

**TRADITION AND MODERNITY IN  
THE MEDITERRANEAN**

The subject of Vassos Argyrou's study is modernization, as reflected in the changing nature of wedding celebrations in Cyprus over two generations. He argues that modernization is not a process that makes a society "modern," but a legitimizing discourse. It is an idiom that Greek Cypriots employ to represent, and contest, relationships between social classes, old and young, men and women, the city and the village. It is also the way in which they conceptualize, and submit to, the symbolic domination of Europe.

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TRADITION AND  
MODERNITY IN THE  
MEDITERRANEAN

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The wedding as symbolic struggle

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To my mother  
and in memory of my father

**This is because knowledge is not made for understanding;  
it is made for cutting.**

Michel Foucault, *Nietzsche, Genealogy, History*

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# Introduction

## **Preliminaries**

This book is about a fashionable topic – symbolic domination. My reason for writing about it is simple. I wanted to understand how a small, and at one point largely self-contained, self-sustained, and overwhelmingly rural society that had embarked on a journey of socioeconomic transformation quite accidentally, has ended up sixty years later and despite itself being a prisoner of its own devices. I wanted to understand this process of self-victimization largely because for half of this time I was on board travelling along.

This is the story of Greek Cypriot society<sup>1</sup> and its journey to a destination variably called locally “modernity,” “Europe,” or “the West.”<sup>2</sup> In more general terms, it is an attempt to explore how societies, like individuals, become subjects in Foucault’s (1982) sense of the term, that is, how they tie themselves to a particular identity and submit in this way to other, more powerful societies. In what follows, I explore these issues by focusing on the foremost Cypriot cultural celebration: the wedding. What have the major changes in wedding celebrations been since the early 1930s, the point of departure of this study, and how did they come about? How are weddings celebrated today? To what extent are they differentiated, and along what lines? What do they signify about Greek Cypriot culture itself, its internal dynamics, tensions, and contradictions, and the dilemmas that it is currently facing?

These questions may seem the parochial concerns of an obscure little island in the Eastern Mediterranean. Weddings themselves are often considered “folkloristic” and rather banal to be of contemporary interest. Nothing could be more misleading. Unlike other societies where weddings seem to be largely a family affair, in Cyprus they have been and still are the

most important cultural celebration, something of a master symbol that encapsulates, expresses, and helps to reproduce a complex way of life, as current and vibrant as any other we know. In order to understand this way of life, wedding celebrations are one of the first things that one must turn to. As for the culture itself, I hope to be able to show that its significance transcends the national and regional boundaries of Cyprus and poses crucial questions about the meaning of such ubiquitous notions as the West and the politics of globalizing processes like Westernization.

In its recent history, Cyprus has been an Ottoman province for three centuries and a British colony for almost one.<sup>3</sup> This historical legacy continues to animate the island's present and shape its future. Caught in the interstices of what is often called "the Great Divide" – between Occident and Orient, the West and the Other – Cypriot society is striving to rid itself of what is retrospectively depicted as the Orientalizing "affliction" of the Ottomans, and to capitalize on the "civilizing" experience furnished by the British presence. Post-colonial Cyprus then, lends itself, more than any other place perhaps, for the study of global hegemonic processes that are constantly referred to, but are not as frequently critically questioned and analyzed. For what does it really mean to say that other societies and cultures are Westernizing? Is this a process of homogenization and sameness as anthropologists have maintained all along? Is the West a destination to be reached, an object to be appropriated, or a specter that haunts those under its spell? What are the assumptions that underlie these notions and what are the politics that sustain and reproduce them?

The present study may be read as a commentary on how one society grapples with some of these questions. It is an analysis of how Greek Cypriots reify the West – in contrast and in many ways parallel to the way Westerners reify themselves (Carrier 1992) – in their struggles for identity and power. The main argument is that during the last sixty years or so the notion of the West has emerged as the dominant idiom through which a series of relations of inequality are both resisted and legitimated: between social classes, age groups, men and women, city dwellers and villagers, mainland and Cypriot Greeks, and between the two main communities on the island, Greek and Turkish Cypriots. I also argue that through these struggles Greek Cypriots express, enact, and inadvertently reproduce a historical experience of symbolic domination – the recognition that their cultural identity is inferior to that of the countries of Western Europe and North America.

My thinking about these issues has been influenced by several writers. In his work on Greece, Herzfeld (1986, 1987a) furnished us with critical

insight into the nature of Greek identity: the polarity between the European front that Greeks display to foreigners and the Oriental aspects of their culture which they acknowledge among themselves. This is the predicament of a culture which has been historically assigned to the “margins of Europe,” of a people expected to play the role of the “living ancestor” of Europe but also function as a palpable reminder of the consequences of Orientalization (Herzfeld 1987a). This insight is particularly relevant in the case of Cyprus, a predominantly Greek-speaking island, which, as a British colony, has been marginalized in a more tangible and perhaps more fundamental way.<sup>4</sup> I have sought to elaborate Herzfeld’s argument further by showing that the dichotomy extends far beyond the “inside/outside” axis. My aim has been to ground the dichotomy in the social order and to show that it follows the logic of symbolic struggles between social groups. Greek Cypriots do not display a European front only to foreigners, but also to one another – the weddings of the urban middle class are precisely such a display. Similarly, acknowledging an Oriental identity is not merely an act of reflexivity and soul-searching, but also a strategy of legitimation. An “authentic” local identity is often viewed not as a flaw, but as something to be proudly displayed, as indeed “village” weddings so graphically demonstrate. In the same vein, when the Cypriot bourgeoisie laments the “backwardness” of Cypriot culture, its aim is to differentiate and distinguish itself. For the reference is not to what it takes to be *its* culture, but that of villagers and the working classes.

The book also draws heavily on Bourdieu’s work, particularly *Distinction*, and the argument that culture – on account of its opposition to nature – is “predisposed to fulfil . . . a social function of legitimating social differences” (1984:7).<sup>5</sup> I employ this insight to show that in culturally dominated societies the process of legitimation is decisively reinforced by appeals to “higher authorities.” In Cyprus where people are in addition predisposed to view the countries of Western Europe and North America as the site of the highest culture, association with Western symbols and practices serves to legitimate the legitimation.

*Distinction* has been criticized on several grounds, but the most relevant here is the view that the book relies on an ahistorical structuralism which reifies French culture on a massive scale (Frow 1987; Gartman 1991:421). Other, more sympathetic readers have noted similar problems and suggested ways in which Bourdieu’s “theory of practice” may be developed to account for change (Lash 1993). These criticisms should not be taken lightly. It is true that one of the auxiliary analytical concepts in *Distinction* is “social trajectory” – the change in perceptions, evaluations, and actions

that individuals undergo during the course of their lives. Nonetheless, Bourdieu's largely synchronic approach forces him to focus more on the reproduction of class culture than its transformation.

The present study does not seek to explain change in any theoretical sense. However, it employs an empirical, diachronic perspective which I hope renders change intelligible. The inevitable synchronic juxtaposition between "village" and bourgeois weddings in chapter 5 is an analytical strategy. It is not intended to suggest anything remotely close to a state of equilibrium. For even though distinction is maintained and reproduced, the process takes place within a dynamic field. Emulation of the dominant culture, initially by the "petite bourgeoisie" and subsequently by villagers and the urban working class, triggers strategies of further differentiation in a cycle of transformations and counter-transformations.

I return to this dynamic element in the last chapter where I examine the symbolic confrontation between Cyprus and Europe. I argue that in this particular field of power relations, emulation triggers strategies of denial rather than further differentiation. Cypriot claims to a European identity are frustrated through the essentialization of Cypriot culture so that change is depicted either as loss of character or an imitation of the "original." I suggest that the conditions of possibility of such denials are to be found in the complex interplay between the monopolization of the means of symbolic production – that is, production of legitimate culture and superior identity – and the recognition, implicit or otherwise, that Cypriots accord to Europe as the only legitimate source of it.

### **Questions of method**

This study is not intended as a polemic either against Europe and more generally the West or the Greek Cypriot bourgeoisie. At the same time, I do not deny that my personal circumstances as a member of a dominated society and my background as a member of a dominated social class cannot be easily divorced from my decision to undertake this study and the point of view that I take.

In a dominated society such as Cyprus there is virtually no prospect of escaping the poignant conclusion that one's cultural identity is inferior. The educational establishment teaches, with all the seriousness that befits it, that in the global scheme of things Cyprus is "underdeveloped" or, more recently, "developing." The mass media popularizes similar "scientific" truths: the country has a relatively high "infant-mortality rate"; "life expectancy" is not as good as in Europe; the level of "literacy" is still quite low; there are not as many telephones or television sets "per 1,000 inhabi-

tants” as in the “developed” world. In casual conversation the rhetoric has it that, as far as Cypriot culture is concerned, *imasten piso pou ton kosmon* (we are behind the world), or that *zioumen ston meseonan akoma* (we still live in the Middle Ages).

Moreover, anyone who spends time in Europe or North America is sooner or later forced to deal with one’s tainted identity. And no matter what one does or says, one is in the end confirmed as culturally inferior. Ethnocentrism need not be blatant and direct. It is already incorporated in the way Others have been historically constituted. For example, the seemingly innocuous question, “What is the position of women in Cyprus?” is more often than not rhetorical. It presupposes the “knowledge” that they are in fact dominated.<sup>6</sup> One may deny the “backwardness” of one’s culture – “Men and women are equal” – in which case one is simply not believed. Or one may defend it – “Women in Cyprus are not promiscuous” – in which case one simply confirms one’s backwardness. Alternatively, one may take the middle ground: acknowledge the backwardness but emphasize the modernizing trends – “They are still subjugated, of course, but things are changing, particularly in towns” – in which case one implicitly acknowledges the other’s superiority for setting the standards.

My return to Cyprus and the study I was undertaking was partly an attempt to come to terms with myself – my village, my working-class background, and my current position as a member of an educated elite; the culture that I grew up in and doubtless carry with me consciously and unconsciously, and my place in this culture. I am also aware that the choice of weddings as an object of study has not been exclusively determined by the “rational” considerations that I cite below. It is also partly related to my personal stance toward marriage, family, and the celebration of values associated with these and other conventional social institutions. When I was still living on the island, I stubbornly refused to attend any weddings, but it was only after I became an anthropologist that I understood why. On my return, my family treated my decision to study weddings with surprise and disbelief, and subsequently with silent anticipation that “I have finally changed.” I may have disappointed them.

The point in making these comments is not to suggest that I endorse a relativistic philosophy that treats every account as the subjective outcome of one’s social position in the world. It is to show that I am well aware of these issues and their potential influence on my work. I certainly do not claim the status of a free-floating intellectual. Undoubtedly, there is no vantage point outside history and, as it has been recently put, we all write “fictions” and “partial truths” (Clifford 1986a). However, it is also the

case, and many people seem to forget this, that some truths are less partial than others. I strove not to turn this work into a polemic and I hope that I have succeeded. At the same time, I do not deny an ethical disposition that places me on the side of the weak and the dominated.

The choice of wedding celebrations as the object of study and the time span of around sixty years over which I propose to carry out this investigation require further elaboration. There are several methodological points that need to be made, some general and theoretical, and some specific to the Cypriot context.

The first and rather obvious point is that weddings fall under that broad theoretical category that anthropologists call ritual. Whatever the differences among anthropologists, for instance, as to the precise meaning of the term, it is safe to say that, as a minimal consensus, rituals constitute occasions where people act out collectively whatever it is about themselves and their society that they consider important. As one anthropologist succinctly put it: ritual constitutes “a neatly demarcated frame of time and space [within which] the norms and values of a culture are enacted, usually in a condensed, exaggerated form” (Brandes 1988:6).

Brandes alludes to certain features of ritual that have received considerable attention in anthropological literature. It has been argued, for instance, that rituals are set apart from everyday life in a conceptually, temporally, and spatially distinct framework (Douglas 1966); that they tend to condense a wide range of meanings in a few symbols (Turner 1967); and that they are enacted in an exaggerated and often redundant manner (Tambiah 1979). We must also add to these features the fact that rituals are often public events. All these have been cited as factors that account for a certain “didactic” dimension in ritual, its ability to impart norms and values to the individual, whether participant or participant observer. As Marcus and Fischer (1986:61) point out, rituals are “much more accessible as the collective and public ‘said’ in contrast to the ‘unsaid,’ the understated, and the tacit meanings of everyday life.”

The nature of ritual, then, makes it a prime candidate for the study of any culture. For the anthropologist working in Cyprus, wedding celebrations offer an additional incentive. Unlike the countries of Western Europe and North America where they are considered to be a “family affair,” in Cyprus they are truly a public event. In his book on the wedding industry in Scotland, Charsley (1991:95) reports that the number of guests at the four weddings he studied ranged from 47 to 161. In Cyprus, an average-sized wedding numbers 1,500–2,000 people, while weddings with twice as many guests are not unknown. To place these figures into perspec-



tive, it is necessary to bear in mind that Greek Cypriots number around 600,000 souls (Republic of Cyprus 1991a:39). An average wedding, therefore, is attended by almost a half percent of the population. In the United States this would amount to over a million guests.

A time span of about sixty years takes us into the early 1930s, a period that, as I will show below (chapter 1), had been a turning point in the socioeconomic and cultural history of the country. The subsequent decade in particular, was a time of profound and dramatic structural change, and it is in these changes that the foundations of Greek Cypriot modernity should be sought. Loizos (1985) provides a concise summary of the sociostructural transformations during this period. Here, it should suffice to say that two fundamental, concomitant processes were already under way. The first was the transformation of a subsistence economy, based on cereal cultivation and stock raising, into a cash, market economy based on irrigated, mechanized agriculture, light industry, and services, most notably tourism. Second, there was a massive exodus of the rural population and an influx into the major urban centers, particularly Nicosia and Limassol (Attalides 1981). If the 1940s, then, was a period when drastic socioeconomic and cultural changes were already well under way, any diachronic, comparative study must take as its point of departure the preceding decade, namely, the 1930s.<sup>7</sup>

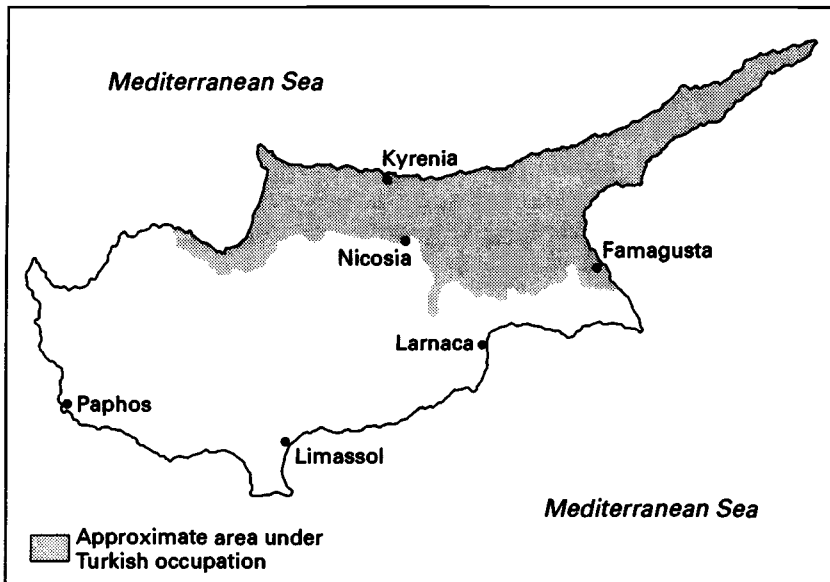
I spent a total of fourteen months in Cyprus, between June 1991 and July 1992, though fieldwork was not my only preoccupation. A substantial part of my time was allocated to a non-academic, mundane pursuit, namely, making a living. When in the spring of 1991 it became apparent that my research proposal was not likely to be funded, I decided to proceed with fieldwork and seek a money-making vocation to sustain the anthropologist. The combination was not ideal perhaps, but in one sense it rendered my research more penetrating. My presence as an anthropologist was less conspicuous and intrusive and although people were aware that I was doing some kind of research, they often responded to my questions the same way they would have responded to their friends and acquaintances.

I spent the summers of 1991 and 1992 working as a bartender in the heart of Paphos's tourist area and the rest of the time as a teacher of English at a private school in Nicosia. The arrangement compromised my ability to do fieldwork in other parts of the country, but the impact on the quality and quantity of the data that I have collected was minimal. There are several reasons for this. Being a very small society, both in terms of population and area,<sup>8</sup> Cyprus is culturally relatively homogenized.

Moreover, since I was to investigate tradition and modernity, Nicosia, being the capital and the largest Cypriot town, proved to be an excellent location for the exploration of the latest trends in wedding celebrations. Paphos, on the other hand, is considered by many Cypriots as the most traditional – meaning “backward” – area. As the saying has it, *Paphitin anayionis, katsoshiron meronis* (raising a Paphian [is like trying] to domesticate a hedgehog). By studying wedding celebrations in Paphos and Nicosia, then, I was effectively studying what Cypriots themselves consider to be the old and the new. Whatever else was there came between the two. Nonetheless, to minimize the risk of missing out on important practices that might have been going on in other areas, I attended as many weddings outside Nicosia and Paphos as possible. In total, I attended sixteen weddings: six in Nicosia, five in Paphos, three in Limassol, and two in Larnaca. At the same time, I followed closely the local magazines and newspapers which keep an eye on the *kosmiki zoi* (social life) in all parts of the country, frequently reporting on “selected” weddings and publishing many photographs.

On the basis of the information that I collected from older informants and folkloric accounts,<sup>9</sup> I reconstructed the wedding celebrations of the 1930s and made them the point of departure for the exploration of subse-

Figure 1. Sketch map of Cyprus



quent changes. My aim has been to uncover the forces of change, the internal dynamics and processes that shaped these practices and transformed them into what they are today. In the next section, I attempt to place these issues in perspective and present a brief introduction to the main body of this study.

### Weddings

In some societies, people save money all their lives so that when they die, they can have a decent funeral. In others, what counts most is a decent wedding. Greek Cypriots adopt the latter view and go out of their way to stage grand weddings that cost large amounts of money, require considerable investment in time and effort, and involve thousands of guests. To have a “close” wedding is almost an oxymoron and to many simply inconceivable. When asked to explain the sense in staging grand celebrations, they often provide a simple, rhetorical answer: “One gets married only once.” And although this is still largely true in Cyprus,<sup>10</sup> the significance of marriage as a social institution does not by itself explain the importance that people attach to weddings as a cultural celebration.

Writing in the late 1920s, Surridge, a British colonial administrator, was clearly impressed by the extravagance of wedding celebrations in an otherwise impoverished countryside:

Marriage festivities are customary and also extravagant in most villages if the strictly practical point of view is adopted . . . A waste of time and a needless display perhaps, but there is little else to break the monotony of life in the fields.

(1930:25)

As I will show in the next chapter, the 1930s were a period of extreme poverty and hardship for the vast majority of the population. Nonetheless, “weddings were weddings,” older informants insisted, even if it meant that, to do what one needed and was expected to do, one was compelled to borrow money and often be plunged into crippling debt. The significance of wedding celebrations in Greek Cypriot society has been more recently noted by Loizos. In Argaki, a village in the Nicosia district now under Turkish occupation, “Weddings were *the* social events of the village calendar” (1981:27). Local ethnographic studies (Markides *et al.* 1978; Averof 1986), even though couched in the functionalist paradigm, likewise depict weddings as a principal celebration. But the most telling indication of the importance accorded to weddings is their sheer size. In a society of just over half a million people, they are invariably, even though not always willingly, attended by several thousand guests.

One of the main arguments of this study is that wedding celebrations have been transformed from rites of passage to rites of class distinction. The weddings of the 1930s were characterized by several rites that can be made intelligible on the basis of Van Gennep's (1960) tripartite structure. Nonetheless, it would be only partially true to say that these rites marked the transition of actors from one social position to the next. At the same time, by reproducing the major cultural categories, weddings contributed to the reproduction of the social order and the inequalities embedded in it, primarily between age groups. The emphasis on relations of inequality is not meant to deny that weddings also reproduced kinship, the family as an economic unit, and other social institutions. Rather, my aim is to highlight those forces that were primarily responsible for subsequent changes so that contemporary wedding celebrations may become intelligible.

The role of weddings as rites of passage, important though it may have been, cannot by itself account for the importance that Cypriots accord to them. The weddings of the 1930s must also be understood as "potlatches" in Mauss's (1967) sense of the term. Like potlatches, they followed the logic of gift exchange, were characterized by extravagance and conspicuous consumption, and were animated by a similar agonistic spirit. In effect, the hosts sought to surpass the generosity or *fouartalliki* (the disposition of the big spender) of others in past encounters and to anticipate manifestations of it in similar future events. And just as potlatches operated as mechanisms of social ascendancy, so weddings enhanced prestige and moral authority. At the same time, by reproducing the ideology of the big spender in a society marked by economic inequalities, they contributed, inadvertently but inevitably, to the legitimation of relations of exploitation among the dominant social group – adult men.

The potlatch-like character of wedding celebrations is one of the elements least affected by change. Contemporary weddings are as competitive and extravagant as they have ever been, itself an indication that the *fouartas* (big-spender) ideology continues to be a critical factor in the struggle for prestige and power. Nonetheless, the celebrations have been transformed in many, often striking ways. Of all the changes, four are particularly conspicuous. To begin with, the duration of celebrations has been drastically curtailed from five days in the 1930s to a single day. Second, there has been a remarkable increase in the number of guests, itself an indication that the shorter version does not necessarily signify trivialization of the event. Third, the ritual display of the bride's virginity, initially to all guests and subsequently to kin only, has been universally abandoned. Not only is sexual access to the bride possible long before the

actual wedding – but usually after the official engagement – it is also now recognized that the question of virginity is the couple's private concern. Last, weddings have been polarized between two antagonistic types: “village” weddings (*khorkatiki ghami*), enacted by villagers and the urban working classes, and what I call “champagne” weddings, the celebrations of the urban middle class.

To understand the significance of these changes, it is necessary to situate them in the context of the wider transformation of the sociocultural order. Contrary to scholarly and native interpretations, the shortening of the celebrations has little to do with either costs or tighter work schedules, much less with the current availability of alternative forms of entertainment. The change signifies the restructuring of power relations between parents and children, the old and the young, and the concomitant “dejuvenilization” of youngsters before marriage. Spreading the various rites designed to bring them into the world of adulthood over five days when they had already achieved, even if partially, the status practically and by themselves began to seem superfluous. The disappearance of the ritual display of the bride's virginity may also be interpreted partly as the result of the restructuring in the balance of power between the generations. Sexual intercourse before marriage was one of the stakes that engaged youngsters could now bargain for. Even so, the parent's eventual relenting must not be interpreted as submission to the youngsters' demands. It was largely a strategic manipulation of the new conditions by the parents, an attempt to ensure success of their ultimate objective – that engagement led to marriage. If engaged youngsters could no longer be prevented from having sex before marriage, it was best to institutionalize the practice and bring it under parental control.

To say that wedding celebrations have been transformed from rites of passage to rites of distinction is not to deny that they are still in many ways practices that signify changes in social position and status. The individual identity implicated in these changes, however, has now been subordinated to a more collective and compelling one – class identity. The polarization of weddings signifies a wider symbolic confrontation between, on the one hand, villagers and the urban working classes and, on the other, the urban bourgeoisie. Contemporary weddings, then, are primarily the *locus* of symbolic class struggles rather than the ground for individual passage to adulthood. In many ways, class antagonism in weddings follows the logic of the nature–culture opposition, but in addition both sides appeal to higher authorities for legitimation. Thus, the bourgeoisie distinguishes itself from other classes on the basis of two interrelated strategies: it

claims a superior, modern identity and seeks to legitimate the claim by displaying the presumed affinity that this identity has with European culture. In the same vein, villagers and the urban working classes respond to the challenge by stigmatizing bourgeois modernity and by appealing for legitimation to the authority of an “authentic,” local tradition.

Whether modernity and its twin notion of modernization or Westernization are perceived as a blessing or anathema, their meaning is largely constituted in the context of social struggles. This contextualization of Westernization for Cypriots raises several related questions. How is the meaning of Westernization constituted in academia, and in particular anthropology, the science of the Other? What is the relation between the common understanding of the West in the countries of Europe and North America and the Cypriot understanding? And what are the implications for both Cypriots and anthropologists? The most intriguing aspect of these questions and the answers to them is the homologies that emerge from the juxtaposition of meanings. On the one hand, anthropologists and Cypriots, particularly villagers and working-class people, share the same basic understanding of Westernization. For the former, it is global homogenization and sameness; for the latter, cultural alienation and loss of identity. In both cases, it is anathema. On the other hand, the notion of the West in the West and among the Cypriot bourgeoisie is understood in pretty much the same way. In both cases, it signifies superior cultural identity. What is one to make of all this, then?

To begin with, the meaning of Westernization in anthropology must be sought in the antagonistic relations that anthropologists maintain with other groups in their *own* societies. For a dominated faction of the dominant class, as anthropologists and, more generally, academics are, Westernization as homogenization is an implicit critique of the social order and of those who occupy the dominant positions in it. Second, as it has been frequently pointed out by anthropologists themselves, the notion of the West as a superior cultural identity has been constituted in the context of colonialism and neo-colonialism and serves to legitimate the domination of one block of nations over the rest of the world. In short, whatever else it may be, the West is an instrument of division, a mechanism of power. The implications of this “anthropological” understanding of the notion of the West for anthropologists are ironic. Through the notion of Westernization, they reify – and they must, if the notion is to have any meaning – the countries of North America and Europe as the West, that is, as a unified culture. In this way, and against their better judgment, they inadvertently reproduce the very ideology they mean to

debunk. The implications for Cypriots are equally ironic and perhaps more painful.

The constitution of the Cypriot bourgeoisie as the dominant social class is inextricably associated with the recognition it accords to the superiority of Western culture. This recognition is accorded both practically – as in its weddings and general lifestyle – and at the level of discourse, that is, through the endorsement of the ideology of Westernization. The subjugating effects of this recognition are much more complex than they may initially appear. If the “anthropological” understanding of the West as an instrument of division and power has any truth in it, Westernization is neither a process nor progress. It is a circularity, in both senses of the term – a stasis of sorts. In fact, Cypriots experience the anthropological truth in practice quite frequently. Their claims to a modern, European identity are repudiated by the European tourist, writer, or intellectual as soon as they are asserted. Cypriot modernity is denied either as an imitation of the original, or as a loss of local character, or both.

Ironically, resistance to Western hegemony by the dominated has the same subjugating results. And even though the mechanism is different, it is equally effective. By embracing the local “authentic” tradition, the dominated embrace their inferior position in the world. By rejecting modernity, they willingly relinquish any claims to the advantages it confers. Such are, at least, the effects of *symbolic* resistance. For it is both misrecognized and misdirected.

# 1

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## The island of Aphrodite<sup>1</sup>

It is May 1991. The flight from London Heathrow to Larnaca airport takes just over four hours. I am sitting in one of Cyprus Airways's "sunjets" going home. Home also happens to be "the field," the site that I have chosen to conduct my research. Anthropologists do not usually study their own culture. The concern is that they already know too much about it practically to be able to achieve the distance required to reconstruct it theoretically.<sup>2</sup> Put in another way, "native" anthropologists are themselves situated in the sociocultural universe they intend to study. And like any other social actor, they have invested in the game and are implicated in the struggles that it entails – or so the received wisdom postulates. Yet sociologists study their own societies as a matter of course, which goes to show that detachment does not have to be objectively part of one's relation with one's object of study. It can be achieved.

Larnaca airport, the major port of entry into the government-controlled area, is still very much a "refugee" airport. It was constructed in haste after the Turkish invasion of 1974 when it became apparent that the main airport on the island in Nicosia could no longer be operated, as it was now lying in the demilitarized buffer zone – euphemistically called the "Green Line" – separating the Turkish-occupied north from the rest of the country and was, therefore, out of bounds. The government chose Larnaca in which to build a new airport largely because of the existing infrastructure – an old British airfield just outside the town to the west.

The passenger terminal is a small prefabricated building and looks rather bare and basic compared to the Nicosia airport terminal. Since its construction, it has undergone numerous extensions and renovations to cope with the ever-increasing tourist traffic. And although it is now much larger than the Nicosia terminal, it still lacks the air of sophistication that



one usually associates with international airports. Larnaca airport lies next to the sea and by one of the two salt lakes in Cyprus which in spring attracts large numbers of flamingos and other migratory birds. In the distance, at the north-west end of the lake, surrounded by palm trees and lush greenery, lies one of the holiest Muslim shrines, the Tekke, dedicated to the Prophet's aunt who was killed nearby when she visited the island. At the south end of the lake, very close to the runway, there is a large *laiki paralia*, literally a popular beach, so called because it has been organized with an eye on low-income groups. During the summer months the beach is bustling with mainly working-class people who do not seem to mind the noise of the airplanes. In fact, many seem to be excited whenever a plane takes off or lands. "Kostaki, look. Do you see how big that plane is?" "Papa (Daddy), how do planes fly?" "Eh . . . they fly, like birds!"

The drive to Nicosia on the new highway takes about forty-five minutes. The road passes through an area with an almost desert-like feel to it. It is dominated by several low, white chalk hills which, despite efforts to reforest them, look bald and dry. Half-way to the capital, the Larnaca highway converges with the Limassol–Nicosia highway and heads north into a flat, golden plain of wheat and barley. A few more minutes and the skyline of Nicosia can be seen in the distance, white and irregular, against the background of Pendadhaktilos, the "five-fingered" mountain range in the Turkish-occupied north. The closer one gets to Nicosia the hotter it becomes. In the summer, which for all practical purposes begins in May and ends in September, the capital outruns the other towns by as many as 10 degrees Celsius. During the hottest days the temperature in Nicosia often climbs to 40 degrees Celsius. Yet as much as I dreaded the heat of the capital, so much more did I look forward to its cool, breezy nights on the veranda, in the taverna courtyard, the sidewalk cafe or bar, and the open-air cinema.

### **The capital**

Nicosia is a divided city. The "Green Line" that separates the two Cypriot communities cuts through the heart of the town, the old part of Nicosia that is surrounded by the sixteenth-century Venetian walls. Ledras and Onasagorou, one of the main shopping areas, are dead-end streets. As one walks along, one comes abruptly to an end – the street is cut off by sand bags and sentry posts. There is only one small opening for the United Nations military patrols, the only people who can cross freely from one side of the "Green Line" to the other. The sentry posts are manned by 18-year-olds, just out of high school, doing their two-year military service. On

the other side of the line, Turkish Cypriot youngsters doing their military service man the Turkish sentry posts. In some places in the old city, sentries are divided by nothing more than the street, and the young conscripts engage in conversation and often abuse. Greek and Turkish Cypriots, it would seem, are so close to one another and yet so far apart.

During the early days of my stay in Cyprus, I lived in Aylantjia, one of Nicosia's largest suburbs. Subsequently, I moved to Nicosia-within-the-walls in an old, two-storey house near the Archbishopric and St. John's Cathedral, the church preferred by the Nicosian elite for its weddings. The house was also within walking distance from one of the gates of the Venetian walls, known locally as the "Famagusta Gate." The gate itself has been converted into a cultural center by the Nicosia municipality and regularly hosts art exhibitions, lectures, and other cultural events. There are also concerts and theater performances in a small, open-air theater outside the gate in the fosse. This particular section of Nicosia-within-the-walls has been high on the municipality's list of priorities for conservation. And like a similar project in the Cretan town of Rethemnos (Herzfeld 1991), it has often led to bitter struggles between the local inhabitants who feel that they are entitled to do what they wish with their houses and the municipality that seeks to preserve the historic character of the area.

Being one of the first areas to be renovated, and with a spirit of "progressive" conservationism very much in the air, the area around Famagusta Gate has become very trendy and is bustling with nightlife. Several cafes, restaurants, bars, and a small theatre company sprang up, all with an air of alternative lifestyle and urban sophistication. The clientele includes intellectuals, artists, environmentalists, and journalists, and one or two of these establishments are reputed to be gay meeting places. The modernity of the area signifies different things to different people. To the plain-clothes, usually moustachioed policemen, it largely means drugs. To the local inhabitants, the vast majority of whom are old and poor, it translates into commotion and sleepless nights. To the respectable bourgeoisie, it causes a vague uneasiness; and to the working classes, it seems pretentious. For those who frequent the area, however, it is a modernity with a difference. Like the Athenian elite that Faubion (1993) describes, they see themselves in the process of constructing a new identity, one that is inspired by the West but sustained by the recent Cypriot past, classical Greek civilization, and more recently the Orthodox Byzantine tradition. The concern is with a Cypriot cultural identity that does not simply adopt *ksenoferta pramata* (foreign-brought things), but assimilates what is to be assimilated within an already existing framework of historical consciousness.

Outside the Venetian walls to the south lies new Nicosia. There is another kind of modernity out here that consists of high-rise apartment and office blocks, hotels, and more recently imposing steel and glass structures. The heart of this modernity is Makarios III Avenue – after the late president and archbishop Makarios – and the surrounding streets. This is the main shopping area outside the walls and the streets are lined with exclusive boutiques and shops. They provide an imported, sophisticated modernity whose often exorbitant prices are not able to deter the fashion-conscious Nicosians. This modernity has many different names: Giorgio Armani, Christian Dior, Ray Ban, Mercedes, Gucci, LA Gear, Lacoste, Benetton, Maserati, Calvin Klein. And so do the boutiques that sell it: “Preludo,” “Energy,” “Xendrix,” “Replay,” “Involved,” and “Symbolo,” to name just a few of the more striking ones.

New Nicosia caters for the lifestyles of a mixed bag of people. The urban middle class patronizes the Hilton hotel in Makarios III Avenue, its restaurants, bars, and cafeteria. The hotel, associated with cosmopolitan sophistication, is also the first choice for its wedding receptions. During fieldwork, I realized that going to the Hilton had acquired additional cultural significance. On Sunday afternoons there was a string quartet performing there. Once I attended a performance with a friend who loves classical music but detests the “pretensions” of the bourgeoisie. We had

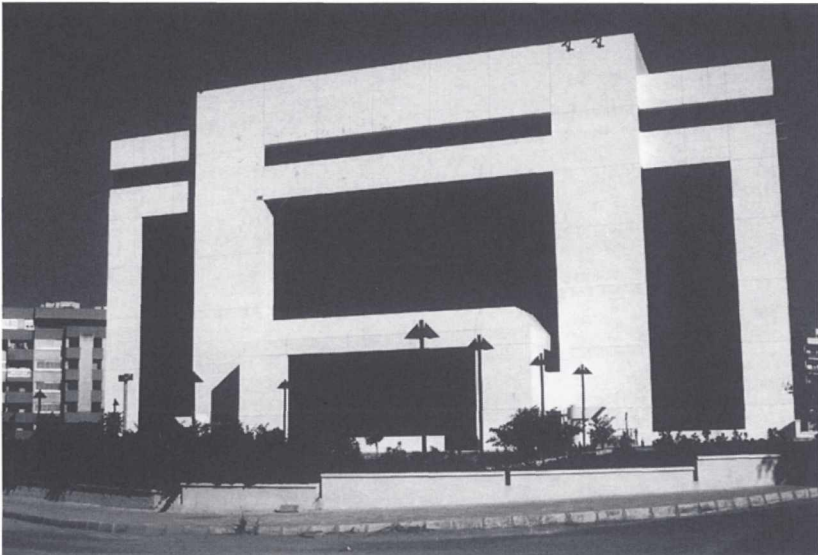
Plate 1. A view of Nicosia



tea and French pastries and the bill was astronomical. My friend swore not to set foot in the place again. “Not only did they rob us,” he complained bitterly, “we also had to put up with the pretensions of Nicosia’s high society. I bet most of them do not even know who Mozart was.”

Another favourite bourgeois nightspot is a restaurant and club known as “The Cosmopolitan.” It is located on the second floor of a high-rise office block in the heart of the new town. As one ascends the stairs, one is surrounded by glass displays of expensive, imported consumer items, such as clothing, footwear, watches, and cosmetics. Through the swing doors, one comes face to face with an elderly waiter (black trousers, white shirt, and black bow tie) who asks solemnly if one would like to have dinner or drinks and directs people to the appropriate section. The division is worthy of comment. I do not know whether the proprietors intended to provide a bar where people could have drinks before dinner. If that was the original plan, it seems to have been abandoned long ago. People who sit in the drinking area on the left remain there for the entire evening, and those who sit in the dining area are led there directly when they arrive. The people on the left are mostly young and those on the right mostly middle-aged, which suggests that perhaps over the years young people with white-collar jobs who could not afford to have dinner but aspired to the bourgeois lifestyle went for drinks and set a trend that was eventually institutionalized.<sup>3</sup>

Plate 2. An imposing modern structure



New Nicosia also caters for the tastes of high-school and college students who flock to the numerous discos, cafes, and bars (called “pubs” after the British idiom) every Friday and Saturday night.<sup>4</sup> Most of these establishments are located in the same area and on Saturday nights it is so congested that driving through is an almost impossible task. Hundreds of youngsters stand outside the discos and bars frolicking and blocking the road, and often fights erupt between them and passers-by. Inside the discos the light is very dim and the music blaring. There is no place to sit, or stand for that matter, and having a drink is almost out of the question – unless one is prepared to struggle through the crowd and get to the bar. “Skorpios,” one of the most popular discos in the area, is particularly small and crowded. It is patronized by teenagers, many hardly 16, and some hard-core rock-’n’-roll fans from the disco’s earlier days. If there is something particularly striking in a place like “Skorpios,” it is the eroticism that one encounters. It is rather uncommon to see youngsters kissing in the streets and parks of Nicosia, but not so in discos. I was mildly amused to see them swinging slowly on the dance floor, embracing passionately, and kissing for what seemed to be hours on end, completely oblivious to their surroundings. I was amused but sympathetic. Discos are one of the few places where these youngsters can become intimate without being exposed to the public and largely disapproving gaze.

Tavernas and *bouzouki*<sup>5</sup> clubs – which are often combined – attract a mixed bag of people, from the respectable bourgeoisie to radical intellectuals and artists. However, there are certain *bouzouki* establishments, known as *skilladhika* (dog-houses),<sup>6</sup> that are clearly working class. To begin with, they specialize in a particular kind of Greek popular music known as *vareta laika* (heavy popular [songs]) that many middle-class Cypriots find distasteful, that is, as they often explain, *anatolitiki* (Middle Eastern) and *klapshiariki* (whining). These establishments also cater for the performance needs of the *vareti tipi* (heavy guys), working-class men who seem to be particularly conscious of their masculinity and enjoy expressing it in highly individualistic dancing. One such dance is the *zeibekiko* (Cowan 1990:171–185), slow and undulating, arms high in the air, the head lowered, eyes fixed on the dance floor, an almost esoteric pursuit. Often at the peak of such performances friends get up and pour whiskey<sup>7</sup> onto the dancing floor. They set it on fire and the dancer spins around the flames defiantly, challenging himself, challenging everything and everyone – “Everybody [on the dancing floor] step aside,” one popular song has it, “the guy from Thessaloniki wants to dance.”

Once I was invited by a young, working-class friend, whom I shall call

Dinos, out to the *bouzoukia*. To tease him and see how he would react, I suggested something else. “Lets go to the Cosmopolitan,” I said. “But with the *aristokrates* (aristocrats)?” Dinos asked. “No, no, my friend, I don’t go to places like that, people don’t know how to enjoy themselves. I’ll take you to a place where there is real *dhiaskedhasi* (entertainment).” We went to a taverna at the outskirts of Nicosia called “Mikis Tavern” (in English). “Where’s your wife,” I asked him when we met. “She is at home looking after the children,” he replied matter-of-factly. As it turned out, Dinos did not want to have his wife with him on that particular occasion. “I’ll introduce you to two women tonight,” he said in a conspiratorial way. “They said they will stop by.”

“Mikis Tavern” is a huge establishment the size of a football pitch. The tables are laid out in extended rows that reminded me of “village” weddings. When we entered, the band was playing and a few people were dancing on the floor. We sat at a small table near the dancing floor and Dinos ordered a bottle of brandy. He looked around. “The girls are not here yet,” he said. The waiter appeared with a huge tray full of small plates of *mezedhes* (tidbits) and laid them out on the table. Dinos raised his glass of brandy: “*Sighian, tje kala na pathoume* (to [your] health, and, we deserve what we get),” he said using a popular, self-mocking expression. We started eating and drinking and soon a woman came to our table. “Where were you?” Dinos asked her. Without uttering a word, the woman pointed to a table at the far end of the hall where another woman was sitting. “Well, tell her to come too,” Dinos commanded.

Both women seemed to be in their early twenties. One of them was wearing a black, tight, short dress with a rather daring low cut displaying the heavily tanned upper part of a full breast. Her hair was dyed bleached blonde, she was heavily made up, and, like her friend, was full of gold – earrings, bracelets, and rings. Both reeked of strong perfume. Dinos introduced me and explained, rather proudly I think, that I was a scholar working on my PhD. The women looked unimpressed and indifferent. Soon Dinos got up and danced a few *chiftetellia* (belly dancing) (Cowan 1990:152–153) with the “blonde.” He waved from the dance floor and called us to join in. Rather lamely, I explained to the other woman that I did not know how to dance. She did not seem interested in dancing, however, at least not with me. I tried to start up a conversation with her, but soon gave up. She replied to all my questions laconically and looked bored. In the meantime, Dinos had asked the band for a *zeibekiko*. He executed it brilliantly, while the “blonde” stood around clapping. I looked on, enjoying Dinos’s performance, and ignored my companion as much as she

was ignoring me. When Dinos came back to the table, he was perspiring profusely. "You see how people enjoy themselves?" he said proudly, gasping for breath. I looked at the woman sitting next to me, by now overcome with boredom, and I smiled at him. "Some do and some don't," I thought to myself, and began to feel bored as well.

When the bill came later in the evening, Dinos seized it immediately, an indication that he was not going to let me pay. "How much is it?" I asked perfunctorily. "*Enen pou tin dhoullia sou* (it's none of your business)," he replied firmly. It was futile arguing with him. He had asked me out, he would never allow me to pay, so I did not insist as I should have done perhaps.<sup>9</sup> Dinos fished a large bundle of C£10 notes from his pocket and paid for everyone, including the two women. He was being *fouartas* (a big spender). Like every Cypriot man who respected himself, he wanted us to know that he did not respect money.

The nightlife of Nicosia exemplifies some of the major visions and divisions of Greek Cypriot society, one of the chief concerns of the present study. The best way to capture the meanings of these antagonistic images of the legitimate way of life is to decipher the terms that people use to denote, devalue, and stigmatize other groups. Thus, the people who patronize the establishments in the old part of the town are often referred to as *koultouriaridhes* – from *koultoura*. For many, they are the pretentious lovers of letters and the arts. They are also thought to be intellectually convoluted and confused,<sup>10</sup> have an alternative lifestyle and often dangerous ideas. They may be Marxists, "neo-Cypriots" – people who stand for a Cypriot rather than Greek ethnic identity and, therefore, according to this thinking, "pro-Turkish" – neo-Orthodox (religious fundamentalists) or *Enotiki*, extreme nationalists that still support *Enosis*, the union of Cyprus with Greece (see chapter 2). The men wear beards, scruffy jeans, and military jackets. The women wear no make-up, do not shave their legs, and, as one male informant put it, "demand equality with men in everything."<sup>11</sup>

The urban middle class who patronize nightspots such as the Cosmopolitan are called *kirille* – from *Kirios* and *Kiria* (Mr. and Mrs.). They are said to be family oriented, pretentious, and politically conservative, the pillars of the bourgeois order itself. The men drive black Mercedes, have mobile telephones, wear dark suits, and many are crypto-Masons. Their wives wear conservative designer clothes and hairdos, are involved in charitable work, and follow their husbands dutifully in the latter's public appearances and official functions. In short, they are the women "behind" the men. The young middle-class college and high-school students who flock to the various discos and pubs are said to be

*voutiropedha* (butter-boys and butter-girls). They are “spoiled kids” who have grown up in an environment of luxury and ease, who have never had to do anything for themselves but always relied on their parents. When these youngsters eventually face the harshness and battering of life, when the “heat is turned on,” they begin to melt away like butter. Last, the working-class men who frequent the *skilladhika* are known as *patroni*, literally pimps. They might or might not be real pimps, but, according to the rhetoric, they have coarse and vulgar tastes and lead “lowly” lives. They usually wear moustaches, large rings and golden medallions, jeans neatly pressed down the middle, and flowery shirts – wide open to display the hairy chest. They also grow the nails on both small fingers and, as the banter has it, they use them as toothpicks or to clean their ears.

Despite the different visions and divisions, Nicosians perceive themselves and their town as the very core of Cypriot modernity. They are the epitome of Cypriot urbanites and do not hesitate to contrast, differentiate, and distinguish themselves from the *khorkates*, a term that literally means villagers, but refers to “peasants” (Loizos 1975a), whether urban or rural. As we have seen, for Nicosians and most other Cypriots the foremost site of “backwardness” is the town and district of Paphos. It was here that I spent my summers combining the bartender duties with those of an anthropologist in the field. It was here that I was born and spent my childhood, here that I used to return as a long-established Nicosian myself to spend my holidays. Now I was back as an anthropologist, twice removed from this world, twice a stranger, and yet inevitably very much part of it.

### **Paphos**

The drive from Nicosia takes just over two hours. The highway bypasses the Troodos mountains, the main mountain range, and then swings right toward the city of Limassol on the southern coast, the major industrial city and, since the loss of Famagusta to the Turks in 1974, the principal port and the largest tourist center on the island. The highway bypasses the tourist area and the city center and comes to an end at the outskirts of the town. From here on, the drive to Paphos becomes more interesting. The two-lane road crosses villages, swings around the low hills through Episkopi, one of the two British military bases on the island, and then leads down towards the open sea. It passes by the mythical birthplace of Aphrodite,<sup>12</sup> and continues to run by the sea until it reaches the outskirts of Paphos town.

I settled in Konia village perched in the low hills to the north overlooking the town in my family’s small house – the house in which I was born



and spent my early childhood. I was an insider–outsider in the village. I had always been, even before I became an anthropologist. No doubt, I was one of them – they knew who I was, they greeted and joked with me, inquired after my mother and family in Nicosia, invited me for coffee, fed me, asked if I was still single and volunteered advice about the drawbacks of being alone in life. They treated me as a co-villager, at least an “honorary” one. But it was obvious that I was also a stranger. I could feel it, and they felt it too, even though they were polite enough not to show it. I rarely went to the coffee shop and when I did, I did not play cards or engage in the usual banter. I was too quiet, read books “all the time,” stayed up late in the evening typing (instead of watching television), asked questions about long-forgotten and embarrassing things (“the virginity rite?”), took the neighbour’s hunting dog for walks, was visited by strangers from Nicosia. In short, I was a stranger among friends and a friend among strangers, not too close but not too distant either – the predicament of the “native” anthropologist (or is it an advantage?)

Compared to the other Cypriot cities, Paphos is relatively small.<sup>13</sup> Local people distinguish between Ktima, the part of the town on the hill facing the sea, and Kato Paphos or “Lower Paphos,” the area that houses the tourist industry. Before the 1974 war, Kato Paphos was a small fishing village separate from Ktima. With the loss of Famagusta and Kyrenia to the Turks, the two main tourist resorts, the town was inevitably called upon to fill in the gap. Kato Paphos spread both to the east and to the west along the seashore, and north towards Ktima. Ktima itself expanded in all directions and has engulfed several surrounding villages. Tourism became the main local industry. Though Paphos’s beaches are not as renowned as those in other areas, the town has other important tourist attractions. The Kato Paphos area is replete with archaeological sites and has recently been included in UNESCO’s “World Cultural Heritage List” (Republic of Cyprus 1990). Ironically, archaeology turned out to be both a blessing and a curse, at least to the local developers. It was good to display to the tourists, bad when it was found under very expensive land. Rumor has it that many archaeological sites discovered by local developers were quickly filled and built upon. One site that did not have such a fate stands at the entrance to the tourist area. The developer was forced to modify his plans and his hotel now stands around several ancient tombs.

Tourism has changed the face of Paphos town beyond recognition and the lives of many Paphians equally drastically. As land prices skyrocketed, some people became very rich, very quickly. Many invested their money in the tourist industry and became hotel owners, land developers, tour

operators, restaurant and souvenir-shop owners. The less fortunate were soon to discover that the tourist industry provided an attractive alternative to agricultural work. Not only did it offer higher income, but also one that was not dependent on the exigencies of the weather. They became waiters, porters, gardeners, bus and taxi drivers, hotel maids, and kitchen hands.

