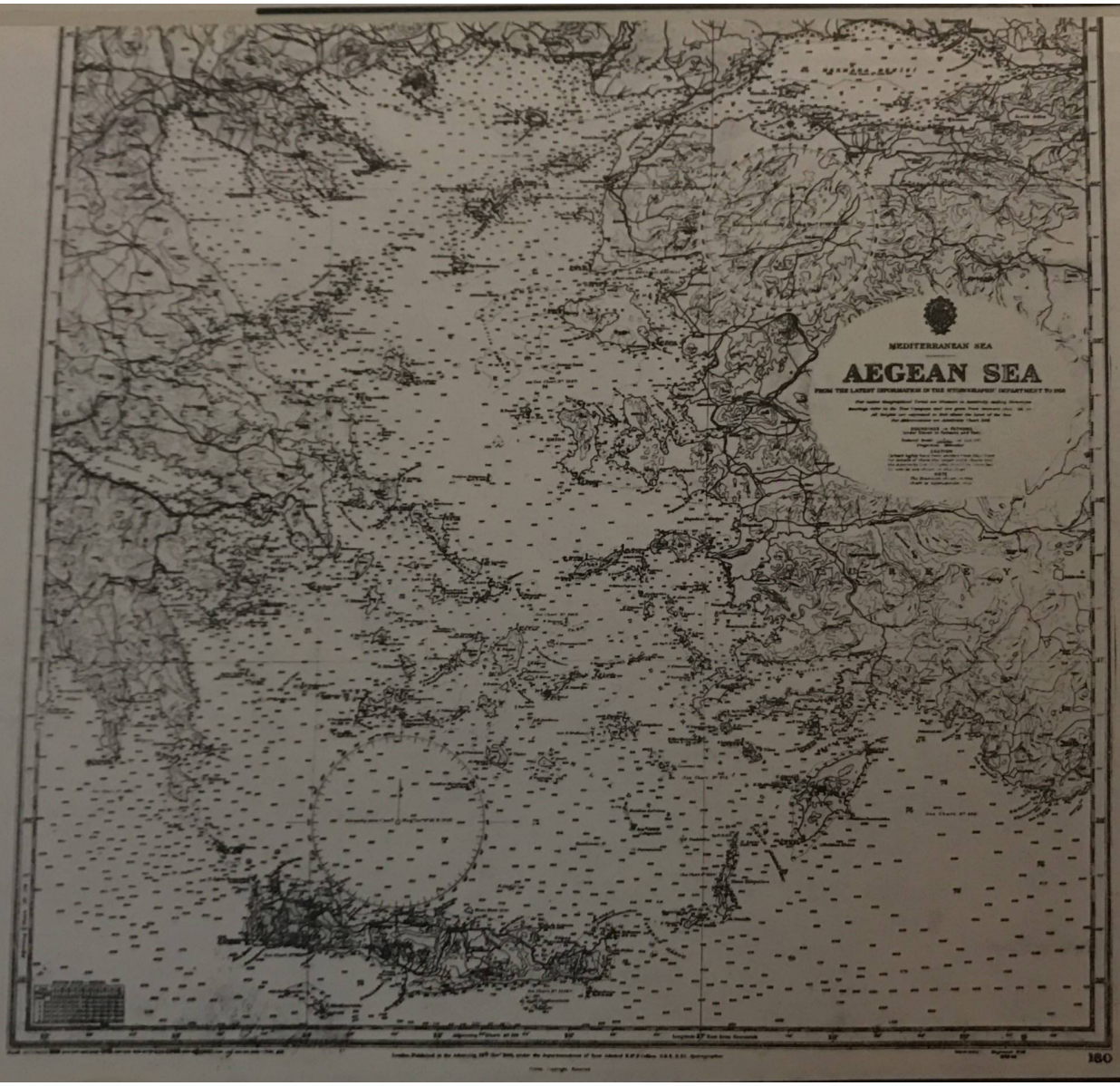
Joy Coulentianou

the goat-dance of skyros


MEDITERRANEAN SEA
AEGEAN SEA
FROM THE LATEST INFORMATION IN THE HYDROGRAPHIC DEPARTMENT TO 1928


Αγ. Ιωάννης
Αγ. Δημ. Τροπαίου
Αγ. Ανδριάς
Αγ. Τριάς
Δεξαμενή
Πρωτοπαπαρια
ΔΕΗ
Αγ. Ιωάννης Θεολόγος
Αγ. Γεώργιος
Ημιθυμνασίου
The Route of the Géri

the goat-dance of skyros

Joy Coulentianou

the goat-dance of skyros

Acknowledgements

First I would like to express my great indebtedness to Professor Demetrios Loukatos, with whom this study began. Secondly, my deep gratitude to all the Skyrians who helped, with such patience, in the gathering of the material. Some of this was drawn from my own observations but much information was given me by Skyrians of all ages, from those who were already in their nineties in 1966 to the young men of today. I cannot single out just a few names, as so many people were of help.

Most of the observations in the concluding chapter are due to research on the transformations of cultural traditions in Greece, which I undertook, under the direction of Dominique Schnapper and Kostas Papaioannou, for the Centre Européen de Sociologie Historique.

I would like to mention too that my understanding of the material was deepened while collaborating with the Greek film-director Pandelís Voúlgaris, on the documentary The Goat-Dance of Skyros.

I wish to thank Carol Natsis for her great help in the final preparation of the text.

I am also grateful to Takis Hadzopoulos for permission to use his photographs of the dressing of the Géros and the Comedy, and to Ioannis Venardis for the photographs on pp. 25, 32, 33 and 42.

This study is in two parts: the first is descriptive and pictorial; in the second I quote from eye-witness accounts and interpretations of the custom from 1835 on, and give my own comments on these.

Introduction

In Greece, Carnival — the three weeks before Lent — is called Apokriés[1], ápo meaning 'away from', kréas meaning 'meat'. This abstention from meat occurs only during the last week of Carnival but the word Apokriés refers to the whole three-week period before Clean Monday — the first day of Lent — and especially to the last Sunday. On the next-to-last Sunday, Kreatini, after which no meat may be eaten for forty-seven days, and especially on the last Sunday, Tirini, which ends a week in which cheese is substituted for meat, there appears in the square and in the narrow streets of Skyros an eerie spectacle: the Géri.

I first saw the Géri when I went out to Skyros during the three weeks of Apokriés in 1965, and although having been there since almost every year, I went again to see them before this book went to press. This last visit not only confirmed my observations and information, but made me realize something which, in spite of my knowledge of the custom and the people performing it, had somehow escaped me. My impressions up to then were of men trying to transform themselves into beasts; now I believe that they are trying to distinguish themselves from the beast while at the same time identifying themselves with it.

The island lies in the northern Archipelago, in the seaway between the North and Central Aegean, between the northeastern islands, the shores of Asia Minor and Mainland Greece. The ancient town, now called the Kastro, built upon a steep rock, dominates the Aegean to the east. The later town extends down from the Kastro on the northern and western sides of the great rock, the eastern and southern sides being sheer for the most part. It is in the streets of this town that the inhabitants still celebrate once a year the festival of a god — or something — they have long forgotten. This festival seemed clearly to be a survival of fertility rites which in prehistoric ages we suppose to have taken place every year at the end of winter to ward off evil influences and to bring about a fertile crop. In these 'primitive' propitiatory cults, we again suppose, people masked themselves in order to relate to their totem, and this totemistic rite, much later in antiquity, became associated with Dionysos. The Orthodox Church, after attempts at suppression, absorbed these pagan fertility rites.[2] I even went so far as to suggest that since (according to some theories) original fertility rites celebrated a definite form of prosperity, varying with the local products, and since a totem may be any animal or plant regarded by a people as having a blood relationship with them, the totem of Skyros must have been the goat. For it is probable that in very ancient times, as now, goats were the main product of Skyros, and Pindar sang of the abundance of the milk of Skyrian goats in the Pythian Odes. There was a saying in Greece — 'aíx Skyria' — Skyros goat — used to describe the most productive people. Furthermore, if it is also true that the word tragodía means 'goat-song', could this be a survival of the birth of tragedy?[3]

However, even if I were still convinced of these theories, they are very dangerous indeed to defend. There is great

controversy about totemism, and the origins of such customs have been treated admirably if not conclusively by others more competent than I. What should be done is a comparative study of similar customs not only in other parts of Greece but in different parts of the world — a study in space and time which I cannot undertake. The most important contribution I can make is to present as accurately as possible a documentary of what goes on today in Skyros and what has been going on for almost a century, according to my informants, which I hope may be of help to those who need such material for further theoretical work. At this stage the more important question seems to me not only how the custom originated but in what form it survives. Why do the young men of Skyros still want to disguise themselves as Géri? For they do want to do so very much. If you meet a young shepherd at any other time of the year he may well talk to you about what sort of mask he will be wearing at Carnival. All of the young Skyrians now working in Athens will do their best to get leave and come to the island for the last week-end of Apokriés — to become a Géros: those who are too old will come to see the Géri. When I asked the young men if the custom means as much to them as to their forefathers, and if they wish to continue it they all answered: 'Yes! We wish to become Géri! But there are no more kapóta left (long black woollen jackets once worn by the shepherds).' And for the townspeople the spectacle of the Géri is by far the most important event of the year.

That the Géros — and therefore the shepherd — has always dominated the Carnival in Skyros will be obvious to the reader, especially if he reads the comments of Mr. Antoniadis in the Appendix. It is also obvious that the Géros, although dressed in standard shepherd's costume from the waist down, otherwise does his best, if not to metamorphose himself into a goat, at least to identify himself in some way with it, as mentioned above; this is why he wears the shaggy cape, the goat-mask and the bells. Shepherding has always been the basis of the island's economy — until the advent of tourism and the unpredictable effect of the enormous aerodrome currently under construction. And, as far as I have been able to determine, similar disguises in other parts of Greece, notably Macedonia and Western Thrace, in Europe and other parts of the world, are found in shepherd communities.

---

[1] *In Katharévousa, or formal Greek, the word for Carnival is Apókreo (Ἀπόκρεω). However, in the spoken language it is also referred to as Apókria or Apokriá for the singular; Apókries or Apokriés for the plural.*

---

[2] *See Dawkins, R.M., 'The Modern Carnival in Thrace and the Cult of Dionysos', in Journal of Hellenic Studies, XXVI (1906), pp. 191-206; Lawson, J.C., Modern Greek Folklore and Ancient Greek Religion (Cambridge, 1910); Romaios, K., Les cultes populaires de la Thrace (Athens: Collection de l'Institut Français d'Athènes, 1949); Pólitis, N.G., Laographia, II (1910) p. 47n.*

[3] *Joy Coulentianou, 'The Goat-Dance', Tachydromos, (25 February, 1967) pp. 41-51, in Greek. For interpretation of the saying 'aix Skyría' see Leutsch-Schneidewin, Corpus Paroemiographorum Graecorum, v. I, pp. 36, 200, v. II, pp. 10.*

The Géros

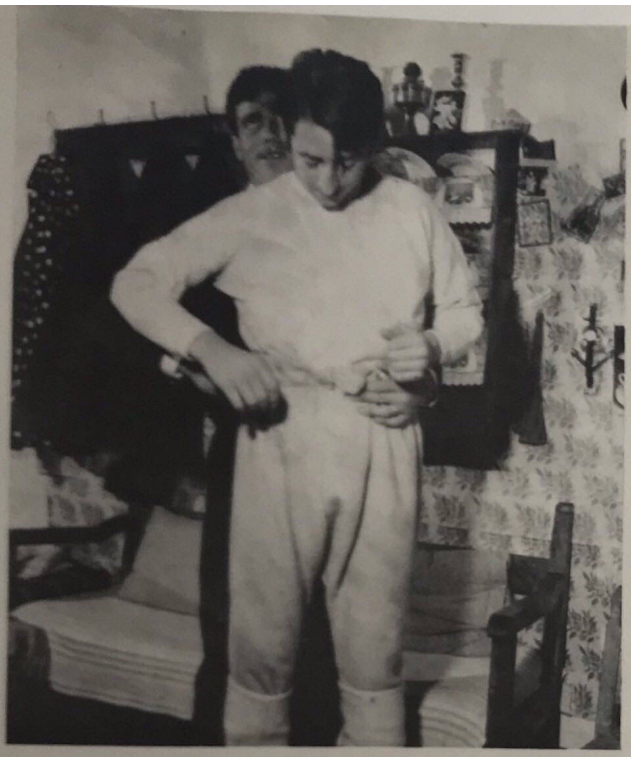
When the first *Géros* appears in the narrow streets and in the square of Skyros one is afraid and thinks one has seen the devil, the bogey-man of childhood. One wonders if it is a demon who has taken on the shape of a man. His head and the upper part of his body are shaggy, his face is like a goat's and goat-bells hang about his middle. From the loins down, the baggy shepherd's trousers, the leggings and the shoes reassure that he is a man in disguise.

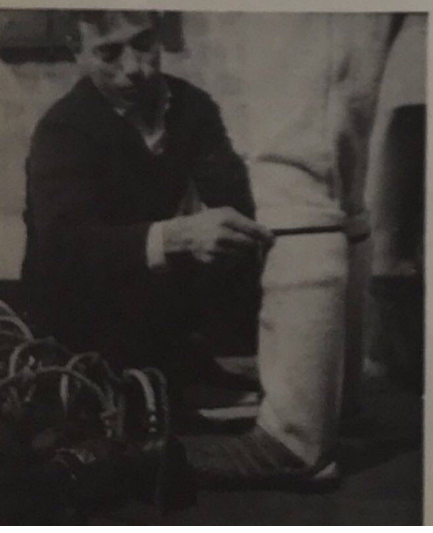
What do the men of Skyros do to bring about this metamorphosis? How does the Skyrian become a Géros?

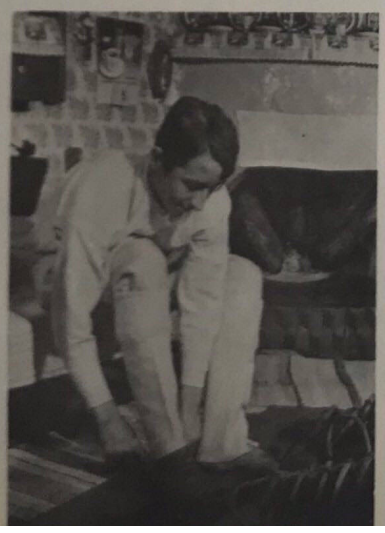
Whoever dresses the Géros must be highly skilful and there are special people who carry this out. The villagers themselves say: «He must be an expert!» He must be careful how each thing is put on—to permit the Géros to endure as long as possible and to move skilfully in order to sound his bells. For the two qualities of a good Géros are endurance and skill in sounding the bells. And the two are inseparable.

Over his underwear—a wool undershirt with long sleeves and short underpants—the Géros puts on the *'panovráki*, the baggy white woollen trousers which the farmers once wore for sowing in the winter and the shepherds for milking and shearing the herds, white leggings *(troha dókaltses)* and the *trohádia* - the laced Skyrian shepherd's sandals—which used to be newly made, preferably with white laces to match the trousers. The leggings are then fastened with black garters, made either of ribbon or of black wool by the shepherds themselves, and the trousers are tied at the waist. If the trousers do not have a belt, they are tied with a rope made of goat-hair.

If the Géros is well-dressed he can hold out all day. There are, therefore, special skills for the tying of the garters, the trousers and the ropes, which are the three principal dangers, and for the placing of the bells, which must have a certain order. The garters, like the ropes, must not be too tight because all of the weight of the bells which he wears about his waist falls below the knees: if the garters are too tight the lower legs hurt and the Géros cannot move forward. Some of the villagers once tightened a Géros' garters too much—for fun or for vengeance—and he was not able to go further than Lambros' store, a point on the route of the Géri. Another Géros had spent three hours with tight garters and his legs hurt so much afterwards that he could neither kneel nor squat for six months. One must







be careful, too, when tying the trousers: this must be done in such a way that the trousers do not shrink at the waist and squeeze the Géros when he sweats. Even with the dressing, the Géros gets very hot; his body is like a wet sponge from the sweating.

On the upper part of the body the Géros wears a *kapóto*, the long black Macedonian shepherd's jacket, inside out so that the fleece gives him a wild and shaggy look. This also protects the kapóto if the bells give out rust and prevents the ropes which pass over the shoulders from cutting into it. Some, I have been told, even put cloths on the shoulders to protect the kapóto, but I have never observed this.

To shorten the kapóto, the Géros' dressers gather the lower ends up around the waist, doubling them up on the inside or even taking them right up to the shoulders, according to the build of the Géros, and then crossing them over in front. This is done so that while the sound of the bells is not muffled by contact with the kapóto as he moves in rhythm, the Géros also has freedom of movement from the waist to the knees—and he is more handsome this way.

While they are tightening the kapóto at the waist with a *litári*, a fine rope made by the shepherds from goat-hair, they stuff a pillow or rags up inside to form a hump on the back. This hump is held in place by the same rope which, doubled around and knotted at the back, holds the ends of the kapóto up and crossed over. Papageorgiou, the Skyrian historian, wrote in 1910 that the hump is added «... apparently as a sign of old age, but rather in order to protect the back from the beatings... which it will undergo in his [the Géros] battle with the crowd.» Others say that it is there to protect the back from contact with the ropes which may be painful when weighed down by the bells. In any case, the hump adds to the fearfulness of the Géros and must be put there both for appearance and utility.

Five, if not six, ropes are needed to dress the Géros. One is passed over each shoulder and these hang down below the waist, sometimes crossed over the chest and the back. To them are attached and secured around the waist two or three more ropes from which hang goat and sheep bells of various shapes, sizes—and sounds. The ropes which go over the shoulders should be at least partly black to match the kapóto, while the two or three ropes which hold the bells can be of mixed white, grey and black goat-hair. The ropes must be tightened only as much as the Géros needs. If the knot of the first rope, which secures the kapóto ends at the waist and holds the hump in place,

presses on his navel, it can do the Géros great harm. The trick, always, is for him to puff out his stomach when this rope is being put on. While the bell ropes are attached, the Géros must lift his arms so that afterwards the bells will hang correctly and not tire him. They should be put on in two series (sometimes three in the old days), each rope with a different type of bell, the large bells at the back, getting gradually smaller towards the front, so that they will not hit the Géros either in the belly or on the thighs. There must be great care in tying the bell ropes around the waist: the Géros tries sounding the bells there where he is being dressed to make sure they do not hit him anywhere. He says: «They hit me here,» and the dressers adjust the ropes accordingly. This is done by passing the vertical ropes under the bell ropes, pulling the latter up as far as necessary, and then knotting the vertical ropes higher up and crossing them over the chest. The Géros himself must regulate this part: he is dressed, that is, according to his build, and he must guide his dressers. As the ropes are tightened and knotted across the chest, they press on his heart. If the ropes are too tight a Géros may die from exhaustion, and there are many who have fainted from the weight and the beating of the bells.

