invited

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<sup>7</sup> Two discs 45rpm extended Fidelity 8910 – 8911, 1960.

<sup>8</sup> Reprinted in Holst (1977:184-200).

<sup>9</sup> Although Hatzidhakis did not support the Communist Party.

<sup>10</sup> Published in *Elliniki Dhimiourghia* (March 1949) and reprinted in Holst (1977:151-155). Critically discussed by Kounadhis (2000:406).

Markos Vamvakaris and Sotiria Bellou, both veteran rebetiko musicians, to perform in his lecture. They were introduced by Hatzidhakis as ‘hierophants of an ancient art’. His romantic rhetorics were intended to stimulate an emotional response towards folk music, which he reproached nostalgically as a survival of ancient cultural splendor worthy of being regarded as ‘art’ (audio examples 16, 17).

However, the majority of Greek academia still avoided officially either teaching or researching rebetiko song. Besides, in the mid-1960s, the Northern Greek Musicians Association, the School of Humanities in Athens, as well as the Folklore Society and the Athens Academy condemned unanimously rebetiko music making as dangerous and ‘degrading’ for Greek folk music tradition (see Orfinos 1956:433). In response to this rigorous academic policy, Dinos Christianopoulos, a left wing Thessalonikian poet and rebetiko expert, demanded indignantly that the circles of the Athens Conservatoire should accept rebetiko song (1954).<sup>11</sup>

The resulting ideological ferment inevitably intrigued art critics, such as Sofia Spanoudhi, then an important art columnist. Despite her previous negative stance, Spanoudhi gradually displayed in her writings a propitious attitude towards rebetiko artistic qualities. In a press article (1952) she praised Tsitsanis’ musical skills, after having clarified, in advance, that the rebetiko tradition is of a different type and duration than the tradition of the *dhimotiko traghoudhi*.<sup>12</sup> It seems that Tsitsanis’ rebetiko politics as well as the ongoing changes in rebetiko performance contexts and in its social status helped to win over even strenuous adherents of European music. Once more, in the case of Spanoudhi, the musical status of rebetiko was elevated via its connection with the glorious ancient past traditions: in its superficially ‘primitive

form' Spanoudhi recognized 'creative tribal characteristics' (1952:156), as well as elements of 'dionysian and rhapsodic' origin, expressed through the modal Byzantine system. Finally, Spanoudhi further acknowledged traces of folk nobility and patriotic sentiments in the nature of rebetiko song expressing thus overall an emotional outburst of romantic folklorism.

During the mid-1960s the so-called period of Indocracy in urban popular song further urged Greek intellectuals to define and distinguish the 'original', 'pure' folk music. In fact, the term 'Indocracy' describes a short period of record productions based on adaptations of Indian film songs to Greek lyrics that enjoyed great commercial success and rapid popularity. Tsitsanis, obviously repulsed, denounced it as an 'era of thievery' that served merely to magnify the profits of the local record industry disregarding the artistic quality of the musical products.

Meanwhile, Hatzidhakis' enthusiastic lecture opened the way for further dogmatic pro-rebetiko expressions. In 1954, the Thessaloniki-based poet Dinos Christianopoulos entered the rebetological arena and ventured, what he described as, an 'apostolic mission' for rebetiko.<sup>13</sup> Christianopoulos sought to substantiate the artistic quality of rebetiko music through philological arguments based on the thematic analysis of the song lyrics. For Christianopoulos, the sanctification of the beloved maternal figure - evident in the frequent 'tender references to the mother figure' - indicates the chaste morality of rebetiko people, whom he represented somehow as 'noble savages'. Moreover, Christianopoulos insisted that the persona of the wicked mother often illustrated in *dhimotiko traghoudhi* is morally inferior to the

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<sup>11</sup> See the collection of his articles on rebetiko song (Christianopoulos 1979).

<sup>12</sup> Published in *Ta Nea*, 1.02.1952, reprinted in Holst (1977:155-158).

<sup>13</sup> In an article published in *Ellinikos Vorras*, 11.05.1954.

mother figure of the rebetiko song. However, the poet disregarded the numerous menaces, curses and avengeful expressions addressed against other men's mothers contained in the rebetiko narratives – both in verse form and various other textual evidences (see Gauntlett 1989:20).

### *The Epitheorisi Technis debate*

The controversial music politics followed by the Greek Communist Party further clouded the rebetological landscape. In the mid-1960s, the intensifying rebetiko discourse was oriented towards the examination of the relationship between rebetiko and *dhimotiko traghoudhi*. A series of, more or less, zealously written articles were published in the art magazine *Epitheorisi Technis*, which became then the main arena of the rebetological debate polarizing left wing intellectuals. The majority of the approaches reflect a rigorous Marxist bias revealed in attempts to explain the character of rebetiko culture and music as products of alienating urban conditions.

In this context, Petros Orfinos (1956), while he acknowledged *dhimotiko traghoudhi* as 'the most essential expression of the nation's physiognomy', attacked contemporary rebetiko venues for 'offering their customers barbarian tunes, with foolish and disgusting meanings'. On the other hand, Skouriotis (1956a) attempted to validate rebetiko as an art genre by comparing it with *dhimotiki poiisi* (the poetry of *dhimotiko traghoudhi*) in search of common roots interrelating the two traditions. In response, Samouilidhou (1956) rejected the idea of connecting the two musical styles, which she regarded as 'sacrilegious'. Similar and even more negative was Gardhikis'

reaction: he categorically stressed that 'rotteness does not deserve caresses' (1956:245).

A year later, Skouriotis (1957) came back with a sociological model that aimed at explaining the growth of anti-social songs (meaning mainly rebetiko hashish songs) out of the decadent urban life that threatened the healthy proletariat and urban society at large. The only antidote to the pathetic and alienating quality of folk ethics was, according to Skouriotis' model, the valorous *dhimotiko traghoudhi*. The *Epitheorisi Technis* debate closed with Kouzinopoulos' argument that rebetiko song may on one hand be *laiko* ('folk') but not necessary a 'pro-folk' (*filolaiko*) type of song, since it expresses sentiments of 'defeat and frustration' (1961:612). Finally, he suggested that instead of detecting the origins, scholars ought to focus upon what rebetiko song expressed and by what means.

A few years later Emmanouil Zachos, echoing local sociological approaches, suggested that rebetiko represents a musical style 'qui répond aux aspirations d' un public aussi large que celui des sous-employés' (1966:9). In most sociological analyses of the times, rebetiko is discussed as a musical reflection of the social decay brought about by the rapid industrialization of the country and the consequent transformations of social organization in the major city centres. On this basis, rebetiko song was interpreted as a symbol of the suffering urban population, an expression of the debased and culturally degenerated people of the city who were the main victims of a radical modernization. Following an inflexible Marxist model rebetologists of a sociological bias evaluated rebetiko as a particular musical manifestation that corresponded directly and exclusively to a specific social group, describing its economical status, cultural profile and ideology. This way, leftist sociologists

discussed rebetiko music as a product of an alienating social reality, which sacrificed the lower urban strata in the name of capitalist prosperity.

### *The Avghi inquiry*

A new wave of rebetological debate was generated *a propos* the inquiry undertaken by the Athenian left wing newspaper *Avghi* in April 1961.<sup>14</sup> The questions posed involved, among other issues, the identity of modern folk song, as well as its origins and connections with other Greek folk music genres. In fact, the *Avghi* editors recognized that the current state of folk song - 'the inseparable companion of *romios*' - reflected an ideological crisis that the inquiry was intended to investigate.

Once more, the extremist arguments of the contributors manifested further neo-hellenic cultural predicaments veiled behind evaluations of the rebetiko song. Markos Avgheris, for instance, while arguing that different musical styles express different 'cultural levels of folk social strata', considered rebetiko music as insufficient to express 'the high and heroic sentiments, as well as the complex pathos of the *Epitaphios* dirge' (Theodorakis 1974:210-11). Despoina Mazaraki, a music folklorist, stressed the absence of folk musicians' contributions, which would offer a 'valuable opinion' that would 'enlighten all of us' (ibid.:211). Among the most strenuous rebetophiles, stood, once more, Theodorakis. He displayed a somewhat populist rebetophilia, presenting himself as an academic composer who 'bowed' before the wisdom of 'our folk'. Again, he underlined that folk song (meaning rebetiko) incorporated actually most of the past Greek musical traditions, namely

Byzantine chant, Aegean demotic song, Asia Minor music, and *dhimotiko traghoudhi*. A year earlier, he acknowledged the *bouzouki* as ‘the current national folk instrument’ (ibid.:176), and claimed that in association with the ‘dashing’ and ‘lucid’ voice of Bithikotsis and the *bouzouki* dexterity of Manolis Hiotis, he had produced a version of *Epitaphios* that was appropriate for ‘the markets and the alleys’ (ibid.:179-180).

Conversely, Alekos Xenos continued his polemic against rebetiko, which he described as a ‘morass’ - in contrast to the purely ‘patriotic’ *dhimotiko traghoudhi* – arguing that rebetiko was completely unrelated to both church music and the *dhimotiko traghoudhi*. He substantiated his distaste for rebetiko by highlighting the ways it was used as a tourist attraction, as a popularized music much broadcast on radio and promoted by the recording industry. In addition, he commented ironically upon the fact that ‘recently *esthète* ladies entertain themselves with the *bouzouki*’ (ibid.:218). He considered rebetiko music a blend of ‘Greek, Turkish, Serbian, Oriental, Spanish...*kantadha*, tango, fox trot, march etc.’ – a heterogeneous mixture of diverse elements that was, eventually, dangerous and alienating for ‘our folk tradition’ (ibid.:219). On the other hand, Livadhitis, an optimist rebetophile, writing against Xenos’ extreme views, predicted that a new era for Greek folk song was about to begin (ibid.:224). Livadhitis supported rebetiko song ‘as the most immaculate song...because it directly derives from Greek musical tradition and, more specifically, the Byzantine’ (ibid.:221). Rejecting Xenos’ accusation of rebetiko as a ‘morass’, he argued that the rhetorics of pain and misery found in rebetiko lyrics were in fact ‘the most genuinely human’ expressions (ibid.:222).

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<sup>14</sup> The *Avghi* debate is reprinted in Theodorakis (1974:207-234).

The debate was further propelled by Elli Papadhimitriou, one of the few female contributors. Her pro-rebetiko argumentation bore an anti-western bias, since her writings warned of 'our submission to Western ideals' and denounced *kantadha* (that was based on the well-tempered system) as 'insipid...non-music'. For Papadhimitriou, modal folk song was musically more complex than western music. She concluded that the problem in Greek music history is the notion that 'we progress by accepting Western art' (ibid.:227). In contrast, Dromazos' writings reverberated Xenos' extremist arguments: 'Today, the folk song of the city is suppressed by the sovereign ideology that seeks to impose on the folk masses a psychology of impasses' (ibid.:232). Folk song ought, instead, to express the 'warm romeic heart' (ibid.:234).

#### *Rebetiko and the Greek Left*

Both of the debates above outlined (published in *Epitheorisi Technis* magazine and the *Avghi* newspaper) nourished a dogmatic and poorly substantiated discourse that emerged shortly after the Communist Party's defeat in the Greek Civil War. Left wing intellectuals and music experts treated rebetiko song as a pretext to inflame extreme controversy, apparently driven by ideological disputes lying beyond attempts to define the nature of rebetiko music itself. The rebetological polarization of the 1960s embodied further the contemporary political discomfort and social insecurity troubling the recently defeated Communist Party. More broadly, the dogmatic nature of the debates represent early nuances of a freshly emerging postmodern confusion questioning Greek musical and cultural identity, which appears to condition, more or

less consciously and in various ways, the writings of neo-hellenic Greek intellectuals.<sup>15</sup>

Both debates operated in similar conceptual frameworks that were set by contributors attached to a particular political domain. For *Epitheorisi Technis*, the central issue, concerning the ways rebetiko music was related to *dhimotiko traghoudhi*, stimulated further evaluations of the nature of the rebetiko song itself. The genres were either linked or differentiated with respect to their effects on the social consciousness of 'the people', 'the folk': rebetiko was, in this way, considered either as healthy or dangerous for the urban proletarians. The *Avghi* inquiry launched the above issue within a more general set of questions; the main problem was to define what folk song was and to delineate its prospects within the Greek musical tradition.

In the context of these general frameworks, the published critiques sought to develop theories about the origins, the history and the nature of rebetiko music, in order to assess its 'greekness' and 'purity' and to examine its appropriateness for representing contemporary Greek folk song in general. Thus, proving or rejecting the association of rebetiko with other, well-established musical traditions of the past, namely ancient Greek music and Byzantine chant, became a way of validating or

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<sup>15</sup> A similar phenomenon regarding the association of the American left with the folk music revival is discussed in Denisoff (1971). See also Serge R. Denisoff, 'The Proletarian Renaissance: The Folkness of the Ideological Folk', *Journal of American Folklore* 82 (1969): 51-65; *Sing a Song of Social Significance* (1972); Jens Lund and Serge R. Denisoff, 'The Folk Music Revival and the Counter Culture', *Journal of American Folklore* 84 (1971):394-405; Robie Lieberman, 'My Song is My Weapon': *People's Songs, American Communism, and the Politics of Culture, 1930-1950* (1989); Jane S. Becker and Barbara Franco (eds.), *Folk Roots, New Roots: Folklore in American Life* (1988); James Porter, 'Muddying the Crystal Spring: From Idealism to Realism and Marxism in the Study of English and American Folk Song', in *Comparative Musicology and Anthropology of Music*, eds. Bruno Nettl and Philip Bohlman (1991, pp.113-30); Richard A. Reuss, 'American Folksongs and Left Wing Politics: 1935-56', *Journal of the Folklore Institute* 12 (1975):89-111 and 'The Roots of American Left-Wing Interest in Folksong', *Labor History* 12 (1971):259-79.

displacing rebetiko music from a centuries-long Greek tradition. The evolutionist schemes employed sought to justify the presence of 'foreign' musical elements (Turkish, western popular, Balkan etc.) in rebetiko in opposite ways: either in an attempt to stress positively its assimilative power or, otherwise, to reject rebetiko songs as 'sordid mixtures' (Orfinos 1956:489). On this level, for the contributors to the rebetiko debates, *dhimotiko traghoudhi* and Byzantine chant were either totally irrelevant elements or, on the contrary, indispensable parts of rebetiko tradition. For the pro-rebetiko side, both were embodied in rebetiko music while, the opposite side distinguished them as Greek song ideals from the past, which unfortunately nowadays disappeared.

The comparison of rebetiko with *dhimotiko traghoudhi* generated further definitions of musical 'greekness'; rebetiko either encapsulated or, on the other hand, threatened the age-long established greekness of 'our' traditions. In the past (the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century), such conceptualizations of greekness were usually developed in terms of a nationalist romantic ideology. In the case of rebetological debates, however, ideas on greekness were developed within a rigorous Marxist model of thinking - conditioned, apparently, by the dictates of the socialist realism art movement - that interpreted folk song as a reflection of socio-economic transformations in Greek society. This way, left wing rebetiko rhetorics in the 1960s appear to combine socialist ideas with ethnocentric sentiments. This resulted in a confluence of arguments concerning what was thought of as 'proper' proletarian folk music with perceptions of 'proper' Greek folk music.

Regarding the question 'is rebetiko anti-proletarian or not?' leftist intellectuals viewed rebetiko music as a product of recent urbanization and industrialization

processes and the emergence of proletarian social groups. The central puzzling issue in this case then, was that of the genesis and association of rebetiko with marginal social enclaves (described as 'lumpen proletarians'). Justifying this association was seen, in turn, as a way to prove the alienating effects of the genre – a common, argument among anti-rebetiko scholars. Noteworthy is that both sides rejected hashish songs and, to a certain extent, songs describing *mangas* illegal activities. For the rebetophile side, however, these songs represented just a frivolous expression of early rebetiko history that contemporary folk song had far long overcome Theodorakis argued with characteristic irony: 'Do we worry that those people who preserved their purity during centuries of systematic...corruption, are so naïve, immature and, eventually, foolish, that they will all lead themselves to hashish dens!' (1974:186).

Consequently, rebetiko ethos was either seen as beneficial or dangerous for the folk psyche – a music that might reflect or undermine insidiously the 'true' folk Greek soul. In fact, the leftist rhetorics on musical greekness based on a fusion of ideals defining proletarian folk song along with 'pure' Greek music revealed the leading role of left wing intellectuals in constructing ideas of neo-hellenic Greek musical identity. The notion of greekness in the relevant arguments acquired various meanings. On one hand, they sought to capitalize on the notions of *romiosini* and *romios* in association with folk song. *Romiosini* suggests an understanding of greekness that emphasizes the Byzantine historic tradition; *romioi* (pl.) are the heroic Greeks who fought against Ottoman rule. In that sense, the 'romeic' definition of greekness is radically differentiated from the 'hellenic', implying the heritage of the 'golden' ancient past.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> The 'romeic' and 'hellenic' elements of greekness are schematically conceptualized in Herzfeld (1987:101). Despite their different connotations, 'hellenic' and 'romeic' are neither opposite terms – 'hellenic' may acquire various other, more generic uses - nor do they represent a binary set of criteria describing Greek culture.

For rebetiko exponents, *dhimotiko traghoudhi* was seen as a 'healthy', 'genuine' and 'patriotic' folk genre representing the 'true', 'hellenic' folk song. According to hard-core leftist rhetorics, urban social decay and the capitalist interests of the West promoted rebetiko on purpose, to inspire passivity and, eventually, to manipulate the folk masses. Seen in this vein of thought, rebetiko music threatened the agonistic consciousness of working class people and, therefore, was considered as inadequate to express the Greek *levendia*.<sup>17</sup> Because it was not 'proper' folk music – where 'folk' referred to the ingenuous urban working class people – it was not proper *Greek* folk music. The sociological bias of the leftist argumentation reproduced the stereotypical rural / urban music dichotomy in the name of *dhimotiko traghoudhi* and rebetiko song respectively. These conceptual frameworks echoed ideas also broadly supported then by Greek folklorists such as Meghas, Romeos and Loukatos.<sup>18</sup> Urban culture – and thus urban folk song - represented the fall from traditional values and the natural environment. It was seen as a symbolic realm of social estrangement caused by the corrupting effects of modernization on human beings. Conversely, village culture was identified with pristine agricultural communities which expressed themselves musically through *dhimotiko traghoudhi*.

For the rebetophile side, *romeiki levendia* is found in rebetiko song. The supposed connection with the *kleftiko* (the song style associated with the *kleftes*, the groups of armed social bandits of the late Ottoman era), as well as the fact that there were rebetiko songs glorifying the Resistance during World War II, were deemed as sufficient evidence of the 'patriotic' character of rebetiko as a whole. In this case, greekness identified in the rebetiko was a 'romeic' greekness; it involved an

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<sup>17</sup> The term *levendia* refers to a set of moral characteristics combining bravery, pride, manliness, and generosity. *Levendia* is traditionally considered as a male characteristic.

<sup>18</sup> See chapter 8, *The rural – urban cultural and musical dichotomy*.

expression ‘of the genuine Greek culture that has its roots in the Orient...Every *romios* deposits inside of him these elements’ (Theodorakis [1961], reprinted in 1974:263). Musically, the ‘romeic’ character of rebetiko song was substantiated through its connection with the Byzantine chant that ‘expresses the multi-faceted soul of *romiosini*’ (Dromazos [1961], *ibid.*:230). Finally, in response to what the anti-rebetiko side described as ‘sordid sentimentalism’, the rebetiko proponents highlighted the humanity of urban folk song that ‘is full of passion and truth’ (Livadhitis *ibid.*:222).

Eventually, in definitions of folk song, left wing rebetiko rhetorics implied further definitions of ‘folk people’. Interestingly enough, ‘our folk’ (*o laos mas*) was one of the most commonly used expressions referred to in the relevant texts. The social contexts where ‘our folk’ was located, in this case, are the great urban centres: *o laos mas* basically refers to the recently emerged urban working class about which leftist intellectuals appeared particularly worried. They, the *dianoisi* (‘the intelligentsia’) demonstrated publicly a sensitivity towards protecting the so-perceived lower social strata – referred to as ‘our folk’ in the texts. Thus, ‘our folk’, considered as the innocent victims of capitalist exploitation, need to be culturally and musically instructed – not to say indoctrinated; and that was, of course, the responsibility of the leftist intellectuals themselves.

*Rebetiko is moribund; rebetiko is still alive*

*Avghi*’s inquiry was soon followed by a similar survey undertaken by the Thessalonikian press (see Gauntlett 1989:23). Actually, the Thessaloniki-based

intelligentsia had already contributed a lot to the ongoing debate and exercised a considerable impact on the shaping of social attitudes towards the genre.<sup>19</sup> Besides, one of the most active defenders of rebetiko, Νίκος Πετρόπουλος, whose name is broadly associated with rebetiko folklore even today, was for a longtime settled in Thessaloniki, where he felt encouraged to give an earnest rebetophile lecture in 1961.

In the same year, Dinos Christianopoulos (1961) published a rebetiko anthology that aimed at demonstrating the aesthetic qualities of rebetiko song narratives. <sup>α</sup>Because of his admiration of Tsitsanis' work, he deliberately downplayed the artistic value of the first generation of *rebetes*. Christianopoulos viewed them as the agents of an early ill-reputed rebetiko tradition associated with drug consumption and underworld *mangas* activities. By emphasizing Tsitsanis' work, which 'made rebetiko more Greek and human', he disassociated the genre from the marginal *tekes*' communities. His argument that 'rebetiko is still in a formative stage' implied that rebetiko was still in the process of reaching its artistic zenith – that is, the state of 'immaculate' and 'absolute' Greek popular song ([1961] in Christianopoulos 1979:174-208). Nonetheless, his acclamation of Tsitsanis' artistry was soon satirized in a humorous 'Letter to Maitre Tsitsanis' by the journalist and playwright Psathas (1961).<sup>20</sup> Whereas Christianopoulos foresaw a promising future for rebetiko, Hatzidhakis, the once pioneering rebetiko aficionado, considered the genre to be 'moribund'.<sup>21</sup> The contradictory voices regarding the state of rebetiko generated a further confusion that has puzzled the area of rebetology ever since: was rebetiko music dead or alive?

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<sup>19</sup> As already shown, several *rebetes* found refuge in Thessaloniki during the Metaxas' censorship years (see chapter 5, 1936-1941).

<sup>20</sup> Reprinted in Πετρόπουλος ([1979] 1991:242-3).

<sup>21</sup> Published under the title *Den Yparhei Pia Laiko Traghouidi* ('There Is No Folk Song Anymore'), *Tahydhromos Alexandhreas*, 10.05.1960.

In fact, the opposing arguments outlined above, presuppose different perceptions of 'what real rebetiko is'. Obviously, the rebetiko considered by Christianopoulos as a musical style still under formation is different from that thought to be dead by Hatzidhakis. For Hatzidhakis, rebetiko song vanished along with its original cultural context, that is, the culture of underworld people; 'authentic' rebetiko is, therefore, in his view, the music associated with marginal urban groups, *manges*, prostitutes and outlaws. Christianopoulos, on the other hand, overlooked this part of rebetiko history, being ideologically opposed to it. For him, this was the primitive, almost savage, rebetiko pre-history; 'proper' rebetiko (meaning that of the second generation) gradually blossomed out of this germinal era following a course of gradual refinement, still ongoing today.

Hatzidhakis' newfound dislike of rebetiko was expressed in 1960 - almost a decade after his celebrated pro-rebetiko lecture. The increasing commercialization of the genre, as well as its tourist exploitation, were viewed as 'a repulsive construction of quasi-popular type'.<sup>22</sup> Nonetheless, tracing the origins of rebetiko back to the ancient 'golden age' was still a stimulating theory for a number of Greek intellectuals and artists, such as the painter Yiannis Tsarouhis (1963) and the novelist Kostas Tahtsis (1964) - both members of the Communist Party.<sup>23</sup>

A new approach came when Tahtsis and Tsarouhis attempted to validate rebetiko music by theorizing about *zeibekikos* dance. Tsarouhis accused of puritanism those who considered the *zeibekikos* as a Turkish dance. '*Zeibekikos* is a dance from

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<sup>22</sup> In the 1960s several *rebetes* of the second generation composed soundtracks and also appeared in Greek fiction films (Mitsakis, Tsitsanis, etc.). At the same time, films like 'Zorba the Greek' (by Mihalis Kakoyiannis) and 'Never on Sunday' (by Jill Dassin) promoted *bouzouki* and *syrtaki* dance to international symbols of greekness.

Thrace, the homeland of Orpheus, who was a Turk!...He moved to Asia Minor together with the *Zeibekos* tribe (of Phrygian origin)' (Holst 1977:201). For Tsarouhis (photo 20), the *zeibekikos* dance together with the musical scales of the 'golden era' (meaning 5<sup>th</sup> century BC) survived among present day habitants of the region. In the same spirit, Tahtsis suggested that *zeibekikos* had ancient Greek roots and that the Turks borrowed the dance from the Greek populations during the Byzantine years.<sup>24</sup> He further argued – following a well-established model – that rebetiko song was a product of the urban underworld, which in contrast to tangos and waltzes, 'spoke the truth' (Holst 1977:205). However, he condemned contemporary *bouzoukia* nightclubs that attracted tourists, as well as the eccentric middle class urbanites: 'they scared the true folk', making the *zeibekikos* dance a standard expression 'of the establishment' (ibid.:208).

The contributions of Tahtsis, Tsarouhis and Christianopoulos, and, earlier of Hatzidakis, in rebetophile discourse exemplifies, apparently not by accident, a special intellectual reality, namely that of gay left wing artists and literati. There appears to be something beyond the defense of rebetiko greekness in the enthusiastic support of rebetiko song based on their evolutionist rhetorics. The mythical image of the folk, of the working class and stalwart man who displays his masculinity in dashing *zeibekikos* movements, was transformed, in the eyes of the leftist gay intellectuals, to an appealing male ideal. This way, the exoneration of rebetiko music and *zeibekikos* worked as a metaphor of gay aesthetic aspirations. On this basis, it is probably not a

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<sup>23</sup> Both reprinted in Holst (1977:201-209).

<sup>24</sup> Although he proposed this theory, he apologized for not being an expert on such issues.

coincidence that, along with rebetiko, gay intellectuals capitalized on ancient Greek morality, in order to validate further their social gender.<sup>25</sup>

It seems that rebetiko music and culture also impressed and attracted foreign travelers, such as Patrick Leigh-Fermor (1958), and novelists (see Gauntlett 1989:21, n.35). Xan Fielding (1953), for instance, was impressed by the spread of hashish smoking and rebetiko performances in the major urban centres of the country. Outside Greece, *bouzouki* music and Greek folk dances had traveled throughout the world featuring films such as 'Zorba the Greek' and 'Never on Sunday'.<sup>26</sup> Greekness was illustrated on celluloid in the image of the manly folk persona who valorously relieved his misfortunes in a sombrous, self-centered revelry, dancing away his sufferings in proud and magnificent *zeibekikos*' movements. It was exactly this notion of greekness that nourished the expectations of tourists, who imagined Greece as the land of individualistic impulse, pride and freedom. 'Bouzouki music' was advertised as a special attraction in tourist *tavernes*, while the instrument itself was variously depicted on summer postcards and *bouzouki* recordings were, and still are, marketed as souvenirs from Greece.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> As already shown above, the ancient origins of rebetiko were broadly propagated among rebetophiles (see, for example, Anoyianakis 1961). However, in the case of Greek gay ideology, it is the public acceptance of homosexuality in ancient Greek society that mainly stimulated an interest in what was perceived as liberal ancient Greek culture.

<sup>26</sup> It is interesting to notice the Greek press comments regarding the death of Antony Quinn, the actor who personified Alexis Zorbas: 'the Greek persona of Hollywood' who was 'plethoric, earthy and rough' (*Ta Nea*, 5.06.2001). In fact, the celebrated *syrtaki* dance, which became ever since a synonym of Greek ethos, is a choreographed neo-hellenic fabrication and not an inherent part of rebetiko music tradition. For the novel of Nikos Kazantzakis upon which 'Zorba the Greek' was based see Beaton (1994:177-180).

<sup>27</sup> The notion is quite generic and is not confined to rebetiko music; it usually refers to the combination of rebetiko 'classics', *laiko* songs and 'art song' compositions featuring *bouzouki* (such as the famous song *Paidhia tou Piraia*, 'The Boys of Piraeus').

## Chapter 6. The first rebetiko revival

### *Banning and glorification: Petropoulos' rebetiko politics*

In 1968, Ilias Petropoulos, a left wing philologist, published his rebetiko anthology titled *Rebetika Tragoudhia*, ignoring state censorship legislation. Soon, the Junta authorities banned his book and prosecuted the author for 'contravening the law against obscene publications' (*Ethnos*, 12.12.1968). Nonetheless, *Rebetika Tragoudhia* became a best-seller in 1968; within two weeks the first thousand of copies were sold out,<sup>1</sup> while several editions of his book were subsequently issued.<sup>2</sup> Eventually, Petropoulos was sentenced to five months in prison 'for pornography'. His prosecution and, more particularly, the rationale behind his sentencing, were decisive for the establishment of a new rebetiko era, the first rebetiko revival. In fact, 'this had been a wise career move' (Gauntlett 1989:25); Petropoulos became a rebetiko martyr, who suffered in order to validate the officially neglected music. This way, his illegal publication, which opposed the Junta's censorship, elevated him to a heroic figure who faced political prosecution because of his dedication to the rebetiko ideal. It appears that the author capitalized upon his adventures,<sup>3</sup> and in the following years became, in a way, the self-appointed intellectual advocate of rebetiko. Later on, he proudly claimed his book to be the first that 'broke the silence of oppositional writers' (Petropoulos 1991: cover note).<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> See Fredy Germanos, *Alpha*, 17.10.1968.

<sup>2</sup> Ed Emery and the Institute of Rebetology in London recently translated Petropoulos' *Rebetologia* into English (London: Saqi, 2000).

<sup>3</sup> In 6.8.1974, a week after the fall of Junta, he published an article on his adventures as a politically persecuted writer (titled *I Peripeteia Enos Synghrafeos*, 'The Adventure of a Writer'). Gauntlett later described Petropoulos as a 'maverick impresario' of rebetiko (1989:28).

<sup>4</sup> I do not mean to undermine here anti-censorship activities; censorship is a power mechanism that aims to control human ideas and as such it is repellent. My intention here is to present a case where censorship was used in order to popularize the forbidden and, finally, glorify a musical genre to benefit the author's personal aspirations.

Obviously, in the case of Petropoulos it was rebetiko song that was sentenced and, inevitably, transformed<sup>in</sup> to a symbol of protest against the Colonels' state. In the echoes of 'hippie' and the French 'May '68' movements, Greek liberal intellectuals and youth groups identified in rebetiko the musical expression of anti-conformism and counter-culture of the times (audio example 18). As Holst put it, 'perhaps there is something in the swaggering individuality and the pain of rebetika, the contemptuous references to the police and the secret language of hashish smokers, which appealed to a population living in a military-police state. Perhaps rebetika spoke to the young people of the '70s in a way they understood' (1975:16-7).<sup>5</sup>

Certain problems arise with Petropoulos' book. His sizeable anthology included, next to rebetiko songs of the past, lyrics of 'contemporary rebetika'. These involved current compositions that emulated the old rebetiko style or songs associated with musicians of *laiko* (folk) song, such as Stelios Kazantzidis. Moreover, he failed to date and to transcribe accurately the lyrics of certain original recordings. This way, he published problematic transcriptions of texts, either by missing parts, adding his own words, or changing the order of the strophes (see Gauntlett 1985, 1:9 n.28, 46 n.6, 47 n.11). His mistakes were unfortunately followed by several subsequent rebetologists who relied upon his book (Revault d' Allones 1973; Holst 1975; Butterworth & Schneider 1975; Damianakos 1976).

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<sup>5</sup> See also Holst (1988). Similarly American folk song revivalists were attracted to the 'authentic' folk music recordings of Folkways Records. In the early ninety sixties, 'protest songs and folk songs were inextricably linked...in the minds of the record buying public' (Goldsmith 1998:313). Folk song revival in U.S. became an expression of a rebellion youth culture that was celebrated in festivals, magazines, live performances (see Goldsmith 1998:291-344).

Petropoulos' rebetiko treatise was also invested with light 'shocking' comments (using the rebetiko slang) and illustrations in an attempt to express the anti-conformist and subversive profile of the genre.<sup>6</sup> Such a mythicized representation of rebetiko that served the author's main purpose: to provoke the Junta authorities and pour scorn on Orthodox-Christian ethics via a liberal, deliberately 'indecent' language and a sarcastic, often humorous, writing style.<sup>7</sup> Ironically, he made it clear from the outset that 'rebetiko is the morally purest type of folk song; no rebetiko song, ever, bears a word of sexual meaning' ([1978] 1991:32).

More important, since it became the best-selling rebetiko book, the anthology and comments of *Rebetika Traghoudhia* seriously affected the ways Greek people understood rebetiko song, by promoting certain ideologies associated with the genre. Petropoulos homogenized diverse genres under the category of 'rebetiko *traghoudhi*' by including in his anthology early *smyrnaiiko* (from Smyrna) and *politiko* (from Poli, Constantinople) songs next to rebetiko and *laiko* compositions. Moreover, he attempted to construct a rebetiko history that was insufficiently substantiated;<sup>8</sup> as a result, his account of rebetiko song inspired various myths and stereotypical perceptions, which surround rebetiko even today. This way – and given the sales numbers and the several re-editions of his book - his interpretations of rebetiko music and culture played a crucial role in the ways people perceived, experienced and even performed rebetiko songs in the oncoming revivalist contexts.

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<sup>6</sup> For example, in the foreword there is a section titled 'A Few Words of Sexual Nature' (*Oligha Sexualika*, p. 32).

<sup>7</sup> Petropoulos' writings in the following years focused on various other 'obscene' issues, such as the *Kaliarda* (1971), that is a dictionary of gay slang, *To Aghio Hasisaki* ('The Holy Hashish', 1991), *To Bourdhelo* ('The Brothel', 1991), *Pseirologhia* ('Louse-logy', 1991).

<sup>8</sup> In the foreword he compared *dhimotiko traghoudhi* with rebetiko song, examined the connection of rebetiko with Byzantine chant, theorized upon the origins of the *bouzouki* and discussed various aspects of rebetiko culture and dance.

While he appropriated rebetiko to the dictates of the anti-establishment movement of the late 1970s, at the same time Petropoulos attempted to introduce the music to the Greek progressive art scene. This was actually a well-planned initiation that took place at a time when interest in folk and so-called primitive art was already developing as an international fashionable trend. For this reason, he organized rebetiko concerts held in the luxurious Athens Hilton hotel (photo 21) and, later on, patronized performances in particular urban venues, the so-called *boites*.<sup>9</sup> His initiatives were primarily addressed to the audience for Greek art song and, in particular, to Greek *neo kyma* adherents (the ‘new wave’ light popular song, a westernized type of ballad composition).

His attempt to idealize rebetiko lifestyle and musicianship was further sustained by a primitivist endeavor to re-establish ‘authentic’ *mangas* style performance practices. In addition, he was actively involved in rebetological controversies over authorship issues,<sup>10</sup> and undertook various rebetiko managerial activities.<sup>11</sup> By the mid-1970s rebetiko had already acquired ‘the appeal of the forbidden fruit of Eden’ (Vasilis Vasilikos, *Avghi*, 6.02.1977). More than any other rebetologist, Petropoulos’ writings and politics constituted the grounds and nurtured the stereotypes upon which the forthcoming monumentalization of rebetiko song was going to prosper.

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<sup>9</sup> *Boites* is a French-borrowed term used to describe small music venues hosting acoustic art song music. *Boites* were *par excellence* performance contexts of the *neo kyma* Greek musical movement and thrived in urban centres in the 1970s up to late 1980s.

<sup>10</sup> Petropoulos encouraged rebetiko veterans to write their autobiographies – often edited by a rebetiko expert - and give interviews emphasizing topics that amplified the *mangas*’ mythology and underworld appeal.

<sup>11</sup> See, for example, the text that accompanied the programme brochure of the *Kytaro boite*. In seven points he described in a didactic way the rebetiko character as ‘a magic flowery valley buried under forty years of chagrin’ (reprinted in Holst 1977:213).

*In memoriam of rebetiko: a story of death and sanctification*

By the end of the 1960s and the beginning of the following decade, rebetiko song increasingly engaged the interest of journalists and folklorists and became a profitable project in the hands of the music industry. Several rebetiko musicians of the first generation were invited to support revivalist politics. Kostas Hatzidhoulis, for example, one of the journalists who pioneered the rebetiko revival, wrote in 1974 a letter to Nikos Mathesis, a famous rebetiko lyricist, informing him about his managerial plans (reprinted in Karandis 1999:220):

I invited him [a well-connected journalist]...he loves rebetiko and Mathesis. He didn't know you are alive. He writes in *Nea*, *Vima* and *Tahydhromos*. We are going to give the interview to him, it will be published in newspapers and great magazines... Listen, you'll take 4-5 papers and you'll write slowly and cautiously what you know about rebetiko history without insulting anyone. I shall write the introduction...I also need photographic material... Remember that the exhibition in *Minion* [with rebetiko memorabilia] will last one month. It is the biggest one ever. We are organizing a concert and a lecture on rebetiko in *Kan-Kan* venue. We will invite Mayors...Police authorities,<sup>12</sup> Academics, Writers, Litterateurs, Poets, Publishers of newspapers and magazines, Journalists, Composers of modern song, Xarhakos, Plessas, Katsaros, Moutsis, Spanos [all Greek art song composers], etc... All *rebetes* composers and lyricists and their families and the inheritors of the deceased will be honorary guests. All of you, every one of you, will be honored persons. Draghoumis [Head of the Music Folklore Archive] will open the lecture and the concert. Petropoulos and Manos Hatzidhakis will also talk. I'm in charge of the programme. It will be the biggest ever.  
Piraeus, 24/06/1974

Because of its insistence on the value of 'authenticity' the revivalist movement focused initially upon the first generation of *rebetes*. In fact, many of them were particularly flattered and felt proud to advertise their musical talent and highlight further their contribution to folk music. Besides, most of them who had enjoyed fame and wide recognition in rebetiko music in the previous years were embittered and disappointed by their fall from popularity. Inevitably, the attention the revivalist

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<sup>12</sup> I use capital letters for those nouns in accordance with the original document.

movement drew upon rebetiko musicians influenced the musicians' worldview and inspired in them new understandings of rebetiko music. Being aware of contemporary rebetophile trends and rhetorics that acknowledged him as a 'rebetiko master', Vamvakaris (the acclaimed rebetiko composer) proudly stated in his biography: 'I'm Markos. From my house, here, comes all the truth about *bouzouki*' (Vellou-Keil 1978:243).

The ongoing intellectual acknowledgment of rebetiko music was also echoed in the assertive words of Papaioanou: 'we are the history of folk music'. At the same time, however, he complained:

I often visit Markos, who is ill; we remember the past and we cry. Who, Markos? The master! I wonder: are they going to do the same things to me? And Tsitsanis? None of them really think of us... Whoever comes to us, he comes to listen to the history of folk music. Where else should one go?... Other composers, those who followed us, they are not the history of folk music. This is why people come to us. All those who know what to listen to, they come, those who know about folk music (Papaioannou 1982:138-9).

Elsewhere Vamvakaris described the new era of rebetiko performances as 'the best one in my life':

And the venues, when they realized that the radios were daily talking about Markos Vamvakaris... no longer could they hire me for a piece of bread only. I went to Patra, for example, two years ago [to play] for one and a half thousand [drachmas]... Those who also worked this out were the students, who organized for me big events. Not only here [in Athens], but also in Saloniki,<sup>13</sup> wherever I played, there were student people. And here, wherever I used to play in Plaka, student people were gathered. It seems they knew my story, they learned my story, they knew who I was, and the students loved me a lot, very much. That means that wherever I play now, I have the students with me. They come along... This started with Nearhos Georghiadis [a revivalist rebetiko journalist] and Kiki Kalamara in a concert that took place in a big house. We didn't get paid. It was a friendly concert. The students'

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<sup>13</sup> In 1967 and 1968 Vamvakaris performed in Thessaloniki in *Dheilina*, *Vendetta* and *Xenycti* venues (Neapoli area). He underlined the special care he enjoyed while he stayed at the best hotel in the city where he also met the manager 'who liked me... his servant treated me as if I was a saint. Lettered people loved me a lot' (Vellou – Keil 1978:238).

enthusiasm was exceptional...And then I started, what they call in magazines, the 'second career'(Vellou-Keil 1978:237).

Many of the above-cited biographies, as well as numerous other rebetiko articles and portraits of musicians long forgotten, were published in the early 1970s and during the early post-Junta years.<sup>14</sup> Mathesis appears overtly impressed by the changing rebetiko scenery: 'How could I imagine that princes and ambassadors of powerful states and great stars would come and listen to Greek *bouzouki*? And now, because of the astronomic prices in nightclubs, nobody can go to the *bouzoukia* of the aristocracy' (Karandis 1999: 215). More important, in his own rebetiko account, the lyricist expressed his gratitude to Petropoulos for 'discovering' and offering him the chance to publish his memoirs. In addition, he stated proudly that 'I had also reveled together with Shipowners...Recently a film director asked me to appear in his movie' [Petropoulos 1994 (1979):264].<sup>15</sup>

Inevitably, the ways old rebetiko musicians realized their novel social status, as it was promoted by the revivalist movement, considerably influenced their public rhetorics. It seems that, in certain cases, they corresponded consciously and, in a way, supported, the myths and ideologies advertised by the intellectual revivalists. This way, the rebetiko revival was transformed to a reflexive process that was in turn reproduced by those revived. Because *rebetes* realized that they were in vogue again,

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<sup>14</sup> A series of biographies were edited by Hatzidhoulis (1979); Shorelis published a series of rebetiko anthology (4 vols., 1981). See also, Foivos Anoyianakis, *Rebetiko Arheio* (1975, Teatro, 8/43-4); Markos Draghoumis, *Elliniki Paradhosiaki Mousiki No 4: To Rebetiko Tragoudhi* (1974); Panayiotis Kounadhis, *I Smyrnaiiki Scholi kai to Rebetiko Tragoudhi* (Tetradio 4, 1974: 17); *Kataghoghi kai Epidhraseis tou Rebetikou Tragoudhiou* (Tetradio 5, 1974: 17-8); *Gyro Apo to Rebetiko* (Avgghi, 10/15.01.1975); Yiannis Papaioannou, *I Mousiki ton Rebeton* (Hroniko, 1973: 282-96); Ilias Petropoulos, *Pios Eghrapse ti Synnefiasmeni Kyriaki?* (Tahyromos, 12.10.1973: 12); Kostas Verghopoulos, *Merikes Thesis Pano sto Rebetiko Tragoudhi* (Avgghi, 25.12.1974); Giorgchos Leotsakos, *Gia to Rebetiko* (Vima, 6.04.1974); Lefteris Marangakis, *To Rebetiko Tragoudhi* (Thessaloniki, 3.03.1973); Tasos Falireas, *Merikes Skepseis* (Mousiki Yenias, 12.02.1972); Haris Xanthoudhakias, *To Rebetiko kai o Provlitismos tis Aristeras Gyro Tou* (Anti 13, 1975: 47-8).

<sup>15</sup> The word 'Shipowners' is given with capital first letter in accordance to the original source.

they appeared aware of what the revivalists would like to hear from them, the topics, the playing techniques, the style and the kind of songs they preferred. Old *rebetes*, consciously performed their rebetiko identities to satisfy the revivalists' needs and to promote themselves professionally in the emerging rebetiko market.

Indeed, local record companies took several old *rebetes* back to the recording studios and released memorial compilations of their works. Moreover, they re-mastered 78 rpm gramophone recordings and transferred them to LP vinyl records, while encouraging the collaboration of rebetiko musicians with *entehno* composers. In this way, the revivalist musical market became a vehicle for manipulating collective memory; the re-issued records contributed, in their own way, to the construction of a 'formal' rebetiko history made up of *manges* outlaws, hashish dens and alluring females. Often enough, the disc covers were invested with didactic comments or short booklets written by the rebetophile journalists and folklorists who promoted rebetiko revival by all means, textual and audiovisual. Hatzidhoulis, for example, was in charge of a series of portrait compilations titled 'The Big Names of Rebetiko' (1975, *Minos* record label). Subtitles such as 'authentic old recordings', 'gramophone recordings' and 're-mastered 78's' were, in addition, used to emphasize the authenticity of the marketed recordings.

By all available ways then, rebetiko tradition was re-made, in order to be propagated to a new audience of middle class liberal urbanites, students, artists and intellectuals.<sup>16</sup> Apart from reading about it or listening to its recordings, rebetiko was

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<sup>16</sup> Revivalist movements are usually promoted by certain intellectual urban groups. See, for example, the numerous writings on the American and English folksong movements (chapter 5, fn.15). On music revivals see also Groom (1971); Behague (1973); Niles (1978); Allen (1981); Slobin (1983), (1984), (1996); Monro (1984); Holst (1988); Haskell (1988); Rosenberg (1993); Boyes (1993); Turino (1993); Cantwell (1996); Livingston (1999).

also practiced in *tavernes* and various other venues and happenings. Going to rebetiko *tavernes* became an alternative type of entertainment, which was broadly considered as a fashionable activity by the young circles of rebetiko fans. Indeed, the politically correct youth and various urban anti-Junta groups - humorously described by Zabetas as *koultouritzidhes* ('cultured youths') - identified then in roughish rebetiko *koutoukia* (small-scale *tavernes*) a musical locus that suited their 'underground' ideology.<sup>17</sup> Soon, next to the veteran musicians, new bands (*kompanies*) were gradually formed by young enthusiasts who began to perform rebetiko music in various *tavernes*. Learning to play the *baghlamas* and *bouzouki* was then considered as a subversive practice that was opposed to the ideal of institutionalized musical education offered by the *odheia* (conservatoires).

Following the revivalist dictates, the performance of rebetiko music by these *kompanies* adhered faithfully to the ideal of authenticity. In search of 'pure' rebetiko playing style the musicians attempted to imitate the music heard on old gramophone records. Under the dogma of authenticity, the structure of the band ought to be minimal - featuring one or two *bouzoukia* (one leading, one accompanying, or one *bouzouki* and a *baghlamas*), a singer and an accompanying guitar.<sup>18</sup> The *bouzouki* type preferred was the 3-stringed instead of the later 4-stringed version, which, for the rigorous adherents of authenticity corresponded to the less authentic, or even decadent *arhondorebetiko* style.

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<sup>17</sup> The lyrics of Zabetas' song *Koultoura* (1974) satirize the type of person who 'wears black glasses', 'holds a pipe and has long hair' and is immersed in 'books, art and *boites venues*'. The song never became popular (see Kleiasiou 1997:432).

<sup>18</sup> This is in contrast to the large ensembles of *arhondorebetiko* night clubs, which featured several four-stringed (*tetrahordha* pl., sing -o) *bouzoukia*, a double bass, piano and drum set. In fact, the four-stringed *bouzoukia* are instruments with four pairs of strings (the same applies to the term *trihordho*, 'three stringed').

Old rebetiko musicians were recruited to perform in glamorous *bouzoukia* nightclubs and acknowledged live stages. In Athens the performances of Tsitsanis together with Sotiria Bellou in *Harama* - that started in 1973 and lasted for a decade – was one of the most popular rebetiko attractions.<sup>19</sup> According to one of the *Harama* owners, the place was like ‘popular worship...full of...students and artists’ (Adhamidhou 1998:216). Regardless of the quest for authenticity, old musicians actually ‘performed’ the revival in *bouzoukia* venues, using amplified instruments and sound engineering technology. In Thessaloniki, the *bouzouki* player Hondronakos and the female singer Mario – both among the leading figures of the later rebetiko revival – used to perform in the *Kalyva* club.<sup>20</sup> Finally, several rebetiko musicians based in Athens were invited to perform in Thessalonikian *boites* and famous rebetiko venues, as well as in stadiums and concert halls throughout the country.<sup>21</sup>

The available photographic material illustrates several international celebrities reveling at *bouzoukia*, both in the classic rebetiko as well as in the *arhondorebetiko* performance contexts (photo 22).<sup>22</sup> At the same time, rebetiko veterans were encouraged to collaborate with contemporary art song musicians. In 1975-6, for example, Bellou performed together with Manolis Mitsias in the *Zoom* venue in Plaka area, where again ‘all the people of intellectual and artistic circles, students and the enthusiasts of folk song passed by...’ (Adhamidhou 1998:226). In the same year,

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<sup>19</sup> In 1973 Bellou appeared in a Thessalonikian *bouzoukia* nightclub, where she also attracted the local artistic and intellectual audience (see Adhamidhou 1998:218-9).

<sup>20</sup> See Giorghos Mitrakis, *I Triti Anoixi tou Rebetikou sti Thessaloniki*, ‘The Third Spring of Rebetiko in Thessaloniki’, *Difono*, Feb. 1996 (6):34-37.

<sup>21</sup> After the fall of the Junta, local cultural authorities and ministerial committees sponsored rebetiko concerts on a grand scale (see Kleiasiou 1997:309).

<sup>22</sup> Among the photographed foreign visiting stars are the actors Anthony Quinn, Christopher Lee, the designer Piere Cardin, the actresses Jeraldin Chaplin and Sophia Lauren, the director Ilias Kazan, etc. Among the Greek famous patrons photographed are the entrepreneur Alexandros Onassis, the painter Yiannis Tsarouhis, the composers Dionysis Savopoulos and Mikis Theodorakis, the singer Nana Moushouri and Maria Farandouri, the actors Irene Papas, Melina Merkouri, Dimitris Papamihail, Alike Vouyiouklaki, Mairi Hronopoulou, Tzeni Karezi, Kostas Kazakos, Nikos Kourkoulos etc.

Stelios Keromytis and Bayianderas, both old *rebetes*, performed at the *Zyghos* together with younger musicians (Viki Mosholiou and Themis Andhreadis) and a guitar duo representative of the urban serenade song style (the Tzavara brothers).

In fact, urban musical networks in the 1970s encouraged strongly the interplay of rebetiko music with art song; besides, several *entehno* composers were eager to add a bit of rebetiko flavor to their work.<sup>23</sup> In 1971 Hatzidhakis debuted his 'five improvisations for *bouzouki* and piano', while later he released more rebetiko-inspired compositions (see Mylonas 1992, 3:62-3, 81). According to Christianopoulos Hatzidhakis' experimentation with folk song was an attempt at 'rebeticizing light popular song and light-popularizing rebetiko' (1979:188).<sup>24</sup> Nevertheless, in the following years, the majority of Greek composers produced works that either incorporated, in various ways, melodic motives, rhythmic patterns (especially the *zeibekikos*) and instruments, or lyrics inspired by rebetiko music.<sup>25</sup>

Soon, there was a critical response to ongoing rebetiko trends. In 1975 a newspaper article (titled 'After Forty Years We Have Discovered Rebetiko', Kondoyiannis 1975) described the 'exploitation' of rebetiko music in Plaka as 'a veritable epidemic'. Others attacked the famous nightclubs frequented by celebrities, who used to revel in extravagant and exhibitionist mode;<sup>26</sup> Kostas Tahtsis, for

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<sup>23</sup> Theodorakis with *Epitaphios* had already opened the way.

<sup>24</sup> Anoyianakis, on the contrary, exonerated Hatzidhakis' style; see Mylonas (1985, 2:24).

<sup>25</sup> Stavros Xarhakos had already in the mid-1960s composed the soundtrack of the film *Ta Kokkina Fanaria* ('The Red Lights', by V. Georghiadis). The most popular song there, *Kaisariani* ('Kaisariani'), is written in a combination of rebetiko rhythmic styles (*hasapikos* and *zeibekikos*). Within the wider primitivist spirit, other composers, such as Yiannis Markopoulos, incorporated musical forms from *dhimotiko traghoudhi* (e.g. *Rizitika*, 1971). In 1971, Manos Loizos, a representative of Greek 'new wave' song style composed the famous 'Zeibekikos of Evdhokia' (for the film *Evdhokia* by A. Damianos, 1971). Sotiria Bellou sang compositions by Andhriopoulos, Moutsis and Savopoulos, which are still popular today (see Adhamidhou 1998:386).

<sup>26</sup> Listening to amplified rebetiko music was often accompanied by *ghlendi* (revelry) practices of smashing plates, throwing flowers and drinking bottles of whisky.

example, coined the ironic term *bouzouko-theques* (meaning discotheque-like *bouzouki* haunts).<sup>27</sup>

Anyway, the liberalist profile of rebetiko attracted, beyond local students and intellectuals, various foreign researchers who were enchanted by the marginal glamour of the genre. Foreign research interest was apparently also propelled by Petropoulos' prosecution that was already discussed in newspapers worldwide.<sup>28</sup> Beyond a subversive musical expression, rebetiko song was identified as a mysterious folk culture surrounded by the smell of hashish - a magic 'other' land of relief and indulgence. 'The appeal of these songs is that the conflicts they express are not exclusively Greek conflicts, they are everybody's...Many young Americans who come to Greece learn these songs, and in singing them recognize echoes of their own malaise and the problems that trouble us all' (Butterworth and Schneider 1975:9). Similarly, Holst in the opening chapter of her book sought to introduce the unacquainted reader to her own 'road' to rebetiko by describing a scene of rebetiko mystique: *bouzouki* music making in a hashish den in Piraeus where 'the sweet black hashish fumes filled the air' (1975:17).

As a result, foreign researchers fortified and served local revivalist politics by 'preaching' the rebetiko myth abroad. In the majority of the relevant treatises, authors stressed the values of 'authentic' old rebetiko, which declined sometime around the 1950s. Characteristically, Holst manifested overtly her disdain for 'vulgar' and 'kitsch' *bouzoukia* nightclubs and contemporary Greek entertainment practices:

I'm now convinced that it is impossible to hear rembetika [transliteration by Holst] in a modern bouzouki club. They are now even worse than they were

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<sup>27</sup> In his *collection of stories* *I Giaghia mou I Athina* ('My Grandmother Athina', 1979: 49).

<sup>28</sup> *Der Spiegel*, *Guardian* newspapers (see Petropoulos 1979).

in the late '60s. Vulgarly is something Greeks have quite a talent for, and if you're looking for a kitsch night out and have a large cheque book with you, you may get some enjoyment from a night at the bouzoukis. You can pop balloons at 100 drachmas a pop, smash plates brought in special piles to the table for the purpose and costing anything from 50 to 100 drachmas each, drink any imported liquor you like (if you can afford it) but not find a drop of good barrel retsina in the place, watch young drunken boys and their girl friends pay to dance badly, or groups of professional dancers perform balletic travesties of rembetika dances, and have your ear drums permanently damaged by over-amplified bouzoukis. Worse still, you can watch a great rembetika singer like Sotiria Bellou sitting tiredly in the midst of the circus, beefing out the songs which made her famous (1975:14).

Whether as a sonic vehicle for a relaxed and mystical paradise or as a subversive, *art-maudit* genre, rebetiko certainly embodied an 'otherness'. Next to the young American *bouzouki* students who were fascinated by the *penies* ('*bouzouki plectrum* strokes') of *Paidhia tou Peiraia*<sup>29</sup> local enthusiasts also identified in rebetiko an 'underground' musical language.<sup>30</sup> Besides, one of the most commonly applied descriptions of rebetiko song was the one that described the music as 'the Greek blues'.<sup>31</sup> Of course, parallels can be drawn; as an urban folk musical style originally associated with deprived social groups that was later gradually popularized and institutionalized, rebetiko shares, on a broader level, similar characteristics with blues music culture. However, this is neither the only nor the closest musical parallel. Spanish *flamenco*, Portuguese *fado*, Argentinean tango, Algerian *rai*, for instance, are also urban folk musical traditions born within similar social conditions. When

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<sup>29</sup> The song *Ta Paidhia tou Peiraia* ('The Boys of Piraeus') was originally composed by Hatzidhakis for the film 'Never on Sunday', which received an award in the Cannes Film Festival of 1960. Ever since it became the most popular Greek tune abroad.

<sup>30</sup> See, for example, Falireas' rhetorics that describe rebetiko as the 'Greek underground'. The author compared the popularization of rebetiko via the mechanism of 'over exposure' with that of the musics of Bob Dylan, Elvis Presley, Chuck Berry and John Lennon (see Holst 1977:209-211). Holst was also involved in rock music making.

<sup>31</sup> For example, Paul Oliver writing on the cover of 'Road to Rembetika' in 1975, argued that 'quite obviously the music is, in meaning and purpose, if not in sound, close to blues'. For Jacques Lacarrière, great *rebetes* are 'equal to big composers of blues' (Petropoulos 1979:271). The relationship between the two genres was examined in detail by Papadhimitriou (see Butterworth and Schneider 1975:34). The blues metaphor is still vivid today. Interestingly, Stelios Vamvakaris, the son of the veteran composer, recently collaborated with the blues musician John Lee Hooker.

compared with blues, rebetiko is interpreted and translated with concepts that are more familiar to Western musical perceptions. To say that 'rebetiko is the Greek blues' involves, consequently, a western-friendly interpretation: it tends to overlook inherent particularities featuring the tradition by oversimplifying the understanding of rebetiko as a special urban folk musical culture.

Next to the blues and rock music, other enthusiasts associated rebetiko with 'oriental ritual musics' – a foretaste of the emerging 'new age' trend that idealized non-western, 'ethnic' cultures, including 'ethnic' musics, philosophy, religion, art, food, etc. This is clearly manifested in the rebetiko 'photo-history' that occupies a lengthy section of <sup>the expanded 1979 edition of</sup> Petropoulos' book. Next to illustrations of the *Zeibekoi* tribe and early Ottoman musical scenes, as well as Ancient Greek, Byzantine relics and drawings of reveling warriors of the 1821 revolution, there are photos and illustrations of various other 'exotic' musical traditions. These oriental cultural scenes included in a rebetiko anthology reveal the author's intention to stress the relation of rebetiko culture with Asian – represented as 'oriental' in general - drug use practices and harems, and, moreover, the resemblance of the depicted string instruments to the *bouzouki*. There is a photo of a painting, for instance, from Thailand with a female instrumentalist, a drawing of a Persian dancer, illustrations of Dervish orders, of Indian harem-women musicians, a Mongolian palace scene, Moroccan instrumentalists, a Chinese musical group, an Egyptian fresco, etc. (see Petropoulos [1979] 1991:284-334).

The quest for escaping into the enchanting rebetiko utopia of the 1970s was actually defined by a strong urban middle class impetus.<sup>32</sup> ‘For years now I’ve been struggling to shake off an upbringing that imprisoned me in ivory towers of Victorian fake-dignity and inspired a horrible obscene-phobia that, at the end, makes the human an enemy of its own body. I was taught to see in folk gestures only “vulgarity” and ignore pretentiously its beauty’ confessed Giorghos Leotsakos, a local music expert (*Vima*, 6.04.1974, reprinted in Holst 1975:228-231). By then, the author had already traveled to India. His experience of Indian *ragas* influenced his appreciation of rebetiko song, in which he romantically identified common elements with Asian ‘ritualistic musics’. Inspired by ‘new age’ ideas, he envisaged in rebetiko a music that becomes ‘an extension of the body’ – a music seen to embody the ‘wisdom’ and ‘gracious simplicity’ he found in Indian traditions. His orientalist perception of rebetiko became a preamble of later changes in the ways rebetiko was appreciated that characterized mainly the years of the second revival.

Leotsakos’ statements represent a case of turning to rebetiko as a revolutionary expression against conservative urban middle class ethics. Adhering to rebetiko culture was in this context perceived as a means of behaving differently, thinking differently, listening to different music and, eventually, of being different. However subversive this attitude may have appeared, it was in its time a legitimate and fashionable public manifestation of social deviation. After all, the Greek urban middle class, despite its conservatism, had traditionally welcomed new ideas and constituted a social ground that nurtured progressive expressions within Greek society. In the following decades, it became even clearer that those ‘extreme’ cultural

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<sup>32</sup> This was also one the main arguments of Hatzidhakis’ later disapproval of rebetiko revival (see Kounadhis 2000:406-409).

trends did not constitute a serious threat to middle class social status; on the contrary, they eventually came to sustain it.<sup>33</sup> On this basis, the anti-conformist aesthetics of younger generations channeled in rebetiko music, were, in the end, safe – a reasonable and healthy declination from old-style habits, ethics and lifestyle. Besides, those middle class radicals were quite remote, in terms of socio-economic and educational background, both from rebetiko musicians and the broader underworld depicted in the song lyrics. In the eyes of their favored *mangas* musicians, revivalists were the ‘aristocrats’, the ‘people of letters’, the ‘artists’ who ‘discovered’ and acknowledged *rebetes* as valuable artists in Greek society.<sup>34</sup>

In 1973 the constitution of the ‘Centre for Research on Rebetiko Songs’ established by prominent left-wing intellectuals inaugurated officially a new era of scholarly rebetiko studies.<sup>35</sup> Among the main aims of the Centre was the organization of working groups who would classify and analyze rebetiko songs, as well as the publication of relevant books and recordings. By the end of the 1970s, Greek academic music folklorists finally began to incorporate short references to rebetiko song in their lectures (Alkistis Kyriakidou-Nestoros in Thessaloniki and Georgios Loukatos in Athens). A decade earlier, academic music folklorists had discarded unanimously the genre altogether.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> See the Socialist cultural politics (see chapter 7, *Rebetiko for the People*).

<sup>34</sup> So described by Vamvakaris, Bellou, Papaioannou, Mathesis, Tsitsanis, et. al.

<sup>35</sup> Among them the poets Odhyseas Elytis, Nikos Gatsos, and the composer Manos Hatzidakis. For further details regarding the rebetophile attempts to organize the study of rebetiko song see Kounadhis (2000:13-21).

<sup>36</sup> Spyridhakis stressed that rebetiko song culture is opposed to the traditional mentality of Greek people. Romaios argued that rebetiko ‘sticks in the mud’ and that the *bouzouki* is an instrument of ‘musical perversion’. Meghas recognized in rebetiko the decline of folk music and poetry, a undesirable remnant of Turkish domination and a means of barbarizing Greek youth aesthetics (see Gauntlett 1989:30).

Until the end of the 1980s, the depreciation and neglect of rebetiko by the majority of the academic world was consistent with the attitude of post-Junta state authorities. In 1977 the Karamanlis' right-wing government banned a drug-song titled *To Vapori Ap' tin Persia* ('The Ship From Persia'), as well as other re-issued early rebetiko songs alleged to promote drug use. At the same time, a part of the Communist party was still ill-disposed towards rebetiko, although for different reasons: for them, the exoneration of rebetiko served capitalist interests which popularized the 'a-political' rebetiko song and used it as a means for manipulating Greek people's historic memory.

## Chapter 7. The second rebetiko revival

The political developments of the next decade altered considerably the rebetiko profile in Greek society. In 1981 the newly elected Panhellenic Socialist Movement (PASOK) government initiated an overtly rebetophile cultural policy. Photographs of the Prime Minister, Andreas Papandreou, as well as, of other members of the Socialist government reveling in *bouzoukia* clubs and dancing to *zeibekikos* (photo 23) were often published in local newspapers. The leading actress of 'Never on Sunday' - the film featuring the ever popular tune of *Paidhia tou Peiraia* - Melina Merkouri was appointed as Minister of Culture; her successor in the Ministry was an art song composer, Thanos Mikroutsikos, who had also welcomed rebetiko song in the early 1970s. For the first time in postwar Greece the victimized rebetiko was exonerated by the state. In the following years the musical revival that was already grounded in the 1970s was about to be transformed in new directions under the patronage of Greek authorities.

### *The term 'second revival'*

What the generic term 'second revival' describes is the new orientations and understandings of rebetiko music that, from the early 1980s, were gradually nurtured and developed into the so-called 'third spring of rebetiko'.<sup>1</sup> In this sense, we cannot accurately define the date the first revival era actually expired, because, by fixing a

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<sup>1</sup> See Mitrakis (op.c.); Stavros Tzimas, *Thessaloniki: I Rebetes Traghoudan Akoma*, ('Thessaloniki: the Rebetes are Still Singing'), *Tahydhromos* 1993, 15: 14.04.1993.; G. Skabardhonis, *Afieroma ston Tsitsani tis Thessalonikis* ('Tribute to Tsitsanis of Thessaloniki'), *Thessaloniki* '97, Dec. (4).

*terminus ante quem*, we would ignore the transformative dynamics that brought forward the contemporary rebetiko era. The concept, therefore of rebetiko ‘revival’ is a schematic definition of complex processes that serves the need to organize our perception and produce understandings of rebetiko history.

The post-war rebetiko debates and practices demonstrated this clearly: what we perceive as the 1970s revival was actually the outcome of previous ideological fermentation. Besides, as part of urban entertainment practices rebetiko music was subject to different and changing performance contexts. ‘Revival’ may, in a way, be a misleading term: it presupposes that rebetiko was at some point ‘dead’ – that it was resurrected after a period of social narcosis. Consequently, in order to understand what we describe as ‘second revival’, we need to look at it not as a clear-cut era of rebetiko music that originated, thrived and declined within a fixed period of time. Although it is a phenomenon that emerged in the 1990s, it is organically linked to the ways rebetiko music was experienced and perceived in the previous decades. ‘Second revival’, in that sense, refers to recent changes and ongoing transformations of rebetiko music making in Greek society today.

### *Postmortem revival*

Before any attempt to illustrate contemporary manifestations of rebetiko culture, it is essential to stress a rather paradoxical aspect of recent revivalist processes. Rebetiko music was given the kiss of life after it was first acknowledged as ‘dead’. Revival was preceded by *obituaries* and nostalgic rhetorics of the past expressed by even less

extreme rebetophiles who hitherto supported the second generation of *rebetes*, and, subsequently, welcomed the rebetiko revivalist culture of the previous decade. In 1980 the head of the Music Folklore Archives categorically declared that now 'rebetiko music is dead' (Markos Draghoumis interviewed in *Vima*, 9.03.1980: 14).

Rebetiko was thus certified as a deceased musical style recently 'stocked' in the closets of tradition. The date of its death was, more or less, estimated to have been during the early postwar years; the first revival was, thus, perceived as its death rattle. By all means, rebetiko was now as dead as *dhimotiko traghoudhi* – as past as the ruins of the Parthenon temple; once and for all it was buried, together with Vamvakaris and Papaioannou. It was about time to think then of rebetiko song as a precious folk monument of Greek history. After all, as a dead music it could not be harmful anymore. As it often happens with monuments from the Greek past, rebetiko might well be promoted to a musical symbol advertising greekness that was echoed in *bouzouki penies* and the *mangas* dancing not only abroad, but also locally.

Overall, the mortuary rebetiko rhetorics presupposed a general concern with the directions taken by contemporary Greek music and culture. For one thing, the majority of scholars - regardless of their motives and argumentation - were, and still are, congruent: that contemporary folk song, disparagingly called *skyladhiko* (literally 'dog den music'), is of low artistic value, decadent and inane. The growing popularity of *skyladhiko* was generally regarded as an alienating force threatening the 'purity' of Greek folk song. As such, it represented a disgraceful expression of neo-hellenic music, a realm of 'kitsch' and 'cheap' entertainment aesthetics personified in the

naiveté and arrogant glamour of pop star singers.<sup>2</sup> The discrimination against contemporary folk song was, in some cases, so poignant that the Association of Greek Singers was led to protest in public against the use of the term *skyladhiko* by several local media on the grounds that it was offensive to the musicians employed there.<sup>3</sup>

The evaluation of contemporary folk music as decadent implied *a priori* a comparison with a 'healthy' way of music making. Within this context of ideation, it was necessary - in order to sustain Greek musical tradition - to promote a civilized one that will stand against what is perceived as decaying local music making. Because musical decadence was seen as a product of dangerous and alienating mechanisms that hindered insidiously the prosperity of local cultural values, Greeks ought to look back and recall those musical expressions that served the 'proper' Greek musical morale. They can either invent new traditions or resurrect from the past one 'buried' in our musical repository. This is where a music is revived, re-discovered and re-used for current cultural purposes.

In fact, Greek music politics appear to have followed both directions, more or less deliberately; besides, the revived music of the past is a music re-made by those people who practice, experience and understand it in various ways within contemporary society. Moreover, this re-invented music influenced, to a certain extent, the directions taken by new musical trends; it subsequently stimulated neo-

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<sup>2</sup> See, for example, Bazianas (1983).

<sup>3</sup> Indeed, many of the instrumentalists employed in nightclubs are virtuosos and, often enough, graduates of Music Conservatoires who seek to work in such places for a higher income.

traditional music making, or even inspired musical experimentation and fusion worked upon the musical tradition of the past.<sup>4</sup>

*Rebetiko music and culture today: faces of revival*

The rebetiko faces of today both adhere to revivalist practices of the past and, at the same, they display transformations harmonized with the present. On one hand, they developed and appropriated past revivalist expressions to current ideology and aesthetics, such as the *taverna* performance context, or the media-supported rebetological discourse. At the same time, there are newly emerging faces, which were promoted within the recent context of global musical networks and correspond to current neo-hellenic entertainment aesthetics.