The impact of tourism was also quite dramatic on the youth of the

Plate 3. The neoclassical center of Paphos

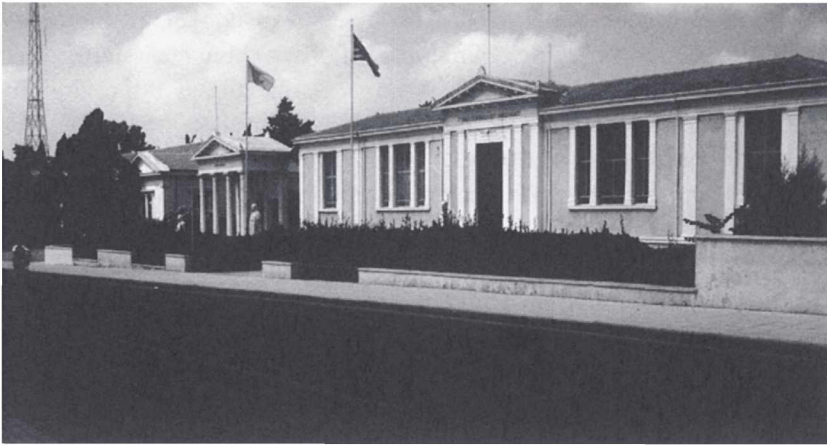
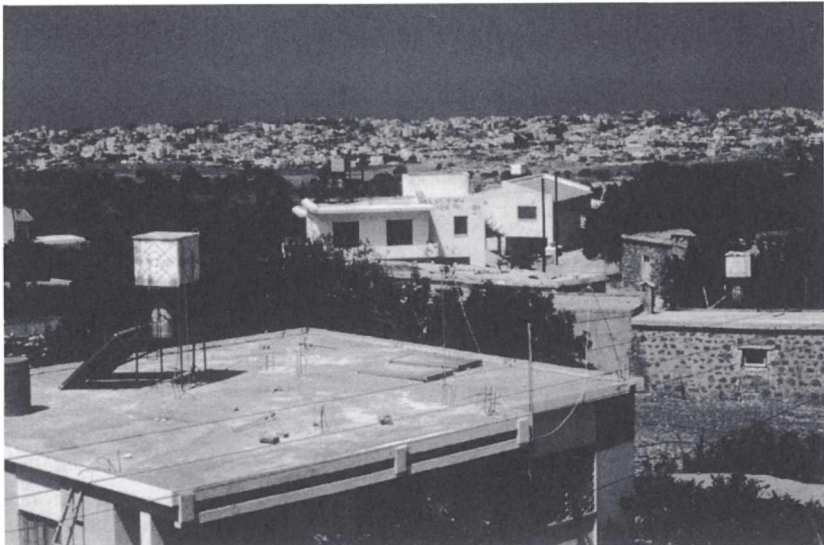


Plate 4. A view of Paphos from Konia village



town. *Kamaki*, the pursuit of tourist women with the intention of having sex (Zinovieff 1991:203–220), became a favourite pastime for many Paphian youngsters and during my stay hardly a day went by that I was not told a story about the *touristries* (tourist women) – their nationality, how they were picked up, how they resisted or “went looking for it,” whether they were better or worse than others in previous encounters, and so on. I also noticed that Paphian youngsters, both boys and girls, were particularly well versed in the international youth culture. They dressed casually according to the latest fashion, worn modern haircuts – the girls daring crew cuts, the boys ponytails – and knew everything there was to know about the latest hits of British and American pop stars. They would tell me about the latest hits and were bemused to find out that I, coming from America, did not know this or that band, song, or singer.

The villagers around Paphos that were not near enough to have been engulfed by the town were the setting for my fieldwork. It was here that I attended most traditional weddings, what I call in the present study, following the local term, “village” weddings (*Khorkatiki ghami*). Unlike villages in the hinterland, they have survived the pressures of urbanization. Physical proximity to the town and a relatively good road network meant that people could easily commute to the town for work. Similarly, high land prices in the town made the building of dowry houses prohibitively expensive.<sup>14</sup> As a result, most young people get married and settled down in their villages. The inhabitants of these villages seem to have prospered from tourism at least as much as town dwellers. Moreover, mechanized agriculture and a large irrigation project in the area meant that agricultural incomes were also on the rise. Villagers grow bananas and other tropical fruits such as mango and kiwi, oranges, table grapes, and vegetables. The prosperity of these villages is self-evident – large, modern houses and expensive cars parked outside being the most conspicuous signs of it. Yet even though the living standards here are comparable to those in the city, in the eyes of many urban Paphians, villagers remain mere *khorkates* (peasants). On my arrival in Paphos, I inquired about the main shopping area and was immediately advised by an acquaintance against going on a Saturday. “It’s the worse day,” she said, “all the *khorkates* flock to town to shop, it’s chaos, you’ll regret it.” Being an anthropologist, I made certain to go shopping on a Saturday.

Villagers are well aware of the way that town dwellers perceive them and hit back equally hard. Soon after my arrival in Paphos, I went to visit Loukia, a relative on my father’s side who lives in a village near the town with her husband, two daughters, and son-in-law. I was instructed by my

mother to ask Loukia about another relative whom my mother had not seen for many years. Loukia laughed with disdain. “Don’t ask,” she said, “she moved to Paphos and *eksippastiken* (was impressed). She became *politissa* (a town dweller)<sup>15</sup> and doesn’t condescend us *khorkates* any more.” And she concluded with a pungent Cypriot proverb, said about those who suddenly become rich and do not quite know how to handle their wealth: “The naked asshole saw a pair of knickers and wanted to take a crap.”

Loukia was one of those estranged relatives in Paphos whom I had never met, basically because I chose not to. When I was still living on the island, I refused to meet relatives with whom – I had decided – I had nothing in common. I could not see the point in doing so – being relatives was not enough for me. Now I needed her help, and here I was rushing to the village to meet her as if I always wanted to do so but somehow I did not manage before now. As I drove to the village that afternoon, I felt very small and kept reproaching myself. I was also apprehensive. How was she going to receive me? Would she be friendly, or tell me off as I no doubt deserved.

The village is perched on a hillside overlooking the town of Paphos and the sea. As one leaves the main road and turns right toward the village, one is greeted by new, modern houses with flat concrete roofs, each roof accommodating a water tank attached to two solar panels – an unattractive arrangement but quite functional. The village is expanding outwards towards the main road to Paphos, while the center is dominated by old houses built with stone, many of them abandoned. At the square, I stopped by one of the coffee shops to ask for directions. I was immediately surrounded by people curious to know who I was and eager to help. They suggested that I should park my car at the square and walk, since the streets in the area where Loukia lived were rather narrow. A middle-aged man volunteered to escort me there. We walked through the narrow village streets and my companion bombarded me with questions. Was I a relative? Where from, and who was my father? I furnished him with all the details, but he did not seem satisfied. He asked what kind of work I did, and I explained that I was a student. Naturally, he wanted to know where, and what subject I was studying. I said I was a “folklorist” and he shook his head in recognition.<sup>16</sup> As we walked through the village, old women dressed in black were sitting outside their houses and greeted us. One of them asked my companion: “Kostandi, who is your *ksenos* (guest)?” “He is not mine,” the man replied, “he’s Loukia’s relative.” The woman shook her head and looked at me from top to bottom.

We finally arrived at the house and Kostandis banged on the iron gate. “Loukia,” he shouted, “you have guests.” A woman’s voice was heard from the inside. “Just a minute, I’m coming.” The iron gate opened and a middle-aged woman appeared, drying her hand on her apron. “*Ya sas* (hello),” she said smiling, and looked at me. Before I could open my mouth, Kostandis introduced me. We shook hands, but it was obvious that she could not quite figure out who I was. “But who is he?” she asked Kostandis. I explained who my father and mother were and from which village they came, but the woman was still uncertain. “But are you Vassos?” she asked finally in disbelief. “My God, you’ve grown. Last time I saw you, you were just a baby,” she said, and before I had time to prepare myself for what I should have known was coming, she bent over and gave wet kisses on both cheeks. “Come in, come in,” she said warmly, and looked sincerely happy to meet me. I had never felt guiltier in my life.

Kostandis excused himself, and I stepped into the courtyard as Loukia shut the gate behind me. The small yard was dominated by an enormous vine in the middle. There was a tall wall on the left side, and at the opposite end stood two houses, one next to the other. The bigger – a new, modern, two-storey house – was the eldest daughter’s dowry house. The other, much smaller and more traditional looking, was the house in which the rest of the family lived. There was also a small outbuilding in one corner that I suspected was the bathroom for the smaller house. I sat under the shade of the vine at a large table and Loukia went in to her kitchen to make coffee. The yard was paved with concrete except for a narrow strip by the outside wall where flowers were planted. All around there were large metal and plastic vessels in which Loukia had planted basil, marjoram, and more flowers. There was a sweet, familiar smell in the air that made me feel at ease. Loukia soon returned with two cups of coffee and *ghliko* (fruit preserved in syrup), the traditional treat. She sat with me and we began talking about the family and my studies. About half an hour later the courtyard gate opened and a young girl wearing a high-school uniform came in. Loukia shouted: “Soulla, come, come and meet your cousin. He is *epistimonas* (a scholar).” The girl came close, shook my hand shyly, and disappeared into the house. Loukia turned to me. “You’ll stay for dinner,” she said. “You’ll meet my husband, my eldest daughter, and my son-in-law. They are at the vineyard today, they should be back soon.”

Early in the evening the courtyard gate opened again and two men and a young woman came in. Loukia introduced me and I shook hands with everyone. The husband, a short, bald man in his early fifties with blue eyes and one or two golden teeth, said almost immediately in a way that left no

room for argument: "You'll stay for dinner." Loukia explained that she had already invited me to stay and the man shook his head, apparently pleased to hear it. Then, he turned to his wife and ordered: "Slaughter a chicken and make some pasta too." I felt that this was the time to warn my hosts that I was a vegetarian, but it was not easy. A man who does not eat meat does not fare very well with other men in Cyprus (see chapter 5). Predictably enough, the husband was surprised. "You don't eat meat?" he asked, looking at me suspiciously. "What do you eat, if you don't eat meat?" Loukia came to my rescue: "Let him eat what he wants. I'm going to make some potatoes, salad, pasta, there will be plenty." The man turned to me again. "But you do drink brandy," he said expectantly, "don't you?" I knew I could not say no, even if I wanted to. "Soulla," he shouted, "bring the brandy from the refrigerator." The girl came out carrying a bottle of brandy and two very small, narrow glasses. "Bring us some nuts too, *mana mou* (my love),"<sup>17</sup> said the father.

We sat under the vine in the courtyard and began sipping brandy, while the eldest daughter and son-in-law went into their house to wash and get ready for dinner. The man wanted to know what I was studying, and once again I put on my folklorist's cap. "And what kind of work can you get when you finish?" he asked. I was about to say that I had not thought much about work, that I was not doing it for money anyhow, but I checked the impulse in time. "I can get a job in the government," I responded, and the man shook his head approvingly. The government meant a secure job, prestige, and a good salary; in short, the kind of things that a young man in my position should be striving for. Soon the eldest daughter reappeared with her husband. The young woman went into her mother's kitchen to help with the cooking, the son-in-law came and sat with us. "You'll drink one with us?" asked the father-in-law. "There is no beer?" inquired the young man looking at the bottle of brandy with ambivalence. "Beer?" said the father-in-law teasingly. "Drink brandy, a man's drink." He too seemed to have little choice.

The women finished cooking, brought the food outside and laid it on the table. "Is everything OK?" asked Loukia. The husband looked at the numerous plates on the table. "Everything is OK," he said, "take a seat." They sat and we began eating. Inevitably, the discussion revolved around my research and the old times in the village. I jumped at the opportunity and asked for permission to record our conversation. Loukia laughed nervously. "Oh dear! You are going to interview us?" she said. I felt awkward and embarrassed. Not only was I turning a "family" gathering into a formal interview, I was also drawing a line of division between us – I, the

scholar, they, the simple, unsophisticated folk. This was a problem that I grappled with many times during fieldwork but never quite managed to resolve. Loukia's husband came to my rescue: "It's his job," he said, and after a sip of brandy, he began without any probing on my part.

Things were different then [in the old days]. My father would tell us "Sit there" and we would. Today, if you tell them [one's children], they'll do what *they* want. Maybe there is too much freedom. [In the old days] when the father went to the coffee shop, the son stood up to show respect. Today, he may even turn his back to the father. A son would never smoke a cigarette in front of his father, not even when he was 25-years old and married. These things don't happen any more. Now, what happens in the cities, well, you know better than me. In villages, you still have some respect, in the cities there is nothing. For example, if my daughter [he turns to his younger daughter] says, "I'll go to the disco" and I say no, she'll listen to me. Girls in towns, they will get dressed and go without asking anyone, neither mother, nor father. Not that the parents care very much . . . *o kosmos ekhalasen* (people have degenerated), *en touti i ekseliksi pou na mas fai* (it's this modernity that will eat [destroy] us).

Late in the evening I thanked my hosts and promised to return on the following Sunday. The son-in-law was invited to a wedding in a neighbouring village and had asked me to go with him. As I drove to my village that evening, my thoughts revolved around what Loukia's husband had been saying: the village versus the town, a world of primeval goodness versus a world of moral decline and degeneration.<sup>18</sup> These were the issues, according to Loukia's husband, the evils that needed to be eradicated before they destroyed what was left of his world. I also remembered my acquaintance's advice on my arrival in Paphos not to go shopping on a Saturday because this was the time that the *khorkates* (peasants) came to town. Loukia's husband was undoubtedly *khorkatis* in her eyes. What he called respect, she interpreted as parental oppression. His standard of morality was her definition of backwardness, the "good old days" were *protines epokhes* (aboriginal times) to her. Another point of view, another vision, and a deep social division that reproduced itself symbolically over and over again.

And yet it was not long ago that the vast majority of the population resided in villages<sup>19</sup> and most people were living off the land. It was not long ago when, as it is often remarked about those who today drive Mercedes and BMWs and pretend to have forgotten their village background, everyone was riding donkeys. How was rural life in the 1930s? What has happened to bring about this apparent marginalization of village culture? And how did it happen? In a recent article on highland Scotland, Nadel-Klein (1991) provides a useful theoretical framework

within which such questions may be addressed. She convincingly argues that localism, as particularism and a form of resistance to the universalism of the dominant culture, is the unintended consequence of the modern political economy. Capitalism incorporates communities into the national market but abandons them when other, more profitable opportunities arise. It imposes its universalistic standards and unwittingly creates conditions that undermine them. In what follows, I explore some of the major macroeconomic and social processes in Cyprus during the 1930s and 1940s. My argument is that the marginalization of village culture has been brought about by the villagers themselves. In a very real sense, it was the unintended consequence of the strategies that they adopted to take advantage of the opportunities created by the new division of labor.

### **Modernity and unintended consequences**

If there is anything that all of my older informants agreed on, it was that the 1930s were a time of extreme poverty and hardship. The most valuable asset was land, but not everyone owned land and even those who did were not much better off than the rest. Lack of water, poor farming techniques, and fragmentation of holdings meant that productivity was very low.<sup>20</sup> Food was scarce, families were large, and people were often close to starvation. Here is how a 68-year-old woman remembers her childhood:

We were seven brothers and sisters. There was great poverty and misery. We could not live [properly] . . . We would go to school, come back at noon and fetch wood to cook and wash our clothes. We used to go to school sometimes with shoes, sometimes without, sometimes fed, sometimes hungry. We got by. Many times we would ask our mother: "Mother, would the food go bad if we saved it for tomorrow?" If she said no, we'd save it to have something to eat the next day, so great was our poverty. We used to eat broad beans, black-eye beans, olives, onions, even carobs. Meat we would eat two to three times a year. When our mother told us that the food would go bad if we saved it, we would eat it all, come home from school the next day, get a little bit of bread, cut it into small pieces, and eat it with appetite pretending it was *andidhoron*.<sup>21</sup>

In his survey of rural life, Surridge (1930:32–35) depicts an equally bleak picture. Not surprisingly, he places families that owned no land at the bottom of the economic scale. Surridge estimated that the weekly cost of living for a family of five, by no means the norm at the time, was around 16 shillings. The daily diet of such a family consisted of bread, a small piece of cheese or a few olives in the morning; bread and onion, a dried herring, and olives at noon; and vegetables cooked in oil in the evening. Provided that both husband and wife were employed, not a likely possibil-



ity given the lack of employment opportunities, they could hope for a maximum weekly wage of about 18 shillings. On the basis of these estimates, Surrige concluded that around 25 percent of rural families, those who owned no land, lived on or below this "poverty" line.

Under the circumstances, people were forced to employ all sorts of strategies in order to survive. For example, with the outbreak of World War II, many enlisted with the British army and fought in Greece, apparently not so much for patriotic reasons, as the nationalist propaganda has it, as for the steady if meagre monthly income.<sup>22</sup> An 84-year-old man from a village in the Paphos area, speaking for many, explained his decision to enlist as follows:

VASSILIS: My job before, I was a *reshperis* (grain cultivator). Well, with this job I couldn't manage. And don't think that I was just anybody, I was a big *reshperis*. Once I produced as much as 200 kilos [of wheat]. One year I sowed a field, you see, well, it came out empty (there was no yield) . . . What could I do? I went to the conscription office in town, I tell the man in charge: "I want to go to the war." He says, "But you are old, let the officer decide about it." Well, they accepted me.

V. A.: Were they paying good money?

VASSILIS: No, they didn't pay much, only two and a half shillings [per day], but what could I do? My children were hungry, I could see them, they were hungry, the field I sowed came out empty, what could I do? I went.

Another common practice during this period was to put children to work at a fairly early age. Those families who owned land took the older children with them in the fields and left behind one of the girls to look after the younger children (Surrige 1930:26). Sometimes, all able children were needed in the fields and mothers made certain that infants slept throughout their absence. They gave the infants tea made of *haskashia*, dried poppy bulbs that they collected from the fields.<sup>23</sup> One informant told me that once she and her mother needed to go and collect sycamore leaves for the silkworm and they had to be away all day. As there was no one else in the house to look after the baby, they gave him tea made of *haskashia*. It seems that the dose was rather strong, however, for the infant slept continuously for 48 hours. At one point, they thought that he was going to die and placed him *nekrika* (death-like), that is, with his head pointing to the west.<sup>24</sup>

Poverty forced many people to send their young daughters to rich families in towns as domestic servants. Such girls were known as *dhoules*, a derogatory term whose literal meaning is "slaves." Most girls worked for a few years and returned to their villages. Others stayed on, as some

employers took it upon themselves *na tes apokatastisoun* (to set them up in life), that is, find them a husband and help them open their own households. There were also those girls who could not contemplate ever returning to their villages, not even for a visit. Having been seduced or raped by their employers, they ended up in brothels (SurrIDGE 1930:27). The experience of many *dhoules* was not unlike that of their literal counterparts. They were overworked, starved, sexually assaulted, and beaten on a regular basis.

Evanthia, a 68-year-old woman who experienced such a life first hand, gave me a vivid account. She comes from Paphos but for many years now has lived in a Nicosia suburb. She has a two-room house behind her daughter's house. As in the case of many working-class families, Evanthia was forced to give up her house when her daughter got married. The house became the daughter's dowry and Evanthia's husband built the two rooms to accommodate them and their two unmarried sons. Evanthia was almost raped by her employer, "a second cousin," she said bitterly. Before we began the interview, she warned me: "I don't want my husband to know anything about this. He doesn't even know that I was *dhoula*."<sup>25</sup>

In the old times parents used to place their children as *dhoules* to make money, to give them and also support themselves. The first job my mother sent me was at Mavrovouni to an English family.<sup>26</sup> I was 11 years old, it was the first time I left my village, I couldn't speak English, a Turk would come to the house to bring the shopping and he would translate. One day the Englishman told me to go and bring his son's bike from the school. I didn't know how to get there, the Englishman hit me. The Turk came home, I told him, I was crying . . . Every day I was crying. I used to write to my parents to come and get me, my parents, nothing. Once my father came, I told him I wanted to leave. They used to give me 25 shillings per month which was a large sum in those days, he [the father] left without taking me with him . . .

I moved to another house in Xeros village, to a Greek family with seven children. My life there was worse because all night . . . all day I had to work, at night I had to wait for them to eat, then I washed the dishes, brushed their shoes, and then I ate alone. I was a baby, 11 years old, I would start brushing the shoes and fall asleep, wake up and fall asleep again. And they hit me a lot. I used to write to my mother that I would drown in the sea, I didn't want to live anymore . . . I had one sister who was engaged, my mother came with the fiancé to collect my salaries to marry my sister off. As soon as I saw her, I started crying, saying that I would kill myself. She says to me: "Listen, my daughter, we are not going to leave you here, we will take you with us. I'll leave my basket here, I'll go for a ride with your brother-in-law and I'll come back to get you." They left the basket behind, they never came back.

During this period, two concomitant processes that were to shake the foundations of Cypriot society and culture were already in progress. First,

the subsistence economy based on cereal cultivation and stock raising was being transformed into a cash economy based on mechanized agriculture, light industry, and services, particularly tourism. And second, there was a substantial movement of people from rural areas to urban centers, seeking to take advantage of the new employment opportunities and escape the impoverished and harsh village life. The forces that set in motion this two-fold process of transformation were external, fortuitous, and beyond the knowledge and control of the local population. They were also quite unrelated to any humane concern on the part of the colonial authorities about the misery of the Cypriot villagers.<sup>27</sup>

At the end of World War II there was a great international demand for minerals and, as a consequence, prices increased substantially. The Korean war that was soon to follow contributed even further to the strengthening of the international mineral market. The Cypriot mining industry, which had invested heavily in the 1920s and 1930s, was quick to expand output and take advantage of the new export opportunities. As a result, by the end of the 1940s, exports of minerals accounted for one-half of all Cypriot exports and the industry became the most important source of foreign earnings. The second powerful drive came from the colonial rulers of Cyprus themselves. With the end of World War II, Britain was forced to abandon her bases in the Middle East and to grant independence to India. The creation of the state of Israel was an additional factor that made Cyprus, quite unexpectedly, an important strategic area. The British responded to these changes by spending vast amounts of money for the construction of two large military bases, Episkopi and Dhekelia. As a result, the construction industry became another major force in the transformation of the subsistence economy.

The Cypriot villagers were quick to take advantage of the new employment opportunities. Families from different parts of the country flocked to the mining areas of Mavrovouni and Xeros to find employment. As for the construction industry, in the words of one informant, "There was no man who didn't go to the military bases to work, even those who had land but wanted to fill up the time of no work in the fields."<sup>28</sup> The chain reaction that these forces set into motion was far reaching. Between 1950 and 1957 the average annual rate of growth of the economy was 12 percent. During the same period, the cost of living rose by 55 percent while wages increased by 40 percent. One woman from a village in the Paphos area perceived these changes in the following way: "We were one of the poorest families in the village. From the time that my youngest son was born, we never ran out of money in our family. He brought us luck." The year her son was

born was, significantly enough, 1953, a time of ample employment opportunities and rising living standards.

The movement of people from rural areas to towns in search of employment was substantial. While in 1931 the urban population amounted to about 22 percent, in 1960 the figure jumped to 36 percent. During the same period, the population of Nicosia and Limassol almost tripled while that of Famagusta almost quadrupled (Republic of Cyprus 1991a:32). This is not to say that entire families dropped everything they had and moved to the towns, even if all they possessed was a small plot of land and a few animals. As Attalides (1981) has shown for Nicosia, the majority of the people who had moved were those who had no land of their own and no work, that is, mainly unmarried men and women. In fact, the most common reason stated for migrating to Nicosia was the lack of work in the village, followed by the decision to attend high school. “Migrants to Nicosia have generally been young individuals who entered the labour market for the first time in Nicosia . . . They are most likely to have moved to Nicosia immediately after the war [World War II]” (Attalides 1981:75).

One consequence of these transformations was that skilled craftsmen began to rise higher in the socioeconomic scale. As soon as boys finished elementary school they were sent to the nearest town *se mastron* (literally to a master, a skilled craftsman) *na mathoun tekhnin* (to learn a skill) – carpenter, builder, mechanic, these were now the professions *me mellon* (with a future). At the same time, both the number and prestige of the people in the dominant socioeconomic positions – *reshperis* (grain cultivator) and shepherd – began to dwindle, a steady decline that was to bring them to the bottom of the social hierarchy which they now occupy with unskilled

Plate 5. An abandoned village house



laborers (Markides *et al.* 1978). But perhaps the most significant change during this period was the recognition that education provided the best opportunities for “a better life,”<sup>29</sup> meaning a life in the city, one that did not require people to toil in the fields. Education, not land, had now become the most valuable asset.

Young men from the better-off rural families were sent *sto ghimnasion* (to high school) and upon graduation entered the civil service or obtained an office job in the nearest town. Their prestige was higher than that of the *tekhmites* (skilled craftsmen) because, in addition to the steady and secure income, they had the privilege *na kseroun ghrammata* (of knowing “letters”) and, therefore, of not having to engage in manual work. As Attalides (1976:76) put it, “The ability to earn money while sitting on a chair [was] a miracle to peasant eyes.” But the highest achievement of all was university education, an accomplishment that transformed one into what has become an almost legendary figure – *epistimonas*, literally a scientist, but in Cyprus (and Greece) applied loosely to any university graduate. Young men, initially from urban families, but during this period increasingly from the more prosperous village families as well, were sent to Greece and other European countries to study medicine, engineering, law, or subjects such as Greek literature and mathematics that would allow them to become *kathiyites* (high-school teachers). The following couplet of a daughter who refuses to accept a shepherd for her husband is characteristic of the period and the new visions:

I don't want him, mother,  
the dirty shepherd,  
I want a lawyer  
or an office employee

University education did not only provide a prestigious and well-paid job, but also access to the inner circles of the small urban elite and the emerging middle class. Young educated men, even with humble peasant origins, were sought after as prospective grooms with a bright future. Cyprus had never had an indigenous landed aristocracy and the small urban elite of the time, mostly merchants (Michaelide 1985), were as impressed by education and the values of the rising middle class as anyone else. Here is how an old man from Nicosia described the situation in the 1930s:

They [young educated men] began to come back [from abroad] after the first war [World War I]. When an *epistimonas* returned, the good families ran [to get him], no matter if he was the son of the lowest peasant. If he came back *yatroui* (little

doctor), *dhikighoroui* (little lawyer),<sup>30</sup> he found the doors open. For it was great prestige for someone to marry his daughter to a doctor or a lawyer.

The prestige of a doctor or a lawyer reflected on his family back in the village as well. One's name was significantly enhanced if he could claim an educated son with an important job in the city. There are several reasons for this that express some of the major values of village culture. To begin with, given the costs involved, sending one's son abroad to obtain university education suggested hard work, a certain degree of material sacrifice, and *koumando* (good management [of one's resources and affairs]).<sup>31</sup> It also signified that one had raised *nousima pethkia* (sensible children<sup>32</sup>) – children who were brought up to be such, apparently by *nousimi* parents. Further, it indicated the successful completion of a journey, the achievement of the most important goal in one's life – to set up one's children well. In the case of sons, this meant education, preferably at the university level, and a non-manual job, while in the case of daughters, a successful marriage (Peristiany 1968). All this reflected on the parents and particularly on the household head. Such a man is often said to be *aksios* – from *aksia* (value) – another hardly translatable term that carries connotations of merit, social worth, and above all excellence.

But the benefits of education were not only symbolic. Nor were they strictly material, as where money was sent to the parents back in the village. Having a son with an important job in the city meant, in addition, that one could now gain access to the centers of power and decision-making. With the incorporation of the village into the national economy and the increasing dependence of villagers on the market and the government bureaucracy, such access had become a vital stake (Loizos 1975a).

These may have also been the major reasons that prompted villagers from the 1930s onwards increasingly to educate their sons. Yet such immediate, individual gains must be evaluated within the context of the cumulative, long-term effects of the process and its impact on those who stayed behind in the villages. At the risk of oversimplifying, the village boys sent to high school in the city or to universities abroad were eventually to join the ranks of an emerging middle class that had developed its own distinctive culture and lifestyle. Parents and siblings back in the village may have enjoyed the immediate benefits of this change, but the long-term results have been less than beneficial. The emergence of the urban middle class caused a restructuring of power relations – a shift of power from the village to the city, from the village headman, the *reshperis* (grain cultivator), priest, and elementary school teacher, to the government bureaucrat,

the industrialist, the doctor, and the *epistimonas* (Loizos 1985). In short, at the individual level, it meant a shift of power from father to son. Moreover, the culture of the “brave new world” of Cypriot modernity emerged victorious, setting itself against village culture and effectively marginalizing it.

The multitude of individual strategies of Cypriot villagers, then, which aimed at the alleviation of their poverty and the enhancement of their status in the village, led to their eventual downfall as a group. Not only did they find themselves at the bottom of the social hierarchy, but culturally, too, they were transformed into mere *khorkates* (peasants). There is a poignant irony here that must be made explicit. The most vociferous opponent of modernity – understood as the lifestyle of the city – is the older generation of Cypriot villagers. This suggests that modernity was not what they had intended and, more tellingly perhaps, that they are in fact unaware that it was *they*, as a group, who brought it about, even if indirectly and inadvertently. Cypriot modernity, then, is in a very real sense an “unintended consequence” of action (Ortner 1984; Giddens 1984).

In the next chapter, I explore the unintended consequences of another set of practices, those of the Greek Cypriot nationalists. Their quest for *Enosis* (union with Greece), whose ultimate expression took the form of a coup against the government, was not destined to end successfully. It led to the Turkish invasion, death, destruction, and the division of the island.

## 2

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### Nationalism and the poverty of imagination

In a recent influential book (Anderson 1991), nationalism is portrayed as a figment of the imagination – thinking of one’s self as a member of a community whose other members one does not even know. Greek Cypriots number only 600,000 souls and seem to know one another to a far greater extent than people in other, larger countries. Nonetheless, they too imagine, and their imagination is both complex and impoverished. It is complex, one might even say vivid, because it transcends not only geographical but also temporal boundaries. And it is impoverished because it has proved self-defeating.

As is well known, Anderson (1991) argues that nationalism became possible when people ceased to imagine themselves as members of communities that lay beyond their geographical boundaries. Religion, for instance, had made it possible for people as far apart as, say, Pakistan and Morocco to think of themselves as members of the same (Islamic) community and in this way prevented the forging of a Pakistani or a Moroccan national consciousness. In this chapter I want to argue that Greek Cypriot nationalism cannot be understood outside the context of a wider hegemonic identity – a new religion – what Cypriots variably call *I Evropi* (Europe), *I Dhisi* (the West), or alternatively *O politismenos kosmos* (the civilized world). In an ironic reversal of Anderson’s thesis, then, it is largely because they imagine themselves as members of a wider community – Europe – that Cypriots think of themselves as being Greek. But the complexity of their imagination does not end here. For Cypriots, the ultimate significance of being Greek does not lie in the obvious association with mainland Greece. As I will show below, the association is riddled with tensions and contradictions. The significance rather is to be found in the past, the heart of classical, Greek civilization of the fifth century BC. It is this



“Greekness” that carries the premium – the-cradle-of-the-West syndrome – so that in order to claim a European identity, Cypriots need also to imagine themselves as descendants of the ancient Greeks.

Despite its vividness, Greek Cypriot imagination is impoverished perhaps more so than other nationalisms. It has failed Cyprus many times in the past, but its most recent failure – the division of the island – has been the most painful, at least for the Greek side. Greek Cypriot aspirations to a European identity have been historically generated within the context of the de-Ottomanization of the Greek-speaking world, itself an aspect of the wider symbolic opposition between Europe and the Orient (Said 1978). To put it in another way, Turkish Cypriots have been to Greek Cypriots what the rest of the world has been to the countries of Western Europe and North America. Ironically, descendants or not of the classical Greeks, the Greek speakers of Cyprus are no more European now than they had ever been in their history. For, as I will argue in greater detail in the last chapter, Europe and the West are neither destinations to be reached nor objects to be appropriated. They constitute a hegemonic identity, an instrument of power – one that has been historically constituted not to smooth out but to enhance cultural divisions. The poverty of Greek Cypriot imagination lies precisely in its failure to grasp these subtle but crucial interconnections. Irrespective of how “Greek” Cypriots are, they will always be excluded from the “Occidental core,” if not practically, certainly symbolically. In the meantime, the consequences of their failed imagination – the division of the island, the dead and the missing, the plight of refugees – continue to plague them.

### **A brief history**

Cyprus is a very old country but a very new nation-state. It has 8,000 years of history but just over 30 as an independent nation. Greek Cypriots are proud of the long history of their country. They are also proud to be Greeks. The two things do not necessarily cancel each other out but they create a long silence and an enormous gap in historical memory.

A traveller to Cyprus can get a glimpse of Cypriot history through the pages of Cyprus Airways’s in-flight magazine. The text, a short introduction, has all the trappings of nationalist rhetoric. The writer begins by pointing out that the island’s prehistory runs as far back as the sixth millennium BC. Then, with one stroke of the pen, one is moved, suddenly and quite unexpectedly, 4,000 years forward to the second millennium. For Greek Cypriots this date is a milestone. It is the time when the Achaean Greeks colonized the island and introduced their language and

civilization. It is the time when Cypriots became *Greek*. What happened between Khirokitia, the earliest neolithic settlement in Cyprus, and Engomi, one of the cities established by the Achaeans, one is left wondering about.<sup>1</sup> The uninitiated reader may be forgiven for attributing this gap in historical memory to a scant record. For this is not incomplete but “selective” history, a story that emphasizes certain periods and events while passing over others silently. In short, one is confronted with the outcome of the methodical pursuit of local scholarship and the official establishment for over a century.

Until very recently Cypriot elementary and high-school students were taught only Greek history.<sup>2</sup> The main focus was on classical Greece, but one was also introduced to the history of the Byzantine Empire and Greek Christianity, the Fall of Constantinople and the “dark ages” under Ottoman rule, the Greek War of Independence of 1821, the Balkan Wars, the *Mikrasiatiki Katastrophi* (Asia Minor Catastrophe) – the uprooting of Greeks from Asia Minor and their influx into mainland Greece (Hirschon 1989) – and about Greece’s more recent struggles against the Italians and Germans during World War II. Information about Cyprus was scant and filtered through the grand schema of Greek nationalist history. The practice effectively excluded significant information about Cyprus before 1200 BC – the arrival of the Achaeans – such as the culture of the *Eteocyprians*, the native inhabitants of the island. It also meant that important subsequent events, such as the arrival of the Phoenicians around the middle of the ninth century BC, the cities they had built, and the civilization they had established were only given cursory attention, if any at all. Being a product of this educational experience myself, I was often forced to revise much of what I had learnt at high school. For instance, as a student in London, I was bemused, and at that point in my life rather disappointed, to find out from Bertrand Russell’s *History of Western Philosophy* that the celebrated Cypriot Stoic philosopher Zenon was not Greek but Phoenician. Similarly, having read Herodotus’ *Histories* in the English translation, I had no choice but to abandon my naive belief in the romantic story I was taught at high school about the Greco-Persian wars, namely, that Cypriots, as befits good brothers, assisted the Greeks against the Persians. Apparently, some (Phoenician) Cypriot city-states actually fought against Athens in King Zerxes’ armada.

Following the Achaean arrival in Cyprus, the now “Hellenized” island, the rhetoric goes, being rich in natural resources, attracted many regional powers but had never lost its Greek character. In succession, it fell into

the hands of the Assyrians (709–660 BC), the Egyptians (560–545 BC), and the Persians (545–333 BC). The island was liberated “from the *vice-like* grip of Persia” by Alexander the Great to whom ‘the Cypriot cities *voluntarily* submitted” (Panteli 1990:21; emphases added). In 58 BC, Cyprus fell into the hands of the Romans and remained a part of the Roman Empire until 330 AD. During the first century AD the apostles Paul and Barnabas arrived in Cyprus and converted the population to Christianity. Legend has it that during their mission, they were arrested in Paphos, and Paul was tied to a pillar and flogged *saranda para mia* (forty [times] save one).

When in 330 AD the Roman Empire was divided, Cyprus became a province of the eastern segment, Byzantium, and “from then on [she] was to share the fortunes of the Greek Orthodox world” (Republic of Cyprus 1991b:5). During the Crusades, the island was conquered by Richard the Lion Heart of England who subsequently sold it to the Knights Templars and they, in turn, to the Lusignan of France. The French dynasty ruled the country from 1192 to 1489 and established a feudal-type kingdom, turning Cypriot peasants into serfs. The Lusignan transferred the island to the Republic of Venice which held it until 1571, the time when Cyprus fell into the hands of the Ottoman Turks. The Ottoman occupation lasted for just over 300 years and, as I will argue below, British colonialism exploited the deplorable conditions of the Cypriot peasants to legitimate its presence on the island. Yet during the early years of Ottoman rule, the conditions of the peasants actually improved. As Hill points out, not only had the Orthodox church been restored to its former position<sup>3</sup> and the archbishop officially recognized as an *ethnarch* (the political representative of the Greeks of Cyprus), but also “those who had under Frankish rule been serfs now became owners of the soil, with the right of succession to their heirs” (Hill 1952:22; see also Kyrris 1984). In fact, the Latin rule had been so oppressive that many Cypriots actually co-operated with the Ottomans, hoping that the latter “would set them free from the heavy Venetian yoke” (Kyrris 1984:65).

In 1878 Britain took control of the island as part of a secret agreement made with Turkey and the new rulers were once again received by the Greek population as “liberators.” Hill, anticipating the future claims to the British administration, had this to say about the reaction of the Greek Cypriot population:

The Greeks welcomed their new masters, as they had throughout their history welcomed any change of this kind. They seemed generally to entertain the expectation that all taxes would be abolished. (1952:293)

In 1914, following Turkey's entry into World War I against the allies, Cyprus was formally annexed to the British Crown and declared a colony. Once again, the move was welcomed by the Greek Cypriots and even by a large majority of Turkish Cypriots who promised loyal obedience (Hill 1952:413). The years ahead, however, were marked by bitter struggles and bloodshed.

The first serious confrontation between Greek Cypriots and the British administration, known as *Oktovriana* (the October [incident]), took place in 1931 when, following the uncovering of a scandal regarding taxation,<sup>4</sup> riots broke out and Greek Cypriots burned down the residence of the British governor. In 1955, EOKA, the 'National Organization of Cypriot Fighters,' composed entirely of Greek Cypriots, assumed an armed struggle against the British. The aim was *Enosis*, the unification of the island with Greece. The call for *Enosis*, however, was met by a parallel call from the Turkish Cypriots for *Taksim*, partition of the island in which one half would go to Greece and the other to Turkey. By 1958, animosity between the two communities reached unprecedented heights and led to the first intercommunal violence in which fifty-six Greeks and fifty-three Turks died (Panteli 1990:180).<sup>5</sup>

In the meantime, EOKA's bitter struggle against the British dragged on until 1959 but *Enosis* remained an unfulfilled dream. In 1960, following the "London-Zurich Agreements" between Britain, Greece, and Turkey, Cyprus became independent and was proclaimed a republic. However, peace in the new nation-state was destined to last only for a very brief period. In 1963, Makarios, the Greek Cypriot president of the republic, proposed an amendment to the constitution after it had become apparent that the representatives of the two communities in the legislature, the House of Representatives, could not agree on legislation concerning such vital issues as income tax and customs (Panteli 1990:194). The Turkish Cypriots turned down the proposal and soon fighting broke out between the two communities.<sup>6</sup> For the first time the possibility of an invasion by Turkey, which lies only 75 kilometers off the north coast of Cyprus,<sup>7</sup> loomed large on the horizon. Fighting continued throughout 1964 and was resumed again in 1967 when Turkey, once again, threatened to invade the island.

The Turkish threat materialized seven years later, on July 20, 1974. Although by this time the *Enosis* movement had lost much of its popular support (Markides 1974), an extreme nationalist faction kept the issue very much alive. Throughout the early 1970s, the terrorist organization EOKA VITA (the second EOKA) was engaged in a series of subversive

activities. Its members attempted to assassinate the president, attacked police stations, and stole guns from the national guard. By early 1974, widespread rumors had it that with the help of the Greek military junta in Athens, which had control of the Greek Cypriot national guard, EOKA VITA was planning a coup. On Monday July 15, the Cyprus Broadcasting Corporation announced that the national guard had taken over control of the country. Makarios was ousted and a provisional government composed of hard-line nationalists was set up. It was not destined to stay in power long. Less than a week later, on July 20, 1974, Turkey invaded the island to protect, as it was claimed, the Turkish Cypriot community and to restore constitutional order.

It was a short and unequal struggle. In the aftermath of the invasion, 37 percent of the territory fell into the hands of the Turkish army. It includes the entire district of Kyrenia, almost the whole of Famagusta district, including the town, a significant section of the district of Nicosia, and a small part of the district of Larnaca. Famagusta town itself has never been colonized. Since August 1974, when its inhabitants were forced to leave, it has remained an empty ghost town. Two hundred thousand Greek Cypriots, about one-third of the population, were forced to leave their homes and flee to the south. The Turkish Cypriots living in the south were transported to the north. Twenty years later, the situation remains unaltered with the two Cypriot communities still living apart and the hopes for reunification shattered.

### **Politics and the Eurocentric ideology**

The contemporary Cypriot political scene is intensely fragmented both ideologically and with regard to the different views on the political problem of the island's division. Whatever the divisions, however, and no matter how deep they run, there is an overarching ideology that cuts across them and unifies all political parties and other voluntary organizations. As is repeatedly declared, recently more frequently than before, "*I Kipros ine anapospasto meros tis Evropis* (Cyprus is an integral part of Europe)". My aim in this section is to present a sketchy history of Greek Cypriot politics and to explore how deep this Eurocentric ideology runs.

Representative politics in Cyprus were first introduced on a strictly limited basis in 1883 by the British with the setting up of a legislative Council. This "toy parliament" (Hill 1952:419) was composed by the British High Commissioner himself, six British colonial officials, eight Greek Cypriots, and three Turkish Cypriots (Panteli 1990:84). As Hill points out, the "toy" was to be a great nuisance to the British because the

Greek Cypriot representatives used their position to promote the cause of *Enosis*. In 1931, following the widespread riots against the British administration, this partial political representation was suspended and all political parties were banned, only to be allowed to operate again after World War II.

There is some evidence to suggest that the limited electoral democracy that the British had made available was also resisted in symbolic, one might say unorthodox, ways. For instance, during municipal elections in the 1920s, a group of prominent young Nicosians nominated a totally unsuitable individual to run for mayor and asked all their friends and acquaintances to vote for him. By early afternoon, it had become apparent<sup>8</sup> that this individual was winning by a large margin. It took the intervention of some more serious Nicosians who urged voters "to rise to the occasion," to prevent him from being elected to office. The informant who told me this story interpreted the youngster's machinations as a practical joke, a way "to have fun." One wonders if this was not rather a way, whether conscious or unconscious, to *make fun* of British colonial rule itself.

The first free elections took place with independence in 1960 but they were far from being truly representative. To avoid class struggle and endanger the stability of the new nation-state, the Greek Cypriot politicians reached an agreement on the basis of which the communist party AKEL was pre-allocated five of the thirty-five Greek Cypriots seats in the House of Representatives. This was a significant compromise on the part of the communists because, as subsequent elections were to show, their share of the vote was much larger. The remaining thirty Greek Cypriot seats went to the other contestant, the right-wing "Patriotic Front," which, as Loizos (1975a:236) pointed out, was "less a party than an alliance of individuals." Turkish Cypriots took their share of fifteen seats as provided for by the constitution.

The political life on the island, however, was not destined to run as the constitution prescribed. Following the Turkish Cypriot secession of 1963–64, the 1965 elections for members of the House were postponed, once again for reasons of national unity and stability. The next elections took place in 1970 and of the five parties contesting them only two survive today, AKEL and the socialist party EDEK that was formed in 1969.<sup>9</sup> In the 1970 elections, AKEL won nine seats and EDEK two, while the remaining twenty-four seats went to right-wing parties. The 1975 elections were once again postponed as a result of the Turkish invasion and they eventually took place in 1977. Thereafter, four parties were to dominate

the Greek Cypriot political scene: AKEL, EDEK, and the two right-wing parties that were founded in 1976, the center-right DEKO (Democratic Party), and the right-wing DESY (Democratic Rally). In the last elections for members of the House in 1991, the largest party was DESY, taking approximately 33 percent of the vote, followed by AKEL with 30 percent, DEKO with 27 percent, and EDEK with 8 percent.

The oldest and best-organized party in Cyprus is AKEL. It was founded in 1926 as KKK, the "Communist Party of Cyprus," and after World War II when political parties were once again legalized it reappeared on the political scene with its current name that stands for the "Elevating Party of Working People." AKEL has always played a determining role in the political, social, and economic life of Cyprus. For instance, it was responsible for organizing the Cypriot working class into a strong and, as the 124-day miners' strike of 1948 in Mavrovouni–Xeros had shown, a militant force (Panteli 1990:140). AKEL was also the only political party in Cyprus to provide open support to the idea of an independent Cyprus as an alternative to *Enosis* with Greece. As a result, many of its supporters were persecuted by EOKA during the national liberation struggle of 1955–59 (Attalides 1977; Loizos 1975a). Its pro-independence also meant that AKEL was the only Greek Cypriot party to be supported by Turkish Cypriots. Friendship and *siniparksis* (co-existence) between the two Cypriot communities were values that the party has always upheld and when two of its members, Mishaoulis and Kavazoglou, a Greek and a Turkish Cypriot respectively, were assassinated by Turkish Cypriot extremists, they became a symbol of these values.

The ability of AKEL to dominate Cypriot political life, and to a certain extent determine its course, continues to the present day. In the 1983 presidential elections it was AKEL votes that shifted the balance in favor of the DEKO candidate. Subsequently, AKEL withdrew its support from the president that it helped get elected and supported an independent candidate. And even though the latter was completely inexperienced and had never been part of the political scene, AKEL managed to elect him to office. Nor do the communists seem to have suffered any losses as a result of the collapse of the Eastern bloc in 1989. On the contrary, as its supporters point out, AKEL is probably the only communist party in the world that has actually gained in popular support. In the 1991 elections for members of the House, AKEL's share of the vote actually increased by 3 percent.

The other three major political parties, DESY, DEKO, and EDEK, are relative newcomers on the political scene. The oldest and smallest of the

three, EDEK, was founded in 1969 by the personal physician of the late president Makarios. It is a social-democratic party leaning more to the left, and is supported mainly by the lower urban middle class, students, and intellectuals. During the coup of 1974, it appeared to have had a well-organized underground network and its supporters were the only organized group to take up armed resistance. DEKO, the centrist party, reached the pinnacle of its power when its president, Spyros Kyprianou, was also the president of the republic, that is, following the death of president Makarios in 1977 and up to 1988. During the last elections for members of the House in 1991, it suffered heavy losses. DESY, the conservative, right-wing party, was also founded in 1976 but its leader and many of its senior officials have been part of the Cypriot political scene for many years. It represents the interests of Cypriot big business but also houses many nationalists and ex-EOKA VITA guerrillas. One such nationalist who took up a ministerial position in the coupist government ran under the DESY banner in 1991 and became a deputy in the new House. In the opening of the new parliament, the AKEL and EDEK deputies abandoned their seats and left the House in protest.

The Cypriot political scene exhibits certain features that are worthy of comment. To say that it has all along been polarized between left and right is perhaps not particularly original. The extent of this polarization, however, and the particular form it assumes are quite striking. An interesting aspect of the polarization is the (unofficial) classification of soccer teams according to their reputed political affiliation.<sup>10</sup> Each town and village has its own *aristeres* (left) and *dheksies* (right) *omadhes* ([soccer] teams), the most popular however being two Nicosian clubs, *Omonia* (left wing) and *Apoel* (right wing). Markides *et al.* (1978:66–67) suggested that the origins of the politicization of soccer may be traced back to the colonial era, and in particular the period when political parties were declared illegal. Since people could no longer express their political beliefs through normal channels, they resorted to doing so by utilizing the only organized groups they had access to, the soccer clubs. This may well have been the case. The phenomenon continues to persist, however, at a period of “normal” political life and despite repeated official attempts to discourage the association “for the benefit of the sport.” Political polarization, it would seem, cannot be ignored as a major contributing factor.

A similar polarization, much more perceptible in villages than in towns, characterizes the organization of *kafenedhes* (coffee shops).<sup>11</sup> In almost every village a visitor is likely to encounter coffee shops that bear the name of some nationalist hero and fly the Greek flag. These are the *ethnikofrona*



*somatia*, literally clubs of the nationalist persuasion which may or may not house a soccer team. Nearby, often across the road, are located the coffee shops *ton aristeron* (of the leftists). In each coffee shop one will find the appropriate newspaper. In the leftist coffee shop the *Haravyi* (Dawn), the paper of AKEL; in the nationalist ones, *O Aghon* (The Struggle) and *Simerini* (Today's [paper]). Depending on one's political affiliation and ideology, one is likely to frequent only the appropriate coffee shop. Those politically uncommitted or not wishing to make their political stand public, visit a politically neutral coffee shop or both leftist and nationalist, making certain that they are not seen in one more often than the other.

Another striking feature of Cypriot political life, exemplified at the national level, is the unlikely alliances, formal and informal, that the various political parties strike among themselves, depending on what is at stake each time. As we have seen, AKEL is one of the parties that seek to promote Greek and Turkish Cypriot friendship and co-operation. On the *ethnikon zitima* (national issue), the question of Cypriot reunification, AKEL takes a moderate stand that supports concessions to the Turkish Cypriot side. So does the other major party, DESY, but for rather different reasons. AKEL, being a communist party, is ideologically committed to opposing narrowly perceived nationalism. DESY, on the other hand, being the party of capital, realizes that political instability is bad for business. Both parties therefore press for unification and are prepared to accept significant compromises. The hardliners are the socialist EDEK and the centrist DEKO. When the issue at stake is the "Cypriot problem," there is usually an alliance between AKEL and DESY on the one hand, and DEKO and EDEK on the other. These alliances, however, are never long lasting, nor are they ever recognized as such by the respective parties, an indication of the deep ideological gap that separates them.