The hood of the kapóto covers the head and is secured by the long white shepherd's belt, the *zounári*. (This belt, woven, and embroidered with different colours at either end, used to be worn by the shepherds on Sundays and holidays, wound tightly about the waist; it gave them a more elegant air.) The zounári is passed around the peak of the hood and crossed, with a knot, at the back; its ends, twisted around the two shoulder ropes and then spread out, hang down onto the chest. It serves to hold the hood in place and is, at the same time, decorative.

They then cover the Géros' face with a mask made from the whole hide of a kid goat, its hair on the outside, and its hind legs tied behind the Géros' head. If the legs are not long enough, a string is either passed through holes in the feet and tied at the back of the head or, as the feet are apt to tear, it is simply fastened to the ends of the legs and then tied. For greater security, a black kerchief, worn by widows, is wound twice around the head like a turban, and knotted behind: without this, the mask may swell with the sweat and slip and the Géros will not be able to see.

A silk kerchief is then folded in a triangle and fastened to the ropes above the ends of the zounári. This kerchief — preferably with colourful designs — now usually replaced by a nylon scarf, thus covers the chest between the wide ends of the zounári: it is both decorative and hides the ropes which cross the chest and support the bells.

In the old days, the Géros used to wear woollen gloves,









with coloured decoration, not for elegance, it seems, but so that he would not be recognized by his hands — not only by their appearance but by the presence of a wedding ring. They also protected his hands from being cut by the edges of the bells worn by other Géri.

Indispensable still are freshly cut wild flowers, which are put on the hood, the breast and the *stavroràvdi*, the shepherd's crook which the Géros is given at the last and which he holds with the handle facing outwards to give him better support as he moves.

The Mask

The mask or *m'tsoúna* is usually made from the hide of a miscarried kid, or of a kid which has died shortly after birth, or of one which is too weak to live — this they either slaughter or wait for it to die. Rarely, it seems, does the shepherd slaughter a kid whose hide pleases him. Some deny they ever slaughter at all. «Slaughter a kid goat and lose four or five hundred drachmas? You can't eat it: for eating, it must be big; if it is big, it is not suitable for a mask. And the aborted one or the weakling — if you are there on the spot or find it before it rots — is particularly good: at four months rather than five, the skin is soft and smooth, without much fur, and it is small. «In any case,» they say, «the kids small enough to be used for masks are born in November or December.»

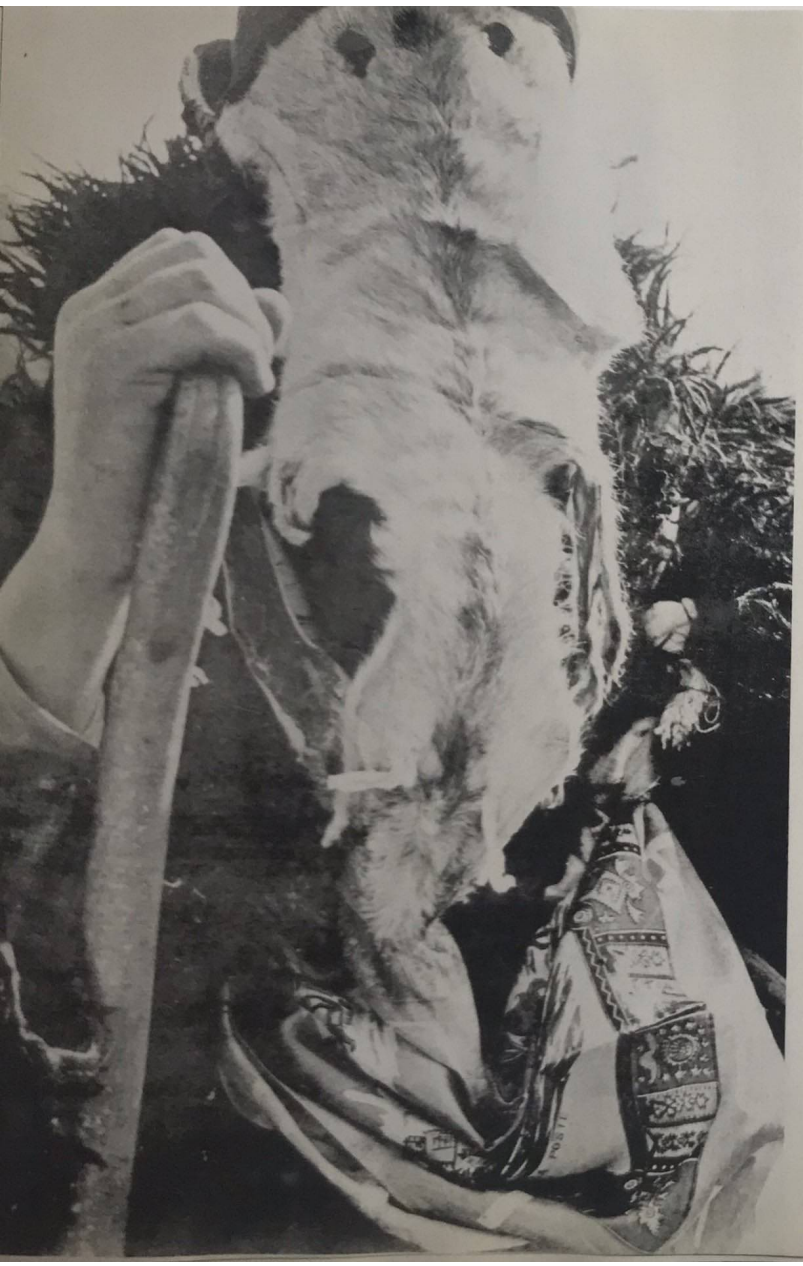
Others say they would never use an aborted kid or one which had died. «How can you put a dead thing on your face? We slaughter them at fifteen to twenty days old, eat the meat or sell it and make a mask out of the skin: it serves both for food and for a mask.» Many do both: if they happen on a dead kid whose hide pleases them they take it, but they will sometimes slaughter one for its beautiful hide. Those who become Géri, but who are not shepherds, may even ask the shepherds to slaughter a kid and keep a good skin for them, according to the colour they want. Given on the one hand the importance to the Géros of the colour of his goat mask, kids must sometimes be slaughtered for the mask alone; given on the other hand the frugality of the shepherd's life, one doubts whether the kid would be slaughtered without a second thought to its size for eating.

Whether he comes upon the hide he longs for when a goat miscarries, or is stillborn, or one so weak it will die — or finds a kid so beautiful he decides to slaughter it — the shepherd skins it carefully. He leaves the hide in the sun for a while, tightly stretched with pieces of wood stuck in the feet, and fixed to a wall, a tree or a rope, and the mask is ready — for some. A few insist that it should be treated with a little salt or sometimes even alum. Many shepherds say that they use salt only for a kid which is dead when they find it. However, with the more primitive «tanning», the hide gives off a terrible smell when the Géros sweats, so

some sprinkle cologne or ouzo inside the mask, and others even cover the inside of the mask with a piece of cloth to protect their faces. But this question always causes great controversy. Most say emphatically no, they put nothing on the inside: it is not permitted. «It has a beautiful smell.» Very rarely, a bit of ouzo, they say, to lessen the smell of the skin when the Géros sweats and the skin rots and it is in direct contact with his face. But it doesn't bother them if they clean the hide well and dry it. They used to wear clean masks: they put nothing inside. Most of the older men answer in this way. And they say, with some disdain, that many of the younger men *do* sew a piece of cloth inside to protect from the smell. The only older man who admitted to using a piece of cloth also explained that he always slaughtered a kid for his mask — both because he wanted a black one and because he had once used the hide of an aborted kid and his face had come out in pimples: «When the hide is left to dry in the sun you never know, perhaps a rat may bite it and then when you sweat something might happen to you.»

However the hide is treated, and whether it is worn with a cloth inside or not, two holes are cut with scissors for the eyes. The position of the holes depends on the individual face so they should, ideally, be cut when the Géros is being dressed. But as more and more often the masks are borrowed, it is rather a question of adjusting them properly each time. In most cases, holes are made only for the eyes and none for the nose and mouth, as the bottom part of the mask is open. More rarely, another small hole is cut for both the nose and the mouth, the better to breathe — and to drink—through. Then the Géros doesn't have to lift the mask and risk being recognized.

The mask is for disguise and the Géros always tries not to be recognized. It would not do: it makes no sense. Why wear a mask at all? But he is always finally recognized, by his hands, or by the way he moves or perhaps because people know what mask he will wear — something gives him away. A small child or someone will say to another: «That's So-and-so. The other one there is....» And even his dresser, when somebody remarks how well-dressed the Géros is, cannot help saying: «I dressed him!» «Who is he?» they will ask. At first he won't tell, but then he admits



that it is So-and-so. Now the Géri often lift their masks when exhausted and resting in some alleyway, or on a wall near the main square, or on a door-step, or in some café. The heat, and the sweat and the lack of air become unbearable. Nowadays some even *want* to be recognized and photographed with their masks lifted, but in the old days to remain unknown was part of the game. They would never lift their masks from exhaustion unless they went to rest at their houses or somewhere away from the Agora — the main street; they would strike anyone who tried to lift their mask.

One would think, from the importance he gives to the mask, that the Géros would keep it carefully from year to year, but he rarely does so. He throws it away. He says: «I'll find another next year.» To keep it needs care: it must be cleaned of the sweat, dried well again and put under a mattress or something which will keep it flat until the next year. Usually new masks are made each year, but sometimes, if a mask is particularly good or rare — as is the *arvanitiko* — and if it hasn't been broken from the sweating, it may be kept for years.

For the colour of his mask is a matter of passionate importance to the Géros. Each type of mask has its name, after the colour of the goat — and each colour or possible combination of colours has a name. There are as many names, that is, as there are types of goats and these are infinite. A shepherd gives a name to each kid when it is born, much as a father names his child. Naturally, there are many goats, and therefore masks, with the same name — the most common. And each Géros has a preference for a certain mask. The favourite seems to be the black *(to mávro)* for the black is more wild and frightens the people. It is also more difficult to recognize the Géros in a black mask; and it is considered beautiful, because it matches the kapóto. Next comes the *misó-mavro*, half-black, half-white. Then the *lamboúriko*, the many-coloured; and the much rarer *arvanítiko*, a mixture of red and black in the front, white at the back. Very striking masks are the *ferró*, all red, which I have seen but once or twice; the *polió*, a blue-grey; and the all-white, *to áspro*.

The Bells

The Géri in Skyros wear three types of bells: the *trokánia* or *strongylá*, which are round — or rather oblong — with a small piece of iron, like a nail, attached to the inside and hanging down below; the *plakará*, which are straight at the top, flat on the sides, getting narrower towards the bottom, as do the trokánia; and the *koudoúnia* or *diplá* — double — because there is actually one bell inside the other, each shaped like a cone but rather flat at the top and widening towards the bottom. These are also called *kambânes* because they resemble church-bells both in shape and sound or *tá broúnzina* since they are made of bronze. A simpler form of these are the *monâ* — or single — which, instead of a second bell, have only a bronze bar hanging inside with a knob at the lower end. The trokánia are made from sheet-iron lightly copper-plated for tone; the plakará are of heavier sheet-iron and these are also copper-plated.

Each bell has the initial or sign of the shepherd to whom it belongs, but each also has a distinctive and beautiful sound which only the shepherd himself can choose. He buys the bells according to the animals he has, and then chooses from them according to the size, weight and resistance of each sheep or goat: the larger ones for the most lively animals and for the leaders of the flocks, so that they can be heard from far away. Each animal has its own note, as it were, and thus the shepherd knows exactly where to find it. He knows the animal upon which he has put a particular bell, and it doesn't matter if that animal is with fifty others—they say that even if it has fallen into a flock of one or two thousand—the shepherd can find his own by the sound of its bell. He is so experienced that when a Géros passes by with fifteen of his bells, he will realize from the sound if one bell is missing: he will even know which bell is missing.

For at the beginning of *Triódi* — the three weeks of Apókries — the shepherds remove the wooden collars with the bells from certain of their animals, leaving a few on some smaller ones, on the leaders and on those which are apt to wander, put the collars on a rope and bring them into the village. During the week after Clean Monday—which marks the end of Apókries and the beginning of Lent—they will take the bells back to the flocks.

They again choose the bells carefully but this time they choose those which please them, or their friends—to become Géri: bells with different tones, those which will combine with others to bring about the best harmony, both of sound and appearance. Each shepherd knows who has the best bells and on which animals. One will ask another if he can have the bell which is on the other's laboúriko or on his polió, etc. Even those who are not shepherds know which bells they want from the flocks. A shepherd with a large flock might once have had a whole set of the proper bells to lend to two or more Géri. In those days bells were plentiful and cheap, but now they are more scarce. Even if shepherds do have big flocks they don't like to remove the bells in case they get damaged. This means that whoever wants to become a Géros must borrow from others, choosing and changing for sound. A group of friends may get together to exchange bells, each supplementing the other. In this way a Géros can compose a complete set of the correct bells. Or a shepherd may lend them individually to those who wish to become Géri. Formerly a shepherd might leave his bells (and indeed the whole costume—substituting it with an old army coat, etc.) to a relative or friend to become a Géros during the week while he himself went out to look after the animals, returning on Thursdays and the week-ends to be a Géros again. (Some have been known, however, to keep one particularly beautiful bell for their own use only). To an outsider all this borrowing would appear to create the utmost confusion but it is not so: the shepherds can tell the owner of each bell both from the sound and the peculiarities of the different bells and collars; I have been told they sometimes put chalk marks inside to be absolutely sure.

Just as in the dressing of the Géros, the placing of the bells is done by experts. They thread the hooped wooden collars, one by one, onto the ropes and fasten them with looped knots each at a suitable distance from the other, according to the size, shape and weight (and therefore sound) of each bell. The bells must go on in a certain order,

the largest at the back, getting gradually smaller towards the front. If the large bells are placed in front they strike the thighs of the Géros and tire him, interfering with his movements. But this order is also chosen for the sound. There are two «series», or ropes of bells: the first to be put on the Géros holds the plakará; the second, the trokánia. In this way the plakará hang better and there is less danger of breaking the trokánia which are somewhat like balloons and more fragile, the metal being thinner. The trokánia «bounce» more easily and are at the same time more cumbersome; if the plakará were on top neither would strike properly, and it would also be inaesthetic. From two to six double kambânes are placed between the plakará at certain distances to create certain sounds. Some say, however, that they put the kambânes on the second rope with the trokánia. Whichever the case, the kambânes should be put at the side or towards the back on the hips where they will not hurt the Géros and where there is the greatest movement of the body. Thus they can beat more freely, giving a better sound to the whole. If there are not enough double kambânes or if a different sound is desired, the single kambânes may be used. And they have been known to add a third series of bells.

The number and total weight of the bells cannot be precisely determined. The strongest Géri may wear up to seventy or eighty bells. Some say they wear from forty to sixty; others that as a rule a Géros must wear between thirty and forty. A good Géros will wear fewer bells but good ones: if he doesn't wear just the right number of bells he cannot make the proper beat. If he puts on more, the weight will be too much and he will have to have very great endurance indeed to be able to move easily.

The average weight is judged to be around 40-50 kilos, (or about 88-110 pounds), although one expert says that nowadays it is more likely to be 20 kilos or so (44 pounds). The old shepherds, however, put the weight up to 75 kilos (165 pounds). In any case, both the number of bells and their weight would depend on the build and stamina of the Géros, the number of bells of each type and size at his disposal, and his own taste or that of his dresser. Even certain variations in the order of the bells depend on these things.

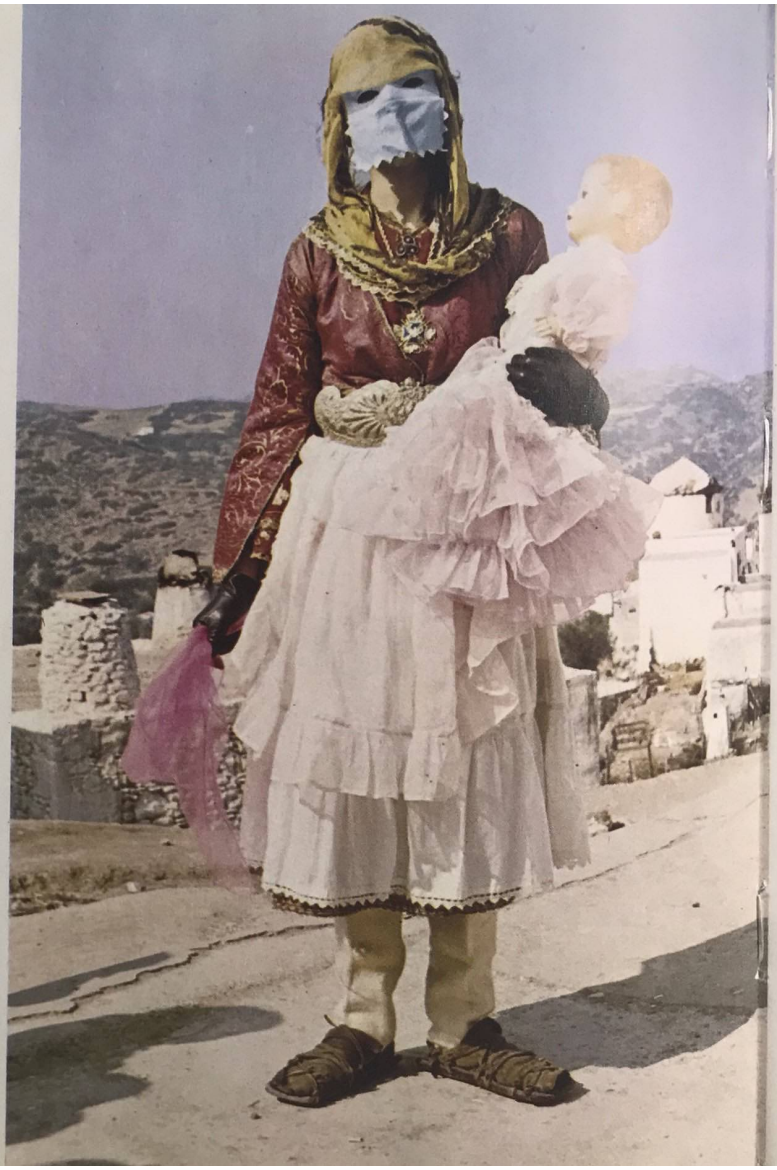
The Korélla

The indispensable companion and as it were bride of the Géros is the *Korélla*, a young man disguised as a girl, wearing parts of the fine old bridal costume of Skyros. But whereas the bride wears a very elaborate costume, with two and sometimes three *pokàmi sa* or «shirts» so called although they reach to the ankles), the Korélla is allowed to wear only those parts of the bridal costume which are considered of somewhat secondary quality: they couldn't risk having the most valuable cloths and embroideries torn by the movements of the Korélla during the dance. And the Korélla wears some things which a bride does not.