In 1983 Greek state television broadcast a series titled *To Minore tis Avghis* that soon attracted a great number of TV-viewers. The script was based on the lives of first generation rebetiko musicians, while one of the most popular rebetiko bands, *Athinaiiki Kompania*, performed the rebetiko soundtrack. The success of the series was paradigmatic of the changing scenery of the rebetiko revivalist process; the intellectuals and artists who pioneered the exaltation of rebetiko in the previous era were now replaced by the TV screen. In the case of the rebetiko-inspired series, the nation was induced to idolize actors personifying *mangas* heroes and fantasize about romantic rebetiko love affairs and adventures. In the same year, rebetiko culture was

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<sup>4</sup> The term 'neo-traditional' (*neo-paradhosiakos*) refers to new musical compositions that adopt in various ways elements (instruments, playing techniques, rhythms, musical forms) from the old-style rebetiko compositions.

also successfully animated on celluloid: the film *Rebetiko* directed by Kostas Ferris was awarded in the 24<sup>th</sup> Thessalonikian International Film Festival and reached local cinemas throughout the country (audio example 19).<sup>5</sup>

More serious attempts to visualize the rebetiko world were undertaken by numerous directors of film documentaries that further distributed rebetiko mythology abroad. Several of the documentary attempts perpetuated successfully the ideological heritage of the first revival, while they capitalized upon stereotypical images of the Greek 'folk'. Thus, it is not mere coincidence that the starring actor of the internationally popular *Zorba* film, Anthony Quinn, who already personified male greekness in the 1960s, was also the narrator of an Australian rebetiko documentary.<sup>6</sup> In 1984, two of the documentaries produced by state ET3 TV focused upon the history of rebetiko in Thessaloniki.<sup>7</sup> Beyond the visual fictionalization of rebetiko music, various fine art and literature works were inspired by rebetiko culture - a movement rooted in the first rebetiko revivalist era, whence it was also encouraged by the broader interest in 'primitive' art.<sup>8</sup>

Apart from certain films and documentaries, rebetiko music was repeatedly broadcast by Greek radio and television. Rebetiko *kompanies* appeared to perform for

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<sup>5</sup> In 1991, *Rebetiko* was dramatized and performed on stage. Ferris is also one of the most strenuous rebetologists today who had attempted to transfer the rebetiko discourse 'on line' (see the web site of Rebetiko Club, [www.rembetiko.gr/club.htm](http://www.rembetiko.gr/club.htm)). The site is published both in Greek and English.

<sup>6</sup> *Rembetika the Blues of Greece*, scripted by G. Holst, 1982. Also see Vasilis Maros' documentary on *bouzouki* (sponsored by BBC and the Bavarian TV, 1978); Channel 4, UK, *Rembetika, The music of the outsiders* (1987); Gheorghos Zervas, *M'aresoun oi kardies san ti diki mou – Markos Vamvakaris*, ('I Like Hearts Like Mine', *Eurimage* Production, 2000); Panos Kravvas, *Athanasios Athanasiou, Mia aionia zoi* ('Athanasios Athanasiou, An Eternal Life', Greek Film Centre, 2000), based on research by Dafni Tragaki.

<sup>7</sup> The TV documentaries titled *Ston iskio tou Gendi Koule* ('In the Shadow of Yendi Koule') and *Palioi Rebetes tis Thessalonikis* ('Old Rebetes of Thessaloniki').

various TV-shows, even on formal occasions, such as Christmas TV-music programmes. State television also displayed a great interest in covering rebetiko concerts, or in portraying personalities of the rebetiko world. *Rebetomania* – a term coined by Theodorakis (1984:47) – had gone so far that a famous rebetiko musician from Thessaloniki, Aghathonas, also starred at a TV commercial spot advertising lottery tickets, where he appeared together with a rebetiko band performing a rebetiko-style musical spot.

In addition, several radio producers today comment respectfully upon the inherent ‘truth’ and ‘magic’ of rebetiko music and include classic rebetiko songs within their radio programmes. State radio stations broadcast more specialized radio shows involving rebetiko song; usually, they are organized by rebetophile producers, who also happen to be enthusiastic record collectors and journalists, such as Panos Geramanis and Panos Savopoulos. At the same time, old off-white photos recalling the glorious rebetiko past illustrate retrospective articles on musicians’ biographies, as well as various other topics (some thought to enlighten new aspects of rebetiko history) frequently published in local music magazines<sup>9</sup> and newspapers.<sup>10</sup> Moreover, local publishing companies continue to support today the interest of contemporary rebetologists in editing biographies of deceased rebetiko stars, as well as various

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<sup>8</sup> For instance, Dinos Christianopoulos’ novel, *Oi Rebetes tou Dounia* (‘The Rebetes of the World’, 1986); Fassianos’ illustrations for Petropoulos’ re-edited book (1979) were inspired by folk art painting style.

<sup>9</sup> Such as, *Difono* magazine. The 1<sup>st</sup> issue of *Difono* (1995), which is today regarded as one of the most popular local music magazines covering both historic and contemporary Greek music issues, offered a free rebetiko CD (same for the issues 2, 3, 6, 12, 19, 31, 36, 39, 56, 60).

<sup>10</sup> Ilias Voliotis - Kapetankis, a journalist and author of books on rebetiko history, Panos Geramanis, journalist and rebetiko expert and the veteran rebetologist Ilias Petropoulos, all have columns in daily newspapers (*Eleftherotipia, Ta Nea*). Rebetiko articles are often published in the local Sunday press.

historic<sup>a</sup> accounts.<sup>11</sup> In addition, glowing obituaries apropos the death of a veteran rebetiko star are often published in the foreign press.<sup>12</sup>

For rebetophiles, the launch of a book usually becomes, in a way, a rebetiko happening; such was the case of the recent launch of a fictionalized biography of Tsitsanis by Sotos Alexiou, which I attended a few years ago.<sup>13</sup> The event was advertised in the local press and took place in a small theatre in central Athens. The place was packed with rebetophiles and intellectuals who were there to honor the work of the great composer and socialize *in memoriam* of rebetiko song. The highlight of the night was the appearance of Tsitsanis' nephew who read a sorrowful commentary that was, at the end, rewarded with enthusiastic applause by the participants. The event closed with the performance of Tsitsanis' songs by old co-musicians of the composer in front of an audience who attended the music making in a way that reminded me of the formal atmosphere of a western art music performance.

Moreover, the recording industry that had already promoted the previous renaissance era continued to exercise a great impact on the revivalist movement. Rebetiko song was still regarded as a musical product that could certainly guarantee a standard number of sales.<sup>14</sup> Today a great number of recordings are also sponsored by local cultural organizations and institutions. It seems that the various old re-issued and re-mastered recordings are intended primary to authenticate rebetiko (photo 24) as a

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<sup>11</sup> See, for example, Nikos Mathesis' biography by Karandis (1999); Nearhos Georghiadis' books on rebetiko origins and history (1997).

<sup>12</sup> E.g. *Guardian* and *New York Times* for the death of Sotiria Bellou, 1997.

<sup>13</sup> Titled *Vasilis Tsitsanis*, Athens: Kastaniotis Press, 1998. For fiction based on Tsitsanis biography and his stay in Thessaloniki, see Giorghos Scabardhonis, *Ouzeri Tsitsanis*, Athens 2001: Kedhros Press.

<sup>14</sup> Nonetheless, rebetiko recordings did not reach the 'hits' of Greek music charts, which contemporary folk song (*skyladhiko*) steadily occupies.

precious Greek cultural monument, rather than to profiteer from it. Apart from the more sophisticated and expensive CD releases, rebetiko music is also sold as souvenir in duty free shops and tourist sites, as well as in cyberspace.

As already mentioned above, rebetiko music inspired in various ways contemporary musicians either of folk or *entehno* (audio example 20) or composers of contemporary <sup>songs</sup> More important, rebetiko music is performed by musicians who are broadly regarded as the current 'authentic' exponents of the genre. Those are the celebrated *rebetes* of today, professional singers such as the Thessalonikian female singer Mario (audio example 21), the *bouzouki*-players Aghathonas and Hondronakos,<sup>15</sup> or the Athens-based Babis Tsertos, Andonis Lebasis, Takis Binis and Stelios Vamvakaris, the son of the 1930s rebetiko composer (photo 25). During the previous revival period many of them were already rising stars; nowadays, they perform in expensive live stages (*rebetadhika*), participate in rebetiko recordings, give interviews in the local press and appear in TV shows.

Eventually the monumentalization of rebetiko song was further promoted by the organization of festivals and the establishment of museums. Various local authorities capitalized proudly upon the rebetiko heritage; thus, the municipality of Trikala, the birthplace of Tsitsanis, organized a rebetiko festival and set up a museum (1985); on the island of Syros there is the Vamvakaris museum (1991). The Trikala authorities also sponsored a conference on Tsitsanis (1999), while other conferences lately organized in Greece feature the study of rebetiko as a special topic.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> He died in 1999.

The popularization of rebetiko was not confined within the limits of Greek society. 'Our rebetiko' was globalized; it became a keyword in search engines of the worldwide web of electronic information. The ways rebetiko culture and music are nowadays digitized and discussed on line reproduce, in fact, contemporary rebetiko myths already well-spread during the first revivalist era. A considerable number of the published internet sites are set up by individual rebetiko enthusiasts; the general historic information provided stresses the appealing issues of drug use, refugee culture, origins and authenticity of old rebetiko. Rebetiko is broadly advertised as an exciting, non-conformist, even bizarre, culture of outlaws, prisoners and femmes fatales. This appears to define the basic rationale of the aspirant rebetiko web masters, whose work, among other things, involves an attempt to introduce 'rebetiko for beginners'.

An interesting and frequently visited website is that organized by Kostas Ferris, named 'The Rebetiko Club' (see fn.5, photo 26). Next to the publication of lyrics and song audio files, the site launched a 'forum' - that is, a virtual locus for exchanging ideas - which is 'visited' daily by rebetiko fans. Thus, despite the adherence to 'authenticity' and *romiosini* values that tend to neglect the latest western-imported technological applications on rebetiko music making, contemporary rebetological discourse welcomes internet technology that becomes an alternative vehicle for propagating the values of rebetiko song. 'The Rebetiko Club' represents the case of a website that serves to communicate on an international level and in a faster and more direct way, current ideas and interpretations on rebetiko.

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<sup>16</sup> Nikaia (Athens), 1995; Rethymno, 1996; Hydra (2001), Arta (2002).

A quick surfing through the topics discussed may eliminate the problems and ideological issues puzzling ongoing rebetology: rebetiko and Greek music identity, Byzantine music and *makams*, rebetiko and *dhimotiko traghoudhi*, the origins of instruments, as well as up-to-date folk music topics and events. Also noteworthy are the rhetorics employed by the member-contributors, often based on *mangas* slang, which sounds quite artificial and affected. This way, the people of the 'forum', mostly males, constitute and display a kind of rebetiko brotherhood realized on line.<sup>17</sup> Finally, the forum also attracts non-Greek internet users, who seek the advice of local experts on aspects of rebetiko history, *bouzouki*-teachers, or performance places.

Beyond computer screens, rebetiko music has recently been celebrated in great concert halls in Greece and abroad (photo 27). In Athens rebetiko managed to enter the shrine of western art music, the *Megharon Mousikis* (14.02.2001) and was performed at a dramatized concert organized in memory of Tsitsanis.<sup>18</sup> Rebetiko songs of both generations were also incorporated in the concert program of the famous Greek singer, Giorghos Dalaras, while the latest, so-described, 'popular oratorio', *Axion Esti*, composed by Mikis Theodorakis was also <sup>partly</sup> inspired by rebetiko music. In Brussels, a French brochure presenting a series of Greek music concerts advertised 'la grande dame du rebetiko', Sotiria Bellou, as the performer of 'la chanson de mauvais garçons, des fumeurs de haschich, du sous-prolétariat urbain' (reprinted in Adhamidhou 1998:424). It is also noteworthy that the Committee of the Academy Charles Cross (France) officially acknowledged rebetiko as an art genre and awarded a prize to Vasilis Tsitsanis a year before his death, in 1984. Finally, the

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<sup>17</sup> Still today, the discussion on rebetiko issues, either on a popular or an academic level, is mainly monopolized by male scholars.

<sup>18</sup> The performance was orchestrated (by Kostas Ganosselis) and dramatized by a well-known revue director (Stamatis Fasoulis).

members of the Greek diaspora (settled in U.S.A., Australia, Germany) celebrate their identity by forming rebetiko *kompanies*, which sometimes also incorporate foreign musicians.<sup>19</sup>

Universities abroad pioneered the incorporation of rebetiko in academic courses (see Gauntlett 1989:38, n.76, 77). Vellou-Keil, the biographer of Vamvakaris, had attempted to export the musicians' genius to Buffalo University (USA), where he performed in a seminar series. Soon, rebetiko music and culture became a research topic featuring doctoral theses; again, the majority of the PhDs were conducted in universities abroad.<sup>20</sup> Among the leading local academics who included rebetiko in folklore tutorials, was Professor Ghrighoris Sifakis (1976 -77). In this way rebetiko was ultimately institutionalized and established in the Greek academic world. Not surprisingly, Christianopoulos recently highlighted rebetiko as 'a live element of our folk tradition and, at the same time, a mirror of national self-knowledge' (1988:66). Today, the Music Department in Athens offers lectures on 'urban folk song'.<sup>21</sup> Traditional rebetiko discourse actually managed to enter academia and, as a result, it was additionally validated as an academic rhetoric promoted by a higher educational institution. Beyond the Music Department rebetiko lectures also feature in the local Panteion University Sociology Department, which produced socio-anthropological

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<sup>19</sup> This is not a novel practice; migrant communities used to listen to and revel with rebetiko ever since the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. At that time rebetiko musical culture represented a minority; it was confined to the musical world of migrants. Today, the culture of Greek diasporic communities moves in new directions. Rebetiko *kompanies* are performing as established 'ethnic music' ensembles. Such is the case, for instance, of the Sweden-based band *Taximi*, where the violin player is Swedish, or the *Apodhimi Kompania* in Melbourne (supported by the Brunswick City Council).

<sup>20</sup> Stathis Gauntlett, Univ. of Oxford, 1978; Eberhard Dietrich, Free University of Berlin 1987; Risto Pekka Pennanen, Helsinki, 2000.

<sup>21</sup> Still though, the approach to rebetiko seems to follow uncritically already established stereotypes, while it avoids a more thorough, contemporary and anthropologically informed ethnomusicological understanding of the genre. The lecture notes involve a compilation of articles published in newspapers and local rebetological books.

accounts, postgraduate dissertations and publications (*Dokimes* magazine, 1991; Kotaridhis, 1996). Indeed, most of the local academics who attempted to understand rebetiko culture via rigorous methodological and theoretical approaches are sociologists. Nonetheless, the field of rebetiko research is constantly changing today and seems to stimulate an interdisciplinary interest.

The institutionalization of rebetiko also occurred outside university departments, both on a private and public education level. During the last few years lessons on *bouzouki* music were incorporated in the curriculum of public music schools, while private music conservatoires specialized in folk song attract a great number of students (photo 28). The majority of these newly-founded schools included rebetiko music lessons within a broader curriculum that mainly focuses on Byzantine chant and so-called 'traditional' music (meaning *dhimotiko traghoudhi*).<sup>22</sup> In addition, various schools and numerous teachers offer today private lessons in *bouzouki*, which are mainly based on *bouzouki* learning methods recently published in the Greek market.<sup>23</sup> The way contemporary *bouzouki* students are practicing and developing their skills is similar to those of students of western art music. Inevitably, the western-centered educational strategies standardized rebetiko learning processes by fixing the playing techniques, normalizing improvisation and generally discouraging the elaboration of personal playing styles.

By all these means rebetiko was refined, aestheticized and finally gained a position in the Greek folk music pantheon next to ancient Greek music, Byzantine chant and *dhimotiko traghoudhi*. During the last couple of decades, rebetiko music is

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<sup>22</sup> One of the most prominent music schools in Thessaloniki is *En Hordais* which also runs a record label. Lately, the Macedonian Conservatory organized a special Greek music department.

<sup>23</sup> These are published compilations of rebetiko songs transcribed in western notation often accompanied by tablature.

manifested and propagated in all available ways, from TV shows and websites to academic courses and conferences. Eventually the nostalgic articles and films, the reissued recordings and concerts, serve to teach contemporary Greeks what 'authentic' rebetiko song is, its origins and history and who are the 'sacred monsters' of this musical world. The qualities of 'art maudit' and mystical indulgence identified in rebetiko music - that previously appealed to its proponents – are now replaced by the official state acknowledgment of the genre as part of 'our' national tradition. It is a tradition Greeks ought to disseminate and preserve because it is acknowledged as representative of local cultural identity. Within the new revivalist era, there is no doubt anymore that rebetiko deserves serious attention and should be declared as a local cultural monument, worthy of protection mainly because it embodies two distinct characteristics: it is folk music and it is local - rooted in 'our' age-old musical history.

### *Rebetiko for 'the people'*

In an article recently published in a local newspaper (*Vimagazino*, 5.11.2000:79), the author attempted to outline the profile of Dafni Simitis, the current Prime Minister's spouse, by showing her in the setting of a *taverna*, drinking red wine together with friends while listening to the music of a rebetiko *kompania* from Thessaloniki. A few decades ago it would have been inconceivable for a governmental spouse, especially female, to overtly advertise her favor towards rebetiko music. Today, it is not a risk for Ms Simitis, who carefully maintains a moderate and modest public image, to advertise her favor for rebetiko sounds. She is well aware that by the end of the 1990s

rebetiko entertainment is a safe practice among Greek people in general. More important, depicting her in the context of rebetiko songs automatically brings her - a *member of the upper class* - closer to the 'folk', while it adds a hint of sophistication to her image. Of course, Ms Simitis had, in addition, a serious reason to like rebetiko: it was the favored music of anti-Junta intellectuals, like her husband.

Ironically, the actual de-politicization of rebetiko among Greek society after 1981 was supported basically by the ways the Socialist government politicized rebetiko entertainment. In the so-called *Contract with People* the newly-elected Panhellenic Socialist Movement (PASOK) promised to commit itself to protecting Greek popular cultural activity against the western interests of the local economic elite that generated a crisis in Greek cultural identity. The declaration of the 'green' government bears two main ideological impetus.<sup>24</sup> First, to express clearly its opposition to the cultural agenda of the right wing encoded in the slogan 'we belong to the West'. Secondly, the new Socialist government displayed *a priori* its political favor towards the Greek 'folk' and musical orientations of the people which, for PASOK, were hitherto deliberately overlooked and manipulated by various exploiters, including western capitalists.

The so-called 'government of change' (PASOK) attempted to embrace, therefore, folk cultural expressions, which were neglected or variously censored by previous governments. In the realm of music, rebetiko was seen as the great martyr; the Socialist Party government became, thus, its sworn liberator. Soon the censorship was relaxed so profoundly that rebetiko hashish songs were even broadcast on TV,

only a few years after their official banning by right-wing state authorities. In this way, Socialist politicians paraded triumphantly as the unprecedented heroes of the suppressed populus. In fact, this protective gesture towards rebetiko was a strategic movement that aimed at bringing the socially distanced ranks of politicians, closer to the people. In the eyes of Greek people, 'Andreas', as people used to call the Prime Minister (using his first name) and his fellow Ministers were dancing the same dances, singing the same songs, and thus, sharing with them the same popular values of *levendia* and *mangia*.<sup>25</sup>

Next to dancing, Socialist politicians also lamented the death of rebetiko tradition. Tsitsanis' funeral, in 1984, was attended by the Prime Minister together with his Minister of Culture; it took place at state expense and was broadcast on TV news. When Sotiria Bellou was seriously ill in hospital, she received various supportive letters from members of the Socialist government (see Adhamidhou 1998:437-442). The singer was also buried with state honors; the Minister of Culture, Evangelos Venizelos, announced the sponsoring of the public ceremonial by stressing that 'Sotiria Bellou held a prominent position in the history of our folk song'.<sup>26</sup>

This overtly displayed generosity towards rebetiko music is actually an outcome of the first renaissance era of the genre. In that sense, the ideological *stimuli* of liberal intellectuals and artists who frequented *tavernes* and *bouzoukia* venues during the dictatorship years prepared the ground for the 1990s rebetiko cult. Moreover, several intellectuals and future politicians had already propagated the

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<sup>24</sup> Green in the color of PASOK logo (a green rising sun). This is not to be confused with ecological political movements, which have adopted the same color.

<sup>25</sup> For the Socialist populist politics see Gauntlett (1990); Ploritis (1989).

persecuted musical culture abroad, in the European capitals where many of them settled during the adverse years of the Colonels' government. On this basis, rebetiko in the 1970s was broadly considered to be suffering together with democracy; the growing sympathy for the Greek political drama cultivated abroad was addressed towards the depressed music, too.

The ongoing political embrace of rebetiko song represented a reaction against the value of 'panhellenic traditional musics and dances' promoted by the Junta establishment.<sup>27</sup> The Colonels felt the need to promote a homogenized profile of national traditional music that would manifest the common musical heritage of the Greek nation. Their nationalist cultural aspirations deliberately overlooked and suppressed local musics, especially those of non-Greek speaking groups (such as the Arvanites, Macedonians, Vlahoi, Gypsies, Pomaks, Muslims). While rebetiko was dangerous for the Greek patriotic ethos, those local musical languages were regarded as exceptional phenomena that alienated 'our' immaculate musical tradition. The image of the Prime Minister dancing to *zeibekikos* became, therefore, a metaphor of the Socialist answer to the famous *tsamikos* danced by Colonel Georghios Papadopoulos. As such, it becomes a *zeibekikos* performance that embodied the authentication of the music Greek people really favored in contrast to the music hitherto people ought to favor.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> See *Odhos Panos* magazine (issue 107, Jan.-March 2000:29) that published a collection of obituaries on Bellou.

<sup>27</sup> The concept of 'panhellenic music and dances' involved an attempt of the Junta authorities to construct a special core of musical styles and dances, which would represent Greek musical and dance culture on the whole. This core of musics and dances included certain genres of *dhimotiko traghoudhi*, such as the *kalamatianos*, the *tsamikos* and the *syrtos*. This way, the Colonels aimed to construct a homogenized Greek musical identity that by excluding local and non-Greek musical idioms would contribute to the shaping of a 'national' Greek music.

<sup>28</sup> Next to rebetiko, other previously neglected musical traditions were protected, such as Gypsy music.

On a superficial level, the current official promotion of rebetiko - compared to the restrictive policies of past establishments - could be beneficial; it involves a political attitude that could encourage the development of tradition and open new rebetiko horizons in Greek music. Nonetheless, the entire history of the genre witnessed the contrary: rebetiko originated and prospered within adverse socio-political conditions (the Greek kingdom and later the Metaxas' dictatorship) – even the first revival took place under the rigorous regime of the Colonels. Thus, state validation was not necessarily a sufficient condition ensuring the promotion of 'good' rebetiko. This would be, anyway, a deterministic assessment. Greek cultural politics point, in fact, towards a different direction: the persecution and various censorship rebetiko suffered were capitalized and used as a promotional package for the recent official validation of the genre. By appropriating rebetiko the Socialist government attempted to 'prove that 'we are the government of the people', as the following dialogue that took place in Greek Parliament in 1984 exemplifies (Vanavatsos 1984:12):

Mitsotakis [~~Leader~~ of the Right Wing party]: This Prime Minister of yours even danced *tsifteteli* in a village in Crete. [*tsifteteli* dancing is associated with entertainment in *bouzoukia* clubs today].

Koutsoyiorghas [Minister of PASOK]: Well, of course we dance *tsifteteli* and we dance rebetika and we dance *tsamiko* [a traditional dance] anywhere. We're a government of the people.

Mitsotakis: We too are of the people...

## *Rebetiko urban entertainment places today*

### *a. Rebetiko in bars and cafés*

Despite the populist rebetiko politics that served to shape the public image of the Socialist government, *dhimotiko traghoudhi* and various other folk music genres continued to feature popular entertainment. In the various *rebetiko-bars* (see *Defi* 1983, 4:62) – namely rebetiko bars – the repertory often included, together with rebetiko, current folk, light and art song, as well as *dhimotiko traghoudhi* – covering this way almost every area of Greek music.<sup>1</sup> This is, for instance, how a reviewer of nightlife entertainment described those places in the early 1980s:

This year the little bars with rebetiko *kompanies* multiplied and it seems that they offer something needed, since an entire world (95% young people) entertain themselves there every night. Of course, there are much more places than those reviewed here... Among the common characteristics are that they are small places, they don't serve food, they have cheap prices, humble decoration, not well-known professional musicians and a basic sound engineering device. What they profoundly lack is – or are – the singers. Of course, the musicians [meaning instrumentalists] who sing – more or less well – are covering the program. However, this is still a problem, because the voice is a basic element, maybe the most basic, of the folk music performance (*Defi* 1983, 4:63).

Elsewhere, the reviewer stressed that 'the height of the stage...discourages the dancing participation of the audience' and 'the relationship of the *Athinaiki Kompania* [a famous revivalist Athens based band] with the audience continues to appear remote' (*ibid*:62). However, in other cases the dancing activity was described as more

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<sup>1</sup> This pluralism of the programme varied in accordance to the performing bands; some places adhered more strictly to a classic rebetiko repertory, others used to mix rebetiko and *laiko* song, while others appeared even more diverse, including art and light songs, as well as *dhimotiko traghoudhi* in their programme. (see *Defi* 1982, 1: 24-7, 1983 (4):62-3).

‘lively’, such as the venue where Aghathonas (the Thessalonikian *bouzouki* player) used to perform.

What is, however, the most striking element of these reports is the inherent surprise expressed by the reviewers and also patrons of such places regarding the changing rebetiko scene. This is also implied in the way the reviewer represented the *rebetto-bars* phenomenon and outlined the features that differentiate these places from any other previous rebetiko performance venues. Evidently, something new appeared to have taken place in the land of rebetiko music making; besides, this is what the made-up name (*rebetto-bars*) that was used for those places apparently indicates. The reviewers highlighted the fact that rebetiko was now broadly performed by new and rapidly popularized *kompanies*. Of course, young *kompanies* were already formed during the previous revival; however in the 1990s, more than any other time, young *kompanies* prospered and multiplied within a fruitful (for rebetiko song) urban musical reality (audio example 20). The actual performance of rebetiko music as the highlight of current revivalist practices was further stressed by Tasos Falireas, a rebetophile music producer: ‘Even if a hundred rebetiko records were to be re-issued now, they would play a secondary role in comparison to the live stage, namely, the impact of playing *kompanies*’ (Defi, 1983, 4:26).

In these fashionable venues, the structure of the repertory was not monopolized by rebetiko music; the programme also included, to a greater or lesser degree, other musical genres. Besides, ever since the first revival, urban musical networks encouraged the interplay between rebetiko and other urban musical genres, such as the art and ‘light’ song. This musical communication was further endorsed in

the area of revivalist performances and seemed to satisfy the musical needs of current rebetiko fans, who welcomed these mixed repertoires with enthusiasm. It was a foretaste of the later success of *rebetadhika* clubs, which are in a way a *skyladhiko* version of rebetiko music making.<sup>2</sup>

Today, in Thessaloniki and Athens, there are special bars where one may enjoy a rebetiko *kompania* and share a drink with friends. Those places are often called 'cafés' (the term *rebetobar* is not commonly used today) and are frequented mostly by young people. Rebetiko *kompanies* are usually employed there for a certain period of time - a 'season' - on a fixed weekly programme, which may also occasionally incorporate other Greek music ensembles. Next to these cafés, rebetiko continues to thrive in the traditional realm of *taverna*, which, anyway, had never ~~ceased~~<sup>to exist</sup> as a rebetiko performance place. There are *tavernes*, more expensive and luxurious, where the professional ensembles employed are often amplified and present a highly mixed programme based on rebetiko (such as the rebetiko *tavernes* located in *Ladhadika* area in Thessaloniki). Other *tavernes*, the so-called *koutoukia*, are more humble places, which usually employ small amateur *kompanies* performing without amplification. These venues are located both in suburban, as well as in central areas of the city, such as the area of Ano Poli, where I conducted the ethnographic research discussed in Part B.

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<sup>2</sup> In a *skyladhiko* nightclub the decoration is often luxurious and the music is performed amplified and at high volume (involving, in certain cases, echo and overloaded bass sounds). There is also a dance floor and a high stage, where the musical performance takes place under multicolored lighting effects.

*b. Rebetadhika nightclubs*

Next to *tavernes* and *cafés*, rebetiko is celebrated today in special nightclubs called *rebetadhika*, or *ellinadhika*. *Rebetadhika* are popular places usually advertised in huge posters in central city streets. They represent the most glamorous form of rebetiko entertainment context, frequented by smartly dressed people who often spend a great amount of money 'on having a good time'. *Rebetadhika* host the famous rebetiko stars. The musicians employed there are placed in the top of the musicians' hierarchy – they are the best-paid professionals and often the most competent instrumentalists in the rebetiko music market. Because the programme structure and the entire performance are standardized, the ensembles often need to rehearse for months before the 'season' begins. The repertory may combine, along with rebetiko, various Greek folk popular tunes (but not *skyladhiko* songs) - of *dhimotiko traghoudhi*, *smyrnaiiko*, *laiko* song, art (*entehno*) and light (*elafry*) song.

*Rebetadhiko* clubs attract a different clientele to that of *cafés* and *tavernes*, because they correspond mainly to *nouveaux riches* entertainment ideals. At the stage of *tsakir kefi* (that is the peak of *kefi*, 'high spirits') most of the revelers had already consumed great amounts of alcohol and women often dance sensual *tsiftetelia* on the tables, which are followed by *zeibekikos* dancing towards the end of the performance programme.

c. *Rebetiko as 'ethnic' music making: Mario's image making*

Recently, some café-bars stages invite, next to rebetiko *kompanies*, other 'ethnic' music ensembles; Arab, Eastern Mediterranean, Armenian, Byzantine and Ottoman classical, or neo-traditional musics may be also performed on the same stage with rebetiko song (photo 29). The emergence of these, so-called, 'ethnic bars' is associated with the increasing popularity of 'world music'. Inevitably, rebetiko performed in the context of these 'other' musics acquired an 'ethnic music' profile, too. Outside Greece, the appeal of rebetiko as an 'ethnic' music was further increased by the marketing strategies of local record labels. For Gauntlett, rebetiko performances abroad became an 'imported exotica' (1991:89). *Folk Roots* magazine, for instance, referred to Mario, the famous rebetiko singer from Thessaloniki, as 'the best singer of *amanes*, *smyrnaiiko* and rebetiko songs' (March 1998), while a Belgian reviewer argued that she is of the same quality as 'Bessie Smith and Cesaria Evora for the genres they each had sung' (*Journal de Medecin*, 23.07.1999).

For the promotion of her record *Laledhakia*, Mario was photographed as a sophisticated middle-aged woman, framed within an abstract black background (photo 30).<sup>3</sup> The way 'our Mario' (according to the flyer) was photographed hardly recalls any of the rebetiko stereotypical images, though. Instead, the singer appears sitting on a chair, resting her forehead on her right hand, while her facial expression is thoughtful and nostalgic. Although she is dressed in a smart looking black shirt that gives her the air of a veteran primadonna, there is something in her styling that clearly differentiates her image from that of a western art song singer. On her left wrist she

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<sup>3</sup> The CD *Laledhakia* ('Laledhakia') is released by Lyra (ML-4949, 1999).

wears a *komboshoini* – on the right hand she holds a red *komboloi*. The first is a bracelet made of black cotton knots; each knot symbolizes for Orthodox believers a prayer to God. The other one is a set of worry beads; an instrument of diversion traditionally used by male *mangas* persons.

By holding a *komboloi* and wearing a *komboshoini*, Mario unites in her body two apparently oppositional worlds: Orthodox religion and the subversive *rebetiko*. The combination of both symbols under her thoughtful gaze does not appear to be an expression of eccentricity: rather, Mario's styling brings together harmonically the values associated with each attribute. Besides, both the *komboshoini* and the *komboloi* are ultimately understood as symbols of *romiosini*.<sup>4</sup> the first corresponds to the romaic character of Hellenic-Orthodox culture, that is the Greek culture of the Byzantine era that is conceptually differentiated from the pre-Christian, pagan hellenic past; the other is an attribute of the folk *romios* person communicating the values of 'genuine' Greek manhood, associated with the *mangas* ideal.<sup>5</sup> In fact, the use of both attributes may reveal aspects of Mario's ideology and the ways *rebetiko* music culture is purposefully profiled today. Mario has not actually declared in public her dedication to Orthodox religion. More than a symbol of believing, then, the *komboshoini* stands apparently as an attribute that relates her artistry – *rebetiko* singing – with the past, that is notably the glorious cultural past (the Byzantine years) thought to represent *rebetiko* music's pre-history. At the same time, by holding a *komboloi*, Mario - a woman - communicates overtly nuances of female liberalism and radicalism, since *komboloi* is traditionally carried by *manges*. Her image making bears, therefore, a

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<sup>4</sup> *Romiosini* denotes the nature of greekness in the Byzantine era and the subsequent Ottoman years.

<sup>5</sup> Greek manhood had variously appealed to foreign ethnographers, too. See, for example, Herzfeld (1985).

complex connotation of *romiosini* values defined in this case as a combination of two celebrated stereotypes: the *romios* of the magnificent Hellenic-Orthodox civilization together with the *mangas* hero type of *romios*. Both symbols of *romiosini* are nonetheless discreetly – and radically – appropriated to Mario's overall western sophisticated style. Mario appears, this way, as a singer of *romiosini* – reverberated in the sounds of rebetiko - and, at the same time, as an artist 'of the world'; she appears namely as a local musician – a rebetiko singer - who lives in a global world.

In this way the singer embodies and advertises, more or less consciously, current meanings of rebetiko song. Mario, in fact, performs rebetiko and rebetiko is performed in Mario. On one hand, she is attached to the tradition, since she is acknowledged as a priestess of 'authentic' rebetiko and an ambassador of the music abroad. At the same time, this acknowledged role brings her beyond and above the rebetiko tradition: her music making re-defines rebetiko, appropriating it to a broader audience - that of 'world music'. In the process of globalizing it, she needs to translate rebetiko into the new, universal language of 'ethnic' musics (as the 'ethnic' label is understood by record producers). For this reason, Mario discreetly fuses western with local aesthetics in the front cover of the *Laledhakia* CD. Her image, namely, communicates rebetiko music culture in a language that, while it appears somehow familiar to the uninitiated – mainly western – listeners, also embodies a mystique of 'otherness' that attracts their musical interests.

This 'otherness' understood in rebetiko song that is performed and experienced as 'ethnic' music culture in certain Thessalonikian urban venues today represents the central issue addressed by the present ethnography. The ethnographic

knowledge it communicates attempts to illuminate and interpret certain facets of current revivalist reality and the processes of 'other-ing' rebetiko as an expression of postmodern culture and the ways urban musicality is shaped in Greek society today.

## PART B

### Chapter 8. Urban ethnomusicology at home

In this chapter I intend to examine more thoroughly two particular aspects featuring the present study of rebetiko culture. First, I discuss the nature of 'urban music' and the ways it was constructed as antithetical to 'rural' music. Secondly, I explore the concept of ethnomusicological research 'at home' and question the issue of 'native ethnography'.<sup>1</sup> Both inquiries further inform the theoretical contexts in which I have grounded my research experience and formulated relevant conclusions.

#### *The 'rural' - 'urban' cultural and musical dichotomy*

In November 1997, when I worked on the preliminary thesis proposal, there were hardly any ethnomusicological accounts of urban Greek music in general, and rebetiko song in particular. The small number of sociological, anthropological and philological approaches available had mainly examined rebetiko in historical perspective, as a past expression of a deprived urban population.<sup>2</sup> In addition, the numerous books and press articles on rebetiko that were mainly written by local

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<sup>1</sup> For writings on native ethnography see Hussein Fahim (ed.), *Indigenous Anthropology in Non-Western Countries* (1982); Emiko Ohnuki-Tierney, 'Native Anthropologists', *American Ethnologist*, 11, no3:584-6; Anthony Jackson, *Anthropology at Home* (1987); D. Messerschmidt (ed.), *Anthropologists at Home in North America: Methods and Issues in the Study of One's Own Society*, (1981).

<sup>2</sup> Recently there were a few accounts on local rock youth culture, such as Nikos Christakis, *Mousikes Taftotites* ('Musical Identities', 1994); Antonis Astrinakis, *Pareklinontes Ypopolitismoι kai Style tis Neolaias tis Erghatikis Taxis: Vasikoi Prosdhioristikoi Paraghontes sti Diamorfosi tous* ('Deviating Subcultures and Styles of the Working Class Youth', 1990); Antonis Astrinakis and Lily M.-G. Stylianoudhi, *Heavy Metal, Rockabilly kai Fanatikoi Opadoi: Neanikoi Politismoι kai Ypopolitismoι sti Dytiki Attiki* ('Heavy Metal, Rockabilly and Fans: Youth Cultures and Subcultures In Western Attica', 1996). The analytical framework and fieldwork methods are based, however, on sociological theories and, therefore, they lack an overall ethnomusicological orientation and the associated anthropological approach to musical culture.

rebetiko experts, collectors and journalists had primarily served to support the rebetiko music legend. In fact, the lack of interest in investigating urban musics had been a traditional preoccupation in Greek folklore scholarship. Besides, the origins of research on Greek music have features in common with those of other newly established nation states in Europe at the end of 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>3</sup> Behind the romantic enthusiasm of re-inventing rural musics and ascribing to them an artistic authority (see Bartok 1933 in Suchoff 1976), there was the urgent need to construct a proper national musical identity that could adequately serve and legitimate ethnic politics and nationalistic aspirations. *Laographia* ('Folklore Studies') was often considered a 'national' discipline that 'aims to prove the unity of the Greek nation from ancient times until today'.<sup>4</sup> Inspired by the so-called 'theory of survivals', foreign and local music anthologists and folklorists had looked for 'original' Greek music in rural areas, where they expected to find the oldest, purest songs and tunes.<sup>5</sup> Their aspirations recall Bela Bartok, who stated characteristically: 'the urban music frequently sounds stilted, affected and artificial; the peasant music, on the other hand, gives the impression of being a far more spontaneous and vivid manifestation despite its primitiveness' (Bartok 1933 in Suchoff 1976:38). In the same spirit anthologists who studied Greek folk poetry had idealized Greek rural 'psyche' as the 'basic source

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<sup>3</sup> See Kiriakidhou-Nestoros (1978).

<sup>4</sup> According to Nikolaos Politis who coined the term in 1884; see Skouteri (1990:81-83)

<sup>5</sup> See, for example, the booklet issued in 2001 by the Association for the Dissemination of National Music founded by Simonas Karras, one of the most influential Greek music folklorists. Similarly, Samuel Baud-Bovy, one of the key figures in the study of Greek folk song, in his *Essay on Greek Folk Song* notices his preoccupation with collecting rural folk songs thought to represent the 'traditional' music: 'Then, in 1930, I was interested in local songs, the traditional...I was not in a mood to write down a song that an old man insisted to sing for me "a very old *hava* [melody, tune], which I'm sure nobody sung for you before". I knew that this must be a fashionable song...of which the lyrics, structure and duration witnessed its foreign, usually urban, origins' (1984:66). Nonetheless, in his *Essay* he included a chapter on urban music where he discusses briefly the *amanes* and rebetiko traditions (ibid:55-70), although he appears somehow reluctant to acknowledge their 'artistic quality, which is somehow overestimated' (ibid.:70). It is interesting that in the relevant chapter there is no reference to the *kantadha*, the urban song tradition based on western musical structures.

from where the Greek nation drafts the elements of its cultural particularities' (Meghas 1938, 1947 in Skouteri 1990:82-83).<sup>6</sup>

The basic task of folklore scholarship in Greece was to provide scientific evidence that would substantiate the political requirements of a newly established and fragile state. To that extent, the collection and classification of rural folk song texts, so-called *dhimotiki poiisi*,<sup>7</sup> had provided one of the basic tools for constructing a homogenized image of Greek people that ignored ethnic and cultural diversity.<sup>8</sup> This making of national folk music tradition had deliberately ignored concurrent musical traditions proliferating in urban places, including the *café-aman* and rebetiko musics, since they represented undesirable reminiscences of the Ottoman past. The music of the rural population – regarded as those people who kicked over the traces of Turkish tyranny - was considered as more appropriate to serve the 'national, humanistic, and internationalist' objectives of Greek folklore (Loukatos 1964-5 in Skouteri 1990:83).

The orientation of early folk song studies that legitimized *dhimotiko traghoudhi* as the culmination of national musical ethos had, inevitably, capitalized on the construction of rural/urban culture as antithetical categories (Kiriakidhis 1922, in Skouteri 1990:82). The 'urban' was seen as a synonym of modernity, the 'rural' of tradition; the 'urban' as a condition featuring change and mobility, the 'rural' as one

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<sup>6</sup> For the 'discovery' of Greek folk song see Politis (1999). For a critical approach on Greek Folklore Studies see Herzfeld (1982).

<sup>7</sup> The application of the term *poiisi* (poetry) to song texts implies an acknowledgment of folk lyrics as a literary genre. The use of *poiisi* to describe folk song lyrics is actually a scholarly invention and evaluation, which ignores the special qualities of orality in folk song tradition. Moreover, it fails to correspond to the ways the people involved in music making understand folk music and disregards the integrity of music and lyrics that characterizes Greek musical traditions. Beaton in the preface of *Folk Poetry of Modern Greece* – where he included a chapter on rebetiko song (1980:193-198) - stresses that 'it must not be forgotten...that all of this poetry is in fact song, and that until the collectors began to write it down, it had no existence outside the sung performance' (ibid.:xi).

<sup>8</sup> For example, they had ignored Gypsy music and musicians, who had played, and continue to play an important role in broader musical networks of the area and had been distinguished performers. In the same way they ignored musical traditions of non-Greek speaking ethnic groups, such as the *Arvanites* or the *Vlahoi* and the Macedonians.

associated with constancy and stability; the 'urban' as an area of estrangement and isolation, the 'rural' as one of collectivity and coherence. Moreover, the urban condition was seen as the realm of reason and discipline where progress was taking place, in contrast to the backward tendencies of the emotional and impulsive qualities of rural culture. In turn, rural became a symbol of a primitive and pristine state of being, opposed to the cultured and corrupted nature of urban existence. These oppositional qualities were, to a great extent, integrated into neohellenic perceptions of Greek music. In addition, they formed perceptual dualities often used to substantiate Greek evaluations of urban musical traditions. Consequently, they served to legitimate the scholarly interest in researching *dhimotiko tragoudhi* and, at the same time, to deny the recognition of urban traditions as 'authentic' Greek music.

*Mediterranean anthropology: exoticizing Greek rural culture*

More recently, anthropological research in Greece has similarly disregarded local urban cultures as fields of inquiry and has mainly conducted fieldwork in rural and remote areas in the search for traditional communities. Urban culture was associated with present day, complex societies; it was not considered as a proper, well-defined topic representative of Greek culture. Village areas were deemed as more appropriate for examining the various subjects that attracted the interests of what was then generally labeled 'Mediterranean anthropology' (see Pina-Cabral 1989).<sup>9</sup> For Herzfeld, 'the village focus of most ethnography in the area has tended to obscure the complex web of relations between local, national and international politics and

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<sup>9</sup> See J. Davies, *People of the Mediterranean* (London, 1977), J. Cole, 'Anthropology comes part-way home: community studies in Europe', *Annual Review of Anthropology* 6 (1977): 349-378, D. Gilmore, 'Anthropology of the Mediterranean area', *Annual Review of Anthropology* 11 (1985): 175-205 and D. Gilmore (ed.), *Honor and shame and the unity of the Mediterranean* (1987).

economics' (Herzfeld 1987:12). Gender studies, rituals, folk religion, kinship, property, ethics (the celebrated 'honor' and 'shame' Mediterranean values)<sup>10</sup> and particular ethnic groups (such as the nomadic Sarakatsanoi or more recently the Pomak Muslim minority) monopolized the analytical approaches of the majority of cultural anthropologists. The relevant ethnographies contributed, to a great extent, to the formulation of a standard image of Greek culture with associated beliefs, values and practices. By failing to treat the city as an area that may provide useful insights in the anthropological and, more recently, ethnomusicological research in Greek culture, the relevant ethnographies are inevitably characterized by the deliberate treatment of two main parameters: time and place.

*Perceptions of time and place in constructing the rural – urban dichotomy*

*a. Time.*

Time in the ethnographic experience of Greek culture points to the past. Often enough, ethnographies describe practices and ideas, which today are vanishing or changing in different, less 'traditional' directions. Thus, ongoing transformations usually caused by modernization, westernization or globalization processes are considered as recent phenomena unworthy of disciplinary attention and analysis. They are regarded as mere manifestations of cultural alienation that threaten the more representative and 'authentic' Greek expressions of the past – although this old-fashioned and heavily criticized term is nowadays avoided. Urban contexts had discouraged scholarly investigation, since they are commonly identified as areas *par excellence* where 'alienating' dynamics proliferate. They are thought to represent the

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<sup>10</sup> See Herzfeld (1980).

image of the ever-changing city ‘that never sleeps’, the forum of the latest cultural trends, the voice of tomorrow. In that sense, cities seem to confuse anthropologists who seek to dedicate themselves in the study of a closed, small, slowly changing community. They tend to identify intensively transforming city networks with progress; urban cultures are seen as systems that operate at a fast speed, in contrast to geographically remote settlements, which move moderately in time. The relevant perceptions could be framed in the following antithetical schemes:<sup>11</sup>

<i>Area</i>	<i>place</i>	<i>horizontal time</i>	<i>vertical time</i>
<b><u>Rural</u></b>	<b>periphery</b>	<b>Long duration</b>	<b>past</b>
<b><u>urban</u></b>	<b>centre</b>	<b>Short duration</b>	<b>present, future</b>

The urban area in traditional time perceptions of Mediterranean anthropology is identified with the present, because it is considered to be a place of rapid changes, which constantly eliminate older elements and import novel practices and ideas. Consequently, the city is recognized as a locus pregnant with future. Whatever transformations may involve Greek society at large, they are first produced and appear within the urban social space. In that sense, rural areas are considered a privileged field of research, where we may experience local culture ‘as it originally used to be’. Because change in peasant communities is thought to take place at a slower rate, they are considered as communities preserving cultural expressions,

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<sup>11</sup> The antithetical concepts framed in the table were critically revised and deconstructed by the, so-called, world economic theory (see Wallerstein 1976) supported by the political economy schools in U.S. and Britain in the 1970s. Whereas in the 1970s the broader Mediterranean anthropology abandoned the represented antithetical categories – under the impact of the criticism expressed by world economic theorists - Mediterraneanist scholars focusing on Greek culture continued to advocate these perceptual dichotomies in their studies still during the 1980s. It should be clear then that my criticism regarding the ideas of Mediterraneanism here involves the research directions of Greek anthropological studies.

which are hardly discernible – or have completely disappeared - in the city. In this vein of thought, rural areas encompass survivals of the past and may provide information and manifestations of how local culture originally was before the damage caused by imported disorientating elements. In that sense, they provide arenas for rhetorics of ‘otherness’ legitimized by the conceptual construction of an anthropological subspecialty, the so-called Mediterranean Anthropology. ‘Mediterraneanism’, a term that implies the study of an autonomous geo-cultural entity - the Mediterranean - could, after all, only substantiate its disciplinary existence by concentrating on remote and closed communities.<sup>12</sup>

*b. Place.*

This stereotypical rural/urban dichotomy expands further to spatial perceptions underpinning (the above discussed) temporal dualism. Because urban is generally identified with present and rural with past, urban areas are commonly understood as centers (we often say, in Greek ‘urban centre’, but rarely ‘rural centre’), whereas rural places are often described with the term ‘periphery’.<sup>13</sup> This involves a perception that justifies village communities as places located at a distance from a central nucleus, the city. Moreover, it suggests that the city-village relationship is asymmetric: the city functions as a transmitter, the village community, on the other hand, as a receiver, who selectively and slowly absorbs urban cultural radiation. On this basis, rural areas

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<sup>12</sup> Mediterranean anthropologists had capitalized on the ‘culture area concept’, identifying the circum-Mediterranean countries as a region that shares common cultural traits. The focus on ‘isolated’ communities is something that the titles of the relevant ethnographic texts strikingly demonstrate. For example, *Honor, Family and Patronage. A Study of Institutions and Moral Values in a Greek Mountain Community* (J. Campbell, 1964), *Gender and Power in Rural Greece* (J. Dubisch, 1986), *Portrait of a Greek Mountain Village* (J. du Boulay 1974), *The Greek Gift. Politics in a Cypriot Village* (P. Loizos, 1975), *The Poetics of Manhood: Contest and Identity in a Cretan Mountain Village* (M. Herzfeld, 1985).

<sup>13</sup> The Greek term *eparhia* (literally ‘province’) is often used with backward and conservative discriminating connotations, in contrast to the term *protevousa* (‘capital’). Because of its derogatory qualities, Greek state representatives had lately instead preferred - in formal public discourse - the term ‘periphery’ (*periferia*), which sounds less pejorative.

are not directly reflective of urban cultural change. That means that spatial distance legitimates temporal distance and that both can explain cultural difference: because villages are located in remote areas, away from the 'simmering' city, they represent, in a way, pristine cultural 'survivals'.

Hence, despite their epistemological and historical differences, both Mediterranean anthropologists studying Greece and local folklorists have romantically expected to detect in communities of mountain villages and islands, well-preserved relics of rich traditions of peasant cultures. The Greek non-urban people – as well as, other south European populations - were the closest 'exotics' to Western European scholars, who had lost, by that time (the 1970s), the privilege of accessing ex-colonial fields and were attracted to invent another 'other' in circum-Mediterranean countries (see Pina-Cabral 1989:400). Llobera had further reprobated the making of an anthropology of 'Mediterranean culture':<sup>14</sup> 'it has been largely due to the needs of Anglo-Saxon anthropological departments that the idea of the 'Mediterranean' as a culture area has been constituted' (Llobera 1986:30).

The notion of Mediterranean entity constructed by post-war anthropology had influenced ethnomusicological research orientations and, in a way, it is still apparent in contemporary musical ethnographic accounts of Mediterranean musics. It is characteristic that the International Council for Traditional Music had formed a study group dedicated to the 'anthropology and music in Mediterranean cultures'. Despite reservations expressed about the Mediterranean myth by certain members of the editorial board (Stokes 1996), the official foreword that summarizes the aims and interests of the forum declares that: 'Mediterranean, however, signifies not merely a

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<sup>14</sup> For the critics of Mediterraneanism, the so-called 'culture area complex' had also created myths that served tourist exploitation of Mediterranean countries (Herzfeld 1987:76).

geographical and historical region but also a metaphorical entity with constructed and contested boundaries, cultures and identities' (Tulia Magrini, editor).<sup>15</sup> The homogenized conceptualization of Mediterranean *music* (sing.) recently reappeared more critically elaborated in Bohlman's writings (1998). He used the term 'Mediterranean musical landscape' (1998, 1:p.1), while in his discussion on music and diasporic communities of the area argued that 'diasporas historically give the Mediterranean an ethnographic unity, and ethnographically they give the Mediterranean an historical unity' (1998, 2:p.1). However, he later appears to be more cautious in the ways he treats this 'Mediterranean music': 'we construct approaches to the music of the Mediterranean that emphasize connectedness and contradiction' (1998, 2:p.1).

The understandings of musical cultures that capitalized on the distinction between urban and rural traditions had rarely, however, questioned<sup>ed</sup> what makes a musical culture 'rural' as opposed to 'urban'? Which are the distinct features that draw a separating line between villages and cities? A more thorough comparative examination of cultural practices and ideas of traditional antithetical loci (village / city) suggests that neither is the 'rural' necessarily a cultural expression taking place exclusively in villages, nor urban cultural qualities are restricted to the city. 'Rural' and 'urban' do not concern autonomous categories, with rigid, nonnegotiable boundaries; rather, they are in constant discourse, which is substantiated within a communicational network of multiple realities. Rural interacts with urban and together they are transformed, as historically sensitive dynamics in a process that, in the end, renders the use of such generic terms meaningless.

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<sup>15</sup> Published in Music & Anthropology web site: [www.muspe.unibo.it/period/MA/](http://www.muspe.unibo.it/period/MA/).

Why then the title 'Urban ethnomusicology in the city of Thessaloniki'? First, it means doing ethnomusicological fieldwork within an urban social environment. 'Urban' does not indicate a special cultural category; it characterizes the locus of the fieldwork, the capital of Northern Greece, the city of Thessaloniki. Of course, a specific locus does not simply concern a geographical region; it is also associated with the particular people who *make* the place, their traditions and broader socio-historical dynamics. However, we should be careful in the ways we understand the overall processes that construct the urban space. It is important to realize that our definitions of rural / urban qualities are often a product of a perceptual dichotomy that implies an antithetically constructed reality. A more critical examination of the terms would reveal that neither urban nor rural cultures concern a package of homogenizing identities operating in respective spatial contexts. They are rather diverse, overlapping, complex and differential, in respect to the multi-dimensionality of the associated people. It is these inherent realities that I wish to denote by using the term 'urban'. It is then obvious that urban ethnomusicology has been a critical moment in the history of the discipline that opened new directions and analytical approaches of music cultures. As such, the investigation in Greek urban musical contexts may provide an arena of questioning and re-considering traditional perceptions and stereotypes of the nature of Greek music making.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Urban ethnomusicology as a special disciplinary field was pioneered by scholars in the US in the 1970s under the influence of relevant trends already developed in the area of urban anthropology. See, for example, the work of Alan Merriam (1960); Charles Keil, *Urban Blues*, (1966); Adelaide Reyes-Schramm, *The Role of Music in the Interaction of Black Americans and Hispanos in New York City's East Harlem*, Ph. D. Dissertation, Columbia University (1975); Ridgeway, Cecilia and John Roberts, Urban Popular Music and Interaction: a Semantic Relationship, *Ethnomusicology* 20 (2), 1976: 233-251; Bruno Nettl, *Eight Urban Musical Cultures* (1978); Reyes-Schramm, Ethnic Music, the Urban Area, and Ethnomusicology, *Ethnomusicology* 1979; Explorations in Urban Ethnomusicology: Hard Lessons from the Spectacular Ordinary, *Yearbook for Traditional Music* (14) 1982: 1-14. Also see the numerous writings of Ali Jihad Racy and Salwa El-Shawan for the urban musical culture in Cairo. Among more recent ethnomusicological accounts dealing with urban music are, for instance, John Baily, *Music of Afghanistan. Professional Musicians in the City of Herat* (1988); Ruth Finnegan, *The Hidden Musicians. Local Music in a Small English Town* (1989); Burton W. Peretti, *The Creation of Jazz, Music, Race and Culture in Urban America* (1992); Thomas Turino, *Moving Away from Silence*

A characteristic example for understanding the multiple levels of urban musical networks can be found in the structure of the weekly program of musical events in *Amareion*, an 'ethnic' bar located in the Ano Poli area of the city of Thessaloniki. Next to performances of rebetiko song, the same venue used to host neo-traditional ensembles playing *dhimotiko traghoudhi* traditions, such as Thracian, Cretan, Macedonian etc. While doing fieldwork in current rebetiko music making in Thessaloniki, I could not ignore the ways those 'other', traditionally considered as 'non-urban' musics, interact with the particular music I was studying, rebetiko song. In fact, they are active parts of the musical culture I wished to experience, so that I could not consider them as extraneous realities, but rather as one, complex entity. To what extent, does *dhimotiko traghoudhi* - a musical style associated with rural communities - remain 'rural' when it is performed in an urban context and corresponds to the expectations and aesthetics of particular urban groups? In fact, the practices of listening and appreciating *dhimotiko traghoudhi* within an urban music venue transform it to a tradition of the city. What is then generally denoted by the term 'rural', it is re-generated within the 'urban', it becomes, in a way, a 'rural-urban' expression.<sup>17</sup> At the same time, it changes what was hitherto identified as 'urban' and, eventually, both expressions engender urban culture - a changing construction defined by networks of diverse interactive traditions.

In that sense, both rural and urban features are relative and subjective concepts, since it is the individual who makes and experiences them at a given

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(1993); *Musical Aesthetics and Multiculturalism in Los Angeles*, edited by S. Loza (1994); Martin Stokes, *The Arabesk Debate* (1992); Susie Tanenbaum, *Underground Harmonies* (1995); Simon Frith, *Sound Effects. Youth Leisure and the Politics of Rock' n Roll*; Lucy Duran, *Stars and Songbirds. Mande Female Singers in Urban Music, Mali 1980-1999* (1999).

<sup>17</sup> Dawe in his discussion on current Cretan music culture refers to the ways 'rural' and 'urban' worlds 'have moved closer together, have merged, and become much less distinct' (2000:50).

historical moment. During the last decade, for example, performing ensembles in Greek music clubs have sought to incorporate musicians who play so-called 'traditional' instruments, namely instruments that were used in older times mainly in village music making. As a result, the music club stage is equipped with 'bizarre', 'unusual' (so-described to me by several customers) instruments, such as the *daouli*, (big frame drum) while the *outi* ('oud') appears lately to have replaced the electric bass that had been introduced in Greek music clubs from the 1960s onwards.<sup>18</sup> Again, in the process of musical change instruments formerly recognized as rural, or associated with music making of centuries ago, have been recently introduced to urban entertainment contexts, in order to satisfy ongoing traditionalist trends in Greek music making.<sup>19</sup> At the same time, it becomes more and more difficult to find 'rural' instruments in village musical performances – unless they are chosen deliberately to represent local musical ethos in folklore festival revivals that are officially organized. Instead, one is more likely to find in a village revelry a *kompania* of amplified *bouzoukia*, or mediated modern folk music taking place, while quite often there are performances by touring folk musicians, those disparagingly called today *skyladhes* (literally 'people of dog-dens' considered to be playing low quality music in folk music clubs today).

This combination in folk music ensembles of 'proper' urban instruments (of rebetiko and *laiko* song) together with others resurrected from the past may serve to

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<sup>18</sup> Yiannis Alexandhris, a Thessaloniki-based instrument maker and musician, argued that 'from the 1960s up to 1980-85, I think that I'm the first who restarted making ouds in Greece...Before Ross Daily come here, all these instruments, namely the *saz*, the oud, the *tambouras*...had disappeared' (personal communication).

<sup>19</sup> This trend is also related to a recently increasing interest in practicing Ottoman art music and theories suggesting the descent and evolution of Greek music out of Byzantine church music. Several musicians and musical experts today - inspired by a proliferating neo-Orthodox ideology - are engaged in professional study and practice of Ottoman art music, considered as the wider musical tradition in which local music making is embedded. (see, for instance, the work of the composer and music scholar Christos Tsiamoulis)

illustrate the interacting dynamics that shape urban musical networks. Several people I met during my fieldwork, especially of a younger age, were attracted and excited by these newly introduced 'exotic' instruments, which they generally recognized as romantic images of the 'debonair' past. In any case, the revised role of the adopted instruments played in a contemporary Greek music club ensemble re-defines their traditional identities – the 'rural' stamp – and produce novel soundscapes that formulate, in turn, a particular aesthetic environment. The re-contextualized instruments remake the musical reality and the ways we perceive, feel, and experience musical practices. Within this new cultural setting we, thus, produce new appreciations and understandings of the use, for example, of *daouli*, in Greek music club performances. Beyond a traditional rural instrument, hitherto confined to village feasts, *daouli* becomes, in a way, a paradigm of local cultural aspirations: its incorporation as an 'other' instrument in urban performances expresses neohellenic musical orientations. In fact, certain urban audiences a few decades ago would consider the appearance of a traditional instrument in a music club inappropriate, in extreme cases 'retrogressive', to express their Europhile musical taste. In contrast, today, several urban musical venues seek to employ 'traditional' instrumentalists, who bring the flavor of older musical traditions. In addition, - there is lately a growing demand in local 'ethnic' music recordings made by artists who appear in various urban venues and major concert halls. How we perceive 'rural' and 'urban' musics becomes therefore a process of a subjective modeling of stereotypes, which are sensitive to the historical and social context <sup>in which</sup> they are produced.

It is to these stereotypes that Vamvakaris, the famous rebetiko composer refers with his scornful assertion 'the hate of the urbanite for his peasant self' (Vellou-Keil

1978).<sup>20</sup> Despite the dogmatic nuances of his conviction, Vamvakaris' criticism encompasses the inherent contradiction of Greek post-war urban culture, pointing at the ways rural correlates with urban. For Vamvakaris, there are innate rural qualities in the urban individual; that means that urban is also made by rural and, consequently, urban *is* also rural.

### *Setting up fieldwork 'at home'*

The city of Thessaloniki - the broader area of my research - is the place I had lived for seven years, most of which I had spent as a student in the local university. Before then, I used to visit the city quite often, from my early childhood, since the city I was brought up, Serres, is close to Thessaloniki. For me, Thessaloniki was, in a way, the city of my dreams, where I wished to spend my student years and experience everyday life. / It is a city with a vivid art scene, musical concerts and happenings of various kinds and a colorful nightlife. It was an environment that from early on had attracted my interest. Later on, I had the chance to live there, to feel the place, make friends and gradually to become part of the local musical networks. The overall idea of the beloved city that I had formerly elaborated was further amplified by the ways I experienced it. Thessaloniki became my homeland with which I developed such close bonds that it inspired the main topic of my thesis.

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<sup>20</sup> In Greek, *to misos tou astou gia to horiati eafto tou*. Vamvakaris' assertion reminds one of Herzfeld's ideas on the village-city culture relationship: 'each claims an identity that at once incorporates and rejects the self-image of the other' (1991:24).

I returned to Thessaloniki after spending two and a half years studying ethnomusicology in London, bringing along a general proposal for a doctoral research that was designed to take place there. My main concern was to re-establish myself in the local networks, prepare and organize the fieldwork. The overall plan did not cause me any serious worries. I was not a beginner. I had done this before and, in any case, I knew several people who could help me with practicalities. In fact, the preparation of the main fieldwork was an easy-going process, mainly due to my established relationship with the place –the advantage of conducting fieldwork in a familiar area.

Setting up was further facilitated by several other privileges I enjoyed as a result of being a native researcher. First, I was a native speaker, who had studied local history and culture. Although I had to work to a greater depth on particular topics, I had overcome two basic concerns of the preparatory stage: first, the period spent in learning native language and, secondly, the general reading regarding local history and culture. I was already acquainted with the city and local people, their social values, behavioral codes and aesthetics. The fact that I was involved in the broader musicians' community and that I was also for several years a student in a local conservatory, was an additional asset in studying local musical culture and rebetiko song in particular. Consequently, I knew a few people who were related to rebetiko music making and I could easily find access to local experts. In addition, I had formerly visited places with rebetiko music and, more importantly, I was familiar with the songs, the ideology and the ways it was practiced. Besides, my relationship with rebetiko was originally established in my childhood years, through listening to rebetiko recordings in my family environment. I was acquainted with Greek music in general, I had listened to several different musics coming from various regions of the country (traditional, art and urban musics, Byzantine chant and recent musical trends)

as well as musics from neighboring countries. Finally, I had already got a general knowledge of the history of local music making, the different periods, special musical forms, prominent musicians and composers.

Under these circumstances, the initial planning and organization were rendered in an optimistic atmosphere that stimulated further fieldwork aspirations and promised a fertile research future. Soon, a few weeks after my arrival, I realized that the city I left behind two years ago had, in several aspects, changed. In fact, these changes did not happen suddenly and unexpectedly; however, as a result of the time I spent abroad, I could more clearly perceive the transformations taking place in the city.

#### *How 'home' is home?*

In 1996, Thessaloniki was voted as the Cultural Capital of Europe. This status was financially supported by EC, who sponsored several projects which aimed at restoring older buildings that were representative of local architecture, as well as excavating Byzantine ruins in order to demonstrate effectively facets of a magnificent local past civilization. An important part of these initiatives focused on the reformation of Ano Poli, a north-central neighborhood that was declared by the local authorities as a conservation area, one that retained the older physiognomy of the city.<sup>21</sup> Because Ano Poli was the area I planned to concentrate my research, I had to re-assess on this basis the research hypothesis and re-consider my investigation. While I do not intend to go

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<sup>21</sup> The Greek words officially used to describe the project are *anadheixi*, that is 'to set something off', namely 'to stress its special character', and *anaplasi* meaning here 'to recreate something and appropriate' it to the novel cityscape.

here in further details regarding the relationship of rebetiko music making with the monumentalization of the area, I bring up the discussion of changes, in order to examine a theoretical question regarding the nature of 'doing ethnomusicology at home': to what extent the 'home' area is a well-known, ethnographically secure field of research? How 'home' is home?

'Home' is a concept that denotes one's natural territory, one's place of origin. Because it is primarily associated with the family unit, it is a *familiar* area that encompasses feelings of protection and security. Home inspires a sense of safety and confidence, it is a well-known, trusted domain; within the home context major misinterpretations or misunderstandings are inconceivable. Home cannot normally be deceitful; because we feel that we know the homeland, we believe, as native researchers, that we may understand it. What do individuals sharing a common territory understand, however, as 'home' and what does 'home' communicate to them? The environment we are brought up in, our personal, innate qualities, as well as the socializing paths we followed, formulate our set of identities and ideologies. Our worldview, consequently, emerges out of individual-specific processes and the ways we create our social and cultural selves. Because our worldviews as native ethnomusicologists are special, we develop particular and selective perceptions of 'home'; 'home' is what someone lives and experiences as 'home'. 'Home' is, consequently, a *reflexive* domain that is constructed by individuals in certain coordinates determined by broader historic and cultural dynamics.

This is something I practically realized after spending a considerable time abroad. The understandings that home, in that case north-central Greece and, more specifically the city of Thessaloniki, communicated to me were sensitive to what

home *was* in a given time and *how* I experienced it. In that sense, the native locus may comprise unpredictable and changing qualities that are necessary to consider while planning a research project in the homeland. Besides, the ways we experience home are defined by a pivotal passage; from the state of living a culture to the state of living *and* researching a culture – namely of living at home as an ethnomusicologist. This implies, on another level, a passage in the ways other local people view the novel identities of the individual researcher. On one hand they usually acknowledge that the native ethnomusicologist comes from ‘our home’, is one of ‘us’. This may not necessarily inspire greater reliability; it consolidates, though, a broader forum for communication. On the other hand, the researcher is someone *beyond* them who attempts to understand the homeland culture as a scholar and, presumably in the end, to formally represent it to the outside world.

Bearing in mind the particularities determined by both research parameters, namely ‘home’ itself and the native ethnomusicologist, as well as the interaction in between them, we might re-consider the nature of ethnomusicology ‘at home’. Home may also be alien, because the homeland may enclose unknown realities, too.<sup>22</sup> Eventually, we may recognize, to certain extents, various social codes; this may not vouch for understanding them, though. We need to examine in advance, how we came to recognize certain communicational codes as such. Regardless, then, of the actual size and diversity of home society, we realize that home has ‘others’. In that sense, even fairly familiar domains, formerly experienced by the individual, may reveal alien, new faces, when living them as a researcher, too.

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<sup>22</sup> One of the early areas of inquiry, for example, of prime significance for urban ethnomusicology involved ethnic minorities in cosmopolitan cities. Native ethnomusicologists, who were also local citizens, attempted to investigate the ‘other’ at home (see Reyes Schramm fn. 16).

At this point, however, we may question the nature of the native ethnomusicologist *per se*. On a superficial level, she/he appears to have a schizophrenic physiognomy embodying a dual, apparently inconsistent scope: the inherent one, associated with being a native, and the other, the 'obtained' character, that of becoming a scholar. However controversial these qualities may appear, they are mutually integrated in the person of the native ethnographer in interactive and complementary processes. In the end, the native and the scholar are incorporated in a unified human presence; they are interweaving sets of attitudes, behaviors and perceptions that make and will be making the human researcher. In doing ethnomusicology 'at home' one cannot set aside her/his cultural background - in this case, associated with the fieldwork context - the same way a foreign ethnographer carries in the field her/his different cultural origins, too. This is an inevitable reality.

Thinking of the making of ethnography on this level may indeed generate suspicion regarding the nature of the research itself: to what extent does the wider academic community trust native ethnographers? We may formulate, however, such a doubt in reverse: to what extent do they trust non-native ethnographers? In fact, this verifying type of inquiry presupposes that there is one *unique* ethnographic truth that we seek to understand. In the sense that, ethnographies, for example, of rebetiko culture in Thessaloniki, are considered to be scientific attempts to depict cultural realities more or less successfully -that is, more or less close to the 'truth'. More important though, they are questions that, in a way, treat researchers as de-humanized ethnographic 'processors'; as if their final 'product', the understanding of culture, depends on the culture they come from and determines their study. In addition, it establishes a rationale that evaluates ethnography in a binary, native/foreign scheme that primarily implies an *en masse* categorization, a categorization suggesting that

there is a culture of origin that determines ethnographic experience and, therefore, ignores the special and complex ways culture makes the self and vice versa.

At the end, whether at home or not, there is always an 'other' –just as there are many 'homes', even away from the homeland. In a way, the educational institution I come from is another academic 'home' that, in turn, significantly defined the present discourse regarding the notion of 'home'. Does this awareness of alien realities 'at home' imply that what we call 'ethnomusicology at home' is an overstatement? In fact, the purpose of examining the nuances of the 'home' concept above was to underline the need to consider in advance our special place in the field as native ethnomusicologists. While homeland as a research context may provide several advantages - as I had outlined in advance regarding the privileged preparation of my fieldwork – it is at the same time a subjective and transforming reality. Before formulating any research hypothesis, I found it necessary, therefore, to examine these qualities with caution. Considering home as a given, invariant domain we are familiar with as native ethnomusicologists may be misleading. Besides, it is an arrogant conviction, in any case, to categorically predicate knowledge of a cultural area; in fact, what we experience are instances of the constant making of a culture, in our case a musical culture. After all, the final ethnographic text is the materialization of particular historical moments taking place in the cultural context that is represented and interpreted by a historically sensitive individual.