On issues concerning social policy, the configuration of power changes drastically. The two parties of the left, AKEL and EDEK, put their differences aside and team up to protect the interests of "the working people." The two parties of the right, DESY and DEKO, form a similar alliance to protect the interests of their supporters. Just before I left Cyprus in August 1992, the political parties were preparing for the forthcoming presidential elections in early 1993 and clandestine talks were carried out among them to form alliances. At the time, it seemed as though DEKO and EDEK would team up together and support a common candidate, thus suggesting that the "national issue" was given priority over political ideology. DESY was "flirting" with DEKO but when the latter publicly declared that it would not support DESY's president for the presidency, the talks seemed

to have reached a stalemate. An alliance between AKEL and DESY, on the other hand, is highly unlikely. Despite their similar stand on the "national issue," the two parties are still "traditional enemies" and are separated by an unbridgeable ideological gap. It is more probable that they will end up each nominating its own candidate, and in the case of DESY this will probably be its current president.<sup>12</sup>

Despite their ideological differences and their different stand on the national issue, all political parties in Cyprus agree on one fundamental, overarching ideology: that Greek Cypriot society is a European society. The unanimity on this issue became publicly apparent and was strongly reaffirmed in 1990 a few months before the government formally applied for full membership of the European Community (EC).<sup>13</sup> So great was the urgency with which the political parties approached the issue that they found it necessary to call for an extraordinary session of the House to discuss what they perceived as an unjustified delay on the part of the government in applying. The only political party to take a rather cautious approach and voice concern was AKEL. Nonetheless, this must be viewed as a drastic shift toward the pro-European stand since before the collapse of the Eastern bloc the party opposed strongly the prospect of applying for membership. It seems likely that AKEL's initial opposition had more to do with the fact that most of the EC countries are also members of NATO, and therefore hostile to the Eastern bloc, than with any fundamental disagreement with the philosophy that pronounces Cyprus a European society. The breaking up of the Warsaw Pact meant that NATO was no longer an obstacle, at least not to the extent that it had been previously. Thus, its opponents argue, in order to save face, AKEL decided to voice caution and concern over the application rather than endorse it openly.

That AKEL aspires to the same Eurocentric ideology as any other Greek Cypriot political party, there can hardly be any doubt. Let me illustrate this point with one telling example. During the municipal elections of 1991, AKEL published various leaflets to promote its candidates. The leaflet for Aylantjia was entitled, "Together for the European Town of 2000." In his personal statement, the communist mayor seeking reelection had this to say about the future of the suburb: "I ask for your vote because Aylantjia of the 2000 demands, and can . . . develop into a beautiful European town." In another section of the same leaflet, it is pointed out that the municipal council and mayor "proved" themselves during their first term in office:

[We wanted] to prove in practice that the [quality of] life of the members of our municipality required improvement and that Aylantjia has the right to dream [about turning itself] into a small European town, *rationally* developed (emphasis added).

Apparently for AKEL, as much as for any other Cypriot political party, Europe sets the standards not only of “beauty” but of “rationality” as well. The fact that AKEL is a communist party, at least by paying lip service to communism, does not make it impervious to the Eurocentric ideology. Marx was, after all, the product of his time and despite his critique of capitalism, there is no doubt that he was as staunch a supporter of “rationality” and “progress” as any nineteenth-century intellectual.

In a special government publication to mark and promote the Cypriot application for full membership of the EC, the then president George Vassiliou who was elected with AKEL votes expressed the official sentiment in this way:

The European destiny of Cyprus is deeply rooted in our island’s culture, traditions, and history as well as in [the] political, economic, and social conditions of today. Last year’s application for full membership of the European Community was an expression and a reaffirmation of Cyprus’s European orientation and its will to become an integral part of Europe. *(Republic of Cyprus 1991b:3)*

There is no doubt that one of the reasons that Cyprus has applied for full membership was the desire to get European nations more involved in the Cyprus problem and prevent a Turkish take-over of the entire island. It is also true that the decision has been influenced by many important economic considerations.<sup>14</sup> These practical concerns, however, must be seen as a concrete manifestation of Greek Cypriot aspirations to a modern European identity, as effects rather than causes of the application. For it is because Cypriots view themselves as Europeans that they can make this sort of political and economic claim on Europe. And to see that this indeed is their vision of their future, one only needs to bear in mind that the alternative identity – Middle Eastern, Oriental and, according to the rhetoric, backward – they have rejected long ago.

### **Two ways of being Greek?**

By the early 1970s, the *Enosis* movement (union of Cyprus with Greece) had lost its momentum and entered a period of decline. Markides (1974) lists several reasons to account for the change, the most obvious being the realization that Turkey would use force to prevent *Enosis*. His main argument, however, is that the movement declined because of the inroads that

“modernization” and “secularization” had in the meantime made in Greek Cypriot society. Although Markides does not explain what he means by these notoriously equivocal terms, the argument seems to be based on the assumption that the movement was inspired by the vision of a “Greater,” Christian Orthodox Greece, a new Byzantium as it were, which Cyprus wished to join.

It is easy to see how one may be led to such a conclusion. EOKA’s struggle was apparently directed against British colonial rule, and the Cypriot Church was not only solidly behind it, but one of its main sources of support.<sup>15</sup> Nonetheless, ironically, *Enosis* was not an anti-British movement, at least not in the sense of being anti-European. As I have already suggested, since the middle of the nineteenth century, if not earlier, the cultural mood in Cyprus was characterized by a fixation for “de-Ottomanization.” Having discovered the premium placed on classical Greek civilization by the Eurocentric ideology, Cypriots wanted to shake off the Turkish influences, recover the spirit of their ancient forebears, and claim rightfully, as they understood it, a place among modern European nations. The struggle against the British and the calls for *Enosis*, then, did not mean turning away from Europe. They meant joining it, but on an equal footing – not as colonial subjects but as part of a people whose civilization laid the foundation of modern Europe itself. It is true, of course, that the *Enosis* movement was tinged with Orthodox religious overtones, but the Church’s involvement was circumstantial. As Hill (1952) pointed out, with the arrival of the British, the Church had lost most of the privileges that it enjoyed under Ottoman rule. The historical conjuncture therefore was conducive to Church involvement in the struggle. And understandably its assistance was both needed and welcome, particularly since there was no secular organization of the Church’s stature to assume leadership.

With this, I do not mean to suggest that the notion of Greekness is exhausted by reference to classical Greek civilization. Greek Cypriots are also Orthodox Christians – in contrast to the Protestant and Catholic Western Europe – and heirs to the Byzantine tradition. This aspect of their identity, however, has not been decisive in their vision of the world for the last century or so, at least as far as the educated elite is concerned.<sup>16</sup> Having said that, there has been a recent modest revival of this identity in the guise of “Neo-Orthodoxy,” particularly after the collapse of the Eastern bloc and the restoration of religious freedom in these traditionally Orthodox countries.<sup>17</sup> *Enosis*, then, was a modernizing movement from its inception, even though this may not be readily apparent.

The 1970s were also a time when Cypriots began to draw an unequivocal cultural boundary between themselves and their “brothers” on the mainland. Officially, this process of differentiation and distinction does not exist, but despite the rhetorical use of the kinship idiom, everyday life is replete with examples of it. The relations between Greek Cypriots and mainland Greeks is in many ways similar to that between Cretans and the mainlanders. It is riddled with ambivalence, tensions, and contradictions. Unlike Cretans, however, who emphasize their bravery and insubordination to authority (Herzfeld 1985), Greek Cypriots seek to distinguish themselves on the basis of a different set of values. They point to their higher living standards, civility, superior bureaucracy, better public services, in short, to all those aspects of their lives which, as they perceive it, make them better Europeans than mainland Greeks.

The best illustration perhaps of the way in which Greek Cypriots have created and reproduce a cultural boundary between themselves and the mainlanders is their deployment of the term *kalamaras*. The term is only used in everyday speech, while *Ellinas* (Greek) and *Elladhitis* (citizen of Greece) are reserved for formal, official discourse. Literally *kalamaras* means a person who carries a *kalamari* (pen),<sup>18</sup> a “pen-pusher” so to speak, but the connotations, although subtle, are much more complex and clearly pejorative. In fact, the stronger version of the term is *poushto-kalamaras*, *pushtis* being the “passive” male homosexual (Loizos 1975a:286, n. 10).

The image of the *kalamaras* consists of a set of negative cultural traits that allegedly characterize mainland Greeks and set them apart from Cypriots (*Kiprei*). Mainlanders are said to be sly and deceitful, not to be trusted and to be kept at a safe distance at all times. For, as the rhetoric has it, they are sooner or later bound to take advantage of one. This image has a historical precedent in Cyprus. In the 1930s, when illiteracy was high, villagers were indeed deceived and taken advantage of by people who held the *kalamari* (pen), the money lenders (Surrige 1930:45–46; Attalides 1977). Because Cypriots speak what they themselves perceive as a dialect and have learned to recognize the demotic Greek tongue as the language of the “educated,” mainlanders may have been historically associated in the popular imagination with the individual who knows *ghrammata* (letters) and can therefore deceive the uneducated and the poor. Cypriots who visit Greece often return with stories about how some sly Greek tried to cheat them – a taxi driver who spent hours to take them to their destination,<sup>19</sup> a waiter who charged them outrageously large amounts of money for a coffee or a meal, a street vendor who persuaded them to buy his fake

merchandize by swearing on his “dead” mother’s soul that it was genuine. The image of the deceitful Greek has been strengthened over the years also partly because of the presence of Greek military personnel on the island. Many Cypriots are particularly defensive towards the Greek soldiers because, as they say, through witticisms, false promises, and sheer lies, they seduce “innocent” Cypriot girls and then desert them when they return to Greece.

Mainland Greeks are also said to be lazy. They avoid honest work as much as possible and seek to make money through *kombines* (underhanded practices). This explains, according to Cypriots, the “poverty” that one finds in Greece. Athenians live in tiny apartments “one on top of the other” and struggle for the most basic necessities of life. Allegedly *en ekhoun na fasin* (they have little to eat), they are *nistitji*, a term that literally means fasting but implies deprivation in a more general sense. This shows in the way that they interact with one another in public – they never stand in lines, they fight to get a seat on the bus, they insult each other *me to paramikro* (with the slightest [provocation]), they argue and quarrel for the pettiest of things. In short, they are rude and impertinent and lack the most basic standards of civility. Greek society itself is said to be in total disarray. Nothing works in Greece, according to Cypriots. From the bureaucracy, to public services, to the political system itself, the country is in a state of permanent disorganization and disorder. A friend who spent his summer holidays in Greece told me that he was particularly inconvenienced by Greek customs in trying to register his motorcycle. “I was sent from one office to the next. Nobody seemed to know what I was supposed to do, and nobody was prepared to assume responsibility,” he complained bitterly.<sup>20</sup> “Harry Clean is certainly right in saying that Greece is the only European country with African citizens.”<sup>21</sup>

The foregoing discussion would be incomplete without emphasizing two things. First, the image of the *kalamaras* – sly, lazy, rude, disorganized – ethnocentric though it is,<sup>22</sup> is one in which mainland Greeks often recognize themselves. As many anthropologists have noted, this negative image is the *Romeic* or Oriental aspect of Greek identity as opposed to the positive or Western aspect of the *Ellinas*.<sup>23</sup> Second, mainland Greeks often respond to the Cypriot accusations by valorizing the former aspect and playing down the significance of the latter. For instance, a Cypriot student at Athens university told me that Greeks depict Cypriots as having sold their “souls to the Jews.” This anti-Semitic statement is meant to suggest that they are much more concerned with making money than with the “traditional,” that is, *Romeic* Greek ideals. In the same vein, Cypriots are

often said to have “learned” their manners from the British, the implication being that they have now become “snobs” like the British and so much unlike the unpretentious Greeks.

As I have already suggested, these boundaries of exclusion, the terms of stigmatization that both sides deploy in their symbolic confrontations, are usually the subject of everyday discourse. There are times, however, few as they may be, when these images surface in official contexts as well, itself an indication that they are deeply embedded in both Cypriot and mainland Greek culture. Let me illustrate this point with one telling example. The president of DESY, the nationalist, conservative party, was invited by Cypriot television to express his views on the political problem of the island’s division. The other guest was an ex-Greek ambassador to Cyprus who takes a hardline stand on the issue and is against any concessions to the Turkish Cypriot side. The ambassador was in the studios of the Greek Television in Athens and the connection was made via satellite.

The discussion began in earnest and, predictably enough, it soon became quite heated. The Greek ambassador, anxious to make his case, was repeatedly interrupting the DESY president, so much so that at one point the latter, apparently quite irritated, exploded: “We, in Cyprus, do not argue the way you do in Greece.” Cypriots, then, the DESY president implied, do not interrupt their interlocutors but politely wait for them to finish, and then make their case. This is in contrast to the mainlanders who know nothing of civilized discussion. The implications of the statement were crystal clear to the ambassador. And predictably enough, he became offended. He accused the DESY president of insulting the Greek people and hit back, as forcefully, by ironically pointing out that Cypriots have learned “British manners.” At this point the satellite connection had run out of time and the confrontation came to an abrupt end, saving perhaps embarrassment to both sides. The exchange, however, short though it may have been, is highly significant. The person who accused mainland Greeks of being uncivilized rogues was not the average layman but the president of the largest Cypriot party that still stands for *Enosis* – or at least pays lip service to it – himself one of the most senior and experienced politicians on the island.<sup>24</sup> It may be said, of course, in his defense, that politicians are people too. Yet this is precisely the point. Despite their lofty positions and rhetoric, they are subject to the same kind of prejudice as ordinary folk.

The cultural boundaries that Cypriots draw between themselves and mainland Greeks and the fact that after the 1974 invasion the *Enosis* movement has become defunct in Cyprus<sup>25</sup> may suggest to the outside observer that Cypriots are relinquishing their claim to being Greek. Yet

nothing could be more misleading. The claim is as strongly asserted today as it has ever been. Cypriots take great pride in their Greekness and never miss the opportunity to declare it publicly. In fact, there is nothing more offensive to Cypriots than the suggestion, however subtle, that they might not be Greek. In the rare instances that the suggestion comes from within, it is treated as nothing short of treason. An incident that took place in the spring of 1992 illustrates this point quite graphically.

A young sociologist from Limassol was invited onto the popular TV talk show *Khoris Plesia* (“Without Limits”) and was asked to express his views on, among other things, Greek Cypriot ethnic identity. The gist of what he had to say may be briefly summarized as follows: he did not feel himself to be Greek but Cypriot, though he pointed out that he was not anti-Greek in the least; instead of demotic Greek, the Cypriot dialect should be adopted as the official language; if Cyprus wishes to strengthen its status as an independent nation, it should cease using the Greek national anthem; Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots fought common struggles in the past and had not always been the “traditional” enemies that Greek nationalism makes them out to be. The comments caused an unprecedented upheaval and the incident occupied the headlines of the local press for weeks on end. His views were thought to be so provocative that, as one journalist observed in disbelief, he had “managed to unite the government, the political parties, and the press in condemning them” (*The Cyprus Weekly*, April 10, 1992) – a rather rare phenomenon in the intensely fragmented Cypriot political universe.

Not surprisingly, the nationalists were particularly offended and indignant. Here are some telling comments from the nationalist press:

Once we had ideals . . . Once we used to die for Greece, and only her name [was enough] to cause SACRED sentiments . . . The Greeks of Cyprus act as Greeks. Indeed, YES! [For] 3,000 years, have we not been inhaling and exhaling GREECE AND ONLY GREECE? (*Simerini, April 12, 1992; capital letters in the original*)

When the question of freedom of expression was raised from some quarters, another nationalist paper responded with the following rhetorical question:

Why should we not invite a rapist, or a pedophile, or a drug pusher [to express his views]? . . . Why should we not bring all these things within the sphere of free expression? For the wiping out of historical truth and the questioning of [our] very descent contains corruption to a greater extent [than these other practices].

(*Aghon, April 11, 1992*)



The Cyprus Broadcasting Corporation that aired the views of the young sociologist found itself under heavy fire as well. Its board of directors felt compelled to condemn them publicly and to announce that it was reviewing the format and structure of the program. It also invited onto the program a well-known and widely respected local scholar to confront the heresy and reiterate the official version of the truth.

The foregoing analysis presents us with a paradox whose solution has already been alluded to, but nonetheless requires further comment. How is it possible for Cypriots to claim that they are Greek and at the same time portray those who occupy the very core of modern “Greekness” – mainland Greeks – in such pejorative terms? The argument that I want to propose is that Greek Cypriot ethnic identity cannot be understood outside the context of an imputed historical continuity with classical Greek civilization. Like mainland Greeks, Cypriots imagine themselves to be descendants of the classical Hellenes. This, no doubt, makes them and the mainlanders “brothers” – or, as it is sometimes phrased, it makes Greece the *mitera patridha* (motherland) – but who can deny that kin can be as different as complete strangers? To understand the claims to this genealogy, we must consider, even if rather sketchily, the roots of Eurocentric ideology.

In an iconoclastic and influential book, Bernal (1987) has argued that with the rise of racism in nineteenth-century Europe, Western scholarship sought to present European culture as “pure” in origin and, especially, free from Oriental influences. Classical Greek civilization was constituted in such a way as to serve this particular purpose. While in previous centuries European scholars recognized and acknowledged the intellectual debt that classical Greece owed to Egypt and Phoenicia, now the links were severed and the ancient Greeks constituted as the only legitimate ancestors of Western civilization. The same Eurocentric ideology recognized modern Greeks, including Cypriots (Herzfeld 1987a:73–74), as descendants of the classical Hellenes but stopped short of granting them full “European” status. Having spent four centuries under Ottoman rule, their culture was “corrupted” by Oriental influences and had stagnated. The predicament of modern Greeks, then, was to serve as the “living ancestors” of Europe (Herzfeld 1987a), as a reminder of what Europeans had once been and, by implication, of how far they had travelled along the way. Be that as it may, the ideology nonetheless held the promise of an eventual incorporation of modern Greeks into the present (cf. Fabian 1983). As Anderson (1991:72) pointed out, Greek intellectuals educated

abroad and “exalted by the philhellenism at the center of Western European civilization . . . undertook the debarbarizing” of their fellow Greeks. In order to be admitted, modern Greeks needed to de-Ottomanize themselves first.

The claim that modern Greeks were indeed descendants of the classical Hellenes did not always go uncontested. When skepticism was raised from some quarters in Europe, Greek intellectuals were instrumental in seeking to establish links with the classical past as proof of their Greekness. Folklorists in particular sought to locate historical continuity with classical Greek civilization in the practices and culture of the rural population. Significantly enough, one of the most prominent figures in this movement has been the Cypriot teacher Loukas (1874). As Herzfeld (1986:93–95) has shown, after completing his studies in Athens, Loukas returned to Cyprus and undertook extensive research, determined as he was to silence the critics and show that Cypriots too were truly Greek. The rhetoric, as we have seen, is as animated today as it had been during Loukas’s time. Cypriots assert that they are descendants of the Achaeans who colonized the island over 2,000 years ago. And to demonstrate the genealogy, they often point to certain unique features in their culture, particularly their language. The latter, it is often pointed out, is much closer to Homeric Greek than demotic Greek itself.

At the cost of being repetitive, it can be asked: if Cypriots are descendants of the ancient Greeks, and if, as the Eurocentric ideology dictates, classical Greek civilization is the cradle of the modern West, does this not mean that Cypriots, above all people, are entitled to a European identity? Greek Cypriots certainly think so. Hence the almost religious zeal with which they safeguard their claim to Greekness, the vehement repudiation of any suggestion, however subtle and indirect, that they might not be Greek. It is within the context of the Eurocentric ideology, then, that the Cypriot claim to Greekness should be understood. Moreover, within this context their attempt to distinguish themselves from mainland Greeks ceases to be a paradox. The practice implies that there are two ways of being Greek, and that the Cypriot way is superior.

The Eurocentric ideology also demarcates the ground on which the Cypriot official establishment attempts to build the edifice of its modernity. It illuminates its enthusiasm for the project and the eagerness with which it displays Cypriot modernity to itself and to outsiders. For it is the concrete proof, so to speak, that Cypriots have succeeded in de-Ottomanizing themselves. Yet Greek Cypriots are not the only inhabitants on the island. A sizeable minority claims to be descended from the mighty

Ottoman Turks, to have the closest of links, in other words, with the very legacy from which Greek Cypriots have been steadfastly seeking to disentangle themselves. And so the stage is set for an implacable conflict.

### The “exotic” within

The relations between Greek and Turkish Cypriots and more generally between Greeks and Turks are historically complex and cannot be analyzed here. My aim is simply to make a few remarks within the context of the foregoing discussion. Moreover, I do not wish to argue that the cultural model that I put forward here can explain by itself the Cypriot conflict. However, it seems to me that without this model the conflict cannot be fully understood either.

As I have already suggested, Turkish Cypriots have been to Greek Cypriots what the rest of the world has been to the West – in a word, culturally inferior. Apparently, this is more than an unhappy coincidence. It is the result of a hegemonic ideology at work, of a lesson that Greek Cypriots have learned practically as well as theoretically – practically in their encounter with the British who treated them as “backward peasants,” and theoretically through the Western intellectual tradition of the nineteenth century. Let me illustrate this point with a few telling examples. In 1930, the British colonial government of Cyprus published the findings of a survey of the rural population (Surrige 1930). In the preface, the governor, Sir Ronald Storrs, explains “the idleness, wastefulness, and improvidence of the [Cypriot] villager” in these terms: “In condemning defects or anomalies, [the critic] will do well to remember that the *Ottoman Empire* preserved for centuries, as in a museum, the social and political conditions of the Middle Ages” (1930:4; emphasis added). The governor, who seems to have been a lover of classical civilization – he begins his preface with a quote from Homer<sup>26</sup> – considered the Ottomans responsible for the “backwardness” of the Cypriot villager. And like a good colonial administrator, he took it up to himself and his government to remedy the situation: “It is our pleasant and honourable task . . . to better [the villagers’] conditions herein revealed” (1930:5).

But Greek Cypriots did not really need the governor to tell them why they were backward. They had already mastered the colonialist rhetoric pretty well. The Greek Cypriot daily *Alithia* of January 16, 1925, published an editorial evaluating the prospects of Turkey becoming a “civilized” nation after the fall of the Sultan and the rise of the Young Turks. The text could be easily mistaken for an extract from any colonialist anthropological manual of the nineteenth century.

The Ottoman is by nature and by position leisure-prone, slave to a paralyzing climate and an indolent tradition, prey to a religious mysticism and endless voluptuousness. The civilization of so many centuries, which has wrought . . . like hot iron even the most savage and distant peoples of Earth has not touched the Turks at all.

Today this kind of attack is uncommon, partly because the rhetoric of ethnocentrism has become more refined over the years and partly because such views are not conducive to the resolution of the Cypriot problem. In everyday language, however, Turks are still depicted as “barbarians” and “backward,” an accusation that is especially levelled against the Anatolian Turkish settlers in the occupied north of the island. As for the Turkish Cypriots themselves, they are said to be no match for the Greek Cypriot entrepreneurial spirit and proclivity for progress. It is often pointed out, for instance, that even though they have been in control of the best agricultural land and most of the industrial and tourist infrastructure since 1974, their living standards are five times lower than those of Greek Cypriots. Similar views are expressed – and legitimated – by outside authorities. A good illustration is the case of the British journalist and intellectual, Colin Thubron, who visited Cyprus a few years before the Turkish invasion. In the preface to his book’s second edition, he suggests some of the reasons for why the island is likely to remain divided.

It is an unhappy and unequal division, but after the atrocities of the recent years these two peoples . . . will live apart. Already the two halves of the island are stamped with their *personalities*. The north has fallen into *neglect*, the south into *over-exploitation*.  
(Thubron 1986:xi; *emphases added*)

It may perhaps be surprising that the “Great Divide” – the separation of the world into modern and backward, disenchanting and mystified, “hot” and “cold” – has found expression and taken firm root in a small country such as Cyprus. Yet such is the dialectic of global hegemony, and the “Green Line” stands as an unhappy concrete manifestation of it. This painful reality becomes even more distressing when one bears in mind that in reproducing the colonialist rhetoric, in confronting the Turkish Cypriots in the same way that the West has been confronting the rest of the world, Greek Cypriots perpetuate the conditions of their own domination. They reproduce the very ideology that constitutes *them* as “backward” Middle Easterners.

Yet a different, more auspicious picture emerges when one talks to ordinary folk. The older generations of Greek Cypriot men and women insist that in the past they and Turkish Cypriots were “like brothers.” As they often say, “We used to go to their weddings, they used to come to

ours, that's how things were." It is not accidental that people refer to weddings to explain how amicable the relations between the two communities had been. Not only were weddings the major event of the village calendar, they were also occasions that renewed old friendships and established new ones. To this period of peaceful co-existence, I turn next. I reconstruct the weddings of the 1930s and explore their significance as rites of passage and as occasions for reciprocity and the expression of the ideology of the *fouartas* persona – the man who gains respect by demonstrating that he does not respect money.

# 3

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## The weddings of the 1930s

Apart from those who experienced them first hand and portray them with a certain nostalgia, and the folklorist who seeks to capture the memory of a fleeting “cultural heritage” (Averof 1986:5), the wedding celebrations of the recent rural Cypriot past are considered by most people as little more than *protina pramata* (aboriginal things) – picturesque perhaps, but also remote, unsophisticated, and crude.<sup>1</sup> These perceptions can hardly do them justice. The weddings of the 1930s were complex events – at the same time religious, social, and political – that expressed and legitimated an intricate way of life with its own visions and divisions, aspirations and dilemmas, conflicts and contradictions.

Drawing on folkloric accounts<sup>2</sup> and my own fieldwork, in this chapter I will reconstruct the wedding celebrations of this period and attempt to capture a sense of what they must have been like. My primary aim, however, is to highlight certain key features and in particular the role of weddings in the legitimation and reproduction of two fundamental divisions in the social order – between the generations and among adult men. This is not to deny that weddings legitimated other divisions, such as between men and women (Skouteri-Didaskalou 1984; Kligman 1988: 74–149; Cowan 1990:87–133). Nor am I unaware that they reproduced other important institutions, such as the family, sex, and kinship. The emphasis on division and inequality is meant to render the dynamics of both change and continuity comprehensible. For it was primarily the struggle for power and control between the generations that has undermined the status of weddings as “rites of passage” and eventually transformed them into their present guise. Similarly, to understand why weddings were and still are the single most important cultural celebration in Cyprus, we need to explore how they have been constituted as occasions

where adult men competed with one another for the accumulation of symbolic profits – prestige and moral authority.

### Rites of passage

Van Gennep (1960:116) considered weddings as the most important rite of passage. In a sense, they are the most disruptive of the social order since they involve both the physical movement of people and the transfer of property. In the Cypriot context of the 1930s, the groom and the bride moved from their parents' houses into their own – residence being neolocal. The transfer of property also involved both the family of the groom and the family of the bride. The former provided the house, the latter furniture and the bride's trousseau (Loizos 1975b).

Like any other rite of passage, weddings also signify the symbolic transfer of people from one social category to the next. Through marriage boys (*kopellouthkia*) became men (*athropi*) and girls (*koroues*) became women (*ghenetjes*). Wedding celebrations – the public realization and affirmation of marriage – marked this transition from adolescence to social adulthood and conferred on the bride and groom a new status. Despite the drastic changes in the social structure over the last sixty years, one is still not considered to be a “full” adult before marriage, even when one has other equally significant “qualifications.” Let me illustrate this with one small example. A 30-year-old friend with a doctorate in sociology moved to Nicosia and became friendly with the neighborhood's children. When an 8-year-old boy addressed him as “*Re Andrea*,”<sup>3</sup> one of the boy's friends chastised him for not using the more proper idiom *Kirie* (Mr.). “Why should I call him Mr?” the boy retorted. “He's not even married yet.”

As several anthropologists have shown for Greece,<sup>4</sup> single men, and particularly women, are not simply an oddity. They are liminal entities, almost not quite human. As I was to find out personally in an unpleasant incident, this perception is still quite prevalent in Cyprus as well. At a large gathering of relatives at an aunt's house in Paphos, and after we had a lot to eat and even more to drink, she inquired whether I was planning to get married, now that my studies were nearing the end. “You are no longer *moro* (a baby), my son,” she reminded me, “*En tjeros sou* (it's time for you [to get married].” Before I had time to reply, her husband, apparently quite inebriated by this time, interjected and said vehemently: “A man who doesn't get married and doesn't have children *en san to khtino* (is like a beast).”

The traditional emphasis on the transition of actors from one social position to the next has often led anthropologists to overlook the fact that

rites of passage are also political events. This shortcoming is increasingly becoming apparent, particularly to women anthropologists. As we have seen, several writers have noted the role of weddings in the legitimation of gender inequality. In societies where weddings also function as rites of initiation (Belmont 1982), they reproduce in addition hierarchical relations between age groups, primarily between adult men and youths. Rites of initiation symbolically manipulate age limits by arbitrarily dividing biological age into discontinuous segments (Bourdieu 1977). In this way, they fix the social boundary between age groups and determine the limitations and privileges of each, as well as the relations between them. Legitimate sexuality, prestige, and social standing were the major stakes of social adulthood in the 1930s. And so was the power to control younger men and women. The weddings of the period, then, not only marked the boundary between adolescence and adulthood but also regulated the symbolic transfers from one side to the other. Their efficacy in this role will become more apparent in the next chapter. Here it should suffice to point out that much later when youngsters achieved social adulthood practically – largely as a result of economic independence – and the symbolic boundaries that separated them from their elders became increasingly blurred, the importance of elaborate and protracted celebrations was severely undermined. As a result, weddings eventually became a single-day event.

Depending on the area, weddings in the 1930s were celebrated over a five- or six-day period. They commenced on Friday or Saturday and ended on the following Tuesday. Moreover, on the first Sunday after the wedding, a more modest celebration known as *andighamos*, literally in lieu of the *ghamos* (wedding), took place at the house of the newlyweds. In what follows, I shall reconstruct the events that began on Friday and led to the *andighamos* on the basis of Van Gennep's famous tripartite schema. The *resi* preparations on Friday, the "mattress" rite on Saturday, and the "changing of the bride" and "shaving of the groom" on Sunday morning constituted rites of separation. The rite of transition consisted of the church ceremony known as *stefanoman* (crowning), while the feasts on Sunday, Monday, and Tuesday evening, the ritual display of the bride's virginity on Monday morning, the "dance of the couple" on Monday evening, and the *andighamos* feast constituted rites of incorporation.

### ***Friday***

In the villages of Paphos, Friday was the day for the ritual preparation of the *resi*. As Averof (1986:17) notes, this particular wedding dish was unique to the area and certain parts of the Limassol district. It was made



with crushed wheat and various meats such as chicken and pork, all cooked together in large vessels known as *khartzia* (cauldrons). The *resi* was ritualistically prepared on Friday but was cooked on Saturday night to be ready for the Sunday feast. The wheat was first separated from unclean elements such as little stones, hay, and other seeds, and was then taken by a group of women to the village fountain to be washed. It was placed in large wooden vessels called *skafes* and was covered with red shawls. The procession to the village fountain was headed by the musicians, the *fkio-laris* (fiddler) and the *laoudaris* (the lute player).<sup>5</sup> Averof (1986), a noted fiddler himself, points out that the musicians were not paid a fixed salary but instead depended on the *ploumismata*, the ritualistic and exhibitionist giving of money gifts by those who requested a particular song or dance.<sup>6</sup>

On arrival at the village fountain, the wheat was treated to *efta plim-mata*, that is, it was washed seven times, and upon completion of this task, the procession returned to the bride's house. There, the wheat was laid out on a cloth on the floor of the house and pounded by women in rhythmic movements until it was crushed. In this task, the women used a wooden implement called *faouta*, a rectangular plank rounded at the edges and attached to a wooden handle. The same implement was used to wash clothes and pound them clean at the village fountain. Throughout the ritualistic preparation of *resi*, the musicians played songs appropriate to the occasion:

Five red kerchiefs  
and a beautiful *fesi*<sup>7</sup>  
come on girls  
let's wash the *resi*  
(Averof 1986:17)

The ritual preparation of the *resi* was the first in a series of rites of separation of the groom and bride from their natal families and their positions as adolescents. It was also a fertility rite. As a perceptive octogenarian from Paphos put it, "It symbolizes the fertility of the Earth and of the couple."

### ***Saturday***

The major focus of the celebrations on Saturday was the ritual preparation of the bridal mattress. The ceremony took place at the house of the bride's parents in the afternoon and the task was once again performed by village women invited specifically for the occasion. The ritual consisted of the dancing of the sheep wool, which was placed for this purpose in a shallow basket called *tsestos*, the filling up of the mattress cloth, and the stitching

of red ribbons in the shape of a cross on the four edges of the mattress and one in the center. The task could only be carried out by women *monostefanes* (who had been crowned [married] only once) and whose husbands were still alive – a requirement expressing the wish that the would-be-bridal would herself remain *monostefani*. After the stitching of the mattress and the crosses, the women brought forward the bride's *prika* (trousseau) in several *tsestous* and danced around the mattress. They then made up the mattress and placed a male child on it who was rolled over several times, symbolically wishing the couple to have a male first-born. The bride's trousseau was then displayed to the women. It was laid out on the mattress itself and typically consisted of silk sheets and pillowcases, embroidered table cloths and kitchen towels, a quilt made of wool, and a quilt cover. In the villages of Nicosia, the bride's trousseau, known in this area as *manassa* (Sakellarios 1891:726), was displayed on the walls of the house. In Nicosia itself, though no formal display took place, the mother of the bride "always found an opportunity to open the wardrobe and show it off," according to a perceptive female informant. Once the display of the trousseau was completed, a plate was placed in the center of the mattress and the musicians asked the congregation to step forward *na ploumisoun to krevati* (to adorn the mattress with money gifts), that is, place the money in the plate.

The money was then collected for the bride and groom and the next rite to be performed was the "dance of the mattress." The women hoisted the mattress from the floor, placed it on their shoulders, and danced around for a few minutes before placing it on the bridal bed. Throughout the ceremony the musicians played songs appropriate to the task at hand:

Adorn your needles with silk thread,  
girls, and stitch the mattress nicely  
Place the four crosses in the center  
[and] the edges  
so that the bride and groom can lie  
like *filikoutounia* (love-birds)

Call the relatives to come [forward]  
and adorn it [mattress] with money  
[and may they go] to the holy grave of Christ  
and pay their respects<sup>8</sup>

The preparation of the mattress was a fertility ritual that consecrated the impending sexual union of the new couple. It was the second rite of separation leading up to the last two, the "changing of the bride" and the "shaving of the groom" on Sunday.

**Sunday**

Sunday was the major focus of the celebrations. It included several different rituals, the most important being the church ceremony – the *stefanoman* (crowning) – the liminal stage of the celebrations. Soon after lunch, the musicians went to the bride’s house for the first rite of separation of the day known as *to allaman tis nifs* (the changing of the bride’s [clothes]). The village girls, friends of the bride, having helped her into her wedding dress, waited to comb her hair and *na tin kholiasoun* (to make her up with black color around the eyes). The musicians sang during this elaborate procedure:

Today the sky is bright  
today the day is bright  
they are grooming the bride  
who has a lot of pride

Today the sky is changing  
today the day is changing  
today a child is separated  
from the mother

Eh! groom her well  
the one who is pearl-like  
whom her mother has her  
covered in gold

After the bride’s grooming, it was time for the *zosimon*, a rite that involved tying and untying a red kerchief around the bride’s waist. The rite was performed first by the bride’s father, then by her mother, and then by other close relatives, such as grandparents, uncles, and aunts. Each placed the red kerchief around the bride’s waist, tied it, untied it, and then removed it, repeating the same sequence another two times. The musicians gave the signal for the rite to begin with the following song:

Call her father  
to come and do the *zosimon*  
to give her his blessing  
and to deliver her

The rite is said to signify the breaking of the bonds that tied the bride to her natal family so that she could now create her own (Papacharalambous 1965:117), though many informants were not quite certain. “It’s the custom,” they would say, and when I pressed them, they would typically respond: “That’s how we found it, that’s how we do it.”

The next ritual was the *kapnisman* literally “smoking.” The bride’s mother placed charcoal and dry olive leaves in a small, silver-plated vessel

called *kapnistirin* and set the mixture on fire.<sup>9</sup> She passed the *kapnistirin* with a circular motion over the bride's head three times and then held it in front of her *ya na kapnisti* (to smoke herself). The gesture of "smoking one's self" involves extending the right hand, palm half-closed, as if literally trying to catch the smoke, and then crossing oneself three times. The *kapnisman* was, and still is, practiced in other contexts as well, for instance, in some households every day at sunset, and it is said to protect people against the evil eye.<sup>10</sup>

This was the last rite for the bride before the church ceremony. Next, the musicians went to the groom's house to play during *to ksiourisman tou ghambrou* (the [ritualistic] shaving of the groom) by the village barber.

Barber, sharpen  
your blade well  
to shave the groom  
without making him suffer

Barber, shave him well  
and splash him with lavender  
[so that] today's day  
he remembers always

Having been shaved, the groom was then helped into his new, white shirt and his *zimboundi* (waistcoat) by his best man,<sup>11</sup> and participated in his own

Plate 6. The *zosimon* of the bride in a contemporary "village" wedding



rites of the *zosimon* and the *kapnisman*. The groom and his party subsequently proceeded to the bride's house to claim her and then to the church. The procession was headed by the musicians who played a tune known as "the wedding song," followed by the priest, the groom, and his father, and the bride and her father. Behind them came relatives and friends of the two families.

With the last two rites of separation, the groom and bride entered the liminal phase of the celebration, the church ceremony or *stefanoman* (crowning). I was unable to find any written accounts as to how this particular rite was enacted in the 1930s and the information I collected proved to be rather scanty. Older informants insisted that the ceremony has not changed since then, but this is questionable. In the Greek Orthodox world, as in other societies, local religious tradition does not always follow Church doctrine very closely. Sometimes, it opposes it openly (Danforth 1982; Caraveli 1986), even though the distinction between the two may not be as clear cut as the ecclesiastical establishment would have it (Stewart 1991). To circumvent this problem, I will describe the rite in subsequent chapters as I witnessed it on several occasions during fieldwork.

After the church ceremony, the newlyweds returned to their own house "holding *bratsio*," that is, the bride placed her arm around her husband's and walked with him side by side, a public sign of legitimate intimacy. At their house, they received their guests who wished them well – *na zisete* (may you live [long]) is the appropriate phrase for the occasion. It is interesting to note here that the newlyweds and their guests did not shake hands as they do today. The gesture was rather more poetic. When the guests uttered their wishes, the couple responded by sprinkling rosewater in the guests' hands from a small silver-plated vessel called *pouseli* or *merrekha*. The guests were then treated to a glass of home-made wine (the men) and *ghliko*, fruit preserved in syrup (the women). In the early evening, men, relatives of the bride and groom, made the village round and invited people *sta trapezia* (to the tables) for the feast, which was usually extravagant, at least by the standards of the time. As I have already pointed out, the most popular wedding dish was the *resi*. Other typical dishes included *kolokasi*<sup>12</sup> and potatoes *yakhni* (cooked in tomato sauce), beets, salads, and various meats. Drink consisted entirely of home-made wine and *zivania* (grappa). It is perhaps noteworthy that "at the tables" men and women were segregated, while dancing and singing were monopolized by the men. The women *andreboundan* (were embarrassed) to sing and dance, and for the most part they were content to watch the men perform. This is in accordance with the ethic of expressive masculinity and passive femininity.<sup>13</sup>

Eating, drinking, and singing, and dancing went on until late into the night. In the villages of Nicosia custom prescribed that a group of youths stayed behind after all the guests had left to tease the groom. They usually blocked the entrance to the bridal “chamber” with a boulder or sometimes, they themselves laid down and occupied the bridal bed. The youths refused to leave and allow the newlyweds to consummate their marriage unless the groom gave them *tin okan tou tjirou tou* (the oke<sup>14</sup> of his father), that is, food and drink to continue the celebrations by themselves (Papacharalambous 1965:131). The understanding was that the groom would give anything to get rid of them, being anxious as he was to have his first sexual encounter.

### **Monday**

Monday morning was the time for the ritual display of the bride’s virginity. I shall deal with this practice in detail in the next chapter. Here, it should suffice to say that, even though it offends today’s sensibilities, this was an important rite that incorporated the couple into the adult world of legitimate sexuality. It is also necessary to point out something that is often overlooked. The rite was a confirmation, not only of the bride’s purity, but also of the groom’s virility. People did not merely expect to see whether the bride was *korashia* (a virgin), but also that the groom *ekamen tin dhouliau tou* (did his job [properly]) or that *ekataferen ta* (he managed it [to have intercourse]). The stake in this rite, then, was procreation and the establishment of a new family – by a sexually potent man and a woman who would not endanger the stability of the family by being “shameless” (cf. Delaney 1987).<sup>15</sup>

During the course of the day, people visited the newlyweds’ house and brought *kanishia* (gifts in kind), such as potatoes, pasta, chickens, olive oil, cheese, and wine. To some extent, these gifts determined who would participate in the Monday-evening feast, though it is important to point out that there was no “screening” by the hosts and theoretically anyone could participate in the feast, whether bearer of gifts or not. People brought gifts because they did not want to be obligated to the couple and their families for the latter’s hospitality. As such, the *kanishi* is best seen as a counter-gift whose aim was to maintain a balance in the cycle of reciprocity between guests and hosts (Mauss 1967).<sup>16</sup>

After lunch, the musicians once again began to play, but this time their audience was mostly women. As Averof (1986:32–37) points out, Monday afternoon was especially reserved for the village women who, taking advantage of the men’s absence, sang and danced the *karchilamadhes*<sup>17</sup> without feeling exposed.

I will buy you a [sewing] machine  
so you can sew, you proud one,  
without having the need [to borrow one from]  
anyone in this neighborhood

(Averof 1986:33)

My small-leaf basil  
and my marjoram  
it is you who will separate me  
from my mother

Come to the window  
girl, the one with the glass pane  
to see your face  
[which is as white as] flour

The stairs you ascend  
[I wished] I ascended too  
and at every step  
to give you sweet kisses

As the night fell, the men would begin to appear for the evening celebrations and the women returned to their role as servers of food and drink, and as spectators. The major focus of Monday evening's celebrations was *o khoros tou androinou* (the couple's dance) and the inevitable *ploumisman*. The groom and bride, having consummated their marriage the previous evening, appeared in front of the community and danced, and the community responded with money gifts, a sign of admitting them into its ranks. For the *ploumisman*, a plate was placed on a chair adjacent to the musicians. And as the couple danced, first the parents and relatives, then others, came forward and placed their money gifts in the plate.

According to one informant, at his wedding in 1931, he received 28 shillings (approximately \$3), while another who married in 1937 received C£3 (around \$6). By the early 1950s, people collected as much as C£50, while today an average figure would probably be between C£3,000 and 4,000. Once I was told that a couple received as much as C£15,000, though this is almost certainly an exaggeration.<sup>18</sup> Still, in the 1930s C£3 was not an insignificant amount. This particular informant borrowed another C£6 and bought as much as four donums of land.<sup>19</sup>

### **Tuesday**

This was the last day of the celebrations. They were mainly attended by close relatives and friends and those few who did not manage to attend on Sunday or Monday. The major events of the day were *to kopsimon ton*

*makarounion* (the cutting of the pasta) and *to sinaman ton ornithon* (the collection of chickens) from different village households. In early afternoon, the women gathered at the couple's house and "cut" the *makarounia*, that is, they rolled small pieces of dough in their palms to make them long and thin and then cut them into small pieces. The musicians accompanied them in their task playing appropriate songs:

Girls adorned from top to bottom  
cut the *makarounia*  
so that the bride and groom  
eat with golden forks!

(Averof 1986:49)

Plate 7. An old man with the *vraka* and the *tsangaropoines*





After the “cutting” of the pasta, young men made the village round and collected chickens for the evening feast. The musicians headed the procession and were followed by the youths who held a long wooden bar on which the chickens were tied, hanging upside down. Custom prescribed that the youths were free to enter any household and catch chickens by themselves, but the implication was that the households thus contributing to the feast were expected to attend it also. When enough chickens were collected the procession returned to the couple’s house and the chickens were slaughtered and cooked with the pasta. As Averof (1968:50) complains, before the musicians had any time to rest, drink a cup of coffee, and smoke a cigarette, they were asked to play again so that the wedding would not die down. And play they did, relieved perhaps at the thought that this was the last night of the celebrations.

### **The andighamos**

Seven days after the *stefanoman* (church ceremony), the couple invited to their house their parents, siblings, best men and women, and other close relatives and friends for lunch. This was the last feast and the last rite of incorporation. There was music, singing, and dancing, and the feast usually continued late into the evening. Compared to the preceding week, however, the *andighamos* was a significantly scaled-down event. When the groom was from another village, particularly one far away from the bride’s, the *andighamos* took place at the groom’s village and the event was larger. The rationale was that, since the groom’s co-villagers could not attend the wedding celebrations proper due to the distance and lack of accommodation, this was the only opportunity for them to participate.

Because of village endogamy, however (see chapter 4), large *andighami* were uncommon. They became rather more frequent briefly during the 1950s and 1960s as young men moved to towns in large numbers and married city girls, and then declined again as the duration of weddings was significantly scaled down. Today they are rare, even though a man who married in Nicosia in 1982 and settled there told me that he had an *andighamos* in his village in Paphos and that it was actually bigger than the *ghamos* proper. In the vast majority of cases, however, celebrations take place during a single day which is invariably the day of the church ceremony. In “champagne” weddings, the weddings of the urban middle class, celebrations are even shorter. They are enacted in a matter of a few hours.

**Weddings as potlatches**

The weddings of the 1930s were not merely events that spread over several days. They were also occasions during which the hosts stretched their meager resources often far beyond what they could afford. Neither were weddings only occasions that marked and regulated the transition of actors from adolescence to the world of adulthood and its privileges. They also signified the position of the hosts, primarily the bride's father and his family, in the social order. In short, in addition to expressing and reproducing divisions between the generations, weddings were also a major idiom through which adult men competed for prestige and moral authority.

These celebrations resembled in several important respects the North American Indian potlatches that fascinated Mauss (1967) so much: they followed the logic of gift exchange, were animated by a competitive spirit, and, very much like potlatches, were extravagantly celebrated. Just as the Indian chief felt the need to "give a potlatch for himself, his son, his son-in-law or daughter" (Mauss 1967:37), so for the Cypriot father it was imperative to stage a wedding celebration for his sons and daughters worthy of his name. To begin with, he felt obligated to invite all those with whom he maintained, or wished to establish, any significant kind of social relation – kin, friends, co-villagers, co-workers, patrons or employees, in short, virtually the entire community.<sup>20</sup> The obligation stemmed primarily from a relative undifferentiation between what we might call the "personal" and "public" domains. Weddings were never an event celebrated among close relatives and friends. They were a public affair because non-kin and non-interpersonal relations were themselves cast in personal terms. An employee was also "part of the family," an employer also a patron, a co-worker or co-villager also a "brother." Wedding invitations, then, were a recognition of these simultaneously "personal" and "public" ties, of one's entire network of social relations.

Not surprisingly, the invitation procedure was quite elaborate. In the villages of Paphos, a few weeks before the wedding, the families of the bride and groom baked a special kind of bread called *yiristarka* and distributed it as an invitation token. After this first round of invitations, and with the commencement of the actual celebrations, relatives of the bride invited people on a daily basis, particularly women who were asked to attend and participate in the various rites. The token of invitation for this second round was *rodhostemiasman*, the sprinkling of rose water in the guests' hands. People were also invited *sta trapezia* (to the tables), the Sunday and

Monday evening feasts. These invitations were extended by the men of the two families (Averof 1986:25) presumably in order to make them more official.

Beyond the obligation to invite one's relatives, friends, and co-villagers however, the weddings of the 1930s were animated by an agonistic spirit that incited adult men to stage grand celebrations. Cyprus has never been an egalitarian society but, or perhaps because of it, people always sought to negate material inequalities at the symbolic level. Cypriots conceptualized themselves to be equal in moral terms and this equality is considered to be natural. Men often say, *Tje 'si moustatji, tje 'gho moustatji* (you have a moustache and so do I). The phrase does not only suggest that "we are equal in our masculinity," as Peristiany (1968) argued. Rather, in more general terms, it suggests that in the same way that men have a moustache by their very nature (as opposed to women) so too they are naturally equal, that is, they were born equal. Yet despite the rhetoric, adult men were constantly compelled to assert that they too had a "moustache." If the neighbour's wedding was attended by so many guests, one made certain that one's own wedding was attended by an equally large number of people, if not larger. These performances (Goffman 1959), then, were designed to assert that, at the very least, one was as good as anybody else.

Beyond the number of guests, there were other means by which men competed to reproduce and enhance if possible their moral authority and prestige. The hosts, essentially the couple's parents and in particular the fathers, were concerned to show that they upheld the major values of the community. At the very least, it was imperative to demonstrate to the community that their children – the couple – accorded to them the necessary respect. There were numerous rituals of this kind, but the most conspicuous perhaps was the ritual display of the bride's virginity, which I will examine in detail in the next chapter. Here it suffices to say that the rite demonstrated beyond reasonable doubt that the bride – being a good girl from a good family – followed to the letter the parental directive to remain "pure" until her wedding day. The father's moral authority over the bride, as well as over his wife who was delegated the role of the moral guardian on a day-to-day basis, was thus symbolically reasserted. This, in turn, helped to reproduce his *public* authority and prestige. For how could a man expect to be respected by the community, if he was not taken seriously in his own house?