The bride puts on first the *mentené*, a short fitted jacket with long sleeves; over this goes a light white, red or green silk «shirt» with simple embroidery of small flowers or birds. On top of the mentené and the shirt she puts «the fine shirt with the gold», with its thin silk blouse — dark crimson or orange or golden red or green — and its sleeves with big leaf embroidery in gold. The mentené is worn under the two shirts to fill out their sleeves; as the bride dances, the sleeves of the outer shirt fall back to show those under it. On top of the skirt, or *skoúta*, of the outer shirt she puts the *kolovóli* — a wide petticoat of heavy cotton — which helps to fill out the *kap'khâs*. For the real bride also puts on this kap'khâs, a heavy many-pleated skirt with a sleeveless bodice, and adds, before the belt, a vest bordered with fur — the *goúna*. The kap'khas and the goúna are made so as to allow all the embroidery of the outer shirt to show.

The Korélla, however, wears only one shirt, the simpler white, red or green one with a skoúta. He also wears the kolovóli on top of the pokámiso, shorter to show the embroidered border of the skirt. But, contrary to the real bride, the Korélla wears a richer mentené as an outer garment (also worn on the outside in another Skyros costume known as the *yialabí*), and on top of the kolovóli he puts an apron, which has nothing at all to do with the bride. An apron is normally worn only over the simpler dress and is of one colour, usually pink or blue with white cotton embroidery, or blue and white stripes or polka-dots. The Korélla chooses from these or the women of the house may make an apron especially for him out of whatever cloth they find which pleases them. (The Korélles in my photographs wear white aprons and modern ready-made ones are now sometimes used.)

In common with the bride, the Korélla wears a belt woven with gold and coloured threads on silk or velvet and fastened with elaborate buckles called *klidotíria*. But whereas the bride wears a very elaborate headdress of four parts, the Korélla wears the simple yellow kerchief with its printed black-leafed design and crocheted edging. Then he adds *krémases*, silver or gold-plated necklaces, which are normally attached to the quilts in which babies are wrapped during the first three days after birth. Two false braids with silk ribbons, a false bosom, white leggings, shepherd's sandals, and a mask complete the Korélla's costume. For while sometimes, as the bride, he may wear white cotton stockings and decorated slippers, the best Korélla usually wears the same white leggings and shepherd's sandals, as the Géros, and the contrast between these and his feminine clothing gives a comic effect. In the past the Korélla always wore a paper mask with painted lips and cheeks and eyebrows or a transparent scarf called a *toulpáni* tied over the face; apparently the mask was even made from an animal skin; nowadays one often sees a modern mask. The Korélla also holds a handkerchief in one hand and sometimes a small stick in the other. I have also seen him carry a doll, although this does not seem to be part of his formal attire.



The Frángos

The Géros and the Korélla are formal stylized characters about whose disguise, Papageorgiou excepted, there is little dispute. What differences there are can be attributed to the taste of the individual Géros and the Korélla or of whoever dresses them. The other participant in the dance, however, the *Frángos* or Frank — a name used by the Greeks for Europeans in general — is mysterious, elusive, and free. Dressed in modern clothes, he can wear anything his fancy suggests. His mask is sometimes a goat or lamb skin, sometimes just a kerchief tied over the whole face.

In my first study I was under the impression that the Frangos must always have a bell hanging behind him and hold a conch shell to blow — one of those the fishing caiques sound when they want to be heard from far away. I observed this disguise and then found it in my reading. But the people are rather laconic and vague when asked about the Frank. The older men told me that he does indeed wear a goat mask and a bell; also a pair of trousers and a shirt. And he carries a short strong stick. Others say he puts on anything he wants and neither the bell nor the conch shell nor the goat mask is essential. The Frank can wear anything providing it has *goústo*, literally «taste» but really meaning something less refined, something which makes people laugh: an old pair of trousers and various strange things, all in the worst condition possible — dead crows, garlic, the skull of a donkey, old frying pans — anything. For the mask he still prefers a skin, whether goat, lamb (which is bigger) or rabbit, but sometimes instead he uses a piece of cloth, a nylon stocking, even an under-water mask or a gas-mask. And sometimes the Frangos carries a knife. Of course he should have something to make noise with: a horn, an old loud-speaker or a conch shell.

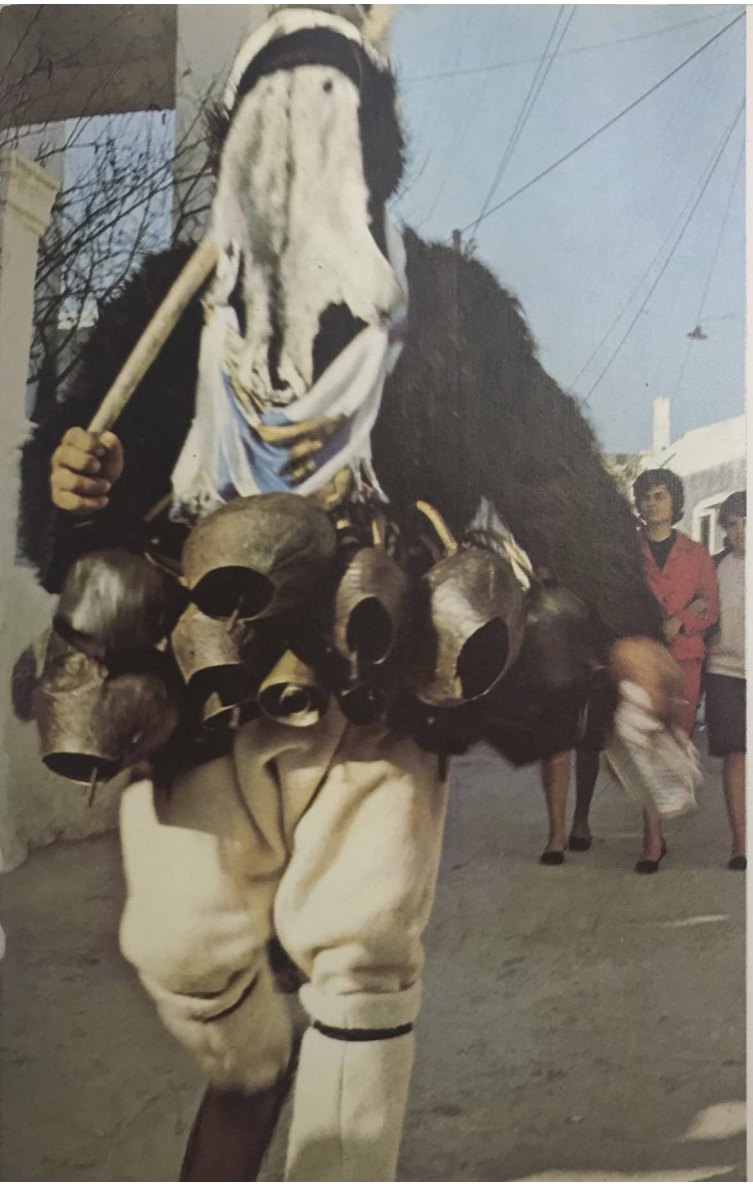
I fear that the Frank is sometimes confused with other masqueraders and especially those in the *komodía*, the little play given during Carnival in which the players have many of the same qualities as the Franks. In any case, the more modern elements in the Frank's attire would be recent additions, and it is very possible that his costume too was much more formal in the past.

The Kyría

When the masqueraders wear modern women's clothing they are neither Korélles nor Frangi but what many Skyrians call *Kyríes* — ladies — sometimes wearing a hat with a kerchief, which represents a veil but also serves as a mask, and often carrying dolls and umbrellas. Some say that the Kyria and the Frank go together as a couple but this is not certain.

The Children

From the beginning of Triódi children appear every day in the streets of the village, from those just beginning to walk to adolescents. They imitate the Géri, sometimes with masks from goat or other animal skins, or with anything they can find: if possible something to act as a kapóto, but at any rate bells (if they are lucky), or tin cans or reeds about the waist. Sometimes to a rope around the waist they attach a soft green plant which has the form of a broom and which grows during the Apókria season near the threshing floors and around the Plateia Brooke. One can also see children holding this plant and wearing the reeds as bells.



The Gangs

Each character does not usually appear alone. They form *omádes* (teams) or *parées* (gangs), each with its own number of Géri, and corresponding numbers of Korélles, Frángi and Kyríes. I had expected to find the formation of the gangs very strict, according to social class, family or profession, and the role of the Géros to be limited to the shepherds or at least to certain people. But both these ideas met with the same reaction: not only is the troupe *not* made up of one class, but the choice of the Géros — and of his suite — depends on other things.

The shepherds do not, and never did, limit the use of the bells, masks and kapóta, etc. to their profession, but lend all this paraphernalia to others, even to those who come up to the village from the shore. Whoever wishes may become a Géros! Even a fisherman? They are among the best! But not just anyone is able to become a Géros: he must have two qualities or skills — endurance and rhythm (art in striking the bells). He must have endurance because apart from the weight of the bells and the tightening of the ropes around the waist and over the chest, the goat mask on the face makes breathing difficult. He must be a *levéndis* — a well-made and virile man — to carry out the role and to move properly. The strongest will become a Géros, the most charming and graceful a Korélla, and the funniest a Frángos.

For although a few say that just anyone may be a Korélla, this seems to mean, as with the Géros, anyone who has the qualifications. The man who is to become a Korélla must have a slimmer, more delicate build; he must be *leptós* — refined — in body and spirit, with good manners; he must be goodlooking and know what movements to make around his Géros. He must also have the gift to amuse, like the Frangos, and he must know how to greet the crowd.

It is, too, more likely that the person who chooses to be or is chosen by his gang to become a Frángos will be someone with certain qualifications. «The most amusing,» they all say. He must be capable of doing many «numbers»

to make the people laugh: someone who is cold cannot become a Frángos. And he has another function: he is the protector of the Géros.

It is difficult to get much information about the Kyría, but the man playing this role should have much the same qualifications as the Frángos, while his movements are more like those of the Korélla — except that his costume makes the Kyría more comical.

Each gang then is made up of a certain number of Géri, Korélles, Frángi and Kyríes. But is the number of each any stricter than the choice? When and how are the numbers and roles decided? There is, at least nowadays and for as long as anybody can remember, no rule for the number of characters or the distribution of parts except for the qualifications mentioned above. The roles are decided quite informally among a group of friends: perhaps drinking around a table in a café, for example, and deciding that this one will become a Géros, the other a Korélla, another a Frangos. There can be three or five or more in a gang: one or two Géri, and two or sometimes three Korélles, and the rest Frángi and Kyríes, according to the size of the group. In the past the gangs were even bigger.

The Korélla dresses according to the clothes which are at his disposal in the family or in the families of his friends. Since the delicate clothes make his dressing difficult he is either dressed at his own house by his mother and sisters if he is unmarried or by his wife, or at the home of the person who lends him the clothes. Some have said, however, that all the Korélles of each gang are dressed by the women in one house: that the members of the gang decide amongst themselves at which house they will all dress together. Others say that each one usually dresses at home and then they all have a rendezvous at a fixed place. Yet others say that the Géros and the Frangos leave the house where they have dressed and the Géros passes by and picks up the Korélla, who is considered as a lady. Whatever the case, the gang then goes out into the Agora where the villagers are waiting for them.

The Procession

The procession, headed by the Géri, appears in the main street and moves down into the square, the Korélles gracefully skipping in and out among the Géri, and the Frángi capering along blowing their conch shells — if they have them.

The Géros must know how to begin: if he starts running suddenly, he will get out of breath and may even die. He can tell from the first ten steps whether he can breathe properly. If he does not get out of breath then — and if he has the stamina — he can continue all day. So he must begin to walk slowly and, as he moves forward slowly to sound his bells until gradually his body takes on its own rhythm. For the Géris' art in striking the bells, their movements and the corresponding rhythms excite the crowd very much, as do their incredible resistance to these iron bulks.

The way of moving with the goat bells makes a pattern of changing rhythms. The Géri are six-gaited and each gait makes the bells clash and clang in a definite rhythm. The first gait is a loping walk with a bucking movement of the buttocks after each step, creating a two-beat measure much like the speed and rhythm of a march. This walk of the Géros is done to start the bells beating and to be able to control them afterwards. It should be done in a particular way: he must not place the entire sole of his foot on the ground at any one time; he must go up on the toes first and then down on the heels. This gives the bells a more harmonious and regular beat, a better «rendering» to the steps. The Géros does not walk like other people: if he walks with the heels first, the bells make a particular sound, and if he places the points of the toes first, they make a different and more beautiful sound.

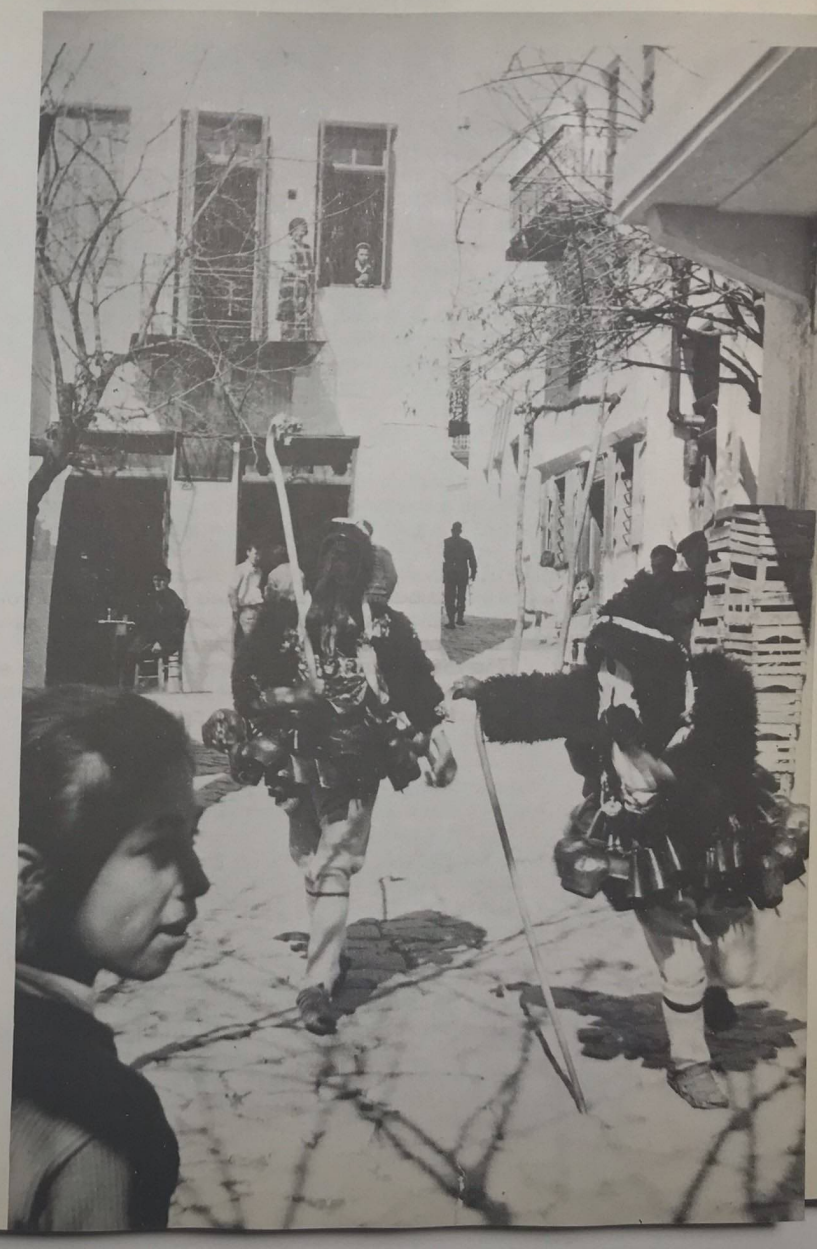
A heavy hop, crossing his free foot up in front or behind in a little dance, changes the rhythm to one long beat and one short. As an extra feat, jumping into a stride and back to standing position again — a heavy two-beat rhythm. A leap forward, lunging to the right and left — still another rhythm. Then moving forward in little hops, jogging along — again a different rhythm.

The second very difficult movement is called the *seísimo* — shaking. With the feet wide apart, the Géri stand

in one place and move the bells from side to side to make what they call the *lylýrisma* — something lyrical — a sort of tinkling when all the bells together produce a very delicate sound. This is done by moving the shoulders only, to the right and to the left, causing the bells to shake or rather tinkle, softly at first, then louder, then softly again. In another more brutal version of this the Géri thrust the hips and the head backwards and forwards in jerky but regular movements. These movements are done by the individual Géros or by two or three or even more Géri who meet and form a circle. Standing with their feet apart or one foot in front of the other, holding their shepherd's crooks with the curved handle facing outwards, they vie with one another to see who is the most skilful and who can hold out the longest. One moves his hips forward and back, another twists to the right and left, still another rocks back and forth. The din is almost unbearable and can last for more than a quarter of an hour until one of the Géri gives up. The Géros must have great strength and endurance to do the seísimo properly; he could hurt himself in the spleen.

One shepherd, now in his sixties, told me the following: «The bells on the Géros are like a dance, and it is our local dance. Can everyone dance well? The Géros must be a *technítis* (a craftsman or expert): his steps must be *anapiditó* (jumpy or springy); he must calculate in order to make the sound *ktipitó* (by this he means to have the right beat) and to *vrondízei* (thunder or boom) correctly. If you don't know how to *seíseis* (from seisimo) and to *vrondízeis* the bells you can't do anything: you are worthless. The Géros learns this from a little child. Just as the children still follow and watch the Géri and imitate them, so we too learned as small children.»

People still remember who the best Géri were. One loved being a Géros so much and was so admired that the shepherds would leave their kapota, white leggings, apanovrákia and trohádia at his house during Apókries, when they returned from tending the flocks. He would choose his bells from those belonging to each of his shepherd friends and would keep them for himself for the whole of Apókries. He would also change masks so that they wouldn't recognize him so easily, but as he would come down from his house through the Megali Strata, once the most important street, everyone came out of their houses because they knew who it



was by the beating of the bells. What grace! What a gift! He was known more because of his skill with the bells than for his strength (he wore seventy to eighty bells) and he continued to be a Géros until his sixtieth year. He kept a café. Another (a pharmacist!), loaded with his bells, used to jump up onto tables, and once leaped from an outside staircase 3 to 4 meters high, breaking his fall with his shepherd's crook.

In the procession, the other members of the gang play their roles. The aim of the Korélla is to make different movements in front of the Géros who must then answer them: when he begins some other movement the Korélla should follow him exactly as in a dance — and often with the Frángos joining in. The Korélla is considered as the Géros' partner and the Géros treats her as his dame. She sports with the Géros, plays games around him and flirts, teasing him with different tricks and artifices. I could make out three steps for the Korélla: a skipping around in and out among the Géri, waving the handkerchief to salute the crowd, often with one hand on the hip. This movement is done very lightly and as gracefully as is possible for a young man dressed in women's clothing and encumbered by the white leggings and trohádia. Then the Korélla turns around in circles to show her underskirts. And she runs, usually in front of the Géros.

The Kyríes do various movements, more exaggerated than those of a woman. They more or less imitate the Korélla in his rapport with the Géros, but with a certain silliness.