My purpose here is not to deny the fact that home is a promising and fruitful domain for our ethnographic insights. For those born in the field, it is hardly possible to feel the kind of worries and despair expressed, for instance, by Jane Cowan in her account on dance events happening in a small town in northern Greece:

I often returned home utterly drained, emotionally as well as physically. Some of this, of course, was the anxiety of not knowing the cultural rules. Being both foreign and female, and recognizing that dancing was about sexuality – among other things – but in a highly coded way that I did not yet understand, I worried that I might unwittingly embarrass my hosts or even precipitate more serious misunderstandings. (1990: xii)

Eventually, our conviction that homeland will not surprise us - in terms of social values and behavioral codes – strengthens our confidence and inspires a sense of self-integration in the field. We should not, however, take home for granted. As native researchers we are primarily confronted with our past selves, the ways we have lived and understood homeland before approaching it as ethnographers. Inevitably, by initiating ourselves in this fieldwork we are, at the same time, engaged in a process of self-awareness. We get to realize our place in home society, our relationship with other individuals, the ways we had shaped our worldviews. We are participating in discursive practices the same way ethnomusicologists of ‘other’ cultures do, which are perplexing and further amplified by our former relationship with the field. In that sense, Clifford’s claim that ‘every vision of the “other” is also a construction of “self”’ (Clifford and Marcus 1986:23) is additionally strengthened - in the case of the native researcher - by the range of special qualities and self-reformations generated by one’s personal history in the field. It is these special dynamics of *reflexivity* that make ethnography ‘at home’ a more culturally sensitive product. Not because it can provide a more thorough cultural analysis, but primarily because it discloses an understanding that capitalizes on a diverse experiential entirety, an entirety that incorporates - beyond reflexivity generated within ethnographic activity - a reflexivity of our own course in life, of the native cultural voices we embody.

### 9. On doing and writing ethnography

#### Theoretical frameworks

The area of ideas broadly known under the term 'reflexive ethnomusicology' concerns the main theoretical framework defining the present ethnographic account. Among the most representative writings discussing the idea of 'reflexivity' in ethnomusicological research are those published in the recent volume titled *Shadows in the Field* (Barz and Cooley 1997). My purpose here is to provide a brief outline of what reflexive ethnomusicology is and its epistemological orientations, moving to the particular ways in which it has influenced the present ethnography. To begin with, I am going to develop certain ideas that affected the organization of the thesis regarding the traditional distinction between theory and method. These are ideas, which formed the basis for my decision to avoid distinguishing hereby methodology from theory and discuss *both* under the common theoretical perspective suggested by reflexive ethnomusicology.

#### *Theory and method*

Within the tradition of organizing the actual writing up of a doctoral thesis - and more particularly that of structuring the various chapters - the present section would be typically considered as the one that amounts to 'theory'. Typically, a separate chapter aiming at presenting the 'methodology' would be expected to accompany this 'theory' chapter. This is a schema that reflexive ethnomusicology attempts to challenge and critically question. The research orientations it proposes instead feature both the

method and the theory of research activity. They are namely orientations regarding both the process of *doing* and *writing* about fieldwork. Reflexive ethnomusicologists reject the distinction between theory and method as one representing a fixed, non-negotiable relationship between outsiders - the researchers, who apply the method - and insiders - the researched, to whom the method is applied. Instead, it stresses the reordering of theory and method 'within an ontology that understands both researching and researched as potentially interchangeable and as capable of change through time, during the dialogues that typify the fieldwork experience' (Rice 1997:106).

Method and theory objectified as distinctive areas of ethnography are now considered as processes, which are in constant discourse and interaction throughout the entire ethnographic enterprise.<sup>23</sup> Theory, the abstract core of ideas, which direct the ways we view and think about things (from the Greek verb *theoro*, meaning 'look at', 'view'), exists also in method, the decisions we make while doing things, which in turn are conditioned by theories. Theory and method are, therefore, inter-connected and mutually fused; throughout the ethnographic process they coexist in a dialogue that shapes one another. Because of the very human nature of ethnographic research, the ways the researcher does fieldwork (method) embody ways of thinking and writing about it (theory) and vice versa. In this context, the theory / method distinction becomes rather a mere writing strategy, a canonical norm typically applied in ethnography. While their relationship is often far more complex than it is usually articulated in ethnographic texts, the designation of method and theory as distinct sections seems to serve, moreover, a matter of 'prestige': it helps to communicate a

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<sup>23</sup> This dialectical approach was already discussed by Gourlay in what he termed as 'ethnomusicological process' (1978:22-3).

disciplinary ethos and ascribe a serious scholarly value to the final ethnographic product.

Furthermore, the recognition of the reflexive relationship between theory and method aims at opposing the traditional ideal of ethnographic research that uses a validated research method. The appropriation of a fixed and dependable method presupposes, besides, a, more or less, concrete, *universal* model of research to be followed, a standard way of documentation, which appears to form the basic level, a pre-condition for the production of theory.<sup>24</sup> As such, it precedes the level of analyzing and shaping conclusions out of the concentrated research data. It tends, thus, to ignore the special voices the field reverberates, that may open new horizons for the ethnographer while 'being there'. Such methods, consequently, provide moulds for modeling ethnomusicological understanding that discourage individual improvisation and the invention of alternative methods emerging in the field.<sup>25</sup>

This is characteristically exemplified in methods of research inscribed in volumes concerned with 'how to do fieldwork' widely known as field manuals: they aim to dictate the proper 'steps' to be taken in designing and organizing a field trip, as well as during the research and after the completion of it. For this reason, they *prescribe* effective ways of approaching and studying a culture. Methods intend to 'show the right way' and protect the ethnographer from failures and dead-end situations by providing him with the appropriate know-how for reaching a successful ethnographic inquiry.

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<sup>24</sup> See, for example, the field manual compiled by the Society for Ethnomusicology (Post et al 1994).

<sup>25</sup> My intention here is to question the perception of research as represented in field manuals and relevant methodological writings rather than to imply that modernist ethnomusicologists have in fact followed 'universal' methods in fieldwork on the whole.

Along this line of thinking, 'informants' give and the 'researchers' take... There is little room in this dialogue for the exchange of ideas, information, or traditions in the field; true mutuality is neither a primary goal nor is it encouraged.... Manuals present field research as... a means to an end with ethnography as the goal... [Field] manuals accept experience's legitimacy only as data; being musical-in-the-world becomes reduced to recorded, "accurate" documents, documents that can be studied in the laboratory... (Barz *ibid*:207-208).

Since, however, doing fieldwork concerns primarily a situation of human encounter, field research, because of its very human nature, cannot be predictable. The conception and use of method as exemplified in field manuals largely draws upon the paradigm of science. In science, method is applied to research data as a fixed corpus of accumulated, tested knowledge, in order to guarantee effectiveness for the research project. In fact, this involves a research perception typically reified in ethnographies of the colonial ethnomusicological past that echo an ethnographer-*qua*-subject – culture-*qua*-object relationship. Postmodern ethnomusicology comes to subvert the power relations implied in this asymmetrical schema rejecting the underlying science paradigm: human culture is not considered 'as objectively observable' (Barz & Cooley 1997:16). Music is not perceived as an object to be analyzed but rather as a culture to be lived.<sup>26</sup> Any appropriation of a standard method becomes, therefore, an attempt to pre-cast our course of life in the field – that is a normative attempt of approaching and understanding a musical culture. Despite the paradox that it is itself another theory, reflexive ethnomusicology acknowledges, instead, the special qualities of subjectivity - and of subjectivities in discourse where both the researcher and the researched are involved. This makes it a 'nonmodel approach', that accepts 'the importance of human interactions and the development of relationships as the real sources of learning in the field' (Beaudry 1997:68).

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<sup>26</sup> By 'lived' I mean the way postmodern reflexive ethnomusicology has emphasized the ontological approach to the study and writing of music culture (see section *Fieldwork as 'Special Ontology'*).

It is this rejection of the objectivistic model proposed by the science paradigm that introduces a heightened interest in the dynamics of *reflexivity* in contemporary ethnomusicological research. For Cooley (1997:17) 'ethnographers attempt reflexively to understand their positions in the culture being studied and to represent these positions in ethnographies'. While an objective ethnography aims at understanding 'others', reflexive ethnography acknowledges the mutual, inter-subjective relationship between the ethnographer and the 'others'. In this context, the ethnomusicologist is no longer 'missing' (Gourlay 1978:3); her/his physical presence becomes part of the interpretative process. Living with others promotes constantly an interactive self-understanding, which becomes a vehicle for knowing 'others', too.

Since the main forum for the making of this interactive knowledge is the field, *experience* of the music culture and the ways it is shaped, gains a primary significance for reflexive ethnomusicologists. This focus on experience and subjectivity is not, however, a monopoly or a novelty of contemporary ethnomusicological theory. It features the broader postmodern 'new ethnography', and has already been broadly discussed in the area of anthropology.<sup>27</sup> It has been described as 'total' experience (Okely 2000:1), namely an experience that demands the activation of all researcher's senses, intellectual, emotional, physical and intuitive. On this basis, then, reflexive ethnomusicology is mainly concerned with music culture as a 'lived experience' (Titon 1997:87). Consequently, fieldwork is seen as something performed rather than

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<sup>27</sup> For anthropological writings that preceded and inspired current ethnomusicological theory, see, for example, Myerhoff & Ruby, *A Crack in the Mirror: Reflexive Perspectives in Anthropology* (1982); Clifford & Marcus (1986); R. Bernstein, *Beyond Objectivism and Relativism: Science, Hermeneutics and Practice* (1983); P. Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice* (1977); Turner & Bruner, *The Anthropology of Experience* (1987); G. Stocking, *Observers Observed: Essays on Ethnographic Fieldwork* (1983); C. Geertz, *Local Knowledge* (1983); G. Marcus & M. Fischer, *Anthropology as Cultural Critique* (1986).

a mere initiation into a communication with an 'other' culture. Since fieldwork is a performance, writing about it – that is composing an ethnography – is understood, thus, as a 'meta-performance' (Kisliuk 1997:33).<sup>28</sup>

*Fieldwork as a 'special ontology'*

The ideas introduced by reflexive ethnomusicologists led to re-considerations of the definition and scopes of ethnomusicology articulated as 'the study of people making / experiencing music' (Tito 1997:91) or 'life-experience understanding in ethnomusicology' (Rice 1997:106). Seen as such, ethnomusicological research promotes the turn away from sorted, set theories towards a, so-called, 'polyphonic theory' (Rice *ibid*:104). Theoretical polyphony does not pretend to deny that, at the end, it is the ethnographer's voice that interprets a music culture. It encourages, however, the ethnographer to avoid muting the different, juxtaposed worldviews enacted in the field; these are the worldviews of the human beings brought together 'there' (in the field) which, this way, are given voices and presence in the poetics of cultural knowledge.

Underlining experience should not be confused, however, with a return to empiricism, where experience, and more specifically, objective experience, functions as the unfailing proof of truth. Reflexive ethnomusicology lays stress upon experience not as something that is objectively captured by the senses – namely as something once evidenced, its existence is indisputable and can be witnessed by anyone else visiting the field, too. The experience 'new' ethnographers are preoccupied with,

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<sup>28</sup> See also Fabian's ideas distinguishing informative from performative ethnography (Fabian 1983).

refers to, beyond anything literally seen and heard, also felt, touched, imagined, thought, desired and intuitively sensed. More particular, 'new' ethnomusicologists are interested in describing and mediating the ways bodily, intellectual and psychological experiences are reciprocally made within the encounter with others and become vehicles of knowing and interpreting a music culture.

Describing, therefore, field experience does not serve as a documentation of cultural truth. Rather than a 'mimesis' (Tyler 1986:130), a realistic copy of cultural reality, it becomes a means for constructing ethnographically the 'allegory' (Clifford *ibid*:98) of it.<sup>29</sup> The truths that ethnographies are supposed to represent are thought to be 'inherently partial' (Clifford 1986:7). They are representations 'fashioned' by the ethnographer, who decides what to silence, highlight, exclude or undermine in 'writing culture'. In that sense, the description of experience renders ethnographic texts to 'fictions in the sense of something made' (Clifford 1986:6). Like an author of a fiction, the ethnographer is transformed, then, to 'a messenger', who 'like a little Hermes...may obtain his message through stealth' (Crapanzano 1986:51).

This recognition of the partiality of truth in contemporary ethnographic theory matured within the broader context of postmodern thinking. The decline in the confidence expressed towards the instrumental rationality of modernity promoted the emphasis on the subjective, relevant and reflexive qualities of fieldwork. It is this postmodern notion of research experience that paved the way for a re-conceptualization of ethnomusicological fieldwork as a 'special ontology' (Titon

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<sup>29</sup> For the perception of ethnography as allegory, see, for example, Michael Taussig, 'History as sorcery', *Representations*, Vol. 7, 1984, pp. 87-109. 'Allegorical anthropology' suggests that cultural accounts are extended metaphors, stories, which additionally refer and teach about other ideas by means of the narratives expressed.

1997:94). For Titon, this 'special ontology' refers to what he calls 'musical being', where musical knowing, that is knowing how people make music, is grounded:

I am in the world musically...I have a musical way of 'being in the world'...I call this 'musical being' and it is a mode of being that presents itself as different from my normal, everyday modes of experiencing, from my self-conscious modes of experiencing, and from my objectivizing modes of experiencing...(ibid.)

In fact, this musical way of 'being-in-the-world' is an impact of philosophical ideas developed in the area of hermeneutic phenomenology and the broader tradition of phenomenology. In the light of phenomenological theory, music culture may be considered as an assemblage of phenomena and should be understood as it presents itself to consciousness.<sup>30</sup> 'Being-in-the-world' refers to the condition of the ego, the subject, before 'being thrown' into cultural works.<sup>31</sup> The understanding of cultural works, in this case of the music culture, transforms the ego to a self. The transition from the state of 'being-in-the-world' to selfhood is made through 'hermeneutic arcs' of experiencing, understanding and interpreting the musical world in question. The pre-understandings and pre-conceptions we already embody prior to understanding the world, condition the emergent understandings of the world we produce while acting in the world. Speaking of music, the pre-understandings we carry define the musical understandings we seek to reach in the encounter with a musical culture. It is within this encounter that the 'being' returns to the self and it is, thus, represented to consciousness. This is actually a process of reflexive self-awareness happening in the experience of music, namely an ontological transformation that is seen as a vehicle that brings the self into knowing music.

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<sup>30</sup> Under the impact of ideas mainly expressed by Martin Heidegger in *Being and Time* (1978), Hans Georg Gadamer in *Truth and Method* (1975) and Paul Ricoeur in *Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences* (1981).

<sup>31</sup> As expressed by Paul Ricoeur in *Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences* (1981:192-3; reprinted in Barz and Cooley 1997:114).

Being musical-in-the-world, therefore, moves beyond the hermeneutical premises that view culture, in our case music culture, as a text to be interpreted.<sup>32</sup> The ontological nature reflexive ethnomusicologists identify in fieldwork experience suggests instead that 'the world is not like a text to be read but like a musical performance to be experienced' (Titon 1997:91).

Furthermore, this 'musical being' conditioning experience of the musical world points to new perceptions of the nature of the native researcher. Since 'musical being' is not exclusively a condition featuring ethnomusicological practices, inevitably, indigenous ethnographers already incorporate a capital of cultural experience: they have already 'been musically-in-the-world' and have 'been thrown' into the cultural area, before doing fieldwork. The field is, to a certain extent, also one of the places they were constituted ontologically and culturally, a forum where they have 'made' themselves before. Doing fieldwork 'at home' invites them to negotiate with the cultural knowledge they embody. In that sense, side by side with the intersubjective understanding of 'others', the native ethnographer is immersed - consciously, as well as, automatically - in an intra-dialogue with the self as a cultural 'other'. The special qualities of the course this esoteric cultural knowing follows are crucial in shaping mutually the researcher's course in the field happening simultaneously. Because they decisively define and re-define the native researcher, they form the essence of the special dynamics of reflexivity empowered in knowing people making music 'at home'.

The stress, however, upon the rhetorics of self and personal experience should not be misconstrued as a tendency towards 'self-confessional' or 'self-indulgent'

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<sup>32</sup> See, for example, Geertz (1973). Geertz likens culture to an 'assemblage of texts' to be interpreted.

ethnographic accounts. Writing reflexively should not be confused with writing autobiographically. It is the musical culture that the description of total experience primarily aims to portray, not the self *apropos* music. Although the ethnographer is present as author, the inclusion of 'I' in the ethnographic text serves to illuminate the process of gaining this knowledge; it is a decision to write about, and thus invite the reader to share, the poetics and politics of ethnography.

## **The ethnography in Ano Poli**

What is the impact of the theoretical ideas developed in the area of reflexive ethnomusicology on the present ethnography? The purpose of the following section is to illustrate the ways I worked as an ethnographer in the field and gained knowledge of the musical culture in the process of practicing ethnography. Moreover, this chapter is intended to discuss the poetics of representing field experience, namely the paths I decided to follow as an ethnographer-author endeavouring to communicate this experience textually to the reader.

### *On recording tools*

When I started my fieldwork, I needed to think about the ways I was going to record and store the field 'data', namely my experiences in the field. As I was mainly interested in contemporary musical performances of rebetiko music, the ideal technical equipment, that would enable the synchronic audio-visual recording of a musical happening would, undoubtedly, be a camcorder. My earlier initiation to using the camcorder as a research tool during my postgraduate studies had convinced me in practice that this was the most suitable and effective tool for 'storing' and representing what was going on in the research field.<sup>1</sup> I hoped to use it extensively for my doctoral research project, too.

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<sup>1</sup> My rudiments in the use of camcorder as a recording tool were inspired and amplified - from an early stage of my studies - by the enthusiasm and dedication in ethnographic film making of my teacher and supervisor, Dr. John Baily. As a result, I bought a compact VHS camcorder to use during short fieldwork projects.

Apart from the camcorder, I decided to use an analogue tape recorder to record discussions with musicians and participants of the events, keep a fieldwork diary (typed in my PC) and, moreover, use a notebook while doing research. There was something, however, which I failed beforehand to anticipate: whether, to what extent and how I was going to use these recording techniques. In fact, after a couple of months in the field, I realized that the field itself was suggesting the particular ways I would apply these research tools.

During my first visits in café *Amareion* and other rebetiko venues I deliberately avoided using any recording device. My prime concern was to familiarize myself with the musicians and the patrons. Standing behind a camcorder from the very beginning would automatically transform me, in the eyes of the people in the performance context, to an observer shooting some 'bizarre' happening. Most likely it would affect the responses and attitudes of people attending the musical events. Inevitably, this would create a social distance between the people in the field and myself and develop an outsider-insider relationship that would hinder my initiation in the music-making context. First, I needed to establish somehow myself, meet the musicians, get acquainted with the 'climate' of Sunday rebetiko afternoons; I needed, namely, to live somehow the field before starting documenting it.

After a few visits, I decided to discuss with Haris, the *bouzouki* player and one of the owners of *Amareion* venue, the possibility of using a camcorder in the café. 'Where will you stand?' he asked. 'I need to shoot the music making and the audience. I might need to change positions...' I tried to explain. He seemed skeptical. 'It would harm the atmosphere' he argued, and avoided further discussion. Having

visited the venue a few times, I could see that his worries were reasonable. *Amareion* was a small place frequented by a community of patrons and adherents of rebetiko afternoons. Haris was worried that taking a video of the musicians and the people would disrupt the entire happening.<sup>2</sup> Some time later I asked his permission again. I managed to persuade him to allow me to use the camcorder for approximately half an hour. Under Haris' conditions, I had to remain at the far corner, behind the bar, without moving around.

The next Sunday, I was there with my compact VHS camcorder. When the program started, I began to shoot discreetly as possible, standing remotely, almost hidden behind the bar. Suddenly, after playing a couple of songs the musicians stopped performing. Ourania, the female singer, and Haris left the stage for a while and had a murmured argument at the other end of the bar. I got worried. She looked furious. Then, Haris came to my side. 'I hope you don't mind. Ourania can't go on with this,' he said, pointing his finger at the camcorder with an almost disdainful gesture.

A couple of days later I talked to Ourania. I gave her a VHS copy of the six-seven minutes I managed to record and thanked her. She seemed to appreciate my gesture. However, she remained categorically negative. 'I can't! It is not natural...it doesn't go with rebetiko...What about the people? What are they going to think?' Regardless of my attempts to reassure her that I was going to use the tapes only for research purposes and that I would try to respect the performance atmosphere at any rate, she insisted on ignoring my request. 'Let me take at least some photos!' I said.

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<sup>2</sup> It is worth noting that the rebetiko performances in café *Amareion* were never video-recorded in the past. I have not witnessed any video-shooting taking place in rebetiko *tavernes* either.

'It makes no difference!' she refused, raising her eyebrows obstinately. I was distressed. I preferred not to push the situation further and possibly damage my relationship with her. Upsetting her would possibly trouble the research project, too. Since taking a video of the performance was seen as an 'anti-rebetiko' action, namely as a practice that opposes rebetiko ethics and values, I could not ignore people's requests.<sup>3</sup> I had to contrive alternative ways of keeping fieldwork records. The only recording tool I could use in *Amareion* was a tape recorder, together with a small notebook.

Soon, despite my initial disappointment, I managed to find a suitable way of keeping records. I used the tape recorder throughout my visits in rebetiko events and the discussions I had with people, while in my notebook I used to keep whatever remarks, thoughts, or anything I regarded as noteworthy. During the conversations I held with musicians and participants I avoided using any questionnaires or predetermined lists of questions. Although there were certain things I needed to know or clarify, I used to allow the discussion to unfold easily within the general framework of my inquiry. After all, I was primarily interested in exploring the individual worlds of ideas defining contemporary rebetiko experience. This way, specific topics were raised in the natural flow of a dialogue without causing major divergencies or destroying the course of narratives. During the first visits, I wished to avoid 'coloring' beforehand the ways personal narratives were performed with my own hypotheses and interpretations. Later on, and mostly towards the end of my research activity, when I felt myself to be maturing in the field, my inquiry became increasingly

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<sup>3</sup> People seemed unwilling to be video-recorded in other small-scale venues where I conducted fieldwork, too. In the *Bekris' taverna*, the keeper of the place commented humorously: 'For what do you need this Japanese devilish-thing?' (meaning the camcorder).

interactive and this has considerably affected the ways my ethnographic knowledge was formulated.

Apart from the tape-recorded soundscapes and conversations, I used to type a document with a thick description of the events straight after my visits in *Amareion* or any other research occasion. In this fieldwork diary, I used to keep a record of the musicians' attitudes and expressions, the practices and behavior of the participants, my impressions, thoughts, questions or early theoretical concerns - anything the event inspired with respect to my research interests.

This way, I accommodated to the particularities of the field without any further attempt to force my initial claims and ignore personal requirements. The alternative recording tools I had to contrive seemed to work. Instead of fighting to satisfy my original research aspirations and impose recording methods I was taught to apply, I decided to listen to the special voices of the field and its human actors. After all, I was interested in the ways people understand and experience rebetiko in Ano Poli venues. I was not 'there' to make clear recordings of songs to be transcribed, accurate descriptions of instruments and playing techniques and meticulous documentations of certain rebetiko related dances and habits. It was the human communication happening in rebetiko places, as well as the meanings and perceptions of rebetiko music shaped within these cultural contexts, that I was mainly interested in. To that extent, the most important recording device I needed to improve were my senses; to know and interpret what was happening presupposed, more than anything else, to 'open up' myself and 'receive' this part of the world and the experience of 'being there'.

### *The poetics of ethnography*

'Receiving' the world of the field, then, moves beyond the recording of soundscapes and conversations, the thick descriptions of various musical and social situations and the detection of anyone or anything that might provide useful information for the research project. In the end, the overall experience of 'being there' becomes a capital of memories. In the case of my research in Ano Poli, I considered these memories as the outcome of the ways I myself lived the rebetiko musical world by visiting places, experiencing music making, meeting people, making friends. Because they are memories, they concern selective and subjective storages of sounds, pictures, colors, words, sentiments, flavors, dispositions, as well as the various reflections and understandings of them. Eventually, this bank of experiences defines what I perceive as the 'field'. This way, the concept of 'field' finally transcends the notion of a specific geographical area – in this case the region of Ano Poli in the city of Thessaloniki – or that of a particular musical genre – namely rebetiko song. It is developed into an idea, an abstract core of knowledge that embodies the total lived ethnographic experience.

In fact, such an understanding of the 'field' suggests that no one field can be identical to another. Even in the case when two ethnographers are committed to a fieldwork in the same area and explore the same musical events, the field remains an individual, subjective construction. As a conceptual outcome of the research experience, the field develops its own personality, temperament and individuality; it is unique. It is this personification of the field that suggests the 'non-model' approach, namely an approach that acknowledges it primarily as a subjectively defined nexus of

human interplay. Because the field acquires its own personality, the process of doing ethnography invites the author to a dialogue: not only are we working in the field, but the field is also working in us.

This is something I realized from the early stages of my ethnographic research (and I discuss somewhat in detail in the following chapter, *In the field*). What I came to define as the specific area of my exploration – rebetiko performances in various venues of Ano Poli – was actually a product of my preliminary research experience. Overall, the orientations and directions the ethnography was taking in the course of fieldwork were guided by the ways my interests and chain of inquiries were gradually shaped while living ‘there’. Beyond any initial plan, what I was ‘doing’ as an ethnographer was constantly informed and conditioned by the already accommodated experiences of doing ethnography. More important, together with this ongoing shaping of my interests and research focuses, there was constant – yet often elusive – change happening in the culture on which I was conducting this research. As I was moving through space and time, my horizons were changing; at the same time, the musical world where I was moving was traveling in space and time, too. As Clifford argued:

‘Cultures’ do not hold still for their pictures. Attempts to make them do so always involve simplification and exclusion, selection of a temporal focus, the construction of a particular self-other relationship and the imposition or negotiation of a power relationship (Clifford 1986:10).

While I was writing this ethnography my main concern was how to invite the reader to share the reflexive dynamics of the research experience. Ethnography is thought traditionally to be a textual product, a book, and I was invited to perform the art of writing in order to express my ideas and knowledge – rather than dancing or

composing a song about it. At the time I decided to start writing the first drafts I had already gathered a certain amount of recorded tapes and fieldnotes and studied various ethnomusicological, anthropological, historical and rebetological articles and books. Of course, it would be impossible to represent textually everything I had lived during several months of fieldwork. Instead, I had to make a reduction, something I regarded as a process of editing – in film making terms. As in the process of film editing, I needed to decide what to include and highlight and what to exclude and overlook and find the most communicative and expressive writing mode that would effectively transmit my experience.

### *The three case studies*

[In film editing] one tries putting the beginning at the end, and the end at the beginning. Certain scenes emerge as particularly dynamic; they are hard to get in place and are moved around a lot in the course of editing. They create problems but also suggest new avenues to explore. Whole scenes are dropped, reinserted, dropped again [...] In the editing process one builds up a delicate web of internal cross-references, part of the underlying structure of the film (Baily 1989:15).

The ‘fine cut’ of the editing process has resulted in the present ethnography, which consists of three case studies, each of them representing a particular rebetiko performance context: (a) a so-called ‘ethnic’ bar (*Amareion*), (b) a traditional *taverna* (*Bekris*), and (c) a rebetiko *ghlendi* (‘revelry’, ‘merry making’) taking place in a café (*Kath’ Odhon*). All three venues are located in a north central area of the city, Ano Poli, which has been declared by state authorities as a ‘conservation’ area, because it maintains the urban physiognomy of the past. The decision to represent contemporary rebetiko culture in Ano Poli via three particular case studies was considerably shaped

by my slowly developing understandings of the ideology, aesthetics and cultural meanings associated with the rebetiko revival in Greek society today. One of the three performance contexts, the *Amareion* 'ethnic' bar, became the central case study and occupies greater length in comparison to the other two – the *Bekris' taverna* and the *Kath' Odhon ghlendi* – which here function as peripheral rebetiko contexts and are, therefore, less thoroughly discussed. It was the character of the venue that drove me to this decision: rebetiko performances staged in an 'ethnic' bar, a place where other 'ethnic' musics are also performed – from Thracian traditional to Arab 'art' music – are a recent development in the local rebetiko musical scene. Consequently, I considered the ethnography of such a performance context – the *Amareion* 'ethnic' bar - as a suitable 'allegory' for expressing cultural realities associated with the second rebetiko revival. The experience of rebetiko culture in *Amareion*, then, became the prime ethnographic paradigm – namely the central case study that could effectively communicate the cultural disclosures of the current rebetiko revivalist era.

The three ethnographic case studies are not independent; rather they form a network of contemporary rebetiko realities. Although they are differentiated, at the same time, they interact: their differences both dissociate them and align the three of them. The realization of these special dynamics of interaction has formed my decision to discuss the rebetiko performances in *Bekris' taverna* and the revelry in *Kath' Odhon* café as case studies peripheral to that of the *Amareion* 'ethnic' bar. The link uniting the three performing contexts was primarily the musicians forming the *kompania* of *Amareion* and the relationship I developed with them.

In the end, the three rebetiko contexts are inter-connected and mutually define one another via certain human actors moving in-between them. These human actors, Mitsos, Ourania and Haris - the three musicians performing in *Amareion* - became in a way the protagonists of the overall ethnographic narrative. Beyond mere actors primarily associated with the 'ethnic' bar musical culture, they also provided the link between the three - apparently distinct - rebetiko venues. For example, the 'ethnic' bar rebetiko context connects with that of the *taverna* via the guitar player of the *Amareion kompania*, Mitsos, who is related to the rebetiko performing band there, as well as certain patrons of the 'ethnic' bar, who also frequent the *Bekris* venue. Mitsos invited me to visit the *taverna*; this way, I shared the *taverna* fieldwork experience together with a musician personifying for me a particular field, that of *Amareion*. In the *Bekris' taverna* we met the musicians who organized the revelry in *Kath' Odhon* café, who were also friends of Mitsos and the other musicians of both the *Amareion* and the *Bekris' kompanies*. Unless I had met Mitsos, I would have probably missed this specially organized revelry. Finally, the people with whom I happened to share the same table during the revelry in the *Kath' Odhon* café were the rebetiko musicians performing in *Amareion* ethnic bar.

The interconnections between the three case studies also emerged in the area of musical performance. For example, Mitsos, the guitarist of the *Amareion kompania* spontaneously played together with the musicians of the *Bekris' taverna*, while Ourania, the *Amareion* female singer, was invited to sing during the *Kath' Odhon* revelry. This way, the relationship I developed with the persons I regard here as protagonists of this ethnography had decisively propelled the interplay among the particular contexts - an interplay constituted by human relations happening in

contemporary rebetiko culture in Ano Poli. Although apparently immovable, well-defined and fixed structures, the three places move and meet each other in the bodies of the people who define them.

Consequently, despite their differences, the ways the three performance contexts are interrelated form a cultural network that gradually unfolds during the overall course of the fieldwork. The human links acting in-between the three of them connect the three venues through their physical presence, their attitudes, narratives and practices. Because they move from one rebetiko context to another, these attitudes, narratives and practices are variously performed in a dialogue with each particular cultural context. In this dialogue, the ethnographic protagonists carry together the ways their attitudes, narratives and practices were performed in other contexts, too. This way, they are rendered to *media* enacting and fusing one way of rebetiko-being-in-the-world into another. At the end, all three case studies represented in this ethnography constitute one broader rebetiko world. Within this diverse world, there are rebetiko worldviews moving in-between the three venues and worldviews defining the particularities of each one of them; it is a world made of diverse worlds.

Eventually, the present ethnography becomes a multi-layered, reflexive arena of rebetiko cultural poetics. To that extent, my decision to describe the dynamics of connection and differentiation next to commonalities and irregularities coexisting in the overall rebetiko world of Ano Poli aims at re-addressing the traditional politics of ethnographic representation. Unlike traditional ethnographies of music cultures - where contradiction is treated as an exception unworthy of the ethnographer's attention as a valuable source of cultural meanings - I attempted to avoid interpreting

rebetiko cultural reality here as a homogenous locus of ideas and aesthetics. The rebetiko world is rather understood here as a dynamic construction of diverse realities: it can be happening in different ways and embody diverse worldviews and histories. It is a world of coherence and a world of discontinuity - of consonance and of dissonance. It is a world – an ethnographic world - that ‘accepts contradiction as an aspect of reality itself’ (Gourlay 1978:23).

These understandings of rebetiko music culture today have strengthened my decision to discuss the *Bekris’ taverna* and the *Kath’ Odhon* revelry as peripheral case studies. *Bekris* is considered as an ‘authentic’ rebetiko *taverna*; unlike the *Amareion* ‘ethnic’ bar, *Bekris* represents a traditional type of rebetiko venue, a type of rebetiko entertainment that has existed at least since the 1940s.<sup>4</sup> These ‘old style’ *taverna* rebetiko performances were revived and became a fashionable form of entertainment during the first rebetiko revivalist era of the 1960s.<sup>5</sup> Rebetiko *ghlendi* also used to be an old form of entertainment occasionally organized in a ‘hangout’ (*steki*) or a coffee shop, or earlier on - at least from the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and during the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century - in a *tekes* (‘hashish den’). Both types of rebetiko performance contexts - the *taverna* and the *ghlendi* - are, consequently, traditional, and may exist in various ways today in Ano Poli next to the recently developed ‘ethnic’ bar kind of venue, which is a product of the second rebetiko revival. Within the context of this second revival these traditional rebetiko loci are re-defined and reverberate in their own ways the meanings of contemporary rebetiko culture. Because they represent alternative ways of ‘rebetiko being’ - next to the ‘ethnic’ bar venue – doing research

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<sup>4</sup> See chapter 4, section 1920 – 1936.

<sup>5</sup> See chapter 6.

in these contexts enhanced the overall understanding and expanded the horizons of knowing rebetiko culture in Ano Poli today.

*Writing rebetiko: strategies of ethnographic representation*

Having decided upon an overall strategy for writing this ethnography, I moved to a more detailed planning of the ways I was going to represent the three case studies. I had to decide about the strategies I was going to follow in ethnographic representation of the three different venues: what I was going to write about and how. Since it was impossible to textualize everything I had experienced in these venues over several months of fieldwork, I continued the process of 'editing'. The final written ethnography is, in fact, a series of 'shots' - namely various lived musical occasions and situations - of the ethnographer's intensified life in the field. Regardless of whether they may sequence directly or not in 'real' ethnographic time - namely in the actual time of fieldwork - these various lived experiences constitute here a written collage of interrelated musical events and social occasions.

In that sense, these shots of the total ethnographic experience concern purposefully made selections that animate textually aspects of living the rebetiko revivalist culture of Ano Poli. In that sense, the search for the appropriate writing mode was a process of experimentation. Beyond providing a thick description of what happened, I needed to contrive the suitable strategies that could communicate the ways I developed the understandings and interpretations of what happened. My aim, therefore, was to illuminate the reflexive dynamics of fieldwork and re-perform the

field experience in text. This demanded a multi-subjective representation, where next to the voice of the author, the reader could also hear the voices of the people the author encountered. In this way, it demanded a representation in the form of dialogic narrative that would invite the reader to share the negotiation of cultural, musical and individual realities happening in the field.<sup>6</sup>

In fact, this ethnography is not about rebetiko music. I was not interested in musicological analysis of rebetiko songs and theorizing about the various scales used, the instruments and playing techniques. This ethnography is about the human encounters happening in various rebetiko musical events. These human encounters *make* contemporary rebetiko culture in Ano Poli, by bringing together different ideologies, aesthetics and worldviews. It is an ethnography about the intersection of different life courses unfolding in rebetiko venues; about individual ‘roads to rebetiko’ (to paraphrase Holst’s book title, 1975) revealed in the course of the ethnographer’s own road to rebetiko knowledge.

Consequently, my main concern was to understand contemporary rebetiko revival through the ways people perceive, think about, behave, feel, practice and imagine rebetiko song in certain venues. For this reason, next to ethnographic representations of musical events, I decided to discuss extra-musical situations, such

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<sup>6</sup> These strategies of ethnographic representation recall Baily’s discussion of the National Film and Television School filmmaking style (1989): the fictitious nature of ethnographic representation, the narrative form, the reflexive qualities of the ethnographic process, the manipulation of time and the construction of a seemingly coherent sequence, the rendering of conversations and the use of native rhetorics, the avoidance of an authoritarian approach. Baily suggests an understanding of the film as ‘the creation of the ethnographer, a highly-personalized, non-objective, non-scientific account of other people’s lives’ (ibid.:16). MacDougall has also promoted the values of reflexive representation, the juxtaposition of ethnographic voices and the polyphonic construction of ethnography. For MacDougall, ethnography likewise films involves a ‘crossing of cultural perspectives’ and ‘a way of creating the circumstances in which new knowledge can take us by surprise’ (1998:163) that ‘can never be wholly the maker’s fabrication’ (ibid.:158).

as, for example, a dinner party at Haris' (the *bouzouki* player of *Amareion* venue) place, or a free discussion while listening to Ourania's (the singer of *Amareion*) newly bought CDs. Within these situations I try to illuminate the ways humans perform their practices and narratives *via* rebetiko and *apropos* rebetiko song. Some of the stories recounted here, by talking about rebetiko, reveal at the same time aspects of the individual's worldview. And while other stories inspired within rebetiko soundscape are apparently extra-musical, on a different level, they talk about the contemporary rebetiko musicians' and patrons' aesthetic orientations and ideologies.

In this context, the present ethnography discusses occasions of distress and enjoyment, of misunderstanding and satisfaction, failure and success – occasions that variously defined the overall ethos of the lived research experience in Ano Poli. They were occasions that determined variously the qualities of the reflexive relationship with the people in the field and the paths my ethnographic inquiry and knowledge had followed. To that extent, my experiments in writing ethnography led me to include in the ethnographic narrative events which may be strictly regarded as extra-rebetiko events. This is the case of the representation of the experience of the *Loxandra café-aman* music ensemble's performance on a Saturday evening in *Amareion*. The links to this event were both some of the patrons of the rebetiko performances and, more important, the singer of the *Amareion kompania* who performed with the *Loxandra* ensemble. Although a non-rebetiko music making occasion, the description of what happened that evening speaks allegorically of broader concepts that define the nature and ideology of the revivalist performances staged in an 'ethnic' bar, represented here by the *Amareion* venue in Ano Poli.

Finally, a dialogically edited ethnography calls for the illumination of the ethnographer's personal dialogue of thoughts, dilemmas, emotional reactions, questions, plans and concerns – the totality of reflections also recounted in the fieldnotes. Because my main concern as an author was to represent the ways I shaped my ethnomusicological interpretations, I decided to include parts of these early, immature reflections in the final ethnographic narrative. This way, I hoped to inform the reader about the process of translating field experience to text and the gradual making of ethnographic knowledge:

With fieldnotes acting as such a fluid and malleable intermediary point, boundaries between experience and interpretation become less distinct, allowing ethnography to become more directly linked to experience, and field research to become an integral part of interpretation (Barz 1997:49).

## **Introducing the ethnography: a study guide**

The final ethnographic narrative - that is the following chapter titled 'In the field' - consists of four parts: one introductory (*preface*) and three parts referring to each one of the three case studies respectively.

### *The preface*

In the introductory part I discuss briefly my personal relationship with rebetiko song as a native researcher, the setting up of fieldwork and the character of Ano Poli as the area where this fieldwork was conducted. More specifically, the fact that 'I knew the music before studying it' (see *Preface* section) is considered as a pre-ethnographic relationship with rebetiko song that aims to portray the author in a rite of passage; from that of being native to that of being both native and ethnographer. Because it is a passage, it involves a change, which coalesces both conditions: one core of identities embodies and is constantly re-embodied within the other and this dynamic fusion defines the special ontology of being a native ethnographer.

In the introductory section I also discuss the ways the early experience of the broader research area decisively stimulated the final process regarding the definition of the field. This part of ethnographic narrative (see *Defining the field* section) aims at revealing the opening phase of the research, the shaping of initial questions and areas of inquiries, the deliberate selections and exclusions that took place in the preliminary 'making' of the field. To that extent, I refer to the ways the people I met reacted to the

research topic – contemporary rebetiko culture in Ano Poli. The relevant narratives (see *I'm looking for rebetiko places* section) reverberate local popular perceptions of what ethnomusicology is, as well as mainstream evaluations of the academic study of rebetiko music and its place in the study of Greek musical tradition. Finally, the represented narratives introduce the main ethnographic representation through emphasizing a paradox: that although rebetiko is broadly considered as a 'dead' music, at the same people acknowledge that they listen, dance and sing rebetiko song today. It is a paradox that, by touching upon the concept of 'authenticity' in rebetiko song, it basically defines the culture and ideology of contemporary rebetiko revival: it is a dead music still in practice, a music of the past given life today, namely a revived music.

The preface concludes with a brief discussion of the reasons that led me to concentrate my research on the Ano Poli area of Thessaloniki. In advance, I attempt to portray the character of the Ladhadhika area an equally important contemporary rebetiko locus in the city. Here, I am mainly interested in illuminating the role of state cultural politics in, so-called, 'preserving' particular urban regions (see *Why Ano Poli?* section), which are transformed into monuments that exhibit the history and architectural traditions of the city. The music that is considered as most appropriate to 'orchestrate' the cultural tradition displayed in these 'conservation' areas is rebetiko song, usually performed in local *tavernes* and restaurants. On this basis, I refer to the musical, historical and cultural particularities that make Ano Poli an ideal landscape for studying rebetiko revival.

a. *The rebetiko culture in Amareion 'ethnic' bar.*

The representation of the main ethnography follows a deductive movement: having portrayed the outer cultural space, namely the area of Ano Poli, the reader is gradually led to the core of the music-making context. In advance, the description of a poster that advertises the weekly program of the concerts staged in the 'ethnic' bar venue predisposes the reader about the musical culture represented by the first case study. This way, the rhetorics and aesthetics displayed in the poster serve as a preamble to the *Amareion* ethnographic scene and introduce perceptions of rebetiko as 'music of the world' within the overall rationale of musical entertainment organized in the *Amareion* venue. The discussion generated *apropos* the advertising poster becomes finally a 'thread' that leads to the person behind the overall rationale of organizing this 'ethnic' musical entertainment: the *bouzouki* player of the *Amareion kompania* and one of the owners of the place, Haris Drizos.

Moving inside *Amareion*, I attempt to represent my first visit, namely how I established myself as ethnographer, and the musicians' initial response. This way, I introduce the musician-protagonists of my ethnographic narrative by writing about my initial impressions stimulated by their narratives and attitudes during the early stages of my relationship with them. Establishing this relationship was not always an easy task; such was the case of my encounter with the singer Ourania (see *Ourania and I* section). The representation of the gradual process of becoming a 'familiar face' also encodes aspects of the particularities of doing native ethnography within an urban context. *Amareion* represents one of the various musical cultures happening in the city of Thessaloniki, a *steki* ('hangout') that recently opened in Ano Poli. If I was a native researcher working in a closed community, I would normally be an identifiable person

– someone who more or less everyone knows. As a native urbanite researcher, however, I am a ‘familiar face’ within certain social and musical areas. Thus, doing urban ethnography might invite the researcher to experience ‘other’ cultural contexts; besides ‘home may also be alien’ (see *How home is home?* section above).

Furthermore, the representation of the course of knowing and being known within the *Amareion* community becomes a vehicle for displaying the dynamics of reflexivity. It is a reflexivity embodied in the ways I formulated questions and considerations about my ethnographic presence there. Fleeting reflections, such as ‘what do they think about me?’ were stimulated by people’s evaluations and understandings of my attitude;<sup>1</sup> questions and speculations generated new questions and speculations. As this interactive relationship gradually intensifies, I came to realize in practice the relative and subjective nature of cultural knowledge. This realization triggered further thoughts: what is the impact of the researcher on the ways the ‘researched’ perform consciously their rebetiko identities? Does the awareness that I am ‘there’ as an ethnographer affect the musicians’ responses?

In addition, coming ‘closer’ and building up a friendship with the musicians of *Amareion* (see *Lunch at Haris’ place* section) encouraged further the people in the field to participate dialogically in the process of shaping my interpretations. This is the case, for example, in writing about Haris’ rhetorics on what he calls ‘rebetiko philosophy’, or his ‘psychology’ of the audience (see *To live like a rebetis* and *The making of the repertory* sections). In fact, I represent the development of friendships as the drive that basically propelled the interference between the three particular

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<sup>1</sup> Citations in quotation marks are parts that appear in the following chapter.

fields-case studies happening in the course of doing ethnography.<sup>2</sup> Finally, the intensification of ethnographic reflexivity generated particular concerns about the people's feedback to the final ethnographic text. In a way, I began to worry about the responses that the reading of the thesis would inspire in my field friends: 'they were about to see themselves illustrated as ethnographic heroes'. Textualizing such worries becomes a metaphor of the ways I perceived as an ethnographer the meanings and nuances of the authority to represent cultural realities. Because, at the end - regardless of my aspirations to produce a multi-subjective ethnographic narrative - I was the author writing about and interpreting them; within the ethnography they could only have the voices I would decide to give them.

What does the rebetiko culture of *Amareion* venue as a case study serve to demonstrate? *Amareion* is broadly described as an 'ethnic' bar. The meanings related to the word 'ethnic' in this case should not, however, be confused with the special meanings of the term as used in cultural studies. 'Ethnic' as a mainstream word was recently adopted (during the 1990s) in Greek vernacular vocabulary (untranslated in Greek: *έθνικ*) in order to describe food, fashion, decoration, artifacts, music, which represent non-western cultures broadly perceived as 'exotic' or 'oriental'. An 'ethnic' venue, therefore, offers musical entertainment other than western rock and pop, electronic ('techno', 'house', etc.) or blues and jazz music. It is a venue that hosts 'world music' traditions, including, as in the case of *Amareion*, the performance of various Greek local musics (Cretan, Thracian, Macedonian) by neo-traditional

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<sup>2</sup> For example, Mitsos proposed we visit together the *Bekris' taverna*. This way, 'the field...[meaning the *Amareion* venue where Mitsos performed] becomes an ethnographer, too' (fieldnotes cited).

ensembles.<sup>3</sup> Among these concerts of various ‘musics of the world’ organized in *Amareion*, there are rebetiko events taking place every Sunday afternoon.

Rebetiko performances staged in an ‘ethnic’ bar are a symptom of the 1990s. The *Amareion* case study stands, therefore, as an ethnographic paradigm that speaks of the ideas, meanings, musical understandings, imaginary worlds, practices and attitudes embodied in the lived experience of rebetiko as an ‘ethnic’ musical genre. It discusses the ways rebetiko is re-defined within the broader ‘world music’ trend and the ‘new age’ ideology and lifestyle of the 1990s. As such, the *Amareion* case study opens a window onto contemporary rebetiko revivalist culture: it becomes an allegory of contemporary rebetiko ways of being-in-the-world happening in a Greek urban region, the Ano Poli area in the city of Thessaloniki.

This ‘other-ing’ of rebetiko is manifested in the people’s narratives, aesthetics and attitudes rather than in the musical structures *per se*. It is an ‘other-ing’ discussed in sections referring to the ways people perform revived rebetiko song and appreciate music and rebetiko performances within a ‘world music’ ideological context. Such a re-definition of rebetiko is represented in various individual rhetorics on musical ‘authenticity’ and ‘purity’, the history and values that, at the end, reveal the current nuances of rebetiko myth, as well as perceptions of ‘true’ music in general. The knowledge of rebetiko culture is provided by the diverse ways people display their quest for escapism, ‘alternative’ entertainment, perceive their multi-musicality and

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<sup>3</sup> I refer to the kind of musics the international music industry labeled and promoted as ‘world music’. The ‘world music’ phenomenon has attracted the interest of several scholars during the last decade. See Burnett (1984); Frith (1989); Goodwin and Gore (1990); Robinson et al. (1991); Jowers (1993); Garofalo (1993); Slobin (1993); Guilbault (1993 a,b, 1997); Erlmann (1993, 1996); Erlmann (1993, 1996); Lipsitz (1994); Feld (1994 a,b); Taylor (1997); Bohlman (2002). Greeks today often use the term ‘ethnic’ as alternative to ‘world music’ (*mousiki tou kosmou*). Both terms refer either to ‘authentic’ or to ‘ethno-pop’ and ‘world-beat’ kind of recordings.

variously represent the 'ethnic', neo-traditionalist musical trend within an urban musical network today. Moreover, it is a knowledge based on the ways repertory is 'made', the understanding of the, so-perceived, 'mission' of reviving rebetiko songs on stage and the use of song as a language of communication. Eventually, it is an understanding of how diverse individual 'roads to rebetiko' intersect in *Amareion* venue constructing a special rebetiko community, a, so-described, 'other planet'.

Finally, this 'new age' cultural world that exoticizes rebetiko music making in *Amareion* is further epitomized in specific sections titled *The Loxandra ensemble* and *The time of the Gypsies*. Although superficially they refer to an extra-rebetiko incident, the description of an accidental musical happening animates vividly modes of revivalist musical culture surrounding rebetiko performances within the broader musical world of the *Amareion* venue. Furthermore, it elucidates contemporary meta-orientalist aesthetics of entertainment embodied in the patron's expressions and reactions to the 'exciting' and 'fascinating' performance of the duet of Gypsy wandering musicians.

#### *b. The Bekris' taverna*

A rebetiko performance that took place in *Bekris' taverna* of Ano Poli constitutes the second case study represented in this ethnography. It is a study that describes an alternative way of living rebetiko music culture today – an alternative way of rebetiko-being-in-the-world happening within an 'authentic' rebetiko *taverna*. This 'authenticity' is realized both in music making – the performance of 'authentic'

rebetiko – and relative narratives, as well as in the associated drinking, eating and socializing practices.

The related sections of the ethnography attempt primarily to display the musician's network that connects the *Amareion* case study with that of *Bekris' taverna*, which becomes, in a way, an ethnographic extension of the preceding section. Moreover, the description of the particular performance event becomes a paradigm of the ways the hierarchy among the rebetiko musicians' network is performed within the music-making context. The skills, age and experience of the rebetiko musicians located at the top of this particular hierarchy qualify them – more, specifically, the *bouzouki* player known as Nikos the Tsitsanis - as honoured carriers of rebetiko tradition within the local rebetiko world. Finally, these 'high-ranking' musicians become the link between the *Bekris' taverna* and the third case study, since they are also the musicians of the revelry organized in the *Kath' Odhon* café of Ano Poli. In addition, the ethnography of *Bekris* becomes a discussion of the practices of 'spontaneous performance' and the associated special codes of communication defining aspects of the ethos of rebetiko music making among the musicians' network in Ano Poli.

The link between the *Bekris* case study and that of *Amareion* are, moreover, the patrons who happen to frequent both places. Both places attract the rebetiko-oriented student and young intellectual culture of Thessaloniki, despite their differences in terms of musical performance, spatial and temporal organization of the musical event, and the ways rebetiko is appreciated and experienced within these venues. Nonetheless, the relevant ethnographic narratives are intended finally to

represent comparatively what makes the rebetiko context of *Bekris* different to that of *Amareion*. *Bekris' taverna* concerns a traditional type of rebetiko venue, a historic locus of rebetiko entertainment re-defined within the ongoing rebetiko revival; in *Amareion*, on the other hand, rebetiko music is represented on stage as a respectable and precious ethnic tradition.<sup>4</sup>

*c. A rebetiko ghlendi at Kath' Odhon café*

The third case study is an occasional rebetiko event - not a fixed performance as in the case of the two preceding case studies. It is a *ghlendi* – a ‘revelry’, a merry making event – organized among a ‘circle’ of rebetiko fans surrounding the musicians already introduced within the previous ethnographic section. This ‘circle’ involves a different human community happening in rebetiko music, a community made primarily by working class people of the northern part of Ano Poli area. It is a community ‘born’ in a rebetiko *ghlendi*.<sup>5</sup> The people making this *ghlendi* display rebetiko discourses and aesthetics defining particular socio-cultural identities; they are considered as ‘the original’ rebetiko people, who have ‘rebetiko inside’ (see *The circle* section). The *Kath' Odhon* case study is an exceptional mode of rebetiko entertainment, scarcely organized nowadays, which, nonetheless, within this ethnography becomes part of a broader rebetiko events network. As such, it is a peripheral event that connects contemporary ways of experiencing rebetiko music with the past. It animates an alternative musical world historically linked to the past, which, at the same time, is shaped and re-figured within the present.

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<sup>4</sup> See *In the Field* chapter; ‘the difference is not in music; it is in the way the music happens’.

<sup>5</sup> I borrow Caraveli’s expression (1985).

What makes the rebetiko event in *Kath' Odhon* café a *ghlendi* are the dynamics of entertainment: people are there to dance, 'order' the songs they favor, drink great amounts of alcohol and have a good time with their friends. As the *kefi* 'fires up' (*anavi*), musicians and patrons enter the *meraki* state of being, they 'burn' their worries, forget routine problems, concentrate in music making, deepen themselves to music, or even exhibit extravagant behavior (see *The red carnations* section). Furthermore, writing about the rebetiko *ghlendi* is an attempt to represent an ethnographic occasion during which I myself *meraklothika* (that is 'I entered in the *meraki* state of being') - namely to express in written word a personal, intensified rebetiko experience, the special nuances of the ethnographer's 'musical-way-of-being'. The experience of rebetiko *ghlendi*, moreover, became the stimulus to realize my individual limits in doing my first large scale ethnographic project and reflect briefly on gender related issues and the character of the fieldwork in total. This is particularly portrayed in discussing my concerns and disappointments while trying to approach a middle aged rebetiko *bouzouki* player, Nikos the Tsitsanis. It is finally expressed in what I came to identify as a 'failure' in communicating with a musician in the field. Although a failure, it represents a research occasion that, in the end, enhanced ethnographic reflexivity: the failure was transformed to a medium of knowing rebetiko culture and, through this, knowing self.

Eventually, the *Kath' Odhon* case study provides an arena for discussing the interference happening between the particular research fields. It represents an ethnographic experience I happened to share together with the three musicians of the *Amareion kompania*. Here, the process of understanding rebetiko *ghlendi* meets that

of understanding the *Amareion* musicians who personify the 'ethnic' bar rebetiko culture; one field re-emerges within another, producing a mutual feedback of understanding. This way, the multi-layered ethnographic experience engendered in *Kath' Odhon* place enhances the manifold and comprehensive understanding of rebetiko culture today; it promotes understanding coming from a different, from an 'other', way.

## Chapter 10. In the field

*'I'm looking for rebetiko places'*

When I got back to Thessaloniki, after two years studying Ethnomusicology in London, I started thinking about people who could help me with research practicalities. I had a fellow-student from the Music Conservatory, Christos, a guitar-player who was working with Aghathonas, one of the Thessalonikian rebetiko stars. 'I'm doing . . . research on rebetiko music today.' 'What are you looking for? There is no rebetiko today.' He sounded quite confident about it. 'There are *kompanies*, there are places, there are famous rebetiko musicians,' I replied. 'Oh, this is what you're after. I thought you're looking for *real* rebetiko.' Hearing these words from someone who had been, for years now, performing in rebetiko nightclubs, I was at first puzzled. Later on, I met other local musicians who were involved in rebetiko and they also attested to Christos' view: 'Rebetiko has long before gone.' What do they think they are doing then? How could a music be dead but still in practice?

In fact, what the musicians had predicated involves an inherent paradox of contemporary rebetiko perceptions and practices. Rebetiko is nowadays broadly considered as 'dead' – though people still play, sing and dance rebetiko. A further contradiction is that neither the ongoing associated practices nor its death are neglected; they both define the ways we live rebetiko music today, in fact, the ways we re-live it – the rebetiko revival.

'I'm looking for rebetiko places,' sounded a more normal request; of course, there were places – 'music' was not thought to be alive. Again, the same paradox: there are places where we perform and enjoy ourselves with rebetiko, which is, however, dead. It died together with its legendary heroes, Vamvakaris and Tsitsanis. Since *hashish-dens*, *dervishomanges* and the *babessa* kind of females belong to the past, how can rebetiko be alive?<sup>1</sup> However, most people in rebetiko places were very clear about one thing: that they still enjoyed singing and dancing rebetiko music, although it was gone. And, more important, that Greek people will always favor rebetiko, although it died. 'It will never cease to have meanings for us.'<sup>2</sup>

Most of the people I met were not surprised by the general topic of the research, rebetiko music. For many of the young students who frequented rebetiko venues this was an 'exciting, cool subject!' What they used to find bizarre was my interest in contemporary practices; what kind of interest could someone find in rebetiko practices today? Some used to think that I am visiting rebetiko performances in order to reconstruct, in a way, the image of the past. Next to the enthusiastic responses, there were others who had considered this as a mainstream investigation; besides, there are numerous rebetologists who had already scrutinized the subject. It would be difficult, thus, for me to 'discover' something new. Instead, they suggested that I should re-direct my fieldwork to a more intriguing subject, such as something related to ancient music or a 'strange' musical culture, still untouched by the 'civilized' world.

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<sup>1</sup> Both are slang words illustrating stereotypical characters described in rebetiko lyrics.

<sup>2</sup> According to Kostas, a patron from *Amareion* café rebetiko events.

At any rate, rebetiko music was generally considered as a legitimate area for academic research. Perhaps, for some people, this study appeared as an 'easy' field of knowledge: rebetiko musical structures were quite simple, and, moreover, there were already many accounts on the history of the genre, the musicians and the instruments. However, they still used to admit that rebetiko deserves to be studied 'scientifically' (*epistimonika*), because it is a valuable part of Greek musical tradition. What might have caused ambiguous, even resentful responses a few decades ago, was now broadly acknowledged as a justifiable doctoral research area. There was no doubt that I was committed to a fieldwork beneficial for the broader Greek tradition, a research that could contribute to the preservation and dissemination of 'our cultural values'.

### *Defining the field*

When I got to Thessaloniki I started looking for a place to stay. Soon, I moved to one of my favorite central areas of the city, Ano Poli (literally the Upper City), where I lived as a university student. At this early stage of setting up the research, I ignored, however, a more important aspect of my choice: living in Ano Poli was living in the field. In the initial research proposal I had submitted I had not yet defined a specific geographic area of investigation; the fieldwork was planned to take place in the broader area of Thessaloniki. As a beginner ethnomusicologist, I had not yet realized that, in practice, I was going to find that the initial research plan I had set out was overly broad and ambitious. It soon became clear that I had to limit my inquiry to a particular area; this way I could concentrate more thoroughly on the case study.

The decision to limit my research to the Ano Poli district was basically an outcome of my early field experience. In the beginning, I visited various rebetiko venues outside this area. Although this may sound meaningless, at a final stage, it had a considerable impact on the ultimate process of defining the specific field of research. Before limiting the research area, I had already experienced several other performance contexts. Having a general knowledge of what was going on at a broader level, I could then decide more clearly which specific field would correspond to my research interests. More important, the general knowledge I accumulated outside the final research area constituted a broader framework of experience within which I could comparatively evaluate specific contexts of rebetiko being-in-the-world. If I had started this fieldwork with Ano Poli and the particular venues featuring the present ethnography, I would have missed this counterpart rebetiko experience I gained during the initial broader exploration in the field.

It was, therefore, through experience that I came to speculate about certain problems which I was not aware of when formulating the research hypothesis. It is also through experience that I decided which directions I should follow and, finally, it is the experience that worked as a catalyst to promote transformations and open new areas of inquiry for the research project. Eventually, I felt and realized these inherent changes of fieldwork activity primarily as a human being. These experimental processes of the total ethnographic project - beyond formulating the research itself - stimulated various emotional responses. There were times of satisfaction, times of despair, times of worry, times of happiness; there were optimistic and disappointing phases which I needed to cope with in order to achieve my goals. Going through this range of emotional responses became, therefore, a part of making ethnographic

knowledge; it is a trial that by 'making' the researcher an ethnographer, it further re-constitutes one's self.

### *Why Ano Poli?*

Today, one can visit rebetiko venues in many parts of Thessaloniki, from the more deprived western suburbs to the privileged eastern areas of the city. However, there are two districts, both centrally located, that concentrate rebetiko venues more than anywhere else: Ladhadhika and Ano Poli. Both districts have been declared by the Ministry of Culture as 'conservation <sup>areas</sup> (*dhiatiritees*), namely areas that represent the historical, architectural and cultural profile of the city and should, therefore, be protected from any type of modernizing development. This way, both areas are considered as urban monuments, which, under state patronage, should be restored and preserved.

Ladhadhika (literally meaning 'olive oil place') used to be a central industrial area, located behind the west side of the city port. By day, the place was populated by the various craftsmen and workers employed in the workshops and oil depots; in the night it used to be a so-called 'red light district', frequented by prostitutes, brothel-hotels and transvestites.<sup>3</sup> The cultural preservation enterprise, which was launched by the Greek state in the late 1990s, gradually changed this scene by enforcing what could be called a 'cleansing policy' (photo 31). Workshops and brothels were gradually closed down; the stone-built industrial buildings and the weathered reliefs

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<sup>3</sup> For the brothels of Ladhadhika see the historiographic novel by Korovinis (1996).

of the neo-classical brothel-hotels facades were refurbished. The overall change of scenery is bitterly described by a local novelist, Thomas Korovinis: 'Once and for all the folk debauch of Thessaloniki had flown away...there was not even a streetwalker...Now, the place fills you with sorrow...A frenzy area of dude people. Neophytes of rebetiko-lust...In the place of the nostalgic *boites*, there are now quasi-rebetiko and new-folk bawling voices mixed with techno music' (1996:54-57).

Ladhadhika area then represents today a city monument that spectacularly evidences Thessalonikian history. The ways local state authorities envisaged this preservation were mainly driven by the need to 'ascribe value' (*axiopoisi*) to the area, a process that would transform it into a profitable tourist attraction. Soon, old workshops and depots were converted to restaurants, clubs and bars frequented by people who were romantically attracted by the 'traditional color' and the much glorified marginality of the area. More important, in most of these 'traditional' restaurants, there was rebetiko music making. The ideal, thus, of the revived urban area was adequately invested and sustained by that of the revived urban folk music, in this case rebetiko song. Consequently, rebetiko was regarded as an appropriate 'voice of the past' to invest the revived urban area and fortify the concept of cultural preservation.

The same rationale runs the recent 'remodeling' (*anaplasti*) of Ano Poli area. Ano Poli was traditionally an area populated by Turkish-speaking groups and refugees who were established there after the population exchange of 1922. Small humble houses, workshops and buildings of traditional Turkish and Macedonian architecture covered most of the area. Until recently, Ano Poli used to be a relatively

poor area inhabited mainly by working class people. Today, the transformational mechanisms have considerably changed the population structure and, more broadly, the profile of the place. The preservation of the old architectural styles and town planning (photo 32) had gradually attracted new inhabitants to the area who could afford the now expensive house prices. As a result, the number of *Ano Poli koutoukia* (small-scale *tavernes*) has considerably increased. The newly opened *tavernes* were decorated in a retro style, while the older have been refurbished. These small traditional *tavernes* that recall romantic memories of the untouched by modernization past became actually the local highlight. The entire area was transformed into a sight-seeing site and a leisure centre for the city. Again, the music that could most adequately ‘orchestrate’ these memories was rebetiko song. In fact, the owners of old *koutoukia* capitalized on the patrons’ nostalgic needs; soon, the traditional ‘authentic’ rebetiko *taverna* services they provided became a profitable business (photo 33).

After a few visits to Ladhadhika and Ano Poli, I realized that they both provided promising contexts where I could successfully explore the concept of musical revival that is central to the present rebetiko study. In a way, the study of contemporary rebetiko music making in areas which are officially declared as conservation areas, is a study of revival *in* revival. The fact that the notion of revival conditions both the spatial context and the musical practices I was interested in strengthened the main hypothesis of my research; namely, that rebetiko revival today is not just a musical trend, but a musical enclosure of contemporary Greek cultural predicaments and identities.

Still, I had to decide where to focus my interest; to conduct research in both areas would demand a great amount of time that exceeded the prescriptions of a doctoral thesis. Even if I could manage to coordinate both situations, I would still not be able to go into a more thorough investigation of certain aspects of rebetiko culture, get closer to people and gain an insightful experience that would meaningfully supply the ‘making’ of my ethnography. Thus, I decided to focus specifically on one of the prospective areas, that of Ano Poli. The basic reasons, for which I set aside rebetiko in Ladhadhika, were related to my research interests and practicalities, as well as, financial constraints. The music making contexts in Ladhadhika were big neo-traditional *tavernes* usually frequented by the *nouveaux riches* who enjoyed rebetiko music along with consuming often immense amounts of food and alcohol. The rebetiko music performed there is broadly considered as ‘commercial’ rebetiko. The musicians, who are classed as ‘professionals’, perform on stage with amplified instruments, satisfying the merry-making aesthetics of ‘the neophytes of rebetiko-lust’ (so-described by Thomas Korovinis; see fn. 3).

In contrast, the rebetiko performed in Ano Poli is generally considered as a decent representation of ‘original’ rebetiko performances that adhere more faithfully to the dictates of an ‘authentic’ rebetiko entertainment. The musicians employed there are young people, considered as ‘amateurs’ who perform acoustic, non-amplified rebetiko music.<sup>4</sup> The patrons are mostly students and young Thessalonikians, who entertain themselves more moderately and in a less extravagant way than the revelers in Ladhadhika. This ‘authenticity’ supposed to be featuring contemporary Ano Poli

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<sup>4</sup> ‘Professional’ musicians in this context are those full-time employed in entertainment places, in contrast to ‘amateurs’ who are mostly part-time performers and usually have a second basic source of income. The distinction may also involve artistic competence; thus, ‘professionals’ may also be more skillful and experienced performers in relation to those described as amateurs.

rebetiko contexts qualifies, thus, the area as a locus of rebetiko revival *par excellence*. As such, it decisively motivated and further inspired my ethnographic interests. By doing fieldwork in rebetiko venues in Ano Poli, I could focus on what was accepted as 'ideal' and 'proper' ways of playing, listening and communicating rebetiko within the broader rebetiko revival context.

Apart from theoretical reasons, there were also a few practical considerations that influenced my decision. In Ano Poli it was easier for me to conduct long-term research, during which I had been frequently visiting various places, mostly by myself. In addition, because of the high prices in Ladhadhika rebetiko venues, doing research there would have been an expensive project, out of my financial reach. Finally, it was important to conduct research in places which I would enjoy visiting, especially since I was about to spend a long period of time there. Consequently, I preferred Ano Poli to the *nouveaux riches* rebetiko landscape of Ladhadhika, although the latter could become an equally promising and revealing project.

#### *Ano Poli: an ideal landscape for rebetiko revival*

Ano Poli is the most elevated district of the *intra muros* Thessaloniki, namely the part of the city defined by the Byzantine walls. The ancient walls are also the northern boundary of the area, while the southern boundary is defined by Olympiadhos Street that follows the coastal line. From the port, you may see the district stretching alongside the Byzantine ruins and covering the hill that dominates the city from the North. In contrast to most of the central residential districts of the city which are dominated by concrete-made block of flats, the

buildings and town planning of Ano Poli preserve the architectural physiognomy of the late Ottoman years (19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries). Next to old Greek-Macedonian, Turkish and Jewish houses, which are typical of the broader southern Balkan area, as well as low-ceiling refugee places, there are recently built luxurious residences either of strictly neo-traditional or more eclectic and post-modern style buildings (see Laghopoulos et al 1998: 6.1- 6.15).

Until the beginning of the 20th century, Ano Poli was mainly inhabited by Turkish people. The population structure was considerably altered after the incorporation of the city in the Greek state (1912-13) and the population exchange that followed the Asia Minor war (1922-24). The majority of the thousands of refugees who were crammed into Thessaloniki were settled in Ano Poli. Still today, several of the families populating the district are their descendants. Next to the old refugee households, a small number of new refugees deriving mostly from the ex-Soviet Union have found shelter in impoverished settlements of the area. Ano Poli had also been a neighborhood of students and young people who looked for cheap residence in an area with a 'traditional' flavour. Nonetheless, from the 1980s onwards the area had increasingly attracted economically privileged and highly educated urban groups (academics, doctors, lawyers, etc.), who lately tend to outnumber the traditional working class and young population (see Laghopoulos et al, 1998: 3.4).

As a result of the concentration of Turkish and refugee population, the various coffee shops and *tavernes* of the district used to offer mainly oriental musical entertainment (*smyrnaiiko*, and later on rebetiko song). Throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century the local venues remained steadily orientated towards urban folk song, namely

rebetiko and *laiko* song; not a single venue of the westernized light popular (*elafry*) song is recorded or witnessed in the area. Ano Poli, thus, is a traditional rebetiko land; it not only ‘sounds’, but also looks like a rebetiko locus. This musical historicity of the place is additionally validated by its long-established architectural profile, which is also declared as ‘conservational’: the old *sahnisia* (closed balconies), the ochre-painted stone built houses, or the small white-washed old refugee houses and the paved alleys with a drain channel lengthwise.

Clearly, Ano Poli is an urban area that points to the past, primarily because it displays its connection with the past. As such, it provides an ideal forum for recalling the past – an ideal landscape that stimulates cultural memory. An important part of these cultural memories is music. Revitalizing rebetiko music in Ano Poli becomes a way of revitalizing the soundscape of the past. In that sense, Ano Poli provides a prosperous setting for ‘making’ rebetiko revival, primarily because it supplies the revivalist practices with meanings: meanings that originate and capitalize upon the exhibited historicity of the area and its indisputable traditional qualities.