The primary means by which adult men earned the respect of the community, however, was destruction of wealth. Mauss (1967:35) noted that nowhere else was individual prestige more associated with expenditure

than in the North American Indian potlatches, but a similar case can be made about Cypriot weddings as well. As we have seen, SurrIDGE (1930) was puzzled by the extravagance of weddings in rural Cyprus during the 1920s. Apparently, he found it difficult to come to terms with the fact that a people living at the brink of poverty squandered their resources to stage grand celebrations that seemed to serve no other practical purpose except, as SurrIDGE thought, breaking the monotony of rural life. Unfortunately, no data are available about wedding costs during this period, since most items consumed did not enter the market to carry a price tag. If dowries are any indication of the degree of extravagance, however, it is certain that in most cases spending was beyond the hosts' means. SurrIDGE (1930) estimated that 60 percent of what seemed to him unnecessarily inflated dowries were paid from loans. "The very natural temptation to show off on these occasions and to pretend that their financial circumstances are better than those of their neighbors leads peasants to cripple themselves" (SurrIDGE 1930:25).

The ideology that underscored the extravagance of wedding celebrations is epitomized by the practices of the *fouartas* (big-spender) persona, itself a disposition at the very core of male personhood. Every man who respected himself and expected to be respected by the community needed to be a *fouartas*. He was required to demonstrate practically and with every available opportunity that he did not respect money. Let me illustrate this point with a contemporary example. Stavros is a middle-aged man from a village in the Nicosia district who seems to go out of his way to spend his money on friends and acquaintances. His spending habits are somewhat exaggerated perhaps, but nonetheless they highlight the spirit, if not the letter, of what it means to be a big spender in Cyprus. I was introduced to Stavros by my uncle who is one of his closest friends and apparently proud to be associated with him. "Stavros doesn't care about money at all," my uncle said several times when I visited him in the village.

He told me, he made half a million pounds in Saudi Arabia and he spent it in six months when he came to Cyprus. I believe him! The other day, we were sitting at the coffee shop and he says, "Let's go to Kakopetria<sup>21</sup> to have something to eat. *Tjerno egho* (I'm buying)."<sup>22</sup> So we went to a restaurant in Kakopetria, we were seven or eight [men], he kept on ordering [dishes]: "Bring this, and bring that . . ." I tell him, "Enough my friend, who is going to eat all this?" He wouldn't listen. When the bill came, it must have been about C£100 [approximately \$200]. I tell him, "It's too much for one person to pay, let us help out." "*Apokliete* (no way)," he says, "even by offering to pay, you insult me."

The same afternoon, after the semi-formal interview with my uncle, we went to one of the village's coffee shops that Stavros patronizes. He was there, sitting at a round table playing cards with several other men. As soon as he saw us, he greeted us and called the proprietor: "Bring the guys whatever they want to drink." We ordered beer but the proprietor misunderstood and brought us two glasses of brandy. When at one point Stavros turned to say something to my uncle and noticed the two glasses of brandy, he asked: "But didn't you order beer?" My uncle explained that the proprietor had made a mistake, but that brandy was fine too. "No way!" he exclaimed and shouted to the proprietor: "Bring these guys two large bottles of beer." The proprietor looked at us: "But they haven't finished their brandy yet," he said. "It doesn't matter," Stavros replied, "bring some beer too." He brought us the beer and went to Stavros's table to get paid. Without looking up from his cards, Stavros said: "Bring the guys [sitting at the table] another round of brandies." And then, almost immediately, "No, bring the whole bottle." The man returned with the bottle of brandy and Stavros fished a large bundle of C£10 notes from his pocket to pay. "Do you have any cigars? Bring me five packets," he said, and gave the man two C£10 notes. When the cigars arrived, he opened two packets and offered the men around the table. He turned to us and without saying anything, he put another packet on our table. We lit the cigars and sipped our beer slowly. My uncle looked at me behind the smoke screen of his cigar and smiled. "Do you see what I mean?" he said in a low voice. I shook my head, "Yes, I see exactly what you mean."

Disdain for money and for narrowly perceived personal interests is the primary ideological weapon of the *fouartas*. As Mauss (1967:35) observed, one spends to "give the appearance that one has no desire to receive anything back." In Cyprus, the big spender asks rhetorically: "What's money? Money is for spending. Have you ever seen anyone who's taken it with him [to the other world]?" What really counts, according to the rhetoric, is *i kali karkia* (the good heart), kindness and generosity. After all, *ta riallia en ekhoun psishin* (money doesn't have a soul). It is people who do. Those individuals who are perceived to be "tight" with their money are held in contempt. They are said to be *spangorammeni* (stingy), literally stitched with string, because no one can reach either their pocket or their hearts. The slightest allusion, particularly in public, that one may be stingy is cause of great embarrassment, so much so that shrewd individuals capitalize on it. Let me illustrate this with a personal example.

The first time I bought cigarettes from a kiosk in Nicosia, the change I received was rounded to the nearest 5 cents – for two packets of cigarettes

that cost 72 cents each, I gave C£2 and received 55 cents change. I assumed that the kiosk owner had made a mistake, but being a member of the culture, I could not bring myself to ask for it. "After all, what's 1 cent?" I thought to myself. I soon realized that this was no error and that my local kiosk owner was not the only one who practiced it. Everywhere I went my change was rounded down to the nearest 5 cents. I discussed the matter with some friends who confirmed my suspicion: "Well, they [kiosk owners] know that no one will ask for 1 cent, people will be embarrassed (*en na 'drapoun*) [to do so], so they take advantage of the situation." I wondered what the reaction would be if I demanded the full amount of change and, having struggled to overcome my cultural inhibitions, I put on the anthropologist's cap and took the plunge. I went to a kiosk where I was not known, bought two packets of cigarettes, and when the owner gave me the change, I asked politely for the remaining cent. The man looked at me straight in the eyes for a moment, presumably trying to ascertain if I was serious. He then opened his cash register, took out one cent, and holding it dramatically with the tip of his fingers, he dropped it in my palm and said aloud: "Here's your cent, my friend." There were only two or three other people in the shop, and even though I kept repeating to myself that I was an anthropologist doing fieldwork, he succeeded in embarrassing me.

Much has been made about the "shame of dishonor" (Gilmore 1987) in the literature of the Mediterranean, but the stigma of stinginess is at least as shameful and probably more damaging. For if a "dishonored" man loses face, a *spangorammenos* (stingy individual) loses, in addition, trust – the very stuff on which good social relations are based. Having said that, display of the big spender's disposition does not automatically guarantee trust. One must also convey the impression that his actions are motivated by the "good heart." For if it is perceived that a gift of any sort is given with some ulterior motive in mind, the gesture is likely to backfire.

Once, I escorted a friend who works for the district office on one of his rounds in a village not far from Nicosia. We visited a newly established chicken farm just outside the village to check if the owner had filed the necessary documents for a permit. When we arrived, we were greeted by a middle-aged man and his wife and shown around the farm. As it turned out, the man had not filed for a permit but promised to do so as soon as possible. My friend decided not to report him but made it quite plain that he would do so if everything was not in order the next time he visited the farm. At one point, and as the inspection was nearing completion, the man turned to his wife and whispered something to her. She left us and a few minutes later she returned carrying a tray of eggs. The man turned to my friend:

MAN: These eggs are for you.

FRIEND: Oh no, thank you . . .

MAN: But why? Take them! They are fresh, they are good for the kids.

FRIEND: No, thank you, I have enough eggs at home.

MAN: Come on, take them, what's a few eggs?

FRIEND: No, no thanks. Good-bye.

We drove away and I could see behind us the man telling something to his wife, deeply disturbed and humiliated. My friend was furious and I was embarrassed by the whole incident. Yet the farmer had violated one of the primary rules of the game of gift exchange. He had not allowed enough time to pass between my friend's goodwill gesture not to report him, and making his gift of eggs. The gift could not have been perceived and experienced "as an inaugural act of generosity, without any past or future, i.e. without *calculation*" (Bourdieu 1977:171). It was made too soon and while my friend's goodwill gesture was still in everyone's mind. As a result, my friend construed the gesture as an attempt to bribe him.

To return to wedding celebrations, the foregoing discussion suggests that their significance, both in the 1930s and today, cannot be understood outside the context of the wider male struggles for prestige and moral authority. Weddings were occasions that lent themselves to the rhetorical uses of the *fouartas* persona and could be exploited to the latter's full advantage. They permitted exaggerated gestures of generosity and the accumulation of the profits of recognition from the largest possible audience without ill effects. By their very nature, as ritual practices, weddings are predisposed towards dramatic and exaggerated statements. And they ensure what Goffman (1959:21) called a "working consensus," an implicit agreement that the performers' claim would be accepted, at least temporarily. Moreover, they provide the necessary ideological context that legitimates extravagance. On the one hand, they are cast in terms of hospitality; on the other, as a once-in-a-lifetime event, they celebrate the happiness of parents and children.

In reproducing the ideology of the big spender, weddings contributed to the legitimation of power relations among adult men. As Mauss (1967:172) was clearly aware, gifts not returned created dependence: "To accept without returning or repaying more is to face subordination, to become a client and subservient." Because he was more concerned with group morality, however, with "charity, social service, and solidarity" (1967:66), this aspect of gift exchange remained peripheral in his account. To say that gifts legitimate relations of inequality and domination is not to deny that recipients may experience them as genuine acts

of generosity – as we have just seen, gifts are not likely to be accepted if they are perceived as calculated gestures. Nor do I wish to argue that gift-givers consciously strive to create relations of obligation and dependence. To be a *fouartas* (big spender) is a disposition, not a machination. People learn to be big spenders practically – as the right thing to do, done by all respectable and self-respecting people – and not after theoretical instruction in the economics of the “good heart.” Yet in any social universe where economic resources are unequally distributed, certain people can afford to be bigger big spenders than others. The ideology of the *fouartas* persona disregards economic inequality and proceeds as if generosity and the “good heart” were the only relevant factors. In short, it emphasizes the disposition to give and omits to inquire after the economic ability (or otherwise) to do so. As a result, relations of exploitation appear to both parties as disinterested, and the dominant party as an extraordinary individual – or as Peristiany (1992) put it, a *sophron*<sup>23</sup> – to be emulated.

The tendency to present gift exchange as an institution based on the “purer sentiments” (Mauss 1967:66) is one instance of a wider phenomenon, the idealization of the past (and the Other) as a lost “Golden Age” (Williams 1973). Quite apart from being inaccurate,<sup>24</sup> such images obfuscate what needs to be clarified. By treating a rhetorical device that needs to be explained as an instrument of explanation, one ends up participating, inadvertently no doubt, in the very “game” that one is meant to analyze. As I will try to show subsequently, generosity is one of the primary ideological weapons that the older generations, villagers, and other dominated groups deploy in their symbolic confrontations with the urban middle class. The rhetoric may be a compelling polemic against the modernity of the bourgeoisie, but as an analytical tool for understanding the meaning of this modernity and its wider implications for Cypriot society and culture, it is ineffective.

The weddings of the 1930s, then, were neither “aboriginal practices” currently worthy only of the touristic gaze, nor manifestations of pastoral solidarity of a more virtuous past. They were practices that expressed and legitimated an intricate way of life with its specific visions and divisions, ideologies, and power relations. If there is something radically different about them now, it is the inescapable fact that the visions and ideologies they express transcend the local boundaries and involve a wider social universe – Europe and the West. They implicate it in their deployment, and are implicated by it in turn. And the implications of this dialectic are far from being either innocuous or unimportant. I shall deal with them in the last two chapters. First, however, it is necessary to explore the processes that paved the way for this new involvement.



# 4

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## The meaning of change

The state of wedding celebrations in Cyprus today stands witness to the transformations that Greek Cypriot society and culture have undergone over the last sixty years. What is no longer practiced is significant. Through absence, it is possible to reconstruct what has happened over this period, what struggles have been fought, who the protagonists and what the stakes were. What currently exists is equally significant. Through presence, one can explore the current state of the Greek Cypriot society and culture, its present visions and divisions, the tensions and contradictions embedded in the new order of things, the dilemmas that it is currently facing. It may seem that this is asking rather too much out of a single celebration. Yet Goffman (1959:45) was surely on target when he declared years ago that, "The world, in truth, is a wedding."

Of all the changes in weddings over the period under investigation, four are particularly conspicuous. The earliest and most sensational perhaps has been the disappearance of the ritual display of the bride's virginity. Closely associated with it was the drastic shortening of the celebrations to a single day. The third, and seemingly contradictory, development has been an explosion in the number of guests from a few hundred in the 1930s to several thousand. Last, wedding celebrations have been polarized between two distinct and mutually antagonistic types, "village" weddings enacted by the rural population and the urban working class and what I call "champagne" weddings, the celebrations of the Cypriot middle class.

My aim in the present chapter is to analyze these changes, to explore how they have come about, and to examine their significance within the broader cultural setting. I shall deal with the first three changes here and examine the polarization of weddings in the next chapter. In the course of this investigation it will become apparent that contemporary "village"

weddings are the *negotiated* outcome of struggles between the generations. They express a drastic restructuring in the balance of power, particularly between fathers and sons. Even though “village” weddings are depicted by those who practice them as traditional, they are so only in a restricted sense. To use a fashionable phrase, it is largely an “invented” tradition.<sup>1</sup> By this I do not mean to imply that contemporary “village” weddings are somehow unauthentic, as indeed some Cypriots claim. My aim is to emphasize the rhetorical use made of “tradition” and explore the reasons as well as the implications of this usage. In short, what is relevant is not how they compare to the past, but the way in which they deploy the past in the present. As I will try to show in greater detail in the next chapter, whatever else they may have become, “village” weddings are now primarily an idiom that expresses and celebrates a dominated identity and a marginalized way of life.

#### **“Of vigilance and virgins”**

What was the meaning of the ritualized display of the bride’s virginity, and what does the eventual discarding of the rite signify? At one level of analysis, the most superficial, the virginity rite was meant to demonstrate the purity of the bride. At a deeper level, it points to a complex network of power relations, not merely between men and women, but also among men themselves as well as between the generations.

The notion of female chastity occupies a central position in the ethnography of Mediterranean societies. One of the earliest attempts to explain it came from Jane Schneider (1971) in an article whose title I have borrowed as the heading of this section. In this seminal work, she argues that female chastity functions as a symbol that, on the one hand, mobilizes the men of the family around their women in defense of the patrimony, thereby strengthening family solidarity and, on the other, acts as a deterrent to other families from assaulting the patrimony. The need for such a symbol, according to Schneider, arises out of structural contingencies. This is particularly the case under circumstances of fierce competition for scarce resources in the absence of effective state mechanisms for regulating rivalries.

By contrast, Ortner (1978) links female chastity to the emergence of the state. With the rise of state structures, she argues, the family became the basic politico-economic unit. As a result, men found themselves responsible not only *to* their families but also *for* them vis-à-vis the larger system. Female chastity, then – and the subjugation of sons to the head of the family – has come to symbolize the relation between the patriarch and the state. In a more recent article, Delaney (1987) explains female chastity in

terms of a particular conception of procreation, what she calls “monogenesis.” Briefly stated, in this ideology children are understood to come exclusively from the sperm (seed). Women have nothing of substance to offer in procreation except their bodies where, as in the field, the seed is planted and nurtured. Under such circumstances, Delaney argues, what is at stake is the ability of a particular woman to guarantee the seed of a particular man. Female chastity, then, becomes the symbol of this guarantee.<sup>2</sup>

Whatever the differences among these writers, all seem to share the conviction that female chastity reinforces and perpetuates female subjugation. And although this is no doubt true, it would be a mistake to extrapolate from this that the ritual display of virginity signified only or even mainly male control over women. Such an assumption would imply that the eventual abolition of the rite was the result of female emancipation. Indeed, this is the kind of explanation that many older Cypriots provide, even if not in quite the same terms. “Are there any virgins around today, my son, for anybody to see”? they ask rhetorically. “Today’s girls *en sinaounde* (cannot be controlled).” The virginity rite, I want to argue, did not merely express female subjugation but also the wider subjugation of younger people of both sexes to their elders and in particular their parents. Nor should its eventual elimination be taken to mean that virginity and female chastity ceased to be important to men. At stake, rather, was the *timing* of sexual access to the bride.

To understand how the ritual was eventually abolished and what was involved in the process, we must begin at the beginning. This was the time when evidence of the bride’s virginity was *publicly* displayed. And although this exploration will take us as far back as the turn of the century and outside the time limits of this investigation, it is nonetheless necessary.

As I have shown, the rite invariably took place on Monday, though, as Loukas (1874) and Sakellarios (1891) point out, in the nineteenth century the deflowering of the bride was often announced by the groom himself soon after consummation. “Unable to contain his joy” (Sakellarios 1891:732), the groom would fire a few shots into the air, a practice that also reassured “the friends and relatives of the bride” (Loukas 1874:93, n. 1). On Monday morning, the parents of the bride and groom visited the couple in their room and gave them money, a practice known as *ksimeroman* (the dawn [gift]). They also treated them to a special breakfast that consisted of soup and boiled pigeons. The treat was meant to help them regain their strength since, as people teasingly say, “they had been sick the previous night.” According to Sakellarios (1891:732), the blood-stained

sheets were then hung on the walls of the house and in the evening “danced” around in the presence of the congregation.

Even though the public display of the evidence is typically explained in terms of female virtue, informants pointed out that it demonstrated male potency as well. If modesty or “shame” was an important female quality, virility was the defining male characteristic. Once I was told that “in the old times,” the best men and the male relatives of the bride would stay behind after the celebrations to see whether the groom *ekataferen ta* (managed it [copulation]). If the groom failed to carry out his marital duties, the men forcibly placed a *saman* on his back and took him around the village to humiliate him. The *saman* is the traditional wooden saddle for donkeys, the implication being that the groom, having failed to be a “man”, was treated like an animal.<sup>3</sup> In another story, a man failed to consummate his marriage during the first night because he was too tired and anxious. In order to save his reputation as a man, he arose very early in the morning and went to his sister’s house for help. The sister had just finished slaughtering the pigeons for the traditional, Monday-morning breakfast and had plenty of blood to spare. Thus, the virginity rite proceeded as planned and the man’s reputation was saved.

In cases where the groom’s “shame” became known, people sought to mitigate the negative impressions by deploying a potent explanation: “*edhisan ton ghambrom*”, literally, “they [apparently enemies] tied up the groom,” meaning that “they” bewitched him to fail in his marital duties. It was then imperative to seek the services of a *maghos*<sup>4</sup> who would break the spell so that the marriage could be consummated.

There is little doubt, however, that the rite was much more critical for the bride. In the case of the groom it was largely a virility test, so to speak;<sup>5</sup> for the bride there was a lot more at stake. Her virginity was taken to be the ultimate proof of all the female qualities that she had displayed up until that point. For, as the saying goes, “It is the quiet river that one should be most afraid of (*pou ton sighanon potamon na foase*).” And as everyone knew, the quiet river can swell and overflow its banks when people least expect it – behind their backs, so to speak. Thus, as far as the community was concerned, and particularly the mother-in-law, there was no guarantee that an ostensibly modest young woman was not like the “quiet river.” Or rather, the only guarantee at this juncture was her virginity.

Should the bride prove to have already been deflowered, that is, by another man, the groom was entitled by ecclesiastical canon to divorce her, provided that he reported the incident to his local bishop within 24 hours.<sup>6</sup> In such cases, to avoid the ensuing scandal, rich families would promise

the groom extra dowry *ya na siopisi* (to shut up) and some apparently did. Old people also tell stories of how some shrewd young women tried to deceive their prospective husbands and often succeeded. A few days before the wedding, they went to a doctor at the nearest town and had a minor operation known as *parthenorafi*, literally, virginity stitching. Other women would slaughter a chicken, fill up its pouch with blood, and place the pouch inside their vagina just before the consummation of their marriage. As these stories have it, the sight of blood during intercourse was enough to deceive young and inexperienced grooms who took it to be a sign of their brides' virginity.

Beyond the validation of the couple's social value, the virginity rite bestowed prestige on their families, particularly their fathers. Through the rite, the bride's father demonstrated in a tangible and indisputable way that he had been managing his family well – his daughter had followed to the letter one of the most important paternal directives, to remain "pure" until her marriage. On the side of the groom, the rite demonstrated his family's ability to conduct fair exchanges and its determination not to be deceived and taken advantage of. In this particular exchange, the family had "given away" a son and "received" a "daughter" of equal social worth. To all those concerned, this was ample proof that it was a force to be respected and reckoned with. According to informants, parents were proud that their children *estathikan endaksi* (held their ground), that is, did not engage in sexual intercourse before marriage and, as I have pointed out, they rewarded them with generous money gifts.

By the 1930s the rite had already lost much of its public significance. In many areas, it was only the couple's mothers who wished to see evidence of the bride's virginity. In the Paphos district where, as people often say, "customs die hard" the rite retained its public character but it was significantly modified. People no longer displayed the evidence on the walls of the house nor did they "dance" the bloodstained sheets in full view of the congregation. Instead, they made the evidence discreetly available to those who wanted to view it. They put the sheets in a basket, covered it with a red kerchief, and placed the basket on the couple's bed. Those few who did show an interest in the evidence were said to be scandalmongers, however, something that acted as a deterrent and suggests that on the whole the community held the view that the rite should be a family affair. How did this change from public to private come about?

To begin with, the *public* display of the evidence was an ambivalent act. For although it bestowed prestige on the two families, it also caused deep embarrassment to the bride and the other women who were present at the

display. One woman from Paphos who married in 1937 insisted that she took the bloodstained sheets and hid them away. When I asked her why, she responded with indignation: "It was shameful [to display the sheets]. If my husband was satisfied with me, what do I care about others?"<sup>7</sup> Another woman described an incident that caused her great embarrassment. She and her husband attended a wedding in one of the highland villages of Paphos where the custom prescribed that the couple retired early, before the Sunday night feast was over and the guests were gone. When this woman saw that the bride and groom were actually physically driven into the house, and realized why, she urged her husband to leave immediately. "*Ekopiken i moutsouna mou* (I was extremely embarrassed [literally my face fell off])," she explained.

In general, people confirmed that the rite was not a public event in the 1930s, many pointing out that such a practice would be "shameful." For a culture in which people placed such a high premium on female sexual modesty, it is not difficult to understand why. As Peristiany (1965:182) put it, a woman could be tainted simply because "her name [was] constantly on the lips of men." Yet female embarrassment was not the only dilemma in the public version of the rite. More importantly perhaps, it brought shame on the men as well. Through the rite, the sexuality of their women – a taboo subject – was displayed to the entire community. As Surridge noted (1930:21), commenting on the "moral conditions" in rural Cyprus in the 1920s and 1930s, "the lightest whisper against the innocence of a village girl [and] doubts cast upon the fidelity of a wife have been and still are the cause of murders." And yet the public version of the rite provided men with the opportunity, not merely to have the bride "on their lips," but also "in their eyes," so to speak. Thus, although it bestowed prestige on the males related to the bride, the rite also exposed them to the community and rendered their name vulnerable. The transformation of the ritual from a public to a private affair, I want to suggest, is likely to have been the outcome of this intractable contradiction.

What significance did the rite hold when it lost its public character? To begin with, although the evidence was no longer publicly displayed, news of the bride's purity was easily diffused and made public by close relatives and friends. The two families could still claim their share of the symbolic profits accruing from public recognition without being exposed to the public gaze. Moreover, even in its private version, the rite was extremely important to the family of the groom. It was an ultimate test, and in a sense the last opportunity to ascertain the "character" of the woman they were admitting to their ranks. For after marriage, a woman's actions reflected on her adopted rather than her natal family (Peristiany 1965).

To understand the urgency with which the groom's family approached the question of the virginity rite, we must bear in mind that women were perceived as a potential liability. This perception is graphically illustrated by a rite enacted when the groom went to the bride's house to claim her just before the church ceremony. As soon as he entered the house, the bride's mother would remove a red kerchief from her shoulder and put it squarely on the groom's. "*Kondran ikha tj' eskalan tin tje stin rashin sou evala tin* (I had a callous and I removed it and put it on your back)," the mother-in-law would say. The word *kondra* refers to animal callouses, particularly those found on donkeys, and conjures up images of a malignant growth. The "tumor," then, was the bride herself, being symbolically transferred from the body of her natal family to that of her adopted one.

Given this perception of women, the ritual display of virginity was vital for the family of the groom. The groom's mother, having been granted the power to deal with such delicate matters by her husband, wished to determine whether her son *epesen se kala sherka* (fell into good hands) – those of the bride – and was going to be looked after as well as in his natal home. Even more importantly, she was required to ascertain whether her family was in danger of being defamed by its new member, a responsibility that partly explains the popular conception of women as particularly mean to their daughters-in-law. Both families, then, had a vital stake in the enactment of the virginity rite, even in its private version, namely, their good name and repute.

In order to understand the eventual abolition of the rite, we must explore how the balance of power between the generations has shifted over the years. As I have already pointed out, the 1940s were a period of dramatic socioeconomic change. Up until that time, sons were heavily dependent for their future on their fathers because employment opportunities outside subsistence agriculture were few and hard to come by. Fathers were in possession of two vital assets: land, and the knowledge required to work the land, such as farming techniques and weather patterns. Here is how a perceptive, 78-year-old man from a Nicosia village described the situation:

NIKOLAS: A young man had to be obedient, to honor and respect the father, even *na ton proskina* (to worship him), to obey and work for the father until the time when the father decided that his son should have his own family. Dependence continued even after marriage. What fields would he [the son] get? It was up to the father to give him any fields, not to own, but to exploit them. "When will the fields become yours? After my death!" The father would also give him a house . . .

V.A: Was it the man who provided the house in those days?<sup>8</sup>

NIKOLAS: Yes! Otherwise, he was *soghambros*, and it was considered degrading

because he would not have complete authority,<sup>9</sup> though sometimes it was necessary, if the father-in-law had no other children to pass on his property to . . . A young man had to get advice from his father even after his marriage, when to sow, how to sow, what to do in this field, what to do in the other, he was dependent on his father, often until his [the father's] death.

The situation was to change drastically when, in the 1940s, new employment opportunities were created. Dependence on the father was no longer unconditional. Young men could now move to the towns and find employment at construction sites, carpentry workshops, and a little later in factories as well.

The sons of wealthier peasants moved to towns for another reason: to obtain education. Between 1946 and 1960, eight out of every twenty-three people who moved to Nicosia did so in order to receive high-school education, this being the second most common reason for migration (Attalides 1981:71). Education, it would seem, had by this time become an important factor and more and more children were sent to school for longer periods of time. The trend was closely monitored by the British colonial government. According to the 1946 Census of Population and Agriculture, "the two chief features of Cyprus education statistics [were] that illiteracy [was] rapidly declining and that the education of girls, which [had] lagged behind that of boys, [was] now tending to catch up" (Government of Cyprus 1946:26). Another indication of the rising levels of literacy and education was the increase in the number of copies that local newspapers printed. While in 1921 the figure stood at 11,400, by 1946 it had reached 258,000 (Government of Cyprus 1946:28).

The impact of education on social relations, and in particular on those between parents and children was to prove dramatic. To begin with, the children's dependence on the family and the community for information began to diminish since now there was an independent source – books and newspapers. Moreover, the forms of knowledge cherished by the older generations were increasingly contradicted by and eventually replaced with the kind of empirical, "rationalist" knowledge that the children were receiving at school. Loizos (1985:170) captures this change well:

When the motor-powered water pump and the tractor penetrated the villages, opportunities arose for some sons to indeed "know better" than their fathers . . . Sons whose fathers did not understand about machines could soon see that there were *sources* of knowledge independent of their own fathers, which could be tapped and put to use. And a youngster who could read a newspaper, or a government announcement, when his father could not, would no longer see himself as *necessarily* subordinate *in everything* (emphases in the original).



Under the circumstances, the notion that the father always knew best became increasingly difficult to sustain. The following anecdote expresses some of the ambivalence with which the older generation confronted the new order of things.

During a class break, the story goes, the children were playing in the school yard and were swearing at each other. "The devil take you." "No, the devil take *you!*" The devil heard them and said to himself, "Why don't I go down there to see what these children want and are calling my name?" He disguised himself as an old man and appeared in their midst riding a white donkey. As soon as the children saw him, they surrounded him and all wanted to go for a ride. By there were too many and they could not fit all at once. One of the children, the most shrewd, came up with an idea. "I know what to do," he said. "Let's stick a bamboo in the donkey's ass so we can all fit." The devil was impressed. "I'd better get out of here," he said to himself. "Nowadays, children are craftier than I am!" If children could outwit the devil, the very embodiment of cunning, what chances did the parents have?

What was the impact of this undermining of paternal authority on the ritual display of virginity? The people best suited to answer this question are the mothers-in-law since it was they who were most instrumental in demanding the enactment of the rite. I asked several women who had sons married in the late 1950s and early 1960s whether they wished to see evidence of the virginity of their daughters-in-law. The answer was always negative.

No, my son, *en ikha apetisin* (I didn't demand it). Since my son was satisfied [with the "condition" of the bride], why did I want to get involved? Let them sort things out by themselves.

This extract is from an interview with a 76-year-old informant from a Paphos village. When she was married in the mid-1930s, her mother-in-law, who was a "holy woman," according to my informant, wanted the virginity rite enacted. I asked whether she had any objections. "What could I do? It was custom in those days," she explained.

In rationalizing their "lack of interest" in the ritual, some women often point out that they have moved forward with the times. As one characteristically put it, "irons fly in the air;<sup>10</sup> how could we still demand to see *korasata* [evidence of the bride's virginity]?" Such comments are significant because they suggest that parents are now in a position to recognize the limits of their own authority. For how could the parents demand the enactment of the rite, when their sons had already left home, were working and living

alone in the city, and often sent money back to the village; when they possessed the kind of information and had the type of connections that their fathers back in the village were becoming increasingly dependent on; and when it was they who had chosen their brides in the first place? Under the circumstances, the parents of such young men had no option but to make virtue of necessity. As for the parents of brides, they too were unwilling to demand the enactment of the rite, but their reasons were rather different.

During this period, the 1940s onwards, the young village men who moved to towns were living alone or were sharing accommodation with other youths. Once engaged to be married, they were usually asked to move in with their in-laws. To begin with, it was considered improper for a man to care for himself when there were women who could look after him – in this case, one's fiancée and mother-in-law. Moreover, by moving in with his in-laws, a man saved money spent on rent, food, and utilities so that he could now contribute to the costs of building a house. Moving under the same roof, however, meant that young men could now have greater access to their fiancées. The parents needed to be particularly vigilant to prevent any sexual encounters, and indeed they were. According to older informants, in the working-class neighborhoods of Nicosia within-the-walls, parents often went to extremes to ensure that nothing of the sort happened. Because houses were small and bedrooms few, when the fiancé moved in, the father often shared the daughter's bedroom with him and the daughter shared the parents' bedroom with her mother. In the same vein, when the couple went out for a walk, someone, usually the mother or grandmother, always followed them, walking discreetly several meters behind them. The arrangement allowed them *na poun ta dhika tous* (to talk about their own [things]), but at the same time ensured that talk was the only thing they engaged in.

Yet as my informant pointed out, “accidents” did happen and it was not rare for brides to be pregnant at their wedding. A brief reference from Surridge confirms such occurrences and suggests that they may have begun much earlier than I have indicated here:

Among Greek-Christians cohabitation before marriage but *after* the engagement ceremony occasionally occurs, but there are very few instances where marriage does not take place when it is discovered that the woman is with child. This form of “trial” marriage is more frequent among the poorer people in towns.

*(Surridge 1930:21)*

Vigilance was made even more difficult for another reason. As I have pointed out, during this period girls were increasingly sent to school, often

beyond the elementary level. The practice made it possible for them to spend more time away from the house and outside their parents' field of immediate control. It also meant (and this applies to boys as well) that by means of books, newspapers, and magazines, youngsters gained access to new ideas about life that differed from those of their parents. All in all, as a result of these structural changes, strict parental control over girls was no longer easy to maintain. Parents became increasingly dependent on ideological means of persuasion, such as moral guidance, hoping that their daughters would follow the parental directives. Yet they could never be certain.

Uncertainty about their daughter's "condition," coupled with the fact that mothers-in-law no longer demanded the enactment of the virginity rite explains why a bride's mother would not by herself initiate the ritual. Why should a mother ask to see evidence of her daughter's virginity, thus risking embarrassment and possibly causing serious problems should the daughter prove to be already deflowered, when the other side no longer demanded any proof? Let me illustrate this logic with one characteristic example. Evanthia, a woman I introduced in chapter 1, had her daughter engaged to a young man who came to Nicosia from his village to find work and was living with his brother.

V. A.: Did he move in with you?

EVANTHIA: Yes, he did.

V. A.: Did they stay together?

EVANTHIA: No, they didn't. My daughter slept in one room, my son-in-law in another. The custom was that they shouldn't lie together until the day of the wedding.

V. A.: So did you ask to see the evidence . . .

EVANTHIA: No, no, no . . .

V. A.: . . . as your parents did in your case?

EVANTHIA: No, I was not concerned, it was between the two of them. I never got involved in such things, neither with my daughters-in-law, nor with my daughter. It was their business. I knew that my daughter was *endaksi* (OK [that is, a virgin]). She was fifteen and a half [when she was engaged] and I would never let her go anywhere. I never trusted *ton kosmon* (people) because people are always bad. I was guarding her, I knew that she was *ghnisia* (literally genuine, that is, intact); beyond this, it was their business.

Evanthia's logic, and that of many other women in her position, should be clear enough. The bride's mother, being the guardian of the household's moral standards, did her utmost to ensure that her daughter was "genuine". This was a task assigned to her by the family head, and she made certain that she completed it successfully. Her responsibility ended,

however, at the point when the daughter was engaged. From then on, it was the couple's "business." The fact that many youngsters opted to have sex before their wedding may have been unfortunate from the parents' point of view but nonetheless it was not the end of the world. As one old woman from Paphos put it, "It's not proper, but let's make it proper."

During the late 1960s, and certainly by the 1970s, the practice of having fiancés move in with their in-laws became generalized, even when they came from the same town or village. Moreover, by this time engaged youngsters were sleeping together with the parents' knowledge and implicit consent. There are at least two factors that may account for the new order of things. The first has to do with the newly acquired power of youngsters to claim certain rights and a share of the responsibility for matters that, as they now viewed them, concerned them personally and directly. The second is related to the strategic manipulation of the new conditions by the parents of young brides whose main concern was to ensure that the engagement led to marriage without any complications.

Loizos (1975b) noted that by the 1960s, youngsters had acquired the power to veto their parents' choice of marriage partner. In a more recent article, he points out that this period was marked by "a series of challenges," one of the most fundamental being the challenge of parents by their sons (1985:173). One aspect of the confrontation concerned sexual morality and practice during the engagement period, and there is evidence to suggest that young women also, particularly of the lower classes (cf. Pitt-Rivers 1977), were actively involved. The following story indicates how militant some young women could be.

Akis is a 46-year-old man who lives in Pallouriotissa, a working-class Nicosia suburb, with his wife Despina. They married in 1963 and have two daughters, both of them married. Akis left his village in Limassol when he was sixteen and came to Nicosia to find employment. Initially he lived with his mother's sister and the latter's family in Pallouriotissa. His aunt's house was more of a shed, according to Akis, "only one room divided by a curtain" that accommodated eight people. Soon one of his aunt's daughters was engaged and her fiancé came to live with the family as well. This meant that it was time for Akis to go, and his aunt suggested to him that he get engaged. She knew "a very nice girl," she said, "from a poor family, but a decent one." They arranged a meeting, Akis liked the girl and, given his predicament, he decided to get engaged and move in with his in-laws. The fiancée's family was also large and poor. There were eleven people living in the house at the time, and all boys and girls of age were working and contributing to the family's budget. Akis's fiancée was working in a

factory and every week she gave part of her wages to her mother for the household expenses, deposited an amount in the bank, and kept a small amount for her personal expenses.

Because of paucity of space, Akis initially shared a bed with one of his brothers-in-law. After a few months, the oldest brother-in-law, the head of the family after the father's death, urged the young couple to have an official engagement ceremony blessed by the church. From then on marriage seemed imminent.

AKIS: My wife saw this [the official engagement] as a way of pressing for her demand, you know, that we should be together, that she wanted me to stand [sic] by her side, and so on.

V. A.: Did you have sex before the official engagement?

AKIS: No. We played together, you know, kissing, necking, and so on. But we never had the place or the chance to have sex. Despina wanted to, I was less experienced. Anyway, at the beginning [when the demand was made], *eyiniken epanastasi* (literally a revolution took place). It was my mother-in-law who reacted, the others didn't care, but when she [Despina] told my mother-in-law, "Either my fiancé will come and stay with me, or we will find a room to rent and move out of here," she gave in. She [the mother-in-law] must have thought that, "If I don't budge, they'll leave and I'll lose the extra money coming into the house." So I moved into my wife's room.

There is no doubt that the new sexual morality and practice during the engagement period was partly the result of lesser economic dependence of youngsters on their parents. It would be a mistake to assume however that in the confrontation between children and parents the former won an outright victory. The readiness of parents to give in to the youngsters' demands was also the result of a *strategic* manipulation on their part of the emergent conditions. Given that for the parents the ultimate aim was to ensure smooth transition into marriage, they had come to realize that sexual access to their daughters by their fiancés with their knowledge and consent was, under the circumstances, the best way to achieve this goal. In fact, evidence suggests that parents were not only willing to accept the new arrangement, but also, in many cases, actually encouraged it. It was one way of "tying down" the groom. These were no doubt extreme cases but nonetheless indicate how parents began to manipulate the emergent conditions, turning them to their advantage. If they could no longer exercise effective supervision over their daughters, it was best that any sexual activity occurred with their knowledge and implicit approval. For if something went wrong with the engagement, the fiancé would not be able to "slip away" as he might have done under different circumstances.

Surridge pointed out that it was very rare for marriage not to take place

when it was discovered that the girl was pregnant. As the same writer noted (SurrIDGE 1930:21) and many informants confirmed, sullyng a family's reputation by tampering with its women's sexuality constituted grounds for murder. In one story, a married man from Paphos was having an affair with a young woman in the village. Soon enough, gossip in the village was raging and two close kinsmen decided that they could no longer bear the humiliation. They coerced the woman to arrange a meeting with her lover in the vineyards outside the village and ambushed them. As the informant emphasized, they smashed the man's head with stones and hid the body away. When it was realized that the man was missing, the entire village began searching for him, but they could not find him anywhere. In the meantime, the young woman was arrested by the police and detained for a few days, but she disclosed nothing. Several days later a shepherd was alerted by the stench of the badly decomposed body hidden in a cave and contacted the police. The body was carried to the village and buried quickly. The stench was so bad, according to my informant, that the funeral service was conducted in the church yard. And even though everyone suspected who the murderers were, they went unpunished. The incident occurred at the time of the EOKA struggle against the British, the late 1950s and, as my informant explained, "the police had their hands full."

Crimes *ya loghous timis* (for reasons of "honor") are not unknown in contemporary Cypriot society either. During fieldwork, the media sensationalized the story of a young man from Limassol who killed the husband of his mother's sister (MZH) because the latter had allegedly copulated with the young man's 15-year-old sister. Stories such as these provide an indication of the many complications and particularly the dangers that a man would face had he abandoned his fiancée after having had sex with her. The possibility of being pursued and killed by the men of the girl's family could not be easily discounted. For it was not simply a question of assaulting the "honor" of the family, a grave insult in its own right. As far as village morality and practice was concerned, a woman who had lost her virginity even under circumstances such as these, was "ruined." The expression is often used even today, especially by older people, to refer to the act of copulation: *ekatastrepsen tin* (he ruined her). No man would want to marry a "ruined" woman, at least no one who respected himself and expected to be respected by the community. Given the gravity of such a state of affairs, some fathers were prepared to gamble by making it possible for the fiancé to gain sexual access to the bride as a way of "tying him down."

During fieldwork in Paphos, I accidentally found out from two old women that one of their friends was *etimi na yennisi* (about to give birth) when she was getting married. We were discussing dowry practices and the women were telling me the story of the groom who refused to go to church for the wedding unless his father-in-law gave him the donkey he had promised him as part of the girl's dowry. "But was pregnancy supposed to happen?" I inquired naively, thinking about the ritual display of virginity. "No," said the two women amidst their laughter, but nonetheless "sometimes it did happen." "And wasn't that a shameful thing?" I persisted. "Yes, it was," said the women, "the village scandalmongers would talk about it for months." I pressed them to tell me more about the story. "Well, my son," explained one of them,

her father was a silly, irresponsible man. What he did was, he let him [the fiancé] take the girl to his village for a few days for her to meet his parents, and that's how it happened. Do you think that a *nousimos athropos* (sensible man) would let his daughter go?

Yet the father was neither silly nor irresponsible. He was a shrewd, calculating man. As the two women explained, during the marriage negotiations he had promised the fiancé a "house with nine *gholigia* (wooden roof beams)<sup>11</sup>", even though he could not afford to build one. Since the fiancé came from another village and did not have a clear picture of his future father-in-law's financial position, he had no reason to doubt him. The youngsters were engaged, but now the father-in-law had to deal with the fact that he could not keep his promise. Fearing what might happen when the fiancé eventually found out that he could not build him the house, he decided to gamble. He allowed the fiancé to take the girl to his village for a few days expecting that the fiancé would probably take advantage of the situation and "ruin" her. His plan worked perfectly, even though in the end he was forced to surrender a donkey in lieu of the house. The fiancé's refusal to go to church must not be construed as an indication that he was prepared to abandon the girl. Rather, the aim was to embarrass the father-in-law in front of the guests as a way of making certain that he would at least get the donkey.

The practice of making it possible for young men to have sex with their fiancées as a way of "tying them down" seems to have been followed in the case of Akis as well. As I have already pointed out, he explained his mother-in-law's eventual relenting to the couple's demand to "be together" on the basis of his fiancée's sizeable contribution to the family's income. Akis's mother, however, who lived in her village at the time, told me a rather differ-

ent story. To begin with, she did not approve of the engagement. The boy had left the village and came to Nicosia to find work and they (the family of the girl) *etiliksantun* (rolled him up), according to his mother, an expression that suggests deceit and trickery. Second, Akis was only sixteen at the time and, therefore, much too young to get married. Moreover, the girl's family was very poor, which meant that they could not provide her with a dowry house. If Akis was not in such a hurry to get married, his mother reasoned, he would have found a better, richer bride. When Akis's parents found out about his plans, they went to Nicosia and tried to change their son's mind. But, according to his mother, it was too late: "*Evalan tous tje 'ppesan mazin* (they [the girl's family] put them to lie together.)" Under the circumstances, there was nothing they could do. Their son had "ruined" the girl and he was now going to pay the price – marry her.

To recap, by the 1950s the groom's parents could no longer insist on having the virginity rite enacted. Sometimes, they would ask the groom if everything was *endaksi* (OK). In most cases they did not bother to do even that, taking it for granted that everything was indeed *endaksi*. Second, the rite was no longer as profitable in terms of symbolic gains as it had been before. By this time, most people were not interested in the bride's virginity, except perhaps a few scandalmongers. Third, the bride's parents could no longer exercise the kind of strict vigilance that was possible a decade earlier. Last but not least, in many cases, the daughter was now a working woman earning a wage and contributing to the household's finances. Her wishes could no longer be dismissed as easily as before. Under the circumstances, parents soon came to realize that allowing the fiancé sexual access to their daughter was the best way of ensuring their primary objective – that the engagement led to marriage without complications. If sexual intercourse between engaged youngsters could no longer be prevented, it was best that the parents defined the terms and controlled the circumstances under which it took place.

This is not to say that all parents necessarily thought in this way. However, once the practice became generalized, even the strictest of fathers were forced to succumb. An old woman from Paphos who had a daughter engaged in the 1970s was worried about how her husband – a stern patriarch – would react to the new arrangements. She asked her eldest son to talk to his father and try to "soften him up." The old woman reasoned:

When my son gets engaged, he brings his fiancée with him. So, when my daughter gets engaged, what am I supposed to do? Tell her fiancé, "I can't give her to you?" When Koulla [her daughter] got engaged, I told my oldest son: "Talk to your father



and explain to him, I don't want him to blame me when Kostas [the fiancé] comes and lies with her." So, he says to him: "Father, look here. When I was engaged, I was with my fiancée. Now, Koulla will be with her fiancé. You shouldn't start nagging my mother." He [the father] didn't say anything [she laughs]. What could he say? That's how things are nowadays.

The disappearance of the virginity rite, then, and the subsequent adoption of the new sexual morality and practice during the engagement period was the *negotiated* outcome of a struggle in which children won a "dominated" freedom and parents retained partial control through compromise. In the next section, I will try to show that the restructuring in the balance of power between the generations was to exert a tremendous pressure on wedding celebrations and eventually lead to their radical transformation.

### **Time and meaning**

As I have pointed out, in the 1930s a typical wedding virtually spanned the entire week, beginning on Friday or Saturday, ending on Tuesday, and resuming once again for a single day on the following Sunday for the *andighamos*. Today, even though preparations begin relatively early, usually months in advance, the actual celebrations last for a single day, which is invariably the day of the *stefanoman* (church ceremony), be it Sunday, Saturday or a weekday.

Scholars seeking to explain the shortening of wedding celebrations suggested three major reasons: rising costs, the emergence of alternative forms of entertainment, and the establishment of work schedules. Informants themselves expressed similar convictions. Even though these explanations are not irrelevant, there seems to be a deeper significance underlying this radical transformation. The argument that I want to propose is that weddings were truncated because their importance as rites of passage began to decline. The practice of spreading the celebrations over several days to mark symbolically the couple's transition to social adulthood lost its original significance and eventually became redundant. And this was because, given the new structural arrangements, most youngsters would achieve adulthood *practically*, at least partially, long before their marriage. Needless to say, I do not maintain that weddings are no longer rites of passage. I am simply pointing out that, as rites of passage, they are no longer significant enough to sustain protracted celebrations.

In their study of social change in the village of Lysi in the Messaoria plain (now under Turkish occupation), Markides *et al.* argue that the curtailment of wedding celebrations "has been *dictated* by economic and social changes" (1978:123; emphasis added).

With the loss of the villagers' self sufficiency in food, the extended marriage celebrations have become prohibitively expensive. Furthermore there has been a big increase in the population of Lysi and the Lysiotés have acquired many friends outside the village – developments which have substantially increased the number of guests at any wedding, and its consequent cost. Finally, weddings are no longer the one and only form of general entertainment in Lysi nowadays, with television, cinema, football, athletic clubs, and visits to the towns. (1987: 123–124)

In her account of the same phenomenon in Rumanian weddings, Gail Kligman (1988:143–144) makes a similar argument. While most people continue to celebrate weddings in the traditional way, “a truncated version of [the traditional] wedding is gaining popularity in response to work schedules . . . to the rising cost of living, and to diminishing access to resources.”

Informants in Cyprus take a similar stance. Here is how a 60-year-old man from a village in Nicosia rationalized the transformation.

*Iekseliksi* (development [is the cause]). It wasn't as though all these [rites] were necessary even then, but they were people's *partia*.<sup>12</sup> People had no other forms of entertainment, they [weddings] were an excuse, in a way, for relatives to get together and enjoy themselves.

An educated, middle-aged man from Nicosia emphasized costs and different work schedules as the main reason for the change.

For me, this change had to do with economic reasons. I believe, because the idea that the father of the bride has to give her a dowry house begins to take root, parents prefer to reduce the costs of the wedding and use the money for the house. That's how I see it. Parents come to see it [the matter] in a more conservative light [with regard to money]. Let's don't forget also that the cost of living is so much higher than before. On the other hand, people begin to work regular hours, it is no longer like the *reshperis* who, if he doesn't go to work, it doesn't matter. People know that on Monday they will have to go to work, so they can't stay up late on Sunday evening celebrating.

The argument of costs, as a direct function of rising prices of goods and services or as an indirect function of greater demands on the bride's father, seems to stem partly from a popular misconception. For most people, shorter wedding celebrations suggest down-scaling of the event, and the logic seems to be that this has something to do with rising costs. What people fail to take into account, however, is that the practice was accompanied by a considerable increase in the number of guests. I was unable to obtain data about the costs of weddings in the 1930s to make meaningful comparisons, but one would not be too far off the mark to argue that what was saved as a result of shorter celebrations was spent to accommodate more guests.

There is no doubt, of course, that costs have substantially increased since the 1930s; but so have wages, salaries, and the overall standard of living. What makes the argument of rising costs unconvincing, however, is the fact that the truncated version first emerged and became the norm in those areas where the standard of living was highest – the towns. As Hald (1968:36) has shown, in the 1950s, there was

a large gap in income levels between urban and rural workers. Several observers have estimated that around the end of the 1950's rural incomes were about one-half the national average. The 1958 *Economic Review* estimated that *per capita* Gross Domestic Product in agriculture was C£71 compared to the Island average of about C£145. The Thorp Report put 1959 *per capita* agricultural income at C£67 and the national average of C£137.

If rising costs were indeed the cause, how are we to explain the fact that the richer urbanites had already shortened their wedding celebrations, while the significantly poorer villagers persisted in spending their money on five-day events for at least fifteen more years?

The argument of costs fails for another, perhaps more significant reason. To put it simply, it runs counter to the socially held view that a man who respects himself does not respect money. I have already pointed out that this is the dominant ideology of the *fouartas* persona, the man who spends recklessly and claims that there are more important things in life than money. Rising costs should be viewed more as a challenge to than a stumbling block for the *fouartas*. The greater the difficulty in staging expensive weddings, the greater the profits of recognition. Moreover, it is also necessary to bear in mind that big spending is relative. The practice is agonistic and competitive and largely determined by what one's peers do and how much they spend. A middle-aged man from Paphos captured this competitive spirit quite nicely:

My opinion is, this phenomenon [grand weddings] I think it has to do with jealousy. In the village people think, "Why should Sokratis have a wedding with tables [sit down dinner for all guests]? I'll do the same thing." People want to show something, this is the Cypriot mentality I think.