The Frangos' movements are harder to make out: I can only remember him doing one formal step, something between a skip and a hop, less graceful and more jerky than the Korélla. But he can make any sort of movement providing it has «gousto» (it is funny) and turns around the Géros. Like the Korélla, he must amuse: he makes funny gestures, hopping around and blowing on his shell or whatever he may have to make noise. Sometimes the Frángos and the Korélla seem to form a couple. They go arm in arm and he lifts her skirts in jest. But in spite of this teasing I think the Korélla still remains the Géros' lady and that the Frangos goes more with the Kyría. But he has other functions than to amuse. The Frángos is also the protector of the Géros. As the Frángos is lightly dressed he can follow the Géros easily. If the Géros slips, then the Frángos must help him get up. If the ropes are too tight and the Géros risks suffocating then he must cut the ropes. Some of the bells may fall off; the Frangos must be there to pick them up. If there is trouble between the Géri of different troupes — and there often used to be a lot — the Frangos breaks it up. And it was the Frángos, too, who used to help the Géros up to the Kastro.

Women also disguise themselves as Géri. In the past it was only at night when there was merry-making in the houses and it would be a family affair — in those days the women were more confined. And they would go from house to house — but naturally of friends. Only the most well-built can of course become Géri; those «who have a body.» But they still prefer to dress up at night, because they can't stand the mask for long: at night they can take off the masks and lower the hood of the cape instead. Finally they too are recognized by their gait. Women used to become Géri quite often, and still do to some extent, but now they come out in public and appear in the cafés, and sometimes even in the day-time.

In the old days the troupe had a regular route. They would go down into the Agora all the way to the Plateîa (the main square), in a line, one after the other. A turn to the right from the Plateîa led straight to the quarter of Kochylia — at the bottom of the north-western slope of the village, so-called because its shape resembles the shell of a sea-snail — joining the path which comes up from the shore at the weaver's shop. Then, according to the Géros' endurance, they would go up the path as far as «Lambros' store» and from there turn left to a small square which is at the beginning of Megali Strata. But the Géros with the most stamina would go straight up from the weaver's shop to the small square by way of the Toúmba (lit. somersault, tumble), a steep and rocky climb. From there the troupe would go up the Megali Strata and right up to the Monastery of St. George where they would ring the church bells. Then, going down to the Agora again, they would take the south-western slope (the ascent is by the north-eastern one), stopping at the two squares of Lalaré-Kremnós and Kaliméri, then moving on to the Agora and back to the Plateîa again. After a short rest, they would go straight to the cafés where they were served with ouzo, preferably ouzo with water instead of other drinks. Some would then go back to their houses and undress, but a good Géros would make three trips up to the monastery. If he weakened, they would cut his ropes and put another in his place.

One of the functions of the Korélla in particular, and of

the Frangos and Kyría too, was precisely to help the Géros get up to the monastery. They sang to let the Géros rest: the Korélles would go in front arm in arm, singing the song of the Korélla, an extremely slow melody in a wild and irregular strain, while the Géri followed slowly behind. Or sometimes the Korélles, the Géri and the rest would stop there where they were singing. When the Korélles finished the song the Géri would «give it back», beating a rhythm with their bells. The Géros would walk slowly or stop in order to get his breath and when they finished singing he beat his bells for a little while. In this way the Géros ascended the hill with less fatigue: alone he couldn't make it. And the Géri would choose Korélles who knew the song well.

During the descent the Korélles and the Frangi ran and jumped in front while the Géri came down behind, sounding their bells. These processions of twenty or more Géri with their suites descending from the monastery must have been quite a sight to watch from the Agora.

In the past, the seísimo often provoked terrible fights, sometimes the result of some grudge or other between the Géri. As they stood in the circle many would get very angry, shoving and striking each other with their shepherd's crooks. (People remember one Géros who used to give a big push after the «circle» and make the others fall down). One gang would meet another and there would be trouble; they would form the circle, the Géros of one gang trying to outdo the other in endurance, often ending up with raised crooks. They actually, it seems, became Géri to prove their strength and skill at sounding the bells. If they could, they would push each other down; whoever could not hold out would stop and leave. And I have seen Géri come full butt at each other.

At other times, the fights would start as the Géri walked along and one might jostle the other accidentally, or on purpose, or even strike him. Or sometimes the edge of the bells get worn as sharp as knives; one Géros' bell might cut the hand of another and this — given what they drink — would cause trouble. (This is one of the reasons why they used to wear gloves). On other occasions the fights would come from old vengeances, antagonisms, rivalries. There were terrific battles: five, six, ten Géri together. And there were more Géri then, twenty or thirty on the Sundays of Apókries and Tyriní. They used to say: «The Agora is boiling!» Once someone cut the ropes which held the bells of one Géros — the greatest of insults. In those days it was much more savage, the narrow streets full of the Géri and their troupes and the villagers. The Géros whom the people still remember for his strength used to stand in front of a narrow street, and ten Géri couldn't get through: when they pushed and tried to get by he would throw them all down. Nobody was ever killed in the fracas, so they say, but I wonder. They do say, however, that they sometimes struck each other — and the bells — so much that the ropes had to be cut or they had to go to the doctor.

If they had differences they dressed as Géri to settle them. Because they were disguised, they were able to take revenge — up to a certain point — especially if the mask was black. But, as we have said, if they wanted to know who a certain Géros was, they would recognize him from something: the walk, the hands if he wore no gloves, the gloves themselves the kerchief — something. Or someone would give him away, even his dresser. Or one Géros might even confide to the other: «I'll have such and such a sign.» Another would ask: «Has So-and-so become a Géros? What is he wearing? What mask?» And a Géros even had spies!

They used to quarrel much more in the past; they were tougher and wilder then. They had enemies for different reasons: stealing goats, or quarrels over the pasturing of the flocks, or differences at cards or even of love. Stealing was frequent, it seems. You could not leave anything out. Some of the older Skyrians explain that they changed after the war of 1912, became less savage, more orderly. One younger man, however, who was a Géros after the Second World War remembers the Géri as still being very tough then.

A Géros always preferred to have other Géri with him to back him up, although an important function of the Frángi, as I have mentioned, was to stop the fights. Indeed, all the members of each gang would try to separate the Géri. Sometimes even the Korélles would carry sticks, and knives to cut the ropes in case the Géros was exhausted by the weight of the bells — perhaps even to cut another Géros' ropes! The kapóto and the hump provided the Géros with some protection from the blows but the Frángos, so agile, was the real guardian not only of the Géros, but of

the whole troupe. Even then, sometimes the police had to intervene between the gangs — or between the gangs and the crowd.

For there was also trouble between the gangs and the crowd which gathered all along the street. They would push the Géri from both sides and then the Géri would throw themselves upon the crowd, who would push them again. The Frángi and the Korélles used to carry sawdust, bran and ash in *tagária* — woven bags — and would throw it at the people who would do likewise. The Géri would even put down tar for the crowd to slip, and the crowd would do the same to them. The Géri tripped people up with their long shepherd's crooks (they would also hook an acquaintance around the neck — «to greet him»). Now they just make gestures.

On the last Sunday, the Géri start, after church. The people used to wait in the village plateîas — then more frequented — in the different quarters and in the Agora. They watched from the rooftops much more than nowadays, both to see better and, I think, because it was less dangerous. Today they wait in the Agora and the Plateîa to see how each troupe will appear and they watch how each Géros strikes his bells, what movements the Korélla makes and how the Frángi hop about, and so on. And then they begin to judge and say, «That one is good,» or «She [the Korélla] is good». They sit all day watching from the cafés — and drinking — greeting the Géri and offering them drinks, the women and children standing on the sides of the street or following the Géri, and nowadays throwing mere confetti. The minute the children hear the bells, they follow the processions, running behind them.

Carnival is wild indeed all over Greece, but I have yet seen none more wild than in Skyros. The wine consumption, proverbial at any season in Skyros, becomes formidable during these three weeks. They start early in the morning and practically never stop. The bawdiness, also proverbial in Skyros, and not confined to the male population, naturally becomes bawdier during Carnival. The processions of Géri, Korélles and Frángi are the stable elements which take place every year. There are others which change, which come and go and are, I believe, common in many parts of Greece: the donkey who farts, for example. A man on all fours imitates a donkey, with saddle, bit and all, and

one can imagine what obscenities the donkey disguise calls forth and what hilarity this provokes among the spectators. The very old men, now in their nineties, say there was always a donkey «who said lots of words», but I am not sure whether they are talking about someone disguised as a donkey or the donkey upon which one of the village poets stands to recite.

For, depending on the mood of the year, there is often both a satire and a comedy, or at least one or the other, in which satirical poems — often unprintable — are recited. The words *sátyra* and *komodía* are used interchangeably by the populace for two spectacles which resemble each other but are not quite the same. In the satires one or two people (now only one) go about the streets of the town (they used to go from house to house) and satirize in verse — alone or in a dialogue with another — what is happening in the village. Nowadays they read the poem but in the past they often used to memorize it or even make it up on the spot, such is the Skyrian poetic gift. The participants dress up but do not wear masks. Once upon a time, so I have been told, the satirist used to go about on a donkey — which is what the poet of the comedy does now.

The comedy itself is a sort of «happening», with any number of actors, now mostly fishermen from the shore, artisans and masons. The comedians take a contemporary theme — a Skyrian marriage, the arrival of a group of tourists, a shipwreck that has happened off the island during the past year, for instance. They dress up, get or make accessories appropriate to the theme, and stop at certain village squares, each actor improvising his role, and the poet reading verses on the theme, which at the same time satirize just about everything. They usually have a flute and a tambourine with them and at certain points form a circle and do a popular dance.

During the preparations for the comedy and all through the streets, they are drinking furiously of course, and at the end they are, as they themselves say, *stoupî* — «soaked». And by the Sunday night before Clean Monday practically everyone is stoupî: some during the whole three weeks of Apókries; others only on the last week-ends. I challenge any of my cronies or compatriots to match the steady imbibing of

God knows how many liters of resinated wine a day. When night comes and the Géri, Korélles and Frangi finally tire, they too go and sit with the others in the cafés. When these close they go on to the houses, and all the quarters of the village resound with the songs of Apókries.

The Apokriátika Songs

The Apokriátika tunes are as essential a part of the Skyros Carnival as the Géri. There are three: the *prótos* (the first) or *monós* (single) or *aplós* (simple), so-called because it is the first and simplest one they sing and because the melody is easy-flowing. It is also called the *Apokriátikos*. There is the *diplós* (double) Apokriátikos in which the melody is more drawn out: it resembles the first, but is much quicker and more difficult to sing, and unlike the others it has a refrain. Then there is the Apokriátikos of the Koréllas or the *argós* (slow), which is similar to the others but, contrary to the diplós, is extremely slow. It used to be sung to help the Géri up to the Kastro and is almost as difficult as the diplós to sing well.

From the beginning of Triódi up to the night of Clean Monday they sing the prótos Apokriátikos, by preference. And, in principle, only at this time, although one sometimes hears it at other seasons of the year if they are drunk enough. The tune is repeated twice: the group divides it up, the second part of the group following the first and repeating the same melody and words. This tune being easier, it is heard all over the village during the three weeks of Carnival, and all through the night before Clean Monday the village resounds with it. The Koréllа's song is heard more rarely than the simple one, and now only at table. Sometimes the Géri come into the cafés and answer the Koréllа's tune with their bells. The diplós is rarely heard and indeed it is difficult to find someone who can remember the tune and sing it properly. They often confuse it with the monós, and it is true that it is difficult to distinguish the two at the beginning of the song. This tune was sung by one person or by many and then others would repeat it. Then the refrain would be sung and repeated. The refrain is an answer to the verse and its words depend on those of the verse.

They do sing other melodies during Apókries and there are — at least now — very few verses especially for the Apokriátika tunes. And these few are used for all three melodies indiscriminately. In fact any verses can be used. But one Skyrian, who would have been ninety today, gave me twelve verses for the Apokriátika tunes, with their refrains. It may have been more strict many years ago, but in my collec-

tion of Skyrian songs taped during the three weeks of Apókries in 1965 only two of these verses appear: One is the verse now sung to the Korélla's tune:

Let me sing and be happy, let me play, let me laugh,
youth is no longer for sale, I can't buy it back.
I don't weep about death, I know I will die,
I weep for the beautiful years that I'm losing, losing slowly.

I can't attempt to render the beauty and rhyme of the original Greek, only the sense, but one must also imagine these words sung in the haunting high-pitched Skyrian voice to an extremely slow and drawn-out melody in which the syllables and words repeat themselves over and over again. The other verse is sometimes sung with the simple Apokriátikos:

Rejoice young men, enjoy the world, because time is passing,
and whoever goes into the black earth, will not come out again.

All the verses given for the Apokriátika speak of passing time and youth, and of death, but also praise the shepherds—their youth and beauty and everything about them. Even if the role of the Géros is not limited to the shepherds, Apókries and Clean Monday are festivals clearly devoted to them.

Clean Monday (Katharí Deftéra)

Here, what should be in the Appendix — Frangoulis' desription of Clean Monday — I shall put in the text and my own remarks in the Appendix:

> And now comes the dawn of Clean Monday. Almost all the young men, even before daybreak, are dressed in shepherd's clothes, which their mothers and sisters have been careful to obtain from friendly shepherd families. It is really a wonder to see them with the old gold-embroidered shirt and the waistcoat which crosses in front, embroidered with golden branches; around the head, like a garland, the deep-blue kerchief with its white branches surrounded with the embroidered fringe, which allows their carefully-combed hair to show; the new shepherd's breeches with the white belt around the waist; the heavy white shepherd's leggings along with new sandals; on the left shoulder hangs the many-coloured new tagári and in the right hand the beautiful long shepherd's crook with its ornaments and carved handle.
> All the young men are dressed in this way so that, when you see them all together, you will not find one ugly one, since they are all white like little angels.
> All these young men then, from day-break, divide themselves into groups and go around the village from end to end singing the apokriátikos melody all together; and beating their shepherd's crooks rhythmically on the cobblestone street, the measure of the beat falling sharply on the stone, they keep time with the melody of the Apokriátikos tune.
> When they have passed through all the quarters, so that the girls too may see them — those that interest the young men — and when finally, in this way, they have made known to the whole village that Clean Monday has arrived, they will be supplied with sea-food, they will have *prop'ta* (unleavened bread) with them, they will buy halva and red caviar. They will take olives, beans *(vrehtokoúkkia* — dried beans softened in tepid water which are eaten all during Lent)., and *m'sókourpha* (the tender shoots of the chick-pea), and they'll sit somewhere in a «noisy» place where there's good wine nearby and they begin to amuse themselves with good humour and songs. But they always sing their songs to the apokriátikos tune, all through Clean Monday until nightfall when they will stop singing that particular tune and only the next year will they sing it again, whoever lives....
> On Clean Monday and only on Clean Monday the famous *«tsahayâdes»(1)* also appear. The dress of the tsahayiâs is most comical because he puts on whatever old clothes he can find, torn and ragged' and plays the poor ruined shepherd. The tsahayiâs, all during Clean Monday, goes around from group to group and makes different jokes, telling them always in the distinctive old Skyrian dialect. Very few become tsahayiâdes because very few have this jester's gift.
>
> We are at the end of Apókries on Sunday night, and from the next day begins, with Clean Monday, the Lenten fast. In the houses, the families were accustomed to say to the children: «Tonight at midnight the crows will come and eat whatever is left over.» They used to say this as a warning, that from tomorrow fasting would start and whatever they could eat — meat, pittas and macaroni — they must have eaten them by the midnight of this last Sunday, because they were obliged to throw out whatever was left over on the morning of Clean Monday. And I remember a childish but amusing anecdote with my relative — Manoli Stamélo — then a boy — as hero, who believing that the crows really would come on the midnight of the Sunday before Clean Monday and eat the choice left-overs, got up during the night and when he had made sure that the door of their house was closed, went to a small window which was open in the *s'phâ* [a sort of loft] and sat there awake all night long with a slingshot in his hands, determined «not to let those crows come into our house and eat our food.»
> And musical instruments are also indispensable in the festivities of Clean Monday, especially for the young, even if it's impossible for there to exist and to be found enough instruments for all the groups. At any rate at the end most of them get together with their instruments in some square of the village and dance until nighttime with endless *kéfi* [good mood], in fraternity and friendship and with respect for this Skyrian Apókria custom which continues to survive and to manifest itself in the same way until today.
>
> Pouria — Skyros 1953

1
The Skyrians call «tsahayâs» any poor shepherd who, because he has few animals of his own, tends the flocks of the monastery and does odd jobs for the same.

Clean Monday (Katharí Deftéra)

Here, what should be in the Appendix — Frangoulis' desription of Clean Monday — I shall put in the text and my own remarks in the Appendix:

> And now comes the dawn of Clean Monday. Almost all the young men, even before daybreak, are dressed in shepherd's clothes, which their mothers and sisters have been careful to obtain from friendly shepherd families. It is really a wonder to see them with the old gold-embroidered shirt and the waistcoat which crosses in front, embroidered with golden branches; around the head, like a garland, the deep-blue kerchief with its white branches surrounded with the embroidered fringe, which allows their carefully-combed hair to show; the new shepherd's breeches with the white belt around the waist; the heavy white shepherd's leggings along with new sandals; on the left shoulder hangs the many-coloured new tagári and in the right hand the beautiful long shepherd's crook with its ornaments and carved handle.
> All the young men are dressed in this way so that, when you see them all together, you will not find one ugly one, since they are all white like little angels.
> All these young men then, from day-break, divide themselves into groups and go around the village from end to end singing the apokriátikos melody all together; and beating their shepherd's crooks rhythmically on the cobblestone street, the measure of the beat falling sharply on the stone, they keep time with the melody of the Apokriátikos tune.
> When they have passed through all the quarters, so that the girls too may see them — those that interest the young men — and when finally, in this way, they have made known to the whole village that Clean Monday has arrived, they will be supplied with sea-food, they will have *prop'ta* (unleavened bread) with them, they will buy halva and red caviar. They will take olives, beans *(vrehtokoúkkia* — dried beans softened in tepid water which are eaten all during Lent)., and *m'sókourpha* (the tender shoots of the chick-pea), and they'll sit somewhere in a «noisy» place where there's good wine nearby and they begin to amuse themselves with good humour and songs. But they always sing their songs to the apokriátikos tune, all through Clean Monday until nightfall when they will stop singing that particular tune and only the next year will they sing it again, whoever lives....
> On Clean Monday and only on Clean Monday the famous *«tsahayâdes»(1)* also appear. The dress of the tsahayiâs is most comical because he puts on whatever old clothes he can find, torn and ragged' and plays the poor ruined shepherd. The tsahayiâs, all during Clean Monday, goes around from group to group and makes different jokes, telling them always in the distinctive old Skyrian dialect. Very few become tsahayiâdes because very few have this jester's gift.
>
> We are at the end of Apókries on Sunday night, and from the next day begins, with Clean Monday, the Lenten fast. In the houses, the families were accustomed to say to the children: «Tonight at midnight the crows will come and eat whatever is left over.» They used to say this as a warning, that from tomorrow fasting would start and whatever they could eat — meat, pittas and macaroni — they must have eaten them by the midnight of this last Sunday, because they were obliged to throw out whatever was left over on the morning of Clean Monday. And I remember a childish but amusing anecdote with my relative — Manoli Stamélo — then a boy — as hero, who believing that the crows really would come on the midnight of the Sunday before Clean Monday and eat the choice left-overs, got up during the night and when he had made sure that the door of their house was closed, went to a small window which was open in the *s'phâ* [a sort of loft] and sat there awake all night long with a slingshot in his hands, determined «not to let those crows come into our house and eat our food.»
> And musical instruments are also indispensable in the festivities of Clean Monday, especially for the young, even if it's impossible for there to exist and to be found enough instruments for all the groups. At any rate at the end most of them get together with their instruments in some square of the village and dance until nighttime with endless *kéfi* [good mood], in fraternity and friendship and with respect for this Skyrian Apókria custom which continues to survive and to manifest itself in the same way until today.
>
> Pouria — Skyros 1953

1
The Skyrians call «tsahayâs» any poor shepherd who, because he has few animals of his own, tends the flocks of the monastery and does odd jobs for the same.