### a. The Amareion ‘ethnic’ bar

*A poster worth a thousand words*

Only a few weeks after I returned from London, I was walking on the uphill road that led to the apartment I had recently rented in Ano Poli. Stuck on the window of a nearby shop there was a poster that immediately attracted my attention. It advertised the weekly programme of concerts in café *Amareion*, ‘where the musics of the world meet one other’. Among the musics of the world performed in *Amareion*, there were, so-called, ‘rebetiko afternoons’ taking place between four and seven o’clock every Sunday. I was puzzled; until then I had never thought of rebetiko song as an ‘ethnic’ musical style.

The *Amareion* poster that advertised rebetiko as part of a ‘world music’ programme seemed to suggest a different understanding of the music. Interestingly enough, next to rebetiko the programme included various local musical traditions performed by neo-traditional musical ensembles (photo 34). Thus, there was a band playing music that recalled ‘Thracian and Macedonian memories’, as well as a group that specialized in ‘Cretan music and other traditional songs’. On Fridays, there was ‘Arab and Oriental’ music making, while on Saturday evenings there was a so-called *café-aman* ensemble who performed pieces of Ottoman classical music along with *smyrnaiiko* and *politiko* songs.

In fact, the structure of the weekly cycle of the *Amareion* concerts indicated a fusion of urban musics together with particular local traditions, which were overall labeled now as ‘musics of the world’. This generic conceptualization initially confused

me, since the various Greek musical idioms represented here were hitherto broadly described as ‘traditional’ (*paradhosiaki –es*, pl.) musics. While they are still considered as ‘traditional’, they seemed now to be re-defined as ‘ethnic’ musics (according to the mainstream notion of the term). Besides, it is this very concept of ‘traditional’ that authenticates them also as ‘ethnic’. The rationale therefore of connecting rebetiko and *café-aman* music with Thracian, Cretan and Macedonian songs is mainly based on the notion that, from a broader perspective, they are all ‘ethnic’. In that sense, the concert programme of *Amareion* reasonably legitimates the inclusion of ‘Arab and Oriental’ music making alongside local musical genres. Apart from the fact that it supplies the programme structure with a colour of oriental charm, it further associates all the represented traditions with the generic term ‘oriental’. To conceptualize thus *en masse* rebetiko and *dhimotiko* song traditions as ‘musics of the Orient’, underpins and ultimately justifies, in this case, their identity as ‘world musics’.

In addition, the motives that stimulated the interest of the musicians forming the various neo-traditional ensembles support the ‘world music’ kind of rationale of structuring the programme. The instrumentalists and singers of these ensembles are mainly young people who have studied music either in a local school of traditional music or in a conservatoire of western art music and then turned to ‘traditional’ music making. They are people recently attracted by ‘the longing of the traditional songs’ or the excitement of ‘practicing ancient music’ and honoring ‘the sacred sounds of our grandparents.’<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> According to Dimitris Vasiliadis (*kanonaki* player), Ellina Hristodoulari (singer) and Kostas Danis (percussionist) – all musicians employed in *Amareion* café.

There is primary<sup>1</sup> then one thing that dominates the rhetorics that explain their adherence to local traditions: their personal excitement and need to devote themselves to an 'other' musical world. Despite the fact that this 'other' music had already been there, namely in the land they were born and grew up in, it still is an 'other', which although it preexisted, is now being re-discovered. And while it is re-discovered it is also restored, since it is considered as a musical tradition that was either long forgotten, overlooked or, more seriously, misinterpreted and falsified. This way, the people involved in this recent trend of practicing traditional music also appear as advocates of the musics they protect. Consequently, in a 'world music' arena and related ideology, these musics are disengaged from past ideological connotations that mainly identified them as pure Greek patriotic expressions.<sup>2</sup>

Even though there is a romantic notion of greekness connoted in the rhetorics and conceptualizations of neo-traditionalist musicians, this sense of Greek identity is now transformed and embodied in a wider claim for 'new age' escapism. Besides, it is no coincidence that the formation of neo-traditional ensembles by young, mostly educated musicians is a symptom of the 1990s – as well as the salient interest in knowing and playing 'ethnic' musics, in general. This 'world music' trend is also evident in the types of traditional instruments that the current 'suits of the Asian muse' have recently introduced to public performances.<sup>3</sup> Next to instruments typical of *dhimotiko traghoudhi*, such as the lute, the *klarino* ('clarinet'), the *floghera* (end blown reed), the *lyra* and the violin, there are instruments deriving from the Ottoman musical tradition, such as the *bendir* (frame drum), the *sazi* (the Turkish *saz*) and the

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<sup>2</sup> See for example the recent Junta musical politics and the imposition of the 'panhellenic' dances scheme (chapter 7, section *Rebetiko for the people*).

<sup>3</sup> The phrase was originally used to describe the 1880s pro-orientalist literati circles.

*tzouras* (of the *bouzouki* family).<sup>4</sup> Within this spectrum of 'ethnic' instrumentarium, the performance of rebetiko song in places like *Amareion* obtains new meanings: it becomes a local 'ethnic' musical expression and attraction. In this contemporary 'world music' forum, rebetiko is an 'our' musical genre that is re-conceptualized and communicated in the form of an 'other'.

The stylistic layout and graphics of the poster further attest to the 'world' music concerns of the *Amareion* people. The fonts and the illustration used here display again a meaningful fusion of aesthetics. The name *Amareion* and the subtitle, both written in archaic language, are printed in ancient Greek fonts, while some of the names of the performing ensembles are rendered in Byzantine fonts.<sup>5</sup> More perplexing is the central decorative motive of the poster, an illustration in renaissance style depicting an angel of Paradise playing a long flute (*salpinx*) surrounded by other heavenly instruments, a lute and, apparently, a lyre.

Since the poster is a form of marketing strategy for the concert programme, the aesthetics described above serve to communicate publicly messages involving the advertised musics. They are aesthetics purposefully selected in order to inspire understandings and suggest meanings to 'what is actually happening' in café *Amareion*. On this basis, the capital ancient Greek fonts, also used in the front door sign of café *Amareion*, speak directly of a respectful attachment to the glorious past. This connotative homage to the ancient Greek past is further followed by a

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<sup>4</sup> These instruments are not included in the classical organological volume titled *Greek Musical Instruments* by Foivos Anoyianakis ([1976] 1991). Because of their association with Ottoman music making, local musical folklorists have traditionally regarded them as instruments which fail to represent 'original' Greek music.

monumental reference to the Byzantine past. The ways, however, in which this past is overall capitalized stand beyond a conservative concern for 'our' long-standing traditions. It is, in fact, emphatically re-defined by the central presence of the renaissance style banner - a western aesthetic tradition, and more specifically, a tradition that appropriated and transformed elements of ancient Greek art. The way archaic (ancient Greek and Byzantine) graphics are intersected and filtered with a western illustration signify, in their own way, the cosmopolitan musical premises discussed above. First, ancient Greek and Byzantine stylistic references serve to demonstrate the 'old' and 'traditional' qualities of regional musics. Because they are regional, they further stand as manifestations of local musical particularities – namely as expressions of difference. As unique traditions, then, they deserve to be displayed and celebrated as honorable. Therefore, by paying homage to these musics, we protect and exhibit 'our' cultural difference against the alienating cultural mechanisms of the West. Nonetheless, these 'traditional' musics are principally sanctioned via their justification as 'ethnic', rather than 'national', musics. On one hand, then, to re-invent these 'old' yet 'exciting' musical genres is considered, among others, as an anti-western - and thus anti-global - cultural practice. This anti-global music making presupposes, at the same time though, that the re-discovered musics are already accepted as precious treasures of a global musical world – as 'world music' monuments.

In fact, what I initially gathered by observing the advertising poster of café *Amareion* were meanings that later on, in the course of doing fieldwork, were

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<sup>5</sup> One of the rebetiko musicians of *Amareion*, the guitar-player Dimitris Mihalopoulos, also used Byzantine fonts on a piece of paper he wrote down his address. Several of my co-students who used to adhere to liberal and leftist university groups had, apparently on purpose, also appropriated a Byzantine style of handwriting (although this is irrelevant to the handwriting taught in Greek primary schools).

confirmed and further understood. There is an important factor, however, that stimulated my overall interest in the rationale of structuring the concert programme and the making of the poster. The person who was in charge of these activities was one of the rebetiko musicians of the *kompania* performing in *Amareion*, the *bouzouki* player Haris Drizos. My attempt to understand the motives enclosed in his initiatives was part of my interest in the ideas on music expressed by a contemporary rebetiko practitioner. Moreover, Haris is one of the owners of *Amareion* and the person who contrived, in 1991, the idea of making the venue:

I had many friends who, I was sure, were going to support the venue...I could smell the need for something different. People were bored by the same Euro-trash all over...The area was perfect...an old part of the city. I believe this is the best area to open an ethnic bar. Soon, people heard about the place, the musics performed...*Amareion* was and still is something different. It offers something different, something new, to young people, students and others. Don't you know that everywhere abroad they lately started to listen and play these musics? And, those foreign musicians wish to learn and play oriental instruments? Ross Daly, for example...Now, they have discovered the music we had here for ages!

This poster and various other posters of café *Amareion* I encountered later on while wandering about in the city streets had a suggestive endnote: 'located close to the Turkish Consulate'. *Amareion* thus is an 'ethnic' bar located in an 'ethnic' place. The Turkish Consulate building in Thessaloniki is housed in the mansion where Kemal Atatürk was born. As such, it is an 'oriental' locus of the city, an area charged with memories of the Ottoman past. In fact, the use of 'Turkish Consulate' as a spatial reference incorporates further connotations involving the character of the place. It is a reference that embodies the ways people of *Amareion* define the area and further ascribe meanings to the venue. Besides, the street in which *Amareion* is located (Apostolou Pavlou Street, also indicated in the poster) is a relatively well-known road of Ano Poli area and therefore easy to find (photo 35). The reference to the Turkish Consulate tends to imply a connection with those special 'oriental' qualities of the

place. This way, it underpins the 'ethnic' music ideal advertised and represented in the musics performed there. As a performance context located in an 'oriental' and 'historic' area that specializes in 'ethnic' music concerts, including rebetiko song, I saw *Amareion* as a promising research context that could provide understandings of the meanings rebetiko revival today suggests.

### *The first visit*

It was a Sunday afternoon in November, one of the first cold days of the winter in 1998. Thessalonikians had already begun to resort to the winter venues of the city, which had, by that time of the year, already opened. The 'winter season' for the performing musicians, that actually stretches up to late May, had started.<sup>6</sup> Most of the venues had by then, more or less, arranged the employment of musical groups and decided about the kind of music making they were going to offer. Local entertainment guides and nightlife reviewers were publishing their comments on various well known or newly opening places. There were numerous flamboyant placards picturing giant photos of popular musicians who performed in the city, and other, more moderately made, posters advertising smaller scale venues. Evidently, the city had entered, not just a new season of the year, but a new season of music making.

I arrived at café *Amareion* together with a friend at around half past three. I was interested to see what was happening before the actual musical performance started. At the top of the entrance there was a painted, wooden sign with the name of the place

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<sup>6</sup> The period from late May to late September is the 'summer season'.

framed between two ancient Greek columns (photo 36). *Amareion* is an ancient Greek word.<sup>7</sup> Interestingly enough, none of the patrons of the café seemed to know the meaning of the word. I guessed that the owners of *Amareion* deliberately chose an unusual ancient name hoping to ascribe an air of sophistication to the place. The use of ancient Greek naming is a common practice in several venues. It involves somehow a counter response to the non-Greek, mostly English, naming of different type of venues. This way, venue naming reflects an ideological bias that suggests meanings for the kind of entertainment and music making offered. It is noteworthy that the names selected for 'ethnic' music venues may also be non-Greek 'exotic' words, such as the recently established *Bam Terlele*, which is an 'ethnic' music live stage, or the *rebetadhiko* club *Ghlendi Koule*.<sup>8</sup>

By the time we arrived there were only a few people sitting around the bar and chatting/<sup>in a</sup>friendly/<sup>manner</sup> A short, bright-eyed young man, who had next to him a guitar case, asked the man behind the counter: 'Hey Haris, fetch me a scotch!' 'Do it yourself and make one for me!' replied humorously the barman, a person of the same age who was busy tuning his *bouzouki*. Instantly, when they saw us entering the place, they paused for a moment. Who were these new faces visiting the café?

Soon, a young waitress came and politely took the order. 'Is there rebetiko here today?' I asked. 'Every Sunday afternoon. It is still early, though. They start playing

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<sup>7</sup> The ancient Greek name *Amareion* is found as *Amarion* in Strabo (*Geographika* 8.7.3.4) and refers to the sacred grove located in Arcadia that was dedicated to Zeus where the members of the Achaian Federation gathered and 'served the public affairs'. Researchers identify the sacred area with that of the temple of *Omighirios* Zeus, namely the Zeus who was the patron of the congregation (*omighiris*), the public gathering (according to the entry in *Papyros Larousse Britannica* encyclopedia, 1997).

<sup>8</sup> *Ghlendi Koule* is a humorous paraphrasing of the Ottoman *Yendi Koule* prisons of the city. The term *Bam Terlele* describes the small beard men used to grow in the Ottoman years (according to the leaflet offered in the venue).

when the people gather.’ At that point, the young man who curiously listened while seated at the bar, edged into our little discussion shouting proudly: ‘It’s us who play here!’ ‘Great, because we’re looking for some rebetiko music.’ ‘You came to the right place!’ he replied pointing at me his hand with a glass of scotch that looked like a physical extension of his arm. I was a bit restrained. The man seemed to be ‘in high spirits’. Although he looked friendly, I was careful about how to approach him and introduce myself. Hopefully, then, the *bouzouki* musician teased him calmly: ‘Don’t yell, they’re not deaf,’ and then turned to us: ‘I believe this is your first time here.’ His friend followed his statement with a gentle smile.

Obviously, in the eyes of the few people who were already in the café we were newcomers. *Amareion* was apparently a *steki*, namely a ‘hangout’. More or less, the patrons of the place and the musicians employed there knew one another; they were expecting to find in *Amareion* their friends, or, at least, familiar faces. Inevitably, the presence of new visitors attracted their curiosity. In order to get closer to the musicians and the people resorting there, I thought that I should also frequent the place and become a familiar face. What then became clear was that *Amareion* defined, in a way, a community; a community made around the venue and the musics performed there. Soon, this hypothesis was further expanded: the *Amareion* community is a community of ‘ethnic’ music adherents who identified the venue as an ideal place to define and display their interests, aesthetics and ideas on music.

*'What's your name?'*

I was acknowledged as a newcomer. However, I felt that this was not a hostile statement that could hinder my approach to the *Amareion* world. Both musicians had a positive response and took willingly the initiative to open a discussion with me. 'Are you a student?' went on the *bouzouki* player standing relaxed behind the bar. 'Well, yes, I study ethnomusicology.' The guitar player jumped enthusiastically, 'Oh, this is world music, isn't it? That's cool!' 'Here we have traditional ensembles. You should come and listen,' suggested the *bouzouki* player and went on, 'What's your name?' 'I'm Dafni'. 'I'm Haris, I play *bouzouki* and this is Mitsos, our guitar. We are waiting for our singer.'

Mitsos' stood up, took a chair and came towards our table. 'So, are you doing any particular study?' 'I'm interested in rebetiko song,' I replied. Obviously, this was the right time to explain about my research. 'What kind of rebetiko, the Vamvakaris or the Tsitsanis style?' 'Actually, I'm doing a research on rebetiko music today in Thessaloniki.' 'What? Rebetiko today? There is no rebetiko today!' Mitsos repeated what several other musicians had already said, namely that rebetiko music is dead. 'What about your *kompania*?' I replied. 'We play music of the past. Nobody makes music like this anymore.' 'I'm interested in the ways you play this music and the people who enjoy it.' 'So, you're doing research on us! I've never thought that we were so valuable!'

In fact, the way Mitsos enthusiastically responded to my attempt to explain the reasons for being there echoes various popular stereotypes involving musical research in Greece and abroad. In fact, these are stereotypes I repeatedly encountered in the

course of doing fieldwork and, sometimes, raised questions related to my own role in the field. First, the mainstream perception that ethnomusicology is a field of knowledge that studies particular musical styles of 'the world', apart from Western art music genres. This is actually a perception also popular abroad (see Merriam 1975:55). Since an ethnomusicologist is supposed to study exotic musics of oriental and primitive tribes, what kind of interest can she find in contemporary quotidian music making? Others, who in addition understood ethnomusicology as musical folklore, were surprised by my intention to conduct research on urban music making today. This is why Haris suggested that I should attend the traditional musical ensembles of *Amareion*. Furthermore, this justifies Mitsos' surprise at his band being so 'valuable'; in his eyes, ongoing musical practices are not 'traditional' and thus they lack historic value. How could an ethnomusicologist - who is supposed to be documenting and recording traditional musics threatened to disappear - be interested in rebetiko performances today?

These were questions of epistemological character that came up time and again during the discussions I had with people in *Amareion* and other venues. They were questions people were eager to clarify early on; thereafter, they felt 'prepared' (as several of them used to say) to continue these open discussions. They needed a reasonable explanation that would help them feel secure and - according to their own argument - to 'open up' themselves to my inquiries. Eventually, they could sense and enjoy their contribution in the research project - in the making of ethnographic knowledge.

*Rakomelo: 'the nectar of the gods'*

As an 'ethnic' music bar, *Amareion* has an 'ethnic' style decoration, which is, in fact, a mixture of various 'ethnic' artifacts. Next to African totems attached to the walls, as well as several miniature 'oriental' illustrations of Persian or Indian origin, there is an old-style nargileh at the corner. However, the overall space organization is typical of a western-style cafe, with small round tables and a counter offering any kind of spirit typically consumed in a bar.

While I was chatting with Mitsos, people began to gather in the place. Most of them were in their twenties and thirties. They arrived there either as individuals, who expected to meet their friends, or in small groups of two or three people. 'Hey, Aetna!' Haris, standing behind the bar, called a tall woman entering the place. 'Did he say Aetna?' I asked Mitsos a bit puzzled. He laughed: 'Aetna is her nickname, you know, like the volcano in Sicily...She smokes a lot...many *mavra!*'<sup>9</sup> Aetna walked into the café as if she was at home. 'Hey, Mitsaras! [that literally means 'big Mitsos']. Are we going to scratch it today?'<sup>10</sup> She patted him <sup>in a</sup> friendly <sup>way</sup> on the shoulder. Haris placed on the bar a small glass for her: 'Your *rakomelo*, to help yourself get together.'

I turned my head towards the bar, curious to see what the drink looked like. I had tried *rakomelo* a few years ago in Crete; it is a boiled mixture of honey and *raki* – a strong alcoholic spirit made from grapes. However, it was the first time I saw *rakomelo* offered in a city bar. Haris noticed my attention and offered to make some

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<sup>9</sup> 'Black' (in Greek *mavro*, pl. *mavra*) is a common slang word for hashish.

<sup>10</sup> 'Scratch' (in Greek *ghratzounizo*) is a verb metaphorically used for playing a string instrument, due to the upward and downward movements of the right hand that 'scratches' the strings. It may also have an evaluative connotation; a player who 'scratches' the instrument is an unskillful musician.

*rakomelo* for us, too. 'Have you ever tried this? It is an old recipe. It is the nectar of the gods!' Mitsos swallowed the hot, transparent liquid all at once while staring at the front door. A short, robust young woman smilingly entered. 'Here she is, Ourania! Our singer.'

Ourania greeted with a generous smile most of the people who had already gathered in the place. Her manners appeared friendly but quite self-contained; besides, as a singer, the front-woman of the *kompania*, she was a popular character of the place. She was fully aware of her sovereign status, inspired by her identity as a singer, her role as a leading musician, and the appreciation of the people. In fact, she consciously performed this female singer identity; on and off stage she was the primadonna of the *kompania*, the focus of the music making.

Ourania passed by most of the tables with slow, careful movements and instantly attracted the *parees*' (pl., *parea* sing. - a 'group of friends') attention. Most people knew her by her first name and she shook hands with her. In fact, she was late. Nobody, however, complained, neither did she apologize about it. 'On time!' Haris teased her behind the bar. 'Make a tea for me. I have a sore throat today,' she replied more seriously. As with most of the singers I have ever met, Ourania had an obsession with her vocal chords. She then set her eyes on our table; nonetheless, I sensed that she had already noticed us earlier on without, however, expressing overtly her attention. Mitsos stood up and moved towards her; it was obvious that she was the leader of the *kompania*. With the advent of Ourania, all three of the *Amareion kompania* were gathered by the counter.

The patrons kept on ordering spirits or *rakomelo*, while chatting and joking in a friendly manner with friends. At some point, Aetna, exclaimed strenuously: 'Hey you! Are you going to play or what?'

### *Playing rebetiko music on stage*

The sounds of a *taximi* unfolding in the air calmed down the voices and laughter of the patrons.<sup>11</sup> Several patrons turned their heads towards Haris who was playing, absorbed in his improvisation, his head bent towards the fingerboard of his *bouzouki*. Next to him, Ourania was seated magnificently in a chair, as if she was seated on a throne, looking towards the audience with a serious and, at the same time, sedate glance. On her left, there was Mitsos, the guitarist, smiling modestly and ready to display his mastery. All three of them were placed on a stage; notably, *Amareion* was the only venue among the three featured in this ethnography, where music was performed on stage.

Placing rebetiko on stage is an old practice that originated together with the first professional shows of rebetiko musicians. However, there are several references describing small-scale venues without a stage where the performance was taking place in a friendlier atmosphere. *Palko* ('stage') is actually a word that in Greek language denotes the musical practice, too. 'Being on the *palko*' is a phrase that literally means participation in musical performance. The performance of a rebetiko *kompania* from the elevated position of the *palko* places the musicians in a prominent location within

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<sup>11</sup> *Taximi* (from the Turkish word *taksim*) is a form of musical improvisation in rebetiko music, based on the *dhromoi* (literally, 'roads', the rebetiko modes which have common names and structures with Turkish makams) of the main melodic line of the song.

the space of music making. The stage clearly distinguishes the musicians from the patrons; it becomes a social barrier that symbolically manifests their identities in the performance context because it emphatically differentiates them as performers. This 'on stage' performance underpins the principal concept that overall features the establishing rationale and character of 'ethnic' music making in café *Amareion*: what is actually happening there every Sunday afternoon is primarily conceived as a fixed concert, not a revelry (*ghlendi*).

Haris finished his *taximi* and turned his head towards his fellow-musicians; it was about time for them to 'enter' the song. His improvisation style was quite temperate, in the less-elaborated style of the first generation of rebetiko musicians. Mitsos followed him discreetly, with clear-cut accompaniments set on the rhythmic patterns. 'What has Zeus got to do with you?' shouted humorously one of the most regular patrons of rebetiko afternoons, Kostas, a fine-art student and enthusiastic rebetiko fan. 'Zeus' was a nickname invented by Kostas that referred to Haris. Haris has a long beard and his long hair is caught in a braid, behind his bald forehead; his physical appearance, then, resembles the ancient god. More than this, however, his hair style and long white shirt speak of a typical 'new age' appearance that keeps up with the 'ethnic' aesthetics of *Amareion* world.

Each song was followed by the next, after a little pause that allowed people to applaud the musicians. In contrast to Haris, who avoided expressing his gratitude, Ourania often responded with a moderate, suave smile. Obviously, the applause empowered the qualities of her singing and amplified her expressiveness and confidence as a performer. 'I'm "fed" by the ways people look at me. I can receive the

vibes. Sometimes the food is not very good, so I cannot be inspired. There are times that, they feed me well – and I can see this in their faces. Then, I can fly in the seven skies,’ she explained in a discussion we had later. ‘Usually, we worry about Ourania. Suddenly, something might let her down or bother her. She is even capable of stopping singing,’ confided Mitsos once. He himself had a humorous and teasing attitude in the ways he communicated as a musician with people. Often, in the time between songs, he would wink at a friend; there were other times when, ‘there is a female there...and she electrifies me and I can’t pay attention to anyone else. As if I perform only for her.’

Haris seemed to ignore Kostas’ teasing comment. As a more self-contained musician, he had a performance behavior that was a counterbalance to the attitudes and expressive means of his co-musicians. ‘Cheers to Ourania!’ proposed a man holding a glass of *rakomelo* and pointed at the singer. She nodded showing gently her approval.

Πόνους έχω εγώ κρυμμένους μες στα φύλλα της καρδιάς  
με τα μαγικά σου μάτια όταν, φως μου, με κοιτάς<sup>12</sup>

(translation)

I have pains hidden in the leaves of my heart  
When you look at me, my light, <sup>term of endearment</sup> with your magic eyes

Singing these lyrics of a song composed by Vamvakaris she closed her eyes *windily*. In fact, the expressive means employed by Ourania, and most of the rebetiko singers I met were quite moderate and self-contained. At the same time as her voice externalized deeply felt sentiments, her body appeared to absorb and transform these sentiments to an internal, veiled expressive dynamic. ‘I’m a rebetiko singer. I don’t

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<sup>12</sup> The song was composed by Markos Vamvakaris and recorded in 1936 (Odeon GA 1959/GO 2509).

play theatre. My power is my voice, not my movements.’ In fact, the way Ourania was seated - resting her arms on her thighs, which were often covered by long Indian style dark skirts – communicated a sense of dominance.<sup>13</sup> Due to the impact of her robust presence, her posture embodied, moreover, the power to mediate the confident qualities of her performance. ‘You can feel that her voice goes through her entire body and comes out of her mouth. Together with her voice, you can hear the sound of Ourania as a whole’ explained Katerina, also a fine art student and frequenter of the café. This was also evident in the moderate, but graceful ways she played in certain songs the *zilia*.<sup>14</sup> Without employing dramatic expressive gestures and facial expressions, Ourania’s body released the power of music - the music that her voice simultaneously delivered; this way, her stillness could ideally transport the listener to her ‘seven skies’.

Haris quickly looked at Mitsos; they agreed that she was in *meraki*. The language of the eyes was an important code of communication for both musicians; Ourania, as a front-woman that mainly attracted the attention of the people, used to make eye contact with them less often. Ways of looking at each other – in the context of performance -codified thus ways of expressing approval of their mastery, tracing a ‘green note’,<sup>15</sup> indicating the end of a song or the specific point where a musician resumes playing. More than anything else, though, talking with the eyes is eventually a way of sharing the total performance experience. It is a dialogic channel for communicating recurring feelings of satisfaction, discomfort, indulgence, pleasure - of the rebetiko musician’s way of being in the world.

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<sup>13</sup> Ourania’s style is also ‘ethnic’.

<sup>14</sup> *Zilia* are small rounded metal pairs of cymbals, attached on the thumb- and the middle- finger of each hand. Traditionally, the female singers of *smyrniiko* and early rebetiko song used to play them.

After about an hour, Ourania looked back at her fellow-musicians. Mitsos rested his guitar at the corner of the stage, while Haris put his *bouzouki* aside and stepped towards the bar.

### *Ourania and I*

Mitsos came back to our table. 'That was the end of the first part,' he explained. My friend had to go; I was now left alone for the rest of the performance. 'Well, I noticed that you prefer the Vamvakaris' generation of rebetiko,' 'This is the true rebetiko. After the Vamvakaris' generation things got blurred. Sure, some of early Tsitsanis [songs] is welcome!' he explained in a serious tone. I looked towards Ourania, who enjoyed a second cup of tea at the bar. Mitsos sensed that I wished to talk with her. 'Would you like to go there?'

'Let me introduce you, Dafni' he suggested kindly. She looked at me a bit removed. She already knew why I was there; Haris told her. 'Oh, you're the one who's doing the research.' 'Congratulations on your singing,' I replied. I avoided talking straight <sup>forward</sup> about my research project. Ourania looked a little worried about me. She did not reply; she only turned towards Mitsos and commented cynically 'We are great!' 'Have you sung for years now?' I went on. 'I'm not a singer!' Now she was clearly in a defensive mood. I laughed kindly; Ourania was apparently worried by the fact that as a researcher I was about to ask her 'difficult', specialized questions. There was something more important about her reaction, though, as I came to realize later on.

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<sup>15</sup> 'Green note' is a slang expression used among folk musician denoting a musical mistake. A synonym

Ourania felt that my presence in the café attracted the attention of the audience. I was there with a tape-recorder and a notebook and I could overhear sometimes people opening discussions about my presence in the café. She thought that this might threaten her own status there; she needed to remain the main point of reference. However, she later acknowledged that her worries were <sup>un</sup>worthy. She was a performer; I was a listener with special interests, who, finally, also focused upon her. ‘I suppose you’re doing well, though,’ I replied and returned to my seat. Haris indicated to Mitsos that the break was over.

*‘Buy them drinks!’*

Φυσάει ο μπάτης χτυπάει το κύμα  
Τρελό μικρό μου με κάνεις θύμα.<sup>16</sup>

*(translation)*

The sea breeze blows, it hits the wave  
My crazy little one, you make me your victim

The second part started with a more playful song, a *hasaposerviko* (2/8) dated from 1947. Soon, the vivacious song style motivated some of the listeners to sing along with Ourania. Others joined by knocking on the edge of the table following the rhythm, others by shaking their heads, or tapping their feet. Haris was playing with his left leg resting upon his right knee; this was a typical *mangas* style posture. His *bouzouki* was a three-stringed instrument. ‘That’s the authentic instrument. The other [i.e. the four-stringed] is for folk song...very conceited.’ As ‘suitors of the authentic sounds’ – in

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term also commonly used is *faltso* (‘false note’).

<sup>16</sup> The song was composed by Ioanna Yeorghakopoulou and Haralambos Vasiliadhis (HMY AO 2737/OGA 1230).

Mitsos' own words - the rebetiko *kompania* of *Amareion* used to perform without any electric amplification. 'Original *rebetes* used no amplification,' explained Mitsos. 'You see, music is like a woman. If she is truly beautiful, she does not need to wear lipstick and make up.'

Because the instruments were not amplified and Ourania was singing without a microphone, the people had to take care to keep their voice dynamics low. There were a few times, however, when the patrons' noises annoyed the musicians, especially Ourania. Sometimes they complained gently at the end of the song. This was often Haris' responsibility: 'Guys, please, talk a bit lower, we can't play.' There was one case, though, when a so-called *parexighisi* ('misunderstanding') happened.

One time, while the *kefi* ('high spirits') was obviously rising in the café, a *parea* of young people begun to make jokes and tease one another loudly.<sup>17</sup> This is actually a usual expression of communality among groups of friends. Soon, the *parea* of the next table followed them and participated in the joking and teasing. Inevitably, their loud voices and laughter disturbed the musicians and the listeners. Ourania was seriously annoyed, while she was singing:

Χθες το βράδυ, Χαρικλάκι  
Είχες βάλει τ' οργανάκι  
Και γλεντούσες μ' ένα αλάτι  
Κάτω στο Πασαλιμάνι<sup>18</sup>

(translation)

Last night, Hariklaki,

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<sup>17</sup> For the term *kefi* see chapter 12, *Nostalgia, melancholy, meraki and rebetiko-topia*.

<sup>18</sup> The song was composed by Panayiotis Tountas and sung by Roza Eskenazy. It was recorded in 1933, Parlophone B 21674/101321.

You turned on the sweet barrel organ  
And you were reveling with a bum  
Down in Pasalimani

On the last verse the quality of her voice became more flat and serious. Nonetheless, the ‘troublemakers’ deliberately ignored or probably failed to understand the austere warning that her tone of voice conveyed. Ourania was now infuriated. While singing, almost in a blaring way, the first verse of the couplet, where the melody is in the high register, she suddenly stopped.

Ζηλεύω και κλαίω...

*(translation)*

I’m jealous and I cry...

Pause. All that was heard, for a moment was the sound of Haris’ *bouzouki* fading out upon the unfinished musical phrase. Then a freezing silence unfolded in the cafe. Mitsos looked at Ourania embarrassed; he bent his head looking at the stage floor. Haris’ face took a sober and sombrous expression. They both expected her to explode. ‘If you’re *manges*, you wouldn’t behave like that!’ she shouted breaking the silence. She cast her eyes stiffly on the people who caused the disturbance. For a few minutes, she remained silent. There was no response. The ‘troublemakers’ looked really nervous and ashamed; a few of them even blushed. The eyes of the audience were nailed on them. She turned her head back to Haris and Mitsos: ‘Let’s go again, guys!’ and went on lowering her voice ‘Play the *Egho Mangas Fenomouma!*’

Εγώ μάγκας φαινόμενα  
Να γίνω από μικράκι  
Κατάλαβα τα έξυπνα  
Κι έπαιζα μπουζουκάκι <sup>19</sup>

(translation)

I looked like I was about to become a *mangas*  
Ever since I was a little kid  
I used to understand clever things  
And I used to play the sweet *bouzouki*

The song Ourania selected was not accidental; it talks about someone who was ‘born-to-be’ a *mangas*. ‘This is what they needed to listen to! I chose this song, because it is a lesson.’ Gradually, the atmosphere relaxed. Now the ‘troublemakers’, obviously stricken by her reproachful comment, tried to concentrate quietly on the music making. At the end of the song, Mitsos released a sigh of relief. Haris winked at him; the trouble was over. ‘I expected her to leave,’ he explained later. ‘She had done so before...but I think that after a little talk we had in the past she realized that this is not right.’ Before the next song began, she stared for a moment towards the regretful faces of those she reprehended. She smiled at the waitress and ordered: ‘Buy them drinks!’

The *parexighisi* was over: Ourania reinstated order in *Amareion*. Initially, the troublesome listeners failed to comply with the conventional codes of listening and participating in the music making. They disregarded what is broadly considered as the ‘proper’ way of experiencing rebetiko; they failed to respect other listeners and the musicians.<sup>20</sup> Ourania felt that she should berate them and show them the ‘right’ way of

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<sup>19</sup> The song was composed by Mihalis Genitsaris. It was recorded in 1937, Columbia DG 6312/CG 1601.

<sup>20</sup> Performers usually admonish listeners who misbehave within the performance event. For a similar incident see Baily (1988:117).

listening. Being the central performer, she sensed that she was responsible for advising the audacious customers on how to behave properly. This is why she deliberately chose to re-start the music with a *mangas* song. For her, a proper listener is a *mangas*. Thus, she invoked a rebetiko moral value – the *mangas* qualities - because she was aware that they would feel discomfort by her reproach. In this way, Ourania manifested, in addition, her own perception of *mangas*. By defining *mangas* paradigmatically, she instructed the audience in new meanings of the concept. When she later sensed their changing attitude, she generously compensated them; she treated them to drinks.

Since her instruction took place publicly, she should also publicly forgive them. Ultimately, her attitude was more than advisory. She overtly consolidated and reinstated her status - that was previously offended - in front of the audience by restoring her relationship with the insolent listeners. The way she exhibited her forgiveness reasserted her generous yet rigorous nature; this way, she secured her power and amplified her popularity in *Amareion*.

The deviation from the conventional ways of appreciating rebetiko that caused the *parexighisi* speaks further of the ways musicians in *Amareion* view rebetiko music. ‘Rebetiko is a kind of art music,’ stressed Haris. Because it is considered as a ‘respectful tradition’ (Haris’ words), people should honor it carefully. Rebetiko thus is not regarded simply as an urban folk musical genre; it deserves to be treated with reverence and contemplation in the same way as well-established art music genres. In fact, this concept – that implies the elevation of rebetiko song to an ‘art’ status – was decisively promoted during the second revivalist era. ‘You see, today there is no doubt. Rebetiko is part of our history. Why do we place our ancient statues in museums?’

Because they are art, the art of our land. And everyone from all over the world goes there and admires them. This is what a rebetiko performance should be today. An ancient art we respect' (Mitsos' words).

### *People on rebetiko*

After a few visits I became a frequenter of *Amareion*. The people of the place began to recognize me. Haris and the other musicians used to greet me by my first name every time I entered the place. This supplied me with a feeling of belonging and made me feel comfortable to go on with my work. 'You don't miss a gig!' noticed enthusiastically Kostas, one of the regular customers of the place. 'You neither!' I replied. 'She is now a rebetiko-face!' Aetna teased and suggested 'Are you in for a drink?'

We sat at a table together with Kostas. 'Here, for the *Amareion* veterans!' the waitress offered us some *rakomelo*. 'Well, Dafni, you see we have the honors here,' argued Aetna humorously. 'We have built this place,' argued in a more serious way Kostas.<sup>21</sup> 'Is this the only day of the week you come here?' I asked. 'Rebetiko afternoons are my favorite – but from time to time I come here to see other concerts too,' answered Aetna. Kostas also attended regularly the Arab and Oriental ensemble on Fridays. 'The others are also okay, but I like the atmosphere of rebetiko afternoons more.' 'Why are these afternoons so special?' I asked. 'Because you come here and there is a rebetiko mood. I mean, the people are free, relaxed...they are like us...we are

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<sup>21</sup> A metaphoric phrase meaning 'we have frequented this venue ever since it opened'.

like a big *parea* here,' explained Kostas. Aetna added 'It is a habit. You know, like you buy your newspaper every Sunday morning... in the afternoon there is *Amareion*.'

In a minute, Amalia, the waitress, joined our company. In summer time, Amalia visits Greek islands and sells jewelry on the street together with her boyfriend. From time to time she travels to Thailand and India to buy her merchandise. She is covered with Indian jewelry herself. 'Most of the people here are the same style,' she assured me, puffing a cloud of smoke out of her mouth. 'You visit a bar with mainstream music and everyone is dressed fashionably and poses...They follow lifestyle magazines.' Kostas was more skeptical, 'This is the mainstream...they like the music they see in video clips.' 'It is a matter of knowledge,' explained Aetna. 'Most of them have no interests, no quest for alternative things.' 'What about people here?' I asked. 'There are guys here who oppose the norms. They don't follow western nonsense,' replied Amalia, while Aetna was more categorical, 'Here, we are another planet!' 'Well, I think it is obvious,' argued Kostas and went on. 'It is the rebetiko philosophy that links the people here. To be marginal.' 'To trip out!' Aetna added. 'It is the sense of being in a different world...where musics are true,' stressed Amalia. 'They come from the depths of the soul...they are not rational...they transport you to a land of magic...and you feel different, renewed.'

In fact, most of the people I met in *Amareion* were students and young people with a neglected air, which illustrated an attraction to 'new age' liberalism.<sup>22</sup> Others were more politically orientated; they attempted to explain their favour towards rebetiko as an anti-establishment expression. Tzimis, for example, a member of a local

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<sup>22</sup> The majority of them used to wear 'ethnic' accessories and Indian foulards; men also used to have long hair or African style tresses.

anarchist group and an old acquaintance of mine whom I met again in *Amareion* argued that, 'Rebetiko is the raw truth said by people who suffered.' His girlfriend Alexandre, a French visiting student in the local University and member of an activist group who recently occupied an old building of Ano Poli, knew about rebetiko before she came to Greece. 'It was a music banned by those in power,' she stressed in a serious tone.

Such worldviews and approaches of rebetiko song clearly recall the political and ideological orientation of the first revival era. These groups of contemporary liberals and activists represent, however, a counter-culture that additionally embodies a 'new age' spirit. Although they resent globalization, they are interested in 'world music' as an alternative music to 'imported commercialized trash'. 'Difference is a right...it is beautiful to be different...and we need to support ethnic traditions of the world before it is too late,' explained Tzimis. In addition, they are against cultural homogenization, because they believe that, 'ethnic musicians still remain true artists; they don't sell off their art...they don't sell out their image...' (Tzimis' words). Evidently, these counter-culture adherents, like Tzimis and Alexandre, were attracted to the 'ethnic' aesthetics of *Amareion*; and they seemed to enjoy listening to rebetiko in an 'ethnic' bar.

Gradually, new people joined our company. The discussion of rebetiko stimulated them. One of them, who was a *baghlama* student, disagreed with Aetna: 'You think rebetiko is all about hash and marginality...This is what its opponents propagate.' His words echoed rebetological arguments of earlier decades. Obviously, he was aware of the long-standing intellectual debates that emerged in the name of

rebetiko. This was evident in the ways he supported the genre – by associating it with the Greek past. ‘Don’t you know, that the *bouzouki* comes from Byzantine years? And before that, there is an ancestor of *bouzouki* in ancient Greek music? And then, later, the revolutionaries of 1821 [of the Greek War against Ottoman rule], like Makriyiannis, used to revel with *bouzouki*?’

Aetna deliberately ignored his provocative statements. Luckily, she changed the subject and thus forestalled further tension in the atmosphere. ‘There are so many *parees* today here...’ she noticed. ‘Look, people come here with their friends, they sit around a table and get drunk...isn’t it nice?’ ‘I guess it is something they are waiting for throughout the week,’ Kostas seconded her. In fact, for many customers, Sunday rebetiko afternoons in *Amareion* are an important part of their weekly routine cycle of activities. Because it takes place every Sunday, the rebetiko performance becomes part of what is broadly called ‘weekend culture’, a concept that describes the set of activities and habits urbanites commonly practice in their leisure time.

‘Sunday is rebetiko!’ stated a customer enthusiastically. ‘Because music making takes place in the afternoon, you can drink and, then, there is enough time to rest.’ It appears that the timing of the performances was not accidentally arranged. It is worth noting that *Amareion* is the only venue I visited that follows an afternoon timetable for rebetiko music making. ‘Because it is Sunday, many patrons cannot stay up late. It is better this way. They can relax and enjoy the music without any worry,’ explained Haris, who organized the programme. ‘Now we can also revel on Sundays...all the patrons of *Amareion* are accustomed to it...they wait for Sunday to come’ (a patron).

### *Rebetiko and intoxication*

Rebetiko goes together with alcohol. Drinking and drug use are special rituals in the rebetiko world. Playing and listening to rebetiko in entertainment places is accompanied by alcohol drinking, sometimes in enormous quantities. In fact, intoxication - from alcohol drinking and hashish smoking to cocaine and heroin use - is, traditionally, an important aspect of rebetiko culture often discussed in lyrics.

Today, although it is illegal to smoke hashish, several of the musicians and patrons I met in *Amareion* and other venues enjoyed sharing a *gharo* together.<sup>23</sup> Because it is forbidden to do this inside the café, they may sometimes find a nearby hideaway, where they gather as a *parea* to share their *mavro*. Sharing something secret and illegal consolidates the bonds of *parea* and enhances a sense of belonging to a group of friends. Moreover, as an illegal practice, it satisfies the individual need to feel different, non-conformist and subversive.

One Sunday I arrived at *Amareion* while Haris was unlocking the front door. It was still quite early. Soon Mitsos came. 'I brought something special,' he whispered with enthusiasm, 'rare stuff.' Haris looked at him with his eyes wide open: 'Should we try it?' It was obvious that they were talking about hashish. 'Let's go, then! Are you coming with us? We're going for a joint nearby,' he smiled at me. I was puzzled. On one hand, I wished to experience hash smoking together with them; however, I was worried about the effects and the prospects of my fieldwork. I preferred not to take a risk and excused myself, although they invited me: 'Come, you don't know what you

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<sup>23</sup> *Gharo* is a recent slang word that comes from *tsigharo*, the Greek word for 'cigarette'. It is used to denote cigarettes spiked with hashish.

miss.’ I boggled. ‘Okay, Mitsos, don’t insist’. Haris saved me from the difficult position. I smiled. ‘Next time.’

They came back looking somewhat ‘high’ (*mastouromenoi*) laughing at each other.<sup>24</sup> ‘How was it?’ I asked ‘Now I can play music as a *rebetis*,’ answered Mitsos calmly. Haris stepped behind the counter and offered us a big piece of syruped cherry. ‘The old musicians knew better. How else can one write such truthful songs?’ ‘It is the magic filter of rebetiko!’ added Mitsos. ‘Here, and elsewhere in the world, hash smoking is a tradition. Our grandfathers knew how to do it. Oriental medicine also uses hashish. You see, guys, it heals your soul and you fly away, far away.’

I was curious to see how they were going to perform that day. When Ourania arrived they also secretly shared a *mavro* with her. ‘Oh, *Panaghia mou* [Orthodox Virgin Mary] give me a second life to taste more of it,’ sighed Ourania, looking at me. ‘I feel so high that I can send my voice to heaven,’ she confided. This was, in fact, one of the few times that she talked seriously about herself. They grabbed the instruments and stepped on stage. She followed them slowly. The way they played that day was unprecedented.

Haris played his introductory *taximi* by ‘pinching’ the strings. Each tone of his improvisation came out with a distinct expressiveness, clear and meaningful within its resonance. ‘This is a filigree,’ Ourania whispered to him, while Mitsos embraced his guitar and listened in a relaxed mood. Soon she entered the song. Her voice had a gloss of hoarseness over the usual metallic quality of her singing. Instantly, she would move

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<sup>24</sup> *Mastouromenos*, (sing.) is a slang term that describes one in a state of intoxication (‘stoned’).

her voice upward either in a playful, mincing way or in a wailing outbreak. Aetna, who was sitting next to me, was obviously impressed. ‘Ah, she is like an ancient priestess!’ Ourania was staring ahead, serene with her eyes half-closed. She did not focus on anyone specifically in the audience. Mitsos accompanied them looking absorbed in his hand movements. At the end of the song Ourania praised the *bouzouki*-player: ‘Hey, immortal Haris!’

While a few enthusiastic frequenters of rebetiko afternoons acknowledged the different qualities of the *kompania*’s performance that day, the rest of the audience appeared less sensitive to this. The place was packed with *parees* chatting and joking quietly. After the break I was invited to join Alexandre’s company and shared a table with a young couple of hippy-style students, Maria and Petros. They were talking about a party they enjoyed last night. There were no comments on the music making. ‘Today, it is something else,’ I commented in an attempt to initiate a discussion on that particular rebetiko performance. ‘It is great! As it is every Sunday afternoon here!’ replied Maria. She did not seem to have noticed any major difference. Then, they continued narrating funny stories about last night. I joined them. ‘What do you drink?’ Petros bought a round of drinks for us; we were all drinking vodka.<sup>25</sup> We toasted together, ‘*Ade*, [Greek exclamation expressing exhortation], to our health!’ Soon, we came closer and felt more comfortable with each other, although we had only recently met. We shared a second round. In the mean time, the second part of music making had started; but we were absorbed in our chatting.

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<sup>25</sup> It is noteworthy that in *Amareion*, listening to rebetiko was also accompanied with western alcoholic beverages, such as vodka, whisky, rum, etc. *Ouzo* and wine, which are spirits traditionally associated with rebetiko music, were also served. Drinking practices in *Amareion* rebetiko context display therefore a fusion: they combine drinking practices associated with bar culture (drinking vodka, whisky, or *sfinakia*, ‘shots’), together with those typical of *taverna* venues and, moreover, the re-invented Cretan traditional spirit (*rakomelo*).

I began to realize then that there was a different way of living *Amareion* rebetiko afternoons. Although we respected the *kompania* and lowered our voices, we were all concerned with ‘making the *parea*’ (*kanoume parea* according to the Greek expression). We were principally enjoying our encounter and sense of sharing; then the music. Apparently, we ignored what was happening on stage. Nonetheless, the ways we approached each other and ‘made’ our *parea* were practices inspired by this rebetiko performance context. From time to time we stopped for a while and stared towards the stage with appreciation. We knew rebetiko was there; and we felt that rebetiko was the reason for being there – it was what we primarily had in common.

Suddenly, Amalia brought a tray with four small glasses of vodka shots (*sfinakia*). Petros placed a glass in front of each one of us. ‘All at once!’ he shouted enthusiastically. We clinked all together our glasses, joining our hands over the centre of the table. Until then, the places I happened to share *sfinakia* were bars with western pop and rock music. It was the first time that I practiced *sfinaki* drinking with a company of friends in a rebetiko venue. And, moreover, *Amareion* was one of the few rebetiko venues – an ‘ethnic’ bar – where this unusual fusion, namely listening to rebetiko and sharing shots, could possibly happen. Nevertheless, the sharing of *sfinaki* drinking was a catalyst in the making of *parea*. Obviously, we coordinated our drinking; we shared, therefore, the experience of intoxication and the heightening of *kefi*. By doing this, we lived together, as a *parea*, on a Sunday rebetiko afternoon; the pretext for our encounter and, subsequently, the context where we made our *parea* was rebetiko music.

*'To live like a rebetis'*

The next afternoon I went to *Amareion* for a coffee. I was hoping to find Haris and Amalia there and have a little chat. 'Alive?' asked Amalia smiling. 'She is a tough glass!' shouted Haris.<sup>26</sup> I sat at the bar resting my head on my palm. 'You know what I like in you?' said Amalia. 'That you live it! I don't know about the research, but I can see you're in it.'<sup>27</sup> I was pleased. The way Amalia commented on my attitude reflected how I 'looked' in the field. I felt satisfied by the fact that in her eyes I seemed to 'live' rebetiko performances in *Amareion*. 'Apparently, I don't look like a meticulous researcher,' I wrote in my notes later on. By the time, though, I finished this sentence, a new question was formulated: 'I wonder, what, in fact, do they think about me?'

Haris started the discussion. 'Well, this is the rebetiko way of living.' 'Is there such a thing today?' I asked. Most of the musicians I met used to assure me that rebetiko is dead – that there is no 'real' rebetiko today, because 'real' *manges*, 'real' rebetiko *tavernes*, 'real' rebetiko musicians do not exist anymore. Haris went on: 'Well, of course, since Markos [meaning Vamvakaris] and people like him are dead, there is not a rebetiko world anymore. Commercialization and all these publications have ruined it. Such rebetiko, you know, this music of marginal and deprived people, cannot exist today, because there are not similar conditions, I mean, we are in a different historic phase,' he theorized. 'So, what about the rebetiko way of living?' I went on. 'This is the rebetiko philosophy. It is the eyes [with which] you see the world' He hesitated for a moment and finished his line. 'Like what Amalia told you before...that you live it!'

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<sup>26</sup> A common idiomatic phrase used for someone who may consume a lot of alcohol without getting drunk.

‘Is this a rebetiko attitude?’ I smiled. ‘It is, because you look like you know how to have a good time, you know how to leave your worries behind. You are a free person.’ ‘So, do you think that drinking with friends and having a good time makes you a free person?’ I tried to understand this ‘rebetiko philosophy’ Haris was talking about. ‘Not only that. To live the rebetiko way of life means to make your life without conventions, in your own way. Take Nikolas Asimos, for example.<sup>28</sup> He was not a *rebetis* musician, but he lived like a *rebetis*.’ Obviously, for Haris, the rebetiko state of being inspired a charming anti-conformism. His rebetiko ‘philosophy’ involved a set of attitudes and moral values that characterized legendary subversive personalities. ‘Not to be the way they want you to be, but the way yourself want,’ he summarized in a philosophical tone. ‘This is what you will finally learn from rebetiko,’ he concluded in a pedantic manner.

Instantly, I realized the way the discussion was going. Beyond theorizing on the rebetiko way of living, Haris was talking about me. He ended up with a prediction: that I will finally understand what rebetiko is really about. For him, rebetiko music was mainly about one thing: to act freely, unconventionally. He seemed to believe that I was on the right way of reaching this ultimate rebetiko ethos and he was sure about the kind of understanding I was about to ‘achieve’. Evidently, his words implied that he himself was already there - in the rebetiko land of freedom. He regarded himself as an expert of this rebetiko philosophy; besides, he had been a rebetiko musician for years now. As such, he felt authorized to evaluate my behavior and the degree I successfully responded to this rebetiko lifestyle. I wondered to what extent the assured,

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<sup>27</sup> This is a slang expression (*eisai mesa*) meaning ‘you have understood what is going on’, ‘you got the point’.

<sup>28</sup> Nikolas Asimos was a Greek rock ballad singer and anarchist of the 1970’s who was highly influenced by rebetiko song and culture. He died of a heroin overdose.

sophisticated and rather pretentious way he articulated his thoughts was probably inspired by my own attitude towards him; by the fact, namely, that I was there to ask and learn things and he was one who provided the answers.

*'The musics I like'*

In the mean time Ourania appeared in *Amareion*. She was happy, because she had just bought some CDs. 'Let me put on some of this music for you.' She turned up the volume enthusiastically. I could not recognize the composer; it sounded like a 'world music' style of instrumental piece, apparently based on Byzantine chant and *dhimotiko traghoudhi*. It was a production of a local record company *En Hordhais*,<sup>29</sup> which had also recently instituted a 'School of Traditional and Byzantine Music', titled 'Expectation'. 'These are friends of mine,' said Ourania proudly. 'The composer is Kyriakos Kalaitzidhis. He studied Byzantine chant and *politiki mousiki*' ('music of Poli', that is, Constantinople).

'Cool!' said Amalia. 'Hey, do you like it? It is music to lose yourself in!' replied Ourania satisfied by Amalia's response. She turned the volume up further. 'Listen, listen, here! It is like Ottoman stuff!' she remarked pointing her finger assertively. 'Kyriakos told me that he was inspired in this piece by the Apocalypse of Apostle John,' she argued with wonder. Then she put another CD on. 'He is a Turk!' she said fascinated looking towards me. 'Oh, I know him. Erol Deran. He is a legend of the *kanun*,' confirmed Haris. 'This is authentic stuff – it is not contemporary.

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<sup>29</sup> This is an archaic phrase meaning 'in strings' inspired by the Biblical phrase 'in string and instruments you should praise Lord'. *En Hordhais* is also the name of a neo-traditional ensemble formed by people involved in the record industry.

Ottoman scholarly [in Greek *loghia*] music' he explained to me. 'Scholarly?' I asked wondering how Haris perceived 'scholarly' music. 'You know, art music, not folk'. 'This is what music means,' Amalia commented, 'it is magical, so emotional and wise, isn't it?'

Ourania asked Amalia for a *rakomelo*. '*Meraklonomai*.'<sup>30</sup> 'These are the kind of musics I love, you see' she explained and went on in a confidential tone 'I can't stand foreign music' 'But this *kanun* player is Turkish, I mean, he is a foreigner...', I hesitated. 'When I say foreign I mean western, classical music, jazz and that kind of stuff. Erol Deran plays music that I can understand...it is closer to our musics'. Ourania put on the third CD she wanted to listen to. I smiled; I recognized the singer. It was Socratis Malamas, a well-known *entehno* ('art' song) singer. He plays guitar ballads. 'I see, you like it!' she noticed. I liked Malamas' music. 'You can't listen to music if you don't understand the lyrics. And the lyrics speak to you when they're written in your own language,' she theorized. 'Well, you are a singer, you know how important the lyrics are, more than anyone else,' I supposed. 'Of course; this is something I see in people when I sing. There are lyrics they like very much – sometimes they sing along with me - and this makes them love the song too,' she confirmed proudly.

Mitsos stepped in carrying his guitar. 'I came to pick them up, we have a rehearsal,' he argued, 'but I can't see it happening!' 'Mitsos! The rehearsal and the rehearsal...Listen to this music!...That's the rehearsal. We learn from it, too,' replied Ourania, annoyed. Haris laughed. He looked at Mitsos' desperate expression. 'That's

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<sup>30</sup> Meaning 'I enter a *meraki* state of being', that is, 'I feel a great desire and pleasure'.

Ourania, our primadonna,' he whispered to me. Haris tried to make him feel better. He put on one of the CDs Ourania had just bought. 'Okay! It is unusual, isn't it?' he looked at the CD cover. 'Hmm...that Byzantine style composer!' 'Not only...He also mixes Ottoman and traditional music stuff,' remarked Ourania. He turned towards me. 'Very interesting stuff. You know, I like this kind of experimentation! At least, experimentation takes music somewhere...it is much healthier than this *skyladhiko* songs!' 'I see you all like the same kind of music,' I noticed.

'Well, yes and no,' replied Mitsos skeptically. 'Ourania is a great fan of the traditional and the Byzantine stuff – apart from rebetiko and *smyrnaiiko* song which she sings, of course.' 'And you? Do you like any other kind of music? For example, any western musical style?' 'I'm mainly concentrated on Byzantine, *dhimotiko* [*traghoudhi*] and rebetiko. I wouldn't say no to some musicians of the *entehno*, either. Western...definitely not classical music...one of the foreign musics I like is reggae. I used to like it in the past.' 'How come?' I was surprised. What had reggae music to do with Byzantine psalmody or the *dhimotiko traghoudhi*? 'Well, it is cool, relaxed...it is also the music of an oppressed people.'

Haris looked eager to enter the discussion. 'Reggae is like our rebetiko! It talks about people's problems. African stuff...They have also a kind of hash songs, marijuana.' He went on talking about himself: 'I used to be a rocker...You know, several rebetiko musicians today began with rock music...even with heavy metal.' 'And how did you end up playing the *bouzouki*?' I asked. 'I liked the music. And I thought, why don't you catch the Greek rock instrument? That's the *bouzouki*! What is rebetiko? It is our rock! Did you know that many of the people who come here also

like rock music a lot?' His question opened for me a new question. It would be useful to discuss with some *Amareion* patrons about the musics they liked apart from rebetiko. This would possibly support my attempt to understand the way they approach and think about rebetiko music today. It would open a window to their musical world, part of which was Sunday rebetiko afternoons in the cafe *Amareion*.

The way I formulated my questions stimulated, however, further considerations regarding the process of doing ethnography. Haris' statement opened a new path of accessing ethnographic knowledge. Beyond any original scopes and plans I had set out beforehand, there were new ones emerging out of the fieldwork experience. I realized that the field itself – more specifically my relationship with the field - was showing the way of making the ethnography, too.

### *Music is a place*

A few days later, I called my friends Tzimis and Alexandre. We met at my place. 'I was thinking...what other kinds of music do people who frequent rebetiko afternoons in *Amareion* favor?' 'Well, they like other musics, too...I've seen, for example, several of them in these free rock concerts organized in the university campus.' 'So probably they are also attracted to rock,' I speculated. 'Don't you see them? Their style...It is obvious that they're after alternative things.' Haris' words started to make more sense. Alexandre, a French visiting student, viewed rebetiko as a local 'ethnic' musical style, which she considered as a type of 'world music'. 'Well,' she explained, 'I listen to many different kinds of ethnic music: Moroccan, African, Gamelan...and rebetiko. I like rebetiko.'

The next Sunday I visited *Amareion* I attempted to discuss this issue with Kostas and Aetna. 'Look, rebetiko is an old music. When I was sixteen I used to listen to some punk rock. Now, as a student, I feel more mature. And I can appreciate the wisdom of this old music. I can't stand aggressive stuff... There is a kind of wisdom in rebetiko which is also hidden in other oriental musics, too.' 'So, you only like oriental music?' 'I like musics which are truthful, original. Certainly, I found this sincerity in rebetiko, in *smyrnaiiko*, in *politiko* song or in Arab music. Besides, these are age long traditions... I heard Chinese music is cool, too... Oh! and someone told me he heard some exciting stuff from Algeria the other day.' She paused for a moment thoughtfully. 'You must know these things better, I suppose; you are an ethnic musicologist.'<sup>31</sup>

'I also fancy the *café-aman* concerts in *Amareion*. Now and then, the Arab music day, too,' argued Kostas. 'What about the traditional ensembles who play here?' I asked. 'These are fascinating, too... but I don't always have the time and money to come here every night... My great love is rebetiko and all the situation here... and then, it is on Sundays,' explained Kostas, and he added, 'These Cretan traditional concerts are nice, too.' 'What about other kinds of music?' I wondered. 'Do you know something? I quite like the blues! Yes! They are the American rebetiko!' 'Do you frequent in any other venues apart from *Amareion*?' I tried to find out whether *Amareion* is the main entertainment place he favored. '*Lucky Look, Berlin*... [rock bars in Thessaloniki]... I often go to concerts, too. The other day I saw *Madredeus* [a contemporary Portuguese ethnic music ensemble]... and, then, I plan to go to see

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<sup>31</sup> Aetna and several other Greek people, including people who are familiar with music studies too, commonly misquote 'ethnomusicology' (*ethnomusikologhia*) as *ethniko-musikologhia*. This implies a misunderstanding of ethnomusicology as a musicology of various 'national musics', which is what the erroneous prefix *ethniko-* (*ethnikos* means 'national') suggests.

Diamanda Galas.<sup>32</sup> Did you know that she sings *San Pethano Sto Karavi* ['When I die on the Ship', an old rebetiko song], too? And *Kaighomai* ['I'm burning'].<sup>33</sup> And blues... Recently, she released a CD of songs from Armenia and Azerbaijan...Exciting!

Rebetiko then is not the unique musical world for people who frequent rebetiko afternoons in *Amareion*. There are other kinds of music making and musical entertainment they are attracted by. Some are more focused on 'ethnic' and 'oriental' music making, some are also adherents of 'foreign' music (*xeni*) - meaning western music in general - too. Regardless of their individual preferences, they all share common ideas about 'what makes a music *music*' (according to Mitsos' words). A musical genre - in this case rebetiko, as well as oriental and 'ethnic' music, or the blues and early rock - ought to be 'true' and 'sincere'; these credentials make a music authentic and original. Commercialization and music technology are regarded as alienating factors featuring the decadent mainstream music of the West. Next to this, there is a common dislike of *skyladhiko* – that is, contemporary Greek folk song. *Skyladhiko* is considered as a glamorous and popular musical style of low artistic value that primary serves the interests of the music industry and entertainment business. Rebetiko musicians who adopt the *skyladhiko* practices - such as those performing in *Ladhadhika* 'traditional' *tavernes* or in *rebetadhiko* clubs - are dismissed as *skartoi*, 'deficient', 'morally defective' (Mitsos' characterization).

'Music is a place. You listen to different musics - you travel to different places. Could you stay somewhere forever? You need to visit different places; this is why you

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<sup>32</sup> Diamanda Galas is a Greek-American female experimental opera style singer and pianist.

need to listen to different musics. If you remain somewhere forever, you will never truly know where you are. Because you won't understand what is next to you, what is far away from you. This is why I prefer rebetiko and ethnic musics; because they let me know where I am,' Kostas speculated. 'And where do you feel you are closer to?' 'In each one of the musics I favor. When I'm there, I'm all there.'

In the meantime Katerina, a fine art student and rebetiko patron, came and had a little chat with Aetna. I haven't seen her for a couple of weeks. 'Back from Constantinople?' Aetna asked her curiously. 'Forget it! Here we have become Americans!' She looked really excited. 'I've been to really cool *tavernes*, there. You know...original stuff. Only a few *tavernes* here have remained untouched' 'Do you know any such *tavernes*?' I asked. Instantly, I thought that it would be interesting to monitor the way adherents of rebetiko afternoons in *Amareion* experience rebetiko in other venues, too. 'Yes, *Bekris* is one of them...here in Ano Poli...if you're looking for a traditional *taverna*, you should go there.' I knew *Bekris*. I used to go there as a student. After I returned from England, I revisited the place and found that regular rebetiko performances were given there every day. It was still popular among students. By then, I was already strongly attracted by the idea of looking at *Bekris* as a paradigm of rebetiko *taverna* in Ano Poli. And this is what I finally did.

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<sup>33</sup> A rebetiko style song composed by Stavros Xarhakos for the fiction film *Rebetiko* directed by Kostas Ferris.

*Coffee chatting with Mitsos and Ourania. Rebetiko and Byzantine chant*

After several visits to *Amareion*, I found it necessary to meet the musicians of the *kompania* outside the performance context. I arranged together with Mitsos to go out for a coffee. 'Where are we going?' I asked him. 'I have a surprise for you,' he replied. We took the uphill road to the Tsinari area of Ano Poli and we reached the *Kipos* restaurant. He looked at me strangely. 'Should we order?' For a moment, I was surprised. The waitress was Ourania. 'I'll make a coffee for me, too and I will join you.'

Mitsos comes from Korinthos, a town in Peloponnese (southern Greece). He was a student in the local university. He studied theology. After graduating, he remained in Thessaloniki. 'I've made friends here...then I got involved with rebetiko...first we made some funny, amateur bands, then I took it more seriously.' 'How did you learn to play the guitar?' 'Listen, I'm self-taught. I used to listen to old rebetiko recordings and then I tried to play all by myself. Again and again. I used to favor some Theodorakis [music], Xarhakos...then some modern art song, like the Katsimiha brothers [a ballad duet]...Later, when I began playing for money, I decided to find a teacher...to show me some techniques...' 'What kind of teacher?' 'You see, that was a mistake. Because the man I hired did not play folk music...he was a classical guitar teacher. And I realized that classical guitar is for pedantic players; rebetiko, on the other side, is for lazy players. It has to do with a different logic; here [in rebetiko] you need more the feeling than the technique. Then, I began to read books by experts on rebetiko...And I realized that it was important to study Byzantine chant. And I did.' 'So, you studied Byzantine chant in order to play rebetiko better?' I tried to

understand. 'Not only for this reason. Generally, because of my admiration for Byzantine music. I met a great teacher, church cantor, and I also learned Byzantine notation and the *ihous* [=echoi] [the Byzantine musical modal system]. You know, rebetiko *dhromoi* ['roads', the rebetiko modes] are based on the Byzantine *ihoi* [nominative case].' 'What about *makams*?' I wondered. '*Makams* also come from Byzantine modes,' he assured me.

'What kind of stories do you tell there?' Ourania teased him, placing carefully our coffees on the table. 'You see, all these stories about the *makams* and the *ihoi* are like the stories about the names of this coffee. Some people call it Greek coffee, other Turkish. But the right name is Byzantine.'<sup>34</sup> Ourania laughed. It was the first time that she seemed more approachable. She left aside the severe and stiff attitude she had as a singer in *Amareion*. I felt as if I was meeting an actress off stage. In *Kipos* she was more benign and friendly. I was more comfortable with her. 'When did you start to play together?' I asked. 'Well, it was three to four years ago,' she tried to remember. 'And have you played together ever since?' 'Oh, no. First we had to 'find' each other [meaning to find ways of communicating as a *kompania*] ... we were different people...we had different ideas...later we tightened up as a *kompania*.'<sup>35</sup>

The discussion went along smoothly and in an effortless way. I realized that my decision to meet the musicians outside the performance context would significantly promote my approach and understanding of them. Off stage, for example, Ourania seemed to be closer to Mitsos and the two of them talked about rebetiko music making

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<sup>34</sup> In several coffee shops frequented by intellectuals in Thessaloniki, the menu describes this coffee as 'Byzantine'.

<sup>35</sup> The *Amareion kompania* is considered as a 'young' kompania. At the time I met them, Mitsos was thirty two, Ourania was twenty nine and Haris was thirty five years old.

as fellow musicians. In *Amareion*, Ourania gave the impression that she was more remote, and that, as a front woman, she had a supervising position over Mitsos. For a moment, I noticed her wrist. She wore a *komboshoini* (a black bracelet made of cotton knots, originally used for prayers in the Orthodox Christian monastic tradition). She spotted my attention. 'It keeps me safe. It takes my worries away,' she confided. Her *komboshoini* reminded me of the photo of Mario. 'I think Mario has one, too,' I commented. I was curious to see her response. 'Did she? Oh yes, I know...I know several people who wear this. It is fashionable...you know, you look somehow, mmm...uncanny!' she replied thoughtfully. We all paused for a moment. 'Do you believe?' I asked her kindly. 'Yes...'. She hesitated. 'Well, it is also fascinating...it is a trip...away from routine, boring everyday practicalities.' 'The *komboshoini*?' I tried to understand. 'Yes. How can I say this...? The *komboshoini* is a symbol...something mystical that I carry with me...and I have faith in it...it is something that leads to a magical, heavenly world.'

The discussion about religion seemed to stimulate both of them. I was puzzled. How can a musician who plays rebetiko – traditionally regarded as a subversive, marginal musical genre – be also a religious person? Mitsos confided his own story: 'When I graduated, I was in a dilemma whether to become a monk or not. I went to Athos and lived there for a while. When I came back, I fell in love with a woman. I then realized that I can't live without them. Devil is a female!' 'Is this what later led you to Byzantine chant?' I wondered. 'You know, I believe that Hellenic Orthodox civilization was magnificent! In every aspect. The letters, the art of music, everything...I am teaching and chanting Byzantine psalms, because I admire this great tradition. Rebetiko is rooted in this tradition.'

At that point I began to make sense of the - apparently paradoxical - relationship of Mitsos and Ourania as rebetiko musicians with Orthodox religion. They regarded Orthodoxy and Byzantine music basically as mystical and ‘uncanny’ practices and values; not as sanctified national emblems. During this fieldwork and later, these initial hypotheses, regarding the ideas of contemporary rebetiko musicians about Byzantine music and culture, were further strengthened and variously expanded. In fact, they were coming up again and again even after I decided to finish my field research and concentrate more on studying and thinking about what I had gathered.

*Dimitris’ theories: Ancient Greece, Orthodoxy and music making*

Ourania raised her arm signaling towards a man who came and joined our company. I had already seen him playing music on a Saturday evening in *Amareion*. His name is Dimitris Vasiliadhis and he is a *kanonaki* <sup>[kanun]</sup> <sup>the</sup> player in *Loxandra* ensemble. They play *politiko* and *smyrnaiiko* song, the traditions associated with the repertory of *café amans*. Mitsos felt proud to introduce his friend. ‘Here, Dimitris may explain things better. He learned to play the *kanonaki* in a traditional school; he also plays the *laouto* [‘lute’]. Now and again he is traveling to Constantinople; he attends lessons in *politiki lyra* [‘Constantinopolitan lyra’] there.’ ‘Well, he is also a star!’ commented Dimitris humorously. Mitsos took the initiative to lead the discussion. ‘Well, we were talking here about Byzantine chant and rebetiko.’ Straightforwardly, Dimitris began to theorize on the spot. ‘Of course, rebetiko is a child of Byzantine music...but a kind of folk one. It didn’t fully inherit the richness of Byzantine chant. In turn, the mother of Byzantine chant is ancient Greek music. So, you see, they all link...they are one

tradition.' He seemed quite firm and assured about his evolutionary model. I avoided responding to his ideas with questions that would probably irritate him. After all, that was not the reason I was there. I decided to change slightly the subject of conversation and approached him from a different direction. 'What kind of music do you like?' 'The kind of musics I play.' 'What about western music?' I asked. 'I don't like anything that comes from that way,' he replied in a tendentious tone. 'Why that?' 'Because western music is, you know, like maths. They cannot express feeling, emotions. They have, you see, the well-tempered system. Just twelve tones - that's all! Our traditions are far richer. We have all the microtones and complex rhythmic motifs ... Besides, don't you know that their music is based on ancient Greek music? The origins of all civilized musics are ancient Greek!' he insisted enthusiastically. Mitsos and Ourania seemed to admire his reasoning.