If others persist in staging grand weddings despite the costs involved, then, one has no option but to follow suit.

Let me now turn to the question of the emergence of alternative forms of entertainment. During the 1930s, the argument goes, people had very few outlets for *dhiaskedhasi* (entertainment). Apart from the major religious celebrations such as Christmas, Easter, and Lent, and the village festival in honor of the local saint (*panairi*) that took place once a year,

people had nowhere else to go to enjoy themselves. The occasional village wedding was the only other outlet for entertainment. As Surridge (1930:25) put it, foreshadowing this particular reasoning, although weddings were “a waste of time and a needless display . . . there [was] little else to break the monotony of life in the fields.”

One of the problems with this argument is that it postulates entertainment as the primary reason for attending weddings. There is no doubt, of course, that people did enjoy themselves during the celebrations and looked forward to such occasions. Weddings, however, held a deeper significance for the participants. To begin with, it was during occasions such as these that identities, collective and otherwise, were expressed and made meaningful, forged and reproduced. Moreover, participating in wedding celebrations was part of a cycle of reciprocal exchanges of courtesies on the basis of which other more concrete transactions were carried out. And unless one wished, for whatever reason, to break the cycle, one had little choice but to attend. In more general and objective terms, not necessarily perceived by the actors themselves, weddings were one of the primary mechanisms for the reproduction of the symbolic universe and hence of the social order itself. The implication of the argument of entertainment, therefore, would be that the reproduction of the social order was brought to a halt by the emergence of new forms of recreation.

Moreover, the argument does not avoid the pitfalls of historical anachronism – it projects contemporary cultural needs on to a period that was economically and socially different. As is well known, cultural consumption, be it in the form of entertainment or not, is socially constructed. Cyprus became an affluent society during the last thirty years or so. It was only during this period that recreational practices, along with other consumption habits, were diversified and enhanced. Current entertainment practices, then, are one aspect of the wider culturally constituted propensity to consume more, itself a relatively recent phenomenon. To say that weddings have been shortened because people discovered alternative forms of entertainment seems to reverse the order of things. It would be more accurate to argue that people discovered alternative forms of entertainment when the need arose, but there is no evidence to suggest that this need and the shortening of weddings are connected.

Last, the question of work schedules needs to be addressed to ascertain how, if at all, this structural change impinged on wedding celebrations and their duration. It is, of course, true that when people work for themselves, they have a greater degree of flexibility in arranging their work schedules. It is also the case that if one is a *reshperis* (grain cultivator) or a shepherd

one can make prior arrangements so that work does not interfere with a particular celebration. Yet the claim seems to be based on a rather rhetorical, romantic view of the past as a “lost paradise” (see below). That people could adjust their work schedules in the 1930s does not necessarily mean that they would drop everything they had to do whenever there was a wedding and spend their days eating, drinking, and frolicking. For most people, feast nights were Sunday and Monday while Tuesday was for close relatives and friends and those few who had missed the celebrations on the two previous nights. That there were people who attended both feasts and stayed up late drinking and frolicking, there is no doubt. However, this was more the case with a few *potes* ([“hard-core”] drinkers) or *ppekridhes* (drunkards) – people who did not enjoy much of a reputation anyhow<sup>13</sup> – than with the average respectable villager. There is no evidence, therefore, to suggest that weddings were the kind of Bacchanalian festivities that would disrupt the entire life of the village.

Nor does it seem to be the case that the establishment of fixed work schedules had a profound effect on how people spend their evenings. Going out to a cafeteria, a “pub,” a taverna, a *bouzouki* place, a disco, is something that currently people do frequently, during weekdays as well as weekends. Moreover, unlike other parts of the world, “going out” in Cyprus means leaving the house after ten, even when the plan is to dine out. A night out in Nicosia or any other Cypriot town, any night of the week, would make this quite apparent – before ten, most establishments are practically empty. Cypriots are well aware of this general disposition of regularly going out *ya kseskasma* (for blowing off [steam]), and staying out late, and discuss it in various contexts. For instance, sometimes they attempt to account for it and point out that the Turkish invasion has made people painfully aware of how easy it is to lose everything that one has worked for all of one’s life. Thus, they point out, people now prefer to spend their money and have a good time since no one knows what may happen tomorrow. In another context, also related to the Turkish invasion, nationalists often lament what they see as a “rampant” tendency for enjoyment and the alleged disregard of the fact that Cyprus is a “semi-occupied” country. The accusation is that people have lost touch with ideals and are only concerned with material things and frivolous pastimes.<sup>14</sup> In yet another context, that of business – a favourite subject for discussion – Cypriots often argue that the best investment opportunity in the country at the moment is in entertainment and ask rhetorically: “Have you ever seen any establishment that serves food or drink empty?”

To sum up, the shortening of wedding celebrations does not seem to be

in any direct and immediate way the outcome of either rising costs, the emergence of alternative forms of entertainment, or of tighter work schedules. These factors became relevant, to the extent that they did, only after weddings as rites of passage began to lose that measure of significance that justified protracted celebrations. In short, there seems to have been a kind of trade-off between the two processes: the more weddings lost their original measure of significance, the more these factors appeared to be relevant to the truncation of the celebrations.

But what was it exactly that created the sense that five-day celebrations were too protracted and unnecessary a process? I have already discussed the structural changes that had occurred after the 1940s and their major consequences, particularly the greater degree of autonomy that youngsters had come to enjoy. It was this “de-juvenilization” of young men and women before marriage that began to strip weddings of their original significance. Given the new conditions, it no longer made sense to prepare the *resi* in the usual elaborate, ritualistic way, devoting a whole day to this task – take the wheat to the village fountain in procession, wash it seven times, bring it back to the house also in procession, and then crush it rhythmically, keeping pace with the music that was playing all along. Nor did it make much sense to spend the entire Saturday afternoon preparing the bridal mattress – filling it up, stitching it, embroidering it with red crosses, making it up, rolling children in it, and “adorning” it with money.

These were rites that symbolically paved the way to legitimate sexuality and procreation within wedlock. The community enacted these rites with all due care and seriousness because through its very presence and participation, it validated the impending sexual union of the couple, its own values and moral standards, and ultimately itself as a community. Youngsters were now sexually active during the engagement period, many of them on their way to becoming fathers and mothers soon after the wedding itself.<sup>15</sup> The need to spend so much time and effort to enact these rites and legitimate something that the community itself had already legitimated long before the actual wedding – by its implicit consent to the new sexual morality and practice – began to seem devoid of substance and meaning.

Similar considerations apply to the rites of separation and incorporation. On Sunday morning, the groom and bride were prepared, through the elaborate rituals of the “shaving of the groom” and the “changing of the bride” to detach themselves from their natal families and become *independent*. They were prepared to detach themselves from the social position they had occupied thus far, adolescence, a period characterized by depen-

dence, social irresponsibility, particularly for young men, and ignorance of the ways of the adult world. The community spent the next several days – through feasting, singing, and dancing, by witnessing evidence of the couple’s sexual encounter, by “adorning” them with money and gifts, by teasing and congratulating them – incorporating them into their new social positions. By the 1950s, however, youngsters, particularly men were neither so ignorant of the adult world nor so hopelessly dependent on their parents. Many were working and living alone away from their villages; they possessed more information about the “brave new world” of Cypriot modernity than their parents could ever have access to in the confines of the village; they were becoming independent of their families both financially and emotionally. Others had moved to towns to acquire high-school education, while some went abroad – Athens, London, Paris, Berlin – to obtain university education. In short, the incorporation of these youngsters into the adult world was well under way long before they were even engaged. To have treated the situation otherwise would mean that the community was being oblivious to the concrete and inescapable realities of the new order of things.

Given these changes, people became increasingly reluctant to participate in an event that stretched over five days and whose span seemed to be redundant and inconsequential. As a result, those rites that survived the restructuring of power relations between the generations were increasingly truncated, played down, and eventually made to fit the span of a single day. Needless to say, I do not wish for a minute to suggest that the various rites enacted in contemporary “village” weddings are redundant or meaningless. Whatever else they may be, weddings have never ceased to be rites of passage. Nor, for that matter, has the need to legitimate power relations between the generations ceased to exist. For even though the balance of power clearly shifted in a way that favored the young, this does not mean that parental authority vanished. What has become less meaningful, then, was the spreading of the celebrations over several days, not the rites themselves – with the apparent exception of the virginity rite.

### **A flood of guests**

A popular misconception about the weddings of the 1930s is that they were attended by large numbers of people, the impression often being that they were the equivalent of grand village fairs (*panairka*). Older people often say that, “In those days everybody was invited to weddings,” a statement that conjures up images of thousands of guests descending on the newlyweds’ house and occupying every available inch of space. Yet

evidence suggests this was not the case and that the weddings of the 1930s were significantly smaller than the smallest contemporary ones.

The misconception partly arises from the fact that weddings lasted for several days. The assumption seems to be that if people needed so many days to conclude the celebrations, this must be related to the number of guests who wanted to visit the newlyweds and wish them well. Equally misleading is the rhetorical picture of the 1930s that older people are fond of depicting – the past as “Golden Age” (Williams 1973:35–45), a paradise lost. “*Ton tjeron mas ye mou* (during our times, my son),” an old man from a village in Nicosia recalled nostalgically,

we had a different way of doing things. If you were going to slaughter your pigs, everyone would come and help you, if you were going to separate the wheat from the straw, again everyone would come. We used to help each other very much in those days. It's not like today when everyone is trying to eat [destroy] everyone else.

If “everyone” would come to help you slaughter your pigs, it stands to reason that “everyone” would attend your son's or daughter's wedding. Yet the Cypriot village of the 1930s was hardly characterized by “pastoral tranquility and equilibrium” as the older generations of Cypriots – and some scholars (Markides *et al.* 1978:209) taken in by the rhetoric – suggest. Nor was solidarity as forthcoming, let alone “mechanical.”

According to Surridge (1930:29), in 1928 one in every nine Cypriots appeared before a court of law and was convicted for “minor” offences. The most common crimes were animal stealing (cf. Herzfeld 1985), malicious injury to property, thefts, and robberies.<sup>16</sup> Violent conflicts in the village of the 1930s were particularly common between the two dominant socioeconomic groups, the *reshperidhes* (grain cultivators) and the shepherds. The clash of interests between them, according to Surridge (1930:29), often resulted in “malicious damage caused by shepherds pasturing their animals over sown fields of wheat and barley and in the destruction of young trees.” Similarly, Markides *et al.* (1978:209) point out that the “pastoral tranquility” of the village was often disrupted “by the celebrated animosities between the cultivators and the shepherds.” It seems, therefore, that the habit of “trying to eat” one another is not a recent phenomenon, and that people in the 1930s were far less innocent and virtuous than the Golden-Age rhetoric suggests.

When informants are closely questioned, they often say that the people who were typically invited to weddings were relatives and friends. However, they are vague and uncommitted when asked about numbers,



presumably because they do not know themselves. Here is a characteristic response from a middle-aged man in a Nicosia village.

People who attended weddings in those days were only relatives and friends . . . because how many people could a *dhikhoron*<sup>17</sup> accommodate? It looked as though there were many people because space was small.

Although the category of “relatives and friends” often comprised the largest part of the village’s population, any number of guests that exceeded 500–600 is most unlikely. There are several reasons for this. First, the actual size of the village was relatively small. According to the 1946 Census of Population and Agricultural (Government of Cyprus 1946:2), the average-sized village at the time numbered around 560 inhabitants. If one invited only kin and friends, and if not everyone was a relative, while some people were definitely foes, a probable figure would be around 400 guests. This figure should be enlarged to include guests from outside the village. Their number, however, is most unlikely to have been large for two reasons. First, because marriage was strictly an endogamous affair – people preferred to marry within their own villages.<sup>18</sup> Second, labor mobility at the time was virtually non-existent. As a result, one’s network of social relations was fairly restricted so that for all practical purposes one’s co-villagers were also one’s relatives, friends, neighbors, fellow-workers, employers or employees.

The situation was not very different in towns. Older informants pointed out that weddings were not as large as they are today, even though they too were uncertain as to the approximate number of guests. In the working-class neighborhoods of Nicosia-within-the-walls, people invited relatives, friends, and neighbors who came to the house on Sunday after the church ceremony to congratulate the newlyweds. Contrary to village custom, however, not everyone was treated to food and drink. A sit-down dinner was reserved only for the closest of relatives and friends. The weddings of the small urban elite were likewise modest events. The elite avoided contact with the lower classes and kept pretty much to itself. Celebrations were limited to a single day and invariably took place in the couple’s house. When I inquired about hotels, the conventional site of contemporary middle-class wedding receptions, an older informant – himself a member of this small “caste” – explained that this “custom” was instituted only after World War II.

The weddings of the *aristokratia* (aristocracy) of Nicosia were different [than today]. They were close so that not everybody could attend. On the wedding day, they had a small reception in the couple’s house, no sit-down dinner, it was buffet. I

remember a wedding in 1926 or 27, it was the time that beer first came to Cyprus, people were standing drinking and having snacks. This was one of the most aristocratic weddings of Nicosia.

All evidence, then, suggests that the weddings of the 1930s, whether urban or rural, were considerably smaller than contemporary weddings. The size of the Cypriot village, the strict endogamy system, and the lack of any appreciable labor mobility meant that one's network of social relations was fairly restricted. Even if people invited everyone they happened to know, the number of people they knew was small compared to the current situation.

The implication of the foregoing discussion would be that the expansion of the guest list must have been the outcome of expanding networks of social relations. Although apparently this conclusion is not incorrect, it does not by itself explain why people should invite everyone that they happen to know to their weddings. More to the point is the observation that the bonds of reciprocity continue to exert considerable power and the disposition of the *fouartas* persona to be firmly entrenched in the culture.

The idiom through which people experience the force of reciprocity in weddings is *pareksighisi* (misunderstanding). Often, there are people whom one does not wish to invite but does invite nonetheless to avoid "misunderstandings." Similarly, people may not wish to attend certain weddings but do attend for precisely the same reason. *Pareksighisi* consists of conveying the impression that one considers certain people to be socially inferior or, at any rate, not important enough to be seriously concerned with. Hence the expression, *en mas ekatadhektikan* (they did not condescend us). Failure to extend a wedding invitation or failure to accept one by not attending is construed as an expression of denial of equivalence. In a sociocultural universe where moral equality is the dominant ideology, such denials are often sufficient enough to put an end to whatever kind of relation the two parties – hosts and guests – maintain.

The need to display one's *fouartalliki* (big-spending habits) remains an equally potent force. As it will become apparent below, many people have come to question the wisdom of inviting to their weddings such large numbers of guests. In fact, some of them even contemplate seriously the possibility of doing away with large weddings. The concern that they may be thought of as *isingounidhes* (stingy), however, is so overpowering that in the end contemplation is the only thing that they engage in. Let me illustrate this with one characteristic example. A middle-class, professional man from Nicosia was complaining to me about how often he and his wife were invited to weddings. "Every week we have an invitation, sometimes

more than one.” I asked him whether he staged a large wedding for his daughter and he admitted that he did. The rationale that underscored his decision is quite instructive: “What can you do?” he explained. “If you don’t [have a large wedding], people will say: ‘Look at X. He had his daughter married *tje ’lipithiken ta lefta* (he regretted the money); what’s three to four thousand pounds? Nothing!” “Regretting the money” that is needed to stage a large wedding, then, is something that one is not supposed to do, at least not in public.

This is not to say that a grand wedding necessarily demonstrates that one is genuinely *fouartas* (a big spender). In fact, the view is frequently expressed that people invite large numbers of guests to profit from the money gifts: *kamnoun to ya ta rialia* (they do it for the money), is the kind of accusation that one often hears.<sup>19</sup> A man from Paphos, echoing the general sentiment, put the matter in these terms:

If you invite 3,000–4,000 people, if they give you C£5 each, you get [C£]20,000. Your expenses will be, what?, 5,000, 10,000?, you make a nice profit. As I told you before, today it’s money that moves things; profit, *to sifferon* ([personal] interest) is above anything else.

There is little doubt that this is a rhetorical statement. It smacks of nostalgia for a long-gone agrarian paradise and as such, it should not be taken at face value. More to the point, however, evidence suggests that weddings are not a profitable enterprise in monetary terms. Hosts certainly claim that the amount of money left over after expenses are paid is negligible and is not worth the “hassle.” Yet even if this is not quite the case, any short-term gains will eventually be spent on the innumerable weddings that one will be obliged to attend. Ironically, the *real* profits that one accrues from a wedding are not quantifiable. They are the symbolic profits of recognition and prestige. Some people acknowledge this. A perceptive florist, reputedly the best in the business of wedding decoration, put the matter clearly and concisely: “No, they don’t do it for the money, because it is borrowed money. They do it to show off!”

There are several visible signs that wedding celebrations may be scaled down in the future. In fact, as I was told but was unable to observe, members of the elite are already having close weddings attended only by a few hundred guests. Whether this is the outcome of being secured in their social position and, therefore, not finding it necessary to patronize and be patronized as much, or whether it is a conscious decision to assert their modernity against all odds, I cannot say. It is more probable that both, an unyielding modernist ideology and a solid socioeconomic base, play a role.

It would not be an exaggeration to say that the current feeling about weddings on the island is one of discontent. Hosts complain about two things in particular, costs and the *fasaria* (hassle) involved in organizing such large-scale events. A middle-class woman from Nicosia, echoing the general sentiment, had this to say about her daughter's wedding:

When our daughter got married, we thought seriously whether we should do it [have a large reception]. We may be well off, but why should we spend so much money and not give it to the couple, and save ourselves all the trouble. But, it is the custom, we did it. Many rich people don't do it any more, [they] only [have] the church [ceremony]. And that's how it should be because they [receptions] are a big hassle, a big headache. Many say it's a business, it's not, it's a big hassle. You may pay a few expenses [with money gifts], some may make a little money, C£500–800, nothing!

Guests too complain about the costs and the inconvenience involved in attending so many weddings every month. In a magazine report rhetorically entitled "Who pays for the bride," the author captures with humor the general feeling of discontent among the public:

Thank God, it's a leap year!<sup>20</sup> A chance to rest from weddings. For nowadays, it is not he who gets married who pays for the bride, but others. And [others pay] not only money or crystal or silver or plain glass [as gifts] but also in terms of hassle. Tell me, honestly, how many free weekends do you have during non-leap years . . . not having to spend them at the wedding of your *koumbaros*<sup>21</sup> from Limassol, the wedding of your colleague in Nicosia, of your cousin in Paphos, of your friend from the army, of the person next to you at the hospital when you had your appendix removed?  
(*Selidhes*, no. 9, January 25, 1992, pp. 49–53)

The major problem that people face during the marriage season, the summer and early fall, is that they are invited to far too many weddings. The bonds of reciprocity being what they are, most of them feel that they have no choice but to attend. This means that a sizeable amount of money must be set aside every week for gifts. It also means that one must spend the weekend in Nicosia and deal with the intense heat, when one would rather be at the beach or in the mountains. One must drive first to the church and then to the hotel for the reception, one must wait in long lines for one's turn to congratulate the couple, one must put up with the heat, the noise, and the jostling, and then, when all this is eventually accomplished, one must do the same thing all over again during the same day. A senior civil servant from Nicosia complained that during the wedding season he receives around ten wedding invitations per month. "Unfortunately, you can't refuse, you *have* to go." And when I asked what the effects would be if he did not attend, he replied: "The effects would be

negative, but someone must make a start, and I think this will happen in the future. Weddings have become a plague!”

Although such complaints seem genuine enough, one must not always take them at face value. Often they are rhetorical strategies meant to make it known that maintaining “tradition” is costly and difficult. This is particularly the case with those who stage “village” weddings and whose complaints are intended as a preemptive strike, so to speak, against bourgeois culture (see chapter 5). The aim is to show that, unlike alienated city people, village folk somehow manage to maintain their customs and true Cypriot identity, despite the difficulties involved. In one of the coffee shops in Konia village, I raised the question of “champagne” weddings and asked the men sitting around for their views. Nikolas, a 50-year-old farmer who had recently had a “traditional” wedding for his daughter, expressed disapproval with the kind of weddings people have in the city. And he went on to predict ominously:

Soon, we’ll all end up having city weddings, because meats and everything have become very expensive. To have a “village” wedding, you need C£3,000 [around \$6,000], while in the city, they come to congratulate you and that’s it; you save money, you avoid the hassle as well.

Petros, the coffee-shop owner who was standing around listening to the conversation, cut in. He put his hand on my shoulder to ensure that I was paying my undivided attention to him.

It’s a big problem, a real headache, running around to organize things, this and that, it’s *martirio* (a torment)! In my sister’s wedding, we spent C£4,000. If we hadn’t had tables [a feast] this money would have gone to the couple. Someone comes with his wife and five kids [and sit at the tables], even if he gives C£10 [as a money gift], he doesn’t offer anything, it’s a debit!

It was as if I was a government employee, a representative of the official establishment, and these men were seizing the opportunity to air their problems. It was as if they were saying to me that, “Yes, we do know that you educated people recognize the importance of our *ithi ke ethima* (morals and customs), but we also want you to recognize that it is not easy for us to maintain them.” They were asking for recognition and legitimation of their culture and lifestyle and indirectly chastising the official establishment for merely paying lip service to it.

Perhaps a more serious indication that large wedding celebrations may be scaled down in the future is the view that young people hold of these events. For many, large weddings make very little sense. Why should one invite thousands of guests, when most of them are either distant relatives

or simple acquaintances – people that one does not see often, does not maintain any kind of close relationship with, and sometimes does not even know? Why invite so many people when one will be unable to socialize with them and look after them properly? Why must one invest so much time and effort to stage a large wedding and end up exhausted and unable to enjoy one's self on the most important day of one's life? For many young people, particularly of the urban middle class, large weddings are simply not *fun*. If they could have their way, they would have liked them to be more like the parties they throw for their friends, informal and spontaneous, where everybody can relax and have a good time.<sup>22</sup>

When I was in Nicosia, I was invited out for a drink by a middle-class acquaintance, whom I shall call Pavlos. He had spent several years in England studying business administration and was now working with his father, helping him to run their dress-making factory. Pavlos is in his early thirties and is married to Antonia, a civil engineer who also works for her father. There was another woman with them, Irini, Antonia's best friend, who comes from Limassol but lives and works in Nicosia. We drove in Pavlos's brand-new BMW to a trendy piano-bar near Famagusta Gate. Irini wanted to know what I was doing and the conversation inevitably revolved around wedding celebrations. I asked her how she imagines her own wedding. Her response was, roughly, along the following lines:

I want my wedding to be simple, in a close family circle and with some close friends. Perhaps in a small, out-of-the-way chapel. Weddings at hotels are so standardized, the couple gets very tired and they have no fun at all. When I get married I will have a reception but for a few people only, something like a party, where people will be able to dance and have a good time without all these formalities.

Antonia agreed. She and Pavlos had a "champagne" wedding, primarily because their parents expected them to do so.

We had this big reception at the Hilton, a waste of time. When we were thinking whom to invite to the wedding, my parents kept saying, "Let's not forget X, and Y, and Z." They wanted me to invite distant relatives that we hardly ever see, people that I have probably seen only once in my life. What's the point? So what if they are relatives. I don't even know them!

The tendency to invite "everybody" to one's wedding is mocked in the magazine report we have already encountered. Here is another, telling extract:

We [Cypriots] begin to invite, first the *soi* (extended family) and once we have exhausted our family tree on both sides, we go on to relatives of the second, third, and fourth degree, then on to friends . . . neighbors, colleagues, our acquaintances,

erstwhile and current, in short, to everyone who happened to say to us once a simple “good morning.”  
(*Selidhes*, no. 9, January 15, 1992, pp. 49–53)

These young, middle-class individuals are not mistaken in saying that large weddings are not fun. As I have suggested, they were not meant to be. They are involved in the serious business of reproducing and enhancing a family’s name and prestige. In a sociocultural universe that requires incessant personal involvement to achieve moral authority, very little can be private and done for “fun,” certainly not weddings. Young people understand the logic and the stakes involved in large weddings but they do not necessarily share them. This is not to say that they have their own way. Most of them end up staging the grand type of wedding, succumbing to intense parental pressure. Some strike a happy compromise by doing both, the grand reception at a hotel to keep the parents content and, later in the evening, a party where they invite only *their* friends. Those who have broken away from the affective (and economic) bonds that tied them with their parents and can therefore do their “own thing” are not very many. There is little doubt, however, that the cleavage is real and the respective visions of parents and their children on a collision course. This may, in fact, prove to be the main impetus behind future transformations in wedding celebrations.

People complain about the costs and inconvenience involved in staging large-scale wedding celebrations. They also object to the costs and inconvenience involved in attending them. Many can hardly wait for the day when they will be able to refuse an invitation or stage a close wedding without being “misunderstood.” Younger Cypriots seem uninterested in the symbolic profits that large-scale weddings offer and prefer small, intimate, and informal celebrations. These, then, are the various pressures currently exerted on both “village” and “champagne” weddings. Their fate as large-scale events is uncertain, even though it seems likely that at least some weddings, particularly those enacted by villagers and the urban working classes, will continue to attract large numbers of guests. For unlike “champagne” weddings whose claim to being thoroughly modern events could actually be enhanced by a reduction in their size, “village” weddings are either large, festive, and bustling or no “village” weddings – that is, traditional – at all.

In this chapter, I have explored the meaning of the transformations that wedding celebrations have undergone over the last sixty years. Contemporary practices emerge as the *negotiated* outcome of struggles between children and parents, the young and the old. The restructuring of power between the generations was the primary force behind the

elimination of certain wedding practices, such as the virginity rite, and the drastic scaling down of others, such as the duration of the celebrations. Tradition, then, persists in contemporary “village” weddings, but this is largely an invented one. As I have suggested, this does not mean that they are somehow unauthentic, an imitation of something essential, unchanging, and forever lost. All traditions are invented (cf. Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983) in the present and for the present, and contemporary “village” weddings are no exception. Whatever else they may be, they have become an idiom through which a dominated culture resists further exclusion and marginalization. They are an expression of a wider struggle that may be symbolic, but whose stakes – social position and power – could not have been more tangible or compelling.



# 5

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## Distinction and symbolic class struggle

### **Definitions**

Contemporary Cypriot wedding celebrations are about cultural choices, tastes, and lifestyles. They are also about class identity, social position, and power. The former cannot be reduced to the latter in any direct and immediate way, but neither is “status” as independent of social class as Weber (1946) argued. The position that I will adopt here is the middle ground between the Weberian and Marxist approaches, what is often called “practice” or “praxis” theory (Bourdieu 1977, 1990: Giddens 1979, 1984). The emphasis, then, will be on the active side of human agency for as Willis (1981:171) put it, “Determinants need to pass through the cultural milieu to reproduce themselves at all.” Thus, even though class conditions constrain practices, between the two operates the cognitive action of social agents which cannot be disregarded.

Weddings demonstrate this very well. It is not because they are poorer that the dominated classes stage “village” weddings – they cost at least as much as the weddings of the bourgeoisie. Rather, it is because these celebrations express and reproduce a particular identity – itself the product of specific conditions of existence – an identity by means of which people make sense of themselves and others. Having said that, it is important to bear in mind that human agency tends to reproduce socioeconomic determinants (and itself), even if by default, so to speak. As I will argue in greater detail in the last chapter, taking a cue from Willis (1981) who has demonstrated this point admirably, because symbolic practices are “mis-recognized” and “misdirected,” they inadvertently reproduce what they could in principle transform. As long as the confrontation between “village” and “champagne” weddings is taken at face value, that is, thought of as a difference in tastes, the social determinants of differing

tastes and lifestyles – socioeconomic inequality – will continue to reproduce itself.<sup>1</sup>

Contemporary weddings follow the logic of “distinction” (Bourdieu 1984), a logic that raises socioeconomic difference to the level of cultural significance. The possibility is inherent, and perhaps inevitable, in the opposition between nature and culture and the recognition, implicit or otherwise, that the latter is superior to the former (cf. Ortner 1974). The middle class distinguishes itself – and stigmatizes others – through the distinctions it makes between sophisticated and simple, cosmopolitan and parochial, refined and coarse, modern and backward. Weddings also follow the logic of resistance, albeit symbolic, whereby the terms of the opposition are recast in such a way as to remove the stigma and place it on the other side. Thus, the dominated classes depict what the bourgeoisie calls “culture” as the foremost site of frivolity and superficiality and “nature” as the locus of authenticity and substance (*ousia*).

If grandiose claims such as these are to be effective and persuasive, they need to be buttressed and legitimated by something outside themselves. The most common strategy in such cases is for people to appeal to the weight of higher authorities (Goffman 1959; Herzfeld 1985). In the case of Cyprus, and of weddings, the authorities that are called upon to consecrate identities are, on the one hand, modernity (Europe, the West) and, on the other, tradition. The Cypriot bourgeoisie does not merely claim to have a superior culture, it particularly asserts that its culture has close affinities with what is perceived as the only legitimate source of it, Western civilization. The foregoing suggests that the analysis must be carried out at two levels simultaneously. First, it is necessary to explore the meaning of practices in relation to material constraints and conditions of existence. At this level, dispositions and tastes are shaped by necessity and by freedom from necessity (or luxury) respectively (Bourdieu 1984). Second, the tacit connections between tastes and the higher authorities to which they appeal for legitimation must be made explicit.

The struggle for the definition of the legitimate way of life has consequences far beyond the plane of its immediate significance. The dominant classification of the social world is always constituted as the only possible classification, at once “natural” and universal. It generates the sort of logical conformity on the part of the dominated that is necessary for the reproduction of the social order itself. This, of course, is hardly a novel idea. It runs through from Marx’s work and the concept of ideology to Gramsci’s (1971) notion of “hegemony,” and beyond. For Marx, however, and certainly in a certain strand of Marxism, ideology was little more than

“false consciousness,” an illusion that masked an underlying reality. Yet as Gramsci convincingly argued, it is much more than a sheer lie. It is a lived experience and as real as anything else we know – an argument that recalls Durkheim’s observation that the universality of religion suggests something much more fundamental than simply mystification. The notion of hegemony makes this point strongly, but suffers from another problem – the conspiracy syndrome. It presupposes conscious effort in the production and dissemination of ideology, orchestrated attempts by the dominant class to mask reality.<sup>2</sup>

On this issue Bourdieu’s (1984) work is analytically far more sophisticated. Its originality lies in the suggestion that what appears as a concerted effort is the result of innumerable individual and often antagonistic decisions, which nonetheless produce a consistent overall result because those who make them share similar dispositions. Moreover, this schema allows for the real possibility that the dominant may be prey to the dominant ideology as much as the dominated. As I will try to show below, the Cypriot bourgeoisie compete among themselves as much as they compete with other classes. Ironically, the outcome of this internal competition is the strengthening of class identity. In their effort to distinguish themselves from members of their own class, bourgeois individuals and families achieve an even greater degree of distinction from the members of other classes.

### **Going to weddings**

Attending weddings, particularly of people to whom one is not closely related, is for many Cypriots a nuisance. They were a relatively new experience to me, however, because for many years when I was still living in Cyprus I refused to attend any weddings. Now I know that what kept me away was my aversion to all those conventional institutions that weddings celebrate and which, if one attends, one inevitably, even if inadvertently, celebrates as well<sup>3</sup> – religion, marriage, family, kin relations and obligations. I was, therefore, rather apprehensive during the first few weddings I attended, but my anthropological identity always came to my rescue. Whenever my sensibilities as a native were offended, I would put on the anthropologist’s cap and tell myself that I was there because I had a job to do.

I attended several weddings and in most of them, I was an invited guest. On a few occasions, I took the liberty of inviting myself. And even though I was making myself quite conspicuous by taking photographs, nobody seemed to notice, let alone mind my presence. In what follows I describe

what I experienced during those encounters but the description refers to no particular celebration. Rather, I depict a composite picture, so to speak, of several celebrations of the same kind. Having said that, most people who appear in the following pages are real, though their names are disguised to protect their anonymity.

### **“Village” weddings**

The wedding of Nicos and Evangelia took place in September of 1991 in a Paphos village. I was introduced to the couple by my relatives in the village and a few weeks before the wedding, I visited the bride’s house to see them. When I arrived the couple were not at home. Evangelia’s mother explained that they had gone to several villages in the area to invite relatives and friends. She made coffee and told me to wait for them as they would be back soon. I asked her how the preparations were going. “Don’t ask,” she said laughing.

Over the last few weeks, we are running up and down like crazy. And these poor kids [the couple] haven’t had time to sit down even for a minute. They’ve done most of the *kalesmata* (invitations), they have gone as far as Nicosia, we have relatives there, not close, but you must invite them, you know how people are, *pareksighoun efkola* (they misunderstand [one] easily).

At the time of their wedding, Nicos was 23-years-old and his bride 19. They had been engaged for two years, waiting for Evangelia’s dowry house to be completed. Nicos left school at 16 and worked for several years as a car mechanic. When I met him, he was working at a gas station. His father is a truck driver and his mother employed by one of Kato Paphos’s hotels as a maid. When Nicos got engaged, his bride was still at high school but she left a few months before graduation and found employment in a boutique in Ktima. Her family’s standing is similar to that of Nicos’s family. Her father owns several donums of vineyards and also does some part-time house painting. Her mother is a housewife.

The way that these two youngsters met and fell in love is in many ways typical of how village youngsters *pianoun skhesis* “establish relationships” – in full secrecy and often on a platonic level. Here is an extract from the interview I had with Nicos:

V. A.: How did you meet Evangelia?

NICOS: We met after I finished my military service, I knew her from before, but she had grown and become a woman in the meantime. I sent a friend to talk to her and ask her if she wanted *na piasoumen skhesis* (to establish a relationship). She accepted immediately. We had a relationship for a year, then we got engaged.

V. A.: What exactly do you mean by “a relationship”?

NICOS: You know, we used to meet, talk . . .

V. A.: . . . Kissing . . . ?

NICOS: No, no, there were no such things. She wouldn't accept anything like that.

V. A.: Where did you use to meet?

NICOS: Mostly down at Ktima after she finished her classes at school.

Sometimes we met down here in the village, it was harder though, people could see us. After a year, we couldn't wait anymore. I talked to my dad and we both came down here [to his father-in-law's house]. They [the two fathers] talked and *edhokamen lo* (we gave [our] word [to each other]). Then, we put it [announced the engagement] in the papers.

The couple arrived as we were having our coffee, and both looked very tired. They sat down and Evangelia's mother went into the kitchen to make coffee for them as well. "Don't you ever get married," Nicos said to me jokingly. "You won't believe what a headache all these preparations are." Evangelia pretended to be offended: "So, is that how you see it now?" she said, "nobody forced you to marry me, it was your decision, if you remember." Nicos put his arm around her. "I'm only joking *mana mou*," he said affectionately. The preparations for the celebrations begin months in advance. People need to arrange for the printing of the wedding invitations and their distribution. The parents of the groom and bride and the couple themselves spend a couple of months visiting relatives, friends, and acquaintances all over Cyprus to invite them. As the day of the wedding draws closer, people must reserve the church for the religious ceremony, hire the musicians and the photographers, hire tables and chairs for the feast, purchase food and drink, and often cook the food themselves.

The wedding of Nicos and Evangelia took place on a Sunday afternoon. I went to the bride's house early to see the preparations. Next to the house, in an empty lot, wooden tables with formica tops and red plastic chairs were already arranged in long rows and a man was connecting wires and fixing light bulbs. Inside, the house was full of people: parents, grandparents, siblings, uncles and aunts, friends and neighbors. There was commotion, a sense of uneasiness in the air. Has someone called the photographers in Limassol to confirm that they were coming? And what about the musicians? Have they found a *laoudaris* (lute player)? No, but they have a *bouzouki* player, and that's the same thing. No, it's not, but what can you do?<sup>4</sup> And what about the food? Food is OK. Will there be enough people to fetch it from the ovens? Yes, yes, everything is OK . . .

Soon the photographers arrived, but they seemed to be in no hurry. They asked for coffee, they smoked cigarettes, they teased the groom and made small talk. They were relatives of the bride and came specially from

Limassol to “do” her wedding. Being relatives, they were expected to charge less than the normal rate. “What can you do?” one of them told me later in confidence. “The problem is that we are all relatives in Cyprus.” At long last, they began to set up their equipment and gave orders where and how the protagonists should be placed. When the musicians arrived – a *bouzouki* and a violin player – everything seemed to be in order for the rites of separation to begin. I looked around the small, low-ceilinged room, full of people and equipment, and for a minute I had the sense that what was happening was not for real. I felt as though I was in a film studio and there was the director telling actors how to perform different scenes. During this particular filming, but in many other weddings that I attended as well, the protagonists were often told to repeat a particular act because they “didn’t do it well” the first time.

The first act of the drama involved the groom himself who, with all due formality, was first shaved and then helped into his shirt, tie, and jacket by his best man. Only this was more of a “mock” ritual enacted largely for the benefit of the video camera. The groom was clean shaven since early in the morning and the duties of the barber performed by a relative who was, in fact, a carpenter by profession. Nicos sat in a chair placed in the center of the room and looked rather apprehensive facing the video camera. “*Endaksi pethkia* (OK boys),” said the photographers, and the musicians began playing dutifully:

Barber, you should gold plate your razor  
to shave the groom without making him bleed!

The video camera was rolling, the other photographer moved around the room, taking pictures from different angles. Relatives and friends stood around watching the rite attentively and seemed happy and moved. The bride, in the next room, was sitting in front of the mirror with the hairdresser and her friends attending to her, preparing for her own rite of separation. I stepped inside to see what was happening, but the hairdresser put me off. “It’s not good for you to be here,” she said sternly, “Don’t you know that?” Rather lamely, I said I did not and hurried out of the room.

The “shaving” of the groom was completed in a few minutes. Then followed the *zosimon* ritual (the tying and untying of a red kerchief around the waist) and the *kapnisman* (holy smoke) for the evil eye. The groom was now symbolically separated from his family and from his social position as less than a full adult. He stepped outside to smoke a cigarette, as if to assert his newly found freedom. The bride was called in for her own set of

rites and looked radiant. She took the same low seat, facing the video camera confidently, and the musicians began again:

You deserve, bride, the veil on the head  
because you come from a great family . . .

The bride was attended by the hairdresser who groomed the already meticulously groomed hair long enough for a few traditional songs to be sung. She was then helped to get up for the *zosimon* and the *kapnisman* rituals, once again performed with all due formality, and, with this, the rites of separation came to a rather abrupt end.

By now, the time was almost five in the afternoon, the sun was getting lower on the horizon and the heat was mercifully subsiding. Everything seemed to be ready for the religious ceremony. The musicians were standing by the gate, smoking and waiting to head the procession to the village church, but people were still going in and out of the house remembering to do something at the last minute. Finally the musicians set off, followed by the groom and his father, the bride and her father, and two dozen or so close relatives and friends. The procession passed by the village square and the coffee shops and people stood up to watch it. At the church, the groom and his father stood by the entrance and waited for the bride. She was now standing with her father by the church gate waiting, as the photographers were preparing to capture her big entrance. Finally, they waved her on and emphasized that she should “walk very slowly.” The bride and her father moved forward at an agonizingly slow pace, both looking rather uncertain as to what was going to happen next. As they approached, Nicos shifted his position uneasily, then bent over, kissed his bride, and handed her a bouquet of flowers. People smiled and followed the groom and bride into the church for the religious ceremony.

The couple took their positions at the front, “male” section of the church,<sup>5</sup> facing the iconostasis – the groom on the right, the bride on the left. A young priest was waiting behind a small table that held the rings, the crowns, and the gold-plated Gospel. Everyone settled down and the ceremony was about to begin. Around, several fans were humming away, but the lighted candles and the powerful video camera light kept the temperature high. The young priest – he could not have been more than thirty<sup>6</sup> – began with the engagement ritual, the first part of the ceremony. He took the two rings from the table and made the sign of the cross three times over the Gospel: “In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.” The people in the congregation crossed themselves in what seemed to be an almost automatic reaction. The priest turned and faced the couple and

made the sign of the cross over their heads: "The servant of the Lord Nicolaos is betrothed to the servant of the Lord Evangelia, in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit." He repeated the same procedure two more times, asked the couple to kiss the rings, and placed them on the small finger of the left hand of each. The rings were then exchanged by the best man and the best woman and with this, and a few more chants, the first part of the ceremony came to a close.

The temperature in the church continued to rise and it was now unbearably hot. Some of the men in the congregation decided that they had heard and seen enough and stepped outside to smoke a cigarette and cool off. The couple were perspiring profusely and so was the young priest who, at this point, decided he could no longer put up with the incessant murmur and reminded the congregation in a stern voice that this was the "House of God" and that he was conducting a "Holy Sacrament." People became more quiet, and a young woman whose baby did not stop crying since the beginning of the ceremony decided that it was time for her to step outside. The priest was now ready to proceed with the second part of the ceremony, the marriage ritual proper.

This part of the ceremony is very similar to the first. With the *stefana* (crowns) in his hand, the priest made the sign of the cross over the Gospel three times and then over the heads of the couple three times as well: "The servant of the Lord Nicolaos is crowned with the servant of the Lord Evangelia, in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit." Then followed the crowning itself, a rather elaborate procedure. The young priest first placed the crowns on the couple's heads crosswise – the crown in his right hand on the groom's head and the crown in his left on the bride's. Still holding on to the crowns, he moved the bride's crown and put it on the groom's head and vice versa, once, twice, and then for a third time: "Lord, our God, glory and honor [to you], crown them." Having thus crowned them, the priest blessed the bread and wine and administered the Holy Communion. He gave three bites and three sips to each and with a red cloth wiped their mouths.

The ceremony now entered its final phase, known as *O Khoros tou Isaia* (Isaiah's Dance). In this ritual the priest leads the couple and their best man and woman around the small table three times, chanting a hymn. As they all come round holding hands, they stop one by one and kiss the Gospel on the table. During the "dance," it is customary for the congregation to throw rice over the heads of the newlyweds so that, as people say, the couple takes root (*ghia na rizosi to androino*).<sup>7</sup> As the "dance" was performed, a young man dashed forward and landed what seemed to be a



hard slap on the groom's back. The gesture was meant to remind the groom that he was now taking on new, heavy responsibilities and that he should, therefore, be strong enough to withstand the burden. Even though a customary practice, the young priest found the slapping inappropriate and protested immediately. "Please don't do this," he shouted, "this is a church, stop it."

The end of the "dance" marks the end of the church ceremony itself: "With the blessings of our Holy Fathers, Lord Jesus Christ, our God . . . and save us, Amen." The young priest congratulated the couple with a firm handshake and began to put his things away. The groom's parents first, and then the parents of the bride came forward, looking moved and happy, to kiss the crowns and congratulate the couple. They were followed by other close relatives and friends. The completion of the church ceremony meant that the "liminal" period also came to an end. Nicos and Evangelia were now, formally, husband and wife ready to take their rightful adult positions in the community.

We all returned to the couple's house, recently built and looking not quite finished yet, most of us on foot – the groom and bride in a white Mazda decorated with ribbons. The tables for the feast were already set in the road in front of the house and the adjacent empty lot. Close relatives, men and women, wearing aprons around their waist, were already busy preparing plates with food to be distributed to the guests when they

Plate 8. The crowning



arrived. In the meantime, the bridal mattress was brought outside and placed on a table for the traditional rite. The musicians began to play, the sheets, quilt, and pillow cases were dutifully danced around the mattress by a few of the women, the red crosses meticulously stitched. The mattress was then made up, and children were placed on it and rolled over a few times.<sup>8</sup> Then Nicos proceeded to “adorn” the mattress with money. Self-consciously, he fished a large bundle of notes from his pocket and placed C£10 notes on the four corners and one in the middle. The parents of both the bride and groom, who came next, were equally liberal with their money, but the relatives and friends who followed seemed more circumspect. They placed only one C£10 note in the middle of the mattress and stepped back.

The music that accompanies this ritual continued for some time, and when it became apparent that no one else was going to place any more money, several young men and women hoisted the mattress and danced around. They joked and laughed as they moved, and after a few rounds

Plate 9. Dancing around the bridal mattress



they took the mattress into the house and placed it on the bridal bed. The rite was now completed, and Nicos, Evangelia, and their parents took their position in front of the house between two flower stands to “accept congratulations” from their guests. The band began to play popular Greek songs and several children, boys and girls, rushed to the dance floor and began to dance. The guests proceeded one by one to congratulate the couple and their parents and hand over to the groom their C£10 note in the small white envelope. As they passed by, the hosts urged them to go on to the tables and sit down, while the best woman handed them the traditional *lokoumi* (wedding pastry). And so everyone followed the line that led to the tables and were served food and drink in plastic plates and cups by the couple’s relatives. I was standing next to the photographers watching the people passing by. “Let me tell you something for your book,” one of them said. “You see the groom standing in line first?” I nodded. “Well, this happens only in villages. In towns, the groom lets the bride stand first.” I asked him why he thought this was the case. “Look, in towns people are more cultured; here, things like this are *psila ghramata* (fine print).”<sup>9</sup> The dichotomy between the cultured and uncultured, cosmopolitan and parochial, modern and backward is ubiquitous, I thought to myself. And people never lose the opportunity to bring it to the fore.

When most of the guests had passed by and sat at the tables, it was time for the “dance of the couple.” The fiddler and the *bouzouki* player returned to the stage and began to play the traditional songs. First the parents of the groom, then the parents of the bride stepped forward *na ploumisoun* (to “adorn” [the couple] with money). They fished long bands of C£10 notes from their pockets and self-consciously pinned one band on the groom and one on the bride. In addition, the bride’s father took out of his pocket two gold pound sovereigns strung on red ribbon and placed them slowly around the couple’s necks. The parents then kissed the groom and bride, put their arms around them, and posed for the photographer. Other relatives proceeded to pin their money, one after the other, and every time someone came forward, the couple interrupted their dance and stood still expectantly. However, the bands of C£10 notes were becoming increasingly smaller, up to the point where the most distant relatives pinned only a single ten-pound note on each. The “dance of the couple” was the last formal rite of the celebrations. From then on, there would be only eating, drinking, and dancing and a chance for the groom and bride to sit down and rest. Their relatives helping with the serving of the food and drink would, in the meantime, circulate among the tables, talk and joke with the guests, making certain that everybody had enough to eat and drink. “Is

everything OK” they would ask. “Do you need anything else? There is plenty of food, you know. Come on, have some more.”

A large car pulled up in front of the house and a middle-aged man and his wife stepped out. The man was wearing a dark suit and the woman was dressed in a fashionable, formal dress. There was an air about them which suggested that they were special guests. As soon as the bride’s father saw them, he ran toward them with open arms. “Mr. Demetriou,” said the father, “welcome!” They shook hands and the couple proceeded to congratulate the newlyweds. “Who are these people?” I asked a young man standing next to me. “He is *vouleftis* (a member of the House of Representatives),” said the man. I moved closer to witness the encounter between a patron and a client. “Mr. Demetriou,” said the bride’s father, “come and sit at the tables.” Mr. Demetriou declined politely and explained that they really did not have time. “But you must sit at the tables,” insisted the client, “even if only to have a *meze* (literally tidbit, a bite).” “Thank you very much,” said Mrs. Demetriou, “but we must go. We have another two weddings to attend. *Na sa zisoun* (may they [the newlyweds] live long).” They both shook hands with the bride’s father, got in their car and left. The client seemed disappointed and stood there for a few seconds looking at them driving away. Yet he had other guests to attend to, and soon he was circulating among the tables supervising and making certain that nothing was missing, that everyone was satisfied.

Most guests did not stay long, however. They ate and drank hurriedly and, one by one, left to attend another wedding or social engagement, or simply to go home and watch a favorite program on television. Indeed, people often plan their wedding in such a way as to avoid clashes with some big event on television, such as the World Soccer Championships. The guests who stayed behind were close relatives and friends or those few who had nothing better to do. In any case, to the relief of the couple and their family, by twelve o’clock the last guests had left and the celebrations came to an end. The groom and bride and their families could now look forward to a good night’s sleep. It had been a long and tiring day, and the following one promised to be no less demanding – everyone had to get up early and help tidy the place up.

Several days after the wedding I ran into Evangelia’s father in the village coffee shop. When he saw me, he raised his hand and asked me to sit with him. He ordered coffee for me and asked if I had taken enough pictures at the wedding. “It was a wedding that will be remembered for a long time in these parts,” he said proudly. “We had three thousand people, you know.” I asked him about the costs. “Well, it wasn’t cheap,” he said. “I spent about

€4,000, but we had a lot of guests and we served good food, drinks, everything.” It was obvious that Evangelia’s father was quite pleased with himself. He had been a *fouartas* (big spender) and was proud to say so. When I mentioned my chance encounter with him to Loukia’s husband, the latter laughed. “Don’t listen to him,” he said. “He always likes *na founizete* (to boast). He didn’t pay for everything himself. Nicos’s father rented the tables and chairs, and paid the musicians and the photographers.”

### **“Champagne” weddings**

Ersi, a middle-class woman from Nicosia, married at the age of twenty-eight. She had spent several years in the United States studying to become a doctor, but she did not quite make it and became a physiotherapist instead. When she returned to Cyprus, she rented an apartment in Nicosia and lived by herself. “It was ridiculous to go live with my parents after I spent so many years by myself,” she explained. I asked her about her impending wedding. “What’s there to tell?” she said laughing. “I simply decided to hang myself.”<sup>10</sup> “So, how did you meet your fiancé?” I asked.