The custom survives — but what is its origin?

The Skyrians themselves explain the Géri by a legend. Once upon a time an old shepherd and his wife were out with their flock at the season of Apókries and there was a great snow-fall. All their animals died, whereupon the shepherd skinned them, tied bells and skins around himself and returned to the village with his wife, who was by that time in rags. This spectacle, with the sound of the bells, so impressed the populace that they began little by little to imitate it each year at the same season.

Others claim a Dionysiac, if not totemistic origin. Certainly one cannot watch the dance without imagining it originally being performed on a threshing floor, each Géros perhaps *representing* the chief of a tribe of goats, a primitive goat-god. Who can know what went on there besides the separating of the chaff from the grain?

Whatever its origins, the custom both survives — and changes. A foreigner seeing it now for the first time thinks he's seen the devil himself and that he is in the presence of something very serious — which he is. But the people who remember as far back as the turn of the century and up to as recently as twenty years ago (or even less) complain of the relative lack of grace and endurance of today's Géri, of the small number of Géri (no more than perhaps ten at any one time, compared with anything from fifty to one hundred formerly), and of the lack of proper Korélles.

There is less apparent reason for the rhythm to have been lost than for the decrease in the number of Géri and Korélles. Because of depopulation there are fewer people, fewer shepherds; and hence fewer costumes. The shepherds no longer wear kapóta; they use old army overcoats or something similar. The old kapóta are very worn, especially where the ropes go over the shoulders and the shepherds are reluctant to lend them. The bottom part of the disguise, white breeches and leggings, is bound to become more and more scarce. A few women still weave them, but the old costume is dying out and one sees very few men under sixty wearing breeches, leggings or the shepherd's belt. Many people do preserve the old clothes in a chest, to be worn only on Clean Monday when everyone dresses up in their costumes.

In the Géros' costume, the coloured silk kerchief is now replaced by the most ordinary of nylon scarves — making a startling contrast with the Géros' demonic appearance. The trohádia will survive not only because they are better than any other shoes for walking — one sees many young shepherds in modern dress with army leggings and trohádia for shoes — but because they have become a tourist item. Besides the sandals, the only part of the disguise which is still relatively easy to come by is the goat mask, and at the rate that meat consumption (and price!) is rising, these should become more and more plentiful. On the other hand, what if the number of shepherds continues to decrease? That will mean fewer animals, fewer masks, and fewer bells — not only as a result of the emigration of shepherds but also of the scarcity of bell-makers and, consequently, the rise in the price of the bells.

There are fewer young men, too, to play the Korélles. The parts of the bridal costume the Korélla wears are becoming scarce because they are sold at increasingly high prices in the tourist shops; and the remaining costumes are reserved for weddings (very much a tourist attraction in the summers) and Clean Monday (which is fast becoming one) — people do not want to risk them being torn in the Carnival as they can no longer be replaced. Parts of this costume, some made from the home-grown and woven silk which no longer exists, are not included among the handicrafts which the women still practise — the woven and embroidered towels, the table-cloths, the blankets, etc., which are either sold as tourist items or are still used in the houses. The mask of the Korélla is now often replaced by a grotesque modern mask, quite out of keeping with the elegance and mock femininity of the character. People say, too, that the Korélla, like the Géros, has lost his grace of movement.

The Géri's art appears to have been much more sensitive and stylized years ago: the elders complain that the young men today have lost the technique. The walking step is no longer done properly — up on the toes; and the seïsimo, which should be a delicate movement of the shoulders, has become a rough movement from the hips, either from right to left, or backwards and forwards, which gives entirely the wrong beat. The old technique had a certain «sweetness» they say: it is like the difference between the noise you make when you plunge your hand in water and when you turn your hand round in the water gently. Because the young men of today do not do the seïsimo properly, when they stand together in the circle, the contrast and opposition in the beats produced by each one results in a lack of harmony. And they are not able to last more than ten minutes. The old men complain that the Géros has lost not only his grace but his stamina. This may be unfair because it is quite difficult to judge their endurance nowadays: there are so few costumes that most Géri can «become» for only about three hours, and then they must pass on their paraphernalia to another, so that everyone has a chance to make an appearance before nightfall. It is obvious, though, that those coming from their jobs in Athens or having more sedentary jobs on the island itself are quickly exhausted. A well-built young Skyrian from Athens cannot last nearly as long as a slighter, older Skyrian who works as a shepherd or a farmer.

The Frangos' costume may have been much more for-

mal years ago, but as he has always been the modern and comic character of the troupe, he is becoming indistinguishable from masqueraders anywhere else. His dress changes more and more each year as the Skyrians travel — and return — and the island itself is occupied by non-Skyrians. The attitude of the latter is, «Let's show them something better!» All sorts of modern elements adorn him: aluminium kitchen utensils, rubber tires, and sometimes a plastic bottle instead of a bell. The children still wear bells if they can find them but they, too, often replace them with tins or plastic bottles, instead of plants or reeds.

The lack of young men and the increasing social change mean that a formation of the gangs by class is now even more improbable than it ever was. And one has the impression, not of gangs, but individuals going out as Géri and finding more or less whom they can as companions. As for the battles, the long description already given of the old days shows that things were rougher then, although I have sensed a return to «violence» in the last three years. And as far as I can determine, the Géri's route is now more or less confined to the Agora itself.

The masquerades used to begin on the first Sunday of Apókries and last until Clean Monday. Not one day of the week went by without the appearance of at least one Géros, more on Thursdays and Saturdays and many more on the last two Sundays. Sometimes there were even two troupes each day. But now there may be one or two Géri, on *Tsiknopémpti* — the second Thursday of Apókries when the shepherds slaughter animals and bring meat to the homes — and on the days following it for those who can't find bells for the Sundays, but, generally speaking, the Géri are now rarely seen except on the last two Sundays.

In the past, during the three weeks of Apókries, people would gather each evening, taking it in turns, at the houses of different members of the family, friends or neighbours, bringing food and wine; on week-days they would finish somewhat before midnight, but would stay far later on Sundays. There were festivities every day, dancing, and singing the Apokriátika songs. (One can well believe this since a Skyrian marriage party, which now lasts one night or so, used to continue for eight days.) But now the Apókries celebrations take place mostly in the cafés and not every night. People come and sit in the cafés on Saturdays and Sundays, often still going to the houses afterwards, but not as frequently as before. Once, they all used to return to their homes on the last Sunday after the Géri had finished and continue eating, drinking and singing until the dawn of Clean Monday. Then they would change into their best local costume to carry on through the day until midnight. They still do this to some extent, but the cafés stay open until all hours with the juke-boxes, gramophones or even an imported bouzouki orchestra competing with the few local musicians and the people's singing. On the final week-end however television still fights a losing battle in the cafés — except when there is a football match! These evenings could be anywhere in Greece except for the considerable amounts of local retsina consumed — one tradition which remains unchanged.

Certain traditions *do* survive intact. Most housewives still make the Skyrian macaroni on the first days of Apókries and this is eaten throughout the three weeks. On the next to last Sunday — meat-eating Sunday — they still make meat *pittas* or pies, while on the last Sunday — cheese-eating Sunday — they cook pies with wheat, rice, eggs and milk. Most of the houses still offer you this traditional fare. My impression is that at home the Skyrians keep quite strictly to their pre-Lenten and Lenten customs, foodwise, although the restaurants catering to functionaries and foreigners are more lax.

I do not quite see how the custom has survived in Skyros until now.

Paradoxically, the same forces which are causing such traditions to disappear are, at the same time, keeping them alive. The publicity given them, combined with increasing tourism, makes the Skyrians realize the value of their own traditions. They begin to say consciously, «May the local customs hold!» Once the procession of the Géri was like a village psychodrama, in which everyone participated; now it is changing from a spectacular survival into a spectacle. And the Comedy — if *it* survives — is taking over, ironically enough by mocking the very elements which are destroying the tradition

In spite of these elements, however, the custom not only continues in Skyros but was more alive than ever in March of 1975. The elegance, the dignity, the virility — and the art — of the Géros were more manifest than in other years. Even the steps and rhythms appeared to be more like those the elders describe. There seemed to be more Géri, more beautiful Korélles, and more and better bells. The Géros still inspired fear, but one had the profoundly moving feeling of being in the immediate presence of man's ancient attempt to distinguish himself from the rest of nature.

The Géros

Géros literally means «old man» but it can also mean the elder of a community, not only in the sense of age but of leadership. I have never been satisfied with the explanation that they are thus called because they do resemble old men and frighten children. (Konstantinidis, 1900, p. 172). I have used the transliteration Géros; it seems preferable, both visually and etymologically. *Yéros*, however, is phonetically closer to the Greek. For an analysis of the word and that of similar names in other parts of Greece, see Romaios (1949, pp. 151-53). The plural of Géros is Géri.

Géros from *Laographia*, vol. II (1910) p. 40.

The (a) panovráki, literally «over-pants», is made of *sokófi*, or *abás*, a heavy white woollen cloth woven of sheep's wool by the shepherds' wives: the trousers were sewn by special seamstresses. They are somewhat narrower and more elegant than the dark-blue everyday trousers over which they were worn during milking and shearing so as not to soil these. Paradoxically, white was worn to protect dark blue, the former being coarser and easier to wash. The trohadókaltses (from trohádia), like the panovráki made of sokófi, are also called *abadókaltses* (abás).

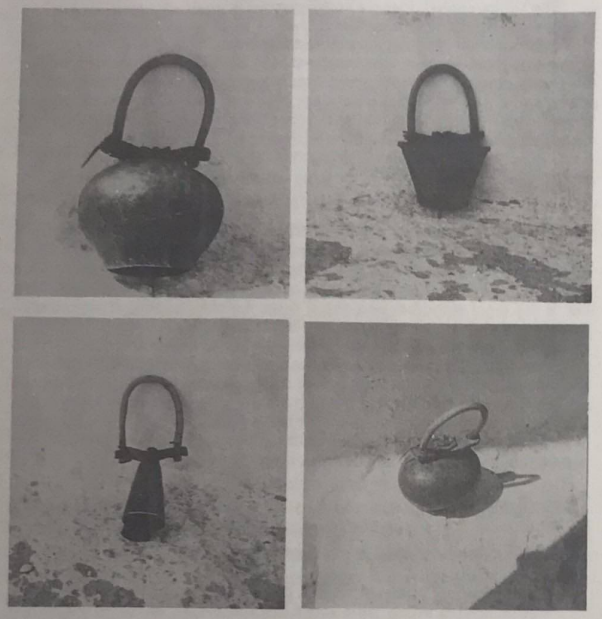
The Mask

John Cuthbert Lawson (1899) says that "the mask for the face is made of the skin of some small animal such as a weasel, of which the hind legs and tail are attached to the hood, while the head and forelegs hang down on the breast of the wearer. Eyeholes are cut in this as in other forms of mask. This last is the most elaborate and costly dress for the Carnival, a weasel skin being worth two or three goat skins". But Papageorgiou (1910) denies this, saying: "As a mask he uses the whole skin of a new-born lamb or goat, sometimes rabbit, but never a weasel as Mr. Lawson wrote. (This animal does not exist in Skyros.)" Although I have never observed anything but a goat skin on the Géros, and most of the Géri answer with a vehement No or Never when asked if they use other animals than the goat, they do admit that lamb or rabbit might be used if the Géros cannot find a goat skin. In effect, the weasel does not exist in Skyros.

The Bells

Lawson described the bells in the Carnival of 1899:

> The capes, of whatever variety, are girt tightly about the waist with a stout cord or thong, from which are suspended, all round the body if possible, but in any case in lieu of a tail, a number of bronze goat bells, of the ordinary shape but of extraordinary dimensions, measuring anything from two to ten inches for the greatest diameter. The method by which these bells are attached to the waist-belt is cleverly designed to permit a large number of bells to be worn without their being in any way muffled by contact with the cape. Each bell is fastened to the end of a curved and pliant stick of about a foot in length, and the other ends of the sticks are inserted behind the bell from above, the curve and elasticity of the stick thus allowing the bell to hang at some few inches distant from the body, free to clash and clang with every motion of the dancer. Some sixty of seventy bells of various sizes are worn by the best-equipped and the weight of such a number was estimated by the people of the place as approximately an hundred weight, no easy load with which to dance over steep, narrow, roughly-paved alleys where even a mule will stumble.



Konstantinidis (p. 172) mentions only "a great number of bells", while Richard M. Dawkins, who witnessed the Carnival in 1905, wrote:

> Round the waist are perhaps fifty to sixty large sheep-bells hung from the shoulders to enable the wearer to support the weight. Each bell is attached to the hooped wooden collars worn by the sheep, and these wooden collars are simply strung on a cord round the waist, to keep the bells hanging fairly free to clash, as the wearer jumps up and down.

Carl Fredrich (1915, p. 154) talks of fifty to sixty bells and Papageorgiou gives the following description:

> On a long but fine hair rope *(litári)* — three of four of which are tied around the waist with the help of friends — are fastened in a row, and at a distance of 3 inches, curved pieces of wood *(kouloúres)*, the length of a span, to whose ends shepherd's bells *(kdoúnia, trokánia)* of different types, sizes, sound and weight are hung by a piece of leather. There are usually 50-80 bells, whose weight is not less than 70-80 okades [220 pounds]. The way in which the bells hang from the waist — often, if there are many, from the shoulders and crossed over the chest — permits the Géros to carry this great number of bells without the sound being diminished by contact with the kapóto; the elasticity of the wood permits the bell to hang at a distance of a few inches and to beat freely at the least movement.

The popular Skyrian writer, Anéstis Frangoulis (1959, pp. 129, 134), born in 1886, writes:

> Before the Triodi, the shepherds are obliged to remove the bells from their flocks. They will leave a few on them. Most, or practically all, they will bring to the village. The younger men will tie them to hair ropes which they call litária and they put them on until they are tied to that rope one by one in a row at a distance corresponding to the size of the koudoúni or the trokáni, and they thread them on four or five ropes until, with them, they are ready to become Géri on these days which open the Triodi.
> ... And now two men skilful at tying begin to "do", that is, to dress and to equip the Géros with all these implements, first putting round his waist many "bunches" of koudoúnia-trokánia (if the bells are big and the géros young and strong, they can put on him and he can lift more than a hundred) and thus an iron kilt is made, with these, around his waist.

The bells known as trokánia in Skyros are called koudoúnia elsewhere in Greece; the bells which are called *kypriá* or *kyprokoúdouna* or *kriarakoúdouna* in the rest of Greece are called koudoúnia in Skyros, also diplá, kambánes and broúntzina. The big plakará, at least in Skyros, are *tápses;* the big trokánia, *bourgádes;* the general word for the smaller bells is *lianotrókana.*

The smaller bells of each type are used for sheep and the smaller goats; the big bells go on buck goats and rams, on the leaders and on those who are apt to stray. This distribution, too, would depend on the *meráki* — love of his art — of the individual shepherd. They buy the bells from Chalkis or from Monastiraki in Athens rather than directly from where they are made (Kozani, Amfissa, etc.); communications to Euboea and Attica are more natural for the Skyrians than to Amfissa or Macedonia.

Wherever they are bought, the bells still have no fittings, neither the *k'lora* nor the *tsopanópetsa* nor the *lourída.* The k'lóra (from *kouloúra* — something rolled or coiled up) are the hooped wooden collars which go

around the necks of the goats and sheep: they are made from the green wood of the fig tree, the oak and other trees, bent over a fire and carved at both ends, one end with two holes one above the other and the other end with a wider bottom. These collars are put around the necks of the animals. The bells do come with an iron loop at the top: two rather thick pieces of leather, the tsopanópetsa (tsopánis, shepherd; pétsa, skin), which have three holes, go over this, the first hole being passed through the hoop and held in place by the wide end of the wood, the middle hole fixed over the metal hoop on top of the bell, the third hole passed over the other end of the hoop and held between the two holes in the wood. The lourída, a leather strip with a loop at one end is passed through the lower hole of the collar and knotted, then through the upper hole, tied back and forth a number of times and passed through the iron loop to hold the heavier pieces of leather in place. It is then attached to the loop at its own end. Another smaller piece of leather is often put over the iron loop to hold better and they sometimes add wire too for more security. As the description is difficult to follow, a comparison with the photographs may be of help.

If the description of the order, the number, and the weight of the bells seems confused or vague it is because the subject itself is just that. These things might be clarified, in part, by counting and weighing the bells worn at any one time by a number of different Géri, when they're putting them on or taking them off; or an approximate judgement could be made by weighing each type and size of bell separately and then estimating the total weight of different numbers of bells. However I have not been able to do either, it being just too difficult or even impossible. It was difficult enough to be able to photograph the dressing of a Geros: I would certainly hesitate to bring along some scales too. By the time the Geri are finished with their bells and everyone is completely drunk, how do you catch them? And on the other hand to find a bell of each type and size and weigh each is difficult when they are on the animals most of the time.

I did manage to measure — but not weigh — the bells of one shepherd and among the trokánia there were about four different sizes; the biggest were 16 cm high by 21 cm wide, 11 cm by 6 cm at the opening and the smallest 6 cm by 7 cm; at the opening, 4 cm by 6 cm. The plakará ranged from 12 cm high by 18 cm wide to 6 cm by 5 cm; 10 cm by 5.5 cm at the opening for the biggest. The kambánes, being smaller at the top and widening towards the bottom, were 10 cm high and 5 cm wide with a round opening, 8 cm by 8 cm for the largest, to 5.5 cm by 3 cm, 5 cm by 4.5 cm at the opening for the smallest. This shepherd gave the approximate weight of a large kambána as 1.5 kilos and a large plakará as 2 kilos. But I was unable to get really precise information.