'Then, since this western art music originated in ancient Greece, it must worth a bit' I speculated upon his own statements. 'No, because they subsequently mixed it with Gregorian chant. Again, logic - they make music mechanically.' 'I see...so you like only non-tempered musical traditions?' I repeated my question. I needed to clarify whether he supported non-western musics in general or he preferred exclusively local traditions. 'I also like Arab and Middle Eastern musics...they are full of wisdom. You know, we are all linked via the *makam* system...and the link is Hellenic-Orthodox civilization. All this part of the world used to be one civilization...Then, unfortunately, some areas became Muslim.' I was getting confused. 'What do you think is wrong about it? *Makams* are used in Muslim areas, too,' I wondered. 'Muslims don't revel! They are not free, they are oppressed. Whereas Orthodox people know how to revel...you see, the heritage of ancient Greek festivals!' 'In western music making

there is a lot of reveling, too,' I went on. 'They revel without feeling... They take chemical drugs to relieve themselves...they are also oppressed by their religions. You know, Catholicism and the Dark Ages.'

His argumentation got increasingly complex. 'Don't you think that there are people here who may also feel oppressed?' 'The source of the problem here is all this imported nonsense. They try to debase our culture. You see, capitalism! Well, yes, this is what oppresses people here,' he replied, turning now from religion to socio-economic matters. I sensed bitterness in his words. 'Is it difficult for musicians like you, too?' I asked. 'Our great enemy is technology and, along with it, the music business.' While he was talking, Mitsos shook his head in support for his friend's impulsive argumentation. On the other side of the table, Ourania marveled at him quietly, almost as if she was listening to a preacher. Mitsos endorsed Dimitris' arguments. 'Businessmen need to make music as easy and fast as possible. This is why they need technology: to maximize their profits. They want computers to play our instruments; they make plastic music.' Ourania attempted to relax the tension of the discussion with a humorous comment: 'Who knows, maybe in the future I will be performing rebetiko like Yianni!' (The Greek-American, internationally popular, computer music composer).

*The Loxandra ensemble. A café-aman music concert in café Amareion*

The discussion I had with Dimitris stimulated my interest to visit café *Amareion* on a Saturday night. Every Saturday there were regular performances of *café-aman* music performed by the *Loxandra* ensemble, where Dimitris used to play *kanonaki*; Ourania was singing. Apart from the *kanonaki*-player, there was a percussionist (*touberleki* and *daires*), a violin player, as well as an *outi*<sup>[oud]</sup> player. I arrived there at around half past nine; the performance was programmed to start at ten thirty. While rebetiko gigs had an afternoon timetable, the *Loxandra* performances used to take place in the evenings. Because they were programmed as Saturday evening performances, they formed an important part of the ways the customers used to spend their weekend leisure time.

The place was dimly lit. The big candles burning at the ends of the bar added a ritualistic color to the atmosphere, which, overall, appeared more formal in comparison to rebetiko afternoons. Next to a few people who reminded me of rebetiko afternoon patrons the majority of the customers were older persons more formally dressed. Haris described them. 'Most of them are intellectuals, you know, educated people who used to be more extreme liberals as students. Now each one of them has a job, a girlfriend and a car...but they still like alternative things.' And he went on, 'This is why they can coexist with the younger people who are still essentially subversive; because they used to be like them.' 'So, do you think that these essentially subversive people will, later on become like them?' I wondered. Haris seemed to imply a model of 'being subversive'. 'It depends on each one. But, yes, I think that, in a way, for the young freaks we have here, the rebetiko experience is something that goes together with being a student. They don't go deep. Despite their faith in it, they still view it superficially.'

When the music started, people attended as if they were in a western classical music concert. They remained concentrated upon the musicians and kept silent. Here and then, they whispered comments into each other's ears. The musicians were seriously dedicated in the music making; they hardly looked at the audience. Only at the end of each piece the violin player used to express a modest 'thank you' in response to the moderate applause of the listeners.

The members of *Loxandra* ensemble had studied music in a local school of traditional music. Dimitris and Sotiris, the violinist, attended occasionally music seminars organized in Constantinople. What they called 'music of *café-amans*' involved actually a repertory made of urban songs from Asia Minor. Thus, for *Loxandra* people, *café-aman* music was mainly associated with urban musical styles – seen as 'oriental memories', according to a reviewer in a local entertainment guide. This oriental nostalgia was further connoted in the naming of the ensemble – *Loxandra*, that is a Constantinopolitan idiomatic version of the female name 'Alexandra'.

During the performance, which took place on stage, the musicians hardly changed postures; their facial expressions were quite limited and serious, too. Ourania seemed to enjoy the formality of the atmosphere. The songs she performed demanded intense rehearsals with the band. 'They are more complex songs than the rebetiko ones,' she explained, 'with frequent modal changes. They require long practice.' The qualities of her voice were suitable for the kind of music the *Loxandra* ensemble performed. She glissaded quickly and smoothly and delivered easily the microtonal passages and melodic declinations in an accurate and comfortable way.

‘How long have you been playing together?’ I asked Sotiris during the break. ‘About a year. We had this idea of making a band that would play the musics people used to enjoy in the past. People today are bombarded by various nonsense and untalented persons who call themselves musicians. *Skyladhiko* is ruling us; and it ruins us. They’re looking for a way out of this. That’s what we wish to offer.’ Loukas, the percussionist, followed on complaining. ‘Entertainment today is business. You can’t just be a good musician. This is the least that counts. First, you need to have an image. We are opposed to it. This is why we return to older musics – we return to the path we lost.’ They both sounded quite assertive. They reminded me of the assured and impulsive manners of Dimitris, the *kanonaki* player I met in *Kipos* restaurant.

Meanwhile, I noticed the way Ourania got off the stage and approached our company. She stepped towards our table walking freely, like a stranger through the various *parees* that packed the place. Although her presence still communicated a feeling of domination, her movements lacked the air of sovereignty that she used to emanate ~~in rebetiko~~<sup>afternoons.</sup>. She only greeted a couple of friends, also frequenters of rebetiko afternoons. After all, she had only recently joined the *Loxandra kompania*. ‘It is new territory for me,’ she argued. There were several listeners who approached and congratulated the instrumentalists. Nonetheless, the interaction between musicians and listeners remained relatively restrained and self-contained; it lacked the friendly and relaxed manners of communication that characterized the rebetiko afternoons. This is in fact an impression I had throughout the entire evening: that I was attending an art music concert which demanded serious attention. Joking, laughing and teasing had no place here; it was a formal performance that demanded suitable behaviour.

‘It is half past eleven. Let’s go back,’ suggested Dimitris. ‘They’re very rigorous with time here,’ whispered Ourania, obviously annoyed. ‘We’re professionals!’ she went on in an ironic tone. They took their positions on stage – almost the same way as in the first part. Before they even started playing the audience was already silent. ‘We’re now going to play a song that was recorded in 1903. We found the gramophone recording in Turkish archives. It is a traditional *hasapikos* from Poli,’ announced the violin player. Because several of the songs were unknown to the listeners, the members of *Loxandra* ensemble introduced them briefly to the audience. ‘1903? That’s really old. Unbelievable!’ whispered a man sitting at the next table. ‘They are experts, not amateurs,’ replied his girlfriend in a self-assured tone. Since the majority of the customers were not familiar with the songs performed, they could hardly sing along or participate actively in the music making. Besides, such expressions were incompatible with the formal character of the performance. However, the formal and serious character of the music making was soon about to be broken by an unforeseen incident that happened during the second part of the concert: the entrance of a couple of wandering Gypsy musicians into the café.

The leading instrumentalist of the duet, a *klaritzis* (‘*klarino* player’) opened the door wearing a gentle smile. He stepped towards the bar and asked Haris ‘May we, mister?’ His fellow musician, a *touberleki* player, was standing at the back. He looked somehow embarrassed. The spontaneous appearance of the wandering duo attracted the curiosity of the unsuspecting listeners. Instantly, the *Loxandra* performers, looking annoyed by the clatter, stopped playing. Haris nodded towards the violin player, who shook his head in acceptance. ‘We respect Gypsy musicians. They’re the best

musicians not only here but elsewhere in the world,' Sotiris argued later. Loukas added: 'In *café-aman* music, too.'

Fifteen minutes or so of performance was enough to 'warm up' the atmosphere. 'It happened once before,' explained Haris. 'They like them; it's the real thing!' Shortly, the rhythmic improvisation of the *touberleki* player stimulated the enthusiastic response of a woman. Listening to a *tsifteteli* rhythm, she began to move her body moderately almost as if she was dancing. 'Come, come on!' her boyfriend tried to encourage her following the rhythm with a loud handclapping. The woman moved her breasts pretentiously, attempting to imitate humorously a belly dancer. 'This is the *Time of the Gypsies!*' another man from her company recognized with excitement the tune. Indeed, the Gypsy duo performed a tune from the soundtrack of Emir Koustouritsa's movie. I was surprised. Most of the Gypsy wandering musicians I had listened to in the past used to play Greek folk songs or fashionable tunes.<sup>36</sup> The inclusion of a soundtrack musical piece sounded, in a way, a sophisticated choice.

'How come they play this tune?' I asked Haris. 'They've smelled the *koultouriaridhes*' (literally 'the cultured people', a derogatory characterization for intellectuals and people of the arts). 'This is the real tradition!' broke <sup>in</sup> the man who had applauded his girlfriend. 'Well, I suppose this is what Goran Bregovits [the soundtrack composer] taught them' I replied skeptically.<sup>37</sup> Shortly, when the *touberleki* player

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<sup>36</sup> Urban wandering Gypsy musicians may adopt anything popular to their instrumentation (*klarino*, or less often, *zournas*, accompanied by a *touberleki* or *daouli*). Thus, they may play various folk music hits, such as contemporary *tsifteteli* tunes, older songs which are currently in vogue, or even tunes of international success, such as the recent *Macarena* dance hit.

<sup>37</sup> Bregovits was inspired by the brass instrument ensembles of Serbia, mostly played by local Gypsy musicians. The movie is also about Gypsy culture in ex-Yugoslavia.

passed by to collect tips, I asked him, 'Where did you learn this song?' 'We've heard it on the radio. It is in fashion... [he laughed kindly]... people here fancy such music.'

Soon, Dimitris attempted to play along without stepping off the stage. After a couple of minutes, however, he stopped. 'I didn't want to compete with the folk musicians,' he excused himself modestly later. In fact, the *klaritzis* had turned his head looking at him insistently. He intended to show Dimitris that he expected him to respond to his invitation. Dimitris, however, ignored the *klaritzis*' initiative. 'It wouldn't be nice for the others [the members of *Loxandra*]... Then the *kefi* would fire... Who could say then "now we have to stop and go back to *Loxandra* music"? No, it would be a problem.' I sensed a feeling of responsibility and concern for his fellow musicians in his words. Haris recognized different motives, though. 'If they would let them play for longer, they would steal the performance,' he argued confidently.<sup>38</sup>

Meanwhile, a man who was moved by the rhythmic improvisation of the *touberleki* player approached him and whistled loudly. Whistling is a sound expression commonly used in folk music entertainment that signifies excitement and enthusiasm.<sup>39</sup> At the same time, a couple of listeners standing a little further away lined with their handclapping the basic rhythmic pattern upon which the percussionist elaborated his improvisation. Haris looked at the man worried. His whistling could possibly cause discomfort to the *Loxandra* musicians; they could misconstrue it as an expression of disrespect against their artistry. Deviant behaviors of any kind were anyway unwanted

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<sup>38</sup> 'Steal the performance' is a standard phrase used to describe an occasion when the most impressive performer or performers 'steal' the interest of the audience, namely they attract the greatest admiration among the listeners.

<sup>39</sup> The *sfyrighma* ('whistling') is traditionally a male practice. The high pitched and loud sound is produced by joining the thumb and first finger between the lips.

in *Amareion*. Besides, as one of the owners of the place, Haris was responsible for maintaining order in the café.

No further explanation was necessary. Immediately, Haris' glance discouraged the man. He took his fingers away from his lips in a gesture of disappointment. The woman, who previously had almost danced to the *tsifteteli* rhythm, began to moderate slightly the swinging of her body. Now, the serious expression spreading on her face intended to warn those who were applauding in support of her dancing expressions. One of them turned his head embarrassed towards Haris, who kept on looking disturbed behind the bar. The musicians remained fixed in their positions on stage. They looked as if their patience and kindness were not going to last for long. It was clear that the show had to be stopped.

The sound of a slow and delicate violin glissando tried to relax the confusion. The violin player restarted playing a *taximi*. He aimed at attracting the attention of the audience; to 'reclaim' the performance 'stolen' by the Gypsies. Instantly, he raised his forehead and stared seriously at the Gypsy duo. They were still gathering the last tips. In response to his rigorous gaze, the Gypsy *klaritzis* greeted him with a smile and gently bent his head showing his gratitude. Apparently, the duo realized that they had to hurry up and leave the place. For a moment the violin player paused. The Gypsies had just left. Rapidly, a breeze of silence froze the atmosphere. The violinist's pause was a message: he required the dedication of the listeners to *Loxandra* performers now that the Gypsy music break was over. 'People had to understand that the *panighyri*

(‘feast’, joyful event) was over.<sup>40</sup> Now they had to concentrate and attend the concert.

‘The kind of music we play demands concentration. It is not for leisure or revelry. It is art music. They were there to listen to us.’

Sotiris thus suggested a clear distinction between ‘art’ (*entehno*) and ‘folk’ (*laiko*) music. For Sotiris and other members of the *Loxandra* ensemble, art music is a serious practice; in contrast to folk music making, art music requires attention and concentration.<sup>41</sup> Listening to art music is, therefore, considered primarily an intellectual experience. Folk music making, on the other hand, is thought to be instinctive; an expression associated with impulsive temperament and passionate body movement. ‘America has black people; we have Gypsies...We owe to Gypsies our musical tradition...They have rhythm in their blood, they’re born as musicians,’ stated the percussionist later on. The musicality then of folk musicians is considered in this case to be a genetic feature, a quality with which they are born, a natural asset. Moreover, such features are seen as characteristics of an original ‘ethnic’ musician, which is further regarded, in the case of Gypsies, as a species under threat. ‘Today, because of all this commercialized trash we listen to, Gypsies are overlooked. People forgot their contribution to our tradition. They kept it alive throughout the centuries. They are our ethnic music capital. This is why we let them play during our concert, because we sense that they should be protected. Don’t you think that they’re among the last representatives of original folk musical expression?’ argued Dimitris in the same assertive tone he had in *Kipos* restaurant.

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<sup>40</sup> *Panighyri* is a word used to describe feasts usually organized by village communities on the name day of the patron saint of the village. It is regarded as a typical performance occasion for Gypsy musicians in Greece.

Later that evening, when the *Loxandra* concert was over, I had the chance to share a drink with the woman who was moved to dance and her boyfriend. 'The Gypsies broke the monotony,' she argued, 'it was so exciting!' Her boyfriend was more cynical. 'With all their shining golden jewelry...and the golden tooth here, in front, to show it with the smile...they were so funny! I guess they gathered lots of tips at the end!' Obviously impressed, the woman went on, 'Yes, how can I say this? We came here to listen to *Loxandra*. But this was something unexpected! I haven't felt such longing to dance for long time now...did you see the sweating forehead of the *touberleki* player? The drops were running on his cheeks! He was playing so passionately!' Her boyfriend went on asking me, 'Have you been to Egypt?' I wondered what this had to do with our discussion. 'There, the Gypsies play traditional music in big hotels. Egyptians know how to treat Gypsies for the benefit of tourism.'

On one hand, then, the *Loxandra* musicians viewed the spontaneous performance of the wandering Gypsies as an 'original folk musical expression' that they ought to 'protect'. Nonetheless, the enthusiastic response of the *Amareion* customers had apparently different *stimuli*. Beyond any ideological motives, they viewed the performance of the Gypsy musicians in *Amareion* as a show: an exciting, funny, sensual and entertaining musical 'getaway', a 'pleasant surprise'. For them, the presence and performance of the wandering Gypsy duet was also a wonderful - and thus wonderful - incident. It was a chance to engage with an 'other' musical world, which they identified as an 'ethnic' musical world. In contrast to the organized concerts in *Amareion*, this 'ethnic' music was not a revived musical tradition,

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<sup>41</sup> The social differentiation between 'art' and 'folk' musicians occurs in various music cultures. For instance, the *sazandeh*, the professional hereditary musicians in the city of Kabul (Afghanistan) consider their music making as 'scientific' in contrast to that of *shauqi* musicians who are self-taught (Baily 1988b:144).

consciously represented by educated musicians; it was considered as the 'real thing' played by 'the Gypsies themselves'. After all, according to Haris' businesslike words, 'They added an exotic tone in the atmosphere... We're an ethnic bar and our customers appreciate this... they know that *Amareion* offers such an escape.' I think he was right.

### *Lunch at Haris' place*

I found the discussion I had with musicians in *Kipos* restaurant a few days <sup>before</sup> very stimulating. I realized that it was equally important to meet them outside the rebetiko performance environment. Off stage and outside the music making context they 'opened' themselves up in a different way. Soon, I arranged a meeting with Haris, too; he invited his fellow-musicians and me to lunch at his place.

His house was filled with smells of incense. The furniture was dressed with Indian textiles and there was a big oriental carpet covering the floor. On the walls there were hanging two *bouzoukia* and a *tzouras*. We all sat relaxed in his living room. 'Let me put on some music for you,' suggested Haris to me. I recognized the voice of the singer at once. It was Savina Yianatou, a female 'new age' and art song singer. 'I suppose you like her... she did this ethnic recording.' Mitsos disagreed. 'She is okay. But there is no one like Domna Samiou,' he exclaimed.<sup>42</sup> Ourania took his side. 'She is the first who sang traditional songs... in the original form - she doesn't change them. She sings in the traditional way.' Haris had tried to strengthen his argument. 'She is

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<sup>42</sup> Domna Samiou is a celebrated collector and singer of *dhimotiko tragoudhi*. She has traveled throughout Greece in search of regional folk traditions, which she recorded and released in the music market. Savina Yianatou is a younger art song singer, involved in the local 'world music' trend of the 1990s.

also a researcher; she travelled and recorded all these different traditions...Savina is an ethnic singer, you know, she does world music.' 'But Samiou never supported rebetiko song, at least publicly' I argued, curious to see their reactions. 'This is an old school,' Haris tried to explain. The others looked puzzled but they avoided responding. It was obvious that until then they had never realized that the famous folk song collector and singer was highly eclectic in the recordings she made and the songs she performed.

Mitsos put another CD on. The sounds of Indian sitar spread in the room. 'Are you hungry? I prepared some Macedonian pies. Have you tried them? It is a traditional recipe,' 'How did you learn to make them? You are an Athenian!' Ourania teased him raising her eyebrow. 'Oh I didn't know this!' I smiled. 'What about you, Ourania?' I asked. 'I'm a local product. Pure Thessalonikian. From mother and father,' she replied proudly. She asked about me, too; she was glad that I come from the North. 'So, you are a panhellenic band!' I concluded. 'Yes, but where else could they play rebetiko like that?' she went on teasing them. Haris tried to excuse himself. 'Don't forget; rebetiko originated in the slums of Piraeus.' 'Well, rebetiko has also an old history here!' she insisted. 'Roza [Eskenazy], Semsis...So many popular musicians were Thessalonikians!'

In fact, there is a traditional antagonism between northern and southern Greeks, especially between Thessalonikians and Athenians. Mitsos tried to support Ourania more moderately. 'In Athens rebetiko was long ago commercialized. You hardly find little *tavernes* with *kompanies* today.' Haris agreed. 'Now, rebetiko there [in Athens] is only for tourists ...or for the *nouveaux riches*.' Mitsos added: 'There are rebetiko clubs here, too'. 'What about Ladhadhika?' I remarked. 'Oh yes...All this *nouveaux riches*

style of rebetiko-mania...There, again, rebetiko is reduced to a commercial thing...for yuppies and executives.'

'This is tasty, my friend. You may call yourself a Macedonian now!' Mitsos commented humorously on Haris' cooking. 'Indeed. Do you believe that in the last years I feel so attached to the city? I don't know...there is something magical about Thessaloniki. I visit Athens for a few days and – do you believe it? – I miss this place. The sea, Ano Poli,' confessed Haris. Mitsos felt the same way. 'It is a female city. A dangerous female. Melancholic...erotic – like rebetiko - and breathtaking. If you stay here more than, let's say, a couple of years it is difficult to leave...She is a siren,' Then, he turned towards me. 'What about you? Why did you leave?' 'Well, I didn't want to; I did so because of my studies. I love this city very much too,' I replied. Actually, that day, I felt closer to these people, as if I was not in fieldwork - as if I was talking to friends.

Until then, I had kept a more restrained attitude and avoided personal discussions. Instantly, Mitsos' question made me realize that if I wanted people to 'open' themselves, I should respectively also 'open' somehow myself to them. This was fair. 'And how does your research goes on now?' asked Haris looking concerned. 'I believe it is getting somewhere!' I replied. I smiled at all the three of them. I wanted to show them my gratitude for their support. 'It must be difficult...you probably need to study hard' speculated Ourania, 'but you seem to like it a lot,' she added. I nodded my head affirmatively. 'And you have to visit all these various places,' argued Mitsos and then proposed, 'I could help you with this, if you want to.' 'And then you have to write a whole volume and analyze...isn't it so?' went on Haris. 'Oh, yes. And

sometimes you feel happy with it, sometimes so and so, even desperate...but still it is something I love doing,' I replied. 'Well, we are curious to read it!' replied Mitsos.

The musicians were conscious then, that I was there, not only as a friend, but also because I was doing research. And that they were part of this research. Of course, this was not something I realized for the first time that day; besides, I had discussed this issue with them from the very first day I visited *Amareion*. I was pleasantly surprised, though, by their concern regarding my state of being while doing this PhD study – and we talked over my research in a friendly and unambiguous manner. 'Talking about fieldwork while in the field,' I wrote that afternoon on my research diary and concluded with a question: 'To what extent, I wonder, does this awareness affect their responses and attitudes towards me? To what extent do they consciously perform their identities as rebetiko musicians? And how may this direct my understanding of what is actually happening in the field?'

Strangely, the way Mitsos expressed his curiosity and wish to read the final ethnographic text had, in a way, upset me. I got worried about their reactions. They would probably read things that would disappoint them, because the thesis would reveal my understandings of them and the entire music making context of *Amareion*. They were about to see themselves illustrated as ethnographic heroes – as characters in an ethnographic novel. The text would completely uncover my motives as a researcher and the ways I used to think and interpret their attitudes, words and behaviours. Apparently, some parts would please and flatter them, while some others would disappoint them, even cause them distress. Of course, it would be indecent to ignore Mitsos' wish. Besides, I was planning to ask people in the field to read the final

ethnographic text; it would provide anyway useful feedback. Nonetheless, Mitsos' expression of interest made me realize and feel more directly that I should be careful with the ways I would finally introduce and present this written ethnography back in the field. Mitsos, Ourania and Haris - beyond being people in the field - became my friends; during this fieldwork we built a friendship I did not wish to spoil.

### *The making of the repertory*

In *Amareion* and most of the venues I visited, the performance repertory remained relatively stable. There was a fixed core of songs the band had rehearsed and performed. During the season they may enrich the repertory with a few new ones. Haris explained this practice thoroughly: 'There are the classic songs, namely the songs which *kompanies* play everywhere. These are among the most popular rebetiko pieces. *Arhondissa* ('Noble Lady'), for example. Every rebetiko band plays this song today. Most of the songs we play are classic. Sometimes, though, one of us may discover an old rebetiko song, which is long forgotten. We rehearse and perform it. Little by little, people learn this new piece and they get to like it. This way, an unknown song comes again to the surface. We add it to our repertory.'

'How do you feel about it?' I asked. 'Well, I think that people who play rebetiko music today are responsible for the rebetiko tradition. It's us, who will deliver it to the next generation.' 'This is why you choose also to perform unknown songs?' I went on. 'The classic songs are already immortal; everyone knows them. When we select an unknown song from an old recording, we decide to give life to it – a new life.'

This way, we offer something to people, something more than entertainment. They get to know about their heritage.'

'So, you feel like you're disseminating rebetiko?' I needed to understand to what extent the *kompania* consciously considered themselves as contemporary 'missionaries' of rebetiko. In fact, 'mission' is the word that Haris used in his own argumentation: 'Of course, we like and enjoy this music. And we like the songs we discover. That is why we may choose to perform anything – there is not a fixed criterion for this. It is like a mission. We listen to an unknown song and we perform it, because we want people to hear this authentic rebetiko piece.' 'Do you think that people appreciate what you're doing?' 'Oh, yes! You know, they may go elsewhere where there is rebetiko live music and ask for the song. A friend of mine, a *bouzouki* player, told me the other day, that someone requested them to play a song they did not know and then he complained saying that 'the guys in *Amareion*, they play it!'' 'So, they identify the band with these unknown songs,' I suggested. 'Because we discover them, people learn these songs the way we play them. They are used to the way Ourania sings them, or to my *taximi* playing. They don't know of any other performances; so, they regard these songs, in a way, as the special songs of the *Amareion kompania*.'

In *Amareion* the three-hour performance was divided into two parts. 'We need to rest a little bit,' explained Mitsos, 'and this is why there is a first and a second part. Ourania also needs to rest her voice.' I had not encountered elsewhere in the rebetiko venues I used to visit such a division of the programme into two parts. Actually, this reminded me of formal concerts, where the programme is also organized the same way

I shared my thoughts with Mitsos: 'This A/B part structure...Is this done anywhere else in rebetiko venues?' I asked. 'I don't think so. But, you know, in *Amareion* rebetiko performances are different.' 'Different? Do you mean you play in a different way?' I wondered. 'No, no...this hasn't got to do with playing style...It is the style of the place...how can I explain this,' he hesitated, 'here rebetiko is like a concert!' 'You mean it is a concert that people come here to attend,' I tried to understand. 'Yes. People don't come here to eat. This is what they do in *tavernes*. They eat and they turn their backs to the musicians. They shout, everything...Rebetiko is in the background. Here they come for the music.' 'But still, they're drinking and joking, while listening to music,' I replied. 'There is a great difference: *Amareion* is a more refined place. People see rebetiko as an art; here they respect it. You see, here we play on stage,' he argued.

'Is this also the reason why you have a fixed timetable - from four to seven in the afternoon?' I went on speculating. 'It is a concert; and a concert has a standard duration.' 'A couple of times, though, you have played a little longer,' I noticed. He tried to remember: 'Oh yes...it was on Aetna's birthday, wasn't it? That was great fun! Everyone got drunk! There was a lot of *kefi*. We couldn't spoil it; it would be nasty to let people down.' 'So, when there is a lot of *kefi*, you may go on. Do you think that the *kefi* depends on the way you play music, too?' 'Well, we have a share! We can make *kefi*!'<sup>43</sup> 'How?' I went on. I recalled that afternoon they played after sharing a hashish cigarette. There were only a few rebetiko enthusiasts who acknowledged the special

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<sup>43</sup> Similarly, Feldmann in his study of musical events taking place among Middle Eastern immigrant communities in New York pointed that the presence or absence of *kef* (*kefi*) in any kind of music defines its quality. While good music has *kef*, bad music does not (1975:21). Kavouras suggested that a similar perception of *kefi* is also found in musical performances of Karpathos island in Greece (1990:213).

qualities of that performance. The majority of customers, on the contrary, did not seem to notice any difference.

Mitsos attempted to explain his ideas more thoroughly. 'There are times we feel that the atmosphere is heavy. We try to "heighten" it. We make little changes in the order of the repertory. We know the songs that make *kefi*...' 'Is this why you play the same songs in different order? Because you sense the general mood?' I tried to understand how the *kompania* communicated with the audience; I assumed that the structure of the repertory played an important role. 'Let me give you an example. Once there was a beauty down there...And she was looking at me playing. I was looking at her. Then, Ourania realized this game and whispered: "let's go for *Omorfi Melahroini*" ['Beautiful Brunette']. The girl was a brunette, you see, and she was flattered.' I could still remember this incident. 'So, you're somehow talking to people with the songs you select to play...' I speculated. 'There are some key songs; they open the gates to people's hearts. If we can open these gates, then we may say "today we've done well." 'And you believe that you've done well when you feel that people participate and make *kefi*' I reckoned. 'Of course. Otherwise, there is no game. Rebetiko music is a game for two: the musicians and the people.'

After several visits to *Amareion*, I began to realize that there was a special rationale in the way the repertory was structured. The appropriate person to discuss this topic was Haris, who was also in charge of the weekly schedule of concerts in *Amareion*. I explained my hypothesis to him: 'I noticed that there is a particular way you structure the programme. I mean, you start with a standard *taximi*, then there are more playful songs in the first part and many hash songs and heavier tunes in the

second.’ He was in a humorous mood. ‘Well, we are not just musicians, we are also psychologists! We start easily...this is why there is a *taximaki* [small *taximi*] in the beginning. Smoothly. No voice. Then we play more nervous tunes, several *hasaposerviko* [a 2/8 dancing rhythmic pattern, the fastest in terms of tempo in rebetiko tradition], to shake them up a bit; to wake them up. People begin to move, they may sing along sometimes...They also get higher, because they drink. We get higher when they get higher, too. When the atmosphere is “done”, I mean when there is enough *meraki* around, we play the hash songs. These are more intimate tunes, more relaxed.’

‘Is it possible for this structure to change?’ I asked. I tried to detect further how the performers interact with the audience. I had already discussed this issue with Mitsos. It was also important, though, to have Haris’ thoughts on this matter. He seemed to enjoy talking about it. ‘Oh, yes. You may believe that I don’t care too much about the audience. I don’t stare, but I do get the vibes. Because, as I told you, we’re psychologists. Otherwise we wouldn’t be decent players. And we know when it is time for a *kapsouriko* song [literally ‘burning hot’, a slang word for a ‘yearning’ love song]. Another time, last year, my partner and I, we used to owe money to the bank, we could have gone to prison...And I played with such a *meraki* the *Tha Pao Ekei stin Arapia* [‘I’m Going There, to the Arab Countries’] you know...

because I was told  
about a great witch  
who can resolve the spells.<sup>44</sup>

He sang the whole strophe. ‘This is a song you usually play in the second part of your programme,’ I noticed. He agreed and smiled. ‘Does this mean anything for

your study?’ ‘Well, I was thinking about your psychology of the audience. I find it very interesting because it reveals how you communicate as a musician with the audience and the audience with you.’ I expressed my thoughts straightforwardly. It was important for my relationship with Haris to be quite open. I wanted him to understand that our discussion was important for my inquiries. Fleetingly, I worried. I sensed in his comment something more than curiosity: a feeling that I was somehow ‘above’ him asking questions. I wished to let him know why I was interested in this topic and, moreover, that I depended on him as a trusty source of knowledge. I went on, ‘What do you think?’ I intended to show that I needed to share my thoughts with him. ‘Oh, yes, the songs we play and the way we play are, in a way, our language; the language we use to contact the people.’ His feedback was precious and opened new channels of communication.

My ethnographic inquiry was getting more interactive. I began to discuss more openly with the musicians of *Amareion* several of the topics that puzzled me. I was looking for alternative answers, reasonings and meanings that would further promote my ethnography. They seemed to appreciate it; sometimes, they were particularly stimulated by our discussions. Soon, I accepted Mitsos’ offer to introduce me to some other rebetiko musicians. I was about to go for fieldwork together with a musician I met in the field. We were going to visit a new venue together and share the experience. Doing ethnography was therefore turning into something more complex than the interactive relationship between myself and the people in the field. The field, personified in this case in Mitsos, was becoming, on a different level, an ethnographer, too.

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<sup>44</sup> The song is a composition by Vasilis Tsitsanis. It was recorded in 1939, HMV AO 2657/OGA 1077.

## b. The *Bekris' taverna*

*'Do you go to tavernes?'*

It was a Sunday evening and there were only a few people left in ~~the~~ <sup>cafe</sup> *Amareion*. The concert was over and I was sitting at a table writing fieldnotes. At some point, a company of three young men entered the place. One of them was carrying a *bouzouki* case. They stepped towards Mitsos, who was packing his guitar. 'Hey Mitsaras! Oh, we are late. What a pity! We missed it.' 'Oooh! Mr. President!' Mitsos greeted him humorously. They chatted for a while. Then, Mitsos guided them towards my table.

'Do you go to *tavernes*?' he asked me and went on before I replied, 'because if you do, you shouldn't miss these ~~gentlemen~~ here. This is Menelaos – he goes together with this *bouzouki*,' he teased him. 'And these are his friends, Vangelis, the guitarist, and Antonis, the *baghlamas*.' I laughed. Apart from an instrument name, *baghlamas* in Greek is also a slang term that means 'jerk', 'daft', 'oaf'. Mitsos humorously called Antonis *baghlamas*, instead of using the proper '*baghlamas* player'.<sup>1</sup> 'Why shouldn't she go to *tavernes*?' said Menelaos. 'Well, I don't know, because there are people who are not used to it. You have to enjoy this type of entertainment,' replied Mitsos. Antonis, a short robust man, supported him. He had a *mangas* style accent. 'He is right. The girl might prefer places, *chic* ['elegant'] like this one here.' Haris heard his comment behind the counter and promptly defended *Amareion*. 'Here, it is a refined place – not a folk *taverna*! There you play and you smell the fried pork!' Mitsos laughed loudly. Apparently, Haris' comment did not bother the three visiting

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<sup>1</sup> Musicians in Greece are often addressed by the name of the instrument they play.

musicians at all. 'Well, we came to listen to your concerto, but we failed.' There was an ironic undertone in how he pronounced the word 'concerto'.

'Do you go to *tavernes*?' Mitsos repeated his question. For him, it was necessary to make sure that I 'fancy going to *tavernes*' - as I replied - before proposing: 'Then you're going to enjoy the *Bekris*' *taverna*; they play nice rebetiko there,' he suggested, turning his head towards his friends. Fleetinglly, I recalled Katerina's words (an *Amareion* patron, who also recommended *Bekris*). Anyway, Mitsos was right. I had heard this question several times before, and I knew several people who disliked *taverna* going the same way others hated clubbing, 'barflying', or theatre going. Indeed, *taverna* going is a particular type of entertainment. It involves a set of practices, aesthetics and habits which make it a special leisure practice; part of what often makes *taverna* going a particular entertainment experience is the performance of rebetiko music.

#### *Bekris: the taverna and the taverniaris*

'*Re*, [calling exclamation], welcome to the kids!' exclaimed a tall man with a fat belly and a long moustache standing in front of the kitchen. He was the *taverniaris*, the owner and keeper of the *taverna*. I remembered him at once. I used to visit his *taverna* as a student. He looked like the caricature illustrated in the graphics painted on one of the walls. This type of folk iconography is commonly found in traditional *tavernes*. The painting depicted a fat man, almost toothless, with a red nose and dizzy eyes who was lying on the floor drunk while holding his swollen belly. It is a comic representation of a boozier - in Greek a *bekris*, which is also the name of the *taverna*.

‘Here he is, Bekris!’ Mitsos introduced me to the *taverniaris*. ‘Bekris’ was his nickname – he was a devoted drinker himself. This is why his *taverna* was one of the places where you could find cheap, good wine. He keeps it in a huge, wooden barrel at the back of the *taverna* – his ‘treasury’ as he used to call it humorously. ‘This is to wet our throats!’ In fact, the customers of the place used to drink a lot. ‘Nobody drinks less than a kilo here!’ he stressed proudly with his hoarse voice.

Drinking in a *taverna* is traditionally accompanied by eating food. The *taverna* cuisine, often described as ‘Greek’ cuisine, involves a standard menu. These are dishes made ‘to order’ and others, the so-called *mezedhes* (pl.), which are small plates of tasty titbits. Nonetheless, eating and drinking in a *taverna* rarely takes place without the accompaniment of rebetiko music, at least mediated, if not performed live. ‘To nosh a bit of the right food at the right time,’ confirmed Bekris himself. As an expert drinker, he may suggest the right *mezes* (sing.) that goes well with each one of the alcoholic beverages traditionally served in a *taverna*: *ouzo* or *tsipouro* (alcoholic spirits based on grapes), wine or *retsina* (resinated wine) and beer. Spirits typically consumed at a bar - such as whisky, vodka or *sfinakia* - are not offered in a *taverna*.

We sat at a table and ordered wine. ‘If your stomach is empty, I would say you should go for a *bekri-mezes*, too [a dish based on fried pork]’ he suggested in a caring tone. He came back with the order and joined us for a little chat. ‘I kind of know you somewhere...,’ he wondered, looking at me pensively. ‘You used to come here, didn’t you?’ he smiled recognizing my face. Mitsos was surprised. ‘So, do you know the musicians here?’ he asked. ‘This was about three years ago’ I explained. ‘There was a different *kompania* here.’ ‘Yes...you don’t know them’ Bekris assured him. ‘Some

sixty-years of age, old musicians. Now they're off duty. I decided to bring some young blood. They know the art,' (meaning rebetiko music making) he argued, rolling the edge of his moustache. 'You know how to choose musicians for your place,' Mitsos confirmed and turned towards me 'You see, his *taverna* has rebetiko music ever since it opened – for some ten years now, isn't it? Bekris has an ear!' he went on praising the *taverniaris*.<sup>2</sup> Indeed, an old *taverniaris* usually knows how to distinguish a skillful rebetiko musician. Moreover, a *taverniaris* may promote a young *kompania* in the *taverna* music market. 'I like offering them the chance. I kind of smell that they may become good professionals and I offer them a job. Then, they themselves must prove whether they deserve it or not.' As an employer of rebetiko musicians for approximately ten years now, Bekris is considered a trusted promoter of *kompanies*. 'If they do well here, it is a guarantee. They will easily find a job anywhere else,' he argued, beating the table with his palm assertively.

### *The 'big stuff' is here*

It was a winter Monday evening. Owners and people employed in entertainment business, the so-called, 'people of *piatsa*' or 'people of the night' commonly regard Mondays as 'dead' or 'calm' days.<sup>3</sup> 'There is less *kinisi* (literally 'movement'), on Mondays.<sup>4</sup> Here, we are rarely empty. You see, there are many young people

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<sup>2</sup> Someone who 'has an ear' (*ehei afti*) is someone with a 'good taste in music', an eclectic listener. A musician who 'has an ear' is the one who is capable to 'catch' a musical phrase orally and reproduce in an accurate way.

<sup>3</sup> In Greek language the phrase *anthropoi tis piatsas* or *tis nyhtas* refers to people who are involved in the night (*nyhta*) entertainment business (club, restaurant and bar owners, barmen, waiters, musicians, DJs, etc). Because such businesses are associated with public, social life, they are also called people of the *piatsa* – that is the Italian word *piazza* ('square', 'market', see Zachos [1981] 1999:410). There is also a folk expression describing these professions as 'works of the night' (*dhoulies tis nyhtas*). Finally, in Greek, there is the slang expression 'making *piatsa*' (*kano piatsa*) used for streetwalker prostitutes.

<sup>4</sup> *Kinisi* is a standard word used to denote the number of customers gathering in this case in the *taverna* or more generally, the flow of people 'going out' to entertainment places on a certain day. In

coming' explained Bekris. On Monday evenings people typically 'stay in'; they usually *istay* at home relaxing in front of their TV screens. Besides, after a weekend of entertainment, *xenyhti* (staying out late at night) and recreation they need to switch back into routine working day practices. Nonetheless, for places such as *Bekris*, as well as most of the *tavernes* in Ano Poli, which are *fititotavernes*, that is *tavernes* mainly frequented by students and young people, things are slightly different.<sup>5</sup> Students may also 'go out' and 'stay late' on Mondays. *Fititotavernes*, thus, are not empty on Mondays; they may well attract a number of customers, though, in smaller numbers in comparison to what happens on other days of the week.

From the entrance I could see the musicians standing at the corner of the *taverna*. There was no stage; the *kompania* was seated round a table, the same way as the customers. Musical performance in *tavernes* of this type usually takes place without a stage. The spatial organization of music making in *Bekris* differs, therefore, considerably from that of *Amareion*. It was ten o'clock in the evening. 'It is still early,' Bekris reassured us. Soon, the first *parees* arrived. Within an hour several of the *taverna* tables were occupied.

Until then, the musicians were chatting and drinking quietly by the table, where they were also about to perform. 'Hey Mitsos, look I've fixed it!' shouted Vangelis showing proudly his guitar. 'Play a bit. I want to listen,' Mitsos replied. Vangelis placed his fingers on the pegboard and played some accompaniments in a so-called (by folk musicians) 'spread out' (*aplota*) way. Then he paused and looked at Mitsos with an expression of wonder on his face. 'You're fine,' he confirmed in a

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entertainment business 'today there is *kinisi*' means that today there are many people out wandering in restaurants and bars. A day of big *kinisi* equals high profits.

rewarding tone. ‘Vangelis is still new. He counts on other s’ opinion,’ he then explained to me confidentially, lowering his voice. Because Mitsos was apparently a more experienced rebetiko guitarist, who has been performing ‘live’ for several years now, he felt, obviously, superior to a beginner guitarist like Vangelis. This was not just Mitsos’ perception. Vangelis seemed also to respect this kind of musicians’ hierarchy. Later on, he confessed, ‘Look, as a beginner you have to listen to the old people [meaning older musicians]. Even though they may not be much better technically than you, they’re more experienced...They’ve been out for years. They know the *kourbeti*’ (literally ‘the foreign land’, a slang word borrowed from Turkish meaning here ‘the outside world’, the society at large). By the time the first *parees* showed up, we heard the first *penies*.

Ζούσα μοναχός χωρίς αγάπη  
Κι όλα γύρω ήταν σκοτεινά<sup>6</sup>

(translation)

I used to live alone without love  
And everything around was dark...

‘They don’t care a lot!’ I commented humorously to Mitsos while watching the customers. Indeed the *parees* who were already there hardly looked at the musicians. They were dedicated to ‘making the *parea*’; rebetiko music was merely the soundscape. Making the *parea* in a *taverna* is associated with a particular set of practices based on sharing: drinking the same type of alcohol, eating food from the

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<sup>5</sup> Nonetheless, there are also older people visiting these *tavernes*, less often and in smaller numbers though.

<sup>6</sup> The song is titled *To Tragoudhi tis Aghapis* (‘The Song of Love’) and is a composition by Dimitris Gogos and Despoina Abatzopoulou. It was recorded in 1939, HMV AO 2658/OGA 1069.

same plates, sharing music, sharing ideas, jokes, laughter.<sup>7</sup> The total experience of sharing is taking place around a table, which becomes the symbol of the *parea*'s bonds and communality. This is often described as 'our table', an expression which also connotes 'our company'.

'Look who's here!' Mitsos looked at the entrance. I stared at the front door; a couple of men stepped in slowly, with an air of confidence in the place. The first one was a middle aged man, fit, with a narrow, accurately cut moustache. '*Opa!* [exclamation of surprise and enthusiasm, also used in folk dancing] Nikos the Tsitsanis!' observed Mitsos and raised his glass to greet him. 'What, Tsitsanis?' I asked Mitsos surprised. I wondered what was the man's relation with the famous rebetiko song composer, Vasilis Tsitsanis. His friend was a little younger, around his forties, bald and fat, bearing a generous expression. 'Yes, Tsitsanis and Apostolis. The big stuff!' he went on still keeping his glass raised towards them.

Instantly, Menelaos' face lit up. Until then he was playing sitting relaxed on one side of the table. When he saw Nikos the Tsitsanis, he took immediately a more rigid posture and sat up properly in his chair. Vangelis and Antonis both seemed a little embarrassed. Their faces took on an expression of deference. Nikos the Tsitsanis' presence unsettled the *kompania*. After all, he was acknowledged as one of the most skilful and competent *bouzouki* players in the city. 'Tsitsanis,' repeated Mitsos with wonder. 'You know, Tsitsanis is a nickname. As a beginner he had

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<sup>7</sup> 'What are we going to drink?' is a question typically asked by one of the *parea* people visiting a *taverna*. Traditionally a *parea* would agree to share the same type of alcohol. In a *taverna* there is no place for individual choices in ordering alcohol. This would be normally regarded as a rude attitude.

played several times together with the real Tsitsanis. Tsitsanis is his great love. Most of the songs they play are his compositions.’<sup>8</sup>

‘Well, well, welcome to the giant!’ Bekris extolled him. Nikos the Tsitsanis greeted him reservedly with a dignified gesture placing his hand on Bekris’ shoulder. ‘Apostolaki [little Apostolis], is everything okay?’ Apostolis smiled at him and followed kindly his friend to a table opposite from that of the musicians. He was the guitarist who accompanied Nikos in music making. As a *bouzouki* player, Nikos was the leader of their *kompania*. And this was a role he successively carried out in the way he treated Apostolis outside music making, too. After all, it was manifest in the different ways Bekris greeted them, by praising Nikos and bantering with Apostolis.

Παλάτια χρυσοστόλιστα χαρέμια με διαμάντια  
Θα χτίσω και θα κάθεται να σε κοιτώ στα μάτια<sup>9</sup>

(translation)

Palaces embellished with gold and harems with diamonds  
I will build and you will be seated within and I will be looking at you in the eyes

Menelaos’ nodded towards his fellow-musicians and the *kompania* started playing a song composed by Vasilis Tsitsanis. This way, they paid homage to the old virtuoso, who was a well-known fan of the celebrated composer. His presence in the *taverna* was an honor for the young *kompania*. Now they seemed to be more concentrated on their own music making. Later on, when I asked Menelaos about it, he said, ‘Since an expert like Nikos the Tsitsanis came in the *taverna*, we wanted to give the best of ourselves. Otherwise we would have let him down.’ ‘Do you mean he

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<sup>8</sup> His real name is Nikos Stroutopoulos.

had some expectations from you?" I wondered. 'Are you joking? He was my teacher!' he replied enthusiastically.

In the past, Nikos the Tsitsanis used to give a few private lessons to young instrumentalists. 'If you're lucky and he likes you, you may become his student. He is the right person...if you wish to learn the old style rebetiko...simple and neat *penies*. Not much babbling [meaning: playing without many embellishing notes]' he explained later. Antonis, the *baghlamas* player, had also taken a few lessons with Nikos. 'Initially, I wanted to become a *bouzouktsis* (*bouzouki* player). After a couple of sessions he discouraged me. Right away. "Take something else" he told me...I was so frustrated...' I sympathized with Antonis' sincere confession. But I noticed that evening that Nikos repeatedly smiled at him while he was performing. Apparently, this was an expression of reassurance; a reassurance that Antonis was on the right track and that he had a promising future as an instrumentalist.

#### *An 'authentic' rebetiko taverna*

I enjoyed the *Bekris*' atmosphere and music making. 'They play *dhemena*,' commented Mitsos (a word denoting that the *kompania* is 'well-tied', namely that they play with good coordination, sounding like one instrument). The repertory was quite similar to that of the *Amareion kompania*.<sup>10</sup> Most of the songs were love songs

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<sup>9</sup> The *zeibekikos* song titled *Haremia me Dhiamandia* ('Harems with Diamonds') was composed by Vasilis Tsitsanis. It was recorded in 1940, Columbia 6546/CG 2065.

<sup>10</sup> Notably, often there is not a specific name for the rebetiko *kompanies*. They are called either by the name of the place they perform, e.g. the *Bekris*' *kompania*, or with the name of the singer or the leading *bouzouki* player of the group. In this case, the phrase 'where do Agathonas play this year?' refers also to the musicians of Agathonas' ensemble. Nonetheless, certain *kompanies* used to have a name, such as the *Tetras tou Piraios* (1934) or the recent *Opisthodhromiki Kompania*.

or songs referring to *mangas* activities and some hashish songs towards the end of the programme. However, the *Bekris' kompania* had a different structure. 'Here, they also have a *baghlamas* player...and the *bouzouktsis* [*bouzouki* player] is also singing, occasionally accompanied by the others,' I commented. I needed to clarify whether this different structure had a particular meaning for the music performed by this *kompania*. 'It is still rebetiko. The most important thing is to be authentic.' I was confused. What is ultimately the proper character of an 'authentic' rebetiko *kompania*? 'It is the kind of songs you play and the way you play them,' Mitsos further explained.

I found his ideas quite stimulating. He went on elaborating his perception of 'authenticity'. He sounded quite assured. 'Look. Do you see any microphone? No. Look at his *bouzouki*; it is a *trihordho* [three-stringed]. Pure sound. Clear. Simple and neat. And listen to their voices. Flat...hoarse... How can I say this? Human! More important: the songs? All old! That's rebetiko, the true rebetiko!' I was satisfied to hear his ideas. By then, I had already made various speculations on how 'original' rebetiko was perceived in the places I used to visit. Mitsos' words supported my hypothesis. However, still there was something that puzzled me. Of course, Mitsos overtly acknowledged the musicians of *Bekris' taverna* as representatives of 'authentic' rebetiko music making, too. Nonetheless, I sensed that there was an important difference between these *kompanies*; something they were aware of, although they did not openly express it.

Evidently, rebetiko music in *Bekris* was performed and experienced in a different way to that of *Amareion*. *Bekris* was an old style *taverna*; *Amareion*, on the other hand, was a contemporary 'ethnic' bar. The weekly programme of *Amareion* also included other musical genres, apart from rebetiko. *Bekris*, and most of the

*tavernes* featuring live music, hosted rebetiko exclusively. Moreover, *Amareion* represented a recent type of performance context; the *taverna*, on the other hand, is a traditional realm of rebetiko song. After having these initial thoughts I was sure that although there was a connection between *Amareion* and *Bekris*, still they represented different worlds of rebetiko music making. 'The music is the same. Both *kompanies* seem to acknowledge it as authentic rebetiko. So, the difference is not in music; it is in the way music happens,' I wrote in my field diary that evening. And at the end, I wrote down 'contact Katerina'. Katerina was a customer of both places; I could start with her.

I happened to meet her a few days later in *Amareion*. 'You've been to *Bekris*,' she said. I was surprised. How could she know? 'Mitsos told us. Nikos the Tsitsanis was also there, wasn't he?' she went on confidently and continued, 'You may listen to original rebetiko there, too. People who like this music, like some of those who come here, appreciate the music of *Bekris*.' 'Do you mean it is the same thing, whether you listen to rebetiko in *Amareion* or in *Bekris*?' I asked curiously. 'Things are more relaxed there. You may have, for example, a nice *mezes* there together with your *ouzo*, too. Here, it is like a concert, you have to be more careful.' Ourania happened to <sup>be</sup> sitting next to us. 'Ah, you've been to *Bekris*, haven't you?' She also knew. Mitsos already advertised our meeting everywhere. 'Did you like it? The style there is more folk...more loose...it is a *taverna*, you see, not a music bar.' 'I noticed that the people there did not pay enough attention to music. And they didn't applaud at the end of each song,' I commented. 'Of course, because in a *taverna* you go for fun; here you come to appreciate rebetiko.' 'So, do you mean that rebetiko here is played more seriously, too?' I tried to understand her. 'The situation is more serious. We [the musicians] are the centre of the universe here. There, what comes first is having fun,

eating good food...then comes the music.' It was getting clearer, now. Both places were acknowledged as ideal areas of 'authentic' rebetiko performance. Suitors of this authenticity were then attracted both to *Amareion* and to *Bekris*. In *Amareion*, rebetiko music was represented on stage as an honorable ethnic tradition. *Bekris'* *taverna*, on the other hand, was a 'real' rebetiko context; it was a tradition by itself.

#### *A spontaneous performance*

It was around twelve o' clock. Most of the *parees* were still having a good time in the *taverna*. Walking up and down the place *Bekris* was taking orders, joking with his customers. *Nikos the Tsitsanis* was still there together with his guitarist, *Apostolis*. The musicians went on playing endlessly, without a break; they only stopped for a few minutes from time to time. 'We're lucky' said *Mitsos*. 'We have *Tsitsanis* here...he is a guarantee for your work. Since he's here, it means we're in the right place, too - not a false one [meaning a 'non-authentic']. Good thing.' 'Perhaps I could talk to him, too,' I suggested. 'Ha,' he laughed, 'he talks to nobody!' Although I was discouraged, I hoped that I could somehow find a way to open a discussion with *Nikos*. In a few days, I realized how difficult it was to approach him. In fact, I never really did.

*Antonis* started playing a *taximi* on the *baglamas*. In his vast hands the instrument looked like a toy. His improvisation was quite moderate, without ostentatious declinations from the basic melodic structure or grandiose displays of skillful motifs. He faithfully adhered to the style that characterized the first generation

of rebetiko instrumentalists. 'He doesn't play theatre. You see? Simple things,' Mitsos remarked.

Πριν το χάραμα μονάχος εξεκίνησα  
Αχ, και στο πρώτο μας το στέκι  
Την αυγούλα γύρισα<sup>11</sup>

(translation)

Before daybreak I moved out all alone  
Ah, and to our first hangout  
I returned at dawn

Menelaos was now more relaxed. He crossed his legs and played.<sup>12</sup> Occasionally, he would glance at Nikos as if he needed to check whether he approved of the performance. At some point Apostolis attempted to reassure Vangelis, the guitarist, who still looked a bit reserved. 'Pluck it and don't be afraid of anything!' he shouted with a loud laughter. For a few moments, Vangelis bent his head modestly towards his guitar, as if he needed to 'digest' Apostolis' advice. Soon, the change was obvious: his playing sounded far louder and more confident. Then he looked at Menelaos and Antonis, as if he wished to check their reaction. Antonis, the *baglamas* player, shook his head positively. Meanwhile, a young woman, who had just arrived at the *taverna*, attracted Menelaos' attention.

She came to our table. She was a friend of Mitsos. 'Mitsos, are you still here?' She greeted him warmly. 'Oh, where have you been, beauty?' he replied in a flattering tone. She sat and shared a drink with us. Her name is Dimitra and she is a rebetiko singer. She comes from Larissa, a north central Greek city and studies physics in the local university. 'I sing for fun. I don't plan to take it seriously. I used

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<sup>11</sup> This *zeibekikos* song was composed by Yiannis Papaioanou. It was recored in 1948 in 78rpm, Columbia DG 6692/CG 2343.

to sing at parties...A friend of mine, a *bouzouki* player, asked me to join their *kompania*...nothing serious, you know a student group,' she explained. Menelaos was staring at her persistently. At the end of the song, she stepped towards the musicians' table and took the chair that Antonis, the *baglamas* player, offered her. He needed to rest for a while. And then, Dimitra started singing. The structure of the *kompania* was now identical with that of *Amareion*: a *bouzouki* player, a guitarist and a female singer.

Dimitra seemed to be comfortable singing in the presence of Nikos the Tsitsanis. She also had a high-pitched voice like Ourania. Despite the *nazi* ('mincing') and the *tsahpinia* ('playful, affected manner') of her singing, Nikos hardly looked at her. He was enjoying his cigarette, looking obviously untouched by her performance. At the end of the song she asked the musicians to play a few songs she liked. They didn't let her down. 'Is this part of the programme?' I asked Mitsos. 'Who, Dimitra? No. She just happened to be here. You know, it happens often. If there is a musician friend in the *taverna*, he may join the *kompania* for a few songs.' I was curious to see whether Nikos and Apostolis would spontaneously join the *kompania*.

After a few songs Menelaos looked a bit worried about Tsitsanis' reactions to the singer. Apparently, Dimitra also realized his difficulty and took the initiative to leave the performance table. Vangelis, who had been chatting with one of the visiting *parees*, returned to his position. On his way back, he stopped for a while at Nikos' table. 'The *gomenes* ['broads', a somewhat derogatory word meaning girlfriends, women in general] had "mounted" on us [meaning 'they got in our way']. This is what Nikos said,' he warned his fellow-musicians in a serious tone. The other two

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<sup>12</sup> Playing with crossed legs seated in a chair is a typical rebetiko musician posture.

looked at him seriously, without making any comments; however, they looked concerned.

They played a couple of songs together. Then, Vangelis, the guitarist, raised the guitar above his head holding it with both hands, showing the instrument to Mitsos. 'Hey, will you move?' he shouted. Mitsos remained by the table smiling jauntily at them. Menelaos lowered his head in an inviting movement. He then left aside his *bouzouki* and opened his arms in the air wishing to show Mitsos that they were waiting for him. 'Come on, why don't you go?' I suggested. Mitsos enjoyed their interest and kept on pretending to ignore them. He was in a bantering mood. Instantly, Nikos, obviously annoyed, turned his head slowly and stared at him with a reproving glance. This was a message. Mitsos' face sobered up, still with an undercurrent smile. Like an obedient student, he moved towards the performance table and took Vangelis' guitar.

Vangelis was pleased to offer him his guitar. 'You're boring,' he teased him. He then came to our table. 'Does this happen often?' I asked him 'You mean this handoff (*passa*)? Ooooh, yes!' He described it with football terms. 'There are other times when there are friends *bouzouktsidhes* (pl.) here and they may play instead of Menelaos or Andonis.' 'Today, there is Nikos the Tsitsanis here,' I said. 'Well, this is another thing. I'm talking about people like us.' 'He is a rebetiko *bouzouktsis*, too, isn't he?' I tried to make him explain further. 'He's from an old school. A master, like him, to come and join us? It is unlikely! You know, he was Menelaos' teacher!' So, it is a matter of different status, I assumed and went on, 'And, what about Bekris himself? Is this all right for him?' 'You're kidding...he fancies this *alishverisi* [a word borrowed from Turkish meaning 'dealing', 'exchange'].

The music making went on until two o' clock in the morning. Nikos the Tsitsanis hardly moved from his seat; only at around half past one, he left together with his friend. First, he passed by the musicians' table to greet them. The musicians looked anxious to hear his comments. 'All fine,' he reassured them briefly. He then placed his fingers on the left side of his forehead, greeting them like a *mangas*. 'We're off,' said he to Apostolis. 'Are you playing anywhere?' Menelaos asked curiously. 'Possibly up in *Kastra* [the Byzantine Walls area].' On the way out, the two men passed by our table. 'Cheers, Niko!' Mitsos greeted him. He blinked at him. 'On Tuesday,' he said, and left. 'We have to be there. On Tuesday they will play in *Kastra*,' Mitsos explained to me enthusiastically.

A little later Bekris lowered the lights. There were only a few *parees* left. 'Come on, the dawn will reach us. Haven't you got kids, no home to go to?'

c. A rebetiko *ghlendi* at *Kath' Odhon* café

*'A woman is a woman': meeting Nikos the Tsitsanis*

If there is a certain happening an ethnographer regards, in a way, as a fieldwork highlight, for me this was my experience of a rebetiko *ghlendi* in the *Kath' Odhon* café. This was a special occasion of rebetiko performance, a *ghlendi* ('revelry') that was organized incidentally - not on a regular weekly basis. Throughout the period I conducted this fieldwork, I have only heard once of another similar happening. *Ghlendia* (pl.) like this one are not broadly advertised because they involve a close circle of people related to the performing *kompania*. 'You may know about it from mouth to mouth,' stressed Mitsos confidentially.

'We should be there around eleven,' said Mitsos. In fact, there was not a fixed timetable for this happening. Moreover, such a late time is not usual for rebetiko events. Although I was somehow surprised, I trusted Mitsos; he was an expert in such rebetiko revelries. 'Have you been to happenings like this before?' I asked him while we were walking up the hill that lead to the *Portara*, the Great Gate of the Byzantine Walls that still stretch out imposingly at the top of the hill. 'Ha, I don't miss such things! But they happen less and less frequently,' he said with disappointment. 'When was the last time?' I wondered. 'Oh...It's been a year now...at *Makedhoniko* [a *taverna* in Ano Poli]. But then, it wasn't Nikos, it was Zeparas then. Now he plays at *Niavendi taverna* [also in Ano Poli].'

We turned into a narrow street and found the café. On the front glass window there was a handwritten sign, misspelled: 'Rebetiko music today'. Above the main entrance a neon sign indicated the name of the place: 'Café - *Kath' Odhon*'.<sup>1</sup> I had never heard about it before. It was a small suburban coffee shop, with a counter and some rounded tables, without any hint of sophistication in its decoration. On the contrary, I would describe the various elements in its decoration as a kitsch attempt to give the impression of flamboyant luxury. There was a huge blue-green mirror on one side of the wall and some flowery curtains that protected the interior from the curiosity of passers-by. The counter was made of a black, shiny wood, which was embellished with some golden metal stakes. At the back, there was a fake electric water spring, looking long neglected. Exactly at the opposite side, at a table by the window, there was Nikos the Tsitsanis, wearing a black suit and a freshly-ironed white shirt that made him look really smart. Next to him there was a second *bouzouki* player, Zapas, usually addressed by his surname only. He was a little younger than Nikos, smoking and drinking in a somewhat jerky manner. 'He is hyped up all the time...That's his style. You'll see it when he plays,' Mitsos commented.

We entered the place and Mitsos greeted them. 'And this is my friend, Dafni, she is *making* a study of rebetiko,' he introduced me. I offered Tsitsanis my hand. He looked a bit reserved. He offered his hand back - a fleshy palm with bony fingers - saying, 'Hey, girl. A study, hmm! Lately, several girls are messing with rebetiko. The other day a young journalist called me...it seems that we are trendy!' I replied ignoring his statement, 'I have heard about you, that you're a great *bouzouktsis*. I'm glad to meet you.' 'Hey, Zapas, do you hear this? We're for study!' he said staring towards his fellow musician. 'Yes, we became monuments!' Zapas agreed

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<sup>1</sup> *Kath' Odhon* is an archaic phrase meaning 'on the road'.

ironically. Nikos then asked 'Weren't you last week in *Bekris*?' 'Yes, together, one company,' replied Mitsos trying to support my position. He ignored us; he stood up and stepped towards the counter.

I was disappointed. Of course, I didn't expect Nikos to react enthusiastically to some 'girl' who came to meet him for her study. But, on the other hand, I sensed that he was not eager to help. Moreover, I didn't like this 'girl' and the *mangas* irony in his manners. However, I was not annoyed. After Mitsos' introduction about him, I was prepared to meet an old *mangas*. But, how could I reach him? 'I told you, Tsitsanis is weird!' Mitsos attempted to comfort me, when we sat at a nearby table. 'Do you suggest anything?' I asked. 'Look, for him a woman is a woman,' he replied. I looked at him skeptically. For a middle aged *mangas* like Nikos, 'a woman is a female', as Mitsos went on. 'Why don't you tell her that he hasn't left even a female cat?' (meaning he is after every female he meets) said Ourania, joining our table in a humorous mood. I felt glad to have her in our *parea*. 'Forget it, Dafni, there is only one way!' she assured me lowering her voice, '...to go with him!'

Instantly, I recalled reading about various heroic figures in the history of ethnography and the compromises and the dangers ethnographers expose themselves to in the name of research. I laughed. There was no way I could go so far for the sake of my fieldwork. Of course, I should be careful. In case, however, I wouldn't be able to discuss with him openly, I would quit. I'd made up my mind. Nonetheless, I was somehow distressed. I felt myself trapped in the fact that I was a female ethnographer wishing to communicate with a middle aged *mangas* personifying a set of rebetiko prejudices and stereotypes about women. Until then, I had not encountered any similar problem, probably because I dealt mostly with younger people. Now I realized

that there were areas of the research field I could hardly enter - at least at that time and working by myself.

### *The 'circle'*

Soon the first *parees* arrived. Most of the people were formally dressed. Men with freshly shaved faces and freshly polished shoes, some wearing strong perfumes and golden necklaces, arrived in small groups of three or four. A few were accompanied by their fiancées or girlfriends. Nonetheless, most of the *parees* were single sex; there was only a small number of couples, as part of bigger *parees*, in the café. Women, mostly around in forties, also arrived in *parees*. They looked like working class women; most of them were quite big, dressed in flamboyant clothes, covered with jewelry and with carefully fixed hairstyles.

A group of three women opened the door cheerfully. In a jolly mood they greeted the musicians. They welcomed them, too. 'Fanoula, as you're getting older, you're getting more beautiful!' Nikos flattered one of them. 'I can't tell you the secret!' she replied humorously in a flirting tone. 'She is one of his harem,' gossiped Mitsos. People kept on coming. The door opened again and a male *parea* now entered. They walked in slowly, with the dashing, rigorous walking style of male working class toughness. 'Nikos, we will burn it today,' said one of them shaking hands with Nikos.<sup>2</sup> 'We will smart it,' confirmed his friend.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> 'We will burn it' (in Greek: *tha to kapsoume*) is a slang phrase denoting extravagant *ghlendi* practices associated with excessive drinking and dancing.

<sup>3</sup> 'Smart it' (in Greek: *to tsouzo*) is a slang phrase meaning 'to booze', namely to drink excessively.

They sat at a table next to the musicians. There was a small plastic sign on the table: 'reserved'. I looked around. I realized that most of the tables were reserved. 'How do they make these reservations?' I asked the waiter, who came to our table. 'Oh, they call here. You're lucky you found an empty table. You know, it is the musicians who arranged this event together with the boss. They're old friends...He will show up later...This one is a family-situation!' he laughed. When he left, Mitsos attempted to explain confidentially. 'I told you. You only know from mouth to mouth. These people here, they know each other and are friends of Nikos and the others. They're a circle.'

I was excited. I hadn't been to a similar rebetiko event before. 'The people here are different' I noticed. 'Oh, yes. Nothing to do with *Amareion*. These are folk people.' <sup>[Ordinary people]</sup> Rebetiko today does not attract only a certain type of audience, I assured myself. In fact, this was a hypothesis I formulated when I set out the initial proposal. This was a chance to go further. 'These folk people are also gathered here for rebetiko,' I assumed. 'Look, each *kompania* has its own circle. Every musician has its own people; every place has its own people. Rebetiko is one thing. Who plays rebetiko is quite another. Usually, any musician, or even a whole *kompania* have some friends who follow them wherever they play. And this helps them make a good name [meaning they become popular] among the *piatsa*,' explained Mitsos. 'So, do the owners of venues often employ musicians who have a good name?' I asked. 'Of course, because they are a guarantee. They also bring customers to the place,' he explained, with a witty glance.

There was still something that troubled me, though. In *Bekris*, I happened to meet customers who also frequented the rebetiko afternoons in *Amareion*. The people

of *Kath' Odhon* rebetiko event were obviously different from the 'new age' frequenters of *Amareion* and those attracted to the student culture of *Bekris*. 'These folk people here, would they attend rebetiko in *Amareion*?' I wondered, trying to stimulate both of them further. Ourania laughed. Apparently, she found it strange, funny. And I went on, 'Or, let's say, in *Bekris taverna*? She sobered up now saying, 'I'm not so sure about it...If not in *Bekris*, though, in some other *taverna* certainly,' she confirmed. Mitsos agreed, 'Oh yes, yes,' and went on theorizing: 'After all, these are the original people of the *tavernes*. It was later that the students invented the *taverna* and rebetiko. Folk people are the people rebetiko song talks about. *Amareion* is a new thing, mostly for young people, a more intellectual, more refined place.' Ourania added, 'Why don't you say it? *Amareion* is more fashionable. These people here grew up with these songs, they don't care about trends...They have rebetiko inside themselves!'

### *The ghlendi started*

The sounds of Nikos' *bouzouki* tuning gradually eased the noise of the people who packed the café. Without saying a word, his fellow-musicians followed him. Two *bouzouki*-players, Zeparas and Nikos the Tsitsanis, the leading instrumentalist, and a guitarist, Apostolis, who showed up in the meantime, formed the *kompania*. 'Cheers, Nikos!' toasted a woman before they even started. Nikos fixed his cigarette between the middle and ring fingers of his right hand and played the strings with a pick. This is an old rebetiko playing posture. His *bouzouki* was embellished with some ivory florescent motives carefully inset on the front board; it was an impressive piece of art. 'This is an old handmade *bouzouki*. It is difficult to find a craftsman who can make

this today,' commented Mitsos, admiring Nikos' instrument. 'Where do you buy rebetiko instruments?' I asked. 'There are some old workshops here. Some musicians may even order them from Athens.'

'Look at Zeparas, the *bouzouki* is shaking in his hands!' remarked Ourania enthusiastically. Indeed, Zeparas was playing jerkily, swinging the *bouzouki* in coordination to the rhythm. Apostolis sat modestly and enjoyed accompanying with his guitar. They were all placed round the table they occupied next to the entrance, dressed in dark suits in front of the flossy flowery curtains stretching down to the floor. On the marble table there was a bottle of whisky, some handwritten papers – notes of lyrics and song titles – and an ashtray already overflowing with cigarettes. Zeparas was keeping a sideways eye on Nikos, who had meanwhile placed his cigarette to his lips. They were both seated with crossed legs. This framing - still vividly incised in my memory - fascinated me. I found it quite representative of the understandings the *Kath' Odhon* performance event communicated to me.