Well, I knew Christos from high school. Next time I saw him was after many years, at a friend’s party. We talked, and he asked me out for a drink. Well, then he went to Germany on a business trip and sent me a postcard saying that he liked me very much, and so on. Anyway, one evening I was bored, I didn’t know what to do, so I called him. We went out for a drink, and that’s how it all started, *keravnovolos erotas* (a thunder-like love [at first sight]). Well, you know, he had his apartment, I had mine, but he spent most of the time with me. One Sunday morning he got up, he wanted to shave, he didn’t have his stuff with him so he went to his apartment to fetch it. A few minutes after, my parents showed up, they wanted to know if I would go with them to the mountains. Anyway, they almost caught us red-handed, and I hated the secrecy, so when he returned, we talked about it and decided to tell our parents that we wanted to live together. They didn’t object, but my father said he would feel much better if we put it [engagement announcement] in the papers.<sup>11</sup> So, we put it in the papers and then we thought, why wait? We might as well get married soon.

Ersi’s wedding took place on a Monday afternoon at St. John’s Cathedral, the seat of the archbishopric, in Nicosia. I arrived at the church early and took a look around the historic area – the old sandstone buildings of the Pancyprian Gymnasium, the archbishopric, and a recently erected, massive statue of the late president and archbishop Makarios that dominates the area. It was a delightful afternoon. The sun was still lingering over the tiled roofs of Nicosia-within-the-walls, turning everything into pure gold. Soon large cars began to arrive – Mercedes, BMWs, Jaguars.

People stepped out and stood around in the churchyard waiting for the bride and groom. There were middle-aged men in dark, solemn suits with their wives who wore conservative hairdos and formal designer clothes; young women in tight short dresses, looking slim, heavily tanned, and lightly made up; and yuppy-looking young men wearing modern haircuts. There were smiles all round, kisses, handshakes, polite conversation, and anticipation of the happy event. Soon the groom arrived with his father and a few minutes later the bride arrived in a white Mercedes decorated with white ribbons. I was standing behind the iron gate in the churchyard feeling slightly out of place in my jeans and T-shirt and trying not to look very conspicuous. Ersi caught sight of me as she passed by and I smiled at her. "Don't you dare laugh at me," she joked, "this is going to happen to you too, sooner or later."

I decided to wait until everyone was inside the church, and when I slipped in quietly a little later, the ceremony, officiated by the archbishop himself – an imposing figure in golden robes – had already begun. I stood in a corner by the door and looked around. The small historic church was full of people listening attentively to the service. There was no commotion here, no talking, no children running around, no infants crying. People stood still, looking self-absorbed and dignified. Next to the couple at the front of the church there were two large flower stands with white gladioli, while the aisle leading up to the altar was marked out with white ribbons, large white candles, and smaller flower arrangements. At the west end of the church, up in the *ghinekonitis*, the small balcony reserved for women in the old days, an all-male choir was chanting Byzantine psalms, its members wearing solemn black robes. It was a formal, self-conscious, grandiose ceremony that contrasted sharply with the relaxed, easy-going atmosphere encountered at the weddings of villagers and working people.

Just before the end of the ceremony, I stepped outside to observe from a good vantage point the couple's departure to the hotel. A sports car decorated with white ribbons was waiting by the gate and, as I got closer, I noticed a string of cans tied to the rear and a sign with little red hearts that read (in English) "Just Married." Soon, people began to emerge from the church and a little later the couple themselves, smiling and holding hands. They walked slowly to the car, posed once or twice for the photographers, and exchanged jokes and laughter with their young friends. As they drove away, the string of cans produced a cacophonous rattling, and for a moment I had the impression that I was watching a scene from an American movie – the hero and heroine had just got married and they were driving away, while behind them people waved, shouted, and wished

them well. When I reached the Hilton five minutes later, the couple's car was already there parked near the entrance at a designated area reserved for the newlyweds and their families.

Guests began to arrive. They entered the hotel and made their way to the reception area outside, around the swimming pool. They were fenced off from the rest of the area by ropes and stood in line waiting patiently. In the meantime, the photographers were busy setting up their equipment and so was the florist with her assistants. From a small truck, they unloaded several flower stands and placed them around the pool. Two large ones were placed at the sides of a small raised platform where the couple would stand and receive their guests, while several arrangements were attached to a wooden rack behind the platform. In the space between the flower stands around the pool, the decorators placed small candle lights that were now flickering in the soft evening breeze. Soon the "Wedding March" was heard over the loudspeakers announcing the couple's entrance to the reception area. A senior waiter led the way walking slowly and self-consciously, every so often looking over his shoulder to see if everything was in order. The couple followed a few steps behind him, and then came the parents, looking pleased and relaxed.

Ersi and Christos were first led to a round table covered with white cloth and decorated with flowers, standing by the swimming pool. There was an imposing wedding cake in the middle of the table and next to it a young waiter holding a tray with a large knife. As the couple approached, the young waiter handed the tray to the head waiter who, in turn, offered the knife ceremoniously to the groom. The couple cut the cake symbolically and for a few seconds the night was illuminated by the flashes of the photographers who asked the couple to look at the camera and smile. The newlyweds were then led to their platform where the junior waiter was waiting, holding another tray with a bottle of champagne and two glasses. Swiftly and skillfully, the head waiter uncorked the bottle and filled the glasses up. Ersi and Christos turned and faced their guests who were still standing patiently behind the ropes watching them. The couple raised their glasses ceremoniously, linked arms, and drank. At that point, the florist stepped forward carrying a small cage. She put it on the ground in front of the couple and opened the small door. Two white doves emerged flapping their wings clumsily, looking dazed and confused. They flew low over the swimming pool stretching their wings and trying to find their bearings and, as they passed over people's heads, the crowd stirred cheerfully. Then, little by little, the doves gained height and soon disappeared behind the high-rise apartment and office blocks around the Hilton.

There was a final rite to be performed and once again I felt that I was watching scenes from the same American movie enacted an hour before at the church. Ersi was now holding her bouquet high in the air, laughing and urging her female friends to get ready. Then she tossed it over her shoulder and turned around to see who was going to catch it. There was a predictable, perfunctory, momentary commotion – jostling, pushing, and giggling – as the young women struggled for the bouquet. It was as if they had rehearsed the sequence several times before, knew exactly what was expected of them, and, like good actors, they were now dutifully delivering their performance. An acquaintance standing next to me turned and said in all seriousness: “Whoever catches the bouquet will be the first one to marry, you know.” I looked at her rather puzzled. Did she really think that

Plate 10. “Just married,” just copying . . .





I did not know the meaning of the rite, or was she taken in by the scene and for a moment confused it with reality?

The hotel loudspeakers began to play soft background music, the florist removed the ropes, and the long line of guests began to move slowly forward towards the platform to congratulate the couple and hand over their gifts. Those with money gifts proceeded directly to the platform. People with gifts in kind went first to a large table just before the platform and placed them there. And on and on they came, shook hands with the couple and the parents, uttered their wishes, received the *lokoumi* (wedding pastry) and a piece of wedding cake, picked up a glass of champagne or punch, and moved on into the hotel's gardens. Small tables were laid out with various delicacies: caviar, smoked turkey, marinated salmon, shrimp salad, blueberry cheesecake, and French pastries. In small groups, the guests sipped their drink and tasted the delicacies, smoked cigarettes and cigars, had cheerful but low-toned conversation, and lingered around. In ten or fifteen minutes, however, one after another, they placed their empty glasses on the small tables and left. The celebrations were concluded.

### *Weddings in the middle*

Between “village” and “champagne” weddings there is a third kind of celebration enacted by what I shall call, for lack of a better term, the “petite bourgeoisie.” I use the term to refer to urban dwellers who do not

Plate 11. Flower decoration at a “champagne” wedding



consider themselves to be *plousii* (rich), or who lack the symbolic instruments necessary for the appropriation of the culture of the rich, but at the same time differentiate themselves from the *khorkates* (peasants). Considered as family units, such groups are not strictly speaking a “petite bourgeoisie” because they are in a state of transition. It may be the case, for instance, that the parents are working class or villagers come to town and the bride and groom university graduates. In the same vein, the parents may be self-made businessmen, but lack higher education and have strong affinities with village and working-class culture. In short, it is difficult to pinpoint the social position of “petite bourgeois” families because the local class structure is relatively fluid. Having said that, I am not suggesting an emergent egalitarianism here, as Bennett (1988), for instance – very much in the American spirit of a classless society – seems to suggest for Greece. Class structure in Cyprus is fluid because, as in Greece (cf. Steward 1991:120–121), class boundaries are still relatively easily surmounted, not because they are disappearing (Attalides 1981).

The weddings of the “petite bourgeoisie” are middle-of-the-road celebrations. They deploy symbols and practices adopted from both “village” and “champagne” weddings, but this is not done in any haphazard way. There is a certain degree of consistency, if not so much in terms of what is adopted, certainly as regards the particular phase of the

Plate 12. Champagne for everyone



celebrations in which “village” and “champagne” practices are enacted. The general pattern is that elements from “village” weddings are presented in intimate, familiar surroundings among relatives and close friends, while elements from “champagne” weddings during those phases that involve socially more distant people as well. In short, the tendency is to acknowledge what one is – of village background – among insiders, and to display what one is not (but aspires to be) – urbanized and sophisticated – to outsiders.

Andreas and Lenia come from Nicosia and were married in the fall of 1991. Andreas’s father, who attended elementary school only, began his career as a brick-layer and eventually became a building contractor. Andreas was sent to Greece to study civil engineering and now runs his father’s business or at least, as he points out, tries to do so. His father apparently is not willing to “let go of the firm yet” and wants to take all the major decisions. Lenia, who was Andreas’s high-school sweet-heart, comes from a similar working-class background, has no university education, and is a housewife. The couple live in Aylantjia, but chose to marry in Pallouriotissa, an adjacent suburb, because the church there was larger – actually it is the largest in Nicosia.

The receptions of “petite bourgeois” weddings are usually held in halls especially build for this purpose next to the church itself. They are the property of the church and have become part of the wedding scene during the last ten to fifteen years. Being the most public aspect of wedding celebrations, receptions are the site where aspirations to middle-class culture become most apparent. Andreas and Lenia held theirs in the Pallouriotissa hall which was decorated with several flower stands, and the space structured with ropes very much like hotel receptions. After the *stefanoman*, the couple went straight to the hall and first proceeded to cut the wedding cake. Next came the bourgeois wedding ritual *par excellence*, the champagne display, but unlike middle-class weddings there was no champagne for the guests. Finally, the couple took their position at a specially decorated platform and the guests began to come forward to congratulate them.

It is also customary with this type of wedding to hold a second reception in the evening of the same day, a feast in a local taverna, where only close relatives and friends are invited. This being a familiar setting for insiders, celebrations resemble “village” weddings quite closely. Andreas and Lenia’s reception took place in a taverna in Aylantjia where, in addition to the usual dishes, *resi* (the traditional wedding dish) was proudly presented. A prime symbol of “village” weddings, the “dance of the

couple” and the *ploumisman* ritual, were performed with all due pomp and long bands of C£10 notes pinned on the groom and bride. The dance floor was then opened to everyone and the guests began to dance to the tunes of popular Greek music. *Kefi* (high spirits) (Cowan 1990:105) quickly flared up and, at one point, the bride took off her shoes and stepped on the table where she danced a slow *chifteteli* (belly-dancing). The formal front put up in the church hall for outsiders had by now completely collapsed.

Weddings in the middle are a dynamic element in the antagonistic encounter between “high” and “low” culture, but one that seems unable to mediate the antagonism and resolve the contradiction. The division of these celebrations between public and private phases reproduces the dichotomy and prevents the emergence of what might be a new synthesis. For even though they are as much “village” as “champagne” weddings, the two aspects are rigidly separated – conceptually, socially, and temporally. What is dynamic about “petite bourgeois” weddings is the way in which they reproduce the dichotomy in ever-renewable guises. As they diffuse bourgeois culture among the lower classes, they force the middle class to innovate and find new ways to maintain the level of differentiation and distinction. Ernestine Friedl (1964) termed this process “lagging emulation” and Stewart (111:134) cast it in terms of Zeno’s paradox. The same way that Achilles was unable to overtake the tortoise, so the lower middle classes emulate but are unable to catch up with the middle class. The latter is always one step ahead.

### **Visions and divisions**

The working-class and village rhetoric about its weddings and lifestyle is drawn from three distinct sources: the notion of “tradition” as an unmitigated blessing; conventional definitions of personhood; and popular tastes about food, drink, and congenial sociability. Often the rhetoric takes the form of showing concern about customs that, as the rhetoric has it, are increasingly becoming defunct. In fact, many people speak about customs as if they were plant or animal species at the brink of extinction and have taken it upon themselves to ensure that this does not happen. What follows is a representative sample of these views from various interviews and chance encounters.

Kipros is a working-class man in his late twenties who comes from Paphos. He has married a woman from Nicosia and now works and lives there permanently. He had a “village” wedding in Nicosia but also held an *andighamos* in Paphos which, as he proudly points out, was bigger than the wedding proper. I visited him in his small office, in the Nicosia

Electricity warehouse, where he has a small desk and keeps records of the stock. Kipros is a staunch supporter of AKEL, the communist party, and an active union member. During my visit, the telephone rang several times and Kipros talked “union business.” He apologized for the repeated interruptions: “We may strike soon,” he explained, “and we must organize things well.” He ordered coffee, we lit cigarettes, and eventually settled down for the interview:

KIPROS: For me, the traditional kind of wedding is the best. All these customs, our traditions are going to be lost forever, we must preserve them . . . City weddings, you know, are like food without salt.

V. A.: What do you mean by that?

KIPROS: Well, people don’t enjoy themselves. Do you think that because I’ll go to the swimming pool [of the hotel] to congratulate the couple, I’m happy? What I want is to eat, drink, sing, dance, see other people . . .

V. A.: Why do you think people have such weddings if they don’t enjoy themselves?

KIPROS: I don’t know, they are trying to look European? That they are *aristokrates*, let’s say. It’s not because of the money, they have money, they want to show they are different from the masses, to show off.

Klitos is a middle-aged man from Konia village in Paphos and was one of my most willing informants. He is a carpenter by profession and although he has little education – he left school when he was only ten – he keeps himself well informed about the world. Given his wide interests, and a healthy dose of curiosity, he is known in the village as “the philosopher.” When he found out that I was in the village doing research, he came to my house to see me and find out what I was doing exactly. From then on, he visited me regularly and we would talk about many things. The following is an extract from one of our conversations that I taped.

KLITOS: Village weddings are nice things, because tomorrow [in the future] . . . let’s say someone dies, and bit by bit [if we lose our traditions], you bury that person and that’s the end of it? In England, they have this system. Some time ago an Englishman died in the village.<sup>12</sup> Before they buried him, the previous night *edhiaskedhazan* (they were celebrating).<sup>13</sup> The next day after they buried him *edhiaskedhazan*, in their white clothes,<sup>14</sup> with their music and everything. I asked an Englishman [what was happening]. “Sleep,” he tells me, “finished, no problem. You [Cypriots] may cry for forty days,<sup>15</sup> two years.” Same thing with [village] weddings, it would be a shame to let them die out like that. If we do, it will be because of *ekseliksi* (progress).<sup>16</sup> . . . For me these things [wedding customs] are nice, there are others who want the swimming pool, aristocratic-like. It depends on the individual, his *eghoismos* (self-regard), the way he thinks.

V. A.: How do people who want the swimming pool think?

KLITOS: They want to show they are different, that they are modern . . . These

things [hotel receptions] are sometimes done by the poor too, out of *eghoismos*, because we may be poor but we are also crazy and throw money away. For me the swimming pool, these decorations, all this *maskarallikia* (fancy stuff) is throwing money away.

V. A.: One thing I've noticed is that there is no food . . .

KLITOS: Yes, only champagne, but you don't feel like drinking it. A relative of mine had such a wedding, no food, no nothing. I thought to myself: "Look at the kind of relatives that I have!" . . . City weddings are like alienation.

The major theme that emerges from these extracts is a concern with the survival of tradition in the face of an encroaching modernity. For these people, tradition is under threat and needs to be defended. Around this overarching opposition – between tradition and modernity or what we might call "Cypriotness" and "Europeanness" – revolve several other themes that relate to definitions of personhood, particularly male, and popular tastes. "Village" weddings are the best, according to this view, because here people can enjoy themselves as proper people should do in such circumstances. If someone gets married, one eats and drinks, sings and dances, jokes and laughs, and expresses one's joy. If someone dies, on the other hand, one grieves and laments, wears the black clothes of mourning, and expresses one's sorrow. This is in contrast to the "European" way of doing things in which people neither know how to grieve at funerals nor how to enjoy themselves at weddings.

City people stage their weddings like Europeans – there is no feasting, no singing, no dancing, no jubilation, no commotion. Everything is quiet, subdued, and highly formal, and if one attends, one feels "alienated" and out of place. A person cannot enjoy himself in city weddings, just as one cannot enjoy "food without salt," because in both cases what is missing is substance, being sacrificed for the sake of empty formality. Thus, the emphasis in this vision of the world is on spontaneity and warmth, freedom of movement, an open heart and a willing spirit. In short, it is a vision that belittles the kind of conventions, restrictions, and constraints that turn city weddings into cold, formal, and estranged occasions. The essence of weddings, then, the essence of *dhiaskedhasi* itself, is the breaking of all the artificial barriers and the opening up to the world. As one informant characteristically, and very graphically, put it: "*Dhiaskedhasi simeni n'annii i karkia sou filla-filla* (*dhiaskedhasi* means [that] your heart opens up leaf by leaf)."

"Champagne" weddings are estranged occasions for another reason. They blatantly breach the rules of hospitality by doing away with food and particularly the kind of congenial sociability that develops around the

table. In the village and working-class culture, the mark of proper hospitality is food. By sharing food, hosts and guests are placed on an equal footing – they sit at the same table and spend time together eating, drinking, and conversing. Such practices negate social distance (Pitt-Rivers 1968; Herzfeld 1987b), even if only symbolically. In an intensely egalitarian universe, however, it is out of such symbolic negations that social relations are established and reproduced. This perception of food sharing is hardly unique to Cyprus. As Douglas (1971:66) pointed out, in England,

Meals are for family, close friends, honored guests. The grand operator of the system is the line between intimacy and distance. Those we know at meals we also know at drinks. Those we only know at drinks we know less intimately.

The sense of distance between hosts and guests in “champagne” weddings has been captured in a colorful way by another informant who pointed out that in city weddings, “They offer you a *lokoumi*, a glass of champagne, *tji’ ekso tis portas* (and out [you go] through the door). Such treatment is insulting and only reserved for inferiors, beggars, or gypsies. Hence, Klitos’s comment that he did not feel like drinking the champagne he was given. How could he, when it felt like a handout?

The fact that no food is served at middle-class weddings gives rise to allegations of another kind as well. Lack of food is often construed by villagers and working-class people as an attempt to save money. Here is how one man put it, expressing the general sentiment.

In my opinion, the *politis* (town dweller) has this kind of wedding because he’ll have fewer expenses, and the money [gifts] will go to the couple. The *politis* thinks to himself, “Why should I spend C£5 to feed someone when he’ll bring me C£2?”

Town dwellers, then, think and act in ways that are contrary to the ethos of the *fouartas* persona. The point is not that they act with their interests in mind – all people do. What is unacceptable is the pettiness with which they look after their interests, the minute and precise calculations, the counting of money *os tin teleftean bakkira* (to the last penny). Such an attitude signifies a closed heart and an impoverished mind, a person who cannot be trusted for anything.<sup>17</sup>

Such, then, according to the rhetoric, are the characteristics of middle-class people and of their weddings; alienation, empty formality, pretention, stinginess. Opposed to this vision, is the middle-class understanding of the legitimate way of life, an understanding that draws its own boundaries and makes its own distinctions. It is important to point out from the outset that that bourgeoisie is careful to avoid verbal attacks on “village”

weddings. If anything, it often depicts them as colorful and picturesque events. Whatever pejorative statements are made about “village” weddings, they are made *practically*, primarily by means of symbols and rites, such as those enacted at bourgeois weddings and which distinguish them as such. There is a very good reason for this circumspection. As I have already pointed out, tradition is the link that connects Cypriots with classical Greek civilization, one of the idioms by which they assert their Greekness and buttress their claims to a European identity. The Cypriot bourgeoisie, then, being a crusader of modernity, has a vital stake in advocating tradition. But it has an equally vital stake in avoiding practical association with it. Unless one has reached a point of no return, in which case one’s actions are not likely to be misconstrued, one cannot afford to display too close an affinity with village culture. Thus, the bourgeoisie maintains an uneasy relation with tradition: it denies it practically – as in its own weddings – and exalts it theoretically in folkloric or journalistic accounts and intellectual discussions. Let me illustrate this point with one telling example.

A senior civil servant from Nicosia, an inspector of secondary education and part-time folklorist, expressed interest in my research and asked to meet with me. I visited him in his house where he spent an entire hour exalting traditional weddings and lamenting the “slow death of our *ithi ke ethima* (morals and customs).” Eventually, I was able to ask about his daughter’s impending wedding. And I was bemused to hear him say that he was planning to have the reception at the Hilton hotel.

In less formal contexts, bourgeois derision of “village” weddings may sometimes become more explicit and direct. A group of middle-class youngsters from Limassol decided to play a game on two of their friends who were engaged to be married. They organized a mock “village” wedding a few days before the couple’s real wedding and slowly dragged them into it. One of the organizers telephoned the two youngsters and informed them that the *parea* (“gang”)<sup>18</sup> was going out for dinner that evening and she was going to pass by their house and pick them up. The *parea* found a fiddler, rented the traditional male and female costumes, photocopied a large number of C£10 notes for the *ploumisman*, and, at the appointed time, drove to the couple’s house in a “village bus.”<sup>19</sup> Here is how one of the organizers, a woman in her mid-twenties, described the scene.

MARILENA: We were about thirty-five, we drove to the girl’s house with the fiddler and everybody. We gave them the costumes to wear, you know, the *vrika* (male baggy trousers) and the traditional dress for the girl with the *kouroukla*



(head shawl). At the beginning, they refused to wear them, my God, we almost died of laughter, you know, nobody expected a village bus to arrive [in a middle-class neighborhood] with the fiddler and everything . . . Anyway, in the end they took their jeans off and put on the costumes, and we went to a taverna for dinner.

V. A.: Did you reserve the taverna for yourselves?

MARILENA: No, it was a small taverna, it was just us and another table but they soon left. So we sat, we asked the fiddler to play the traditional songs, we started eating. Well, we said it was time for the *ploumisman*, at the beginning they wouldn't dance, then, they did for a while and we pinned the "money" on them, it was hilarious.

V. A.: What happened next?

MARILENA: Nothing, after dinner, we got into the bus and drove around the town for a while. Then, we took them home, they changed, and we went out *kanonika* (as we do normally).

This young couple was married at the metropolitan church of Limassol, the seat of the bishopric, while the reception took place at one of the town's most prestigious hotels, the Meridien. Regrettably, I was unable to attend because I found out about it several weeks later. When I asked the young woman who told me the story why they organized the mock "village" wedding, she replied: "To tease them, of course, and to have a few laughs."

Yet such affronts to "village" weddings are not frequent. Not only does the bourgeoisie avoid them, but also the associations of its own weddings with European culture are often down-played and even denied. To begin with, overt and blatant claims to a modern, European identity may be construed as an inverted denial of tradition. Moreover, excesses can and often do give rise to accusations of mimicry – parroting something that has not been quite assimilated and mastered. In fact, the bourgeoisie often levels such accusations itself against the *nouveaux riches* who, being insecure in their newly established position, resort to excesses. Thus, it is only very reluctantly that the urban middle class admits to its adopting European wedding practices. Let me illustrate this with one telling example. A middle-class couple from Nicosia were describing to me their daughter's wedding reception that took place a few months earlier at the Hilton hotel. When at one point I commented about the "American custom" of tying cans at the rear of the newlyweds' car, the husband said: "Yes, people often do that, not everyone of course, but the same thing is done in Greece too. I don't know if this is a foreign custom."<sup>20</sup> Then, he went on to describe what happened when the couple entered the reception area. "It was announced by . . . well, by the Wedding March, which is not Greek but foreign. Eh, unfortunately or fortunately, we follow the European model."

In the same vein, the bourgeoisie portrays the overall orientation of its culture and lifestyle as a slow, circumspect, almost natural process, the outcome of a progressive attitude – moving with the times – rather than a rushed, irresponsible decision characteristic of those who *ksippazounde* (get impressed). During fieldwork in Nicosia, I was looking for older people who could provide information about elite weddings in the city in the 1930s. Friends suggested that I should talk to a well-known man, whom I shall call Mr. Pavlides, a “born and bred” Nicosian who knew “everything there is to know about the Nicosian elite of the time.” I met him at the “Young People’s Center ‘Trust’,”<sup>21</sup> a men’s club and the first one of its kind to be established in the late 1920s. In its early days of operation, the club hosted balls for the Nicosian elite, but today it functions mainly as a coffee shop for the older Nicosian bourgeoisie.

Mr. Pavlides was wearing a suit and tie and spoke in a type of language used by the educated and cultured. This is an odd mixture of Cypriot and Athenian Greek in which the most marked *khorkatika* (peasant-like elements) of the Cypriot tongue, such as the word *tje* (and), are replaced by standard demotic. The language attempts to resolve a cultural contradiction. Educated people everywhere distinguish themselves by using the language of official discourse. In Cyprus, however, this also happens to be the language of the *kalamaradhes* (mainland Greeks) with whom, as I have pointed out, Cypriots are in a state of perpetual cultural conflict. As much as educated Cypriots do not wish to sound like *khorkates*, they also find it in poor taste to sound like mainland Greeks.<sup>22</sup>

Mr. Pavlides spoke with enthusiasm about the old village customs:

Since I was a child, I have always been captivated by village celebrations, weddings, baptisms, even funerals . . . These things have changed because of the enormous progress during the last fifty years in communications, the construction of roads etc. This thing [contact with city life] resulted in the decline of the traditional elements found in weddings, in certain customs etc. Naturally, economic conditions played their part since a *vraka* cost C£20 more than a pair of trousers. Therefore, the decision of the *vrakas* (the wearer of the *vraka*) to become *pandalonas* (a wearer of trousers) was not only [based on] modernity, on *eksevropaismo* (Europeanization), but also on economic considerations.<sup>23</sup>

I asked Mr. Pavlides if Nicosians and Cypriots in general were influenced by the British presence in the island.

That they were influenced, yes. Naturally, I cannot claim that Nicosia followed the vogue *katapodhas* (every step of the way), but people certainly tried to be within the framework of modernity. Certain things, even if the individual does not want, are imposed by the majority, by sociability, the society in which one lives and which

one has to follow. Because, when one remains outside – it is, of course, one’s right – but one will be thought of as capricious, behind the times, etc.

The bourgeoisie, then, finds itself in a paradoxical, almost impossible position. Neither “village” weddings and more generally tradition should be devalued, nor the alleged superiority of its modern lifestyle affirmed in too glaring a way. Yet to achieve differentiation and distinction it has to do both. The resolution of this contradiction is tantalizingly simple: symbols are allowed to speak for themselves.

### **Analysis**

There are certain practices in “champagne” weddings that are clearly taken over from their European and American counterparts. Their connection to the West is explicit, particularly since the Greek Cypriot bourgeoisie employs English terms to denote them. I refer to such symbols and practices as the “bachelor’s night” and “hen’s night,”<sup>24</sup> tying cans at the rear of the couple’s car and displaying “Just Married” signs, the wedding cake, and the Wedding March. The meaning of these practices is fairly explicit and need not detain us long. Their rhetorical intent is to suggest the hosts’ affinity with what is perceived as a sophisticated and modern lifestyle, a proclivity that transcends the small confines of Cyprus – its cultural “parochialism” and Middle Eastern “backwardness” – and draws its inspiration and sense of direction from the source of all legitimate culture, Europe and the West.

Those practices and symbols that are not as explicit are no less effective. Although they convey impressions and images that shift and change, that can be interpreted and reinterpreted, denied as well as asserted, on the whole they seem to be well understood. This is not to say that they are not often also misconstrued. For instance, I was once told by a young village woman that “city people have hotel receptions because they don’t have enough home space.” Or that they get married on weekdays because “they don’t want to spoil people’s weekend at the beach.” In trying to make sense of wedding customs, I was the subject of misinterpretation myself. Unlike the bride, whose wedding dress cuts across class boundaries,<sup>25</sup> the middle-class groom often wears, in lieu of a suit and tie, a tuxedo, a bow tie, and a cummerbund. The tuxedo and bow tie posed no problems, since they are apparently worn in Western formal occasions. However, I was puzzled by the cummerbund. Because the traditional Cypriot male garment, the *vra*ka, is worn with a black band around the waist, I thought that this was perhaps a case of incorporating something traditional within the very

modern.<sup>26</sup> When I returned to the United States, I found out that the cummerbund is a traditional male accessory in American weddings.<sup>27</sup>

Be that as it may, most people readily acknowledge the overall, intended significance of the imagery deployed at middle-class weddings with such terms as “aristocratic,” “modern,” and “European-like,” even though they find them unconvincing. In the remainder of this chapter, I shall attempt to analyze the implicit meanings of such symbols by juxtaposing them, whenever necessary, with “village” weddings and their imagery.

### *The uses of time*

Urban middle-class weddings take place not only on Sunday, the traditional day for the church ceremony, or Saturday, the second-best choice for “village” weddings, but also during weekdays. The practice is not new. Evidence from the local press suggests that weekday weddings were common in the 1920s and 1930s among the small urban elite:

Joyfully the wedding took place last Thursday at the holy church of St. Panteleimon of the distinguished and learned lawyer Mr. C. N. P. and the charming and well-educated Miss E. M. L. (*Eleftheria*, May 22, 1929)

On Monday, in Nicosia, the wedding took place of the distinguished and progressive young man Mr. A. A. and the *perisemni* (demure) and distinguished Miss M. A. They will receive guests on the 24th and 25th, Sunday and Monday, of the current month. (*Eleftheria* November 6, 1929)

The practice has been revived during the last few years presumably by those who seek to distinguish themselves within their own class and maintain the cultural distance that separates them from other classes. Although the meaning of weekday weddings is sometimes misconstrued, many people interpret the practice as way of distinguishing oneself. Here are the views of two women from Nicosia, the first, an educated radical, the second, a perceptive, if not disapproving, middle-class woman.

A: The middle class has its weddings on weekdays as a way of differentiating itself from the working classes. Weekends are the days which working-class people do things that they consider to be “events.”<sup>28</sup>

B: I’m not quite sure why, simply to be different. Oh, and royal weddings in Europe take place on weekdays, I think.

Not everyone thinks that marrying on a weekday is a good idea. Here is what a 19-year-old woman from a village near Nicosia had to say about the matter:

KHARA: In my opinion, it’s wrong! Because to marry during the week . . . you may say all days are the same but the weekend . . . it was Sunday, we said

Saturday is OK too, now we made it Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, it will become something common. It's not right to have a wedding during the week because . . . I believe that the day you have your wedding is important too. Personally, I would never marry during the week.

V. A.: Would it devalue the wedding in your eyes?

KHARA: Yes, yes, that's exactly what I mean!

Weekdays are apparently the days of work – of mundane, profane activity – and for this young woman to have a wedding during the week is to defile it. But other, more practical considerations also apply and it is on the basis of these that the urban middle class seeks to distinguish itself. One simply cannot afford to spend time on festivities when one should be working. The bourgeoisie, however, placed as it is at a relative distance from economic necessity, can take the time to do what others reserve for the days of leisure and play. Difference in circumstances, then – the ability or inability to have control over one's condition of existence – is raised at the level of cultural significance. In this way, weekend weddings become insipid and banal, practiced by ordinary uninteresting people. While weekday weddings acquire an exceptional and extraordinary significance, marking the exceptional and extraordinary status of those who stage them.

As Fabian (1983) has shown, anthropology denies the Other cultural equality by denying it the same temporal existence. The Cypriot bourgeoisie deploys time equally effectively, even if differently. It denies Other social classes cultural equality by redefining and monopolizing the definition of “significant” time.

### *The uses of space*

In the ethnography of societies bordering the Mediterranean, the symbolic structuring and division of space has received particular attention. Hirschon (1975), for instance, has written about space and its relation to female sexuality in Greece. Bourdieu (1990) about the symbolic division of the Kabyle house, and Bahloul (forthcoming) about the Algerian house as a site of memory. My aim in this section is to examine how the Cypriot bourgeoisie manipulates space symbolically in its weddings as a means of differentiation and distinction. I shall be concerned first with the strategic choice of space as the *locus* of particular practices, and second with the way in which it is, equally strategically, structured and organized. Space is constituted as a sign of distinction: in the former case through its associations with wider legitimating authorities; in the latter, through the implicit opposition between nature and culture.

*Choice of space*

Since the major aspects of weddings in Cyprus are the religious service and the subsequent reception, the question as to where one gets married and receives one's guests is often the subject of strategic choices. Although the church regulates who will marry where on the basis of one's area of residence, the rule is not binding. People have the choice to marry outside their parish provided that they pay wedding fees both to their local church and the church of their choice. In Nicosia the most prestigious church is St. John's Cathedral, the seat of the archbishopric, in other towns the local metropolitan church, the seat of the *mitropolitits* (bishop). Hotels are prime sites for bourgeois receptions, but the particular hotel one chooses is open to strategic manipulations. In Nicosia, the Hilton is by far the most prestigious hotel, but in the tourist towns, such as Limassol, the issue is not as clear cut. The existence of several hotels of international reputation, such as the Meridien and the Sheraton, and of many prestigious local ones provides scope for more intense competition.

A brief historical inquiry suggests that in the 1930s the small urban elite dispensed with going to the church altogether. They had the religious ceremony enacted at their houses. An old "born and bred" Nicosian described the practice in the following terms:

The aristocracy had its weddings [church ceremony] in the house, because, when the bell tolled anyone could go to the church and even take the best seat! Well, many people didn't like this, so weddings began to take place within a close family circle. This the church abolished later. Wedding ceremonies in the house used to take place in the 1930s and 1940s when a lot of people began to migrate from villages. Well, many didn't want this social intermingling, they didn't like it: "Why should peasants come to my wedding?"

Much later, after this particular interview, I came across a piece of information that fixes the approximate time when the church stepped in and prohibited wedding ceremonies in houses or in any other place outside the church. I was browsing through some old newspapers in the library of the archbishopric and came across the wedding announcement of a Limassol lawyer. Apparently, he had planned to have his wedding ceremony at a hotel in Platres, a hill resort in the district of Limassol. In the next issue of the paper, a week later, there was a qualifying statement by the editor. It read:

Last Sunday, the wedding of Mr. F. I. K., lawyer and vice-mayor of Limassol, with Miss E. I. K. was blessed in the holy church of Platres. The wedding had taken place, not in the hotel as it was previously announced, but in the holy church of

Platres since, in accordance with Church regulations, the [religious] “mystery” of matrimony takes place in the holy churches and only in case of urgent need in the house of the couple.  
(*Foni Tis Kyprou, August 4, 1934.*)

The “cases of urgent need,” I was informed by a priest, were instances of physical disability or serious illness that might have prevented the groom or bride from going to church. Apparently, the small urban elite took advantage of the loophole in the Church regulations and began to stage its weddings in houses and other places where uninvited *khorkates* (peasants) could be effectively excluded. This practice seems to have been abused and eventually the Church stepped in and put an end to it.

St John’s Cathedral is a rather small church, and looking at it from the outside there is nothing grandiose immediately apparent about it. What makes it highly coveted for the bourgeoisie is its wider historical associations. Inside, the church is decorated with Byzantine frescoes that date back to the fourteenth century and are considered to be some of the best examples of their kind.<sup>29</sup> Historically, the church has been the seat of the archbishop – the political and religious leader of Greek Cypriots during Ottoman rule – a role that was briefly re-enacted during the national liberation struggle against British rule in the middle and late 1950s. Around the church, there are several other symbols that in one way or another express Greek Cypriot ethnic identity: the Pancyprrian Gymnasium, the first high school in Cyprus and closely associated with Greek learning; the Severios Library that has the same associations; the Folk Art Museum, a link of the present with the classical past; the Museum of the National Liberation Struggle; and more recently, the Makarios III Cultural Center that houses, among other things, a permanent collection of rare icons – another link with the past. Last, St John’s Cathedral is the church attended by the official establishment – government, political party leaders, members of the House of Representatives, and senior civil servants. A wedding in this church, then, particularly if it is blessed by the archbishop, leaves no doubts as to one’s status, social connections, and power.

In a relatively recent development, the urban middle class has introduced a novelty into its wedding services – a religious choir. To understand the significance of this practice in the Cypriot Orthodox context, it is necessary to point out that the wedding ceremony, like any other religious service, is traditionally enacted by a priest and two *psaltes* (cantors), known as the “right” and the “left” *psaltes*. A choir has grown out of a church establishment in Nicosia that trains cantors and whose function, up until recently, was limited to singing hymns on television and other

similar settings during major religious celebrations such as Christmas and Easter. In short, unlike Protestant and Catholic religious services, a choir has never been part of the church scene in Cyprus. And although the Church does not discourage its use in wedding ceremonies, it does not seem prepared to adopt it in other religious services, even on a limited scale.

As is to be expected, people perceive this novelty in different ways. Some point out that it “embellishes the ceremony;” others see it as a way of “showing off;” and still others are uncertain about what it means. During a wedding in Limassol, I asked a man who was standing next to me what he thought about the presence of the choir, being surprised myself to see it for the first time in a church. “It sounds like we are in a Protestant church,” he replied. I was unable to ascertain whether he approved of the affinity because he was called outside and I did not see him again. What is important nonetheless is that this man was able to make the intended connections. The significance of the choir as a symbol of distinction is to be found in the relation between the commonality of the *psaltes* (cantors) and the grandeur of the choir, as well as in its homologous opposition between Cyprus and the outside (Protestant) world.

The hotel as the locus of bourgeois wedding receptions is a relatively recent phenomenon. As many older informants pointed out, in the 1930s people *edhekhoundan sikharitiria* (accepted congratulations) in their houses. In fact, until the 1920s there were no hotels in Nicosia to speak of, and visitors to the town patronized the *khania* (inns), probably an Ottoman institution. According to Michaelide, these establishments were “primitive,” with no running water or toilet facilities, and in many cases even without beds. “It seems that it was the guest’s responsibility to carry with him his mattress, though if the guest asked for one, it was provided!” (Michaelide 1985:82). The same author points out that, with the arrival of the British in the nineteenth century, there was an increased demand for accommodation and many houses were converted into hotels. Michaelide takes the change for granted but the transition from *khania* to hotels cannot be explained away on the basis of greater demand for accommodation. Given her description of the *khania*, it is likely that hotels were established to cater for the needs of the new, sophisticated clientele.

One of the first Western-type hotels to open in Nicosia was the Kleopatra and the small urban elite was quick to take advantage of the new, modern facility. As Michaelide (1985:85) points out, it began to organize balls and afternoon tea gatherings – presumably imitating British colonial society – practices that “were thought to be very modern in the



1920s.” When the first wedding receptions took place at the newly established hotels, the lower classes castigated the practice. As one of my older informants pointed out, working-class gossip asked, capitalizing on the rhetoric of hospitality: “Don’t the rich have houses to receive their guests?” The rich themselves were, of course, capitalizing on the associations of the hotel with the modern world beyond Cyprus.

Recently, the most prestigious hotel in Nicosia, the Hilton, celebrated twenty-five years of operation. In a brief report on its history in one of the local magazines, the image of the “hotel” as the *locus* of modernity was vividly depicted. It is worth quoting from this report at some length.

The Hilton hotel celebrates 25 years of life . . . During this period, it has become the locus of social life and has provided hospitality [sic] to dozens of celebrities who have visited Cyprus;<sup>30</sup> from Presidents and Prime Ministers to famous stars like Brigitte Bardot and Raquel Welch . . . The foundations for the establishment of the Hilton hotel were laid in June 1962 in New York by *Archbishop [and President] Makarios* himself. Here is an extract from his speech during the opening ceremony of the hotel: “I was in the United States for a state visit, having been invited by President *Kennedy*, when I met Mr. *Conrad Hilton*. After a half hour of talk, we agreed on the idea of establishing a Hilton hotel in Nicosia.” . . . Only four months after the commencement of operations in June 1967 the “Hilton” was the site of the wedding [reception] of the then Minister of the Interior and Defence *Polykarpos Yiorkatjis* with Miss *Fotini Michaelidou*. The impeccable organization on the part of the hotel, the novelty in decoration, and the number of guests which exceeded eight thousand, justly characterized the event as the “wedding of the year.”

(*Tomazos* 1992)

European and Hollywood cinema stars, American presidents and businessmen, foreign dignitaries and politicians, Western metropolises, local “big men” – the meeting place of the rich and powerful of the world, the locus of cosmopolitanism and Western sophistication: these, then, are the images associated with “the hotel” in the popular imagination – images that raise formidable, albeit symbolic, barriers of exclusion. To many villagers and working-class people, the imagery functions as a mechanism of cultural intimidation. This may perhaps become clearer if we consider the nature of the space appropriated in “village” wedding receptions. In many cases, the focal point is the couple’s newly built house, itself a significant aspect of the overall display effort. In such cases, tables are set outside in the street in front of the house or the adjacent plot of land. The street itself is cut off from traffic on both ends, often without the prior permission of the authorities (which nonetheless tolerate the infringement). In villages near towns and in towns themselves, people usually stage their wedding receptions in poorly constructed sheds – a rectangular area with

straw mats around the three sides functioning as walls, a shabby roof also made of straw mats, and a concrete floor. Such establishments are either especially built for wedding receptions or, more usually, for working-class family outings during the hot summer nights for *souvlakia* (kebabs) and beer. Whatever their purpose, such spaces are characterized by an unassuming, throw-together mood that contrasts sharply with the formality of hotels.

The cultural intimidation that “the hotel” causes is graphically demonstrated by the uneasiness and apprehension that many villagers and working-class people reveal at bourgeois wedding receptions. At one such reception at the Hilton hotel, two working-class men, wearing casual, short-sleeved shirts and sporting well-trimmed moustaches, were standing around the pool smoking and waiting for their turn to congratulate the couple. One of them caught sight of an acquaintance walking around in self-assured manner, with the air of a man who was in familiar, intimate surroundings. “Look at Andreas,” he said to his friend half jokingly, “he comes and goes as if he owns the place!” The other man raised his hand, Andreas saw them and came to greet them. “*Re koumbare* (my friend),” said one of the men, “you go up and down as if you own the place.” Andreas laughed: “I’ve worked in here for six months,” he said, “I did the electrical installation!”

In yet another reception at the same hotel, two village women, mother and daughter, were waiting in line for their turn to congratulate the newlyweds. The mother was wearing what seemed to be her Sunday best – a colorfully patterned dress and a narrow belt tightly fixed around the waist, thus exposing the rounded belly so characteristic of middle-aged, village, and working-class women. The daughter stood out among the sophisticated Nicosian bourgeoisie as well – she was heavily made up and was wearing a strikingly red dress with matching high-heel shoes and handbag. At one point, the mother caught sight of another woman from her village and, forgetting where she was, raised her hand, waved vigorously, and shouted at the top of her voice: “Katina, we are here, come here!” The daughter, self-conscious and apparently feeling out of place, blushed with embarrassment. She turned to her mother and said in a low but stern voice: “Mom, be quiet! *Enna mas kamis rezili* (you’ll humiliate us), we are not in our village!” Indeed they were not. Their presence at the Hilton was purely symbolic and did little to negate the social distance that separated their world from the world of the Nicosian bourgeoisie.

*Order and disorder*

A middle-class acquaintance, commenting about “village” wedding receptions, pointed out that he could not understand how it was possible for people “to wear their Sunday best and then sit *mes’tin khomatsia* (in the dirt) to eat.”<sup>31</sup> He also expressed the commonly held view that “village” weddings were *panairka* (traditional fairs). The imagery was familiar enough, but I asked him to elaborate. He depicted a picture in which infants were crying, children running up and down shouting, adults talking at the top of their voices and making animated gestures – “in short, *khamos* (pandemonium),” he summed up. The imagery brought to mind Goffman’s (1959:32–40) argument that a successful performance presupposes that the “stage” is characterized by a certain consistency between appearance, manner, and setting. Sunday-best clothes clashed with a setting in the dirt; a formal, even if joyful, occasion with excessive mannerisms and commotion; the presence of children with the function of weddings as an adult celebration. Yet why inconsistencies such as these should be problematical is not immediately apparent from Goffman’s account. Douglas’s (1966) insight that the mixing of conceptually distinct things creates disorder is more helpful.

When I asked a middle-class friend to tell me what she thought was the most conspicuous difference between “village” and “champagne” weddings, she replied with hesitation: “In city weddings, there are no children.” Absence of children from urban middle-class weddings is hardly unintentional. It is in accord with an ethic which prescribes that children must “sleep early and rise early,” that they must learn *taksi* (order) and *sira* (literally line, that is, to be in line). In this vision of the world, children do not only create disorder in the obvious sense of the term, but also in the sense that they are out of place; not only because they cry and run up and down disturbing the peace, but also because they do not fit into the grand scheme of things, the adult world and its celebrations.<sup>32</sup> By contrast, villagers and working-class people do not seem to mind taking their children to weddings. It is not so much a question of having nowhere to leave them, as the view that such celebrations are part of the children’s recreational activities and educational development. At weddings, children have the opportunity to play and enjoy themselves, to practice their dancing skills,<sup>33</sup> to learn about customs and the values that these celebrations express and reproduce. There is a certain degree of flexibility in working-class attitudes towards children perhaps because the line that separates the two worlds of children and adults is not always as clearly drawn as in the case of middle-class families.

Similar considerations apply to the inconsistency between Sunday-best clothes and sitting down to have dinner in the *khomatsia* (dirt or soil). At one level of analysis, brand-new or clean clothes seem to clash with the *khomatsia* because the former are associated with the world of leisure and the latter with the world of work, especially manual work. However, this does not explain why it is only the bourgeois gaze that finds the mixing intolerable. For the bourgeoisie, I want to suggest, soil is dirty beyond the literal sense of the term. *Khomatsia* constitutes the working environment of the *reshperis* (grain cultivator) and the shepherd, the *sieras* (iron-structure maker), the *kaloupshis* (mold setter), and the *khtistis* (builder [brick-layer])<sup>34</sup> – in short, the environment of manual labor. The latter is opposed to mental labor, and for the bourgeoisie the opposition takes on a specific significance. With its emphasis on physical strength and the body, manual labor borders on a nature that can easily lapse into animality. Mental labor on the other hand is associated with intellectual power, the mind, the transcendental qualities of culture. It is within this context of antagonistic visions of the world that we must seek the roots of the middle-class aversion. Not only do “backward” villagers and workers, that is, *khorkates* (peasants), appropriate the signs of refinement and culture – the social prerogative of the bourgeoisie – they also devalue them by bringing them into contact with crudeness and vulgarity.

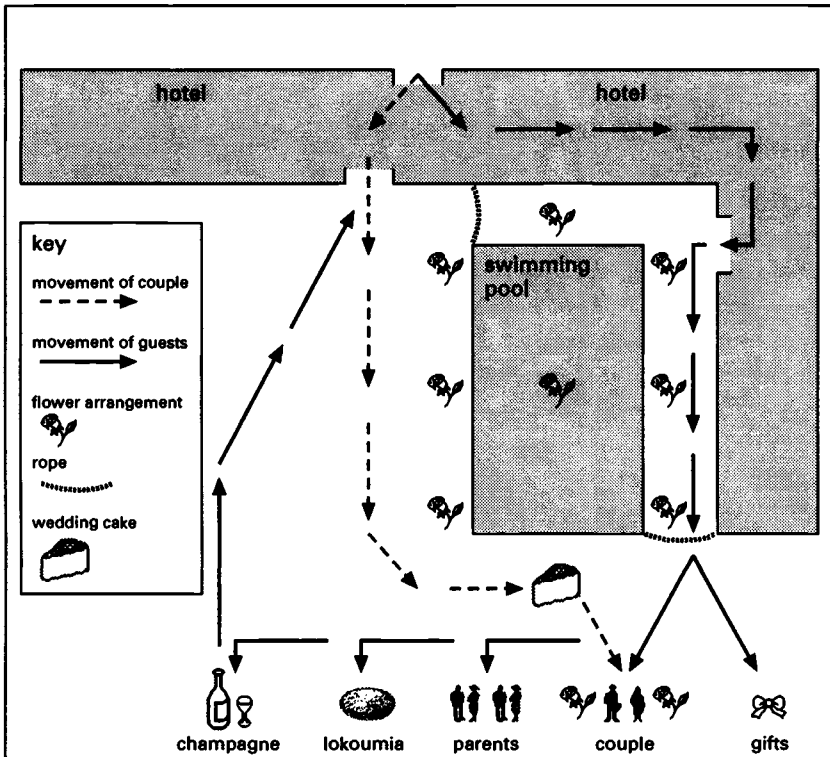
As I have pointed out, *taksi* and *sira*, order and discipline, are two core features of “champagne” weddings. This is reflected in the way that the reception area of such weddings is organized. Hosts and guests follow a specific itinerary from the point of entry to the point of exit with no deviations possible. Ropes are used to mark the itinerary and hold the guests in line until the newlyweds have taken their position at the stand. It is only then that the guests are allowed to proceed. But since the space is cut off with ropes, it is not possible for guests to exit the area by returning to the point of entry, thus causing disruption in the orderly flow. Nor is it possible for anyone to “jump the line,” at least, if one does not want to make a spectacle of oneself by climbing over the ropes.