One shepherd told me that if the Géros is weak he cannot put on more than fifty pieces, and that he himself used to wear seventy or eighty. "It's a question of endurance and if you don't have that you can't take a step. When you do have it you can go three times up to the monastery". An old Skyrian, born in 1878, said he used to wear up to 75 kilos; another, now in his eighties, that he wore from 50 to 60 to 70 kilos.

It really does seem that the build and strength — and taste — of the individual Géros determines the number and weight of the bells he wears. Whoever feels he can carry more bells than will fit on the first two ropes might even put on a third series of bells: I've been told, however, that this was sometimes done when a Géros did not have enough big bells on the first two ropes to produce enough noise. One shepherd said that if a Géros wants to wear fifty bells, and he has them, he puts twenty-five plakará in a row on one rope and all as big as possible; on the other rope a series of trokánia, and these big too — having them all big gives a particular sound. He made a comparison with glasses: when glasses are placed on a table, they should be all the same size; not a mixture of large and small. And if the Géros is dressed properly, the big ones in front don't tire him. But another Skyrian reacted differently: that you would only put on fifty bells if you had many small ones and wanted to supplement the sound: that those who put on many, and all large ones, do so in order to show their strength; that this produces a monotonous sound and is not aesthetic. What I have observed since 1965 is that the bells go on in two series, each with a number of kambánes placed at certain distances, usually between the plakará on the first rope. I do not know if long ago the order was more strict, and now has become a matter of individual taste.

The ends of the first rope cross in front and are knotted at the sides or towards the back according to the length of the rope, the size of the Géros, etc. Although there is confusion about the placing of the second rope, common sense indicates that it would be put on a little higher than the first and fastened so as to bring about the best results. The way in which the shoulder ropes pull up the two bell ropes at the waist make it difficult to tell the order just from observation or photographs.

The bells of different types produce different sounds: the trokánia give a heavy sound; the kambánes a very beautiful high pitched note and the plakará something in between. In Skyros there are more or less six sizes of each type and, of course, each varies in tone according to its size and fabrication. Originally there may have been more uniformity in the choice of the size of the bell in order to control the harmony. Whoever wishes more information on the use of bells may refer to Fivos Anoyanakis, *Folk Musical Instruments of Greece* (National Bank of Greece, Athens, 1976).

The Korélla

Korélla may be spelled with one l: it varies with different authors. I have chosen Korélla because it seems more appropriate to the interpretation of the character I favour.

The bride's pokámiso is made of two different cloths — its blouse of thin silk, its skirt, called the skoúta, of a heavy white linen or cotton cloth; the wide sleeves, the collar and the border of the skirt are embroidered. Most pokámisa are separated at the waist so that the fine silk blouse will not be torn by the weight of the skirt. (In the bride's first shirt, however, only the blouse is worn). Nowadays, instead of the mentené, I've been told that the bride usually wears a woollen undershirt with decorated sleeves. There existed two types of mentené: the cheaper one worn as an undershirt of the

wedding costume worn only by the bride herself and close relatives; and the richer one as mentioned in the text. This better one is of the same cloth and colour as the skirt of the costume — usually grey or lavender silk — or of the same cloth as the kap'khâs, the bride's outer dress made of satin with a flowered design. The Korélla always wears the outer mentené. The description of the bridal costume is taken, in great part, from Hadjimichali (1925, pp. 64-72). At the same time, for the comparison with the Korélla's disguise, I have consulted Skyrian informants.

Lawson, strangely, does not mention the Korélla, but Dawkins (1905), writes:

> The Korélla is a boy dressed as a girl, generally with a modern mask, in the festal attire of a Skyros bride. Carnival is then a good opportunity to see the fine silk-embroidered skirts, sleeves and kerchiefs of the women's full dress. The finest of these are old, though embroidery in silk is still produced.

Papageorgiou writes in 1910:

> The word [Korélla] does not signify, as Mr. Dawkins said, a young man dressed as a girl, but the one wearing torn and dirty clothing, therefore equivalent to *koureloú,* one wearing rags. [*kourélia*]. The Korélles are usually youths or men; both farmers and shepherds. He is indispensable and as it were the wife of the Géros. The Korélla, wearing the farmer's and shepherd's shoes *(trohádia)* without socks, puts on a torn and dirty woman's dress, the jacket *(mentené)* being inside out.
> As a mask he uses the skin of a small lamb, having two holes for the eyes, or a piece of transparent cloth, or a mask of pasteboard *(moutsoúna).* In his right hand he holds a broom *(frókalo)* and in his left a black tagari full of flour or bran or ash *(áthos).* [Papageorgiou's italics].

Papageorgiou also divides the types of disguise into two principal ones:

> The disguises usual everywhere are divided into two principal types in Skyros: that of the *Nyfádes* [nyfádes is the Skyrian word for women wearing the best dress, used for brides *(nýfi),* but not restricted to them]; and that of the Géros with the Korélles. The first is serene and seemly; the second noisy and rough.
> 1. *The Nyfádes.* Youths and men in various numbers, from five to ten, put on the full, very old, gold-trimmed bridal costume of their families, and wear masks, now out of pasteboard, imported, in the old days a plain piece of fine linen or a white silk handkerchief.
> All gathered together in a predetermined house and supplementing anything which happens to be missing, they are placed under the protection of a masked *armatolós* [under Turkish rule, an armed Greek, used for security in certain regions], bearing silver pistols and a sword and called the *Yanítsari* [a Turkish infantry soldier belonging to a corps made up principally of conscripted children]. This party is preceded by two masqueraders, the Géros and the Korélla, who open the way and protect the nyfádes from any trouble on the part of the children who follow.

I am confused about the Nyfádes. In the photograph in Papageorgiou, it seems to be Clean Monday rather than Apókries . The masquerader, Yannítsari, seems out of place before Clean Monday and the violinist would not have much of a chance to be heard on Sunday because of the bells.

From *Laographia,* vol. II (1910)p. 36.

Musicians do play in the cafés and the houses before Clean Monday but one doesn't find them going through the streets. Of all the people I interviewed — some between eighty and ninety years old in 1970, and therefore between twenty and thirty at the time Papageorgiou was writing (he himself would have been fifty-one at that time) — only one confirmed Papageorgiou's description but rembered that the Nyfádes appeared only on Clean Monday, never with the Géri. And he said that they often wore other costumes than the bride's. The other old men said that the Nyfádes appeared only on Clean Monday, and that they were women dressed in the full bridal attire. However, my most reliable informant on Skyros dress - a woman now in her middle

sixties - insists that, although as a rule neither men nor women *ever* appeared in full bridal dress during Apókries or on Clean Monday, men did dress as Korélles on the Monday — but not accompanied by Géri. She did add that on that day, among the Korélles, there were occasionally men who disguised themselves in other women's costumes and this may be what the old men remembered. Many groups of them would go from square to square through the village accompanied by musicians with clarinet, laoúto, violin; and they would sing and dance. Another Skyrian told me that he remembered the Korélla as being more like the bride many years ago: he thought the costume may have changed to give the Korélla more ease of movement or because the costumes themselves have become scarcer. This might explain any discrepancy between the earlier accounts and what we observe today. In any case, when I asked the old men about whether the Korélla has anything to do with kouréli the answer was emphatically no: the Korélla must be beautiful even if wearing the poorer underclothes of the bride. And indeed the Korélles are very beautiful. The description by Frangoulis (p. 135) confirms this:

> He [the Géros] must be accompanied by at least one koréla. That is, she has remained koréla [in the sense of rag] in name only because in grace and suppleness she is really like a doll now, that is, the koréla wears an all-white dress, the "kolovóli", with many pressed pleats, puts on a "mentené" woven with gold and of great value, a yellow scarf made with great skill on her head and down her back hang two long braids in silken ribbons; a beautiful paper mask with red cheeks and lips, hides her face; she must always wear black shoes and beautiful stockings, in her hand she holds a small stick...

The oldest description of the Skyrian Carnival by Karl Fiedler (1841, p. 83) mentions: "Certain come dressed as women..." but the rest of his description sounds as though he witnessed only Clean Monday. Fredrich writes: "Among the masqueraders are distinguishable a trio of disguised and painted young men: an old man, a girl and a Frank. The Frank blows on a conch-shell, the other is dressed as a bride and along with the old man they dance and make an uproar in the streets." Then he talks of Clean Monday: "Nevertheless the womanly dress of the boys on Clean Monday remind one of the old legends, because the custom is explained by the story of Achilles' as a girl...»

But Kostas Faltaits, the Skyrian writer (1939, p. 21), applies this idea to the Korélla:

> ... the dionysiac custom in Skyros of men dressing as girls *(kóres)* during Apókries , who are called *korélles,* appears so ancient that it should be compared to the legend according to which Achilles remained on the island dressed as a girl. Probably Achilles, adapting to the local custom, dressed himself as a girl *(kóre)* or korélla, and thus originated the myth about his prolonged stay in female dress. It is equally probable that there were dionysiac festivals for the coming of Ulysses to Skyros. At that time, in honour of the foreign kings, Achilles would have disguised himself along with the others. Then the cunning man from Ithaca used the arms trap to discover Achilles.

Korella, from *Laographia*, vol. II, (1910), p. 39.

It seems rather far-fetched but who knows? In any case I believe that Papageorgiou confused the Korélla with the Kyría — lady — who is another personage in the Géros' troupe, dressed in modern and sometimes ragged women's clothing: his photographs of the Korélles look very much like the Kyríes. And although he criticises Dawkins, his idea about the kouréli in Skyros is taken from Dawkins article about similar customs in Thrace (1906). Papageorgiou's account of the Nyfádes is very similar to an earlier description written by the other Skyrian historian Konstantinidis (p.173):

Apart from these amusing spectacles (the Géros and others), other groups form a more dignified and civilized display of masqueraders where men, dressed as women in the splendid marriage costumes and accompanied by one or more men wearing Greek costumes (foustanéllas), but for the most part men superbly dressed in wide woollen drawers and with new red caps (fezzes) on their heads, and for this called yenítsari (because dressed as Turks), go around, always masked, in groups and dance to musicians who precede them, to the small squares and to the homes of friends and relatives.... Usually one of the bell-wearing vigilant guardians *(géros)* protects each of these groups of men disguised as women (called *nýmfes)* and accompanied by yenítsari, keeping back the children who approach and follow from curiosity, to prevent the precious costumes from being soiled or otherwise harmed.

This still sounds like Clean Monday although it is rare, at least now, to see a Géros on that day. There may have been such groups on the other days, but that doesn't explain the Korélla. It is possible that Konstantinidis and Papageorgiou remembered things the others would have been too young to remember and that the Korélla as we know him today is a very recent development. There are the photographs (although one can't tell what day they were taken on), and in Naoussa, in Macedonia, men still disguise themselves very much like the Nyfádes Papageorgiou described, and are accompanied by yanítsari with whom they dance to the music of a kind of primitive oboe and a drum. The yanítsari are adorned with many coins which jingle as they move. This takes place on both the Sunday and Clean Monday. I regret the manifest confusion, both for students of the custom and the general reader. For the moment, I cannot be more specific.

The Frángos

Dawkins says: "The Frank's attire differs, but his distinctive features are a sheep-bell tied on at the waist behind, and a conch shell to blow. He either has a cloth tied over his face or wears a modern pasteboard mask". (1905) He does not mention the Frank wearing an animal skin, but Frangoulis, who does not mention a bell, says:

> "But the géros must now be accompanied by still another strong young man, who wears trousers and on his feet he must preferably wear strong shoes *(stivália)* or nautical footwear; on the body he wears whatever there is — it is sufficient that it be some kind of strong clothing; and he hides his face with a mask of goat or sheep skin and puts upon his head whatever hat he likes; indispensable, however, is a shell in his hand for a *bouroú,* that is, one of the kind the fishing caïques have and sound when they want to be heard from afar." (p. 136).

I think that when Lawson described the Géros' disguises at the beginning of the century, he confused the Géros with the Frank and is really describing some of the variations of the latter's disguise:

> The young men of the town array themselves in large goat-skin capes, reaching to the hips or lower, and provided with holes for the arms. Some of these capes are made with hoods of the same material which cover the whole head and face, small holes being cut for the eyes, but none for purposes of respiration. In other cases the cape covers the shoulders only, leaving the head free, and the young man contents himself with the blue and white kerchief, which forms the usual headgear in Scyros (sic), and a roughly made domino, or, thanks to the steadily increasing influx of Western culture during the last few years, an "Ally Sloper" mask. A third variety of cape is provided with a hood to cover the back of the head.... The capes, of whatever variety, are girt tightly about the waist with a stout cord or thong, from which are suspended, all round the body if possible, but in any case in lieu of a tail, a number of bronze goat bells.... (1899).

There has never existed in the memory of anyone living in Skyros but one type of cape, the third type described by Lawson, and the Géros' disguise is so formal that he would hardly wear a sleeveless cape, nor cut holes in the hood and use it for a mask instead of a goat skin, nor wear a domino or an "Alley Sloper" mask. Nor would the Géros wear one bell only "in lieu of a tail." But as the capes were once less rare and expensive than they are now, an old one might have been used on someone other than the Géros. I have always wondered why some strange personages in old worn-out capes are also called Frángos, with or without a bell and with either a hood or a goat skin for a mask. Strictly speaking, they should not be called Frángi, as they are not dressed in European clothing. One Skyrian, now in his forties, told me that he once dressed as a Frángos, wearing an old cape with worn fur, and three strings of reeds hanging free to make a noise instead of bells. This would correspond to at least part of what Lawson describes.

Papageorgiou again objects to Dawkins, whom he says ..."fell to the same level as Lawson [when he says that the masqueraders try to imitate a beast], in reporting the Frangos as a third character after the Geros and the Korelles, with whom the former has no connection whatsoever. The Frangos is a farmer or shepherd who ridicules those wearing European clothes, especially doctors and lawyers."

Perhaps Papageorgiou is again mistaken, because those who imitate doctors and lawyers still exist but are quite separate from the Frangos, appearing on the last Sunday but also on Clean Monday.

The Children

Faltaïts (1939a, p. 21) says: "... the custom... during Apókries of the children putting around their waists the plant called *karóna* clearly reveals a

dionysiac nature. Karóna is the sacred plant of Dionysos called narthix...." But some Skyrians say that the children do not use karóna but *asklída* — ancient *knídi*.

Lawson has also written about the children (1899):

> But such as lack either the prowess or the full accoutrements to share in the most glorious and resonant merry making, do not abstain altogether from the festivities. Each does his best according to his lights and his means to look like a goat. Even the small boys beg, borrow or steal a goat-bell and affix it to the hinder part of their person as a tail to tinkle cheerfully in their wake; or, at the worst, make good the caudal deficiency by the mute inglorious appendix of a branch from the nearest tree.

Papageorgiou, too, speaks of them, but only when describing Clean Monday:

> The children continue the lively Sunday holiday on Clean Monday, but without the din and the uproar. Uprooting poisonous plants (karóna), of which the fruit, according to some, is the ancient hemlock... they tie these in a row on to two fine ropes and put them around their waists instead of bells; carrying reeds instead of the shepherd's crook and without masks they run and jump in the streets imitating the Géros. Others cut reeds the length of a span *(kalamkánia),* which, having put holes in them they pass on to a rope and put them around their waists. Those disguised in this way are called *kalamkanádes:* this word is also used to mock a tall and awkward man.

I don't think this was ever confined to Clean Monday. Neither does Frangoulis (p. 129):

> And now the children precede who on these days besiege the houses of the shepherds perhaps to persuade them to put some rope with bells around their waists too, so that they may go out through the quarters and run and jump in such a way that the bells beat all together in harmony.
>
> These children are aged from five to fifteen years.
>
> When some child goes out for the first time with these bells and runs outside, he jumps for joy because he has become a géros; it doesn't even bother him if he is barefoot, it's enough that he acts like a grown-up, because almost all the children of the village follow him and run behind him and are jealous that they too don't have some bell to beat. All of them follow, even the little girls, and they admire this first géros who has appeared, and they too imitate the movements of the bell-wearer and make the sound of the bells with their little voices — boom... boom... boom...
>
> The small children's desire to become bell-wearing "gerí" too is so great that those who cannot find real bells to put around their waists, take a rope or a heavy string or *kazília* [thick pieces of goat yarn], and tie on empty tin cans in which they have pierced holes, and which they close, after putting small stones or pebbles inside. And they beat them, running, imitating the big bell-wearers, and still other children make a series of bells out of many *kalam'kánia* and others still with karónes.
>
> These first sounds of the bells inform us that Apókria has come...

The Gangs

Knowing that, at least until recently, the social classes in Skyros were very strict, I had expected to find the formation of the gangs just as strict, but I did not. Perhaps they really were, or are, without the people realizing it?

One Skyrian lady of an old family says they don't know what I'm talking about when I ask them if the gang has anything to do with one's family, social class or profession, and that in fact it does have to do with these things. She says that the gangs were made up according to class: this was almost essential, but a landowner (it was once a veritable feudal system of which vestiges still remain) sometimes sought something for his costume from the shepherds who rented their lands from him, and a shepherd might ask to become a Frángos in their group in exchange. (She did not mention the other classes.) But people from other old families, and about the same age as she, certainly know what class means and they were quite emphatic that the gang is made up, naturally, of relatives, neighbours and friends, but that these friends are not at all limited to a particular class or profession. They may have forgotten, but I doubt this as I insist every time on the differences between the present and the past. They say that it is made up of one's *paréa* (group of friends), of different friends of various families — whoever one wants. Another Skyrian says that in the old days there were class distinctions but that now it is freer, more open, less restricted. In any case, structures would be changing as anywhere else.

The problem of the Skyros class structure is sufficient for a whole thesis: we are interested in Apókria , and here the family plays a larger part in the gathering at the houses than in the masquerades where, according to most Skyrians, class distinctions do not exist and everyone is equal. Even by saying this, they imply that otherwise the distinctions *do* exist. But it is well known that at Carnival time in all countries, great license is permitted, and this would probably apply to a break-down of the social system at that time of the year.

The gang, then, would naturally be made up of those whom one normally frequents, but it does not exclude people from other classes. The place is so small anyway — although the population was once much larger — that it would be difficult to carry out all these festivities while enforcing such distinctions and restrictions. And if the role of the Géros were restricted to a shepherd, and his troupe limited to his class, the whole spectacle would be

limited to very few indeed. I have noticed, however, that the families and friends who create the comedy almost every year and who seem equally gifted to become Frángi, appear to come from certain professions: masons, carpenters, fishermen, etc. I have been told that at the beginning of the century the comedy used to be performed by the more educated members of the community.

The Procession

The earliest description of the Skyrian carnival we have is by Fiedler, who visited Skyros in 1835:

> On the 17th of February the Skyrians celebrate the Carnival. The men have with them one who plays the lute with his finger or with a small feather and they go around in small groups, singing in a sharp nasal voice and dancing in one or two plateias a simple circular dance like the Albanians and the Vlachi. Some came dressed as women and the men held gourds with long necks which they employed in an obscene manner to the general hilarity of all the spectators, among which there were girls and boys of all ages.