Πάμε τσάρκα πέρα στο Μπαχτσέ τσιφλίκι  
Κούκλα μου γλυκιά απ' τη Θεσσαλονίκη<sup>4</sup>

(translation)

Let's go for a walk far to Bahtse Tsifliki  
My sweet doll from Thessaloniki

Nikos was singing and playing along with Zeparas a popular Vasilis Tsitsanis' tune. Several people followed them. I was impressed. Most of the people usually remember the couplet and some parts of the song. The people in *Kath' Odhon* could

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<sup>4</sup> The song is titled *Bahtse Tsifliki*, and is a love song that refers to an area of Thessaloniki (Bahtse Tsifliki). It was composed by V. Tsitsanis and recorded in 1946 in 78 rpm, Columbia DG 6598/CG 2162.

fluently recall the whole song. Notably, they also recalled the lyrics of other, less popular, even long forgotten songs.

Μέσα στην τόση συμφορά  
οι φίλοι με γελούνε  
μπατیره με φωνάζουνε  
και με κατηγορούνε

(translation)

Within this whole misfortune  
Friends laugh at me  
They call me 'broke'  
And put the blame on me.<sup>5</sup>

'Where <sup>the hell</sup> do they know this from?' Mitsos asked surprised. 'I haven't heard this song before,' I confessed. 'Oh, I thought you knew it...because I don't know it either,' added Ourania looking skeptical. 'He must have discovered it somewhere...an old recording, who knows? I bet it is Vasilis Tsitsanis.' 'Probably this is his special repertory,' I suggested. 'The same way you recall some unknown songs which are then associated with your *kompania*.'

'They're great!' Mitsos admired the musicians. 'Listen! Now they stick together, Nikos and Zapas, the two *bouzoukia*. You can't say who plays what! You have to watch their fingers...And now Nikos goes ahead, he plays the *melodhia* [melodic line] and Zapas follows playing lower, filling in [*ghemizontas*, meaning 'filling in', underpinning the melodic line played by Nikos].' 'Since when do they play together?' I asked. 'I haven't seen them separately!' replied Mitsos and went on. 'Listen to their playing: they talk to each other. Rarely do you see such a binding

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<sup>5</sup> The song is titled *Batiris* ('Broke'). It was composed by V. Tsitsanis and recorded in 1940, HMV AO 2695/OGA 1128.

[*dhesimo*]!’<sup>6</sup> Ourania, with her cheeks burning red, raised her glass and toasted the musicians. ‘Tonight, our souls will travel to paradise!’ and then she gulped down her wine. ‘Slowly, miss!’ Mitsos warned her humorously. ‘Can I do otherwise?’ she wondered excitedly, ‘this ~~doesn’t~~ happen every day!’

Suddenly, the attention of Nikos was drawn to a figure opening the front door. A tall, middle aged man dressed in a black suit wearing a Panama hat (*kavouraki*) – a typical *mangas* outfit – stepped in. For a moment, he stared at us, especially at me, with a piercing glance. He had seen Mitsos and Ourania before; it was my presence, a new face, which, apparently, ~~caught~~ his attention. He moved towards the counter without greeting any of the people already gathered in the café. Then he rested himself on a stool with slow, confident movements. Immediately, the barman brought him a drink. ‘Cheers, Stelios!’ shouted Nikos at the end of the song and toasted, ‘Let our enemies die!’ ‘So be it!’ replied Stelios, with a deep voice. ‘This is the boss,’ whispered Ourania.

I noticed a couple of other men looking like Stelios at the bar. ‘Are they also people of the cafe?’ I asked, trying to watch them as discreetly as possible. They seemed like ‘heavy’ *manges*. ‘These are *rebetofatses*’ [‘rebetiko faces’] Mitsos described them with respect. ‘They’re the old school...They’re the old *manges* of the area. Same generation as Nikos. It is difficult to meet original *manges* like them today. There are only a few here and there,’ he concluded. Meanwhile, the waiter came with a second jug of wine. ‘This is on the house,’ he said, pointing towards his boss, Stelios. We toasted him gratefully. Ourania swaggered, full of pride. Being treated to a drink by someone like Stelios was a great honour.

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<sup>6</sup> See also the phrase *play dhemena* meaning ‘playing tied’ (see the section on *Bekris’ taverna*)

I was relieved. Initially, his glance made me feel that I was somehow unsuited to this place. After all, I was not a member of the 'circle'. Actually, we were the youngest *parea* in the café. His offer was, therefore, a warm welcome for us. More important, however, it attracted the attention of Nikos the Tsitsanis. And I expected that his friend's generosity would, in a way, motivate his interest, too. Unfortunately, I waited in vain.

It was around one o'clock in the morning. The waiter, still in a rush, kept bringing drinks as the *parees* ordered - mainly wine or whisky. Shortly, Haris appeared in the café. 'Good choice!' he assured me enthusiastically. 'Nikos is a bit capricious...' murmured Mitsos with concern. 'He is very heavy...sparing with words,' said Haris discouragingly. He sounded quite assured. 'Anyway, you see, it is something else here! Pure stuff!'

Now, all four of us shared the same table. We discussed what was going on and enjoyed the happening together. I was pleased. The musicians of *Amareion*, their comments, their reactions, their behaviour within this context, constituted a vivid feedback for my research. This is something I realized on the spot, while sharing this experience with them. Without having originally planned this situation, doing fieldwork in *Kath' Odhon* was turning out to be a particularly complex research occasion. This became even clearer early in the morning, while I was writing my fieldnotes: 'We were all there. First, the people of the performance event - the field of that evening's research. Secondly, the one who defined this as a research field, the ethnographer, myself. There was, moreover, a third level: the musicians of *Amareion* -

the representatives of a field I've worked with earlier on; and we were together, in a single *parea*.'

I was getting a little confused. I strongly sensed that there was a kind of interplay among my research areas. Undoubtedly, on one hand, this intermixing provided a beneficial feedback to my inquiry. I worried, however, that this admittedly interesting interference might become an ethnographic maze where I could lose my orientation. Doing fieldwork was then turning up to be a more fascinating and increasingly interactive process and, at the same time, much more complicated than I had anticipated.

#### '*Merakia*'

Soon, I entered a strong *meraki* state of being; *meraklothika* – as it is called in Greek. After having spent several months in the field, it was the first time I was so deeply moved by the music making. That evening, I 'channeled' myself with the ways people lived the musical performance. Beyond being there as an ethnographer, I primarily enjoyed the experience of simply being there. In the past, I also happened to revel in several other rebetiko performances; I was always aware, though, of the fact that the reason I was there was the research project. Yet, the entire situation in *Kath' Odhon* café led me to immerse myself to an intimate state of spiritual longing, dedication and passion for the music (*meraki*). In fact, all four of our company *meraklothikame* (pl.). In the mean time, the musicians kept on playing almost exclusively Tsitsanis' compositions. Soon, they performed some more popular Tsitsanis' songs and we joined them singing:

Μην απελπίζεσαι και δεν θ' αργήσει  
Κοντά σου θα 'ρθει μια χαραυγή  
Καινούργια αγάπη να σου ζητήσει  
Κάνε λιγάκι υπομονή

(translation)

Don't despair and ~~before~~ long  
A dawn will reach you  
It will ask you for a new love  
Be a little patient <sup>7</sup>

'Opa!' shouted enthusiastically a woman. She was kneeling on the floor together with a couple of other women forming a circle. They started handclapping following the rhythm. 'Come, Fanoula, come!' They invited their friend to dance. Fanoula, a middle aged <sup>d</sup>robust woman, stretched her arms in the air, forming a cross with her body, and stepped in <sup>to</sup> the centre of the imaginary dance floor. She was dancing a *zeibekikos*, a traditionally male solo dance.<sup>8</sup> 'She knows how to dance,' commented Ourania, impressed. Fanoula rotated her body with her arms outstretched, making a grandiose, so-called, *ghyrovolia* ('turnaround'). Then she knelt down beating the floor with her palm. She ~~moved~~ slowly around the circle, improvising her steps according to the rhythm. Her glance was 'nailed' on the floor. 'Aide!' [exclamation of exhortation, enthusiasm] Cheers, Fanoula!' her friends commended her and kept on handclapping following the rhythm. The male *parees* of the café, although they did not seem to disapprove of her dancing, watched somehow reservedly. After all, any typical *mangas*, as they were thought to be, would usually

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<sup>7</sup> A *zeibekiko* song titled *Kane Lighaki Ypomoni* and composed by Vasilis Tsitsanis. It was first recorded in 1948 in 78 rpm, Columbia DG 6747/CG 2458.

<sup>8</sup> From the 1960s onwards dancing to *zeibekikos* – a traditional male solo dance - became a female expression of liberalism. See Cowan (1990:188-205).

avoid encouraging overtly a woman to dance; for them, to kneel down and handclap for a *gomena* (a 'broad') was ridiculous behaviour.<sup>9</sup>

At the end of the song the female *parea* returned to their table. Nikos the Tsitsanis and Zapparas lit up cigarettes and rested for a while. Apostolis found the chance to greet some of his friends, who happened to be there. 'Cheers, Apostolis, to you and your guitar! You made us forget our worries.' He clinked his glass of whisky with that of a gray-haired man. In response, Apostolis pressed his friend's arm shaking him in a friendly manner. Then he moved to Fanoula's *parea*. 'Hello, girls! You seem to be in a good shape today!' he noticed in a bantering tone. Fanoula replied dashingly 'Why shouldn't we? Life is short, Apostolaki [little Apostolis]!' Nikos and Zapparas remained relaxed in their seats smoking. They'd been playing for more than a couple of hours now continuously.

Soon, however, the *ghlendi* was 'on fire'.<sup>10</sup> The *kompania* restarted the music making in a joyful mood. I was expecting that the rest of the programme would include less playful, 'heavier' tunes. Besides, it was almost two o'clock in the morning. But I was wrong. Still more music making was about to take place that evening. When they started playing the *Stis Mastouras to Skopo* ('In the Tune of *Mastoura*', that is the state of being 'high', intoxicated due to drug consumption) it was hard to distinguish Nikos' voice as everyone was singing together with him:

Όταν συμβεί στα περίξ  
Φωτιές να καίνε  
Πίνουν οι μάγκες ναργιλέ

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<sup>9</sup> Nonetheless, today, in *skyladhiko* clubs, young men often handclap and overtly support their girlfriends dancing to *zeibekikos*.

<sup>10</sup> In Greek, to *ghlendi anapse*, a phrase used to denote that the reveling expressions were intensified escalating to the culmination of the *ghlendi*.

(translation)

When it happens around *about*  
That fires are burning  
The manges <sup>are</sup> smok <sup>ing</sup> Anarghile <sup>11</sup>

'*Ala tis!* [*mangas* exclamation of enthusiasm, surprise]. Here it is, a hash song, a *majoraki* [in major mode],' remarked Haris. And then, he addressed Ourania trying to admonish her: 'Come on, it's your turn now!' Meanwhile Ourania was pretty drunk. A red shade covered her eyes making her glance look somehow bleary. When the musicians finished the song, she stood up. 'I'm on my way!' she announced and strutted towards the musicians' table. 'Hey, hey, welcome, girl! Are we going to sing anything, my Ourania?' Zeparas welcomed her and then winked at Nikos. He responded with moderate laughter. 'Let's go, the *Ola Gia 'Sena Koukla Mou!* ['Everything For You, My Doll'].'

Ourania looked away at the ceiling, as if she wished to send her voice there. Then she lowered her eyelids and started singing:

Όσα βγάζω μου τα παίρνεις βρε τσαχπίνα  
Και τραβάς γραμμή να παίξεις στα καζίνα<sup>12</sup>

(translation)

Everything I earn, you take playful woman  
And you head straight on to play in the casinos

'Cheers, Ourania *meraklou!*'<sup>13</sup> Apostolis supported her. She went on absorbed in her singing, ignoring his compliment. 'Cheers, Ourania, with all the beautiful things about you!' Apostolis insisted on praising her. Nikos was watching her, too; he seemed to marvel

<sup>11</sup> The song was composed by Vasilis Tsitsanis. It was recorded in 1946, Columbia DG 6599/CG 2160.

<sup>12</sup> The song is composed by Stratos Payioumtzis and recorded in 1949 in 78 rpm, HMV AO 2749/OGA 1240.

<sup>13</sup> The word *meraklis* (masculine), *-ou* (female) denotes the person who has *meraki*.

at her skills. Apparently, she sensed his attention. She lowered her head graciously towards him and smiled gently, showing her gratitude. Her voice now had a distinctive sensitivity, sounding somehow fragile with a slight tremolo. In the next song, I noticed that her eyes had gone wet. She wasn't crying, although her voice was trembling now.

Και μη μου δώσεις πρόσεξε  
ό,τι κι αν σου γυρεύω  
κλείσε την πόρτα σου καλά  
κι εγώ ας ζητιανεύω<sup>14</sup>

(translation)

And don't you give me, be careful,  
Whatever I might ask you  
Close your door firmly  
And let me begging

'Poor thing...She was hurt,' said Haris with compassion. 'She split with her boyfriend last night. I mean, he left her for another girl, confided Mitsos. Ourania managed to finish the song and looked <sup>towards</sup> Nikos and Zaparas' side. 'Gia mas! ['Cheers']. Come, drink at a gulp!' toasted Zaparas.<sup>15</sup> Apostolis nipped his whisky staring sideways curiously at Ourania. 'Ghia mas, guys!' she replied and swallowed the wine left in the glass all at once. 'Stay well, Ouranitsa! [literally little Ourania, a calling expression of affection],' wished Nikos placing his glass decisively on the table.

Ourania returned modestly to our side. She could hardly stand,

'I'm dried up, guys,' she argued and bent her head sorrowfully.

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<sup>14</sup> The song is titled *O Zitianos* ('The Beggar') and was composed by Vasilis Tsitsanis. It was recorded in 1946, HMV AO 2722/OGA 1191.

<sup>15</sup> *Gia mas* is a typical phrase meaning 'to our health' commonly used to toast in alcohol drinking.

*The red carnations*

It was almost three o'clock in the morning. I was so excited, I didn't feel tired at all. I stared quickly at the counter; the *rebetofatses* were still there, as if they hadn't moved at all for hours now. One of them was playing a <sup>set of</sup> worry beads (*komboloi*), occasionally sharing a few words with the barman. The *parees* were still ordering drinks under a thick cloud of cigarette smoke; there was enough *kefi* in the café. 'Play *Egho Plironta Matia Pou Aghapo*' ('I Pay for the Eyes I Love') requested a man from the *parea* seated close to the musicians. Shortly, the *kompania* satisfied his wish.

Φέρτε μου να πω το ακριβότερο ποτό  
εγώ πληρώνω τα μάτια που αγαπώ<sup>16</sup>

(translation)

Bring me to drink the most expensive drink  
I pay for the eyes I love

They asked for a *hasaposerviko*, a lively rhythm in 2/8. Apparently, this *parangelia* ('request') was not accidental. They must have noticed Ourania's misty eyes. Making this request was a purposeful initiative to restore the *kefi*. This way, the male *parea* took control of the event, more or less consciously, and protected the *ghlendi* situation. They started handclapping rhythmically to the *hasaposerviko* tune. Suddenly, one of them left the café. In a while, he rushed in carrying a big plastic bucket. 'Hey, guys! Let's burn it up!'<sup>17</sup> He sprinkled the musicians with lots of red carnations.<sup>18</sup> The red flowers instantly covered the musicians, rolling down on the floor. Nikos took a carnation and placed it in his lapel. Apostolis paused for a while. He then gathered a handful of flowers and threw them back to the audience. Everyone

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<sup>16</sup> The song was composed by Vasilis Tsitsanis. It was recorded in 1949, Columbia DG 6786/CG 2535.

in the café was in high spirits. ‘Now, that’s a real *ghlendi!*’ acknowledged Mitsos enthusiastically.

‘Look how jaunty they seem. They fancy it!’ remarked Haris, watching the *kompania* still performing bathed in carnations. I was deeply fascinated by the entire rebetiko event – the dedication of the *kompania*, the participation of the people, the culmination of the *ghlendi*. The *Kath’ Odhon* revelry turned out to be a unique field experience. ‘When do they usually stop the programme?’ I asked. Haris laughed. ‘As long as there are people having fun, never! They may go on for ages!’ he replied. By four o’ clock in the morning I decided to leave. The musicians were still playing.

### *A failure*

In the following days, my main concern was to arrange a meeting with Nikos the Tsitsanis. I asked Mitsos how I could find his phone number. He sent me to Menelaos, the *bouzouki* player in *Bekris taverna*; he could not help me, either. I was desperate. Nikos seemed so remote and self-contained, almost like a pop star. I decided to go to *Kath’ Odhon*. ‘What do you want him for?’ the barman asked me in an interrogatory tone. I tried to explain. ‘Look, take this and tell him that Manos sent you,’ he said, giving me a piece of paper with the precious numbers.

Feeling relieved I went back home and called him. We arranged to meet at a small coffee shop near his house. ‘So, what is this thing you’re doing?’ he asked. I briefly talked about my studies and the research on rebetiko song I was doing. He laughed. ‘Why a girl like you <sup>is</sup> doing so much reading? At your age, such a girl’ I

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<sup>17</sup> A slang phrase, see fn.2.

was annoyed by his words. Nonetheless, I went on trying to initiate a discussion on music. Before I finished, he interrupted me. 'Look, sweetheart, rebetiko is for *manges*, not for skirts. The *ghynaikakia* [literally 'little women', a derogatory term] will never touch the *bouzouki* [meaning that women will always be excluded from playing the *bouzouki*]. We put them on stage to show off! Have you ever heard of a woman who wrote a rebetiko song? Rebetiko, pure rebetiko needs *bessa* ['dignity', 'sincerity']!' he stressed.

I was offended by the way he provocatively talked about women. I felt that I was trying to approach someone who would hardly respect me. I recalled, however, the comforting way he treated Ourania in *Kath' Odhon* café. 'Well, anyway, there are some talented singers, don't you think so? Like Ourania, for example.' 'Most of the singers are little sluts. They play around with musicians, because they want to climb on stage. Ourania had an affair with one of my students, Menelaos. She has a nice throat, though [a slang phrase meaning 'she has a nice voice']. I can't deny this, surely. I fancied her that evening...She feels it.' He sipped his coffee. The waiter was there to take my order. I took out some cash to pay for both of us. 'Please, don't. A girl never pays for a man,' he blocked me with his hand.

I was not surprised. After all, he was a middle-aged *mangas*, with old-fashioned values and ideas about gender.<sup>19</sup> I didn't like his manners, though. I found him quite rude. More important, there was an irony in his words and the way he looked at me, which made me feel somehow uncomfortable. 'A girl is taking care of a man,' he completed his statement, sweetening his voice weirdly. Apparently he

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<sup>18</sup> Throwing carnations to the musicians is a typical expression of merry making in *skyladhiko* clubs.

<sup>19</sup> For a discussion on manhood and music making in a Cretan context see Dawe (1996). Cowan discussed gender-related issues in *Dance and the Body Politic in Northern Greece* (1990).

realized I was embarrassed by his attitude. I tried to sober up and turn the discussion back to music. 'How long have you been playing?' 'Since I was fourteen. I had a great *dalkas* ['pain of love', a slang word borrowed from Turkish] then.' 'This *dalkas* led you to rebetiko music?' I asked. 'This is an old story...And what about you?' he replied in a flirting tone.

I was in a difficult position. I preferred not to talk about personal matters with someone like Nikos the Tsitsanis. I was worried about the effects of such an 'opening'. 'Never mind...Look, Mister Nikos, I'm here because I respect your artistry and I would like to learn some things about the rebetiko from your own experience,' I clarified once more. He laughed confidently. 'Women, you're all the same!' he stated scornfully, undermining my words. 'Why do you push yourself, you're such a sweetie!' I was infuriated. Nonetheless, I didn't say anything. <sup>badly towards</sup> ~~To~~ behave Nikos could possibly damage my position and relationship with the field. I finished my coffee, thanked him and left.

I was upset. I had failed to communicate with Tsitsanis. And I would hardly try to test myself again in a similar vein. Although I was impressed by his performance skills, I didn't enjoy talking to him. 'To what extent can an ethnographer tolerate an offensive attitude by an informant in the field?' I wrote down that afternoon in my diary. 'Of course, I was there to know, to hear. And I should be prepared for anything. Normally, then, an offence shouldn't affect me. What about, however, self-respect? How could I ignore my values, my personal dignity, in the name of doing research? Is it possible to split myself between being an ethnographer and being a woman?' I don't think so. Of course, as a researcher I had to make compromises, face misunderstandings and experience even extremely disagreeable

situations. Still though, I was there, in the field, both as an ethnographer and as a person; how else could I primary feel the *meraki*, being myself fascinated by the music making, or build up a friendship with the *Amareion* musicians? And how could I further consider these lived experiences - including my recent 'failure' - as facets of a musical culture I wished to understand?

*Making plans: where should I stop this fieldwork?*

It was the end of May 1998. The winter season of music making was about to end. The concerts in *Amareion* and other winter venues were going to stop. I had to think about the course of my fieldwork. What was left for me to do? The performance contexts I had concentrated on Ano Poli were soon going to close down. I had to make a decision. But first, it was necessary to review what I had done so far.

The outcome of my research was more than a hundred hours of recorded tapes, several used notebooks and a folder saved in my PC named 'fieldnotes'. Until then, I had transcribed only a few tapes. So, one of the most urgent tasks was to complete the transcriptions of field recordings. Next to this, I had to study and further organize my fieldnotes and think about the research as a whole. This was enough homework for the summer time. Then, I could decide more clearly about my future research plans.

Indeed, the review and organization of the research products turned out to be meaningful initiatives. At that stage of the project, it helped me appreciate, reconsider and, thus, re-assess the directions of my research. More important, I started delineating several basic topics or areas of analysis, which I intended to explore more

thoroughly. Some topics appeared more complicated and problematic; the understandings they implied were implicit, hidden behind the people's own words and practices. I still needed to examine more carefully and critically the meanings they communicated.

In addition, I needed to take into consideration the time constraints of a doctoral research project and organize the time schedule of my studies in total. Except for the fieldwork, I needed to devote a certain amount of time to studying and, of course, writing the thesis. Yet, what was basically puzzling me at the end of that summer was the evaluation of my research activity: where should I put an end to this process? Was there actually an end? Doing research on rebetiko performances in Ano Poli could, of course, last for years. I was aware that the total experiences I had gathered so far were actually instances of the facets of contemporary rebetiko culture on which I had focused. In case I were to decide to go on, new things would come up. They could probably inspire further understandings, which might support the hypotheses I already had made, question the directions I had hitherto taken or re-orientate myself toward new paths of study.

On the other hand, I was feeling quite comfortable with my work in the field. I was satisfied with the amount and quality of the material I had gathered within the seven months. Inevitably, the relationships I developed with the field, the ways I approached and lived the rebetiko culture within this relatively short period, were greatly assisted by the fact that I was a native researcher who had in addition already been there. Evidently, in this aspect of doing fieldwork, nativity was on my side.

I decided to return to the field for a period of three months. My main task now was to re-think the topics of my analysis on the spot, before starting to expand and further formulate my initial hypotheses. I needed to live in the field carrying the network of ideas and speculations I had made during the period of reviewing and organizing my recent research. During this period there were occasions when people's words and thoughts, their attitudes and expressions in the rebetiko venues reinforced the various meanings I had already supplied myself with. At the same time, I could see in practice what I had previously conjectured: that by 'digging' more deeply into certain areas of the musical culture, new areas of investigation emerged.

By December 1998 my fieldwork was completed. The next step was to assess the research project as a whole. However, before setting off to crystallize my ideas and study the relevant bibliography, I needed to discharge myself for a while from the research experience; to stand at a distance from what I had done so far. I spent the following months studying and thinking about what I was finally going to write and how. Later, I realized that this formative period was decisive for the final thesis product. Even the more perplexing areas of my study were clarified and further unraveled. During these months, I 'digested' the field experience. I absorbed and reflected on what I lived in the field before textualizing it.

*From ethnographic reality to theory: thinking of topics to theorize upon*

In making the 'fine cut' that emerged from the overall process of 'editing' my ethnography I was predominantly guided by my decision to concentrate on the particular topics I was about to theorize upon in the 'conclusions' part of the thesis.

These were topics – ‘sequences’ in film making terms – that I carefully selected after I had completed the transcription of the tape-recorded discussions.<sup>20</sup> They are sequences that illustrate ideas, practices and events I regarded as representative of the entire research experience. The various ethnographic situations I decided to include inspired in turn further explorations of particular aspects of the revivalist culture. This way, I came across new understandings that defined worlds of ideas which transcended the actually lived ethnographic realities propelling them.

Navigating the world of theory has been basically a process of abstraction. Writing the ‘conclusions’ part of the thesis required a movement from the state of specificity featuring the thick description of cultural practices, aesthetics and discourses illustrated in the three case studies to that of conceptualizing meanings and interpretations that ethnographic experience communicated. These are understandings I worked through in the exploration of certain topics: how rebetiko song is aestheticized and mythicized today, the popular discourses on the origins of the genre and its connection to the Byzantine chant, the evaluation of ‘authentic’ rebetiko. In turn, I attempted to concentrate further on the current meanings of rebetiko song as communicated mainly by the case study of *Amareion* ‘ethnic’ bar performances. In fact, the discussion that takes place in the following ‘conclusions’ part concentrates mainly on an ethnographic interpretation of the *Amareion* case study with respect to the two peripheral case studies, the *Bekris’ taverna* and the *Kath’ Odhon ghlendi*. To that extent, my aim was to elaborate further the understanding of rebetiko experienced as ‘ethnic’ music and the ways it is nowadays promoted, in certain contexts, as a ‘world music’ genre. Regarding ‘ethnic’ rebetiko music making as an ongoing process of ‘other-ing’ rebetiko, I sought to ground my interpretation on recent theoretical

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<sup>20</sup> The useful material was approximately sixty hours of recorded time.

ideas concerning postmodernity and postmodern music culture. In the context of postmodernity I located the investigation of current nuances of orientalism - in fact, meta-orientalism – the exploration of ideas on musical authenticity and the understanding of the ways rebetiko is promoted to an ‘art’ genre by certain intellectual groups today. Eventually, in the light of understanding current rebetiko revivalist culture I attempted to theorize upon the concept of multi-musicality and the nature of urban musicality with respect to Michel Foucault’s philosophical reflections on the notion of ‘heterotopia’.

## Chapter 11. Discussion

### *Preface: The rebetiko revival: musical meta-physics in the city*

Maybe the title of this section sounds somewhat philosophical, but it is intended to describe the very nature of rebetiko song revival. The study of revival aims primarily at exploring the ways rebetiko gains a new life today, a life that comes after its 'physical' life – the days when 'real *rebetes* existed'.<sup>1</sup> It is in that sense that I use the term meta-physics, meaning the meta-life of rebetiko song happening through the constant transformations of rebetiko tradition within the cityscape. In fact, the music was never dead; rather, it constantly changes, re-gaining a new life.

The revived nature of rebetiko tradition suggests novel musical experiences and meanings of rebetiko song that actually define and are defined by pre-existing musical sounds, lyrics and instruments. Ourania, Mitsos and Haris are urban people of the present who play the old type of three-stringed *bouzouki* and sing lyrics that describe rebetiko realities of the past – the *mangas* worldview, illegal activities, dangerous females, social alienation and poverty. 'We [today] play music of the past'. And as rebetiko performers acting today – and also urbanites of today - they may at the same time enjoy, for instance, Indian sitar music, favor 'world music' experimentations or buy recordings of the Greek *entechno* (art) song.

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<sup>1</sup> This notion of revival suggests that rebetiko revival represents a form of musical change 'in the conceptualization of existing music which may or may not be accompanied by a change of technique', 'a change in the social use' as discussed by John Blacking, 'Some Problems of Theory and Method in the Study of Musical Change', *Yearbook for Traditional Music* (1977) reprinted in Byron (1995:148-173:170).

This puzzling discourse between past and present – the essence anyway of tradition - conditions the ongoing transcendence of rebetiko song to novel lives: the contemporary lives of rebetiko animated within contemporary urban settings and realized by contemporary urban people. Besides, ‘it will never cease to have meanings for us’. In search of these meanings rebetiko revival currently communicates, I am going to concentrate here on the discourses and aesthetics of rebetiko *renaissance* today.

By ‘discourse’ I mean the rhetorical construction of imagined histories and rebetiko genealogies – in fact, a body of myths that are likely to enact metaphors of truth, rather of the truths constructed by rebetiko people. The stories the myths tell, therefore, become a codified cultural knowledge that incorporates symbolically understandings of rebetiko culture and music. In other words, the stories tell more than what they actually say. By ‘aesthetics’ I mean the sensed and felt experience (*aesthesis* in Greek means ‘sense’) of rebetiko song - echoed in practices and human attitudes - more specifically, the making of this experience as a process that realizes and fulfils the rebetiko-way-of-being.

Before concentrating on the particular bodies of discourses and aesthetics that define the experience of rebetiko music making today, I intend to discuss the ways the rebetiko revival is related to the ‘world music’ trend and attempt to understand them overall as expressions of postmodern culture.

## **Discourses and aesthetics: understandings of the nature, history and identities of rebetiko music today**

Humans sharing rebetiko music today make stories about its history and nature, values and identities. More than meaningful bodies of words, the various stories also define the poetics of the lived musical experience and become, thus, oral expressions of personal rebetiko-way<sup>s</sup>-of-being. They concern discourses further enacted in the ways the musicians and patrons of the venues represented here feel, imagine, behave, practice rebetiko song and locate it within their individual worldviews. These aesthetics of lived experience condition, in turn, rebetiko discourses in a dialectical process that essentially constitutes the ‘total’ experience of rebetiko culture.

In fact, what the overall flourish of narratives that currently address rebetiko nature and identities primarily indicates is that there is a need to promote the history and values of the music. And this need to validate the profile of the genre is additionally generated by a need to illustrate and substantiate the music with a set of cultural values and aspirations that will eventually re-establish it by re-assessing and appropriating it *à l' esprit du temps*. Besides, rebetiko revivals – and musical revivals in general - usually inspire theories that invest revivalist practices with meanings, symbols and ideals. Theories - by scholars, journalists, practitioners - suggest answers as to why Greek people listen, or ought to listen to, and appreciate rebetiko song. During the first revival the pro-rebetiko discourse aimed at exorcizing the ‘damned’ music and cleaning its profile from undesirable historical associations. Today, having achieved its expurgation, revivalist narratives are intended to promote and establish rebetiko in a glorious place in Greek and, more important, world music history. It is a

place of monumental prestige that re-defines and idealizes rebetiko as a respectable Greek 'art' musical genre of global 'ethnic' appeal.

In the following sections, I attempt to show that the specific bodies of discourses and associated aesthetics defining contemporary revivalist rebetiko experience are the outcome of the above ethnographic narratives and, more particular, of those associated with the *Amareion* case study. The systematized discourses serve to form the basis that substantiates further discussion of certain topics related to current rebetiko musical culture. They are actually bodies of ethnographic knowledge I composed out of the voices of the field that appear here as authors writing through the author, myself. This way, each systematized body is a synthesis of diverse discourses and aesthetics associated with particular understandings of rebetiko revivalist culture as discussed in the present thesis. The meanings of the narratives and practices organized under each body of discourses and aesthetics are further discussed below; in the following section they are at first set out.

*Discourse 1:* <sup>1</sup>'Rebetiko is rooted in Byzantine chant and the magnificent Hellenic-Orthodox civilization'.

'Rebetiko *dhromoi*' ('roads', the rebetiko musical modes) 'are based on Byzantine *ihoi*' ('sounds', the Byzantine modes), which, in turn, evolved out of the ancient Greek modal system. In the same way, the 'ancestor' of the *bouzouki* - the

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<sup>1</sup> The sequence the bodies of discourses are placed below is not hierarchical.

representative instrument of rebetiko song - is traced back to the 'golden' ancient Greek era. 'Makams also come from Byzantine modes' and, consequently, they are also somehow rooted in ancient Greece that is, besides, the mother 'of all civilized musics'.<sup>2</sup>

The musics that share the *makam* modal system – among these, rebetiko song – are 'full of wisdom'. The 'link [among them] is Hellenic Orthodox civilization'. These musics – rebetiko, as well as Middle Eastern and Arab genres - 'are far richer than those of the well-tempered system', that is western musical system, which 'cannot express feelings, emotions'. In contrast to 'foreign', namely western music, which is 'rational', 'like maths', rebetiko song can 'transport' 'our souls to paradise'. Singing rebetiko feels like 'flying to the seven skies' and 'sending one's voice to heaven' – that is also the imaginary 'heavenly world' where Ourania is led by the *komboshoini* (bracelet used for praying), her 'mystical' and 'uncanny' accessory.

'Westerners' on the other hand 'are suppressed by their religions!' – 'you know, Catholicism, the dark ages!' Also suppressed are Muslims 'who don't know how to revel! They're not free!' That leaves the Hellenic Orthodox musical world as the privileged carrier of the precious traditions – namely, *dhimotiko tragoudhi* and rebetiko song – that were developed within the great Byzantine civilization. This also justifies the involvement of some rebetiko musicians in local chanting schools and teaching Byzantine music.

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<sup>2</sup> The entire section on discourses is composed out of selective quotations from narratives represented in the main ethnographic chapter 'In the field'.

Recent experimentations by contemporary 'ethnic' composers, who are mixing elements of these 'wise' traditions, also stimulate enthusiasm and excitement. This is the case, for example, of the 'unusual', although interesting ('cool'), work by Kyriakos Kalaitzidis 'inspired by the Apocalypse of Apostle John' that also, surprisingly, sounds somehow 'like Ottoman stuff!' Besides, these 'ethnic' recordings 'are much healthier than these *skyladhiko* songs' (contemporary Greek folk song). For the more rigorous adherents, though, of the Byzantine musical 'miracle', rebetiko is 'a kind of folk child of Byzantine chant', because its musical structures 'didn't inherit the richness' of it. Nonetheless, the power of the tradition survived Ottoman rule due to the 'heroic Greek revolutionists of 1821 who used to revel with *bouzouki*' (meaning actually the *tambouras*) and thus continued and preserved it during the so-called 'years of slavery'.

This supports the reasons why 'it is important to study Byzantine chant' and 'learn the Byzantine notation and *ihoi*', since Byzantine chant is thought to be the mother of local musical traditions, where 'rebetiko is rooted', too. Musicians, thus, in search of the prime source of musical knowledge travel to Poli (Constantinople) and seek to study music in the local conservatories. In Poli they learn to perform instruments and music of the Ottoman classical music tradition, which, anyway, 'evolved within the majestic Hellenic Orthodox civilization'.

*Discourse 2: 'Rebetiko is a respectful art music'*

'Rebetiko is a kind of art music', 'an ancient art we respect' and this certifies rebetiko as 'part of our history'. The native identities of the genre authorize it as a 'conservational' treasure of the past; it deserves to be 'restored' like the past architectural physiognomy of Ano Poli. Rebetiko for Greek culture is 'like the ancient statues we place in museums and everyone all over the world goes there and admires them'. Because it is 'art', it 'demands concentration' and musicians ought to resolve any 'misunderstanding' caused by those patrons deviating from the 'proper' way of listening to this 'respectful tradition'. Moreover, as an acknowledged 'art' genre – in fact, an accepted *art maudit* – it deserves to be performed in a 'refined place' like *Amareion* in the form of a 'concert', with 'standard duration', timetable and structure. As a concert, moreover, it should be properly advertised as in the case of the poster designed for the *Amareion* weekly programme that depicts a renaissance angel of paradise – the paradise where 'fine' musics belong. The performances of rebetiko concerts are taking place on a stage, that locates the musicians 'in the centre of the universe', in contrast to the *Bekris' taverna* performances: 'here they come for the music'; 'there, what comes first is having fun, eating good food...then comes the music'.

The participants in the concerts are mostly students and young intellectuals (*koultouriaridhes*) who recognize 'a kind of wisdom in rebetiko'. Besides, 'people with no interests', 'bombarded by various western nonsense' are not attracted to it, since today the appreciation of rebetiko 'is a matter of knowledge'. Intellectuals and students are particularly attracted to 'the different world' of musical entertainment

they identify in rebetiko music making, since they 'like alternative things'. For this reason, they are also interested in performances organized in 'authentic' *tavernes* and *ghlendia* (pl.), since they are indeed 'fascinating', 'something else' - regardless of the fact they are not strictly organized in the form of a concert. *Kath' Odhon* and *Bekris* represent, consequently, survivals of the real 'folk' type of rebetiko entertainment, which deserves to be treated as an art, since it is the 'pure stuff'.<sup>3</sup> The precious living agents of the rebetiko 'ancient art' are the 'folk people', who have 'rebetiko inside them'. These are seen as the 'original people of the *tavernes*' 'who don't care about trends'; they are namely the primitive clienteles of traditional rebetiko venues who may nowadays be traced reveling as a 'circle' in a closed rebetiko *ghlendi*.

People in rebetiko concerts are required to maintain low vocal dynamics, applaud at the end of each song and dedicate themselves to listening seriously and undistractedly to the music making. The repertory is loosely fixed – according to the 'psychology' of the audience - and follows a basic skeleton scheduled to fit the three-hour performance time. 'We start easily...there is a *taximaki* in the beginning...Then we play more nervous tunes...when there is enough *meraki* around we play the hash songs. These are more intimate tunes, more relaxed'. Revivalist musicians are 'artists' and demand people's attention and respect. Ourania, for example, is 'capable to stop singing' in case 'something bothers her'. Her 'power' is her 'voice', not her 'movements'. Certain patrons may even romantically idealize her dominant attitude and posture and compare her to 'an ancient priestess'. After all, it is improper for a rebetiko singer - teasingly described as 'primadonna' - to 'play theatre', unlike *skyladhiko* singers who are regarded as exhibitionist performers of a 'commercialized

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<sup>3</sup> The *Bekris*' rebetiko performances were advertised in local entertainment guides.

trash' spectacle. Rebetiko music making in *Amareion* is thus 'a serious situation', a 'concerto', according to the humorous comments of the *taverna* musicians. For this reason, they are differentiated from the *taverna* rebetiko events, as well as the *ghlendi* happening - that is the 'original', 'folk' way of rebetiko performances.

In the same spirit, the *Amareion* performances of *café-aman* music given by the *Loxandra* ensemble also require serious professionalism and formality. Besides, unlike the performance given by the Gypsy wandering musicians, the revivalist *Loxandra* event is a 'concert', 'not a *panighyri*' that is a happening 'for leisure or for revelry'; 'it demands concentration'. 'Folk' musicians, therefore, differ from 'artists', who were taught and learn to practice traditional music in a conservatory. The revivalist performers are educated musicians who are intellectually involved in the art of music. 'Folk' musicians, on the contrary, 'have rhythm in their blood, they're born as musicians'. Their 'passionate' and 'exciting' performance is a 'pleasant surprise'. The *touberleki* player with his 'sweating forehead' and 'the drops running on his cheeks' offers a show that 'breaks the monotony' and stimulates an 'unexpected' 'longing' for dance. At the same time, though, 'they're so funny!' 'with all their shining golden jewelry...and the golden tooth, here, in front, to show it with the smile!'.

Revivalist musicians 'sense that they [the Gypsies] should be protected'. Their superior attitudes and facial expressions convey their will to control the performance event. To that extent, art musicians use musical sounds as signs of their dispositions and intentions – such as the violin glissando that indicated the re-start of their own performance or the abrupt pause that called for people's silence and concentration on

their 'art'. The particular attitudes and musical signs they employ, however, communicate further their worry that 'if they would let them [the Gypsies] play for longer, they would steal the performance'. 'Then the *kefi* would 'fire' and who could say then "now we have to stop and go back to *Loxandra* music?" This worry seems to embody, moreover, a lack of confidence regarding their musical skills in comparison to those of the Gypsy musicians. Apparently, though, they avoid admitting this insecurity and instead disguise it to an ethical value that drives them not 'to compete with a folk musician'.

On the other hand, the Gypsies are obviously aware of how 'fascinating' they look in the eyes of the people sharing the revivalist music making. Because 'they've smelled the *koultouriaridhes*' (a pejorative term for people involved in the arts and letters), they purposefully played the tune of the soundtrack for the film *The Time of the Gypsies*. They aimed to satisfy the intellectual listeners with a 'fashionable' 'ethnic' Gypsy tune they 'heard on the radio'. They are conscious namely of their 'ethnic' appeal. By performing this tune, they perform moreover themselves as precious 'ethnic' musicians. They know that they are recognized and favoured as 'the real tradition' and this acknowledgment also certifies them as 'our ethnic music capital'.

*Discourse 3: 'Rebetiko is ethnic music and ethnic is beautiful'*

Rebetiko is an 'ethnic tradition of the world' threatened to disappear under the rule of 'capitalism' and 'our great enemy, technology and along with this, music business!'

Another great enemy of Greek music is the alienating *skyladhiko* (contemporary folk song) that 'is ruling us...and it ruins us'. *Skyladhiko* musicians serve the entertainment business and musical commercialization: they are *skartoi* ('defective', 'of low morale'). In contrast, 'ethnic musicians...don't sell their art' and therefore need our 'support...before it's too late'.<sup>4</sup>

Because rebetiko song used to express 'the raw truth said by people who had suffered', it 'was a banned music'. This subversive profile of rebetiko is nowadays an appealing myth. As such, it transforms rebetiko to a fashionable expression of 'non-mainstream', 'unusual' musical tastes and attitudes, such as drinking *rakomelo*, 'the nectar of the gods', within an 'ethnic' decorated venue or eating traditional Macedonian pies, while listening to Indian classical music. After all, 'it is beautiful to be different' within an increasingly homogenizing world. 'Ethnic is beautiful', because it suggests difference - 'alternative things' - and, beyond that, a somehow primitivist 'return to the path we lost'. In a similar 'new age' kind of spirit, Gypsy musicians are considered to add 'an exotic tone in the atmosphere', they offer 'a trip away from routine, everyday practicalities' - like the trip Ourania imaginarily takes through her *komboshoini*. Besides, in other countries, they 'know how to treat them to benefit tourism', then why not in Greece, too?

Listening to rebetiko feels 'like being in a different world, where musics are true and come from the depths of the soul'. This 'different world', represented here by the *Amareion* venue, 'offers an escape'. It is located in a historical, 'oriental' urban locus: 'the area was perfect...an old part of the city. I believe this is the best area to

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<sup>4</sup> A musician engaged in 'commercial' music making is often regarded as one who 'sacrifice' his artistry. Similar ideas are found in various music cultures in the world today. See, for instance, the dance musicians' ideas in the U.S. discussed by Becker (1951).

open an ethnic bar.' Haris, one of the owners of the place, 'could smell the need for something different. People were bored by the same Euro-trash all over...' He is convinced, moreover, that '*Amareion* was and still is something different. It offers something different, something new to young people...' The essence of this difference is found in the music – more specifically in 'the musics of the world' that 'meet each other' in *Amareion*.

The 'musics of the world' experienced in the *Amareion* world 'transport you to a land of magic, where you feel different, renewed'. This is anyway 'what music means...it is magical, so emotional and wise'; it 'comes from the depths of the soul'. These are, in fact, the kind of musics an 'ethnic musicologist' is supposed to study. People sharing these musical aesthetics constitute the 'big company' of *Amareion* that is 'an other planet!' an imaginary 'other' planet inhabited by 'free and relaxed' humans who wish 'to trip out!' and 'be marginal', since 'they are opposed to norms' and 'don't follow western nonsense'. In fact, this is the 'rebetiko philosophy' that 'links people' in *Amareion*. Ideally, 'to live like a rebetis' changes the 'eyes you see the world with'. Then 'you know how to have a good time, you know how to leave your worries behind'. Hashish smoking is in a way a practice embedded in this philosophy: 'it heals your soul and you fly away...' Consequently, living 'like a *rebetis*' today can make someone 'a free person', who lives 'without conventions', in one's 'own way'. Eventually, being a contemporary *rebetis* means 'not to be the way they want you to be, but the way yourself want'.

The need for 'wise and emotional' music is not regarded as a monopoly of rebetiko, though. 'It is hidden in other 'oriental musics', too', such as 'Chinese music'

that 'is cool, too' or music from Algeria - 'some exciting stuff!' Closer to the rebetiko cultural birthplace, 'the Arab and Oriental' staged performances, as well as the 'traditional concerts' of *Amareion*, 'are fascinating, too'. To that extent, Ourania is enthusiastic about the fact that the *kanun* player of her recently bought CD 'is a Turk!' Haris favors Indian sitar, local 'new age' record productions and, among others, veteran musicians of 'traditional' Greek music. Some contemporary suitors of rebetiko, such as Kostas, may also favor 'the blues', frequent rock bars and find interest in 'ethnic' music concerts or avant-garde, experimental music making with 'ethnic' colorings. While others, such as Mitsos, justifies his sympathy for the 'cool and relaxed' reggae music – next to Byzantine chant, rebetiko, *dhimotiko traghoudhi* and *entehno* song: 'it is also music of oppressed people'. The subversive qualities of a genre certify it, therefore, in this case as a 'proper' music: 'music to lose yourself in'. In the same spirit, Haris underlined the association of reggae music with hashish smoking and, additionally, manifested that 'rebetiko is our rock!' while for Kostas 'blues are the American rebetiko'. Not surprisingly, Haris 'used to be a rocker' and Aetna 'used to listen to some punk rock'.

'Music is a place', then, and rebetiko is only one of the places contemporary young urbanites long to be. Each one follows a personal 'road to rebetiko', made of diverse musical paths - from rock and 'world' music to Byzantine chant and Arab music. As part of an individual musical cosmos, rebetiko provides a vehicle for knowing oneself in music. 'To listen to different musics' thus is as important as visiting 'different places': 'if you remain somewhere forever, you will never truly know where you are. Because you won't understand what is next to you, what is far away from you'.

*Discourse 4: The definition of 'authentic rebetiko'*

'Authentic' and 'true' is the rebetiko music that is closer to 'the Vamvakaris' style', because then 'things are getting blurred'. However, for the less extreme revivalists – who are the majority - 'real' rebetiko songs are also those of the Tsitsanis' era, especially those he composed during the German occupation years (the 1940s). What is definite, anyway, is that 'real rebetes do not exist anymore'. Besides, 'since Markos [Vamvakaris] and people like him are dead, there is not a rebetiko world anymore. Commercialization and all these publications [meaning rebetological writings] have ruined it'.

'The old style' *bouzouki* playing technique demands 'simple and neat *penies*. Not much babbling ['flashy', meaningless display of technical expertise]'. Because 'authentic' rebetiko performers 'don't play theatre', simplicity, clarity of tonal delivery and the lack of dexterous exhibitionism in *bouzouki* playing skills are the criteria for a 'good', 'authentic', *taximi* that sounds 'like a filigree'. In addition, the 'authentic' vocal delivery sounds 'flat...hoarse...human'. The contemporary rebetiko student, who wishes to learn playing the 'authentic' style, should 'listen to old recordings' or, for the more dedicated revivalists, 'study Byzantine chant'. Anyway, 'rebetiko is for lazy players...you need more the feeling than the technique'. Eventually, living in a historical rebetiko urban centre, like Piraeus or Thessaloniki, might somehow be an 'asset' that locates the musician within a well established locale of rebetiko tradition. These are the centres of 'age long' traditions which are 'original, truthful'. Their living agents become in a way - as Nikos the Tsitsanis humorously admitted - 'monuments' that are worthy of study.

The 'original' *kompania* should 'play *dhemena*' ('well-tight'); the instruments should sound like they 'stick together' – especially when it consists of two *bouzoukia*, which 'talk to each other'. Besides, 'pure rebetiko needs *bessa*', that is dignity and sincerity, that traditionally characterizes <sup>the</sup> male attitude. The opposite word, *babessa*, also found in rebetiko lyrics and slang, describes the female deceitful and unreliable nature. Nikos, as an 'original *mangas*', adheres to these traditional rebetiko stereotypes. For him, 'the broads will never touch the *bouzouki*'. These rebetiko values lead Nikos to neglect communication with and even to offend a female researcher: 'women, you're all the same!'

The 'suitors of the authentic sounds' ought to use the three-stringed *bouzouki* (*trihordho*) and play without amplification, since 'original rebetes used no amplification'. The four-stringed is 'for folk song...very conceited'. The performance of 'old' songs (from the 1940s or earlier) also guarantees the 'authenticity' of a contemporary rebetiko event. After all, authenticity 'is the kind of songs you play and the way you play them'. 'Truthful songs' are usually composed and played under the effect of the 'magic filter of rebetiko', that is hash smoking, also practiced 'by our grandfathers'. It is therefore important to discover and 'give a new life' to old recordings and 'discover' 'an unknown song', namely a song that 'is long forgotten'. This way, 'we deliver [the song] to the next generation'; this is actually a 'mission' for revivalist rebetiko performers today, who 'want people to hear this authentic rebetiko piece' and 'know about their heritage'.

'Decent players' know that 'rebetiko is a game for two: the musicians and the people'. For Haris, 'the songs we play and the way we play are...our language; the language we use to contact people'. This way, the musicians 'can make *kefi*', since they become the 'psychologists' of the audience and can receive 'the vibes' of people's reactions. Moreover, 'decent players' of rebetiko form a network of performers and develop, like 'original' rebetes, certain codes of communication that re-assure their identities as 'true' rebetiko performers.

The network of musicians displays a hierarchy based on age, skills and experience, that also affects the ways 'spontaneous performance' is practiced. 'If there is a friend musician in the *taverna*, he may join the *kompania* for a few songs'. This *alishverisi* ('exchange'), 'handoff' may take place only among musicians of the same status. It is unusual to invite 'a master', an acknowledged, older musician to perform together with people of lower status. In contrast, 'a master' may invite someone of lower status to accompany him while playing, as in the case of Ourania singing in *Kath' Odhon ghlendi*. Musicians ought to respect and satisfy the will of 'the big stuff' and avoid misbehaving in any way. The participation of the 'big stuff' in a performance event is a 'guarantee' of the qualities and 'authenticity' of the musicians. Sometimes a 'master' may also have been a 'teacher' and this amplifies his sovereignty in the musicians' community.

Finally, 'authentic' music has its 'authentic' places, like *Bekris*, an 'authentic rebetiko *taverna*', or 'authentic' happenings, such as the *Kath' Odhon rebetiko ghlendi*, that is 'something else', 'pure stuff'. 'Suitors of the authentic sounds' are attracted to such 'authentic events', which are nowadays aestheticized as relics of a

debonair past. Besides, the *ghlendi* is organized by ‘the original’ rebetiko people who ‘have rebetiko inside themselves!’ This inherent, hereditary rebetiko musicality transforms the *ghlendi* to an ‘authentic’ rebetiko event *par excellence*. It is made by a closed ‘circle’ of people displaying a working class ethos echoed in their language, dressing codes, socialization of the *parees*, the decoration of the venue they gather, the drinking practices, their attitudes and expressions within the performance event.

This ‘circle’ is connected to the *kompania* formed by the first *bouzouki* of the *kompania*, who is conscious that he is broadly regarded as a rebetiko ‘monument’ of Thessaloniki. Anyway, ‘each *kompania* has its own circle’ that ‘gives them a good name in *piatsa*’. Members of a paradigmatic ‘authentic’ rebetiko circle are ‘*rebetofatses*’, namely older *manges* of the *piatsa*, who are respected and acknowledged as human agents of ‘original’ *mangas* nature and behavioral values. The ‘original’ people of a rebetiko *ghlendi* may dance, sing along with most of the songs performed, enter a strong *meraki* state of being, and display extravagant behaviors when the ‘*kefi* fires’, such as sprinkling the performers with numerous red carnations. Finally, a ‘pure’ rebetiko event lasts ‘as long as there are people having fun’, namely as long as there is *kefi* in the atmosphere and people are immersed in *meraki*. *Meraki*, in fact, is the quintessence of the rebetiko musical ‘being’ developing in a *ghlendi* situation. In contrast to the staged rebetiko performances of Sunday afternoons in *Amareion* or the regularly organized *taverna* music making, the musicians in *Kath’ Odhon* ‘may go on for ages!’

In the same spirit, *Bekris* is an ‘authentic’ rebetiko *taverna*, primarily because it hosts ‘authentic’ rebetiko music. Its authenticity is further manifested in the folk

iconography on the walls, the socializing practices of the *parea*, the type of food and alcohol consumption or the supervising presence of *taverniaris* (the owner and keeper of the *taverna*). More important, it is an authenticity performed in the rebetiko sounds. In contrast to the ‘concerto’ style of staged rebetiko performances in *Amareion*, the musicians in *Bekris* are located at a corner table, on the same level as the patrons. People who ‘fancy *taverna* going’ are concentrated in making the *parea*, sharing the same table, eating typical *taverna* food and drinking traditional alcoholic beverages.

This differentiates the *Bekris* from the ‘refined’ *Amareion*, a venue designed as a bar, where people listen to rebetiko without the ‘smell of fried pork’ and may also drink, except for *rakomelo*, ‘western’ spirits or engage in shots-drinking. In *Amareion*, this ‘authentic’ rebetiko is honorably revived and represented in a ‘world music’ programme of concerts because, as ‘original’ music of the past, it deserves at least a place in the pantheon of ‘our’ musical traditions. Beyond that, thinking of rebetiko as ‘authentic’ music, may verify it as <sup>an</sup> ‘ethnic’ musical genre, next to Cretan, Thracian, Macedonian, *entehno* and Arab musics, and elevate it, eventually, to one of the ‘musics of the world’.

Before concentrating on the discussion of the particular ways bodies of discourses and aesthetics constitute the experience of rebetiko music making today, I discuss the ways rebetiko revival is related to the ‘world music’ trend, attempting to understand them overall as expressions of postmodern culture. This broader theoretical discussion sets the frames for exploring further the particular meanings each of the bodies of discourses and aesthetics already outlined communicates.

### **Revival, ‘world music’ and postmodernity**

Seen as a romantic return to the roots, rebetiko revival suggests disenchantment with present life and, more specifically, with the present condition of urbanity. Contemporary urbanites reviving past music seek to satisfy the pleasure of escaping ‘usual’ and ‘commercial’ sounds – either local, such as *skyladhiko* song, or western-derived - and re-invent nostalgically the ‘true’ music of remote times.<sup>1</sup> It is a similar quest for ‘sonic otherness’ (Feld 1994a:262; 1994b:245) that also exercises today a fascinating interest for the devotees of ‘world music’ (see Negus 1999:164-169). This is characteristically exemplified, for instance, in the introductory comments of *World Beat: A Listener’s Guide to World Music on CD*: ‘World music is both entertaining and different. It takes the listener to a place where the world’s various cultures meet happily and in the spirit of festival. It is a force for understanding and goodwill in an increasingly dark world’ (1992:2-3). Likewise, the revivalist ‘suitors of the authentic sounds’ are attracted both by the

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<sup>1</sup> For the phenomenon of ‘world music’ in Greece see also Dawe (1999; 2000). Dawe notices the 1980s revival of traditional musics, the emergence of a local ‘world music’ audience, as well as the popular appeal to the ‘oriental’ roots of rebetiko song (1999:215).

‘mythical’ Byzantine art of music and the *dhimotiko traghoudhi*, as well as the ‘wise’, non-western and thus, immaculate soundscapes of Indian sitar, contemporary ‘ethnic’-flavored experimental compositions and ‘world music’ recordings.

In fact, it appears that the ‘world music’ movement has encouraged and embraced the revival of past traditions, which in turn feed ‘world music’ productions with novel soundscapes. This interactive relationship is vividly illustrated by the present politics of the Greek record industry and the ongoing promotion of releases categorized as ‘ethnic’ music (photo 37).<sup>2</sup> Take for instance, the work of the well-known Greek ‘ethnic’ composer, Nikos Grapsas titled *Stis Thalasses tis Ionias* (‘In the Seas of Ionia’, LYRA 4808 - 4809 [double CD], 1995) and *Mia Kori Apo tin Amorgo - Kai Alles Vyzantines Ballades* (‘A Maiden from Amorgos - and Other Byzantine Ballads’, LYRA 4806-4807 [double CD] 1995). In the first CD Grapsas excavated the musical culture of the 18<sup>th</sup> to the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and brought to light ‘folk songs, amorous ballads, dancing tunes from the land of Homer and the Ionian philosophers, from Asia Minor and Dodecanese’. In the latter work, the composer travels further to the past and recalls romantically ‘old folk Byzantine ballads and post-Byzantine ballads (12<sup>th</sup> to 18<sup>th</sup> century) from Cappadocia, Asia Minor and the islands of Aegean’. The work of Grapsas – and of several other Greek ‘ethnic’ artists– attempts to re-visit, thus, past local musical traditions, which it treasures and revives by ‘other-ing’ them: in the light of the ‘ethnic’ music trend ‘our’ rare,

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<sup>2</sup> On the response of certain small local record industries to the ‘world music’ trend see Dawe (2000).

ancient, and thus sacred, sounds are aestheticized through acquiring an 'exotic' gloss.<sup>3</sup>

Past traditions are moreover used as 'raw' material by the recently emerging Greek 'ethnic jazz' musical scene. In this case, though, tunes and rhythms are borrowed from past traditions and appropriated to a hybrid musical idiom that sounds, eventually, like an experimental, alternative and local translation of jazz music. An interesting case of 'ethnic' jazz is the Athens-based ensemble *Mode Plagal* – that is notably the name of a Byzantine mode. They have recently produced a funky remake of the rebetiko song translated in the CD cover as 'Lads Across your Neighborhood'.<sup>4</sup> For the reviewer of *Herald Tribune* writing in January 1999, '*Mode Plagal* have urbanized the sounds of rural Greece, in the process creating a new branch on the spreading tree of ethnic jazz'.<sup>5</sup> Their main inspiration is *dhimotiko traghoudhi*: they 'mix African and Macedonian music with a healthy splash of jazz and funk for rave reviews'. In the same article, the comments of a member of the band illustrate the global tendencies of their work seen as 'a good opportunity for Americans to hear our music played in a way that is also theirs'.

It appears, consequently, that music revival may be processed within the 'world music' trend, since they both suggest an alternative to mainstream culture that is idealized for its authenticity, artistic purity and origins, both geographical

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<sup>3</sup> Such as the music of Mihalis Nikoloudhis, Floros Floridhis, Savina Yiannatou, Christos Tsiamoulis, the bands *Mode Plagal*, *Vosporos*, *Notios Ihos*, *Avaton*, *En Hordhais*, etc.

<sup>4</sup> The song titled in Greek as *Ta Paidhia tis Geitonias Sou* is sung in the CD by the jazz singer Theodosia Tsatsou (*Mode Plagal III*, Lyra 715, 2001).

<sup>5</sup> For further details see the web-site: [www.modeplagal.gr](http://www.modeplagal.gr)

and historical. In that sense, both processes involve a reaction to, or a transcendence of modernity. In the case of revival, the departure beyond modern values is temporal - it is happening in a historical, vertical perspective: the disappointed by modernity listener is attracted to the musical sounds the modern came to overshadow. On the other hand, the concept of 'ethnic' music embodies a synchronic, horizontal distancing from the long established musical values of modernity. Here the 'beyond' modern is found spatially in musical experiences of 'unknown' grooves coming from remote places 'elsewhere in the world'.

On this basis the rebetiko revival *qua* 'ethnic' today invites us to define frames for understanding it in multiple dimensions. Superficially, the current rebetiko revival appears as a chauvinist response that employs romantic ideas of greekness and national identity. This is probably an impression that narratives glorifying the purity, origins and authenticity of rebetiko may cultivate in a persuasive way. Next to what the words literally say though, there are aesthetics and practices charged with meanings that inform in a complementary manner the interpretations of what the discourses literally state. As a matter of fact, it is quite rare to meet today someone in Greece who would describe rebetiko using the word 'ethnic'; rather, there are various happenings where rebetiko music is lived as 'ethnic', such as in the case of *Amareion* events.<sup>6</sup> Consequently, the understanding of rebetiko revival to that extent calls for a look behind the manifestations of the revivalist reality to the ways it is felt and imagined; the

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<sup>6</sup> Note that Mario, the Thessalonikian rebetiko singer, appeared in WOMEX (World of Music Expo, October 1988) in Stockholm. Several of her songs are included in the collection 'Strictly World Wide '99' released by the European Forum of World Music Festivals who also acknowledged her as 'the top touring singer of the year'.

exploration, namely, of the veiled premises and drives defining the experience of it: this is where the 'ethnic' profile of current rebetiko culture is essentialized.

### **Postmodernity and 'ethnic' rebetiko**

Jameson in 'Postmodernism and Consumer Society' argues that one of the basic features of 'postmodernism is the effacement in it of some key boundaries for separations, most notably the erosion of the older distinction between high culture and so-called mass or popular culture' (1985:112).<sup>7</sup> In the realm of music, then, postmodernism suggests similarly a re-consideration of the traditional distinction that separates the 'high' musical culture of the West, known as Western art music, from musics outside of it, of what is broadly described today as 'world' or 'ethnic' music. Apparently, this may sound as a given claim for the discipline of ethnomusicology that was based, anyway, on exactly this deconstruction of the distinction between 'higher' and 'lower' musics. The erosion of distinction to which Jameson refers, though, involves on a general level the notion of culture, more specifically Western European and American culture, that is the birthplace of modernity and, subsequently, of postmodernity. It refers thus to the ways certain people today are invited to shape new frames of thinking and experiencing other people, beliefs, practices, ideas, and sounds.

To that extent, postmodernism encouraged a popular appeal towards 'ethnic' music, since it proposes 'a new vision of justice that gives primacy to difference, to heterogeneity, to paradox and contradiction, and to local

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<sup>7</sup> A collection of key articles on postmodernity is found in Taylor and Winqvist (1998).

knowledge' (Turner 1994:12). Does, therefore, postmodern culture involve a better, egalitarian world? Of course, it would be naïve to misconstrue postmodernity as such: power games, hegemonies, injustice and exploitation continue to define the cultural map of the globe. This asymmetry, besides, is particularly striking, when looking at how the 'world music' label actually emerged (see Taylor 1997, chapter 1; Negus 1999, chapter 7) and is marketed today by the music industry as a 'commodified otherness', that is as 'a music *of* the world to be sold *around* the world' (Feld 1994a:266). Rather than something practically realized in contemporary societies, then, this 'primacy to difference' - in our case, in musical diversity as a value - that stands at the core of postmodernity describes 'an attitude towards culture' (Jenks 1994:146). The 'ethnic' music devotees who are attracted to and appreciate 'different' musics coming either from elsewhere in the globe or sometime in the past - as in the case of the present rebetiko revival - are sharing, therefore, a trend, namely a cultural fashion.

This differentiates their interests from those of the people related to an ideological movement that is a body of thought formulated to respond to certain social realities and problems intending, ultimately, to support theoretically reformations or revolutions against the existing status quo. Turning back to the roots, that is, reviving rebetiko today is a trend and, as a trend, it is not threatening for the social order. It concerns, instead, a kind of counter-culture that antithetically supports the sovereignty of the dominant musical culture by raising voices of doubt. In that sense, 'postmodernism paradoxically manages to legitimize culture (high and low) even as it subverts it' (Hutcheon 1989:15).

The experience of rebetiko *qua* 'ethnic' music happening in the current revival of the genre offers, therefore, an alternative to the 'commercial western nonsense' and to local 'defective' (*skarto*) contemporary folk song (*skyladhiko*). It is 'another planet' of 'magical', 'emotional' and 'wise' music that 'comes from the depths of the soul' and this makes it 'fascinating' and 'exciting'. The cultural and musical needs the experience of the 'ancient art' of rebetiko fulfils thus involve an escape from the boredom – the 'great ennui' - caused by the mainstream and the established, the everyday and the routine.<sup>8</sup> Besides, postmodernity suggests a depart beyond modernity (hence the prefix post-), rather than a radical reaction against it. Postmodern worldviews are born out of the disenchantment with the celebrated-by-modernity ideas of progress and the exaltation of reason, the decline of faith in technological miracles and international economic and information networks, and disappointment with the social realities featuring the 'civilized' world seen now as a collapsing giant of a glorious industrial era. In the realm of music, the depart beyond the modern is expressed as a growing distrust and skepticism towards the rationality recognized in the well-tempered Western musical system. The latter could be actually perceived as 'grand narratives' - the hallmark of modernity - the same way exploitative capitalism and bureaucratic socialism are historically understood as such. In that sense, the aesthetics and discourses defining rebetiko revivalist experience today can be interpreted as an 'incredulity towards meta-narratives', to follow Lyotard's ([1979] 1984) famous abstract definition of postmodernism.

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<sup>8</sup> For a discussion of the notion, see George Steiner, *In Bluebeard's Castle. Some Notes Towards the Redefinition of Culture* (1971).

In the light of this 'incredulity' the 'musics of the world' are promoted as the relative and subjective, specific and differential sounds of the world. Ironically, it these 'grand narratives' associated with what is defined nowadays as 'late capitalism' (see Jameson 1984) and recognized as mechanisms posing a barren sameness in the world had formed the ground for the genesis of doubt against them.<sup>9</sup> The counter musical culture associated with the focus on 'ethnic' musics is generated and promoted within a globalizing world, which it appears to challenge. Globalization itself as a cultural process is driven by the de-differentiation of spheres, where the previously described erosion of distinction between 'high' and 'low' culture serves the homogenization of the dominant polarities under one, hegemonic power. Rather than promising a harmonic and peaceful coexistence among the various cultures on earth, globalization provides spaces for the display and appreciation of otherness, in this case of sonic otherness, exactly because it appropriates and commodifies it.<sup>10</sup> 'World music' and the growing interest in 'ethnic' styles would probably lack the popularity they gained within the last couple of decades unless the music industry increasingly cared about 'thinking global'.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Erlmann discussed the reaction of local communities to globalization processes as products of 'the very discourses they seek to interrogate' (1998:20).

<sup>10</sup> See also Nercessian (2002). Nercessian proposed a re-orientation of ethnomusicological thought with respect to the impact of globalization processes on music cultures.

<sup>11</sup> I refer both to the managerial strategies of major record companies, as well as to the increasing appearance of the so-called 'independent' labels. I do not mean to undermine the importance of the production and promotion of indigenous musical genres by local enthusiasts who support local traditions and artists. My argument here addresses the interest in homemade 'world music' recordings and the drives of native enthusiasts engaged in record production, which I understand as a counter-action to the assimilating forces of the capitalist music industry. To that extent, independent labels devoted to specific 'world music' genres today are a co-product of the overall interest in 'world music' that was basically fuelled by the claims of international record companies for expanding the music market. Ironically, the globalization dynamics small record labels serve to resist provide the forum for their own prosperity. (See the 'Music Industry in Small Countries' research project published in Wallis and Malm 1984).

Nonetheless people excited by the discovery of 'ethnic' musics, such as those represented in this ethnography, fail to understand their interests as a side effect of a globalizing music reality. On the contrary, they substantiate the need 'to return to the path we lost' as an anti-conformist reaction that supports difference against an even spreading musical uniformity. Re-vitalizing rebetiko today among other 'musics of the world' is thus profiled as a movement of protecting 'endangered' musical species. While their narratives possess a gloss of political correctness and chauvinism that celebrates musical pluralism as a cultural right, the ways they experience the 'endangered' genres actually aestheticize and exoticize them as oases of difference. This way, they fail to realize that they came to know and value 'world' musics primarily because the music industry promoted 'world music' label. And, moreover, that their musical interests are framed within a general musical fashion that commodifies non-western grooves as a fascinating dissonance that transcends the well-known harmonies of the West.

Eventually, as a trend, the practices of listening to and playing the local, traditional, 'authentic' and 'unusual' sounds are fitted up with relevant musical ideals, evaluations, beliefs, dressing codes, slang, attitudes, 'eyes you see the world with' and philosophies on how 'to live like a *rebetis*'. Similar 'ethnic' trends and subcultures are flourishing among western European and North American youth cultures. Besides, those are the people the various 'world music' festivals are organized for, who also form a good part of the target group for the

sales of 'world music'.<sup>12</sup> Greek revivalist rebetiko culture and the experience of rebetiko *qua* 'ethnic' music are thus characterized by a paradox: it is understood as an anti-global musical reality, although it is stimulated and amplified within a globalizing musical world. Living rebetiko then as 'ethnic' music today is, namely, superficially an anti-global cultural expression, which is, nonetheless, in essence global.

The oppositional yet complementary coexistence of global / local cultural forces recall, in a way, what Feld described as the 'complementary schismogenesis' process happening, in this case, in the ways the rebetiko revival is realized today.<sup>13</sup> Glo-cal rebetiko,<sup>14</sup> therefore, stands on this level as a musical paradigm for what Appadurai characterized as 'the central problem of today's global interaction', that is, the 'tension between cultural homogenization and cultural heterogenization' (1990:5). 'Ethnic' musics, the 'ethnic' rebetiko here, are increasingly promoted and displayed as different, local voices at the same time as 'world music' culture enjoys an expanding control over local musics. 'Ethnic' rebetiko among other 'musics of the world' is raised then to a symbol of 'an unprecedented diversity' (Nettl 1985) serving, nonetheless, the panoramic ideal of one, 'global ecumene' (Hannerz 1989). Sounds listened to as metaphors of place and cultural or ethnic identity are celebrated in a fusing – and, at the

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<sup>12</sup> Such as the WOMAD festival, for instance, that was held in 2001 and 2002 in Athens (see Jowers 1993).