Organization of space to control movement and prevent disorder also occurs at the other major location, the church. Once the church ceremony is under way, white ribbons are often tied onto the seats between the side doors, and on the seats between the main western entry to the church. But the most extreme example of orderliness must be the case of a man currently occupying one of the most senior positions in the Cypriot bureaucracy. When he was married, he had the church seats numbered and each guest provided with a ticket with his or her seat

number on it. On arrival at the church, the guests were ushered to their seats as in the theater.

This is in contrast to “village” weddings where structuring of space to control movement does not occur. People come and go pretty much as they please. Apparently they do not consider it necessary to restrain themselves from freely moving about, gesticulating, talking in loud voices, in short, from using their bodies in a spontaneous manner as a vehicle of self-expression. This lack of self-imposed restrictions on movement reflects a practical philosophy in which the body, particularly the male body, acquires special status. Its abilities, such as physical strength to work, to fight, and to reproduce are valorized (cf. Willis 1981; Bourdieu 1984), and so are its needs for food and drink (see below). Gesticulation, loud talk, and unrestrained movement must be seen as an expression of this ethic, an assertion of an identity and a sense of social being constituted in a world where the body, particularly in its manifestation as labor

Figure 2. Layout of hotel reception area



power, occupies a central position. Thus, if for villagers and working-class people letting the body do much of the talking goes without saying, it is because it comes without saying. The body does the “talking” in a domain of practice without which celebrations of any kind would not be possible – the domain of work.

### ***Form and function***

Bourdieu (1984:177–193), taking a hint from Weber, has argued that the rich and the poor display opposing tastes in their consumption habits – a “taste of luxury” and a “taste of necessity” respectively. The former emphasizes form, how things look as opposed to what they do and as such it signifies a certain degree of distance from necessity. By contrast, the taste of necessity emphasizes function, what a particular thing can do, how well it can fulfil a particular *practical* need. As such, this taste stems from necessity itself. This is not to say, of course, that tastes are mechanistically determined by income levels – the poor consume inexpensive items because they cannot afford anything else. Between income levels and consumption habits there is the cognitive action of agents which imbues goods with meanings not necessarily related to costs. Rather, they are related to other meanings within one’s wider vision of the world and one’s place in it, in short, to an identity.

As we have seen, “village” and “champagne” weddings contrast sharply in their practices with regard to food and drink. In the former people are invariably treated to a sit-down dinner. In most “champagne” receptions, by contrast, there is no food, though there is a sit-down dinner after the reception for close relatives and friends, usually 100–200 people. When food is provided for all guests, this is in the form of snacks. There are three parameters that need to be examined here: quantity, quality, and presentation, all related to the question of form versus function. “Village” weddings are characterized by large quantities of traditional foods. People can have as much as they want and, in fact, are often pressured into having more than they want. The main items served are foods for filling up stomachs. Typically, one is served the following three dishes: *patates touournou* (baked potatoes), *makaronia touournou* (baked macaroni with minced meat and cream), and *ofton kleftikon* (beef cooked in clay ovens). The emphasis, then, is on quantity – large amounts of conventional filling foods. As one might expect, presentation of the food does not receive any particular attention. The different items are lumped together in plastic plates. Guests eat with plastic knives and forks, and drink from plastic cups.

By contrast, food in “champagne” weddings, when there is food, is meant to fulfil more of an “aesthetic” than practical function. Although snacks are plentiful, they are not meant to fill one up. They are light, exquisite, often imported items, such as caviar, salmon, smoked turkey, and French pastries, intended more for a sophisticated palate than a hungry stomach. Moreover, presentation is paramount – silverware, proper plates, champagne glasses, and above all food laid out in a decorative manner and embellished with flower arrangements.

There is little doubt that a plate with caviar, smoked turkey, and marinated trout costs more than a plate with the traditional foods. Still, overall costs are not significantly different. In fact, it may often be the case that, given the sheer quantity of food, “village” weddings are more expensive to stage. Be that as it may, the important point here is that the choices people make about food and drink cannot be explained solely by reference to costs. It is also necessary to examine the cultural context within which they are made. Bourdieu (1984) has shown that French working-class men are expected to eat large quantities of food, and prefer the kind that fills one up. This is not necessarily because they are cheaper, but because the working-class ethic valorizes the body and its needs – it befits a strong man to eat “strong” foods. Certain foods, then, are preferred or avoided on the basis of the sense they make within one’s wider sense of identity.

As I have already suggested, in Cyprus meat is considered a manly food. This is not to say that women do not eat meat. Rather, should they decide to give it up, the decision would not be considered quite as remarkable as in the case of a man. Once in Nicosia, a friend and I went to buy *souvlakia* (kebabs) for his family and a portion of grilled *halloumi* cheese, the traditional Cypriot treat, for myself. The owner said that he did not usually grill *halloumi* and that he had too many orders of *souvlakia* to complete. We turned around to leave when he suddenly changed his mind. “Wait a minute,” he called, “I’ll do it for you, but is it for a woman that doesn’t eat meat?”

Such considerations about food apply to working-class preferences of alcoholic beverages. Beer and brandy are the main drinks provided in “village” weddings, although whiskey is sometimes also served, particularly to special guests. Champagne and punch are typical in the weddings of the urban middle class, and sometimes wine as well. Stewart (1991:126–127) has pointed out that in Greece the lower classes have taken a liking to whiskey, imitating the lifestyle of the rich. The same case can be made about Cyprus, but we still need to explain why working-class people have chosen this particular drink and not another class marker, say

champagne. Whiskey and brandy, which working-class people in Cyprus habitually drink with their meals, are, I want to suggest, “strong” drinks and as such, they befit strong men. By contrast, champagne is “soft,” a drink for weak men and for women. Characteristically, working-class men call wine *pouzokraso* (hernia-wine) – hernia being literally and metaphorically a condition in which one cannot lift weight. It may be argued, of course, that although beer is also “soft,” it is nonetheless a popular working-class drink. This is true enough, but many people do not consider beer to be a “serious” alcoholic beverage. Given the intense summer heat in Cyprus, it functions more as “soft drink” in a literal sense, that is, a thirst-quencher.

The bourgeois choice of alcoholic beverages, on the other hand, is underscored by a desire to be proper in one’s tastes, appropriateness being defined by the habits of the European bourgeoisie. Champagne is drunk at celebrations and other festive occasions – as one man put it, “It’s [a wedding] celebration: are we going to drink *ghazoza* (lemonade)?” Whiskey is drunk at the night club and the disco – but unlike the lower classes, never with one’s meal. Brandy is always drunk straight, preferably in brandy glasses, never chilled or with ice as the lower classes like it. Similarly wine is served with meals; chilled white wine with fish, red wine with meats. The latter is always served at room temperature, as the correct etiquette prescribes. This is despite the fact that in Europe where the etiquette originated, room temperature is meant to indicate around 25 degrees Celsius, while in Cyprus it can rise, particularly in the summer, as high as 40 degrees.<sup>35</sup>

Form, then, rather than function, the “aesthetic” rather than the practical, are the principles guiding bourgeois choices in wedding celebrations and their wider lifestyle. The emphasis on form may also account for the importance that the bourgeoisie attaches to decoration, particularly flowers. For although the difference between “champagne” and “village” weddings in this respect is one of degree, it is nonetheless a significant difference. To begin with, in “village” weddings two flower stands, placed at each side of the couple in the church and the reception area, are the main, often the only, decorative items. In the weddings of the bourgeoisie, both the church and the reception area are practically flooded with flower arrangements. Moreover, the kind of flowers used tend to be different. As a florist explained, the most popular choice among villagers and the urban working classes is the carnation. The bourgeoisie opts for more exotic flowers, such as gladioli and a flower locally known as *kerperes*. In money terms, the difference is equally large. While two flower stands cost around



£300, the minimum charged for decoration in a place like the Hilton is £1,000 (\$2,000). This is not to say that villagers and the urban working classes avoid lavish flower decoration because it is prohibitively expensive. Rather, beyond a certain point, money spent on flowers is considered money badly spent, which means that the practice loses its significance in the wider scheme of things.

The Cypriot bourgeoisie distinguishes itself from the dominated classes through the distinctions that it makes between the cosmopolitan and the parochial, the sophisticated and the plain, the extraordinary and the banal, the orderly and the disorderly, the cultured and the uncultured; in short, between the modern and the backward. The hegemonic position of the bourgeois lifestyle would not have been possible, however, without the recognition, often silent and indirect, that the dominated classes accord to it. For despite the evident acts of resistance in wedding celebrations as well as in other non-ritual contexts, the lower classes operate under a hegemonic ideology. To begin with, the notion of “tradition” itself, which, ironically, the dominated classes employ in their confrontation with the bourgeoisie, has been historically constituted by the opposition. Villagers learned about the importance of tradition which they now reproduce through the folklorist and the official establishment. The latter, as I have argued, harnessed folk practices to the needs of national ideology.

Moreover, the significance of tradition in the eyes of the dominated classes has been enhanced over the last few decades by tourism. “Europe” – the source of legitimation of the modernity of the Cypriot bourgeoisie – is often appropriated by the dominated classes in an effort to have tradition itself legitimated. Thus, for instance, to demonstrate the importance of tradition, villagers often ask rhetorically: “Don’t you see that the [European] tourists come *pou toson kosmon* (from so far away) to see our customs?”; the implication being that if Europeans bother to come all the way to Cyprus to see “our customs,” they *must* be important. Despite the apparent acts of resistance to modernity, for the dominated classes too, it is “Europe” – that is, modernity – that ultimately defines the significant and insignificant.

In Cyprus, then, the meaning of modernity (and its contrary) is largely constituted and reproduced within the context of symbolic struggles among classes and other social groups. The notion of modernization (or Westernization) has emerged as the idiom through which the bourgeoisie constitutes itself as the dominant social class. It is also the symbolic instrument through which the dominated social classes experience and resist the hegemony of the bourgeoisie, but ultimately succumb to it. Yet apparently

these notions originate somewhere else and their meaning is hardly exhausted in the Cypriot context. We must therefore ask: what do others mean with these terms, and under what conditions is their meaning constituted and reproduced? Can we afford to take for granted the received wisdom of Western social science, the primary source of signification? Can we at least rely on anthropology, the foremost science of the Other? To these questions, I turn next.

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## Anthropology and the specter of “monoculture”

Modernization (or Westernization) is one of those terms that are constantly employed in the social sciences, but are not as frequently critically analyzed and questioned. This is not to say that the processes and the consequences that these terms imply remain uncontested. At one extreme, Westernization suggests a civilizing process. At the other, it conjures up bleak images of global homogenization and sameness. Yet despite their radically different approaches, these views share a fundamental underlying assumption – that there exists a cultural entity called “the West” on the basis of which the rest of the world can be classified and evaluated.

My aim in this chapter is to question the soundness of this assumption both empirically and theoretically. The notion of a reified West is debunked empirically, even if inadvertently, by several studies of “core” societies that, in addition to demonstrating internal diversity, suggest close affinity with Other parts of the world. The notion is also untenable for two interrelated theoretical reasons. First, because no sociocultural universe is ever integrated enough to avoid structural contradictions. And second, because contradictions create the preconditions for strategies that transcend the limits of the system, even if the end result is their reproduction further down the road.

In the spirit of recent work on the reification of Western societies (Carrier 1992), I will suggest that the notion of Westernization completes the process of essentializing the Other, be it the “Orientalization” of the Middle East (Said 1978), or the “Mediterranization” of southern Europe (Llobera 1986; Herzfeld 1987a; Pina-Cabral 1989). I will also argue that even in its dissenting version as homogenization and sameness, the notion of Westernization participates, albeit inadvertently, in the very ideology

that it was meant to expose. In the last section, I will suggest reasons for the persistence of this notion in anthropology.

### **Reifications**

From Durkheim and Weber to Habermas and Giddens, modernization remains a legitimate project for humanity and the West its crowning achievement. Despite the occasional talk about “alienation,” “anomie,” “iron cages,” and more recently “post-modernity,” there is little doubt that the spirit of the Enlightenment and rationalism lives on. In what is perhaps its most ethnocentric version, modernization theory postulates a set of dispositions, attitudes, and values derived from Schiller’s notion of “the disenchantment of the world” and which Weber made famous. The model is then universalized and employed to gauge the progress of the rest of the world in its endeavor to “become modern” (Inkeles and Smith 1974). Villagers are said to be particularly ill equipped to deal with this kind of change. Although certain “adaptive” elements in traditional cultures are recognized, studies, on the whole, indicate that the “maladaptive aspects” far outweigh them. Simić, for instance, has argued that the major obstacle in (what was) Yugoslavia’s road to modernization is the peasants’ “amoralism” (cf. Banfield 1958) – their exclusive concern with personal and familial interests – and, consequently, their failure “to develop a universalistic ethic in the public sphere” (Simić 1983:219).

Markides *et al.* (1978) employed a similar modernization model in Cyprus in their study of the Messaoria<sup>1</sup> villagers. The latter were questioned on such issues as women’s rights, kinship obligations, secularism, time orientation, and the like (cf. Inkeles and Smith 1974), and as the authors point out, not without a certain complacency, the villagers “gave, in general, modern replies” (1978:205). However, even though the process of modernization seems to be well under way, the project is still largely incomplete. As the authors point out, Cypriot society is characterized by “the phenomenon of social and cultural dualism,” a condition where “many traditional customs and rituals are *still* preserved . . . [and] many cherished values that were dominant in the traditional period are *still* centrally located within [an otherwise modern] cultural system” (Markides *et al.* 1978:212; emphases added).

Despite its apparent popularity, the Weberian notion of modernity has been seriously challenged from different quarters. Of all the challenges, Kuhn’s (1970) work on the natural sciences has perhaps been the most damaging, in particular to the most central concept of modernity, that of rationality. Yet even though the latter, or at any rate “first-order” rational-

ity, is now considered to be little more than a "myth,"<sup>2</sup> modernity is still as legitimate a project as anything we know. What changed was the principle of classification of the modern, not the popularity of the notion itself. In an influential, "post-structuralist"<sup>3</sup> account of social change, Giddens, drawing on the Lévi-Straussian rhetoric, argues that the difference between "cold societies dominated by tradition" (1979:220) and the modern West lies in "the ascendancy of historicity as a mode of historical consciousness" in the latter. What defines the West and sets it apart from the rest of the world is "the active mobilization of social forms in the pursuit of their own transformation" (1979:221). To put it simply, unlike "cold" societies where social change is either accidental or the outcome of external forces, the West has become aware of itself and has taken its destiny in its own hands. Historical consciousness, then – rather than technocratic rationality – the ability to conceptualize structures and bend them to the human will is now the hallmark of modernity.<sup>4</sup>

This view of modernity has been recently reiterated quite forcefully in an anthropological work on Greece. In his exploration of the lives and times of the Athenian elite, Faubion (1993:xvi) asserts that Weber was "wrong to regard [technical rationalism] as the hallmark of modernity *tout court*."<sup>5</sup> Contemporary Greeks are as modern as anyone else, even though not in quite the same way as the people of the "Occidental core." Greeks are modern, then, because they doubt or, to be more precise, because they doubt in a milieu where the cosmos has been constituted as "ethically and morally neutral, God declared dead, and men and women declared . . . to have nothing from which to proceed but their own devices" (1993:6). These devices, according to Faubion, are nothing else than a certain historical consciousness, an awareness of how things have been in the past, how they are in the present, and what they might become in the future. Contemporary Greeks, Faubion argues, are "historical constructivist," synthesizers of the old with the new, the past with the present. In this lies their modernity.

Although anthropology was never particularly concerned with modernity as such, historically it has been uncomfortable with modernization as a globalizing process. As Craig Calhoun (1993:61) recently put it, while anthropology has been "the paradigmatic science of otherness . . . sameness, ethnocentrism, or explicit universalism has been predominant in sociology, economics, psychology, and most of the other human sciences." Since Boas, cultural relativism, whether in its methodological or philosophical guise, served as the basis for defending the Other against the calumny of primitivism and backwardness. Anthropology sought to

recover the value of other cultures in the eyes of its Western European and North American audience by asserting that there was “no one best or more rational way to organize society” (Marcus and Fischer 1986:180). Above all, it endeavored to salvage other cultures from what it perceived as a process of global Westernization and sameness.

The specter of a “monoculture,” as Lévi-Strauss (1973:44) put it, of uniformity and sameness, has been haunting anthropology for some time. And with good reason, it would seem. David Maybury-Lewis has recently reasserted in one of the documentaries in the “Millennium” series that the stakes are very high. Cultural homogenization would not only result in monotony and boredom, but may also threaten our very social existence. Diversity in nature ensures that survival of life, since a change that could wipe out one species may not necessarily affect the others. In the same way, cultural diversity ensures the survival of civilization as we know it. In the context of post-modernity, of mounting doubt and radical critique, the specter of sameness has become more haunting than ever before. For if, as it is now acknowledged, the West does not possess all the answers to life’s problems, global Westernization would be a tragic and probably irreversible mistake.

This compelling picture of the “predicament of cultures” has left little room for critical analysis. It is true that some anthropologists have questioned the notion of Westernization by pointing out, for instance, that the consumption of Western goods by Other cultures – the most conspicuous sign of sameness – does not necessarily signify loss of their identity.<sup>6</sup> Others have suggested that Western influences are not always embraced passively by native populations. Often, they are “indigenized,” so to speak, that is, adjusted to the particular needs of each society (Appadurai 1990). Moreover, in many cases, they are actually resisted by local populations (Friedman 1990). Although such criticisms of Westernization should not be taken lightly, the kind of critique that I have in mind is quite different. My aim is not to question whether Westernization is good or bad, all-pervasive or restricted, imaginary or real. What I want to challenge is the implicit assumptions of the notion, the conditions that make its conceptualization possible. The common-sense understanding aside, what does it really mean to say that Others are Westernizing?

As a global, historical process, Westernization makes sense only if one is prepared to acknowledge the existence of a unified, homogenized entity – the West – an entity defined by certain essential characteristics. Carrier (1992) described the essentialization of the West by Westerners as “Occidentalism,” suggesting that the practice is not unlike the

"Orientalizing" of the Middle East (Said 1978). As these and other writers (Fabian 1983; Kuper 1988) have shown, reifying the Other not only helped Western societies to constitute a superior identity for themselves, but also to legitimate their domination over the rest of the world. Reifying the West, presenting it as a unified cultural entity – rather than the locus of competing cultural logics and strategies – is the other side of the coin. The notion of the West constitutes a superior identity and legitimates the domination of one block of nations over the rest of the world no less than the notion of the Other. The opposition and the cultural distance between the two poles is enhanced irrespective of which one is reified. Ironically, by adopting the notion of Westernization uncritically, anthropology has itself been reifying the West and inadvertently sustaining what it has all along sought to debunk – the ideology of a culturally inferior Other.

It may be argued, of course, that if Other societies are becoming more like the West, the basis of inequality is increasingly eroded. Whatever the problems of global homogenization, a unified world would at least be an egalitarian world. Yet as I will argue in the last chapter, Westernization is not a process by which Other societies become Western, but the mechanism through which they constitute themselves (and are constituted) as Western subjects. For the West is neither a destination to be reached, nor an object to be appropriated. It is a historically constituted instrument of division. Anthropology's deep-seated fear of global homogenization, then, is without real foundation. We will never all be the same because the symbolic instruments for defining sameness and difference – superiority and inferiority – have been historically monopolized by the countries of Western Europe and North America.

### **The consequences of strategy**

In this section, I want to examine how Western societies appear through an anthropological lens. My aim is not to reiterate the obvious and almost banal fact that they are socially and culturally diverse. Nor is it simply to show that many cultural practices, allegedly the hallmark of Other societies, are in fact very much part of life in the West. I also want to explore the conditions of possibility of such affinities, the mechanisms that produce and sustain them. I will examine two major anthropological areas: the code of "honor and shame," and the notions of gift exchange and reciprocity.

Anthropologists working in Mediterranean societies have for many years now singled out two allegedly typical Mediterranean cultural traits, the twin concepts of "honor and shame," and on the basis of these, they

have argued that the region constitutes a distinct cultural area. The literature on “honor and shame” is vast and opinions do not always coincide.<sup>7</sup> The gist of the argument, however, may be summarized as follows: honor and shame are two bundles of virtues appropriate for men and women respectively – the major characteristics of the former being virility and physical strength, and of the latter sexual modesty. Moreover, it is argued that the connecting link between the two is the stigma that female sexual immodesty (shamelessness) can cause to male honor. Indicative of the durability of the notion of “Mediterranean culture” is the fact that twenty years after the publication of Peristiany’s *Honour and Shame: The Values of Mediterranean Society* (1965) – the “original work” on the subject – another collection of essays with almost the same title appeared: Gilmore’s edited volume, *Honor and Shame and the Unity of the Mediterranean* (1987).

The reification of the Mediterranean as a cultural area raised several objections over the years. For instance, it has been argued that “honor and shame” are complex notions that differ from one area to the next, often within the same society (Herzfeld 1980); that they have been reduced to a single dimension related to sexuality and physical attributes, and that, when all is said and done, such notions are not confined to the Mediterranean basin (Llobera 1986; Lever 1986; Pina-Cabral 1989).

Recent anthropological work in countries of the “Occidental core,” such as France, England, and the United States, shows, even if inadvertently, that “the values of Mediterranean society” are not so uniquely Mediterranean after all. As I have pointed out, Bourdieu’s (1984) work suggests that physical strength is the primary trait by which French working-class men define and differentiate themselves from both women and middle-class men. This is demonstrated in many different areas of everyday life, from food preferences and the manner of eating, to ways of talking, laughing, walking, and even blowing one’s nose.

Whereas the working classes are more attentive to the *strength* of the (male) body than its shape, and tend to go for products that are both cheap and nutritious, the professions prefer products that are tasty, health-giving, light, and not fattening.

*(Bourdieu 1984:190; emphasis added).*

French working-class men, according to Bourdieu, find fish unsuitable food for males, not only because it is “light” and associated with sick people, but also because to eat it requires one to handle it in ways that a man’s hands cannot manage, that is, gently. Moreover, eating fish contradicts the “masculine way of eating” since, on account of the bones, one



has to eat with restraint, in small mouthfuls, and chew gently. "The whole masculine identity – what is called virility – is involved in these two ways of eating, nibbling and picking, as befits a woman, or with whole-hearted male gulps and mouthfuls" (Bourdieu 1984: 190–191). For French working-class men, Bourdieu argues, there is a "practical philosophy of the male body as a sort of power, big and strong, with enormous, imperative, brutal needs, which are asserted in every male posture" (1984:192). This "practical philosophy" is not unlike the masculine ethic of Mediterranean villagers that fascinated anthropologists for so long, and sometimes even offended their sensibilities. The irony is that this ethic has been thriving in the anthropologists' back yard all along.

Willis's (1981) study of working-class high-school boys in England is equally revealing. As he points out, manual labor, in which the physical power of the body is demonstrated, "is associated with the social superiority of masculinity" while, by contrast, intellectual labor is associated "with the social inferiority of femininity" (1981:148). In this particular culture, physical strength is what makes a "real" man as opposed to the "sissy," someone effeminate. There is a striking similarity between the English "sissy" and the Cypriot *voutiropedho* (butter boy). The latter term is likewise employed by working-class youths to describe, and devalue, their middle-class peers. It suggests that the latter have been raised in an environment devoid of physical hardship, *sta poupoulla* (on feathers), and that they are, therefore, not quite the men the former take themselves to be. The power of the body and its physical needs – the defining traits of masculinity – then, seem to be as significant in the culture of the English and French working-classes, as it is in the Sarakatsani culture – the transhumant Greek shepherds studied by Campbell (1964) – or the Glendiot – the Cretan highlanders studied by Herzfeld (1985) – to mention only two "Greek" works on Mediterranean "manhood."

Another unifying theme, which anthropologists constituted as dividing, is the expression of masculinity through aggressiveness and fighting. Much like the Sarakatsani and the Glendiot, the English working class defines its masculinity on the basis of aggression and violence. This could be real, physical violence, such as fighting in pubs and committing acts of vandalism, or merely symbolic.

The ambience of violence with its connotations of masculinity spread through the whole culture. The physicality of all interactions, the mock pushing and fighting, the showing off in front of the girls . . . all borrow from the grammar of the real fight situation.

(Willis 1981:36)

Willis's work is enlightening in another respect as well. It explicitly connects moral values to sexual behavior, a relationship that, as it is often argued by anthropologists working in the Mediterranean, constitutes *the* defining characteristic of the region (cf. Gilmore 1987). English working-class masculinity, according to Willis, is constituted and reproduced in opposition to both female passivity and the imputed sexual timidity of middle-class males. One of the ways in which the "lads" – the working-class high-school boys – seek to differentiate themselves from, and establish superiority over, the "ear'oles," their middle-class peers, is by emphasizing their sexual experience and potency, as this passage, spoken by a working-class boy, shows:

You can't imagine Bookley (an "ear'ole") goin' home like with the missus (girlfriend) . . . and having a good maul on her. I can't see him getting to grips with her, though, like we do you know. (Willis 1981:15)

A similar attitude is encountered in Cyprus among working-class youths. They often refer to their middle-class peers as *stroufi* (sparrows), implying that during sexual intercourse they ejaculate quickly and thus fail to satisfy their partners as real men ought to do. The same attitude surfaces in the symbolic confrontation between village and city youths. Let me illustrate this with one specific example. A man from Nicosia sent a letter to one of the local magazines in which he complained about the behavior of certain youths in the village of Ayia Napa – now a cosmopolitan seaside resort. The man spent his summer vacation there with his family and apparently the local youths frequently harassed his teenage daughters. In one instance, several youths approached the girls in the street and asked them rhetorically: "Since Nicosian [men] are all queers, whom do you find to fuck you?" (*To Periodiko*, August 31, 1991, p. 3).

Turning to the question of sexual modesty, another of the alleged hallmarks of "Mediterranean culture," it seems that English working-class women are expected to be passive in their sexual behavior. Indeed, the "lads" make a distinction between the "girlfriend" and the "easy lay," the former representing "the human value that is squandered by promiscuity" (Willis 1981:44).<sup>8</sup> The girlfriend and future wife, then, is expected to be sexually inexperienced and timid. Moreover, this requirement stems – and becomes all the more important in this context – from the same underlying assumptions that anthropologists encounter in Mediterranean societies. English working-class men consider women to be by their very "nature" sexually insatiable and incapable of controlling themselves. "There is a fear [on the part of the "lads"] that once a girl is sexually experienced and

has known joy from sex at all, the floodgates of her desire will be opened and she will be completely promiscuous" (Willis 1981:44; cf. du Boulay 1974:102). Moreover, the same way that female sexual immodesty in the Mediterranean is said to taint male honor and cause violence, so too in English working-class culture men are both shamed and obliged to take drastic measures to restore their reputation when it is tainted by female sexual immodesty, real or imputed.<sup>9</sup>

Circulated stories about the sexual adventures of "the missus" [girlfriend] are a first-rate challenge to masculinity and pride. They have to be answered in the masculine mode:

X, he keeps saying things, he went out with me missus before like, and he keeps saying things what I don't like . . . he ain't been to school since Friday . . . when I fuckin' cop him I'm gonna kill 'im, if I get 'im on the floor he's fucking dead.

(Willis 1981:44)

The foregoing analysis is not intended to make the claim that Western European working-class and rural Mediterranean cultures are the same. Rather, my aim has been to suggest that there are fundamental similarities between the two and that it was only by being oblivious to them that anthropologists could ever exoticize the Mediterranean. Moreover, I want to raise the question as to how, despite their apparent differences, the two cultures exhibit such striking similarities. This is a complex theoretical question to be sure and calls for detailed investigation. Here, I simply want to suggest a direction that such an analysis might take.

If there is something common to both cultures, it is the valorization of the body, particularly the male body and its physical abilities and needs. What is also common is that European working-class men and Mediterranean villagers reproduce their world through manual labor, even though apparently in not quite the same way. To be sure, the former cannot be reduced to the latter in any direct and immediate way. For one thing, it does not seem to be the case that working-class people make a connection between the two in a conscious, calculating manner. Having said that, there is little doubt that some type of connection is indeed made – a post-structuralist would call it "practical" or "pre-reflexive" (Bourdieu 1977, 1990; Giddens 1979). This position does preclude other explanations, but one would then be compelled to assume the formidable task of explaining, first, the origins of the masculine ethos in social universes that, by implication, are quite different; and second, the regularity with which it appears in working-class and village milieux (and by implication, the regularity with which this ethos is absent from male middle-class culture).

Another area that has exerted a constant fascination to anthropologists and other scholars, and which has been deployed variably over the years, is reciprocity and gift exchange. For Malinowski (1961 [1922]: 510), the Kula was a significant social fact uniting people “with definite social bonds . . . binding them with definite ties of reciprocal obligations.” The Trobrianders, then, were not the anarchic savages that the literature of Malinowski’s time presented them to be. They were a people with a complex social and cultural organization. For Mauss (1967:66), the gift was an expression of the “purer sentiments: charity, social service, and solidarity.” In the same vein, for the economic historian Karl Polanyi (1957:47), it signified “the absence of the motive for gain,” of personal economic interest and greed.

The “Golden Era” of gift exchange came to an end in the West with the rise of capitalism and the market – the “satanic mill,” as Polanyi (1957) put it, that threatens society with destruction. Goods are no longer given as gifts, except on special occasions. They became commodities, objects sold and bought on the market for profit. One significant aspect of this transformation, the story goes, is that things took on a life of their own and stand in opposition to those who produce them – they control and dominate their lives. To put it in another way, human relations are no longer personal and direct, that is, “human.” They have “become disguised as the social relations between things” (Taussig 1980:26).<sup>10</sup> If there is something that makes the West different and sets it apart from the rest of the world, then, it is the preponderance of commodity relations and the pursuit of economic interests. Sahlins (1976: 215–216) put this idea in very precise terms: “Even apart from business dealings, in what is sometimes called life as opposed to work – in the association of neighbors, the membership of a church, a country club, or a Friday-night poker game – there enters a decisive economic element.”

In a recent article, Carrier (1992) has reminded us how unrealistic this disjointed picture of the world is. Gift relations, he points out, exist side by side with commodity relations in Western societies, from the more “personal” areas of life, such as among family members, to the most impersonal and mediated ones, such as those between buyers and sellers. In the United States, for example, as late as the middle of the twentieth century, shopkeepers extended credit facilities to their customers on a regular basis, a practice that placed the customer under the moral obligation to continue buying from the same shop. As Carrier (1992:202) observes, “In such a relationship, buying a tin of milk was not an impersonal exchange of

equivalents [but] a recreation of a durable personal relationship, recalling previous transactions and anticipating future ones."

The importance of reciprocity and gift exchange in American society was also demonstrated by Carol Stack (1974). The author set out to study an urban black community in the Midwest and to show that the "culture of poverty" notion, the racist view that African Americans are poor because of defective cultural traits, is unfounded. In repudiating this claim, Stack debunks another ideology that seems to have survived almost intact since the days of Henry Maine (cf. Kuper 1988:17–35): that contract, not kinship, is the principle of social organization in Western societies.<sup>11</sup>

In her analysis, Stack demonstrates how people organize their lives on the basis of kinship networks in order to cope with racism and poverty. As she points out,

the material and cultural support needed to absorb, sustain, and socialize community members in The Flats<sup>12</sup> is provided by networks of cooperating kinsmen . . . People in The Flats are immersed in a domestic web of a large number of kin and friends whom they can count on. (1974:93)

As one would expect, the major values in such a kin-based system are co-operation and reciprocal exchange. As Stack points out, in contrast to the middle-class American ethic of individualism and competition, the poor lead a life of co-operation and interdependence. These are *strategies* for survival in a society that has reduced them to a state of extreme deprivation and poverty. Despite their impoverishment, or rather because of it, people give to others generously. By giving and obligating a large number of individuals, they are likely to be given back when in need.

The trading of goods and services among the poor in complex industrial societies bears a striking resemblance to patterns of exchanges organized around gift giving in non-Western societies. The famous examples of reciprocal gift giving described by Malinowski, Mauss, and Lévi-Strauss provided a basis for comparison.

(Stack 1974:38)

Carrier's anti-essentialist argument and Stack's insightful analysis are important contributions to the debunking of the myth of the Other and its opposite, the West. They reveal the "exotic" within. Yet in a paradigm – the Western intellectual tradition – where evolutionism has been the dominant idiom of conceptualizing the world for so long, the effectiveness of these works could be easily undermined. It may be argued, for instance, that reciprocity and gift exchange in the West persist from a pre-capitalist past and only among marginal groups, and in ritualistic contexts. Commenting on the virtues of gift exchange, Mauss made precisely this

point. “Our morality is not solely commercial. We *still* have people and classes who uphold *past customs* and we bow to them on special occasions and at certain periods of the year” (Mauss 1967:63; emphases added). Carrier comes very close to this position, inadvertently no doubt, when he argues that gift relations in retail trade have persisted well into the twentieth century in the United States. The argument raises the legitimate, even if rhetorical, question as to why they no longer exist. In short, it could be interpreted as proof that, with the passage of time, lingering traits from a traditional past are increasingly eroded by the forces of the market. To put the evolutionist implications to rest, then, it is necessary to go beyond the empirical citing of similarities and trace the logic that underscores and unifies practices.

The argument that I want to suggest is that practices are neither modern nor traditional, that is, they do not follow a distinctive modern or traditional logic. Rather, it would be analytically more fruitful to conceptualize practices as strategies, acts that allow actors to manipulate conflicts and contradictions to their advantage – however this may be defined in different cultures or in different contexts within the same culture. To say this is to do nothing more than to acknowledge two widely accepted notions: first, that no social universe is ever integrated enough to preclude contradictions; and second, that cultural determination is never conclusive enough to prevent agents from manipulating the social world. As is often pointed out, far from reproducing social structures mechanically, people are actively engaged in shaping their lives, maneuvering as they do through obstacles raised by the exigencies of life. In this process, they often resort to practices that are seemingly contradictory to theoretical models, even when they reproduce the system further down the road.

Despite assertions to the contrary, the personal idiom of gift exchange is far from being displaced by the impersonal forces of the market. If we take a close look, we will find it incarnated in an area of the economy in which we would least expect it – big business. The most striking example perhaps is that of the airline industry. Here employees learn how to turn a purely impersonal relation – between buyer and seller (in this case of travel services) – into a “warm,” “friendly,” *personal* encounter. “Air hosts/esses,” for instance – and the term is significant in this respect – are not merely flight attendants who provide safe transportation, food and beverages, and other exchange values – things and services specifically produced for the market – they are transformed into real “hosts/esses.” They are expected to go beyond the call of duty and treat the passengers as they would treat their friends. In short, in addition to exchange value,

the "host/ess" provides a use value – something that by definition is neither for selling nor buying.

It may be argued, of course, that this is simply a facade, since the aim is not to make friends but to attract passengers. Yet things are not quite as simple as that. The whole enterprise is likely to backfire if it is perceived that the personal attention and "caring" are not provided in good faith. Passengers must be convinced that they are dealing with genuinely friendly people, and airline employees must convince themselves that they are indeed such.<sup>13</sup> In short, the game cannot be played out, unless there is a collective misrecognition of the objective aim of the airline industry. Moreover, as Bourdieu (1977) has shown, this misrecognition contributes to the reality of the exchange as much as its objective foundations. For it may be the case that as far as airline management is concerned, the practice is merely a profit-maximizing strategy. Yet neither managers as passengers, nor their employees, necessarily experience it as such in its day-to-day implementation.

The practice of recasting commodity into gift relations defies the logic of the market and the most basic principle of profitability: strict equivalence of value in exchange. The airline industry provides value over and above what the market requires – not only service (for money), but also friendliness (for nothing). And if the strategy turns out to be profitable, this is not because there are no costs involved. It is because they are largely borne by the employees themselves.<sup>14</sup> This bizarre incarnation of the gift in the heart of the capitalist economy is an attempt to deal with the pressures of the market itself. In order to stay in the market, one has to step outside it; in order to maintain it, one has to transcend it. The airline industry strives to overcome a structural contradiction: making a profit within the limits imposed by "perfect competition." In such an economic environment, enterprises compete freely in terms of prices and product quality. Since both follow the logic imposed by the imperative of profitability, prices cannot be reduced below a certain level. In order to gain advantage, but avoid a price war, enterprises must look beyond the market and its limits and incorporate "meta-market" principles. The re-casting of commodity into gift relations is precisely such a strategy.

The practices of the airline industry and other service-oriented corporations have nothing to do with what Bourdieu (1980:261) calls "the logic of the pre-capitalist economy." They are as "capitalist" as anything else we know, at least in the sense that they occur within a socioeconomic system said to be capitalist. Moreover, this is certainly not a logic from the past that "lives on" (Bourdieu 1980:261).<sup>15</sup> There is simply no such logic. There

are only strategies deployed in, and often made inevitable by, different circumstances. This is not to deny that, given different structural arrangements and dynamics, certain practices are more likely to occur in some socioeconomic universes than others. My aim rather has been to show that there is nothing essential and indispensable either about the practices themselves or the structural arrangements that render them possible.

### **Politics**

Before they go into the field, anthropologists are encouraged to be reflective about the type of relations that their societies maintain with those that they are going to observe. They are reminded that the ability to study Others is rendered possible within a specific historical context and that this context may impinge on their observations. Not as much attention is paid, however, to the relations that anthropologists maintain with their own societies. Since they study Others, it is assumed that these relations are largely irrelevant. In this section I want to argue that far from being irrelevant, the social position that anthropologists occupy in their own societies has as profound an impact on their vision of Others as the particular historical relation they maintain with them. More specifically, I want to suggest that the meaning of Westernization for anthropologists – as homogenization and sameness – is largely constituted in, even though it is not reducible to, the social space in which they find themselves historically situated.

Politics and scholarship are two areas that theoretically do not mix, but since Foucault's (1980) ground-breaking work on knowledge and power, it has been shown many times that in reality they are inseparable. Foucault's originality was to show that knowledge and power are inextricably linked not because personal interests are consciously and directly incorporated into scholarship – an unbearable thought to the academic – but rather because scholarship, like any other social practice, is historically situated. And because it is historically situated, it is also, inevitably, politically "contaminated," so to speak. Unlike Plato's philosopher–ruler, then, the scholar is neither a free-floating intellectual, nor a transcendental persona. As Said (1978) put it, "No one has ever devised a method for detaching the scholar from the circumstances of life, from the fact of his involvement . . . with a class, a set of beliefs, a social position, or from the mere activity of being a member of society."

Foucault's work has been particularly influential in anthropology, and the politics (and poetics) of ethnography have received considerable attention. In particular, anthropologists sought to analyze the ways in which, in



practicing their craft, they exercise power over those they study, how they end up constituting them as Other despite their efforts to the contrary. In an influential book, Fabian (1983) explores the uses of time in anthropology and argues that the discipline served, even if indirectly, to legitimate colonialism. Time was used "to accommodate the schemes of one-way history: progress, development, modernity (and their negative mirror images: stagnation, underdevelopment, tradition)" (1983:144). In another influential work, Kuper (1988) explains the origins of the "illusion" of primitive society partly on the basis of nineteenth-century intellectual needs. Even such libertarian thinkers as Marx and Engels embraced this illusion because in the context of their overall theory of history and society it seemed plausible.

In a more recent work, Clifford (1986a:6) provides a comprehensive list of the various determinants of anthropological scholarship. Ethnographies are context-specific, that is, relative; they make use of rhetorical devices, are affected by their institutional setting and by their relation to other similar discourses, and are historically constituted. These factors, Clifford goes on to argue, suggest that ethnographies are "fictions," at best "partial truths" – a view apparently shared by other postmodernist anthropologists, such as Marcus and Fischer (1986). More interesting than this relativistic philosophy – a perennial issue and, one might add, a "partial truth" itself – is Clifford's attempt to deal with the question of what he calls "the theme of the vanishing primitive" (1986b:112); a theme that, as he rightly observes, has oriented most of cross-cultural scholarship in the twentieth century.

We may pose the question by employing Clifford's own terms: why is it that anthropology represents "non-literate, underdeveloped, tribal societies [as] constantly yielding to progress, 'losing' their traditions" (1986b:114–115)? Why is it that for so many years anthropology has been haunted by the specter of monoculture, of global homogenization and sameness, in short, by Westernization? The answer, according to Clifford, is to be found in the way in which anthropology is practiced, particularly the transformation of the experience of fieldwork and verbal discourse into a text. To make his case, Clifford uses an interesting analogy: culture is to the text as verbal statements are to written accounts. Verbal statements are transient, written accounts endure. Transforming cultures into texts, then, inevitably imbues ethnographies with a "salvage intent." To put it another way, although anthropologists put their fieldwork experience on paper to make *it* durable, somehow they end up believing that it is not their experience which is transient but the culture that gave rise to it.

Clifford's analogy may be convincing but the explanation is not. Its major failure is the implicit treatment of anthropology as an independent domain, cut off from and unaffected by the social world. In fact, this is rather surprising, since Clifford is clearly aware that anthropology is not only an intellectual endeavor, but inevitably a social practice as well.

Williams's (1973) work, which Clifford quotes approvingly, provides an interesting, even if not fully explored, alternative. Although the aim is to explain the persistent presentation of the "country" as a lost paradise, his insight is broad enough to allow the substitution of the "country" for the Other. Williams considers the contemplation of an earlier, happier rural life to be an idealization of the past. At the same time, he notes its critical intent: the lamentation of a lost "Golden Age" may be nostalgic, but it also serves as a critique of the contemporary social order. Could anthropology's lamentation of the disappearing Other and of the concomitant process of Westernization have a similar critical intent? Is it the case, in other words, that the specter of "monoculture" constitutes an implicit critique of the capitalist order? The answer to this question is, paradoxically, both affirmative and negative. There is little doubt as to its critical intent; but this should not lead one to assume that the anthropologist is a sort of moral crusader for social justice.<sup>16</sup>

If the image of anthropologists as free-floating intellectuals is no longer viable, should one not situate them in their own social space and seek to understand how their craft is affected by their position in this space?<sup>17</sup> Very schematically, then, anthropologists, like other intellectuals, are endowed with a high level of cultural capital, that is, legitimate knowledge and cultural competence, but a low level of economic capital. If it is accepted that the latter, though apparently not the only kind of capital, is nonetheless dominant, then the anthropologists' network of social relations assumes the following configuration: they occupy a dominated position in relation to the owners of economic capital – even though the latter are not as affluent in terms of scientific credentials – and a dominant position in relation to the working classes who are poorer in both kinds of resources. Objectively, then, as a group, anthropologists find themselves enmeshed in an antagonistic relation with the dominant section of their own class – a relation homologous to the one that the lower classes maintain with the dominant class as a whole. Thus, anthropologists are predisposed to form alliances, symbolic or otherwise, with the dominated because they themselves are a dominated group. Yet unlike sociologists who study their own societies and express affinities with the "working class" or "the masses," anthropologists find inspiration in a "happier,"

"pre-capitalist" world – the Other. Westernization, much like the Marxist notions of "alienation" and exploitation, or Weber's "iron cage," functions as a social critique by a dominated group (and not as a moral crusade of individual subjectivities) of the social order responsible for its domination. It is true, of course, that unlike sociologists who are typically portrayed as dangerous left-wing radicals, anthropologists are known by a much more benign appellation – "hopeless romantics." But this may be due only to the impression that *their* proletariat – the Other – does not pose as great a threat to the order of things.

The foregoing, admittedly schematic, analysis is not meant to suggest that anthropology is determined by social practices. Rather that, whatever else it may be, it is also a social practice. My argument, then, is simply this: it is not sufficient to recognize that the objective relations anthropologists maintain with their object of study have a profound impact on their work. It is also necessary to acknowledge that the equally objective relations they maintain with other social groups in their own societies have as profound an impact on what they say, and *can* say about Others.

The meaning of Westernization for anthropologists, then, cannot be understood outside the social context in which they are historically situated. If for Cypriots Westernization is the symbolic instrument through which they experience the social relations that tie them to one another and as a group to Western societies, for anthropologists it is a means by which, consciously or unconsciously, they experience their own dominated position in, and vision of, their world. Moreover, and perhaps inevitably, Westernization is also the way in which anthropologists reify the West – but in *practice*, in a struggle, and not, as Carrier (1992) suggests, as a result of intellectual oversight. For they must reify the West, that is, constitute it as a unified cultural universe, if the notion of Westernization is to make sense and be taken seriously. Anthropologists, then, inadvertently no doubt and against their best intentions, participate in the very ideology they mean to debunk.

To this ideology I turn next. I examine some of the ways in which Westernization constitutes Cypriots, and no doubt many other erstwhile colonial people, not as Westerners, but as Western *subjects*. I also explore how, in the same process, Cypriots participate in their own domination and constitute *themselves* as Western subjects.

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## The dialectics of symbolic domination

In an influential article Michel Foucault (1982) depicts the goal of his work as an attempt to create a history of the different ways in which people become subjects. To begin with, people are turned into subjects through a process of objectification which is independent of them. For instance, they are objectified by the human sciences – the subject of labor becomes an object of study in economics – or by what Foucault calls “dividing practices,” such as the division between the mad and the sane. People, however, also turn themselves into subjects in another kind of objectification. They tie themselves to a particular identity whose full realization can be achieved only through the mediation, guidance, and ultimately submission to an outside authority – an authority who knows better. The idea is not new, but Foucault’s use of it as a way of defining the predicament of people in Western societies merits attention. The emphasis on knowledge as power – the ability to define others or define how they define themselves – both recalls and anticipates the predicament of Others in relation to Western societies themselves.

My aim in this chapter is to explore some of the ways in which Cypriots have become Western subjects. The emphasis will be on division, but not as in the construction of the Other as a passive, mirror image of the West, which in any case has received sufficient attention. Rather, I will explore how “dividing practices” deny Cypriots the identity that they aspire to. This approach not only eschews the unwarranted implication of the mirror analogy, namely, that the West is somehow an actual entity, but also furnishes the opposition between the West and the Other with a dynamic twist. I will also examine how Cypriots themselves reproduce the conditions of their subjectification in a complex interplay between recognition of Western superiority and resistance to it. I turn to the latter first.

### **Recognition and resistance**

During the last sixty years, modernity, Europe, or more generally the West has emerged as the primary idiom through which a series of relations of domination in Cypriot society are both resisted and legitimated. The transformation of wedding celebrations and their current polarization express some of these antagonisms, mainly between social classes, but also between villagers and city dwellers, as well as between the generations. In chapter 2, I also argued that this cultural idiom may be helpful in understanding an otherwise complex and intractable political problem – the division between the two main Cypriot communities, Greeks and Turks. Here I will explore briefly another kind of antagonism, that between men and women, as a way of making a general point – that through the notion of modernity Cypriots express, enact, and inadvertently reproduce a historical relation of domination that ties them to the West. In short, I will explore how Cypriots constitute themselves as Western subjects.

The question of gender inequality has received considerable attention in the anthropology of Mediterranean societies and I have already commented on the main body of this literature in previous chapters. Here I want to go beyond the honor and shame “syndrome” and explore how urban, educated women struggle to impose their own vision of the world, and how this vision clashes with that of many men and, ironically, of many older women.

As I have suggested, despite changes in sexual morality and practice over the last half a century or so, many men continue to consider virginity as a crucial female attribute. As it is often characteristically said, a woman who is not a virgin is “second hand.” Loss of virginity before marriage suggests loss of a presumed innocence, and thereafter an inability to control sexual desires (du Boulay 1974:100–120). Hence the saying, “When another man’s balls have touched a woman’s cunt, *en sinaete* (she cannot be controlled).” Having said that, it is equally important to acknowledge that, under certain circumstances, such men may be prepared to marry a woman whose genitals have previously come into contact with those of another man. Here is how a young villager from Paphos put the matter, speaking for many:

If I knew that it wasn’t her fault, why shouldn’t I marry her? . . . as long as she told me the truth. If she had a failed engagement, fine, if someone cheated her,<sup>1</sup> fine. But if she went with two or three [men], it can’t be done. If she tells me the truth and I understand her character, that she made a mistake . . . because most of them make a mistake.

A woman who has been taken advantage of, then, cannot in any compelling sense be blamed for what has happened. She was misled and did something against her better judgment – a judgment which determines that men are interested only in one thing and that they are not to be trusted unless they prove the contrary by committing themselves *officially* to marriage. Moreover, by admitting to it, by “telling the truth,” such women indicate, not only that they are in control of their desires, but also that they are willing to be controlled, that is, to submit to the authority of their future husbands. By contrast, a woman who “went” with several men is not to be trusted. She displays a lack of judgment, an inability to control her sexuality, or even an unwillingness to do so.

It is perceptions such as these, and their practical consequences, that urban, middle-class women find intolerable and struggle to change – women such as Eleni, an educated professional in her late thirties. As an individual, Eleni does not exist, but as a persona, she typifies a growing number of Cypriot women.<sup>2</sup> She is thoroughly steeped in the culture of the women’s movement and strives to advance their cause in Cypriot society. Typically, she spent time studying in Europe or the United States and has a degree in the social sciences, possibly in law, or in architecture, or civil engineering. What typifies her above anything else is her frequent references to the “sorry” state of the “moral conditions” in Cyprus, by which she means the determination of female value by sexual behavior. Eleni runs a women’s support group and has inside information about these matters. For instance, she claims to know many young women, particularly from rural areas, who, in order to retain their “value” in the matrimonial market, prefer to be sodomized than lose their virginity. She often criticizes the “conservatism” of Cypriot parents and the double standards they employ in treating their sons and daughters – the former enjoying ample freedom, the latter being restricted considerably, particularly in their evening outings.