This sounds like a joint description of one of the Sundays of Apókria and of Clean Monday — as we know it today. Another witness is Lawson, who wrote in 1899:

> Thus in various grades of hirsute jingling grandeur, the young men and boys traverse the town, stopping here and there, where the steep and tortuous paths offer a wider and more level space, to leap and to dance, or again at some friendly door, to imbibe spiritous encouragement to further efforts.
> In the dancing itself there is nothing peculiar to this festival. The long swingy amble, which is the mode of progression of the more heavily equipped, is dictated by the burden of bells and the roughness of roads. The purpose of the leaping and dancing is solely to evoke as much noise as possible from the bells; and in this the dancers attain their own highest hopes of din and tumult of sound, and painfully surpass the visitor's expectations, for the interior of a belfry with a peal being rung would be peace and quiet after the jar and jangle of hundreds of these goat-bells, when the troupe of dancers wheel suddenly round some corner and pour past down the rugged slippery road, or at the end of the dance leap together into the air and come down together with a crash which in those narrow alleys threatens to dislodge the very houses from the great rocky pinnacle to whose abrupt sides they cling.

Konstandinidis, after describing the Géros says:

> ...girded with a great number of bells, with which, leaping up on purpose, shaking themselves and running, they make an incessant banging, thus provoking panic in the little children and creating a deafening and unbearable din for the others, and resembling black demons jumping up from the depths of Hades; these creatures they call "Geri", some of whom also wear, as a mask, a piece of soft and furry skin, with holes for the eyes.
> Others of a variety of masqueraders — that is, fishermen with fishing-rod and line, sieve-makers, pharmacists or doctors giving advice on the treatment of all sorts of maladies — provoke hilarity and laughter by their witty jokes and movements.
> The crowd which rushes to the central places, especially of the agora, to see the spectacle, is very great in proportion to the population. For, aside from the others [masqueraders], some appear disguised as bears or camels or drovers of a group of kids covered with soot whom they pretend to sell as prisoners-of-war or slaves. (p. 172).

He then goes on to describe what we have already quoted about the nyfades.

Dawkins, in 1905, had the advantage of being prepared for the spectacle by Lawson's description:

> A full set consists of three young men, disguised, one as an Old Man *(géros);* one as a Maid *(korélla)* and one as a Frank *(frángos)*... The trio run capering down the street, the Frank leaping and blowing his conch, the *Korélla* dancing to show off her skirts, and the heavily-laden Old Man halting every now and then with his attendants and jumping up and down to make his bells clash, or indulge in the favourite horse-play of tripping people up with his long sheep hook.... The Old Man seems always the leader and appears sometimes without the other two, whilst I never saw Franks or Maids except in attendance on Old Men.

Fredrich writes:

> On the last Sunday of Apókries everything is very lively. Among the masqueraders are distinguishable a trio of disguised and painted young men: an old man, a maid and a Frank. The Frank blows on a shell, the other is dressed as a bride and together with the old man they dance and make an uproar in the streets. The old man is the principal character, dressed as a shepherd, with a skin over his face, a cape and fifty to sixty bells tied around his waist, which add to the most diabolical noise.

Papageorgiou uses, as usual, the observations and remarks of others, without acknowledgements, but he also describes, probably more or less accurately, certain elements of the Carnival which are of great interest:

Three, five or more Géri meet in a house previously agreed upon, with their Korélles, in order to go forth together into the streets and to pass first of all through the steep and uneven cobblestone streets of the town (Agios Minas) which is the appointed arena for their battles with the villagers.

The weight of the costumes, the mask, the burden of the bells and the unevenness of the cobblestone streets force the Géri to walk in a rocking way and to jump noisily. The aim of the jumping is to evoke as much noise as possible from the bells, which is achieved completely and surpasses the calculations of anyone who has not seen it or heard it: for the interior of a belfry would be peace and quiet after the deafening sound of hundreds of bells on gangs of Géri heaving suddenly into sight around some corner and pouring past down the steep street.

The appearance of the troupe at the beginning of the central street is met by noisy shouts and cries of joy from the women and children from the roofs along the street, the men and youths standing on both sides of the street preparing themselves for battle with the troupe which has appeared. The troupe dashes into the street and scatters flour, bran, ashes, etc., left and right out of their tagaria, but many of the villagers have provided themselves too with harmful projectiles for the eyes of the Géri. Thus then the troupe, hit at and hitting, pushed and pushing, often falling and getting up, manage with great difficulty and much sweating to arrive at the end of the street, free of the battle, to go through the town, causing noise and uproar. The most vigorous attempt to go up through this street but they rarely attain this, because the street is so uphill and the fatigue of the previous battle has so thwarted their boldness, that they are forced to retreat back down from the half-way point, and the result of this retreat is devilish hooting and booing (*ioú, ioú*), and lemons, onions and such things thrown from the roofs....

With her broom he [the Koréļla] hits those who bother her along the road, whenever they fall upon her and the Géros and try to remove their masks. The Korélla, putting the broom under her arm, throws the flour or ash she has in her tagari at the aggressors, defending herself and the Géros, along with whom she usually comes out victorious.

The townspeople call the whole troupe "Geri", as Faltaits explains: «The dionysiac troupes which are called *géri* and which consist of the bell-wearing *géro*, the *korélļas* and the *frángi*, reach up to... *Provakka* during this prevailing custom.» He believes that the word Provakkas certainly means «towards the place of Bacchus», Bacchus being the equivalent of Dionysos. The Monastery of St. George is built at the place called Provakka, and the Géri used to go up as far as the monastery. (1939a, pp. I, 21).

Niki L. Perdika (1940, pp. 132-3) repeats what other writers have written almost as though she had not witnessed the spectacle herself, which would astonish me, given the very admirable material she has published about the customs of Skyros. About the comedies and satires, however, she writes: "Others will go around reciting their apokriátika comedies making fun of whoever imitates the *repandoúses* (those who wear European clothes) and the *Anglogálli* [the English-French, i.e., foreigners]. They talk about the women who vote and about all that is strange and unusual. All who hear them, laugh and amuse themselves.... When someone comes from Athens and wears strange clothes or is painted they mock her and say: "Yiou! tout'ginei! tout'ginei! [i.e., masquerader]."

Frangoulis took part himself in Apókries festivities since childhood, mostly in the satires:

> And now the géros is ready to go out into the agora where he will meet some ten others done up as géri like himself. One will stand opposite the other, and they will strike the bells they wear around their waists all together but so harmoniously that it is a panorama and a marvel to see them jump and run for each to show his superiority in striking the bells but also his resistance to the great load. Your blood runs cold when you see these iron bulks. And whoever becomes a géros is obliged to go all the way up to St. George, high up there in the Kastro, and to come back down by Lalaré, to strike his bells going up, and to jump, striking them, coming down, if he does not achieve this, he is not a strong géros and he must not become one again. Many, of course, not being able to endure, get sick from the effort and the fatigue.
>
> And now, as we said above, it is no longer the same géros who originated in the old days. Now he is elegant and well-made and has a great technique in the striking of his bells as well as unrivalled resistance. There are young men in Skyros who have become and still become géri, and who last a day and a night with these weights upon them, with which they go up as far as St. George even three or four times; but these are few and are renowned for their endurance and their art in striking their bells.
>
> ...[the géros] must always be accompanied by at least one koréla..., who sometimes precedes him and at other times turns back and waits for him and dances in front of him, and who sometimes waits behind to meet with other koréles who are preceding yet another géros, just as you think that that is all — it is a continuing procession.
>
> But the géros must always be accompanied by still another strong young man,... This escort of the géros is called frángos and his duties are to follow the géros and to protect or help him, when perhaps it is necessary to adjust his bells, or if one of the bells falls to pick it up; and in effect he is the protector both of the géros and the koréla; and from time to time he also blows on his conch shell, and thus to the noise of the bells is added the noise of the shells. You can imagine what pandemonium there is when many géri meet, with their followers, the koréles and the frángi with their shells and the simultaneous beating of the bells of all the géri when, if for example, there are 15 géri, must beat together a thousand bells or more, of each size of bell, that is bells of dissimilar sounds, and all these (géri) jumping with force and fury,

> competing who will tire the other or make him out of breath or win over him; you'd think they were veritable rivals in a battle. If we add to this very real struggle the noise from the shells, imagine what happens. (pp. 135-36).

These, then, are the witnesses we have of the procession and they date from 1835 to 1959. The oldest people I have interviewed would have been about twenty years old when Lawson visited Skyros. None of them nor any Skyrian would limit the movements of the géros to the word "leap". They do use the word *anapidó*, but in the sense of "jump", and often the word *horévo* — dance. Nor would they agree with Lawson or Papageorgiou, that the way of walking or *vádisma* "is dictated by the burden of bells and roughness of roads", or that the purpose of the leaping and dancing is solely to evoke as much noise as possible. When asked to describe the quality of the Geros' steps — and therefore the rhythms he creates — they use the word *piditó* (jumping rhythm) and *ktipitó* (striking rhythm). The word *vrondízei* (to make a thundering sound) is used to describe generally the sound of all the Geros' bells together. The use of these words, which do not really apply to either the proper way of walking or of doing the seísimo, implies that all of the steps the Geros uses today were used formerly,— but with greater style, however. And this has been confirmed by my oldest informants. As a third step after the seísimo and the walking on the toes, one told me of a step in which they use the heels and the whole foot — when they want to make a louder noise. I have heard the words *soúsi* (the Skyrian pronunciation of *seísei* — to do the seísimo) and *koúnima* (for *kínima* — movement) used to describe the Geri when they form the circle. They also say they make a wheel *(tróha)* to describe the latter.

Other Disguises

Frangoulis (p. 137) says.

> Aside from the géri, the koréles and the frángi, others dress up differently and represent doctors, lawyers, and one can say that all the inhabitants of Skyros, men, women and children wish to and take pleasure in becoming something and representing something which will amuse them, so that the one satirises the other as in the ancient comedies.

I feel that the different masquerades (donkey, bear and others not animal) are either a substitute for the comedy or go along with it in some way. These disguises are panhellenic and their description can only be more vague than that of the Géros and the Koréllа. They fall somewhere between the Frángos and the Kyría on one hand and the members of the comedy on the other. Some used to dress as a bear, an ox or a camel, with the skin of a goat, a mule or a calf, a sack on the head and an animal mask, and others would lead them through the streets with a chain, holding a stick. *A propos*, Papageorgiou writes:

> Mr. Lawson, seeing a man dressed in fresh goat skins, considered this to be a disguise peculiar to Skyros and to be a *Geros'* disguise. He was mistaken because this would have simply been someone dressed as a bear whom another masquerader makes dance, imitating the bear-training Bulgarians who roam all over Greece.

Comedies and Satires

Each element of Carnival is fascinating. My description of the comedies and satires is very superficial because the subject requires a thesis in itself, given the great amount of material at hand, and will, I hope, some day be the theme of a separate study. I wished to keep to the theme which is the metamorphosis of the Géros, principally the masks and the bells, still giving some of the general background.

The Skyrians themselves separate the Geri and the comedy linguistically: the Géri — and their troupes — are simply "Géri" and the comedy is "*carnaváli*".

For whoever wishes information on the comedies and satires I refer them to Frangoulis' book (pp. 31 - 56), which contain many of his own satires from the Apókries of 1911 to 1959. There is also an excellent study by Manos Faltaïts which appeared in 1973.

The comedy satirises in verse the events of the past year. These long poems are always satirising the modern elements which are changing the Skyros society. And the people who write these poems and perform in the comedy are very much a part of that change because of their professions which have become much more lucrative.

Songs

I made quite a few attempts to understand what the Skyrians mean exactly by the term *diplós* but the rather obscure answers I received did not help me to form a definite opinion on the matter. The musicologist Markos Dragoumis tells me that all three Apokriatika melodies are variants but that they differ, however, in tempo and in degree of elaboration. He also said that the simplest variant is a dance tune which is quite well known in Greece. (It is, by the way, an accepted fact that no folk song is absolutely original.) Indeed, when the laoúto-player of Skyros plays what he calls just the Apokriátikos, he plays exactly the basic melodic structure of this tune: it is almost as fast as the diplós but simpler, like the aplós, and one can imagine it being a dance.

One rarely hears the musicians playing the Apokriátikos now. As for the dancing during Carnival, I could observe nothing different from the rest of the year nor did I learn anything to the contrary. We already have Fiedler's description of the singing and dancing. Dawkins says *à propos:*

> The Carnival also offers an opportunity to see the native dances,

the *bâllo*, a kind of minuet for two men, or a man and a girl, and a lively dance called the *Papadhiá*, "the Parson's wife", performed by four men, three of whom hand-in-hand are generally faced by the leader of the dance. The other usual dance is the *Kalés*, a ring-dance of slower movements for men and girls together. (1900)

The Papadhia he talks of is probably a *syrtós* whose title comes from the words of the tune. The so-called local dances are in all probability variations of panhellenic dances, except the Kalés, and that too resembles a Cretan dance, I have been told.

Konstantanidis, describing the family parties of the last two Sundays of Apókries says that they would stay all night, dancing to musical instruments, the usual ones being the violin and the laoúto and sometimes the flute, but the most common ones were the stringed instruments. Others dance without instruments, to the village tunes. (p. 173). Frangoulis writes of the songs:

> And now comes the Triodi. The Skyrians prepare themselves for Apókries, in as great a mood as possible. One ceases to hear any other melody which the Skyrians sang before Triodi, and now there is only the apokriátikos, which they will sing up until the night of Katharí Deftéra. Then that too will stop, only to be heard again the next year....
> On the last Sunday, for the most part, relatives, friends and in-laws get together in the different houses, all with their food and their wine, and until the dawn of Katharí Deftéra they eat, drink, and sing all the melodies with whatever verses each one knows. But it is the apokriátikos melody which is mostly sung and which has its own verses, sung in the Skyrian dialect. (p.p. 128, 137).

Here he gives a number of verses which for the most part are the same as those recounted by Papageorgiou and those given to me as being especially for Apókries. They are also found in Perdika's collection of Skyrian songs. They are all in praise of the shepherd and the shepherd is intimately linked to the Géros.

Clean Monday *(Katharí Deftéra)*

Like the Comedy and Satire, Clean Monday deserves a separate study. Frangoulis describes only the white shepherd's dress but, at least now, one sees more of the dark blue dress of the farmers which the shepherds wear at present for best. Neither does he mention the girls who dress in shepherd's and farmer's costumes; it is particularly striking when they are dressed in dark blue costume accompanied by young men in the same. Other women and girls dress in different women's costumes, especially the *koumiótika,* a handsome dark costume, worn on Sundays and on special occasions, which takes its name from Kimi in Euboea. There are two variations of the koumiótika, and I've been told that men sometimes used to dress up in these women's costumes on Clean Monday as well as Korélles. Still others make combinations of different costumes and the mothers dress their children just like the adults. Dawkins described Clean Monday in 1905:

> On the Monday not many Old Men or Franks appear. It is the day of the *metemphiesméni* (the disguised), where boys go about disguised as girls, or dressed like shepherds, who on this day all come into the village in their best clothes, with silk shirts with embroidered fronts and lace sleeves, and white waistcoats and jackets. The waistcoats of the ploughmen on the other hand are generally crimson at the back, which is laced up the middle. More old embroideries are seen on this day than on Sunday, so one gets a good idea of the women's festal dress, with its embroidered linen skirt and petticoat, to which is attached a vest of very fine silk with hanging sleeves, embroidered with tinsel. Over this is worn a brocade bodice and a belt with large silver clasps.

There are other masquerades on Kathari Deftera: women dressed as gypsies go about town reading fortunes and collecting money in their tambourines. I have seen the most respectable women who, dressed like this, dance a sensational *tsiftetéli,* a form of belly-dance. There are those who imitate doctors and lawyers and once people used to dress as Turks and pretend to fight others dressed as Greek soldiers, and so forth.

In principle, there should be no Géros on Katharí Deftéra. But some remain who were unable to become Géri during the preceding days, and so they dress as Géri on Clean Monday, even though the Church disapproves the wearing of animal masks on the first day of Lent (for it is this that the Church considers idolatry, and not the amusements themselves). So on Clean Monday they dress in different costumes, no longer "from the bells". But it is really the celebration of the shepherds, as is the whole of Apókreas when one comes right down to it.

Frangoulis emphasizes the picturesque side to Monday and neglects its wildness. Lawson (1900) on the contrary says: "...and on the morrow of Quinquagesima (for Monday is the first day of Lent), the full regulations as to fasting come into operation, not only meat, but fish, eggs, milk, cheese and oil being almost universally prohibited. Nonetheless the free use of wine makes the Monday the climax of the Carnival". Dawkins, too, remarks on this when he says that he "was there for the last of the 3 Sundays of Carnival and the following Monday when, to the scandal of the Hegoumenos of St. George of Skyros, it being the first day of Lent, the festival is at its height". (1905).

The question whether or not it is sinful to extend the Carnival to Katharí Deftéra, and generally how God and St. George would consider the Carnival, brought forth some interesting answers. One of the priests said that the Church has always forbidden mummery as idolatry, but what could they do? A very old and conservative Skyrian answered: "We have the right. The Géros is serious! And we have always amused ourselves freely without misunderstanding on these days, and on Katharí Deftéra." Another, that Monday is not

Carnival because they don't wear masks. Still another, that the rare Géros who might appear on that day is not taken very seriously: greater importance is given to those dressed as shepherds or in various other costumes. "It is not a sin when they amuse themselves on Monday, because it is groups who dress up and go out and amuse themselves and they don't give much importance to the Géros. And I 'll tell you — because it is such an ancient custom it is not a sin, that is, it has nothing anti-religious about it. What the Church can object to, however, is when there is a liturgy going on and the Géri beat their bells outside the church. For this reason, the Géros always tries to avoid passing by a church at that time. If he does happen to pass one, he will walk in such a way as not to make noise for the churchgoers inside, and only when he has passed the church does he start to beat the bells again."

Triodi (The Three weeks)

The texts we have already read give an idea of the events in Skyros during the three weeks of Apókries. However, I would like to add the following.

It is the appearance of the children imitating the Géri, and the sound of their bells which announce Apókries. At the same time the housewives begin to make the Skyrian macaroni called *kohýlia* because it has the shape of the shell of a sea-snail. These are made and eaten all through Apókries. On Kreatiní — meat-eating Sunday:

> The pitta is indispensable. The pitta then is made of meat because it is kreatiní Apókria. If they slaughter pigs they prefer pork; if not, it can be from goat, but not from beef; this does not do.... On tiriní Apókries they make *trahanópitta* (made from wheat soaked in milk and dried in the sun) or egg pitta or milk pitta. All of the houses during these days offer pittas and macaroni and thus everyone is satisfied and happy, but all this, without hearing the noise, the thythmical sound of all the bells together, they have no taste. (Frangoulis, pp. 131-3).