<sup>13</sup> Feld borrows the term from G. Bateson's, *Steps to an Ecology of Mind*, NY: Balantine (1972) and employs it in his discussion of the notions of 'world music' and 'world beat'. Bateson's 'complementary schismogenesis' is a process that involves cycles 'where the mutually promoting actions are essentially dissimilar but mutually appropriate, e.g. in the case of dominance - submission, succoring - dependence, exhibitionism - spectatorship, and the like' (ibid.:109). Feld's application of this pattern is described as 'a mutual differentiation scenario' that 'rhetorically contrasts claims of 'truth', 'tradition', 'roots', and 'authenticity' – under the cover term 'world music' – with practices of mixing, syncretic hybridization, blending, fusion, creolization, collaboration across gulfs, all under the term 'world beat' (1994:265).

<sup>14</sup> 'Glo-cal' is a made up term deriving from 'global' and 'local' coined by Robertson (1995).

same time, confusing - world where now the 'remote' is promptly available and the 'different' becomes an innocent alternative to the established.

Rather than an experience of a faraway 'unknown' music, the remote and different, in the case of rebetiko revival are traced within a familiar - 'ours' - musical genre of the past, lived, nonetheless, as 'other'. In what ways, however, are the bodies of discourses and aesthetics systematized above 'other-ing' rebetiko?

## Chapter 12. Other-ing rebetiko song: Intro

Although the four particular discourses and aesthetics are represented here - for the purpose of organizing the discussion - as autonomous bodies, they actually form a broader nexus of the diverse ways humans think and experience rebetiko song today. In fact, the discourse celebrating rebetiko as 'ethnic' genre becomes the arena where all the above-systematized bodies of discourses and aesthetics meet each other: rebetiko is qualified as local 'ethnic' music (discourse 3) via the acknowledgement of its ancient historical roots (discourse 1), artistic value (discourse 2) and authenticity (discourse 4).

Interestingly, the identities the particular discourses and aesthetics suggest are the very identities that also legitimize rebetiko as a genre appropriate for revival. To that extent, I perceive them as a forum of understandings featuring the ongoing revived interest in performing rebetiko song in Greek urban centres. In this context, rebetiko is considered as 'authentic' music because it is rooted in the 'great' musical traditions of the past. At the same time, these very qualities define the 'art' status of rebetiko tradition: because it is acknowledged as an 'original' and 'ancient' tradition, it is legitimized as a 'respectable art'. In that sense, each body of discussing and experiencing rebetiko song is found within the other and constitutes each other. Eventually, the represented discourses define diverse perspectives of the overall process of 'other-ing' rebetiko today, namely of the ways rebetiko is nowadays profiled within the universe of 'world music'.

The following sections explore the particular meanings codified within each one of the systematized bodies of discourses and aesthetics and the broader cultural understandings rebetiko revivalist performances may communicate today.

### **1. The Byzantine magnificence of rebetiko song: neo-orthodox claims and meta-orientalism.**

It may turn out that religion provides the link between classical modernism at the end of 19<sup>th</sup> century and postmodernism at the end of 20<sup>th</sup> century (Turner 1994:207).

The historical association of rebetiko with Byzantine chant and the honoured local national musical traditions, namely *dhimotiko traghoudhi* and ancient Greek music, represents a favourite argument that has appeared in the course of rebetological debates ever since the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Press accounts dated as early as in 1873 and 1894 describing the entertainment scene of oriental venues in Athens, stressed that Orthodox church cantors used to frequent *café amans* and evaluate as ‘experts’ the singing skills of the artists employed in oriental music making.<sup>1</sup> In Thessaloniki, the association between religious cantors and the secular oriental musics of the *café aman* – the prehistory of rebetiko - is exemplified in the person of one of the most renowned cantors and composers of the Sephardic community, Sadjik Gerson. Gerson was both an acknowledged master among the Sephardic cantors associations who also used to serve the *Beth Israel* synagogue of the city, as well as a competent oud and *santouri* player and *amanes* singer of ‘rare perfection’ (Molho 1974:36). At the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century cantors – either Orthodox Christian or Jewish - appear to

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<sup>1</sup> See Hatzipantazis (1986:93, n. 91).

have shared the musical languages of the Eastern Mediterranean secular musics, described as 'oriental', which they honoured and overtly appreciated.<sup>2</sup>

The acknowledgement of Byzantine chant as an 'oriental' tradition also features in the debate about the nature of Orthodox music taking place towards the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. It is important to clarify here that the concept of 'oriental music' acquires ambiguous meanings depending on the ideological stance of the user. For the proponents of Orthodox *ihoi* (<sup>=echoi</sup> 'sounds', the modes of Byzantine chant), next to the Byzantine chant, the 'oriental' musics of *café amans*, - including the *dhimotiko traghoudhi* - represent the musics of 'our' Orient. In that sense, oriental musics are seen as local, age-long traditions that Greeks ought to venerate and protect against the imported European polyphony threatening to alienate Greek national musical identity. On the other side, those hoping for the creation of a 'civilized', progressive Euro-profile for the newly established Greek state and its music disapprove of the oriental nature of Byzantine chant. In this case, then, 'oriental' musics are seen as barbarian and retrograde traditions of the local musical past carrying despicable Ottoman elements that Greeks ought to forget.

The 1880s literary circle of Nikos Politis also identified nostalgically 'our past traditions' in 'oriental' musics thought to speak a 'patriotic language'. Within the relevant pro-orientalist discourse the Ottoman past is recalled romantically as a symbol of an exoticized yet 'ours' past (photo 38 a,b).<sup>3</sup> Palamas, for instance, venerates 'passion' and 'melancholy' as the 'prime characteristics' of the 'national

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<sup>2</sup> For a further discussion on factors of continuity and discontinuity in Greek modal musical tradition see Beaton (1980b).

<sup>3</sup> For the poet Georghios Drosinis, 'the voluptuous, indolent, oriental melodies, which they bubble monotonically over the sweetest voices of the sixth and seventh positions of the violin, look like they connote all the secrets of the Asian palaces' (published in the newspaper *Estia*, 24.04.1883:263-265).

folk soul, regardless where they derive from' (Hatzipantazis 1986:109). His vision recalls the ways Byzantine music and Ottoman culture are aestheticized in the bodies of discourses represented above. Are the nostalgic pro-orientalist expressions of the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> century re-visited, although unconsciously, in postmodern popular discourses on rebetiko song happening towards the recent *fin de siècle*? The associations appear to be intriguing indeed; I will return to this point later.

The connection of 'oriental' secular traditions, and more specifically *amanes*, with Byzantine chant re-appears in the years of Metaxas' censorship (1936). Again, the emphasis on historical links serves as an argument that substantiates the value of the music as part of Greek tradition. In this case, moreover, the origins of *amanes* are traced out in the ancient Greek past (the *skolia* songs). This way, Byzantine chant and ancient Greek music are perceived as evolutionary stages of one, longitudinal Greek musical tradition – the same way, namely, they appear in the present ethnographic narratives.<sup>4</sup> Nonetheless, for the opponents of *amanes*, the 'oriental' nature of this music is still seen as musical 'vulgarity'. On one hand, then, up to the 1940s, the notion of 'oriental' music represents a local past formulated within the Ottoman culture Greeks shared for centuries.<sup>5</sup> Because, on the other hand, they are seen as traditions Greeks developed within the era of Ottoman rule, 'oriental' musics concern a non-Greek, undesirable heritage from the years of slavery.

Evolutionist ideas that trace the origins of rebetiko to ancient Greece and Byzantium and connect it, further, with *dhimotiko traghoudhi*, were also favoured

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<sup>4</sup> Greek musical tradition is often described as *makraioni*, meaning 'century<sup>ies</sup>-long'.

<sup>5</sup> This notion of 'oriental' recalls what Herzfeld defined as the 'romeic' aspect of Greek culture that differs from 'hellenic', which refers to the ancient Greek cultural heritage (1987).

during the post-war era. The discourses of the left-wing scholars - known as the *Epitheorisi Technis* debate - who 'discovered' at that time rebetiko song outlined, nonetheless, once more an antithetical approach (see chapter 6, *Rebetiko and the Greek Left*): one that validated rebetiko by associating it with *dhimotiko traghoudhi*, and an opposite one that disapproved of such a connection as 'sacrilegious'. In the relevant discourses, pro- and anti-rebetiko, the notion of 'oriental music' has no place, though. Rebetiko is rather discussed in terms of its *romiosini* (the greekness defined in association to the Byzantine and Ottoman past). To that extent, Byzantine chant, *dhimotiko traghoudhi* and, of course, ancient Greek music, are all understood as parts of one 'pure' Greek musical history sharing a unique identity: they are all considered as local musics. The *romiosini* of rebetiko is placed at the core of the pro-rebetiko discourse of the 1960s, the years the genre enjoyed its first acknowledged revival. Once more, it is a greekness proved by its origins in the 'golden age' and its subsequent 'evolution' and formulation in the Byzantine years, which, in this case, justify the presence of Ottoman elements found in the music.

Today, in the bodies of discourses systematized above, the 'Byzantine era' represents for Greek music history a 'grand narrative'. Byzantine civilization is seen as the product of a powerful empire that conquered and dominated a great part of the world. The capital of the empire, Constantinople, the 'Eternal City', becomes a symbolic locus of Hellenic-Orthodox culture, the cradle of the sacred sounds echoing a magnificent past. For revivalist musicians, both of rebetiko song and those involved in the local 'ethnic' music movement – 'The City' reverberates an imaginary realm of celebrated opulence, mystique and spirituality treasured in its musics, too (photo 39).

Placing, therefore, rebetiko in the frames of Hellenic-Orthodox civilization is basically an attempt to historicize rebetiko tradition by identifying it with Byzantine chant as a ‘grand narrative’.<sup>6</sup> Thinking of rebetiko history this way validates rebetiko song – once more using the same, timeworn rebetological argument - as a respectable musical ‘art’. Seen in the context of postmodern culture, the association of rebetiko with the ‘grand narrative’ of Byzantium is basically stimulated by the distrust expressed towards well-tempered musical systems – the heritage of the so-perceived dominant West. The answer, therefore, to the modern – identified here in ‘western’ musics - juxtaposes instead another, in fact alternative, powerful system, the Byzantine culture and its musical traditions. Byzantine culture is notably understood as the *kath’ imas Anatoli*, that is the idea of the ‘nearby us’ – and thus, inside us – Orient re-claimed now from the past. On this level, Ottoman classical musical traditions - also associated with the ‘nearby us Orient’ - may partake of the ways contemporary ‘suitors of the Asian muse’ express their disapproval of and, in turn, develop a meaningful neglect towards the arrogance they sense in modern sounds described as ‘Euro-trash’ or ‘western nonsense’.

Instead of a notion symbolizing proud memories of national history proving the past magnificence of greekness, Byzantium in the context of revivalist culture is rather re-assessed as the ‘wise’, ‘mystical’, ‘passionate’ and ‘emotional’ Orient

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<sup>6</sup> The popular connotations of the notion of Byzantium among contemporary Greeks – also inspired by the ways Byzantine history is taught in *lycei* schools – suggests an understanding of Byzantium as the vast Empire, a cosmopolitan state where *romioi* (the Greeks of the Byzantine era) hold a vital role in the administrative, as well as in the scholarly, cultural and art domain. *Romioi*, as it is broadly believed, continued to thrive in the years of Ottoman Empire. It is characteristic that one of the current pioneers of ‘ethnic’ music making, Christos Tsiamoulis, titled his recently published musical treatise *Romioi Synthetes tis Polis 17<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup> ai.*, ‘*Romioi* Composers of the City, 17<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup> century’, namely of Constantinople (Athens 1998). Note that the book is part of a series titled *Analecta Tis Kath’ Imas Anatonis* (‘Analecta of the Nearby Us Orient’) published by the Association of the Alumni of the *Meghali Scholi* (the ‘Great School’, a prestigious educational institution located in Constantinople, where several prominent Ottoman Greek literati had studied).

bearing a legendary opulence and spiritualism. The ways certain humans sharing rebetiko revivalist music making understand 'Orient' today suggest, therefore, an interpretation of the relevant discourses and practices as nuances of a postmodern orientalism, a body of ideas we could hereby describe as 'meta-orientalism'. As such, the term is differentiated from orientalism, which is a modern discourse of the Orient that reverberates asymmetry – cultural, political, and economic. In the case of orientalism, the images of the 'East' are basically conceptualised by those the asymmetry privileges – it is namely a western-centric discourse. This asymmetry that actually generates and nurtures modern orientalism, concerns, in turn, the condition which meta-orientalist discourse, on the other hand, aspires to depart from. Although, then, postmodern orientalism is still a product of western worldviews, it appears as an alternative to them - it is disguised as a counter-discourse to which current 'ethnic' music counter-culture is attached.

In that sense, the pro-orientalist expressions of Greek intellectuals at the end of <sup>the</sup> 19<sup>th</sup> century involved a local translation of the orientalist movement already developed in Western Europe. It is worth noting, moreover, that in the 1880s the idea of the 'East' – and more specifically the Arab East – was commonly found in lyrics and music, popular erotic, adventure and mystery novels and stories, as well as in popular literature published in local newspapers and periodicals from about 1890 until the second World War (see Kehayioglou 1987). The Arabic East was mainly imagined as a paradise found on Earth, a strange, mystical but promising country, where the stories narrated in the tales of 'Arabian Nights' unravel.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Translated and printed in 1757-62 in Venice under the general title *Aravikon Mythologikon*. It was reprinted several times and circulates in Greece, even today, in cheap, popular editions. It is also noteworthy that during the second half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century educated Greeks and Balkan youths were attracted by Arab language and literature, in particular, by reading, in the original, Arabic lyric poetry.

Within the pro-orientalist discourse from the end of 19<sup>th</sup> century the aestheticized Orient appears basically as a response to the ideal of the westernisation of Greek music that was supported by the Euro-oriented profilers of the emerging nation state. In fact, their orientalism embodies an irony: it laments the impact of the 'West' on Greek culture and music, regardless of the fact that the 'West' itself pioneered and inspired their own aestheticization of the 'East'.<sup>8</sup> Those expressing the pro-orientalist voices have known besides, orientalism in or via Western Europe (photo 40 a,b). To that extent, Greek pro-orientalist literary circles of the 1880s reverberated the Western orientalist discourse, re-working it on a local forum of cultural biases. It is a way of imagining 'our' Orient highlighted in Palama's famous, commonly cited lines:

Γιαννιώτικα, σμυρνιώτικα, πολιτικά,  
Μακρόσυρτα τραγούδια ανατολίτικα  
Λυπητερά,  
Πώς η ψυχή μου δέρνεται μαζί σας  
Είναι χυμένη από τη μουσική σας  
Και πάει με τα δικά σας τα φτερά...  
(Ανατολή, *Οι Καημοί της Λιμνοθάλασσας*, 1882)

(translation)

Songs of Yannena, of Smyrna, songs of Poli  
λουγ - δ'ραωη-ουτ songs of the Orient  
Sorrowful  
Ah, beaten soul of mine, beating you  
Wrought up by your music  
She's now flying with your wings

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At the same time, Arab and Turkish songs influenced the song traditions of the Ottoman urban centres (known as *mismayia* and *fanariotika*). See Kehayioglou (1987).

<sup>8</sup> Greece had, anyway, lived the 'East' during the recent - for those years - political and social participation in the Ottoman Empire and inherited, thus, a rich 'oriental' cultural dowry developed over centuries of coexistence. And before that, Greece shared together with various 'oriental' cultures the Byzantine civilization, upon which the Ottoman Empire was built.

Despite the fact that orientalism and postmodern orientalism may have emerged within different historical contexts and social enclaves, they speak using the same language and seem to respond to similar cultural premises. Current meta-orientalist narratives appear as a local response – that is, the revival of the musics of the ‘nearby us Orient’, including rebetiko – to the globalizing western musical culture. They articulate a quest for a return to the lost innocence identified in the sounds of the ‘magic’, ‘emotional’ and ‘wise’ oriental musics. Byzantine chant and rebetiko are seen as appropriate - ‘true’ - musics for orchestrating this immaculate past, because they are perceived as parts of ‘our’ oriental physiognomy. In the same way literati and western-educated scholars favoured oriental music making of the *fin de siècle*, those promoting relevant ideas and cultural practices today, as the present ethnography illustrates, are certain groups of intellectuals and students within contemporary Greek society. Then (in the 1880s), orientalism appears as a native intellectual response to the European ideal of progress - now, to the notion of ‘global village’ challenged, in this case, by the value identified in ‘ethnic’ sounds, which are ‘different, and thus ‘beautiful’.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Bohlman reflected upon the place of ‘world music at the end of history’ discussing ‘ontological shifts that occur at the end and beginnings of centuries when global encounters empower music to enhance a language of strangeness or exoticism’ (2002b:2). ‘Encounter frequently occupies a position of historical transition...As a measure and marker of encounter, moreover, world music has become implicated in endism [the end of history]...because music expresses and mediates the fear of what lies ahead, and it may serve as a weapon to deflect or stay the impact of unknown, undesired future (ibid.:6-7). Following Bohlman, the pro-orientalist voices of the end of 19<sup>th</sup> century represent a local expression of modernity: ‘modernity was the ticket for entry into the West [which] meant accepting the role of the exotic...becoming the object of the West’s gaze’. In this context, the nostalgia for oriental musics may be seen as ‘a withdrawal into utopia’ (ibid.:9). Music revivals as an expression of escape from ‘the global village’ at the beginning of the twenty first century call for a reassessment of the notion of ‘exotic music’. ‘The exotic is no longer so clearly “outside” (ibid.:26). ‘The exotic has become the everyday as the people without history [meaning the people coming from what is traditionally understood as ‘non-western world’] seize upon world music to construct the end of our century in their image, not ours’. Bohlman, pointed out that world music today is domesticated, serving to ‘draw the world closer to us...negating the space of encounter altogether. We have entered an era in which music flourishes in the language of hyperexoticism’ (ibid.:26-7).

This emphasis on the local, and different – namely on the local ‘oriental’ musical heritage - that drives postmodern orientalism seems to imply nuances of religious nostalgia. It is a nostalgia worked in the appeal to the transcendental condition generally identified in religion. The need, namely, to return to the ‘path we’ve lost’ in search for the ‘pure’ music, may somehow supply a nostalgic return to religious values the rationality of modernity defied. In fact, for the majority of postmodern theorists, nostalgia is seen as the sentiment of postmodernity.<sup>10</sup> It is inspired by ‘a quest for a point of security and stability within a world characterized by an incomprehensible plethora of viewpoints, lifestyle, modes of discourse and opinions’ (Turner 1994:207). Thinking, therefore, rebetiko in the frames of Hellenic Orthodox civilization may invite humans sharing contemporary revivalist culture to a romantic rapprochement to the notion of Orthodoxy.

In the light of what is broadly known in Greek society today as, ‘neo-orthodoxy’,<sup>11</sup> this rapprochement may suggest a special relation between meta-orientalism and the ways Orthodox religious beliefs are nostalgically recalled on the forum of rebetiko revival. An interesting ethnographic paradigm that exemplifies this relationship is found in the ways Ourania performs herself as a dedicated rebetiko singer, who is at the same time an Orthodox believer. Ourania among other people associated with the *Amareion* rebetiko events – represented in the present ethnography - feels the experience of rebetiko song ‘like being in a different world’ that transports her to ‘a land of magic’. In the same way, she envisages her *komboshoini* – a cotton bracelet used for praying - as a ‘fascinating’ ‘trip away from

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<sup>10</sup> Jameson (1985); Rabinow (1986); Hutcheon (1989); Turner (1994); Jenks (1996).

<sup>11</sup> The term ‘neo-orthodoxy’ describes a recent movement of people dedicated to Orthodox religious values, highly influenced by the involvement of the Greek Archbishop, Hristodhoulos, in local politics. See also Makrides, in Ricks & Magdalino (1998:141-153).

routine', a 'mystical' accessory leading her to 'a heavenly world'. 'The heavenly world' her *komboshoini* symbolizes recalls, in turn, the 'other planet' she identifies in *Amareion* rebetiko events and other 'oriental' musics. *Komboshoini* and the ways it is perceived by a contemporary rebetiko practitioner may provide, therefore, a metaphor for a symbolic encounter of diverse aesthetics: this is where neo-orthodoxy meets postmodern orientalism. It becomes, namely, a symbol of the return (itself a naïve idea) to religious metaphysics, on one hand, that also embodies a nostalgia for a mythical, 'oriental' past. This is an 'oriental' past that is re-invented as a realm of spiritualism and musical 'wisdom' found in Hellenic Orthodox musics and the subsequent classical arts of the Ottoman era.<sup>12</sup>

To that extent, in the context of contemporary rebetiko traditionalist claims, neo-orthodox imagination is somehow encapsulated within a meta-orientalist discourse, and vice versa. This could be interpreted in a way as a 'new age' rapprochement of Hellenic Orthodox culture generated within current Greek musical reality. Both bodies of worldviews, seen in the context of rebetiko revivalist culture, offer, one way or another, an escape: either to a heavenly paradise fantasized in Byzantine chant, or an alternative world located in the musics of 'the nearby us Orient'. Escape created in the sounds of 'ethnic' musical realms, including rebetiko, becomes this way the outlet for postmodern nostalgia (photo 41).

It is a nostalgia lived by people sharing revivalist culture driven by the need to re-make the experience of 'flying away' 'on the wings' of 'ethnic' rebetiko songs. This cultural need re-confirms, though, that the music making of the present

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<sup>12</sup> See also the use of *komboshoini* in the image making of the rebetiko singer Mario (chapter 8, *Rebetiko urban entertainment places today*, section c)

dissatisfies humans participating in rebetiko performances today. This disapproval of *moderno* (the Greek translation of ‘modern’), namely of current, fashionable sounds, encourages an eschatological discourse that prefigures the decay of ‘our’ music today. A discourse that warns of the end of ‘true’ local musical culture<sup>13</sup> provides anyway, a fertile ground for musical revivals and traditionalist musical claims.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> See, for instance, the relevant narratives of Dimitris, the *kanonaki*-player of the *Loxandra* ensemble: ‘our great enemies are music business and, along with this, technology’.

<sup>14</sup> Livingston stresses that the categorization of culture into ‘modern’ and ‘traditional’ involves a standard model of thinking in revivalist ideologies (1999:66).

## 2. Rebetiko as a ‘damned art’: intellectuals and the appeal of the forbidden

For Livingston, ‘music revivals are middle class phenomena’ (1999:66) and current rebetiko revivalist performances appear to confirm her argument. Besides, now and again, an important medium that endowed rebetiko revivals with ideological premises were, in fact, published texts, authored mainly by music experts, scholars or people of the arts – namely intellectuals – theorizing upon ‘why we ought to appreciate rebetiko’. The interest left-wing revivalists developed in rebetiko song ever since the 1960s had gradually shaped an educated, middle class profile for rebetiko entertainment. Frequenting *tavernes* and listening to rebetiko *kompanies* came to be identified as expressions of radicalism. This growing enthusiasm expressed by Greek intellectual groups did not discourage, though, the association of other groups among Greek society with the genre – as the *Kath’ Odhon* café case study illustrates.

Nonetheless, now and again intellectuals to whom rebetiko song appealed were the groups that basically defined the orientations and cultural meanings of the genre: intellectuals inspired revivals. Today, educated groups and students associated with revivalist practices appear to promote a binary understanding of rebetiko; as ‘art’ and, at the same time, as ‘ethnic’ music. The experience of rebetiko as ‘ethnic - art’ instrumented by contemporary intellectuals removes the tradition from the cultural settings in which it developed and places it in fixed concerts, where the genre receives the respect that is properly required for precious ‘art’ monuments of ‘our’ past. This way, they de-contextualize and subsequently re-contextualize it; they are, namely, the protagonists in the current process of ‘other-ing’ rebetiko. This is a postmodern ‘other-ing’ that essentializes the subversive and forbidden profiles of rebetiko as the

qualities that constitute its difference and uniqueness. Rather than re-framing the genre as symbol of political radicalism,<sup>1</sup> this 'other-ing' aestheticizes the 'damned' music of the past - which is anyway harmless today: the 'banned' songs are idealized and enter the elegant and refined universe of the 'arts'.

By any means, conceptualizing rebetiko song as 'art' distinguishes it from what is commonly perceived as 'folk' music. This perceptual dichotomy that is fundamental in the ways the particular body of discourses and aesthetics exoticize rebetiko today recalls Bourdieu's (1984)<sup>1</sup> theory of distinction and, more specifically, his criticism of the notion of 'pure taste'. For Bourdieu, intellectuals understand the work of art as 'a finality with no other end than itself' made to fulfill the Kantian notion of 'pure taste'; likewise they view 'art' music, in our case, 'as an end, not a means' (1984:488). The notion of 'pure taste' leaves, therefore, no place for folk music, unless it is acknowledged as 'art'. Besides, 'it is nothing other than a refusal, a disgust – a disgust for objects which impose enjoyment, a disgust for the crude, vulgar taste which revels in this enjoyment' (ibid.)

This resentment over 'enjoyment' featuring 'folk' music is characteristically exemplified by the ethnography of the *Loxandra* performance event. For the revivalist musicians of the *Loxandra* ensemble, 'folk' music is distinguished as an intuitive expression carried 'in the blood' of musicians that awakens innate instincts, bodily reactions and deeply felt sentiments to the listeners. This is how revivalist musicians explain why the Gypsy musicians 'would steal the performance' from the *Loxandra* revivalist ensemble. The ways, on the other hand, educated performers re-interpret

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<sup>1</sup> This is the case of the 1960s revivalist movement, whence listening to rebetiko implied a reaction to the Junta government.

'folk' music of the past transform it to an 'art' genre that is an intellectual experience, which demands knowledge, concentration and respect. 'Art' music is understood as sacred and more sophisticated in comparison to 'folk', which is seen as naïve and less complicated. To that extent, this love for the 'art' of past 'folk' music recalls an age of innocence, an uncontaminated humanity able to produce 'real' music. Similarly, rebetiko represents a 'folk' music recalling mythicized images of outlaws, the scents of hashish, femme fatales and *manges*' bohemian lives. The re-assessment of 'folk' rebetiko as 'art' aestheticizes the so-perceived natural, human, impulsive sounds and places them as antiques in the museum of divine musical monuments.

Thinking of the ancient past as a lost paradise was in fact originally promoted by the ideals of the Enlightenment and, more specifically, the notion of a 'return to the roots'. Again, the growth of relevant ideas took place in the ranks of western European bourgeois groups, who felt uncomfortable within the social scenery shaped by the industrial revolution and technological progress. Dissatisfied by what they saw as an increasingly de-humanized urban society, middle class educated people of the latter half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and early 20<sup>th</sup> century envisaged romantically a 'pure' humanity in the culture of rural people. Their romanticism inspired revivals: they sought to 'invent traditions',<sup>2</sup> among them musical traditions, coming from an uncorrupted era, a supposedly pristine reality.<sup>3</sup>

A similar discourse emphasizing the loneliness, alienation and misery of city life also flourished after the Second World War in an academic – mostly sociological

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<sup>2</sup> The idea of 'invented traditions' is discussed by Eric Hobsbawm (1983). Rosenberg discuss the problems of applying Hobsbawm's ideas to folk music revivals (1993:20).

<sup>3</sup> Romanticism coupled with nationalist aspirations were anyway among the prime ideological drives that motivated early musical folklore in Central Europe and Greece.

- art and literature sphere. Early sociological studies of rebetiko as urban tradition,<sup>4</sup> for example, appear to understand city culture as a desperate condition of living, a disintegrating mechanism of social cruelty that remorselessly feeds injustice. Human beings living in the cities are seen as unhappy, distressed; rebetiko, to that extent, is seen as an expression of their misfortunes and social deprivation.

Today, the notion of city as 'jungle' – a metaphor implying the wild, unforeseen and dangerous nature of urbanity – is commonly found among Greek people's narratives. Departing from the city is often described as an 'escape' (*apodhrasi*).<sup>5</sup> Urban living, on this basis, is perceived as a fatal fall from grace – a grace featuring an imaginary community of the remote past. Once more, the pioneers of an ideology warning of the chaotic destiny of urban areas are particular groups of middle class intellectuals. In the realm of music, escapism is nurtured in the experience of traditionalist and traditional sounds – such as the revival of rebetiko song - that are now polished and displayed as 'art'.

More than anything else, thus, music revivals are happening in the cities.<sup>6</sup> Cultural elites and educated people are part of urban human-scapes as are the scholars who study them. They are the people who often tend to understand the 'art' of music as a product made of 'pleasant' sounds that is an aesthetic 'luxury' rather than something vital for human existence.<sup>7</sup> This sacred understanding of rebetiko *qua* 'art' is, thus, primarily an urban understanding. It requires a 'particular disposition or

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<sup>4</sup> See Damianakos (1976).

<sup>5</sup> It is characteristic that travel agencies, for example, advertise their seasonal offers as 'escapes'.

<sup>6</sup> Bohlman identified the city 'as the entrepôt of the encounters with world music in a postmodern world' (Bohlman 2002a:133).

<sup>7</sup> The art of music has been traditionally defined as an 'aesthetic pleasure'. Such definition is given, for example, by Charles Burney in *A General History of Music from the Earliest Ages to the Present Period*: ([1776] 1935:p.xiii, London: Fullis).

dispositions' inherited in certain groups of urban cultural elites, 'the chosen, who are themselves chosen by their ability to respond to its call' (Bourdieu & Darbel 1991:111). Since cultural elites are people of the city, the rhetorical and poetic construction of distinction promoted by their special dispositions involves a product of urbanity. This discussion of distinction as a feature of particular urban enclaves may apparently, however, seem like an oxymoron when compared to Jameson's ideas (see chapter 4, *Postmodernity and 'Ethnic' Rebetiko*) suggesting the erosion of distinction - discussed above - between 'high' and 'mass' culture as one of the basic features of postmodernity (1985). When applied to the field of music, the erosion of distinction to which Jameson refers to, though, addresses the postmodern definition of 'what is art music', rather than raises doubts questioning 'is there art music?' The concept of 'art' music, then, is re-visited in postmodernity and reformed in the light of postmodern aesthetics and ideological attitudes. It is, besides, in the context of its postmodern reformations that the concept embraces nowadays the previously 'damned' rebetiko, re-baptizing it at the same time as 'ethnic' music.

Furthermore, the need to re-discover the sounds of the past and experience an 'other' art in the music of 'damned' rebetiko concerns an expression of melancholy. Turner describes somehow rigidly melancholy as a cultural attitude of contemporary intellectuals:

To embrace enthusiastically the objects of mass culture involves the cultural elite in a pseudo-populism; to reject critically the objects of mass culture involves distinction, which in turn draws the melancholic intellectual into a nostalgic withdrawal from contemporary culture. Since in postmodern times probably all culture is pseudo-culture, it is invariably the case that all intellectuals are melancholics (1994:131).

Melancholy thus grows within distinction, implied, in this case, in the understanding of rebetiko song as 'art' - a distinction itself - that embodies, in turn, a

resentment of present 'mass' musical culture. To that extent, contemporary revival may also be interpreted as a metaphor of postmodern melancholy; in this case, a cultural melancholy performed in the sounds of rebetiko song. This is the sentiment of revivalist experience driven by the postmodern values of 'futility, despair and anarchy' (Jenks 1994:143), also echoed in Jenk's own melancholic conclusion: 'we are led into absurdities' (ibid.). Since rebetiko revival suggests a confusion of time by bringing sounds of the past into the present, it embodies an absurdity: the lived experience of revival blurs the lines that distinguish the past from the present, the memory from actual experience. The inherent paradox of *la mode retro* recalls Rabinow's comment on nostalgia films: 'what these films do is represent our representations of other eras' (Rabinow 1986:247).

This is characteristically exemplified in the ways the rebetiko events of *Bekris' taverna* and *Kath' Odhon* café differ from those of *Amareion* 'ethnic' bar. With respect to Rabinow's argument, the *Amareion* events are lived as 'our' representations representing music of remote eras: this is the representation of rebetiko song as 'art' form. The *taverna* performances, and more strikingly, the *ghlendi*, on the other hand, are cultural experiences lived primarily as traditions, as sonic embodiments of memories and histories, social and individual. Rebetiko songs are performed in this case as 'compound aural memories'.<sup>8</sup> Nonetheless, those sharing the understandings of rebetiko song suggested by the *Amareion* case study also acknowledge them as 'art' – perceived, in this case, as 'the real thing', that is the

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<sup>8</sup> This is how Stuart Feder described songs in 'Charles Ives 'My Father's Songs': a Psychoanalytic Biography' (New Haven, Yale Univ. Press, 1992:241). The rebetiko experience in *Kath' Odhon* recalls Shelemay's discussion of *pizmonim* songs performances that borrows Feder's concept: 'The *pizmonim* are compound aural memories. They are once a vital part of life as lived, connecting moments in the present to broader themes and historic memory...In the end, *pizmonim* exist for individuals in the community not as bracketed musical genres but as lived experience, absorbed into the fabric of everyday life' (Shelemay 1998:171).

rebetiko condition before 'our' representations. Although *Amareion* events – the intellectual face of ongoing revival – also inspire constructions of memories and histories (that is they make tradition their own way), they do it from different perspectives suggested by the above-systematized bodies of discourses and aesthetics on the whole. Humans sharing these perspectives idealize the *ghlendi* and *taverna* performances, primarily because they identify them as a type of rebetiko *Ur-musik*, the rebetiko pre-history. Following Rabinow, 'ethnic - art' rebetiko concerts represent the representations of the primitive rebetiko thought to happen in these contexts.

Consequently, revival has many faces. This is, besides, what the three different yet intersecting case studies represented here illustrate. The 'ethnic-art' profile of rebetiko that the present ethnography suggests, is one of these faces. It promotes a novel rebetiko way-of-being that co-exists with rebetiko ways-of-being coming from the past, such as the *taverna* and the *ghlendi* performances, and re-defines them. In that sense, the ongoing profiling of rebetiko as 'ethnic-art' motivates tradition; it suggests a new dialogue between past and present rebetiko cultures that creates novel landscapes for the lived experience of rebetiko song.

### 3. The lost innocence of Greek music: performing authenticity

In all revivals, the most important components for the formation of the aesthetic and ethical code are the ideas of cultural continuity and organic purity of the revived practice. The term 'authentic' is most commonly employed to distinguish the revived practice from other musics and to draw attention to its supposed 'time depth'. This is the centerpiece of music revivals...In revivalist discourse, historical continuity is often used to imply authenticity and vice versa...The ideology of authenticity, which combines historical research with reactionary ideas against cultural mainstream, must be carefully constructed and maintained; this often gives rise to the prominent educational component of many revivals (Livingston 1999:74).

If nostalgia defines the ethos of postmodernity and melancholy is the cultural sentiment of rebetiko revival, authenticity is the prime value that both conditions address: it offers an answer to the question 'nostalgia and melancholy for what?' The love for the 'original sounds' today is formulated within a growing concern regarding the impact of technological progress and music industry in contemporary musical culture. Frith, discussing the issue of 'truth' in the area of rock music argues characteristically: 'in the language of rock criticism, what's at issue here is the *truth* of music – truth to the people who created it, truth to our experience. What's bad about the music industry is the layer of deceit and hype and exploitation it places between us and our creativity' (1988:12).

For the people the present ethnographic narratives represent, authentic sounds are historic sounds; a music that is rooted in an ancient tradition is 'authentic' and, therefore, may be considered and experienced as an 'art' and, eventually, enter the world of 'ethnic' musics. This brings us back to the ways the four bodies of discourses and aesthetics meet each other in the forum of understanding rebetiko *qua* 'world music' genre. It is exactly this understanding that sets the postmodern frames for interpreting musical authenticity that is anyway a historically sensitive concept.

Current revivalist performances suggest an examination of ‘authentic’ as a value of ‘ethnic’ rebetiko. To that extent, the ways humans sharing the revivalist culture define authenticity today lie beyond patriotic claims of greekness and musical purism that used to monopolize the concerns of Greek music politics echoed in numerous debates among native folklorists and music experts. The ‘new’ authenticity found in rebetiko stresses instead its connection with a ‘great’ civilization of a past that revivalists today perceive as ‘ours’.

This notion of ‘ours’, though, is not reduced to the notion regarding ‘what is Greek’; rather it is nowadays broadened, having acquired the more generic meaning of ‘local’. ‘Ours’ as ‘local’ encompasses musical traditions that connect the ‘Greek’ identity with a greater musical neighborhood – the Eastern Mediterranean world mainly implied here under the notion of ‘Orient’, the Orient that is close to ‘us’. An Eastern Mediterranean conceptualized as ‘our’ ‘oriental’ territory is imagined as an immaculate musical realm of innocent pluralism – in fact, often described as musical ‘richness’ (photo 41). Rebetiko to that extent is ‘authentic’ because it was formulated within a virtuous past of musical creativity that encouraged the healthy interaction and harmonic coexistence of various ethnic traditions. The purity and integrity identified in ‘ours’ is lamented today as a lost virtue – lost by the catastrophic impact of commercialization and the malignant technology, seen as the acculturating instruments of the dominant ‘West’. The music of ‘ours’ is juxtaposed thus to ‘western’ music and those local musics thought to belong to the sphere of the West: ‘western’ is what ‘ours’ is not.

Consequently, the value of authenticity is ‘other-ing’ rebetiko, because it ensures the purity of the ‘local’. Seen as ‘pure’, it is considered as non-mainstream and, thus, unique, having remained uncontaminated by external influences ever since it originated. Within a current Greek cultural reality characterized anyway by westernized and variously hybridized musics, playing and thinking of rebetiko as ‘authentic’ make it special – a special musical world encapsulating a pre-westernized, and thus pre-modern, musical era of the past.<sup>1</sup> To that extent, both the discourses on authenticity and historic origins of rebetiko are linked to discourses of ‘art’ music: they all concern distinctions. The distinction constructed in this case promotes an ‘original’ and ‘true’ profile for rebetiko that elevates it to a non-commercial, unspoilt and, thus, extra-ordinary music. Rather than aiming at supporting the national origins of the genre, the present discourse on authenticity localizes rebetiko as a ‘pure’ native product that deserves, as such, a place in the panorama of ‘world musics’; it is a postmodern authenticity.

It is this ‘missing’ authenticity of contemporary music that rebetiko revivalist culture endeavors to revitalize. While in the previous revivalist era authenticity was basically discussed in rebetological texts and lectures, today authenticity is performed. Performing ‘real’ rebetiko suggests performing ‘original’ ways of rebetiko musical-being: ‘original’ rebetiko musicians’ ideology, practices, attitudes, philosophy and lifestyle. ‘Original’ rebetiko musicians share special codes of communication, illustrated, for instance, in the practice of spontaneous performance – the musical *alishverisi* - and abide with certain rules of hierarchy. This way, young revivalists glorify the musical personality of Nikos the Tsitsanis, the ‘big stuff’, whom they

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<sup>1</sup> In Greek vernacular the word *moderno* is often associated with ideas or practices coming from the U.S. or Western Europe.

respect as a genuine expression of 'real' *rebetis*, a 'master' player beyond any competition. Similarly, the *rebetofatses*, the revelers of *Kath' Odhon* café and *Bekris*, the *taverniaris*, are idealized as human reminiscences of rebetiko yesteryear. Moreover, as 'decent' rebetiko players, the musicians of *Amareion* become the 'psychologists' of the audience. They think themselves of being 'decent' to the listeners because they shape the programme in response to the ways they anticipate people's dispositions; they stress that their performance is 'true' because it serves the people. Being 'psychologists' and playing 'decently' are perceived, thus, as values featuring musicianship of past debonair and innocent times preceding the era of commodified music and industrialized performers.

The performance of authenticity is enacted in 'original' rebetiko happenings and places, such as the *Bekris' taverna* and, more strikingly, the *Kath' Odhon ghlendi* represented here. More particularly, the core of genuine rebetiko musicality is essentialized in the escalating realities of the revelry defined by the conditions of *meraki* and *kefi* ('high spirits').<sup>2</sup> Deepened in *meraki* and 'firing' the *kefi* become inner experiences of 'true' rebetiko ways-of-being featuring 'original' rebetiko people. 'Pure' rebetiko realities then embody extravagance. Because they are extreme, they transcend normal routine realities: they 'burn' the everyday empowering meta-realities. They represent, therefore, zones of excessive musical aesthetics thought primarily as a privilege of 'folk' people. In that sense, the educated groups supporting revival - the 'non-folk' people - idealize the ultimate authentic rebetiko musicality they themselves fail to share. The 'cultivated' groups then are removed from

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<sup>2</sup> For *meraki* see chapter 3, fn. 16; chapter 12, '*Ethnic' rebetiko, heterotopia and nostalgia*, fn.10. On the notion of *kefi* see Kavouras (1990:212-217). Etymologically, the term derives from the Arab word *keyf* or *kaif* that means well-being and pleasure. Feldmann describes the *keyf* as a 'pleasurable yet introspective state' (1975:21). For Caraveli, it involves a 'heightened form of experience' (1985:263).

sentiments and feelings ‘folk’ people as ‘true’ people may reach, because they partake of different cultural enclaves.

Participation in ‘authentic’ rebetiko events then is driven by nostalgia for the lost impulsiveness that is viewed, somehow, as the ‘true’ quality of primitive humanity. This concept of ‘genuine’ humanity is understood as a condition featuring a gracious remote era when humans used to build healthy communities, such as the ‘circle’ surrounding the *kompania* of Nikos the Tsitsanis. To that extent, the practices of making the *parea* community are fundamental in the ways the *Bekris’ taverna* is defined as an ‘authentic’ rebetiko place. Next to the ways ‘true’ rebetiko is performed, authenticity in the *taverna* is essentialized in the practices of sharing that ultimately constitute the *parea* poetics: sharing food, sharing alcohol, sharing laughter and words – all taking place within the ‘authentic’ rebetiko soundscape happening in an ‘authentically’ decorated venue. Authenticity then is not only musically performed; it is behaved and lived as a special agenda of expressions proper for ‘real’ rebetiko performances.

Musically, authenticity is happening in the repertory and the ways ‘original’ songs are performed.<sup>3</sup> To that extent, the commitment to the ‘authentic’ requires precise and accurate performance of rebetiko based strictly upon the ways songs were played in the original recordings. Musicians perceive themselves as ‘missionaries’ who convey and disseminate the ‘true’ rebetiko tradition.<sup>4</sup> In that sense, they do not re-make or change the sounds of the past; rather they preserve them as intact and ‘give a new life’ to those ‘long forgotten’. This way, they portray themselves as

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<sup>3</sup> See the narratives related to performing rebetiko systematized in discourse 4 (*The definition of ‘authentic’ rebetiko*).

<sup>4</sup> Dawe also describes Cretan musicians as ‘keepers of a tradition’ (1998:23).

guardians of collective memory, who ensure the unbroken continuity of rebetiko tradition. Consequently, the dedication to authenticity negates creativity: according to the revivalist musicians' ideology, performers of the 'authentic' sounds merely reproduce them. Revivalist musicians see themselves, therefore, as the invisible bearers of rebetiko sounds and neglect to understand them as creative subjects of the tradition. Musical tradition is in this way understood as solid and as stable as an ancient statue, that revivalists simply discover and restore, in order to display it to the listeners. For young revivalists, this is a tradition that can only be disseminated as a musical heritage and venerated as a sacred body of history.

#### 4. 'Ethnic' rebetiko, heterotopia and nostalgia

So far, I have attempted to discuss how particular bodies of discourses and aesthetics are 'other-ing' rebetiko and how overall they constitute qualities of the current re-assessment of rebetiko as 'ethnic'. What kind of 'otherness', however, do people sharing revivalist culture experience in rebetiko performances today? In this section I explore further the nature of 'ethnic' rebetiko (discourse 4) in the light of Michel Foucault's philosophical ideas regarding the concept of 'heterotopia', as well as with respect to the cultural and musical poetics of nostalgia as the driving sentiment of postmodern rebetiko revival.

##### *Heterotopia, multi-musicality and rebetiko performances*

Foucault coined the term 'heterotopia' in order to describe 'other spaces' (etymologically, the word is made up from the Greek *heteros*, meaning 'other' and *topos*, 'space').<sup>1</sup> Heterotopias are 'real existing places that are formed in the very founding of society', 'something like counter sites, a kind of effectively enacted utopia in which the real sites, all the other real sites that can be found within the culture, are simultaneously represented, contested and inverted' (1986:24). Because they are real places, they are contrasted to utopias, which are nowhere lands, placeless sites of human absence; on the contrary, heterotopias are 'the space in which we live, which draws us out of ourselves, in which the erosion of our lives, our time and our history occurs' (1986:23).

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<sup>1</sup> He actually coined the term in 1967. Nonetheless the relevant article 'Des Espaces Autres' was only published in 1984 in the French Journal *Architecture – Mouvement – Continuité* and subsequently translated and published in English (Foucault 1986).

One of the basic principles Foucault identifies in heterotopias is their connection to the so-called heterochronies: 'other' time experienced in 'other' spaces. In this sense, heterotopia describes a micro-cosmos whereby geography and history are lived in a way different to what is perceived as ordinary, normal. It is therefore 'the space of our dreams and that of our passions' (Soja 1995:15). Because they represent an 'other' actual cosmos that is culturally and socially constructed, heterotopic sites 'presuppose a system of opening and closing' (ibid:16). Humans may enter and depart from them: it is, in fact, the very human presence that realizes the meanings of heterotopia. The ways spaces, therefore, are experienced and perceived *make* them 'other': 'either their [the heterotopias'] role is to create a space of illusion that exposes every real space...as still more illusory. Or else, on the contrary, to create a space that is other, another real space, as perfect, as meticulous, as well arranged, as ours is messy, ill-constructed, and jumbled' (Foucault 1986:27).

Thinking of heterotopia in the field of music, I suggest that an essential dimension of the poetics of illusion - lived nonetheless in a real 'perfect' space - is the experience of 'other' sounds. Heterotopic sites are mutually conditioned by 'hetero-sonic' spaces, conditioning and being conditioned by hetero-chronic moments. Re-visiting the concept of heterotopia this way brings dialectically together the experience of time, place and music in the sphere of 'otherness'. Because the revival of rebetiko as 'ethnic' basically suggests an 'other-ed' rebetiko, we may understand rebetiko music today as a sonic heterotopia which happens in particular spatial heterotopias that are defined respectively by their own heterochronies.

A panoramic view over the city geography may reveal heterotopias happening in various real existing sites, such as museums, brothels, wedding parties, crime scenes, or concert halls. In the city of Thessaloniki, the area of Ano Poli, where the present ethnography is mapped, is one of them. It is an area determined by the cultural politics of *anaplasti* ('re-modeling'): in a way, it is a state orchestrated heterotopia. The ways Ano Poli is preserved, restored and re-built animate today a local world of memories; the sonic memories of this other-land are reverberated in the performance of rebetiko songs. Even walking on the paved narrow streets of Ano Poli is like entering a zone of an urban Eden, where 'things look very much like they used to some time ago'.<sup>2</sup> The region itself resembles somehow an existing illusion happening within a Greek metropolis; an illusion, anyway, consciously re-made. It happens in the images of the restored architectural styles of the various traditional facades, supposed to be hiding the private lives of foregone human presences, and neo-traditional buildings; the small, stone-built Byzantine chapels and the Ottoman monuments scattered among them like wrinkles of time witnessing an age long history; the affirmative and stout presence of the gigantic Byzantine walls of the *Eptapyrghio* – the eternal seven towers shadowing the entire Ano Poli region - that captures the horizon of the visitor (photo 42); tempting smells of cooked food that escape the red, blue, and green windows of the houses and meet the astonishing fragrance of jasmines climbing on the front walls; the persistent gaze of old women monitoring the newcomers or the slow pace of walkers. Beyond, there expands the urban jungle: gray blocks of flats made of concrete, traffic lights and traffic jams, car horns, the smell of polluted air, fashionable stores and cafés, people rushing on the

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<sup>2</sup> This is a common discourse among Thessalonikians.

streets (photo 43 a,b). This is the realm of the 'real' sounds, of the trendy western 'hits', Greek pop or *skyladhiko* song.

The dreamland of rebetiko is often described via a metaphor of transition: the *Amareion* rebetiko afternoons are vividly illustrated as an alternative musical micro-cosmos - 'another planet'. The musical experience there is seen as a 'transport' to an exciting 'different world' of bewitching *penies*, a fascinating and exciting runway<sup>3</sup> for a magical 'trip out' in the alluring sounds of a 'music to lose yourself into'. The transcendence felt in the above rhetorics implies primarily a movement in space, here in the 'other' urban space (photo 43c). This further recalls Foucault's heterotopological prophecies:

The present epoch will perhaps be above all the epoch of space. We are in the epoch of simultaneity; we are in the epoch of juxtaposition, the epoch of the near and far, of the side-by-side, of the dispersed. We are at the moment, I believe, when our experience of the world is less that of a long life developing through time than that of a network that connects and intersects its own skein (1986: *Introduction*).

The metaphors of travel lie beyond the ways people in the present ethnography make sense of rebetiko performances; they are more broadly used to describe the nature of musical experience. This is vividly illustrated, for instance, in Kostas' narratives:<sup>4</sup>

*Kostas*: 'Music is a place. You listen to different musics - you travel to different places. Could you stay anywhere forever? You need to visit different places; this is why you need to listen to different musics. If you remain somewhere forever, you will never truly know where you are. Because you won't understand what is next to you, what is far away from you. This is why I prefer rebetiko and ethnic musics; because they let me know where I am.'

*Dafni*: 'And where do you feel you are closer to?'

*Kostas*: 'In each one of the musics I favor. When I'm there, I'm all there.'

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<sup>3</sup> 'Exciting' and 'fascinating' were, in fact, among the most commonly used words I have heard during my fieldwork.

<sup>4</sup> See *Music is a Place*, chapter 10 (a).

Kostas, among other people sharing rebetiko revivalist culture, is a visitor in *rebetiko-topia* which could be the name of the 'strange' country defined by rebetiko heterotopia.<sup>5</sup> It is the place where he encounters other visitors of this exotic musical land; where his musical itineraries intersect with those of other people. Before *rebetiko-topia* he has been - and he will be - to other musical heterotopias; those he encounters, too. They, as well, happened to follow their personal *dhromoi* ('roads') to rebetiko songs. This way, the actors of revivalist culture constitute and communicate subjective heterotopias within a broader heterotopia – the actual area of Ano Poli. These are personal heterotopias essentialized through personal traveling to musical places; knowing musics, in this sense, could be seen as an integral part of the process of self-formation and self-awareness: it means knowing 'where I am'.

Consequently, musical experience(s) are placing humans; they are vehicles for mapping the self in the world. Within the boring sameness identified in the global village, this subjective process of musical mapping concerns an attitude that is decisive to shaping individual and collective identities escaping the mainstream, the conventional. Such musical identities should not be understood, though, in the strict sense of the term as 'concrete' musical personalities humans are 'programmed' to embody.<sup>6</sup> Since they are shaped in relation to personal roads leading to different musics, these are flexible, rather than stable, variable, rather than fixed, transitory, rather than permanent, identities of the self lived in music. Kostas points further to that direction by stressing that 'when I'm there [in music as place], I'm all there'. His

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<sup>5</sup> It is characteristic that the central square of Ano Poli was recently named 'Vasilis Tsitsanis' Square'. The naming was proposed by the official authorities and was celebrated with a specially organized rebetiko *ghlendi*. The leading *bouzouki* player of the performing *kompania* was Nikos the Tsitsanis who together with the poet and rebetologist Dinos Christianopoulos had lately formed a rebetiko band called *I Parea tou Tsitsani* ('Tsitsanis' Company'). The mayor of the city also announced that he is planning to place in the square a sculpture with Tsitsanis' figure (see *Eleftherotypia* 27.09.2001, p.30).

<sup>6</sup> For the notion of 'programmed' musicality see Wachsmann (1971).

musicality thus is not limited to one musical-way-of-being. He may well embody diverse musical beings - many musicalities -which he is capable of activating by fully engaging himself in different contexts accordingly.<sup>7</sup>

To that extent, Kostas, among other rebetiko adherents portrayed in this ethnography, may stand as a paradigm of a multi-musical (in respect to Hood's 1960's notion of 'bi-musical') urbanite. He embodies many musical worlds, which he shares with various other people coming from different human-scapes of the city. In that sense, multi-musicality is performed and realized in movements within a network of musical places – to re-visit Foucault's idea. With respect to the nature of identities it defines, this is a malleable network: while it may comprise regularities – such as the *Amareion* rebetiko afternoons - it is at the same time constantly shaped. The experience thus of rebetiko as a musical place – a heterotopia – is neither fixed nor static. The experience of traveling in musical places informs and partly reboots the poetics of living the rebetiko heterotopia through practices and understandings pre-formed musically elsewhere.

Such is the case, for example, of the 'red carnations' incident that took place in the *Kath' Odhon ghlendi*. Throwing carnations to the musicians concerns an extravagant and flamboyant practice of *kefi* imported from *skyladhiko* performances and associated with the aesthetics and the entertainment ethos of certain *nouveaux riches* groups in Greek society. In the *Amareion* case study, the complex workings of multi-musicality are evident, for instance, in Haris' understanding of rebetiko as 'our

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<sup>7</sup> The pluralism of urban music making is also explored by Finnegan (1989). In the introduction the author noted that her ethnography focuses 'on the existence and interaction of different musics', looking at the ways local music is 'structured according to a series of cultural conventions and organized practices...in which both social continuity *and* individual choices play a part' (1989:10, italicization as in the original).

rock' or the ways Mitsos relates rebetiko song to reggae music inspired respectively by their personal association with these genres. They both seem to justify in this way the course of their musical travels – and, of course, their current involvement in rebetiko as performers - by explaining how one musical 'place' (the rock or reggae) interchanges with another. This way, Mitsos' musical itineraries represent his own multi-musicality: he embodies a network interconnecting Byzantine chant with rebetiko song - with reggae music - with art song - with 'ethnic recordings' - with *dhimotiko traghoudhi*.

Anyway, urbanites appear to plot their musical networks as travelers wandering in the urban paths of sonic realities - they 'don't remain anywhere forever'. This way, multi-musicality may become a forum for interpreting, in the field of musical culture, what Young called 'the politics of difference' defining city life. Young proposes a postmodern representation of the city as a differential locus conditioned by 'a kind of relationship' she describes as an ideal form of human coexistence among city people. Young names this relationship as 'openness to unassimilated otherness' and understands city life as a metaphor of the 'politics of difference' featuring this relationship (Young 1990:227). This way, she stands critically against both the ideal of 'communitarianism' – which capitalizes on the power of the community in social relations – and 'liberal individualism' that focuses on the individual as being disassociated from social reality. Instead, her 'politics of difference' suggest a positive experience of city life shared amongst interdependent humans - an idea upon which the notion of 'openness' is based - whom she nonetheless views as 'strangers who do not understand one another in a subjective and

immediate sense', justifying, this way, the 'unassimilated' nature of 'otherness' (Young 1990:234).

Since urban social relations are basically enacted in public spaces, public music making - such as the rebetiko performances in Ano Poli venues discussed here - may likewise become a forum where 'the politics of difference' are symbolically projected. In fact, I suggest that multi-musicality may be considered with respect to this 'openness to unassimilated otherness' as a kind of relationship connecting humans partaking in revivalist rebetiko culture. Because they embody personal musical networks (their itineraries to musical places, which may, to a certain extent, overlap or not), their multi-musicality may both bring them together and distance them as strangers. Living rebetiko music in *Amareion*, to that extent, concerns an experience that overall connects certain humans, at least on a particular level: on the level they form the rebetiko heterotopia. Beyond this particular heterotopia though, they may move in more or less different directions, <sup>that is they</sup> visit different musical places; then, they may come back, re-make the rebetiko heterotopia having experienced more or less different musical routes or other heterotopias. What multi-musicality happening in the city basically appears to disclose then, are poetics of difference – understood as politics of difference, since they both describe ways of shaping and, moreover, managing difference in the realm of musical culture.

Difference and its representations in the multi-musical people portrayed in the present ethnography frame optimistically therefore the pluralism of urban musical experience, otherwise seen as a chaos threatening with disorientation and loss of self

and the 'traditional' musical identities.<sup>8</sup> In any case, urban musical culture is multiple and diverse and this invites humans to develop musical subjectivities which are, at the same time, decentered and proximate, both far away and so close. The complex dynamics of shaping subjective musicalities, as exemplified ethnographically here, challenge, therefore, the traditional definition of 'musical community'. Rather than fixed entities of humans sharing common musicalities, communities 'born' in urban music making – such as that of the *Amareion* rebetiko afternoons – appear as differentiated unities both concrete and fragmentary, regular and constantly shifting. To that extent, exclusion no longer functions as a mechanism for constructing musical communities based on the ideal of an irreducible unity, since the communities themselves are defined by the encounters of different musicalities; musicalities, which are continuously shaped and, thus, unpredictable. Rather than established communities, they concern, consequently, musical communities featuring sonic heterotopias humans share at least whenever sonic heterotopias are realized.

*Nostalgia, melancholy, meraki and the poetics of rebetiko-topia*

Humans immersed in 'the erosion of our lives, our time and our history' (Foucault, 1986:23) that features rebetiko heterotopia need to withdraw from surrounding realities and routines and enter a zone of 'dreams and passions', where they experience 'other', idealized lives, times and histories. To that extent, *rebetiko-topia* presupposes nostalgia, the sentimental pain (*alghos*) for *nostos*, that is, the wish to return home, to what is familiar, close, to what is missed as a result of departing and

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<sup>8</sup> This negative view is suggested by certain postmodern theorists, such as Jameson and Harvey (see Putton 1995:118), who tend to appreciate the increasing differentiation of city life as a symptom of alienation that threatens contemporary urban living.

distancing away from it. It is a nostalgia worked and celebrated in the current experience of rebetiko as 'ethnic' music – one of the traditions of the 'nearby us Orient' – indeed 'our' Orient. Nostalgia also embodies melancholy. The wish to return to the familiar becomes painful, since it is sensed as impossible – besides, 'there is no rebetiko music today'. Melancholy on this level is basically generated by the sense of irreversibility of time that practically can only move forward. Reviving a music of the past, here the rebetiko revival, involves a neglect of the rational concept of time – a kind of heterochrony. The alternative temporalities of rebetiko performances are thus melancholically motivated within a time-travel to an illusion really existing.

'Illusionary spaces' – to recall Foucault – are featured by 'crossroads of time and space', 'juxtaposing in one real place several sites that are themselves incompatible or foreign to one another'.<sup>9</sup> This fusion of spaces determines the very nature of rebetiko revival: it brings the past into the present, phasing one into another. The nostalgic experience of such an interference of past sounds in present lives is conditioned by remembrance. The rebetiko memories humans represented in this ethnography recall, though, are not 'real' memories, in the sense that they do not refer to a world in which revivalists had actually lived before. Instead, they are imaginary memories - indefinite idealizations of a previous musical era, which revivalists have not practically experienced. Eventually, what they experience and enjoy are the ways they favor to imagine a rebetiko world based on rebetological and variously constructed myths and stereotypes of an underworld long before gone. In this sense, the nostalgia defining rebetiko revival may as well point to an ideal future:

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<sup>9</sup> Reprinted in Soja (1995:15).

paradoxically, remembering, since it is imaginary, may imply ways of projecting a 'perfect' future.

This nostalgic remembrance of paradigmatic pasts and futures is fundamental to the poetics of *rebetiko-topia*. The essence of this heterotopia culminates in the state of *meraki*. *Meraki* defines an esoteric experience sensed as a 'burning' of the soul's depths; a state of transcendence to an inner cosmos of desire and passion musically lived.<sup>10</sup> Fire is indeed a common metaphor for *meraki* found in rebetiko lyrics: fire suggests a holistic catastrophe of the self that is nonetheless enjoyed as a heightened state of desire. 'Burning' in the state of *meraki* therefore generates and amplifies the 'erosion of our lives' featuring heterotopia. Eventually, *meraki* as a 'trip' to the 'other' self involves a self-contained heterotopia: the 'real' self melts in the ecstatic self - it is 'lost' - when deepened in the sonic allurements of rebetiko.

*Meraki* thus concerns a process of reaching an 'other', extra-ordinary, passionate self hidden inside the self; it is a self, ravished 'on the wings' of rebetiko song. Drinking alcohol and the effects of intoxication open further windows to the micro-cosmos of *meraki*. It is an intoxication basically worked in the euphoria of diving into the sonic wonderland of rebetiko: alcohol is a vehicle for *meraki* rather than a necessary medium for reaching it; it supports the unraveling of *meraklis'* qualities (*meraklou*, female; the one who may enter and fully absorb him/herself in *meraki*). Departing from the 'burning' state of being lived in *meraki* brings

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<sup>10</sup> Etymologically, the term *meraki* derives from the Turkish word *merak*, which means 'curiosity, whim, or passion for something' (Hony and Fahim 1957:236). Kavouras distinguishes three meanings for *meraki*: (a) 'a strong wish, an intoxicating passion', (b) 'a person's unfulfilled passion' (c) '*meraki* has an aesthetic connotation: something made with *meraki* means something made with care and good taste' (1990:218-219). In the context of the present ethnography *meraki* is mainly used with meaning (a), namely 'as a performative category' (Caraveli 1985:264) associated with the poetics of *kefi*.

melancholy - in fact, an ecstatic, rather than pathetic, melancholy. The fall from the heightened condition of desire and passion becomes a melancholic enjoyment of losing the 'lost' self.<sup>11</sup> This is a delirious melancholy worked in *nostos*, in the wish, namely, to return to the deeply hidden 'burning' self. It is a melancholy that misses an enchanted, rapturous self who is defined by a fleeting, beyond the realm of everyday, condition of existence - the core of the rebetiko-way-of-being.<sup>12</sup>

By and large, *meraki* developed within rebetiko performance is an expression of the love of music; a love felt by 'engaged nostalgics' (Stokes 1997:682). For Stokes, urban musical nostalgia – featuring in his case the Ottoman art music revival in Istanbul - may be interpreted on a binary axis: both as a withdrawal from the dominant narratives of modernism, as well as, 'a new cultural currency of power; a nostalgia which is part of a massive, coordinated and explicit effort to "sell Istanbul"

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<sup>11</sup> See, for instance, the connection of *meraki* and melancholy in the following lyrics:

Όταν πίνεις στην ταβέρνα  
Κάθεσαι και δε μιλάς  
Κάπου κάπου αναστενάζεις  
Απ' τα φύλλα της καρδιάς

Θα \*θελα να σε ρωτήσω  
Και να πληροφορηθώ  
Ποιο μεράκι σ' έχει κάνει  
Τόσο μελαγχολικό;

(The song is titled *Otan Pineis stin Taverna*, 'When You Drink in the Taverna'. It was composed by Vasilis Tsitsanis in 1947, HMV AO 2774/OGA 1300).

(translation)

When you drink in the taverna  
You sit and don't talk  
From time to time you sigh  
From the leaves of the heart

.....

I would like to ask you  
And inform myself  
Which *meraki* has made you  
So melancholic?

<sup>12</sup> In Greece the enjoyment of music is not always a merry-making experience. It may also involve a personal, introspective and sorrowful expression (see Kavouras 1990:216).

shared by many aspiring “global cities” in the current post-nationalist political configurations of the Balkans, Central Asia and the Middle East’ (ibid.).

The recent development of musical nostalgia conditioning urban music making in Thessaloniki, as well as in other major Greek urban centres, is not free of political interests, either. In the Greek case, the increasing Euro-centric concern with ‘harmonizing with our European partners’ promotes a conciliatory Greek diplomatic profile and initiates political attitudes that struggle to cope with the emerging multi-cultural societies in the country.<sup>13</sup> As a recipient country of the waves of refugees flocking from the recent Balkan ~~conflicts~~ and the collapse of the Berlin Wall, the Greek state is urgently invited to correspond to the so-called ‘new order of things’. This ‘new order’ challenges the Greek state to adopt a stabilizing, leading role in the area and develop a political attitude that will now move beyond nationalist insecurities. In this novel socio-political context, traditional enemies and friends are re-assessed on a broader basis determined by the globalizing dynamics of international politics. In that sense, tracing ‘Turkish’, ‘Ottoman’ or any ‘oriental’ elements into a local musical genre is no longer deprecated: these traditions belong, besides, to ‘our neighborhood’, the mythicized ‘nearby us Orient’ – close to ‘where we are’ (to re-visit Kostas’ narratives).

To that extent, it would be fruitless and misleading to interpret the ways the notion of *kath’ imas Anatoli* is revisited today in the area of music – and more specifically in the rebetiko revivalist culture discussed ethnographically here – as a side product of contemporary Greek nationalism. This way, the ‘other-ing’ of rebetiko

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<sup>13</sup> In Greek, *enarmonisi me tous Evropaious etairous mas* (‘harmonizing with our European partners’) is a standard phrasing used by local politicians and political analysts.

associated with the current revival of the genre would be reduced to a superficial translation, a mirror of regional political power games which are anyway increasingly de-territorialized under the dictates of an agenda that urges 'thinking globally'. While the notion of *kath' imas Anatoli* is re-vitalized nowadays, it is nonetheless placed and re-assessed within ongoing political and cultural premises. Therefore, it is now detached from the claims advertised then by the popular concept of the 'Great Idea' (*Meghali Idhea*), that described the aspirations of Greek nationalist politics to regain the Asia Minor countries that were lost in the Greek-Turkish wars. *Kath' imas Anatoli* then - towards the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century - was mapped in the areas inhabited also by Greek speaking populations who were subsequently 'uprooted' as a result of what is called in traditional Greek historiography, the 'Asia Minor Catastrophe'.

In this historical context, the original notion of *kath' imas Anatoli* described moreover the practices, habits, attitudes, ideas, languages and the musics Greeks shared with various populations they co-existed with in the 'lost homes' (*hamenes patridhes*), as well as in the Greek mainland during the long standing Ottoman rule. The 'nearby us Orient' nostalgically remembered in the writings of the 1880s 'suitsors of the Asian Muse' is thus a recent Orient, felt, in fact, as a 'lost home'. It is a nostalgia for an 'oriental' past which can be practically remembered and, more important, which was still actually lived in those years among cultural enclaves of the 'folk' in relation to which European-educated scholars were socially distanced. *Amanes*, *smyrnaiiko*, *politiko* and early rebetiko featured the entertainment culture of Greek urban centres: they were not merely 'dead' musics supported by several members of the local intelligentsia. Rather, they were active traditions to which the

local intellectuals were romantically attracted, as Gustav Flaubert in France fantasized about the erotic Orient, or Gustav Klimt devised his colorings and paintings.

Politis and his artistic and literary circle thus aestheticized the ‘nearby us Orient’ as a historically recent and still flourishing reality. Their orientalist dreams, however, took place within a broader, vague context of turbulent cultural dynamics forming a magnetic field of identities for the newly emerged Greek state pulling it from the recent *romeiko* past to the visions of a *frangiko* (literally Franc, denoting European) future.<sup>14</sup> It is a nostalgia for ‘oriental songs’ happening at the same time Greeks were moved by the myths of the ‘marbled King’ of Constantinople,<sup>15</sup> that ‘again in years and times to come, all will be ours once more’.<sup>16</sup>

Contemporary Greeks, *neohellenes*, (literally, the ‘new Greeks’) live far away - both historically and culturally - from the Ottoman past and its musical traditions.

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<sup>14</sup> *Romeiko* means that of *romios*, the citizen of Roman Empire. Romeic past then refers to the Byzantine era and the Ottoman years, whence *romios* became *rayias* (a submissive *romios*). *Romeiko traghoudhi*, the romeic song, refers to the musical traditions developed by *romioi* (pl.) living in multi-cultural societies of the Byzantine and Ottoman Empire.

<sup>15</sup> That is the popular myth of Konstantinos Palaeologhos, the last Byzantine Emperor of the Palaeologhos dynasty (1261-1453) who turned to marble and thus was never captured during the occupation of the Poli in 1453 by the Ottoman conquerors. The marbled king will come to life again and rule the Empire when Poli will be liberated from the *apistous* (‘infidels’, meaning the Ottomans).

<sup>16</sup> This is the last verse of the *dhimotiko traghoudi* known as ‘Song of Aghia Sophia’, which apparently inspired the poem written by the English philhellene John Burrows on the event of Thessaloniki’s capture by Greek army in 1912, whence it became part of the Greek state:

We too of the younger North  
Claim that Hellas brought us forth

...

Salonika! Salonika!  
We do seek her! We do seek her!  
After centuries of wrong  
Cometh true the ancient song.  
Lady! Stay thee from thy moan!  
Once again she is our own!

(‘Song of the Hellenes to Venizelos, the Cretan’, *Manchester Univ. Magazine*, 1913, 9 (3): 92). For a detailed discussion see Herzfeld 1986:130-6. Greek folk songs of the fall of cities are also discussed by Beaton (1980:95-102).

This distance blurs the view of the past; memories of the magic sounds of the 'nearby us Orient' are fictitious. This brings to mind Jameson's somehow aphoristic argument regarding the nature of postmodernism: 'we seem condemned to seek the historical past through our own pop images and stereotypes about the past, which itself remains forever out of reach' (1983:118). Postmodern nostalgia is primarily worked then in the imagination rather than as a historical and political approach that idealizes the past. The charming Orient and its musics are re-visited without specific references to certain situations, habits, or musical practices; it is rather a dreamy, unknown Orient coming from remote times, like a fairy tale recounting a mythical cosmos of spiritual sounds, passionate singers, voluptuous female dancers and the seductive<sup>t</sup> smells of narghile.