> During the two Sundays of Apókries the nearest and closest relatives come together as a family for their meals, in the evening of course, when they come together with their wives and children in the home of a relative, and each family brings food prepared from their own home, and they stay almost all night, having a family dance.... Of all the various foods and dishes of Apókries the first is the pitta which is spread with many fine layers of pastry, with meat and rice usually put in for a filling, and baked with butter or olive oil in wide copper-tinned plates. In this way, most of the people happily celebrate all the nights of Apókries, taking turns at each relative's house. (Konstantinidis, pp. 173-4).

> The Skyrians spend the two Sundays — Meat-eating and Cheese - eating — with great liveliness and high spirits, bringing together in the paternal household their sons and daughters with their spouses and children, and they pass in a patriarchal manner the day of Apókria with local songs and with dance, as is the custom in other parts of Greece. (Papageorgiou).

Changes

In 1972 an Athenian philanthropist offered the municipality a sum of money to pay for new kapótos so that the custom would continue. They ordered six new ones but instead of getting them from the north of Greece as before (one wonders if they are still made anywhere), they ordered them from a man in Chalkis who makes those shaggy Greek rugs called *flokátas*. He sent the kapótos to Skyros some time before Carnival but they were grey instead of black and had modern trimming on the edges instead of the traditional one. All but one of these kapótos were sent back to be dyed for the Carnival. The other was kept by a Skyrian from a shepherd family, now a merchant, who dyed it himself and had his sister-in-law, the wife of the only shepherd left in the family, change the modern trimming to the traditional. The unfortunate and, as ever, paradoxical, result of the Athenian's philanthropy was that the men who take part in the other, very separate element of Carnival — the comedy — decided that they wouldn't do anything that year. Why should someone give money for the Géri and not for the paraphernalia they needed? Some of the comedy performers could not bear it and made up their own play anyway. Foreigners found it marvellous and the people seemed to love it, although some complained that it was a relatively poor show. I would think it improbable for this to continue much longer without having the same patronage as the Géri, who have also received help from the municipality in the last two years.

Origins

Frangoulis describes the events which every Skyrian — almost without exception — gives as the origin of the custom:

> And now you will ask me. Well, how did this custom happen to be in Skyros? And I will tell you as the people before told it to me. One hundred or two hundred years ago there was an old shepherd who had a few sheep and goats and who lived in the country with his wife winter and summer. Once there happened a winter where they were snowed in, there was so much snow that when it stopped and the old shepherd went out around the mountain to find his sheep he found them all dead. What could the poor man do? Cry? Who would feel sorry for him? So he got hold of himself and skinned them, took off the bells from around their necks, tied them in a row on a hair rope, wrapped himself in the skins, wrapped his wife, too, who was dressed in rags, put around his waist the rope with the bells and took his old ragged wife and they set off for the village. When they got there and passed through the agora, the old man (géros) began to jump in such

a way that the bells delighted the people who all came out of the cafés and the houses to see what was happening.
They see then the old man with the skins wrapped around him, leaning on his shepherd's crook, beating the bells and his wife "koréla" skipping about near him.
This spectacle appeared so very comical and pleasing to the people coming at the time of Apókries that when Apókria came around the next year someone brought bells and skins from his sheep-fold and became exactly like the old man of the year before, and he even dressed someone else in a ragged dress and skins, to imitate the ragged old wife. All the people laughed very much again with them. The next year still other shepherds played the old man with the bells and the old woman in rags, but now they became somewhat more elegant, both the géros and the koréla and each of their movements pleased the people because now they beat their bells louder and more harmoniously than the real geros of that first bad year, and because now the bell-wearer resembled that first old man in external appearance only, while underneath was hidden a strong young man, who played the role of the geros. In the following years, the shepherds took off many bells from their flocks, and their wives even made heavy "panovrakia" of white wool on their looms, as well as white leggings with black garters with tassels and even beautiful festal trohadia-sandals; they also took their black "kapótas" which have a very thick fleece inside, and which they turn inside out....
This is, then, the way the geros is now, that is, it has become a custom in Skyros always to dress as géri each Apókria , but with somewhat more formality and sumptuousness. (pp. 133 - 5).

Lawson doesn't mention the legend:

> Of the origin of the custom or any idea involved in it, the island-folk offer no explanation. They regard it simply as a time-honoured and enjoyable festivity. Nor can its antiquity well be questioned. The vast quantity of special attire reserved exclusively for its celebration is a sure sign that the carnival is no modern fancy that has lightly attracted the popular mind, but a genuine old custom with a claim to observance more firmly established than its present observers are aware. Whether this custom may be a survival of Bacchic or other orgies; whether the season of festival fast in which it occurs has any special appropriateness, and whether the mask made of the skin of a small animal with the head hanging down to the wearer's breast bears more than an accidental resemblance to the *aegis* of Athena, are questions which I do not propose here to discuss. (1899).

Dawkins recounts briefly the popular legend but in another study he makes a comparison of the Skyros Carnival with similar ones in Thrace (1906):

> The custom of the Skyros Carnival described by Mr. Lawson and again by the present writer is closely allied [to the Thracian custom] though much less of it is left. There is no drama, but only the going about the town of sets of three masqueraders, the Old Man *(géros)* with bells and skin masks and, according to Lawson, with skin capes also, who answers to the leading *kalógheros* of Thrace, the Frank *(frángos)*, not dressed in skins and probably corresponding to the second kalógheros, and the *korítsi*, a boy dressed as a girl.... A passage in Fiedler, who observed the custom, shows that the phallic element was formerly present at Skyros also.

After likening these observances in general with the "spring festivals of the spirit of vegetation" he continues:

> The dancing and leaping of the principal actors, so conspicuous at Skyros, fall, like the jumping of the Salii at Rome, under the same head, [Frazer, J. G., *The Golden Bough,* I, p. 36] and the protective padding of the back seems to point to a custom of beating the victim to be slain.

Dawkins goes on to suggest that these customs are a survival of the worship of Dionysos who was killed by his worshippers and attendants, the Titans. Perhaps long ago this death — and resurrection — was acted out in Skyros at Apókria as it is still done in Thrace, the Frank killing the Géros. He also likens the "miracle of St. George of Skyros, who on his festival multiplies the wine poured into a jar sunk in the earth in front of his church" to the idea that Dionysos was the god of wine. To back up his comparison of the festival in Skyros with those in Thrace, he refers to a theory that the inhabitants of Skyros were transported to Corfu by the Venetian Foscolo in 1645, and that the island was perhaps repopulated by people from Thrace, the dialect of Skyros resembling that of certain parts of Thrace — and the local costumes too.

Papageorgiou says that some Skyrians give the legend of the old shepherd as the origin of the custom but that others explain it in a different way:

> My fellow citizens, wishing as usual to go back to the beginning of the custom, have invented that the Géros and the Koréla originated in Constantinople a thousand or more years ago. They relate how couples, reduced to unfortunate circumstances, were obliged to beg, which they did especially at Apókria , during the night, disguised. They would present themselves below the lofty and enclosed palaces of the rich where there was much noise from the merry-making. Because the noise inside didn't permit the voices of the beggars to be heard, they were obliged to bring bells with them, which they would beat in front of the Byzantine palaces to make themselves heard. That is the reason why the géros and the koréla wear the tagaria and, with various movements, ask those whom they meet for five-or ten-lepta coins.

Nikolaos Politis, in the editor's note to Papageorgiou's article, goes along with Dawkins in certain things, objects to others and objects almost entirely to Lawson:

That the Skyrian apókreas custom is a type of dance imitating the movements of beasts, as Lawson thinks and thus characterizes it in the title of his treatise (Beast-Dance), is groundless. On the contrary much more probable appears the rapport of the custom with that of the Kalógeri of apókreas at Viza which Dawkins discerned exactly in the *Journal* of *Hellenic Studies*, v. *XXVI*, p.202, etc. But in order to explain this rapport it is unnecessary to make up the hypothesis of the complete depopulation of Skyros, from 1645, when the Venetian admiral Foscolo occupied the island, and its subsequent settling by Greeks from Thrace, as is apparently inferred by the similarity of the Skyrian idiom to that of the Thracians from *Saranta Ekklisies*.

After stating that since the population of the island at the beginning of the eighteenth century was a little less than half of what it was in his time, there could not have been a total depopulation, he claims that the Skyrian idiom has only one small similarity to the northern one and asks why one should not presuppose a repopulation from Macedonia as well as Thrace.

The Skyrian custom is connected with that of the Kalogeri of Viza because it is, like the other, an imperfectly formed dramatic representation, similar at the beginning, having as its purpose (forgotten in Skyros) the superstitious averting of evil and the obtaining of prosperity. The *Géros* of Skyros corresponds to the other Kalógeri in Viza, the *Korélla* to the *Bábo* [a man dressed as an old woman, carrying something which represents a baby] and the *Nyfádes* to the *Koritsia* [boys dressed as girls]. The *Géros* and the *Kalógeros* have in common some parts of their equipment, especially their characteristic bells. The dramatic core of the Skyros custom, which Dawkins denies, is evident if one examines it against similar customs of disguises in other parts of Greece at Apókreas, Twelve Days [from Christmas to Epiphany] and the first of May, where, in some places, because of the bells suspended from the dress of the masqueraders, they are known by the name *koudounáti*, a name in use since the Middle Ages.

Papageorgiou finishes his article by simply copying what he wishes to from Lawson, without reference, although he objects to — is even rather affronted by — the idea that the Géros of Skyros is trying to imitate a beast.

Fredrich says that even the inhabitants of the island don't know exactly when the masquerades began or what they represent but, as we have read in the appendix on the Korélla, he talks of the feminine dress as having its origin in Achilles' disguise as a girl, as does Kostas Faltaïts, who suggests a definite Dionysiac origin for the custom. Faltaïts'son, Manos, develops the idea of it being of totemistic origin in a study published in 1972. The contemporary Skyrian historian, Xenophon Antoniadis, sums it up nicely in his excellent article on the custom (1970):

Without wanting to put in doubt the scrupulousness of Dawkins, one cannot overlook the acrobatic reasoning with which he strives to support a hypothesis which he takes from the start as already given. The theory of the survival of the worship of Dionysos in Viza is one thing, but its transfer to Skyros with the goat mask and the bells of the *géros* as the only common elements, is quite another. Nothing reassures us that after the episode of Foscolo the island was completely deserted. It is much more natural to accept that the Venetians forced into their galleys certain of the youth and able men of Skyros and not that they depopulated the island completely, since from the texts both of Bouniali and Skyrou it doesn't appear that they either slaughtered the population or that they took them along with them. The theory of colonization from Thrace receives no confirmation, either linguistic or any other. Besides, nothing in the Skyrian carnival masquerade, at least as it has been given to us for many, many years, contains the winter torpor and spring revival with its symbolism of death and resurrection. The *géros* is neither beaten nor killed in the Skyrian apókreas and the hypothesis of the murder by the frángos is absolutely unfounded, given that he appears to be a much later personage, whom the earliest writers don't mention. And the custom of the *Kounoudáti* (bell-wearers) is not just Thracian. Dawkins himself finishes his study with last-minute information about the custom in Tripolis in Arcadia according to which children loaded with bells chase the lame in a symbolic driving-away of "lame February", acknowledging in a very arbitrary manner that perhaps the contact with this custom may have helped in Skyros to obliterate the other characteristics of the carnival play and to generalize and emphasise the bell element.

Papageorgiou tells us that there were two principal characters in the Skyrian apókreas: the *nýfes* and the *géri*. If they made their appearance together and one wished to consider t..e *géros* as Dionysos and the *nýfes* as the noisy retinue of mythological tradition (nymphs, bacchantes, etc.), it would be difficult to find any other element to base it on, still more the inconsistent and contradictory traditions which have been preserved by word of mouth from generation to generation. If again the characters were separate, it is equally difficult to find grounds for considering the nýfes as a survival of the myth which has Achilles dressed as a girl among the daughters of Lycomedes.

Howsoever, the custom in its present-day evolved form has, in Skyros, one single manifestation. [He has a note here that he is naturally not talking about the other different Carnival disguises, varied and changing, which are practically panhellenic.] It consists of the géros, the koréla and frángo. And if we accept the Frángos as a more recent addition (without nevertheless being able to explain his present-day firm attachment to the géros-koréla duet), there remain the géros and the koréla as the only elements of the symbolic representation. That it is not fortuitous but symbolic we do not think there is any doubt. Evidence for this is its obstinate preservation, for, be it with changes, it has come down to our days, while it is certain that just any other chance disguise, however successful, would not withstand the passing of time, as other masquerades which once marked a great success, have not: for example, the scene of the slave-children covered with soot which Konstantinidis mentions. And also the expression of a certain orgiastic character in a representation so original and alive, cannot be excluded. There is a point of view that Dionysos was particularly worshipped in ancient Skyros and that the god was the protector of the town. That such old remnants live on in the forms of the *géros* and the *koréla* or that the memory of the hidden Achilles survives in the nýfes, are hypotheses which cannot be traced today and each theory based on one or the other point of view is sure to bring forth a contrary and equally forceful interpretation.

Skyros, for all that it is an island, has kept for centuries a farming and shepherding character. The shepherd was and is the fundamental personage who dominates its entire life. Considering the manifest shepherd-like appearance of the *géros* with the basic dress of the shepherd, the skin for a mask,the shepherd's bells at the waist,it is very difficultnot to connect this with the character of the island. Rather it is for this reason that the interpretation of the ruined shepherd who loaded himself with the bells from his dead sheep and goats found such a repercussion in the popular imagination and has dominated as the traditional explanation of the custom. It is true that the Skyrian temperament has clothed the géros with its own optimism and its own courage: the interpretation, however, has remained the same. Not because there is any fact that can support it but because it is so evident to themselves. And as such it is so particularly attractive.

It is indeed tempting to consider the Skyrian custom as having a Dionysiac origin. Geographic isolation has kept — until recently — the population of Skyros attached to ancient traditions, and many customs of ancient Greece survive. In pre-Homeric and Homeric times the island had an important position in the Aegean. The oldest recorded king of Skyros was Enyeus, one of the sons of Dionysos and Homer called the town "steep Skyros, city of Enyeus" (*Iliad* IX, 668). It was Enyeus who, at some time before the Trojan war, built the old town — the acropolis — the Kastro. Some say that the old temple of Dionysos, patron of Skyros, was in the Kastro and that there were other places for his worship all over the island, the most sensational of which would certainly have been the 100-foot-high phallus which (it is also believed) stood in the present square where now a more conservative statue has been erected to the memory of Rupert Brooke who died off the island and is buried there. (Faltaïts, 1959 b,p.l.).

As I said in the introduction, these survivals may go back even further than the Dionysia to a totemistic age. It is even possible that the power of metamorphosis manifest today in the Skyros goat-dance dates back to the pre-Homeric legend about the Pelasgian tribe of Centaurs — shaggy mountain men living in a prehistoric age on Mount Pelion — a short distance from Skyros — and who were believed to have had magic powers to turn themselves into beasts. Lawson, in *Modern Greek Folklore and Ancient Greek Religion,* develops at length his idea that the modern *Kallikántzari* — mischievous wicked demons who appear in Greece during the twelve days from Christmas to Epiphany — have their origin in the Centaurs. But when I asked the people, some of whom would be nearing one hundred now, if the Géros had any connection with the Kallikántzari, this was met with either shock or great hilarity. "We don't want any of those! The Kallikántzari are something else. To tell you the truth, we're afraid of them."

Papageorgiou has a tendency to write just what he wishes to have observed, while pretending to be more accurate. After all, there is not such a difference in years between his early youth and the time when Dawkins observed the trio of Géros, Korélla and Frángos, the Géros as the principal character of the Carnival. And the Frangos is too closely attached to the others to have been added just at the end of the nineteenth century. However, I go along absolutely with what Mr. Antoniadis has to say and particularly with his concluding paragraph. This suggests that no interpretation, if one is possible at all, can be found which does not take into consideration the actual character of the island which has always been dominated by shepherding.

But when I asked whether their custom has anything to do with the weather and its effect on their particular products, few Skyrians living on the island seemed to make a definite connection. And this, in spite of the legend they give as the origin of the custom.

Selected Bibliography

Antoniadis, X.A. (1970), «Ἕνα Παράδοξο Ἀποκρηάτικο Ἔθιμο στὴ Σκύρο», *Ἀρχεῖον Εὐβοϊκῶν Μελετῶν,* vol. 16, pp. 395-415.

Dawkins, R.M. (1905), "A Visit to Skyros", *Annual of the British School of Athens,* no. XI (1904-1905), pp. 72-74.

(1906), "The Modern Carnival in Thrace and the Cult of Dionysus", *Journal of Hellenic Studies,* vol. XXVI, pp. 191-206.

Faltaïts, K. (1939a), *Ναοὶ καὶ Λατρείαι τοῦ Διονύσου ἐν Σκύρῳ* (Athens).

(1939b), *Ἡ ἐν Σκύρω Συρία Θεὰ* (Athens).

Faltaïts, M. (1973), *Λαϊκὸ Θέατρο καὶ Ἀποκριάτικη Σάτυρα στὴ Σκύρο* (Athens).

(1972), *Τὸ Καρναβάλι τῆς Σκύρου καὶ ἡ Καταγωγὴ τῶν Ἀπόκρεω* (Athens).

Fiedler, K.G. (1841), *Reise dürch alle Theile des Königreiches Griechenland* (Leipzig), vol. II, p. 83.

Frangoulis, A.I. (1959), *Σκυριανοὶ Ἀντίλαλοι* (Skyros), pp. 31-56, 128-140.

Fredrich, C. (1915), *Vor den Dardanellen auf Altgriechischen Insel und auf den Athos* (Berlin), p. 154.

Hadjimichali, Angeliki (1925), *Ἑλληνικὴ Λαϊκὴ Τέχνη Σκύρος* (Athens), pp. 60-83.

Konstantinidis, M. (1901), *Ἡ Νῆσος Σκύρος* (Athens), pp. 171-174.

Lawson, J.C. (1899), "A Beast-Dance in Skyros", *Annual of the British School of Athens,* no. VI (1899-1900), pp. 125-127.

(1910), *Modern Greek Folklore and Ancient Greek Religion* (Cambridge, Rp. University Books, 1964), pp. 190-255.

Megas, G.A. (1956), *Ἑλληνικαὶ Ἑορταὶ καὶ Ἔθιμα τῆς Λαϊκῆς Λατρείας* (Athens), pp. 91-123.

Papageorgiou, D. (1910), «Αἱ Ἀπόκρεω ἐν Σκύρῳ», *Λαογραφία,* vol. II, pp. 35-47.

Perdika, Niki L. (1940), *Σκύρος* (Athens), pp. 132-133.

Politis, N.G. (1910), *Λαογραφία,* vol. II, p. 47n.

Romaios, C.A. (1949), *Cultes populaires de la Thrace* (Athens, Collection de l'Institut Francais d'Athènes) pp. 151-54.

The Goat-Dance of Skyros
with text and photographs
by
Joy Coulentianou
was printed offset under
the supervision of Pavlos Vakalis
in 3000 copies.
Athens 1977

Ἐκδόσεις «ΕΡΜΗΣ»
Σμολένσκυ 34, Τηλ. 3607.747

Ἀρ. Ἐκ . 209