This is an 'other' world of nostalgia entirely dissociated from the existing realities of Greek culture today. It is a nostalgia happening within an illusion, a fictitious reality that is nonetheless actually lived. People sharing revivalist culture desire to live it. They revive rebetiko performances, transforming them into escapist oases. This is an escape felt in the deep love for the re-discovered rebetiko song that culminates in the euphoric 'burning' of self in the state of *meraki*. It is an escape reached in the experience of the alluring otherness of rebetiko sounds. Beyond 'sonic otherness' there is the realm of sameness: the 'commercial' music coming out of the loud speakers of the city bars and the glamorous images of singers appearing on local TV screens. This is the cosmos the heterotopic *penies* of rebetiko nostalgia invite humans to leave behind, to forget, at least temporarily.

To that extent, current nostalgia nurtures orientalism. This postmodern orientalism, thus, beyond nuances of religious nostalgia – already discussed above – may, more broadly, condition the experience of heterotopic nostalgia. *Rebetiko-topia*, as already shown, involves an escapist musical experience and escapism inspires orientalist dreams of ‘other-ed’ sounds. This is, eventually, a postmodern nostalgia; it defines a heterotopia that is essentially postmodern since it involves a depart from the ‘real’ spaces, an alternative experience to that of the ‘real’ musics featured in everyday city life. The ‘long-drawn-<sup>out</sup> songs of the Orient’ (to recall Palamas) suggest today a management of time that creates inconsistencies with the modern: the slow-moving tempo of the *taximi* played on *bouzouki* is juxtaposed to the fast-going tempo of the progressive, electronic sounds of Greek pop and *skyladhiko* song.<sup>17</sup> This way, the current process of ‘other-ing’ rebetiko questions history, because it defines powerful sites activating discontinuities - slow-flowing musical *loci* happening within musical realities of rapid temporal nature - which are, notably, humanly constructed and desired;<sup>18</sup> it celebrates history by doubt.

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<sup>17</sup> A similar analogy associated with the Ottoman art music revival is found in Stokes (1997:680).

<sup>18</sup> See Genocchio (1995).

## After Ethnography

A few days after I had completed the first draft of writing this thesis I happened to visit the *Amareion* bar. It was early June 2002 and the venue had closed. Haris together with Kostas were there. They were discussing about how to refurbish the place. 'It is going to be an oriental venue,' explained Haris. 'I want to have mostly oriental music: one day for *smyrnaiiko* and *politiko* song, one for pre-war rebetiko, one for post-war and *laiko*...you know'. 'What about other kinds of music?' I asked. 'Here and there, there will be Ottoman, or Arab concerts ...you know similar kind of stuff.' 'That means it is going to be mainly a rebetiko venue,' I tried to make it more clear. 'An oriental one.' Haris corrected me and went on, 'You're going to see here a corner with carpets and pillows, aromatic narghiles...Kostas might paint some harem scene on the wall!' he explained with enthusiasm. For a moment I realized that what I've been theorizing upon during the last months of writing was going to be realized further in Haris' new vision of *Amareion*. 'And how did you come to think about it?' He laughed. 'Well, you know, I sense that people need it. Then, a change is always refreshing; I think that they're going to like it...Do you remember? We used to discuss together, when you were here, about it. You were asking people about it. And I got the message' he explained, blinking his eyes at the end.

The next morning I had to visit the registry of the Music Department I teach in the University of Thessaloniki. As I opened the door, I was surprised. Mitsos, the guitarist, was there. 'What are you doing here?' he asked humorously. 'I teach'. He laughed: 'Oh, I see. Don't tell me, it is the research you did in *Amareion*! You became an academic because you're writing about us! Ha!' He was teasing me. 'What about

you?' 'I came to do postgraduate studies in Byzantine chant'. 'And the rebetiko?' 'I play here and there, sometimes'. 'How is Ourania?' 'Oh, she's now crazy about yoga! There is a school here. She now wants to do some Indian music!'

Doing research then was not strictly a personal life-course. In a way, it affected the ways the *Amareion* venue was about to *change* as a rebetiko place, it apparently inspired Haris' refurbishing plans and the ways a new context of rebetiko entertainment was going to emerge in Ano Poli shortly. It appears that my research experience and understanding of ongoing rebetiko performances embodied seeds of forthcoming transformations of the revivalist culture in Ano Poli: the experience and understanding of the present was pregnant with meanings pointing to the future. The people I became so close to appeared to follow their own meta-ethnography courses, which I sensed that our encounter in the field had somehow influenced. Fieldwork changes somehow the field; fieldwork and ethnography *make* the field - or would this have happened anyway?

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**List of audio examples (recorded in the CD attached at the back cover):**

1. *Amanes* sung by Rita Abatzi. The song is titled *I Ora tou Thanatou* ('The Hour of Death'). Lambros Savaidhis, *kanonaki* and Dimitrios Semsis, violin. The recording is dated c.1935 (see p.24).<sup>1</sup>
2. *Mangiko* ('Little *Mangas* Girl') sung by Antonis Dalgas. A song of the *café-aman* tradition. It was recorded in Athens c. 1934 with Yiannis Oghdontakis (violin) and Arapakis (*santouri*). Arapakis' ('darky') real name is Dimitrios Kallinikos. The rhythm is *hasaposerviko* (2/4). Schwartz argues that the melody derived from the Yiddish song *Yoshke Furt Avek*, which 'was sung in Vilna during the Russo-Japanese War with lyrics about the induction of a criminal and the tearful goodbyes of his ladyfriend'. He further considers the melody as one 'of the family of Moldavian Jewish tunes' and also traced Armenian and Syrian versions of the melody (1991:11, in the accompanying booklet of the CD). Both Oghdontakis, of Smyrna origins, also a recording director, and Arapakis, from Ipiros, were famous for their knowledge and skillful improvisations (see p.25).
3. An instrumental *tsifteteli* (commonly identified in contemporary Greece with belly dance) played by Dimitrios Semsis. *Tsifteteli* literally means in Turkish 'two strings' (*çifte teli*). Schwartz provides two different meanings for the term: (a) it refers to a violin playing technique 'whereby the strings are arranged so that the bow, making contact with two of them at once, can play in the same octave or

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<sup>1</sup> The page number indicated refers to the place of the audio example in the main thesis text.

an octave apart, producing a more thickly resonant sound, as we hear on this selection’.

(b) ‘a dance once commonly played with this technique, which however can be played as other piece on the violin or any other instrument (most often clarinet or oud) (Schwartz 1991:13).

The date of the recording is not given in the accompanying booklet (see p. 82).

4. *Trava Spango* (‘Go away Stingy’) sung by Roza Eskenazy. A *smyrnaiiko* song composed by Dimitrios Semsis, who also plays violin. The rhythmic pattern is *hasaposerviko*. According to the booklet he is accompanied by a mandolin and a guitar player. The exact date of the recording is not given in the booklet (see p. 83).
5. An instrumental *politiko* song in fast *hasaposerviko* rhythm recorded in 1928. The leading instruments are clarinet and violin, which are accompanied by piano and bells that recall the sound of barrel organ. Detailed information about the instrumentalists is not given in the accompanying booklet (see p. 83).
6. A composition by Panayiotis Tountas featuring violin, clarinet, guitar, cymbals. The song is titled *Hariklaki* (that is a female name) and is sung by Roza Eskenazy. It is a popular tune throughout the Balkans. The present recording comes from 1934 (first recording in 1932 with Rita Abatzi). In Turkish it is called ‘Telegrafim Telleri’ (see p.84).

7. A composition by Markos Vamvakaris, *Htes To Vradhy Sto Skotadhi* ('Last Night in the Dark') from the days when he used to perform with the *Tetras tou Piraios*, an ensemble formed by himself, Stratos Payioumtzis, Anestos Delias and Giorghos Batis (see photo 11). It describes the troubles of a *mangas* who was stopped while walking in the dark by policemen and was arrested for possessing hashish. It was recorded in 1935. For the story of the song see Vellou-Keil (1978:92-93) (see p. 94).
  
8. *La Alegria de Jaco* ('The Joy of Jaco') a Sephardic song from Thessaloniki that is set to the melody of the rebetiko song *Elenitsa Mou* ('My Hellenitsa') by Panayiotis Tountas. The present recording is a revivalist recording with the Thessaloniki-based singer, David Saltiel. The instrumentation follows the *smyrnaiiko* tradition (violin, *kanonaki*, oud, frame drum, lyra) (see p. 97).
  
9. A rebetiko love song titled *Oti Ki An Po De Se Xehno* ('Whatever I say I Don't Forget You'). The voice delivery, especially the occurrence of first and second voice, and the harmonic structure reveal the influence of the *kantadha* ('serenade') singing style. The singer Stellakis Perpiniadhis is accompanied by Vasilis Tsitsanis (the composer of the song). The lyrics were written by Stelios Lithariotis. It was recorded in 1940 (see p. 102).

10. *Trele Tsingane* ('Crazy Gypsy Man') a composition by Vasilis Tsitsanis. Ioanna Yeorghakopoulou and Stellakis Perpiniadhis singers, lyrics by Christos Vasiliadhis. The song describes a desperate woman, embittered by her separation from a Gypsy man, asking him to get away altogether to 'far away places' regardless of the consequences of such an action. It was recorded in 1949 (see p. 104).
  
11. *Synefiasmeni Kyriaki* ('Cloudy Sunday') composed by Vasilis Tsitsanis, a rebetiko 'standard' today. 'Cloudy Sunday' is used as a metaphor to describe the singer's 'heart that is always cloudy'. The lyrics describe the singer's heart as a. The singer is Marika Ninou, one of the most popular singers of rebetiko mainly associated with Tsitsanis' work. Her singing is accompanied by Tsitsanis himself and Athanasios Evghenikos. It was recorded in 1948 (see Hatzidhoulis 1979a:66) (see p. 108).
  
12. A sample of the *arhondorebetiko* tradition composed by the virtuoso of the four-stringed *bouzouki* Manolis Hiotis. The song could be described a *bouzouki*-based tango, since the rhythm is borrowed from the tango genre. It is titled *Skotose Me* ('Kill Me') and is a love song. The one separated from the beloved asks him to kill her, so that she can let her soul fly away in his arms (see p. 110).
  
13. *Apopse Mes to Kapilio* ('Tonight in the Tavern') by Vasilis Tsitsanis. The singers are Prodhromos Tsaousakis accompanied by Marika Ninou and the lyrics were

written by Kostas Manesis. The song describes a man in a wine tavern who feels loneliness and sorrow while 'listening to the *bouzoukia* crying'. Recorded in December 1949 (see p. 114).

14. *Kane Lighaki Ypomoni* ('Be a Little Patient') - also known by the first verse *Min Apelpizesai* ('Don't Fall in Despair') - sung by Sotiria Bellou and composed by Vasilis Tsitsanis. It was recorded in 1948. In 1951 it was banned together with other rebetiko songs considered by the authorities to be dangerous for 'the religion, the country, the ethics and the Greek customs and traditions' (from the accompanying booklet) (see p. 114).

15. A song from *Epitaphios* titled *Pou Petaxe t' Aghori mou* ('Where did My Boy Fly'). The song exemplifies the appropriation of rebetiko compositional style, playing techniques and vocal delivery by a prominent *entehno* song composer. The singer Ghrigoris Bithikotsis is accompanied by Kaiti Thymi. The *bouzouki* player is the virtuoso of the *tetrahordho* ('four-stringed'), Manolis Hiotis (see p. 118).

16. *Aghapi Pou 'Ghines Dhikopo Mahairi* ('Love, You Became a Double Edged Knife') composed by Manos Hatzidhakis (1961). An *entehno* composer follows the rebetiko music structures and instrumentation. The singer, Marika Ninou, comes from the rebetiko tradition (see p. 120).

17. A piano adaptation of *Synefiasmeni Kyriaki* ('Cloudy Sunday') by Manos Hatzidhakis. A musical example of the ways rebetiko was 'refined' and introduced to the intellectual Greek audience. It is included in the *Exi Laikes Zoghrafies* ('Six Folk Paintings'), op. 5 (1949-50) and was initially used as a soundtrack for a dance theater performance by Rallou Manou (see p. 120).
18. An example of the ways rebetiko had inspired Greek rock music making. The song is titled *Zeibekiko Blues* composed by Pavlos Sidhiropoulos in the post-Junta period and recorded in 1981. The lyrics employ several words and phrases from the *mangas* slang that serve to express the singer's anti-conformist worldview (see p. 137).
19. *To Dihty* ('The Net') a rebetiko style composition by Stavros Xarhakos from the soundtrack of the film 'Rebetiko' directed by Kostas Ferris (1983). The leading rebetiko singer Takis Binis is accompanied by the popular song singers Yiannis Parios and Haris Alexiou. The lyrics were written by the poet Nikos Gatsos. The orchestration is supervised by the rebetiko musician Evangelia Margharoni (see p. 158).
20. A revivalist recording of the *Minore tis Tavernas* ('The Minor Tune of Taverna'). The singer, Nena Venetsanou, comes from the *entehno* song tradition. Her 'arty' performance and training in western art singing are evident in the accurate and refined rendering of the vocal *ghyrismata* ('turnarounds', the vocal passages from

one tone to another) and the *teliomata* ('endings', the ways she finishes a phrase) of the vocal phrases. It is a composition by Panayiotis Tountas (recorded in 1939) based on an earlier recording (*To Minore tou Teke*, 'The Minor Tune of *Tekes*') by Jack Halkias. The *taximi* in the beginning follows the original recorded version (p. 161).

21. A revivalist performance by the Thessalonikian rebetiko singer Mario of Panayiotis Tountas' song *Tourkolimaniotissa* ('Woman from Tourkolimano'). First recorded in 1936 with Rita Abatzi. For the author of the booklet the song lyrics 'slightly reverberate borrowings from the demotic tradition', which 'are mixed with the use of *mavro* [hashish]'. The foreword reveals his nostalgic feelings for the genre: 'we don't feel nostalgia for the stories and the ladies, the images and the singers that the songs recount. We feel them next to us, as if we hear them. Like mythical sirens they invite us to new adventures'. It was recorded in the years between 1990 and 1995 (the exact date of the recording is not given in the accompanying booklet) (see p. 161).

**Discographic information about the audio examples:**

Examples 1, 2, 3: *Greek Oriental Rebetika. Song and Dances in the Asia Minor Style. The Golden Years: 1911-1937*. Edited and noted by Prof. Martin Schwartz. Arhoolie Productions Inc. 1991. Folklyric CD7005.

Examples 4, 5: *Rebetika II. 'Izmir ve Istanbul'dan Yillanmis Sarkilar'*. Kalan Muzik Yapim 1996, 17278 FRS.

Example 6: *Greatest Greek Singers. The Rebetiko of Rosa Eskenazy*. Lyra ML0088.

Example 7: *Tetras I Xakousti tou Pireos* ('The Famous Piraeus Quartet'). Anodos 1997, ΠΙΜΕ Α-259.

Example 8: David Saltiel. *Jewish-Spanish Songs of Thessaloniki*. Oriente Music 1997, RIEN CD 14.

Examples 9, 10: *Diskoghrafia Tsitsani, 1937-1955* ('Discography of Tsitsanis 1937-1955'). Minos-EMI 1994.

Examples 11, 16: *Sylloghi Difono 19. I Marikou Ninou ston Kosmo ton Meghalon* ('Collection of *Difono* Magazine 19, Marika Ninou in the World of Great Composers'). BMG 1997, GR 432.

Example 12: *14 Arhontorebetika* ('14 Arhontorebetiko Songs'). Minos-EMI 1986.

Example 13: *Diskografia Tsitsani, 1946-1955* ('Discography of Tsitsanis 1946-1955').  
Minos-EMI 1994.

Example 14: *Sylloghi Difono 36. Sotiria Bellou, I Klasiki Epohi* ('Collection of *Difono*  
Magazine 36. Sotiria Bellou, the Classic Era'). Minos-EMI 1998.

Example 15: *Miki Theodoraki 'Epitaphios – Epiphania'* ('Epitaph – Epiphany' by Mikis  
Theodorakis). Minos-EMI 702212.

Example 17: Manos Hatzidhakis. Works for Piano. Sirius 2000.

Example 18: *Ta Blues tou Pringipa + Horis Makiyiaz* ('The Blues of the Prince +  
Without Make Up'). Music Box International 1981. MBI 10529.2.

Example 19: *Sylloghi Difono 40. Stavros Xarhakos, Traghoudia me Istoría* ('Collection  
of *Difono* 40. Stavros Xarhakos, Songs With History'). Minos-EMI 1998.

Examples 20, 21: *Sylloghi Difono 81. Panayiotis Tountas* ('Collection of *Difono*  
Magazine 81. Panayiotis Tountas'). Lyra 2002, CD 99196.

**Photo 1** (p. 18)<sup>1</sup>: Labels of early 78rpm recordings made in the United States dated from 1925 to 1930. The first (by Columbia record company) is a recording of the song *Elli* classified as *syrtos*, a ‘folk song and dance’. There appears the name of the singer, Maria Papagika, described as ‘soprano’. She is accompanied by a ‘Greek orchestra’ (the names of the instrumentalists are not included on the label). The recording is broadly classified as ‘Greek’ (see inscription on the left side). The second one is by Victor. Here the song title appears in Greek and is accompanied by an English translation: *ΚΑΚΟΥΡΓΑ ΕΛΛΗ* (‘Cruel-hearted Elli’). The name of the singer (given in Greek) is *Γεώργιος Κατσαρός* that is also translated (George Katsaros), who is described – again in western terms - as a ‘baritone with guitar’. Both are recordings of the same song of the *smyrnaiiko* tradition. For more details see Kounadhis (2000:327-329). Source of photo: Kounadhis (2000:328).



<sup>1</sup> The page indicates the place of the photographic reference in the main thesis text.

**Photo 2** (p. 22):

The cover of the score for piano of the tune with the French title *Pas de Quatre* (of the *komeidhylio* genre) printed in Athens. Source of photo: Hatzipantazis (1981, vol.2: back cover).



**Photo 3** (p.22):

The 'aristocrat' figures of the *komeidhylio* and *epitheorisi* ('revue') drama genres emulating the dressing codes of contemporary Western European upper class people.

Source of photo: Hatzipantazis (1977:192β).



**Photo 4** (p. 23):

The figure of *anatolitis* ('the oriental man') in *komeidhylio* drama genre. Source of photo: Hatzipantazis (1981, vol.1:80).



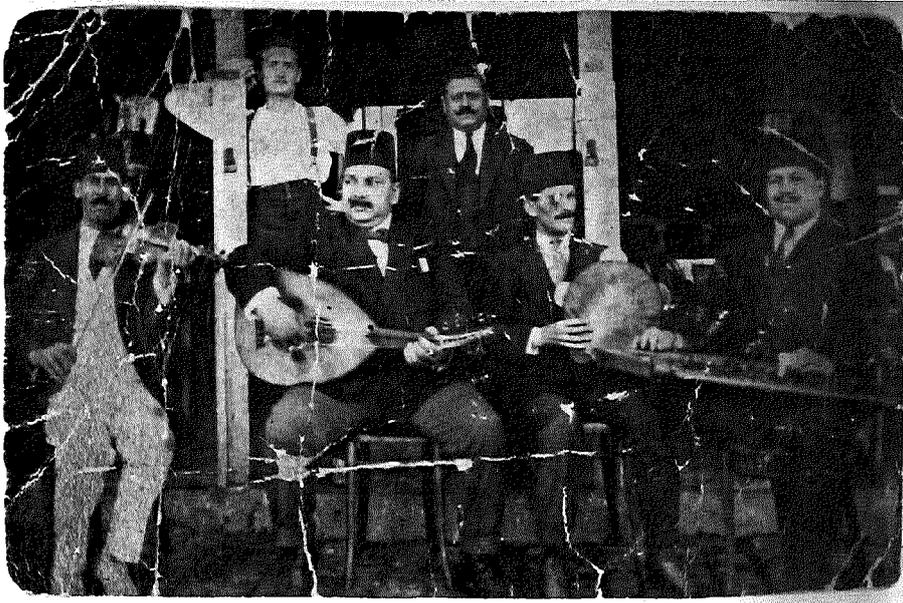
**Photo 5** (p. 48):

The front cover of the score of the *Panathinaia 1911* revue (*epitheorisi*) show (by B. Aninos and G. Tsokopoulos) picturing a middle class woman playing the piano. It is an adaptation by the composer Th. I. Sakelaridhou printed in Athens. Source of photo: Hatzipantazis (1977, A3:264<sup>α</sup>).



**Photo 6** (p. 81):

The *kompania* of Aghapios Tomboulis (a *santouroviolia* ensemble): violin, oud (the player is Tomboulis), *daires* (frame drum with metal cymbals attached on the edge) and *kanonaki*. The photo is taken in Istanbul. Source of photo: Petropoulos ([1979] 1991:360).



**Photo 7** (p. 82):

The *kompania* of Dimitrios Semsis (violin). The singer is the famous Roza Eskenazy holding the *defi* (tambourine) and the *tambur* player is Aghapios Tomboulis. The *kompania* used to perform in the venue *Tayghetos* in Doros Street in 1912. Source of photo: Petropoulos ([1979] 1991:353).



**Photo 8** (p. 84):

Smoking narghiles in a coffee shop in Thessaloniki (around 1890). Petropoulos describes the men as *arnaoutidhes* (of the Arvanites ethnic group) *hamalidhes* ('porters'). Source of photo: Petropoulos ([1979] 1991:301).



**Photo 9** (p. 87):

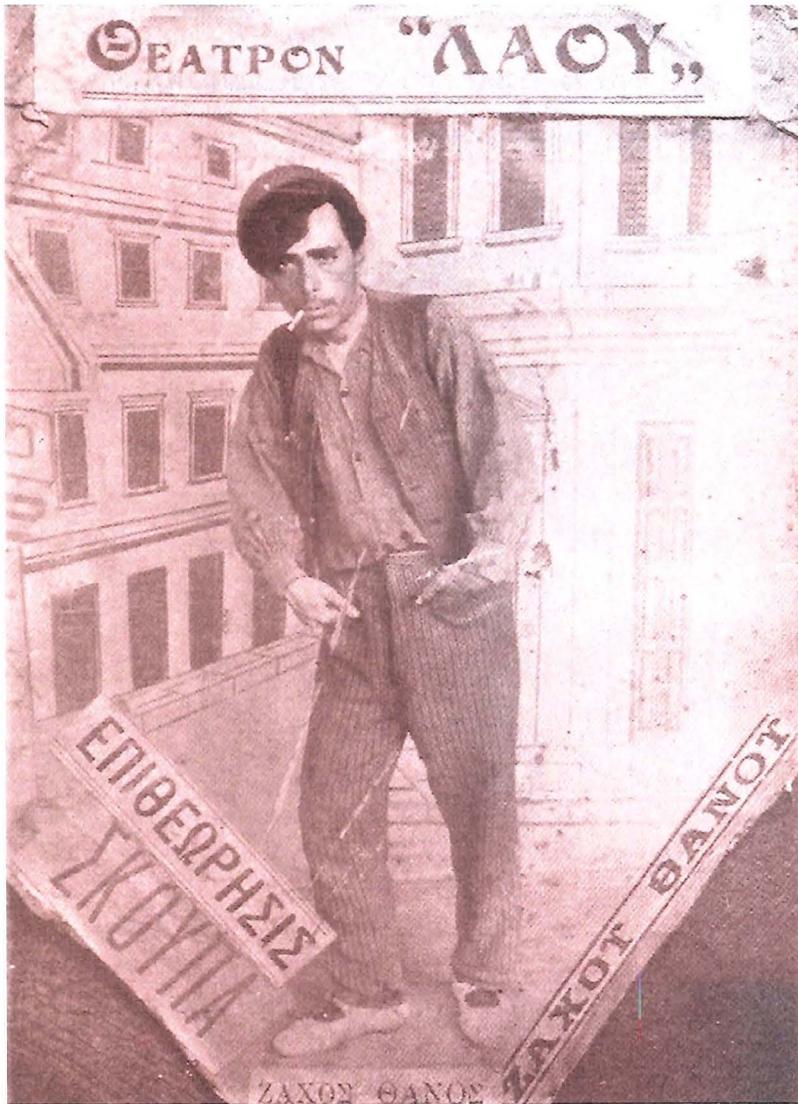
A greeting card from 1916 depicting the international army troop residing in Thessaloniki. Source of photo: Veinstein ([1993] 1994: photo appendix).



Photo 10 (p. 91):

The *koutsavakis* figure as appeared in the Athenian revue shows. Source of photo:

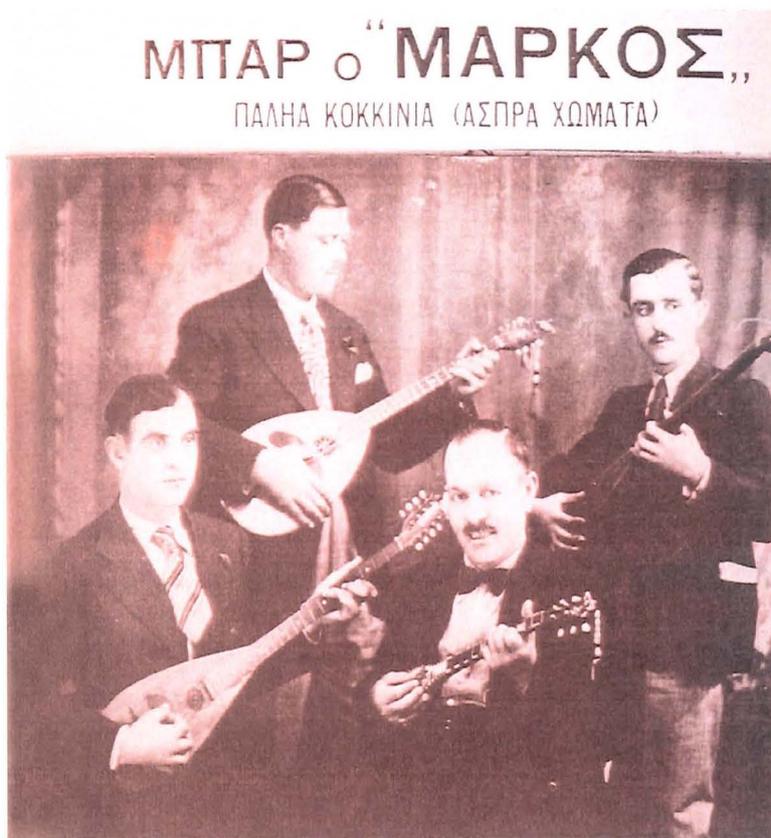
Hatzipantazis (1977, A1:192γ').



**Photo 11** (p. 95):

The poster for the performances of *Tetras tou Piraios* at the 'Bar, *O Markos*' in the area of Palia Kokkinia (Aspra Homata). From the left: Stratos Payioumtzis (*bouzouki*), Markos Vamvakaris (*bouzouki*), Giorghos Batis (*baglamas*), Anestos Delias (*bouzouki*).

Source of photo: Petropoulos (1997a:121).



**Photo 12** (p. 96):

Poster advertising the music broadcasted by the Thessaloniki-based Radio *Tsingiridhis*:

‘The Tobacco Industry Hatzigeorgiou Ltd. offers you today on the 11<sup>00</sup> morning hour, from the radio station Tsingiridhi [underlined] an hour of variety music [with capital bold letters in the middle]’ played by ‘the famous “jazz orchestra” Spathi – Pozelli – Karanika. Disease [show woman-singer]: Erm. Papadhoupoulou, Speaker: Hr. Katakalous’. The photos on the top depict (from the left): M. Spathis, Hr. Katakalous, K. Karanikas. In the middle there appear the photos of An. Spathis (left) and Xatzigiannakis (right). At the bottom there are the photos (from left) of Pozelli, Papadhoupoulou and A. Spathis. Originally published in *Efimeridha ton Valkanion*, 23.06.1946. Source of photo: Anastasiadhis (1996:105).



**Photo 13** (p. 98):

The *bouzouki* player and composer Yiannis Papaioannou together with Panaghopoulos (guitar) and Sitambelos (*bouzouki*, on the right) photographed in Drama city, 13.08.1938.

Source of photo: Petropoulos ([1979] 1991:482).



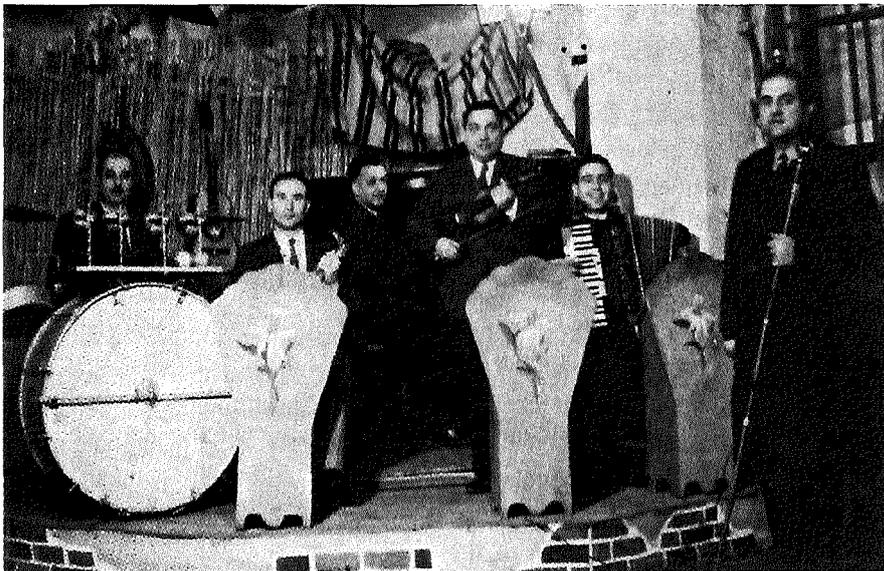
**Photo 14** (p. 102):

Vasilis Tsitsanis at the beginning of his career. Source: Petropoulos (1997b:10).



**Photo 15** (p. 105):

The light song orchestra of Giorghos Mavros based in Thessaloniki featuring a drummer (Valieros), a saxophonist (Fotakis), a violinist (Mavros), an accordionist (Mavromoustakis) and a singer (Seitanidhis). Source of photo: Tomanas (1991:36).



**Photo 16** (p. 111):

Poster of the *kosmiki taverna* named *Nea Ellas* in Thessaloniki. The photos depict (from left) the bouzouki player Christos Mingos, ‘our famous fellow-citizen’, the ‘charming disease’ Dina and Prodhromos Tsaousakis, ‘known from the records of all companies’. The subtitles are more explanatory: *Nea Ellas* is located ‘below *Hrysoun Apidhion*’, that is an old rebetiko venue. The *bouzoukia* (meaning the bouzouki players) are ‘Mingos, Menios, Nikitas and the famous from the Columbia records, Tsaousakis’. The poster closes by inviting ‘everyone to visit *Nea Ellas*’. Petropoulos describes the place as ‘a basement bellow the old *café-aman Hrysoun Apidhion* next to the Pentzikis’ drug store’.

Source of photo: Petropoulos ([1979] 1991:649).



**Photo 17** (p. 111):

The popular Greek actor Dimitris Papamihail in 'high spirits'. He expresses his *kefi* by breaking a chair while dancing to a *zeibekikos* in a *bouzoukia* club, the *Xenyhtia* at Tatoi area. The bouzouki player depicted is Yiannis Papaioannou. Source of photo: Petropoulos (1997c:157).



**Photo 18** (p. 113):

The rebetiko singer Anna Hrysafi wearing a luxurious dress while performing at *Faliriko* club (1959;). Source of photo: Petropoulos ([1979] 1991:570).



**Photo 19** (p. 118):

*Entehno* song meets the rebetiko, *arhontorebetiko* and *laiko* song. Mikis Theodorakis (from the left) next to Vasilis Tsitsanis, Manolis Hiotis and Stelios Kazantzidhis. Theodorakis once stated that 'I would like to be his [Tsitsanis'] student'. Source of photo: Petropoulos (1997b:103).



**Photo 20** (p. 133):

The rebetiko singer Sotiria Bellou sitting next to the painter Yiannis Tsarouhis and her friend Georghia in his studio. Source of photo: Adhamidou (1998: photo inset).



**Photo 21** (p. 139):

Rebetiko performance staged in the Athens Hilton. The concert was organized by Ilias Petropoulos in May 1968. The central *bouzouki* player is Tsitsanis Source of photo: Petropoulos ([1979] 1991:628).



**Photo 22** (p. 145): The *arhondorebetiko* composer Giorghos Zabetas photographed together with the famous entrepreneur Aristotle Onassis who has been an enthusiastic fan of Zabetas. Source of photo: Kleiasiou (1997:337).



**Photo 23** (p. 153):

The head of the Socialist Party and Prime Minister (first elected in 1981) Andreas Papandhreu dancing to *zeibekikos* at a *bouzoukia* club. Source of photo: *Difono* magazine photo archive.



**Photo 24** (p. 160):

Compact disc covers of revivalist rebetiko recordings by the local Lyra record label. The first is titled 'Authentic Rebetika Recordings from the U.S.A.' (with an English translation) and includes selected old 78 rpm recordings digitally re-mastered (Lyra 1995, CD 4635). The second is a compilation of gramophone and LP recordings featuring the singer Roza Eskenazy, one of 'the greatest Greek singers'. The language used on the front cover is English – the booklet is also translated into Greek. Note the inscription 'to be discovered' (Lyra ML0088).

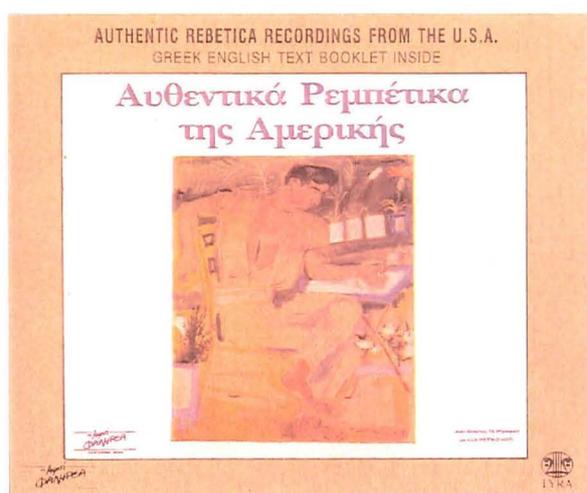
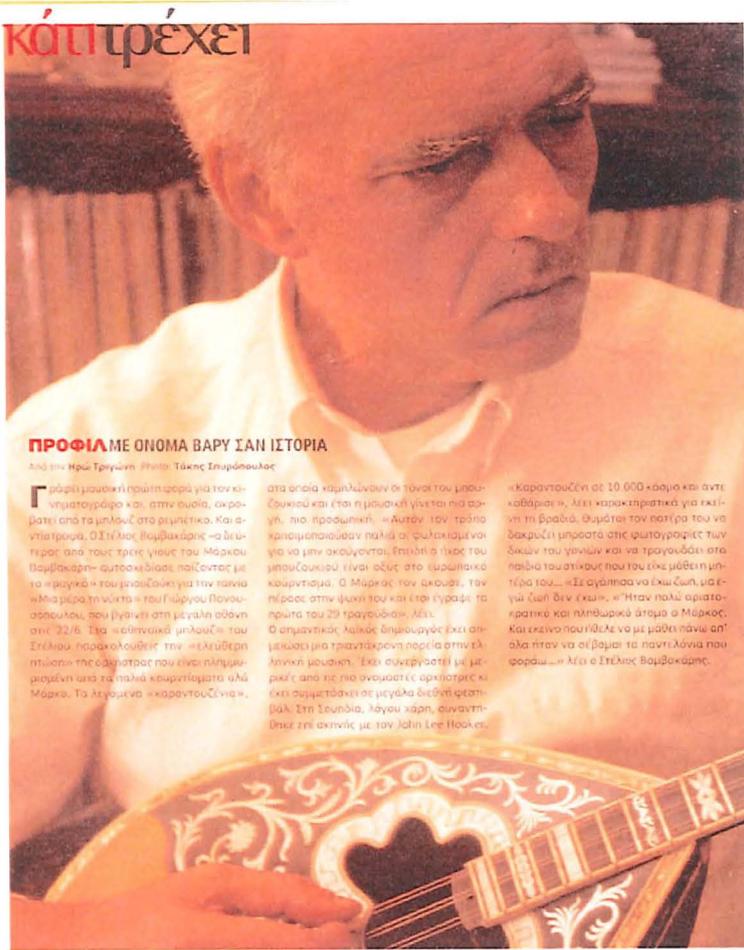


Photo 25 (p. 161):

'Profile as heavy as history' is the title of the article on Stelios Vamvakaris, the son of the famous rebetiko composer of the first generation, Markos Vamvakaris. Source: *Epsilon* magazine photo archive.

**ΚΑΤΙ ΤΡΕΧΕΙ**



**ΠΡΟΦΙΛ ΜΕ ΟΝΟΜΑ ΒΑΡΥ ΣΙΑΝ ΙΣΤΟΡΙΑ**  
Από την Νρώ Τριγωνή - Φωτο: Τάκης Σιμόπουλος

Γράφει μουσική πρώτη φορά για τον κινηματογράφο και, στην ευθεία, ανεβαίνει από τα μπλόκ στο ρεμπέτικο. Και αντιστροφή, ο Στέλιος Βαμβακάρης - ο δεινότερος από τους τρεις γιους του Μάρκου Βαμβακάρη - αυτοσχεδιάζει παίζοντας με το «βαγκά» του μπαρούτι για τον παπιά «Μακριάτη κότα» του Γιάννου Παναγιώτσου, που βγήκε στη μεγάλη οθόνη στις 22/6. Τα «κρίθουκα μιλούσε» του Στέλιου παρακολουθεί την «Ακρίβη» πύλοιο της οδού Αττάλειας που είναι πλημμυρισμένη από τα παλιά κομπάρια από αλά Μάρκο. Τα λέγονται «καρπουζιέρα».

στα οποία κυμαλίζουν οι τόνοι του μπαρούτι και έτσι η μουσική γίνεται πιο σφιχτή, πιο προφορική. «Αυτών των τριών κλασικών ούσαν πάρα οι ρυθμοί και να να μην ακούγονται. Είναι ο ήχος του μπαρούτιού είναι εσύ στο κυριλλικό κομπάρια. Ο Μάρκος τον ακούει, τον πήραε στην ψυχή του και έτσι γράφει το πρώτο του 29 τραγούδια». Λέει.

Ο σημαντικός λαϊκός δημιουργός έχει σημασία μια τραντάχτη πορεία στην ελληνική μουσική. Έχει συνεργαστεί με μερικά από τις πιο αναγνωστές αρχιστρίες κι έχει συμμετάσχει σε μεγάλα διεθνή φεστιβάλ. Στη Σουηδία, λέγει χάρη, συναντήθηκε στη σκηνή με τον John Lee Hooker.

«Καρπουζιέρα σε 10.000 -όχι και αντίκαθάρια». Λέει χαρακτηριστικά για εκείνη τη βραδιά. Θυμάται τον πατέρα του να δοκιμάζει μπροστά στις φωτογραφίες των δίσκων που γίνονταν και να τραγουδεί στα παιδιά του σινγκου που του είχε μείνει μπήρα του... «Σε σφάλισα να έχω ζυμωμένο για ένα όνειρο». «Ήταν πολύ αριστοκρατικό και πληθωρικό άτομο ο Μάρκος. Και εκείνο που ήθελε να με μάθει πάνω απ' όλα ήταν να σε βρωμι τα παντελόνια που φοράω...» Λέει ο Στέλιος Βαμβακάρης.

Photo 26 (p. 162): [www.rebetiko.gr/club.htm](http://www.rebetiko.gr/club.htm): the 'Rebetiko Club'. A digital *topos* for virtual rebetiko fans today.

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- links
- memories
- articles
- rebetes
- music
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- timeline

*Back to the essay*

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Photo 27 (p. 163):

Advertisement for a performance of the Thessalonikian rebetiko singer Mario together with Lizeta Kalimeti in Berlin's 'House of the World's Cultures', May 1999. Rebetiko music is described as 'music of a Greek subculture' featuring 'songs of nostalgia, love and lowlife'. Source of photo: *Eleftherotypia* newspaper archive.

Musik einer griechischen Subkultur

# REMBETIKA

Lieder von Sehnsucht, Liebe und Überleben

Die authentische Stimme des Rebetika

**MARYÓ**  
Μαριώ

special guest  
**LISETA KALIMERI**  
Λίζετα Καλιμερί

ALEXANDRIS Πάνης - gitarre/Dud - VOMVOLOS Κώστας - Akkordeon  
CHALKIAS Θανάσης - Bouzouki - TOURPALIS Μάνος - Bouzouki

BERLIN · Do: 27. Mai 1999 · 20.00 Uhr · Haus der Kulturen der Welt

**Photo 28** (p. 165):

An advertisement of the lessons offered in Makedhonikon Music Conservatory (Thessaloniki) established in 1926. Along lessons on 'all domains of European music' there is a 'school of Greek music (Byzantine, traditional, folk music)'. Source of photo: *Thessaloniki* newspaper archive.

**ΜΑΚΕΔΟΝΙΚΟ ΩΔΕΙΟ ΘΕΣΣΑΛΟΝΙΚΗΣ**  
ΑΠΟ ΤΟ 1926  
Τσιμισκή 105 Τηλ. Fax. 281249

•

**ΣΧΟΛΕΙΣ ΩΔΩΝ ΤΩΝ ΕΙΔΙΚΟΤΗΤΩΝ ΤΗΣ ΕΥΡΩΠΑΪΚΗΣ ΜΟΥΣΙΚΗΣ**

•

**ΣΧΟΛΗ ΕΛΛΗΝΙΚΗΣ ΜΟΥΣΙΚΗΣ**  
(Βυζαντινή, Παραδοσιακή, Λαϊκή Μουσική)

•

**ΠΡΟΓΡΑΜΜΑ ΚΟΙΝΩΝΙΚΗΣ ΠΡΟΣΦΟΡΑΣ**  
(Δωρεάν φοίτηση σε 170 αρχάριους σπουδαστές των σχολών:  
Θεωρητικών, Βυζαντινής Μουσικής, Κιθάρας και Οργάνων  
Ορχήστρας)  
(Χαμηλά διδάκτρα 50.000 δραχ. το χρόνο για 50 αρχάριους  
σπουδαστές του πλάτους)

Photo 29 (p. 175):

The flyer of the concert programme of the venue *Bam Terlele* in Thessaloniki. Along with concerts given by Ross Daily (the local pioneer of 'world music' movement), concerts of Armenian music, of 'Byzantine-Ottoman' music, of the 'Eastern Mediterranean' traditions, of 'art' song and music of 'the nearby us Orient', there are concerts of rebetiko, *smyrnaïiko* and *politiko* song.

**Ημερολογιακή Αντζέντα  
Συναυλιών Δεκεμβρίου 2000**

- 1/12 Παρασκευή Ο **Ross Daly** & ο **Bidjan Chetigian** - Μουσικό σταυρόδρομο μεσογείου. Λαγιά & παραδοσιακή ανατολική μουσική. Εισ. 3.500 δραχ
- 2/12 Σάββατο Ο **Haig Yazdjian** με το σχήμα του - Παρουσιάζει συνθέσεις δικές του, καθώς και παραδοσιακά αρμενικά τραγούδια. Εισ. 3.500 δραχ
- 3/12 Κυριακή Ο **Haig Yazdjian** με το σχήμα του - Αρμενική μουσική & τραγούδια. Εισ. 3.500 δραχ
- 5/12 Τρίτη Οι **"Τερενούμ"** & ο **Σωκράτης Σινόπουλος** - Λαγίες συνθέσεις της βυζαντινής και της οθωμανικής περιόδου. Εισ. 2.500 δραχ
- 6/12 Τετάρτη Οι **"Sikâyet"** - Είδικα ενορχηστρωμένα λαϊκά και παραδοσιακά τραγούδια από την Τουρκία. Εισ. 2.000 δραχ
- 7/12 Πέμπτη Οι **"Ανατολική Μεσόγειος"** - Μουσικό-ποιητικό δρώμενο, σύνθεση ελληνικών κλασικών, από την αρχαιότητα ως σήμερα. Εισ. 2.500 δραχ
- 8/12 Παρασκευή Ο **Δρόσος Κουτσοκώστας** & οι **"Παραδοσιακοί δρόμοι"** - Δημοτική και παραδοσιακή μουσική και τραγούδια. Εισ. 2.500 δραχ
- 9/12 Σάββατο Ο **Παναγιώτης Ξανθόπουλος** - Εντεκα τραγούδια δικά του, καθώς και διαφόρων άλλων συνθετών. Εισ. 2.000 δραχ
- 10/12 Κυριακή Οι **"Νταμίρα"** - Λαϊκά, ρεμπέτικα & σμυρναϊκά τραγούδια. Εισ. 2.000 δραχ
- 12/12 Τρίτη Οι **"Τερενούμ"** - Λαγιά μουσική βυζαντινής & οθωμανικής περιόδου. Εισ. 2.500 δραχ
- 13/12 Τετάρτη Οι **Kirtizi Güllü** - Μουσικές & τραγούδια από διαφορετικές περιοχές και λαούς της "εγγύς ανατολής". Εισ. 2.000 δραχ
- 14/12 Πέμπτη Οι **"Ανατολική Μεσόγειος"** - Μουσικό-ποιητικό δρώμενο. Εισ. 2.500 δραχ
- 15/12 Παρασκευή Οι **"Λωξάντρα"** - Σμυρναϊκά και μικρασιατικά από τα καφέ-αίμα. Εισ. 2.000 δραχ
- 16/12 Σάββατο Ο **Χρίστος Τσαϊμούλης** & το σχήμα του - Από τις "δυναμίες του Αιγαίου" ως σήμερα, καθώς και λαγίες συνθέσεις. Εισ. 3.500 δραχ
- 17/12 Κυριακή Ο **Χρίστος Τσαϊμούλης** & το σχήμα του - Εισ. 3.500 δραχ
- 19/12 Τρίτη Οι **"Τερενούμ"** - Λαγιά μουσική βυζαντινής & οθωμανικής περιόδου. Εισ. 2.500 δραχ
- 20/12 Τετάρτη Οι **"Χειμερινοί κολυμβητές"** - Σε παλιές και νέες επιτυχίες τους. Εισ. 3.500 δραχ
- 21/12 Πέμπτη Οι **"Χειμερινοί κολυμβητές"** - Σε παλιές και νέες επιτυχίες τους. Εισ. 3.500 δραχ
- 22/12 Παρασκευή Ο **Δρόσος Κουτσοκώστας** & οι **"Παραδοσιακοί δρόμοι"** - Εισ. 2.500 δραχ
- 23/12 Σάββατο Οι **"Νταμίρα"** - Λαϊκά, ρεμπέτικα & σμυρναϊκά τραγούδια. Εισ. 2.000 δραχ

\* Σημείωση Για την περίοδο των εορτών (24/12/00 - 7/1/01) το πρόγραμμα θα γνωστοποιηθεί εγκαίρως

## Μπάμ Τερλελε

Συναυλιακός χώρος ωδείου "Γαλαξίας"

### ΠΡΟΓΡΑΜΜΑ ΔΕΚΕΜΒΡΙΟΥ 2000



Έναρξη: 10 μ.μ. • Δευτέρες κλειστά  
Ελάχιστη κατανάλωση 1.500 δραχ  
Είσοδος αναλόγως σχήματος 2.000 έως 3.500 δραχ

- Βασ. Όλγας 285 • Β' όροφος  
Έναντι ΕΛΠΑ • περιοχή Βυζάντιο  
Τηλέφωνο κρατήσεων (031) 419269  
e-mail: bamterlele@hotmail.com

**Photo 30** (p. 175):

The flyer promoting Mario's recent CD titled *Laledhakia*. 'Our Mario' performs songs of 'separation, seas, ports and the foreign land'.





**Photo 32** (p. 243): Scaffolding the past: the preservation of a traditional building in Ano Poli.



Protecting our precious past: restoration of a Byzantine church in Ano Poli.

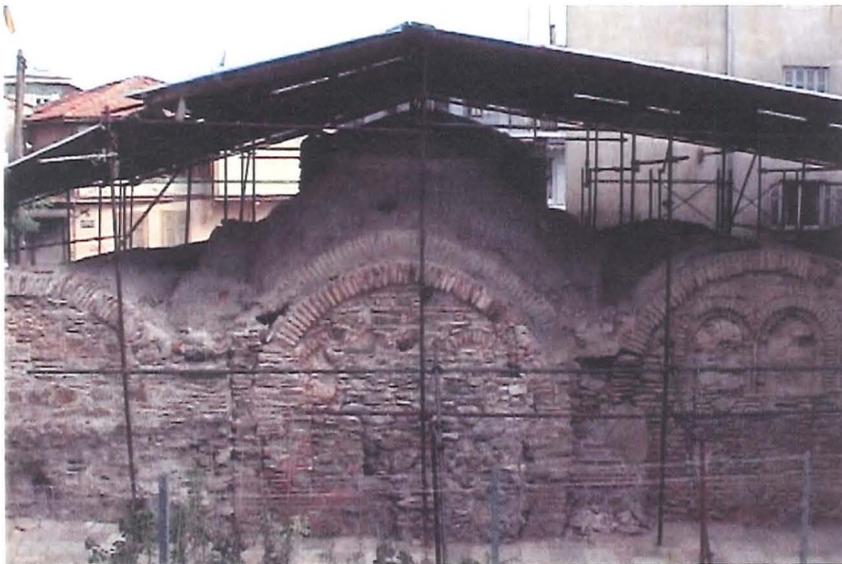


Photo 33 (p. 243): *Tavernes* in Ano Poli.

(a) The taverna 'To Tsinari', one of the oldest *tavernes* of Ano Poli area.



(b) The sign of the *taverna* 'Vlahos' advertises its historicity: 'from 1935'



(c) Imagining the past: the sign of the ouzo-den '1900' depicts a man and a woman dressed in the Ottoman style walking on an old paved road of the area.



**Photo 34** (p. 248):

The program of weekly concerts organized in Amareion 'ethnic'- bar.

(a) Side A (cover page).

Right part: 'Café Amareion [with capital ancient Greek fonts] - 'where the musics of the world meet each other in strings and needles'.

Left part (back cover page): 'Saturday: *Loxandra* - 'in café-aman'. 'Sunday: *Rebetika mesimeria* ['rebetiko afternoons'], 4-7 pm'.



(b) Side B. (Inside part of the flyer).

Left part: 'Hours of events: 10.30-1.00 pm. Monday: *Fighadhes* ['Fugitives'] - Greek music nights. Tuesday (every 15 days): *Kostelidhes* [from Kosti village of Eastern Thrace] - Thracian and Macedonian memories'.

Right part: 'Wednesday: *Ihopramateftadhes* ['Soundmakers'] - Cretan and other traditional songs. Thursday: *Vavylona* ['Babylon'] - musics that broke away from the soul and flew up to the lips. Friday: Arab & oriental music'.

Πρες εκδηλώσεων:  
10.30 μ.μ. - 1 π.μ.

**ΔΕΥΤΕΡΑ**  
**Φυγάδες**  
Ελληνικές μουσικές βραδιές  
Φώτης Θεοδοσιάδης: τραγούδι, κίθάρα  
Νίκος Κοκαϊδής: μπάσο  
Θανάσης Κοντοκαλάς: πιάνο  
Γιάννης Κύριος: κοντραμπάσο

**ΤΡΙΤΗ ανά 15 μέρες**  
**ΚΟΣΤΕΛΙΔΕΣ**  
Θρακικότικες & Μακεδονίτικες θύμησες  
Γιάννης Στρέτσος: λύρα  
Στέλιος Καραβέντζας: ούτι  
Κώστας Ντάκος: κρουστά  
Παυλός Περιφάνης: τραγούδι  
Αγγελική Περιφάνης: τραγούδι

**ΤΕΤΑΡΤΗ**  
**ΗΧΟΠΡΑΜΑΤΕΥΤΑΔΕΣ**  
Κρητικά και άλλα παραδοσιακά  
Αποστόλης Μάρης: ούτι  
Ηλίας Αντρεουλάκης: λύρα  
Χρήστος Τζίκος: λαούτο, ούτι  
Δημήτρης Μπακούλιου: μπεντι

**ΠΕΜΠΤΗ**  
**ΒΑΒΥΛΩΝΑ**  
Μουσικές που ξεκοφάν απ' την ψυχή  
και πετάξαν ως τα χείλη  
Ελένη Χριστοδουλαρή: ούτι, τραγούδι  
Χρήστος Κοκολάτος: κρουστά  
Περσός Κουσιόγλου: λαούτο, κίθάρα, τσίμτσι  
Κώστας Αργυρόγλου: κίθαρη, φλογέρα, μπαγλαμα  
Τάκης Παπαδόπουλος: τραγούδι

**ΠΑΡΑΣΚΕΥΗ**  
Αραβική & ανατολίτικη μουσική  
Zahit Kajah: ούτι, τραγούδι  
Ruth Hak: κρουστά  
Δημήτρης Βασιλειάδης: κρουστά

*Tis alkes Trites & Pempetika*

**Photo 35** (p. 253): The Apostolou Pavlou Street where *Amareion* is located. A place of history that places *Amareion* in history.

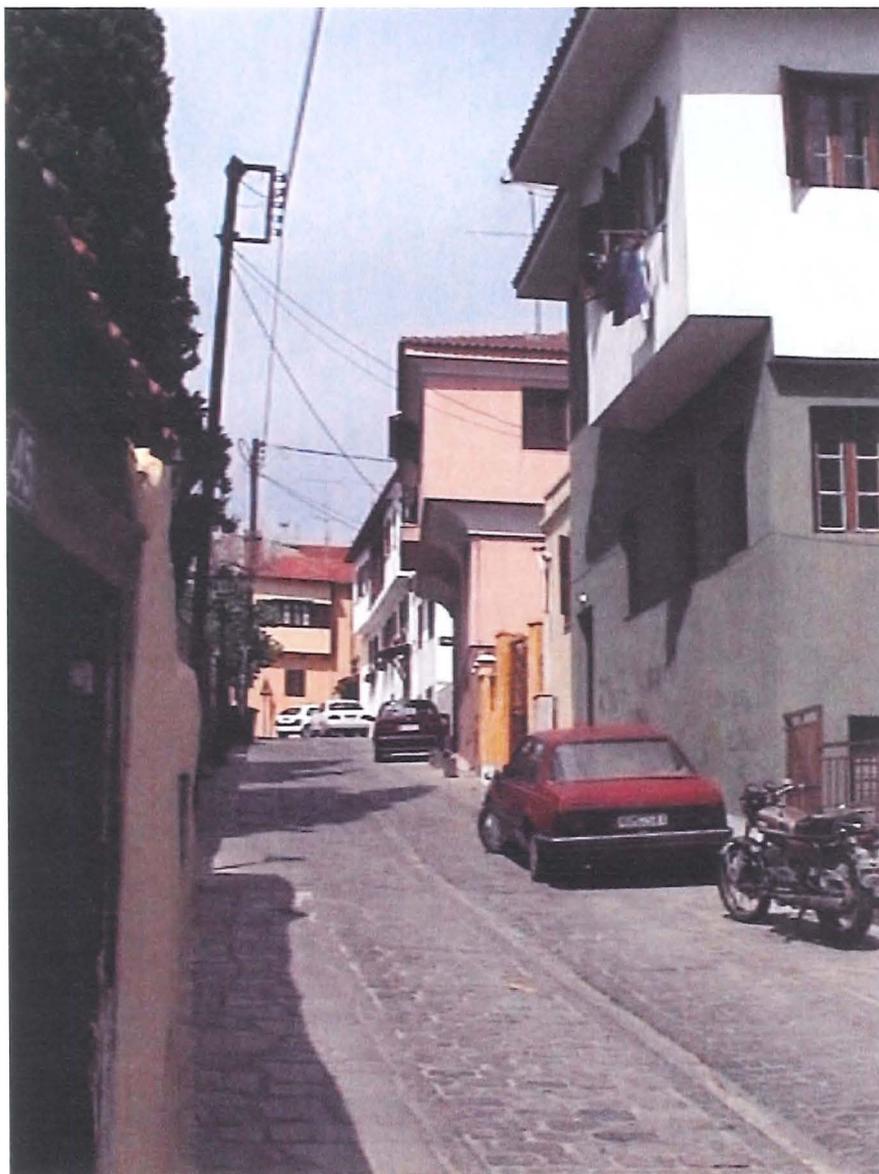
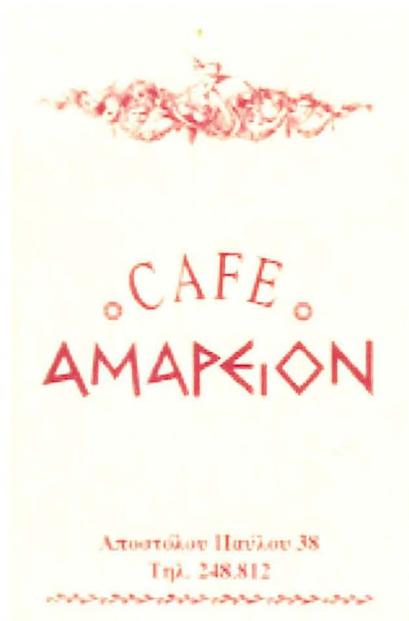


Photo 36 (p. 255): The card of the *Amareion* venue



(b) The sign of the *Amareion* venue

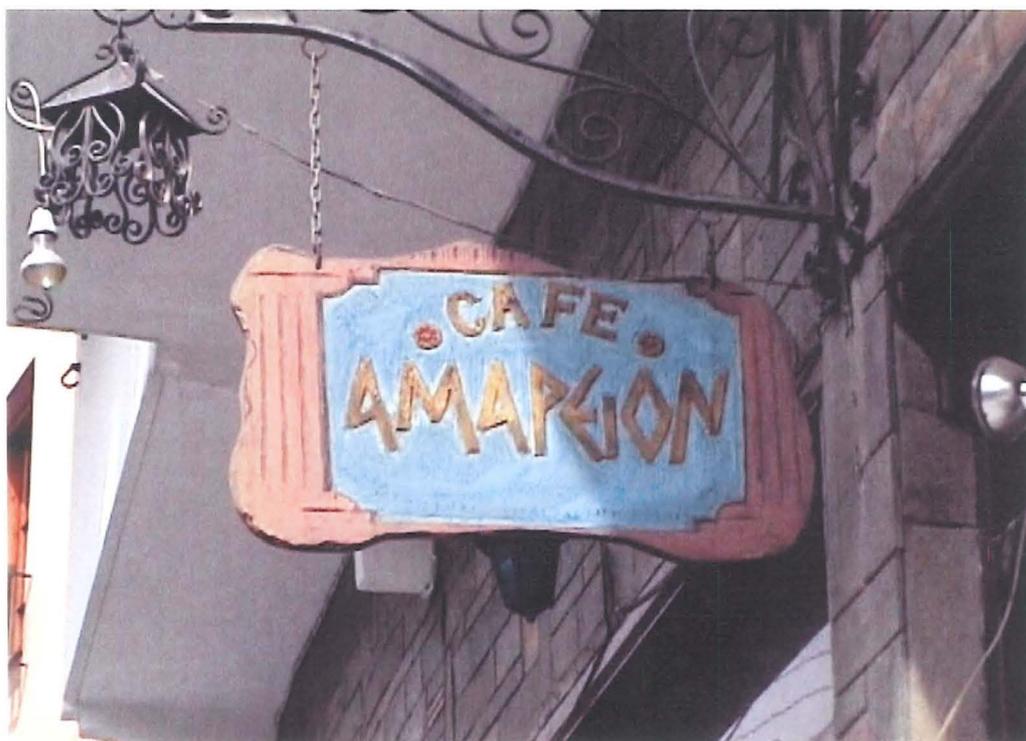
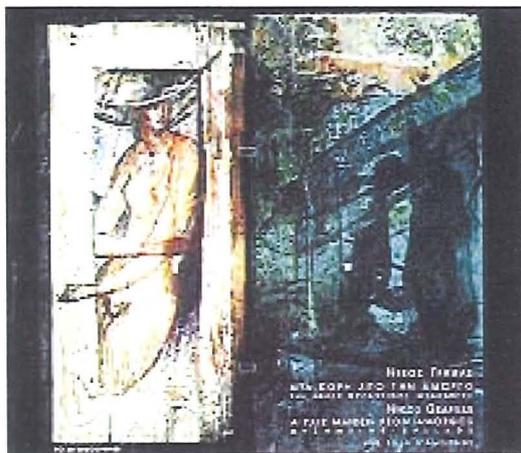


Photo 37 (p. 372): CD covers of local 'ethnic' recordings:

1<sup>st</sup> row: (left) *Mia Kori Apo tin Amorgho* / (right) *Stis Thalasses tis Ionias* by Nikos Grapsas.

2<sup>nd</sup> row: (left) The neo-traditional ensemble *Durga*. The CD is titled 'The Silk Road' / (right) The ethnic-jazz recording *Mode Plagal III*.



**Photo 38** (p. 384):

(a) Remembrances of the 'eternal City'. A greeting card from the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century picturing the street known as *kafesli sokaki* and the Tower of Galatas. Source of photo: Kounadhis (2000:309).



(b) Greeting card from the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century subtitled in French: the 'Estudiantina d' Orient – Dirigée par Basile Sederis'. The *smynaiiko* ensemble (*estudiantina*) of Vasilis Sidheris named *Ta Politakia* ('The Kids from Poli'). Source of photo: Kounadhis (2000: 295).



**Photo 39** (p. 386): (a) Poster advertising a concert of *Entehni Mousiki ton Romion tis Polis* ('Art Music of *Romioi* of the City'). The old gravure illustrates a nostalgic view of 'The City' and an aestheticized image of the legendary and monumental Orthodox church of St. Sophia. The head title of the poster (with the capital Byzantine fonts) is 'Constantinople'.



(b) The cover page of the catalogue of discography published by the *En Hordhais* 'Byzantine and Traditional Music School' and recording label based in Thessaloniki. The label 'presents a series of original recordings focusing on the selection and the presentation of the Greek traditional music and the multicultural musical traditions of the Mediterranean area, as well as of the contemporary musical process'. Notice the Byzantine fonts used for the logo.



Η Κολλυμυνηκή Αδελφή εν  
Καρθουμένητη Εταιρεία  
«**Εν Χορδαίς**»  
παρουσιάζει μια σειρά από  
πρωτότυπες ηχογραφήσεις που  
στοιχείουν στην «αποκατάσταση» και  
την παρουσίαση της ελληνικής  
παραδοσιακής μουσικής και της  
σύγχρονης μουσικής παράδοσης  
της Ανατολικής Μεσογείου,  
όπως επίσης και των  
σύγχρονων μουσικών στυλίων.

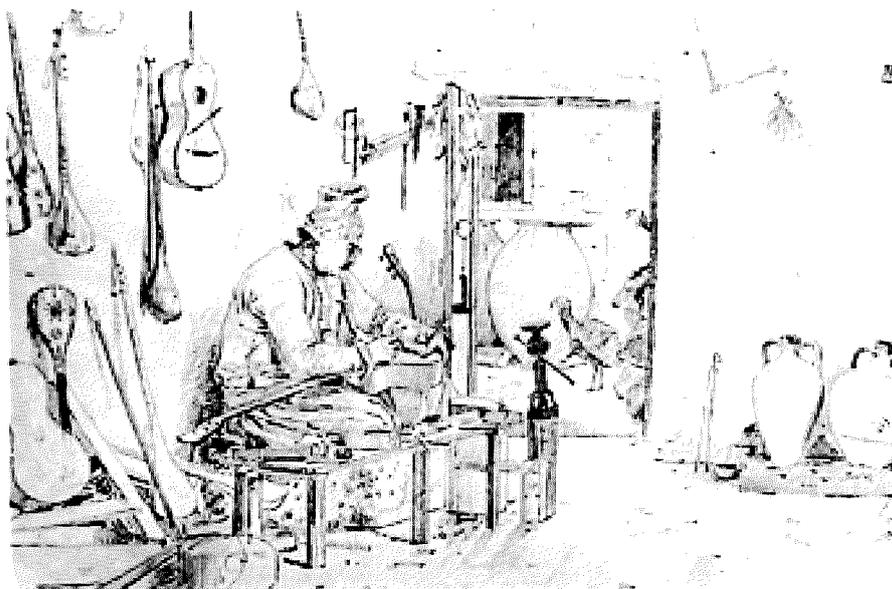
The Ardas Company  
«**En Chordais**»  
presents a series of original  
recordings focusing in the  
selection and the presentation  
of the Greek traditional music  
and the multicultural musical  
tradition of the Mediterranean  
area, as well as of the  
contemporary musical process.

**Photo 40** (p. 389):

- (a) The view of the Greek Orient from the West. A colored lithograph depicting Greek and Armenian women musicians. The Greek woman on the left is playing a *laouto* (lute), while the Armenian one on the right is holding a *tsibouki* (a long smoking pipe) and a *komboloi* ('worry bead'). It was originally included in the French edition *La Turquie: Mœurs et Usages des Orientaux au Dix-Neuvième Siècle. Scènes de Leur Vie Intérieure et Public. Dessines d' Apres Nature par C. Rogier (Paris 1847)*. Source of photo: Voutyra (1990:23).



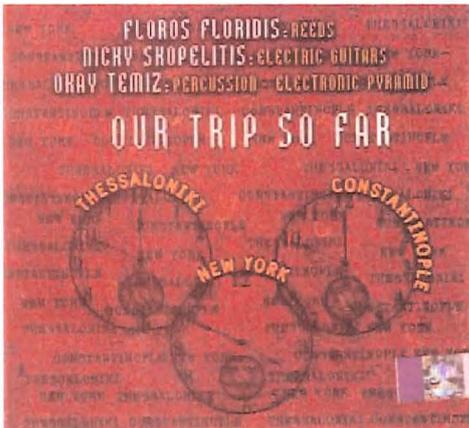
(b) A sketch by the Danish painter M. Rorbye depicting an instrument maker in Athens. The painter visited Athens in 1835. Source of photo: Voutyra (1990:51).



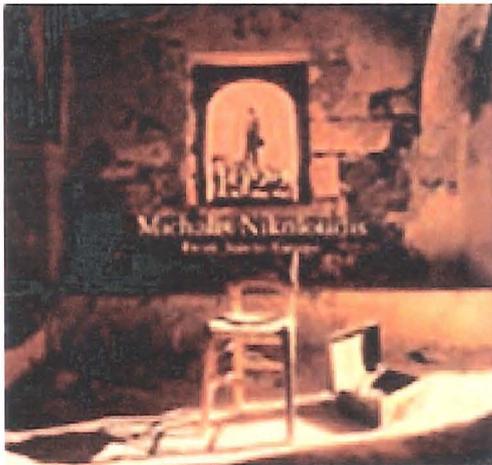
**Photo 41** (p. 392):

Nostalgic nuances depicted on the CD covers of local ‘world music’ recordings:

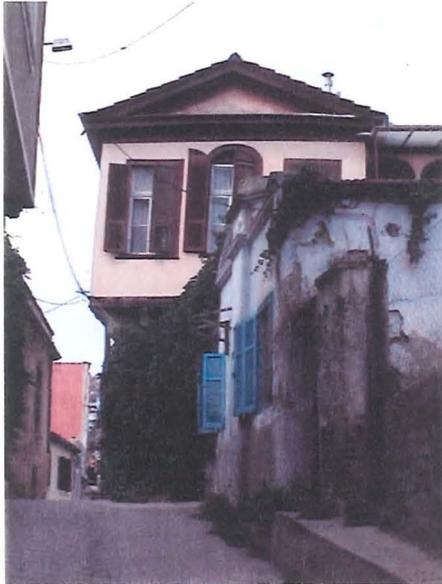
(a) ‘Our trip so far: Thessaloniki – New York – Constantinople’.



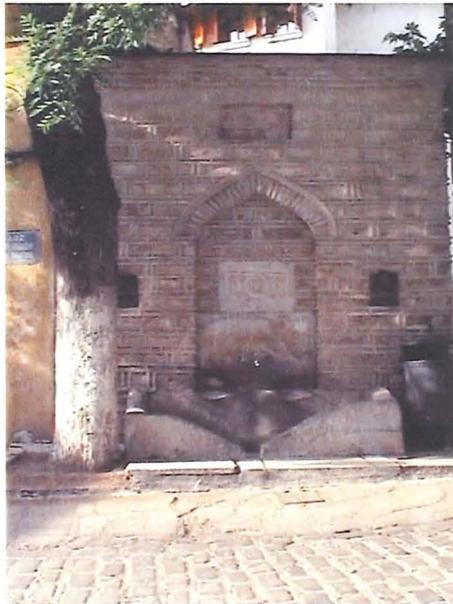
(b) Expressions of melancholy for the ‘lost’ Orient: a deserted Byzantine (?) monument depicted on the CD of Mihalis Nikoloudhis.



**Photo 42** (p. 409): The poetics of heterotopia revealed in the architecture and town planning of Ano Poli.



The wrinkles of the past: (left) an old Byzantine chapel hidden behind the trees (St Nikolaos the Orphanos) and (right) an Ottoman spring located at the Tsinari Square of Ano Poli.



The dominating presence of Eptapyrghio ('The Seven Towers'), the upper boundary of Ano Poli area.



**Photo 43** (p. 410): Encounters of time – the existence of the past in the present. (a) The ruins of the Byzantine Walls - reminisces of the past - meet the contemporary architectural styles that point to the future (the lower boundary of Ano Poli).



(b) The 'real city' beyond the heterotopia of Ano Poli. Olympiadhos Street: on the verge of urban jungle.



(c) The view of Thessalonikian port from Ano Poli – the 'magical' 'other planet' of rebetiko sounds.