For Eleni, the West sets the standards in gender relations that Cyprus must endeavor to meet. Like the bourgeoisie, she often appeals to the authority of Europe to legitimate her vision of the world and women’s place in it. She believes that Cyprus is a European country and meets European standards in many ways – for instance, in terms of prosperity, education, and health. But when it comes to matters of “morality,” she thinks that “we still live in the Middle Ages.” She often mentions, as a way of demonstrating the gap that separates Cyprus from Europe in these matters, an anecdote from a European women’s conference that she attended. A Scandinavian representative, she claims, announced that girls

from this part of the world are now taught how to take their virginity by themselves. The practice is meant to eschew the psychological trauma caused to women in first-time sexual intercourse. She finds this novelty rather extreme, “of course,” but she also points out that the length to which Cypriot women go to preserve their virginity is simply outrageous.

The vision of the world depicted by Eleni, like the vision of any other social group, has certain conditions of possibility. It is shaped by the position she occupies in social space. A world in which Cypriot women will be able to assert their sexuality may be a liberal world, but this does not mean that it is disinterested. In the conventional sociocultural universe, female value – a woman’s social capital or power – stems almost entirely from sexual modesty, or at least from a well-preserved image of a sense of shame. This principle antagonizes the kind of capital that Eleni and the women she typifies have accumulated – education and cultural competence. In a sense, the contradiction between these two forms of capital arises from the same processes that Sant Cassia (1992:246) identified in nineteenth-century Athens – “the commoditisation of things and the personalization of the transactors;” or, what amounts to the same thing, the increasing separation between the personal and the public domains. In the latter, access to positions of power and prestige requires forms of social capital that are objectified, that is, standardized and capable of being quantified; for instance, a university degree. This is in contrast to the precarious, easily disputed capital of female chastity. Women like Eleni who have invested heavily in the objective forms of capital have every reason to object to the determination of a woman’s social worth by sexuality. The more the latter is valued, the more their capital is depreciated.

The recognition of these objectified credentials as the only legitimate ones explains a phenomenon that sociological studies of Cypriot society only record, namely, that a liberal sexual ethic is more prevalent in towns and among educated women than in villages or among the lower urban classes (Mylona *et al.* 1982:47–69). The latter’s social position depends almost entirely on the community and the perceptions of its individual members. Unlike the former whose capital is institutionally endowed and guaranteed, adopting such an ethic would be virtually tantamount to squandering their resources.<sup>3</sup> Needless to say, the foregoing analysis is not intended to reduce moral principles to interests. The fact that social agents such as Eleni may not recognize themselves in this analysis – that they may not conceptualize their struggle in these terms – suggests that they are not reducible. But neither are principles and values free-floating, ahistorical, and transcendental. There is a regularity with which certain morals and

practices are adopted by certain social groups and not by others – a liberal sexual ethic by educated, middle-class women, a more conservative one by villagers and the working class – that attest to their social determination. My aim, then, has been to highlight the conditions of possibility of these values and to situate them in their proper social context.

In her struggle to advance her vision of the world Eleni adopts – very much like the bourgeoisie, the young, and the city dwellers – the rhetoric of a culturally superior West. And she does so in a manner remarkably similar to what Fabian (1983) has shown to be a disavowal of cultural equality through denial of “coevalness” or the same temporal existence. She also deploys the rhetoric of stigmatization – of an inferior Other. Cypriot men, or at least those who aspire to the code of sexual modesty, are “backward Middle Easterners *piso pou ton kosmon* (behind the world).” In short, in order to legitimate her vision of the world and her social position, Eleni must embrace – whether consciously or unconsciously – the rhetoric that legitimates Western superiority. This is not an accusation, much less an attempt to repudiate the significance and validity of gender equality. My aim is simply to explore the complexity of symbolic domination, to tease out the ironies involved, and to sketch the predicament of people in a dominated culture. By embracing a *hegemonic* identity,<sup>4</sup> Eleni may be able to achieve legitimation *as a woman*. At the same time, however, inadvertently but inevitably, she reproduces the conditions of being dominated *as a Cypriot*. The process of subjectification, then – of actively participating in one’s own domination – seems to be far more complex than Foucault might have imagined. In fact, what he did not consider at all was the possibility that not only recognition, but also resistance to a hegemonic identity may have the same subjugating effects.

Although many Cypriot men are now prepared to marry a non-virgin, they are not willing to put up with a woman who, as one characteristically put it, “wants to be equal to men in everything.” A crucial aspect of this equality, according to the rhetoric, is going out alone in the evenings or in the company of other men. Women from Nicosia in particular are said to have such aspirations. A young man from Paphos told me that because of this, when he decides to marry, he will choose a girl from his hometown or “at the most from Limassol” – Limassolian women not being as bad, in his view, as Nicosian. Several months later he announced to me that he had found a girl from Paphos and was seriously considering getting engaged to her. He explained that “*enen pou ‘tzines pou ghirizoun potzi tze podha* (she is not the kind that fools around); she goes from the house to work and



from work to the house.” I inquired as to how he could be certain about that. “I followed her many times,” he said, “to see what she does.”

Women who “fool around” are *poutanes* (whores), according to the rhetoric. They *kologhamiounde* (are ass-fucked), a term not so much intended to describe the particular sexual act as to convey the view that they are utterly promiscuous. Alternatively, such women are said to *ghamiounde san tes shilles* (get fucked like she-dogs), that is, indiscriminately. These perceptions about sexually assertive women come very often to the fore, not only in Cypriot men’s dealing with local, but also – perhaps more so – with foreign, tourist women. The understanding of such men, who are known as *kamakia* (harpoons) (cf. Zinovieff 1991), is that most of the European women who come to Cyprus for their summer vacations “are after the three S’s” – sun, sea, and, in particular, sex. A well-known *kamaki* from Paphos, a man in his late twenties, once told me that he was serious about an English woman whom he was planning to visit in winter. I asked if he would consider marrying her. “Sure,” he said, “I’m not one of those who want a virgin.” A few nights later, however, he came into the bar where I was working, accompanied by a young blonde, with a very different attitude. “Do you see this one?” he said. “My friend picked her up from the disco last night. Tonight, I will fuck her. *Poutanes koumbare* ([these women are] whores my friend) . . .”

Sexual encounters that turn romantic are quickly frustrated. Local men complain that tourist women cannot be trusted. As they characteristically put it, “Today she is with me, tomorrow with someone else, the day after tomorrow with someone else still.” Romantic encounters that lead to marriage do not seem to fare any better. Local men attribute the problems in such marriages to the foreign women’s unwillingness to change their attitudes and adjust to Cypriot reality. As they point out, many of these women continue to behave as if they were still living in their own countries. They do not seem to realize that, as one man put it, “*En tze’n Souidhia dhame* (it’s not Sweden here).”

The *kamakia*, like many other Cypriot men, are tied to a particular identity that refuses to endorse the new sexual ethic. In their relationships with European women, they resist it as they best know how. Most treat the encounters as occasions for casual sex. Those who get romantically involved seek to impose their own moral standards. In either case the encounters are more often than not experienced and presented by European women as “mistreatment.” It is significant, for instance, that in her account of the *kamakia* in Greece, Zinovieff (1991) interprets the phenomenon largely as a way in which Greek men endeavor to reverse a

relation of domination that ties them to the hegemonic culture of Europe. In a less elaborate treatment, tourist women themselves view most Cypriot men as uncultured peasants “only interested in sex.” Alternatively, Cypriots are depicted as backward Middle Easterners who lock their women in the house and do not allow them to go anywhere by themselves. Such views are widespread and seem to have taken a toll on sexual encounters. A Scandinavian tour operator who has been working in Cyprus for many years told me that this type of relationship is no longer as easily established as before. Tourist women have come to realize that the local culture is very different from their own and as a result, they are now “extremely careful.”

Whether the aim of Cypriot *kamakia* is to reverse a relation of symbolic domination, in resisting a dominant vision of the world, they accomplish nothing more than to confirm themselves in their culturally inferior position. For resistance, like recognition, reproduces – inadvertently and perhaps inevitably – the conditions of one’s subjectification. This, in fact, seems to be the predicament of dominated groups in general. By rejecting city culture, villagers relinquish any claims to the privileges that this way of life provides. By stigmatizing the culture of the bourgeoisie, the working classes signify contentment with their dominated position in the sociocultural order. By refusing to accept the new sexual ethic, the *kamakia* block their possible access to the world from which the ethic originates and whose privileges they secretly envy. In short, by resisting a hegemonic ideology, the dominated embrace their dominated position and victimize themselves even further.

Willis (1981) provides an excellent analysis of the complexities of this process of self-victimization. English working-class youngsters resist school culture, drop out of school or graduate without qualifications, and end up with working-class jobs. Even though the educational system provides opportunities for upward mobility, by refusing to embrace school ideology and submit to institutional authority, they deny themselves these opportunities and ultimately come to occupy those social positions that are *objectively* allocated to them. To put it in another way, so as to avoid the pitfalls of the “conspiracy syndrome,” they find themselves in those positions that, given their working-class background, they may be statistically expected to occupy.<sup>5</sup> Unlike Bourdieu, however, who takes a rather pessimistic view on the issue, Willis (1981) provides a hint as to how dominated groups might be able to escape from this vicious circle. He conceptualizes the youngsters’ view of, and resistance to, the educational system as “partial penetrations” of the system. Even though disjointed, confused,

and inarticulate, they are nonetheless an accurate understanding of the wider network of power relations that the school system expresses and helps to reproduce. We may call the kind of struggle that these youngsters engage in “symbolic” or “misrecognized.” The terms are meant to suggest – an implication not drawn by Bourdieu – that it is ultimately a self-defeating struggle because it is *misdirected*. English working-class youngsters fail to realize that their resistance to the school authorities is in fact a challenge to the capitalist order. And that it is only by transforming the latter that they may be able to do away with the former.

Recognition and resistance, then, are two sides of the same coin. Irrespective of which strategy is deployed, one ultimately reproduces the conditions of one’s domination. It may be argued, of course, that recognition of a hegemonic ideology entails aspirations of appropriation – “if you can’t beat them, join them.” Yet the West is neither a destination to be reached, nor a system of symbols to be adopted, much less an object to be appropriated, even though it is often presented as such. It is a historical construct that emerged within the context of colonialism and neo-colonialism as an instrument of division and power, a technique deployed by one block of nations to order the world in a specific way. If the West is an identity, then, as it is often suggested, it is so only in a superficial sense. For identities are for sharing, while the West has been historically deployed to denounce and deny.

### **Denials**

It was Fabian (1983) who explored how anthropology denies the Other cultural equality. By employing an allochronic discourse, anthropologists place Other societies in the past – a culturally inferior space – and condemn them to the Achilles-tortoise syndrome, that is, to be always at least one step behind.<sup>6</sup> In this section I will explore another predicament, what I call the “Sisyphus syndrome,” and another form of denial – the way in which Cypriot aspirations to modernity are practically repudiated.

As a technology of power monopolized by one block of nations, the notion of the West can be deployed at will, at any time, and in diverse conditions. In the case of Cyprus, circumstances, primarily a relatively high living standard, call for the deployment of two specific techniques of denial – accusations of imitation and loss of local character. In the former case, the West essentializes itself as the only true source of legitimate culture so that the practical manifestations of Cypriot claims to modernity seem a poor version of the “original.” In the second case, the procedure is reversed. Cypriot culture is itself reified by being endowed with certain

essential characteristics. In this way, it is frozen in time, and any changes that may occur appear as a loss of “true” identity. Let me illustrate how these techniques operate with a few examples, beginning with a historically relatively old one.

In 1928, Maynard Owen Williams was sent to Cyprus by the National Geographic magazine on a mission of discovery of the Other.<sup>7</sup> The author summed up his findings in an article entitled “Unspoiled Cyprus: The Traditional Island Birthplace of Venus is one of the least Sophisticated of Mediterranean Lands.” Judging by the title alone, one might be led to think that he had found what he was looking for. In the article, however, Williams also notes that amidst the pristine simplicity and innocence there were certain pockets of modernity to be found on the island.

The young folks of Nicosia are not “*unspoiled*.” They don’t doff their hats to the foreigner; they don’t wear rags [and] they are independent . . . Nicosia is progressing. Neat suburbs with attractive homes are growing outside the crumbling walls. It looks down on deserted Famagusta and provincial Kyrenia. And its condescension is *comic*.  
(1928:46; *emphases added*)

Nicosia turned out to be such a pocket of modernity. Its people were “spoiled,” that is, not exotic enough. They were conscious of their modernity and seemed to take pride in it. Hence their looking down on the other Cypriot towns. But what kind of modernity was this? The author does not tell us explicitly, but there is little doubt as to the implications of his comments. By showing condescension to the backwardness of the other Cypriot towns, Nicosia was leaving itself open to ridicule. For even though it was apparently different from the other towns, for someone who came from the outside and had first-hand experience of modernity, the difference was spurious. Nicosia, it would seem, took its modernity too seriously, entertaining the thought perhaps that it was a truly modern town. And this made her condescension amusing.

In the same article, Williams tactfully criticizes Cypriot modernity as a loss of an essential quality that defined the country and its people. Not only Nicosia, but some villages also, began to show signs of alienation from these qualities. In Lefkoniko, one of the largest villages in Famagusta district, the author came across two young women and wanted to photograph them. They had modern, European clothes on, however, and were refusing to wear anything else. Eventually, they succumbed to the pressure and put on the traditional costume for the photographer. The caption of the photograph reads: “It was with difficulty that the author persuaded these ultramodern daughters of the town headman of Lefkoniko and the

village school-teacher to wear outmoded costumes of Cyprus – one of the fast disappearing charms of the island” (1928:47).

In one of the best-known books about Cyprus, Lawrence Durrell’s “Bitter Lemons,” written in the 1950s, there are several examples of the kind of critique of Cypriot modernity that with the subsequent expansion of tourism was to become widespread, even if not so eloquently expressed. Durrell, a well-known English writer and philhellene, arrived in Cyprus in 1953 to find a familiar milieu in an unfamiliar place. His impressions of the town of Kyrenia, now under Turkish occupation, reveal a deep, even if half-expected, disappointment:

Disturbing *anomalies* met the eye everywhere; a Cypriot *version* of the small-car owner, for example, smoking a pipe and reverently polishing a Morris Minor; costumed peasants buying tinned food and frozen meat at the local version of the Co-op; ice-cream parlours with none of the elaborate confectionaries, the true Levant delicacies, which make the towns of the Middle East as memorable as a tale from the Arabian Nights . . . As far as I could judge the townsman’s standard of living roughly corresponded to that of a Manchester suburb. Rural life remained as a sort of undertow. The peasant was already becoming a quaint relic of a forgotten mode of life. White bread and white collars! . . . Somewhere, I concluded, there must be a Cyprus beyond the red pillar-boxes and the stern Union Jacks . . . where *weird* enclaves of these Mediterranean folk lived a joyous, *uproarious, muddled, anarchic* life of their own. Where?  
*(Durrell 1959: 34; emphases added)*

Kyrenia, then, was replete with “anomalies.” Very little, if anything, authentic was left, nothing to satisfy Durrell’s imagination and longing for the exotic. Instead of peasants riding donkeys, he comes across people looking after their British-made cars; in the place of rough, insubordinate, anarchic men, he encounters well-mannered, white-collar urbanites; instead of picturesque poverty, he is confronted with an exhibitionist prosperity. The conclusion seemed inevitable: Cypriots lost all those qualities that made them “true” Cypriots. They were now a version of something that was not “them.”

And so the rhetoric continues into more recent years when another Englishman visited the island in search of the picturesque and the exotic. Thubron, like Williams forty years earlier, was to find Nicosia disappointing:

I approached Nicosia with dread. Sudden wealth – and the prosperity of this whole island was sudden before 1974 – destroys the most *solid character*, and Nicosia is the lodestar of thousands who have abandoned the *rough graces* of the countryside and acquired a higher income in exchange. Through its concrete labyrinth, a wilderness more profound than any tract of Troodos, I found myself a stranger, trudging in boots so worn that nobody any longer enquired after them.

The fever of building and demolition, the sprouting of hotels and offices, the straggle of the cubist suburbs, looked at once new and *shoddy*.

(Thubron 1986:155; *emphases added*)

Nicosia, then, was the place where Cypriot villagers flocked, became rich, and lost their character. Gone were the days when local people displayed signs of respect to the visiting European. Nicosians, who did not “doff their hats” to Williams forty years earlier, ignored Thubron’s presence as well. The “rough graces” of the countryside, “the delights of one-sided hospitality,” as Herzfeld (1987b:76) nicely put it, were no longer forthcoming here. What was more, the town itself looked like a concrete jungle. It had been built without proper design and in poor taste. And even though it looked new, there was something ineffable about it that made its modernity spurious.

In one of his expeditions, Thubron visited Kykko monastery perched high up on the Troodos mountains and met a monk who reminded him of “Chaucer’s Canterbury monk, ‘ful fat and in good point’” (1986:122). In the discussion that followed, the monk complained that although the monastery had now acquired all modern amenities, the number of monks had dwindled significantly. Thubron interprets the paradox in the following way:

Perhaps the monasteries in the *strained* and *metaphysical* West will outlive those in the Levant, where monasticism was born. The urban Cypriot can reject religion in the same *simplicity* with which he held it. To a practical people God, within a generation, may seem meaningless and unnecessary. “But it won’t happen,” said the Canterbury monk. “Decline yes, demise no. Our people still believe. They have never doubted.” Perhaps that was the trouble, I thought. *Nobody doubts*. Faith is either accepted or forgotten, and the distinction can be slender. Whereas a living belief must survive questions.

(1986:123–124; *emphases added*)

Within a generation, it would seem, Cypriots had lost their faith. But was this “secularization” a sign of modernity? Thubron did not believe it was. In the “metaphysical” West where secularization and modernity originate, people doubt – they *reflect* about what they believe and since they reflect, they doubt. The West, then, became a secular universe and Nietzsche was able to proclaim that God was dead, only after a long, tormenting intellectual journey. By contrast, Cypriots do not doubt.<sup>8</sup> And they do not doubt because they do not think. Instead of beliefs – reasonable suppositions subject to revision in the face of contrary evidence – they have faith, a blind trust that knows nothing of reason and empirical reality. In short, Cypriots seemed to be the kind of simple-minded folk who would give up religion as easily as they would adopt it. Giving up religion has

transformed Cyprus into a “faithless” society; it has not made it *secular*. It has made it different, but certainly not *modern*.

The loss-of-character theme has recently become a permanent feature of the encounter between Europe and Cyprus. Since the advent of mass tourism, particularly after 1974, more and more dissenting voices are raised by tourists about what they perceive as the destruction of the island’s character and culture. During fieldwork in Paphos the theme surfaced, in one way or another, in most of my discussions with tourists: “Cyprus is becoming like the south of Spain, too many buildings, hotels, restaurants, too much concrete”; “Cypriots have become rich very quickly and are losing their sense of hospitality”; “it’s a beautiful island and the people are friendly, but it’s being slowly destroyed by too much development.” In a letter to one of the local English-language magazines, two British women capture the general feeling of discontent quite graphically:

Having spoken to many holiday makers over the past few weeks . . . the general feeling which we ourselves had concluded, was a great feeling of sadness at the way Paphos is ruining its appearance and destroying its culture. For example, if you walk along Poseidonos Ave, you could be confused about your exact whereabouts, as much of it resembles any British seaside resort e.g. Blackpool, Skegness. This applies to other areas of Paphos which seem to us to have lost their own identity and Cypriot character. (K. F. and J. S., *Derby, England, Cyprus View, July 1992, p. 3*)

The European tourist is determined “not to be a tourist,” even though, as Herzfeld (1991:47) put it, the determination often “plays right into the hands of local entrepreneurs, who supply variegated packaged formulae . . . for instant, domesticated adventures in otherness.” The Cyprus Tourism Organization (CTO) has long realized that modernity does not “sell” and is actively seeking to alter the impression that the traditional and the exotic face of Cyprus has been lost. Its promotional material is replete with pictures of old village men and women in traditional costumes, priests in their black stovepipe hats and robes, picturesque villages perched in the high mountains, meadows with donkeys and goats, rural scenes imbued with an air of pastoral tranquility. The CTO rhetoric insists on the “traditional Cypriot hospitality,” the “friendliness” of the natives, and the latter’s commitment to preserving their traditions:

The Cypriot’s life centres around Family and Church. The extended family [sic] has different generations living together, with customs and traditions passed from one to the other, kept alive. (CTO leaflet)

Cyprus has never had “extended family” units – the nuclear family being the norm (Peristiany 1968: Loizos 1975a, 1975b) – but the term creates a

dramatic sense of otherness that is meant to excite the imagination of the European tourist.

The rhetorical nature of the various comments presented above should be apparent. To begin with, neither Europe nor Cyprus are unified cultural entities defined by essential, unchanging characteristics. Just as Cypriot culture does not have a “true” identity to be lost, so European culture does not have an essential character to be copied. On a more practical level, the similarities between Cypriot and English towns noted by both Durrell and the two English tourist women are spurious. Neither the topography, nor the climate, much less the architectural styles and the physical characteristics of the people share anything remotely similar. What the various Europeans seem to find familiar is a certain level of prosperity that operates as a *practical* refutation of the Third-Worldish, underdevelopment image that has been established about most of the world; an image that is constantly reproduced by the mass media, the educational system, and other such institutions.<sup>9</sup> The picture that emerges from the foregoing comments on Cyprus – its disappearing true character and identity – is certainly complex, and it would be naive to assume that these statements were purposely made to deny Cypriots cultural equality. Apparently, such a conspiracy theory will not do. To begin with, the West as an instrument of power does not need to be consciously manipulated. One only needs to be one’s self, that is, European to set it in motion. This means that one could even be a dissatisfied intellectual in search of non-existent agrarian paradises, like Durrell. Apparently, his criticism of Kyrenia and its people for allowing the passing of a presumed age of innocence also includes a certain ironic thrust against his home country – “white bread and white collars.” But as I have argued in the previous chapter, a critique of one’s culture is a precondition for a search like Durrell’s, not an impediment. Moreover, if the comments appear remarkably similar, this is not because of some kind of an orchestrated effort. The similarity, and regularity, has to do with the fact that individual dispositions toward Cyprus – and the rest of the world – are historically constituted in a context that all Europeans share. This is the common experience of an ongoing symbolic confrontation between their world and the Other.

The effectiveness of these denials must be sought in the complex interplay between the monopolization of the symbolic means for the constitution of modernity and the recognition accorded to the West as the only legitimate source of it. For no monopolization is ever conclusive enough to produce the kind of hegemonic effects analyzed here without the complicity of the dominated. I have examined how this complicity is



expressed practically in wedding celebrations and other occasions by the Cypriot bourgeoisie, educated middle-class women, town dwellers, and the younger generations. I have also explored the context in which this complicity is rendered virtually inevitable, how it is symbolically resisted by the dominated, and how this resistance produces the same subjugating effects. For such, I have argued, are the dialectics of symbolic domination.

This, then, is the story of the Cypriot journey to modernity, undoubtedly a journey that paved the way to prosperity and other tangible, beneficial effects. It was a story of struggles between different collectivities for identity and power, but also of misrecognized and misdirected action, of inadvertent but voluntary submission to more powerful societies. From a poor, largely self-contained, self-sustained British colony in the 1930s, Cyprus has transformed itself into an affluent, semi-occupied, European “neo-colony.” Perhaps there was nothing else that Cypriots could have done. Certainly, they could not have done it any better, at least as far as the palpable benefits of this journey are concerned. Nonetheless, one cannot avoid the poignant irony in all this: the assumption held by Cypriots that what was at stake all these years was a certain cultural “purification,” a kind of secular salvation, and a communion, at long last, with the powers that be.

If there is anything to be learned from this story, if the Cypriot experience matters at all, it is because in many ways it exemplifies a more global process – the process of subjectification of the rest of the world to the nations of Western Europe and North America. For as the Cypriot case demonstrates, modernization or Westernization is not a means by which societies become Western, even though it is often presented as such. It is the mechanism by which they constitute themselves and are constituted as Western *subjects*.

# Appendix

## Average costs of a “champagne” wedding

		<u>C£<sup>1</sup></u>
<i>Reception costs<sup>2</sup></i>		
65 kg wedding cake	@ 7.00 + 13% tax	514
2,000 petit fours	400 + 13% tax	452
60 bottles champagne	@ 7.00 + 13% tax	475
500 fruit punch	@ 0.70 + 13% tax	396
Space rental	350.00 + 13% tax	396
	Sub-total	<u>2,233</u>
<i>Decoration costs</i>		1,000
<i>Video and photographs</i>		500
	Total costs	<u>3,733</u>

*Notes:*

<sup>1</sup> One Cyprus pound is approximately two US dollars.

<sup>2</sup> For an average-sized wedding of 1,500 guests.

# Notes

## Introduction

- 1 I often use the term Cypriot society and Cypriots to refer to the Greek inhabitants of the island. My aim is to avoid repetition, not to disregard the fact that 18 percent of the population are ethnic Turks.
- 2 One of the aims of this book is to criticize the essentialist rendering of these and other notions, such as “tradition” and “the Other.” With this qualification in mind, I will from now use them without quotation marks.
- 3 From the sixteenth to the nineteenth century and from 1878 to 1960 respectively.
- 4 See the relevant discussion in Herzfeld (1987a:73–74 and *passim*).
- 5 In a famous article Ortner (1974) makes a similar argument about gender inequality.
- 6 Faubion (1993:103) points to the same rhetorical intent of such questions as, “Are contemporary Greeks modern?” Why ask such questions, Faubion wonders, “if one doesn’t already know the answers to them, and know them to be negative? Why ask them at all, if not to suggest underhandedly that Greeks are not quite modern enough? Why ask them at all, if not to challenge through the back door the validity of the Greek present?”
- 7 Needless to say, I do not mean to suggest that before this date Cypriot society was impervious to change. The Lévi-Straussian distinction between “cold” and “hot” societies is the kind of Eurocentric ideology that this study attempts to debunk. The 1940s were simply a period of particularly rapid and substantial change.
- 8 Cyprus is the third largest Mediterranean island, after Sicily and Sardinia, and has an area of 9,251 sq. km. (Republic of Cyprus 1991b).
- 9 The most useful of these accounts have been Loukas (1874), Sakellarios (1891), Papacharalambous (1965), and Averof (1986).
- 10 The divorce rate in Cyprus is very low. In 1989, there were 70 divorces per 1,000 marriages (Republic of Cyprus 1991a:51).

**1      The island of Aphrodite**

- 1 According to Greek mythology, Aphrodite was born from the sea off the coast of Paphos where she, and Adonis, were worshipped in ancient times. For an anthropological treatment see Frazer (1963:383–389).
- 2 On this and other problems that “native” anthropologists face see Gefou-Madianou (1993).
- 3 Having said that, drinks at “The Cosmopolitan” do not come cheap – the first drink costs C£6 (US\$12).
- 4 Despite the fact that teenagers are under stricter parental control than in America, the minimum legal drinking age in Cyprus is 16, itself one of the legacies that the British had left behind after independence.
- 5 The *bouzouki* is the leading instrument in Greek popular music. It is similar to the mandolin but has a much longer neck and a more muscular sound.
- 6 The implication being that they are disorderly, loud, and provide entertainment of low quality.
- 7 Stewart (1991:126–127) pointed out that in Greece whiskey, as a symbol of modernity, was more recently adopted by the lower classes in an attempt to upgrade their social and cultural status. With some qualifications (see chapter 5), the observation applies to Cypriot society as well.
- 8 An ironic term used to denote the urban middle class and its “pretentious” lifestyle.
- 9 It is only after one has put on a good argument that one is expected to relent, accept “defeat,” and let the other pay. And even though I was well steeped in the ritual and knew exactly what was expected of me, I did not want to play the role.
- 10 As one middle-class woman characteristically put it, “*En patoun khame* (they don’t walk on the ground) . . . you know, with all these existentialist things.”
- 11 Many of these women are thought to be lesbians.
- 12 Tourist propaganda seems to have done very well. Every time one passes by the area, known as *I Petra tou Romiou* (the rock of the Greek [of the Byzantine era]), sunburned tourists are parked by the roadside taking pictures.
- 13 Recent estimates put the population in the region of 25,000 (Republic of Cyprus 1991b:4).
- 14 Depending on its location, a building plot in Paphos may cost between US\$30–50,000.
- 15 The masculine adjective *politis* also means citizen. In this context, the term is used ironically. It refers to those who think they are civilized just because they live in the city.
- 16 I tried “anthropology” many times before, but the term in Cyprus conjures up images of skulls and bones, and sometimes is equated with “anatomy.” Folklore (*laoghrafia*) was the nearest to what I was doing that most people understood. See Cowan (1990) and Stewart (1991) for a similar tactic in Greece.
- 17 *Mana* literally means mother, but the term is often used to address someone affectionately.

- 18 For a penetrating analysis of the notion of the “Golden Age,” the primeval goodness of the country as opposed to the evils of the city see Williams (1973).
- 19 80 percent of the population in 1931 and 75 percent in 1946 (Government of Cyprus 1946:3).
- 20 Fragmentation was the result of the “rule” of equal inheritance which prescribed that family land was divided equally among all children, male and female (Loizos 1975b; Sant Cassia 1982). In his *A Survey of Rural Life in Cyprus*, Surridge (1930:51–53) cited fragmentation of holdings as a major problem and suggested a land consolidation scheme. Fragmentation of holdings was also cited by Peristiany (1968) as one of the major problems of his village in highland Cyprus.
- 21 *Andidhoron* is a small piece of bread that the priest administers as part of the holy sacrament.
- 22 In an attempt to exploit the local sentiment for *Enosis*, union with Greece (see Chapter 2), the British posters during the war encouraged Cypriots to join the British army and “fight for freedom and Greece.”
- 23 Although apparently people were aware of its narcotic properties, there is no evidence to suggest that the poppy was cultivated. In fact, even today, the plant grows in the fields naturally.
- 24 The symbolism of the posture is based on the analogy between death and darkness. The west signifies both the end of the day and the end of life (cf. Danforth 1982). Many Cypriots avoid placing their beds in a westward direction.
- 25 To protect the privacy of this and other informants I use fictitious names throughout. In many cases I have also altered several other details about them such as age, place of birth, and place of residence. “Evanthia” had no objection if her story was told. In fact, she wanted it to become known so that “people learn how we used to live in those days.” She only wanted to remain anonymous.
- 26 Mavrovouni, the “black mountain,” was a mining area exploited by foreign companies. Cypriots from all over the island went there to work in the mines.
- 27 As Hald (1968:25) characteristically put it, the British policy in Cyprus with regard to economic development had always been: “Pull yourself up by your own bootstraps.” What follows is based on Hald’s analysis of the Cypriot economy.
- 28 Underemployment in agriculture in the 1960s was estimated between one-quarter and one-third of the agricultural labor force (Hald 1968:52).
- 29 The importance of education as a means of social mobility is emphasized by virtually all ethnographers writing about Cyprus and Greece.
- 30 These terms are diminutive forms of *yatros* (doctor) and *dhikighoros* (lawyer). My informant uses them to indicate that, apart from their education, these young men had little else to show for themselves.
- 31 Possibly a corruption of the English “command” – to be in command or in control.
- 32 The adjective *nousimos*, from the noun *nous* (brain), is untranslatable. It refers to the sensible, mature individual who has been taught well and is able to make the right decisions in life.

**2 Nationalism and the poverty of imagination**

- 1 Panteli (1990:15) points out that recent archaeological findings indicate that there was an even earlier settlement than Khirokitia that dates back to 10,000 BC.
- 2 On the impact of nationalist education in Cyprus see Loizos (1988).
- 3 During Frankish rule, the Church of Cyprus was systematically persecuted, and attempts were made to convert the local population to Catholicism.
- 4 It was revealed that imposition of new taxation was necessary because the budget surplus was used to pay for a Turkish loan (Hill 1952:547).
- 5 On intercommunal killing in Cyprus see Loizos (1988). For a Turkish Cypriot view on these and subsequent events see Volkan (1979). See also Papadakis (1994) for a penetrating analysis of the Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot national struggle museums.
- 6 During fieldwork, I was able to cross the “Green Line” into the Turkish section of Nicosia and witness the results of one incident that occurred during this period. I visited what is rhetorically called “The Museum of Barbarism,” a small house where a Turkish Cypriot woman and her three children were slain by Greek Cypriots. The latter have their own monuments of horror, equally rhetorically displayed.
- 7 By contrast, the nearest Greek soil to Cyprus is the island of Rhodes, some 400 kilometers away.
- 8 I must admit, I do not know how and neither did my informant.
- 9 For an analysis of the 1970 elections in one village, and the impact of representative politics on its social structure, see Loizos (1975a).
- 10 On the politicization of soccer in colonial Algeria see Bahloul (forthcoming).
- 11 On the village forces that prevent political antagonism from becoming open confrontation see Loizos (1975a:130–133 and *passim*).
- 12 In the 1993 presidential elections DESY’s president Glafkos Clerides won with a margin of less than 1 percent of the votes over AKEL’s candidate. His victory was the result of a deal with DEKO that furnished the latter with five ministerial positions, including the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.
- 13 Cyprus has maintained a customs-union agreement with the European Community since 1972.
- 14 The bulk of Cypriot exports go to EC countries, particularly Britain (Republic of Cyprus 1991b).
- 15 The political leader of EOKA was archbishop Makarios.
- 16 It is significant to note here that ordinary folk, particularly the older generations who had little or no schooling at all, often act as if they have no conception of a Greek (Hellenic) identity. For instance, when they are asked about the relations between the two Cypriot communities in the past, they often reply: *Tourchi tje khristiani, imastan san ta’dherfkia* (Turks and Christians, we were like brothers).
- 17 See, for instance, the work of the Greek philosopher and theologian Yannaras (1990).
- 18 The New Year’s carol refers to Saint Vassilios of Cappadocia, the patron of Greek letters, who carries with him *kharti ke kalamari* (paper and pen). In its

modern everyday use the term refers to the squid, but the association with writing is still present since this fish is known for its ink.

- 19 Once I was advised by a friend to try and speak with a Greek accent on my impending trip to Athens. “If the taxi drivers realize that you don’t know your way,” he said, “they will drive round and round and charge you thousands of drachmas for a 500-drachma trip.”
- 20 Herzfeld (1992) has argued that Greek bureaucratic indifference may be viewed as a means of establishing boundaries between insiders and outsiders.
- 21 Harry Clean (pseudonym of Vassilis Tryantafyllides) is a popular Greek-Canadian comedian and fierce critic of the Greek establishment. The pejorative reference to Africans is meant to suggest that Greek “mentality” is not European but “Third Worldish.”
- 22 One might even be tempted to say racist if it was not the case that it has been constructed by Greeks about Greeks.
- 23 See, for instance, Herzfeld (1987a), Sant Cassia (1992), and Faubion (1993).
- 24 And as from February 1993 the new president of the Republic.
- 25 In fact, even before the invasion, and during the terrorist campaign of EOKA VITA in the early 1970s, *Enosis* seems to have been little more than a hollow slogan. During my last visit to Cyprus in the summer of 1994, the national television network aired a special program to commemorate the twentieth anniversary of the coup and the Turkish invasion. In an interview with the second in command of EOKA VITA, a Greek officer now living in Athens, the latter disclosed that soon after his secret arrival on Cyprus and the setting up of the organization, he realized that the local “big men” were motivated by a cause much less noble than *Enosis*. Apparently, they were disgruntled members of the original EOKA who were left outside the post-independence government and were now seeking to overthrow president Makarios and gain access to ministerial and other positions of power.
- 26 It reads, *Laon soon emmene* (insist on [having] a safe population).

### 3 The weddings of the 1930s

- 1 Indicative of this attitude is the reaction of an educated middle-class friend when I described to her in detail the ritual display of virginity: “How could they do such barbaric things?” she said with repugnance.
- 2 In particular, Loukas (1874), Sakellarios (1891), Papacharalambous (1965), and Averof (1986).
- 3 The term *re* is untranslatable. It is an informal way of addressing a male, the female counterpart in Cypriot Greek being *kori*, literally maiden.
- 4 See, among others, du Boulay, (1974) and Hirschon (1975).
- 5 The *laoudo* is here loosely translated as “lute” because, as the Greek term suggests, it is related to this instrument.
- 6 The verb *ploumizo* – from *ploumi* (design, ornamentation) – refers to any kind of ritualistic gift-giving in cash, not only in wedding celebrations but other occasions as well. In weddings the practice was repeated many times, and money gifts were given not only to the musicians but also to the newlyweds.
- 7 The red Ottoman hat *fez*.
- 8 A person who visits the Holy Land is called *hajjis* (feminine *hajjina*), from the

- Arabic *al Hajj*, the pilgrimage to Mecca. It was considered a great honor for an individual to have made the journey.
- 9 The olive leaves used for the *kapnisman* were placed in the village church and left there for forty days to become consecrated.
  - 10 On the notion of the evil eye and its sociological significance in Greece see Blum and Blum (1970) and Herzfeld (1981).
  - 11 The traditional male costume also included the *zostran*, a black band worn around the waist, and the *vraka*, black baggy trousers which, according to a popular folk song, takes 40 pics of cloth to be made (one pic being roughly equivalent to 0.6 meters). On weekdays, men also wore the *tsangaropoines*, black narrow boots.
  - 12 A vegetable fairly similar to turnip.
  - 13 Too much emphasis on female passivity would be misleading. As it has been repeatedly pointed out by many anthropologists working in Greece – see, for instance, the volume edited by Dubish (1986) – women wield a great deal of power, even though in ways that may not be readily perceptible.
  - 14 An oke is equivalent to 2.8 lbs.
  - 15 This, of course, is not to deny that the rite also expressed female subjugation. It is simply to point out that, in addition, it signified the domination of the young by the older generations.
  - 16 On the relation between host and guests see, among others, Pitt-Rivers (1968) and Herzfeld (1987b).
  - 17 From the Turkish word meaning “opposite.” There are “male” and “female” *karchilamadhes* and in both types the dancers face one another as they swing on the floor.
  - 18 The implication being that they had an exceptionally large number of guests, which in turn is a measure of the prestige that the family enjoyed in the community.
  - 19 A donum is equivalent to 1,600 square yards or 1,338 square meters.
  - 20 These points seem to be rather obvious. Charsley (1991:84–85) draws attention to a similar logic in deciding whom to invite in contemporary Scottish weddings. The analysis is necessary, however, because in European weddings the logic applies to a significantly smaller group.
  - 21 A hill resort in the Troodos mountains near my uncle’s own village.
  - 22 On *tjerasma* (demotic Greek *kerasma*), the treating of others to food and drink, see Cowan (1990:63–67), Papataxiarchis (1991), and Herzfeld (1992:51–52).
  - 23 It is also worth mentioning that in the same collection of essays, Pitt-Rivers depicts an equally romantic picture of gift exchange. At times, his analysis is hardly distinguishable from the rhetoric of the Cypriot big spender – he labels gift exchange, for instance, “the reciprocity of the heart” (1992:241).
  - 24 For a critique of the essentialization of non-Western countries as “gift societies” see a recent collection of essays edited by Parry and Bloch (1989).

#### 4 The meaning of change

- 1 It is necessary to make two points here. First, as the case of contemporary “village” weddings shows, inventing tradition is not the prerogative of political elites (cf. Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983). Second, and in contrast to what



these writers seem to imply, tradition is *always* invented, at least in so far as the past is strategically manipulated in the present. As Williams (1977:115) argued, “certain meanings and practices are selected for emphasis and certain other meanings and practices are excluded.” In a similar vein, Collingwood (1946) made current concerns an *a priori* condition of all knowledge of the past.

- 2 This, of course, is a variation of the argument employed by Engels (1972 [1884]). For a similar explanation see also Russell (1961 [1929]).
- 3 Loizos (personal communication) was told a similar story. According to his informants, the groom was made to wear the *saman* only if it was discovered that he had had sexual intercourse with the bride before the wedding.
- 4 The term does not easily translate into English, but sorcerer is probably the closest to the Cypriot meaning. On the problem of translation and the strategic uses of magic in Greek Cypriot society see Argyrou (1993).
- 5 *Athropia*, the adjective that describes the respectable man, refers to such qualities as *timiotita* (honesty, or keeping one’s word), *pallikarka* (bravery), and *fouartalliki*, the disposition of the big spender. By the time a man had reached the age of marriage, the community had a pretty good idea if one possessed these qualities. What the community did not know, however, was whether he was sexually potent.
- 6 See “The Constitution of the Holiest Church of Cyprus” (Church of Cyprus 1914:21). It is noteworthy that the revised version of the constitution no longer cites lack of virginity as grounds for divorce (see *Apostolos Varnavas*, vol. 13, no. 2).
- 7 As I found out later, this woman’s mother-in-law, the person primarily concerned with the evidence, was already dead. This partly explains why she was able to hide the sheets and get away with it.
- 8 Loizos (1975b) has shown that, contrary to popular conceptions, the dowry house is a rather recent development. In the 1930s, it was the groom’s father who provided a house for the newlyweds. And since residence was neolocal, he effectively controlled his son’s marriage prospects. For without a house no one was prepared to give his daughter away.
- 9 The term *soghambros* refers to the man who moves in with his in-laws after marriage. Given the pattern of neolocality, Cypriots considered the practice to be degrading for the groom.
- 10 The reference is to the airplane and, more generally, to the “miracles” of science and technology. The implication is that in this age of “enlightenment” one would be inexcusable to insist on such a “backward” practice as the virginity rite.
- 11 Big enough, in other words, to require nine *gholigia* to support the roof.
- 12 The word is a Hellenized version of “party” in plural. I was talking to an old man in the village coffee shop when this man arrived. He inquired what I was doing, and having found out that I was *epistimonas* (a scholar) doing research, he joined in the conversation.
- 13 Drunkenness, or any other kind of excess for that matter, contradicts one of the primary attributes of male personhood – the need to be in control of both one’s faculties and actions. In addition, by squandering his resources, a drunk

is the man who neglects his family and fails in his role as *nikotjiris* (household head).

- 14 In a recent (May 1994) lecture at a Nicosia College on the occasion of the twentieth anniversary of the Turkish invasion, a well-known nationalist scholar termed the disposition *malthaki idheologia* (the ideology of passivity) and blamed it for the “plight of this island.”
- 15 With the new sexual morality and practice during the engagement period many brides-to-be went to the church for the wedding “heavily” pregnant. In certain areas, this was a regular occurrence even during the 1930s. An anecdote has it that a young villager took his sick fiancée to the doctor, and when the latter announced that the girl was pregnant, the fiancé pleaded with the doctor to tell him *exactly* when the baby was due. The doctor could not understand the man’s concern with the precise date of birth, and the fiancé allegedly retorted: “You see, doctor, it is customary in my village for brides to show up at the church for the wedding pregnant. A few months ago a couple had their baby only two weeks after the wedding, setting a new record. I would like to know exactly when my baby is due because I want to break that record!”
- 16 See also Sant Cassia’s (1993) recent article on the *Hassamboullia*, a group of bandits operating in the Paphos district during the 1930s.
- 17 The *dhikhoron*, literally two-spaced (house) or a house with two rooms, does seem to have been a typical rural dwelling. According to SurrIDGE (1930:12), most houses consisted of only one room which often accommodated the family’s oxen as well. Paucity of space, then, seems to have been even greater than this informant implies.
- 18 See, for instance, Loizos (1975a:52), Markides *et al.* (1978:103), and Sant Cassia (1982). According to the latter author, even as late as the 1980s, in-marriage individuals were called by the autochthonous residents *shillokoual-ima* (what dogs have dragged in), that is, rubbish.
- 19 Most people prefer to make money gifts – an average figure would be between C£10 and C£20 (\$20–40) – even though gifts in kind may cost less. Money may strike an outsider as an inappropriate kind of gift, but in Cyprus the practice is quite legitimate. In fact, although people explain the tendency to give money on the basis of busy schedules – “no time to go shopping” – cash seems to enhance the *fouartas*’s prestige more than gifts in kind. Sant Cassia (1992:97) has shown that in nineteenth-century Athens cash as part of dowry was not considered to be a “full commodity” because it circulated more among kin. Similarly, Parry and Bloch (1989:9), making the point that in societies where the economy is not considered to be a distinct sphere of activity, money gifts do not carry the connotations associated with them in Western countries.
- 20 A leap year is considered unlucky and many people avoid marriage. Statistics indicate that during leap years the number of weddings decreases by as much as 50 percent (Republic of Cyprus 1991a:51).
- 21 A term that refers both to one’s marriage sponsors or “best men” and to the godfather of one’s children.
- 22 Young Scots seem to share similar views about the grand type of wedding (Charsley 1991:51). The irony is that while for them a large wedding is defined

as a “hundred guests” (1991:96), for Cypriot youngsters this is the size of the private, close kind of wedding that they would have liked to have.

## 5 Distinction and symbolic class struggle

- 1 I am well aware that this may be construed as an elitist position – the scholar who sees what ordinary folk cannot. My claim, however, is nothing of the sort. It would be easy to show that intellectuals are no less immune to misrecognition, if not so much of their discursive practices, certainly of their everyday lives.
- 2 As Wacquant (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992:168, n. 123) has pointed out, the major difference between Bourdieu’s theory and Gramsci’s notion of hegemony is that “the former requires none of the active ‘manufacturing,’ of the work of ‘conviction’” entailed by the latter.
- 3 On the power of ritual to convince see, among others, Rappaport (1979), Tambiah (1979), and Bloch (1986).
- 4 The *bouzouki* is not as old an instrument as the *laoudo* and it is, therefore, considered to be less traditional.
- 5 Unlike regular church services, men and women were not segregated in any of the weddings that I attended.
- 6 Rather surprising, since very few men are nowadays prepared to take up priesthood.
- 7 This is a play with words. The Greek term for rice is *rizi* and *riza* is the word for root.
- 8 Unlike the 1930s when only boys were rolled over on the bridal mattress, in contemporary “village” weddings girls are also rolled over. A sign of the times perhaps.
- 9 The implication being that people do not bother to read it, that is, observe the etiquette.
- 10 “Hanging” oneself is a mocking way of saying that one is getting married.
- 11 This is a customary practice and in most cases it substitutes the religious engagement ceremony. A typical announcement reads: “Mr. X from [place of residence] and Miss Y from [place of residence] have made a mutual promise to marry.”
- 12 There are several English families living in the village, mostly retired couples, some of whom bought old houses and renovated them. Even though they mostly keep to themselves, encounters with the villagers are frequent and congenial.
- 13 This is an inadequate gloss. The Greek term *dhiaskedhazo* (noun: *dhiaskedhasi*) has strong connotations of cheerfulness and gaiety, a mood highly inappropriate for a funeral.
- 14 In contrast to Cypriots who wear black clothes to signify mourning.
- 15 In Cyprus, the family of the deceased participates in commemorative church services, known as *mnimosina*, three, nine, and forty days after the funeral. Commemorative services are also held after three and nine months, and from then on once every year (cf. Danforth 1982).
- 16 Progress is also an inadequate gloss. In this particular context, the term is used to suggest that change of this kind is at best a mixed blessing.

- 17 As Herzefeld (1991:169) put it, “Nonchalant imprecision is the very stuff of which social relations are made.”
- 18 On the *parea* as a group of friends see Cowan (1990:60 and *passim*).
- 19 “Village” buses are old, often colorfully painted Bedfords that have been gradually phased out and replaced by modern ones – known in Cyprus as “Pullmans.” There are very few of these Bedfords still in service, and they connect the most remote villages with the main towns. The point is that they are associated with the “hinterland,” the most “backward” areas in the countryside, and the *khorkates* (peasants). Hence the fact that these youngsters spared no effort (or money) to find and rent such a bus and make their game as realistic as possible.
- 20 The reference to Greece was apparently meant to Hellenize the practice. Michaelide (1985:210), in her book on “Old Nicosia,” reports that during one of the first British weddings in Cyprus at the end of the nineteenth century, the Cypriot guests were perplexed to see an old shoe tied at the rear of the couple’s carriage. A local newspaper explained that the shoe was a symbol of happiness.
- 21 The place is known as “Trust” for short and the term is used in English.
- 22 The verb *kalamarizo* (I speak like a mainland Greek) is used to deride those Cypriots who cross the linguistic boundary.
- 23 Mr. Pavlides’s argument of costs is rather shaky, particularly if one bears in mind that the very few people who still wear the *vraka* are old and poor village men. One of them, from a village in Paphos, told me that he will “die with it.” Only once in his lifetime did he wear trousers, and that was when he visited his son in Athens. His eldest son who travelled with him made it clear that he would not take him unless he took off the *vraka*. “I felt as though I was naked,” the old man told me. “I came back to the village and went straight to my house to change so that no one would see me. From then on, I said to myself: ‘Never again’”.
- 24 They are usually enacted several days before the church ceremony. In a recent development that seems to be an attempt to maintain a certain lead over the lower classes – the latter are beginning to adopt both – bachelor’s and hen’s nights are turned into away weekends. Ayia Napa, on the south-eastern coast, is the favorite local location, Athens and London the overseas ones.
- 25 But this is not to say that the wedding dress is not a subject for distinction. Middle-class brides buy their dresses, in contrast to lower-class women who usually rent them. Moreover, they prefer to buy them from abroad, a favorite place being Harrods of London. A young woman from Nicosia reputedly spent C£4,000 (\$8,000) on her wedding dress, while another had hers made by a specialist in Greece. She flew to Athens several times accompanied by her personal dressmaker who was taken along – all expenses paid – for “advice.” On the role of costumes as class markers in nineteenth-century Athens see Sant Cassia (1992).
- 26 Such practices are not unheard of. For instance, a well-known businessman based in Nicosia, whose daughter married an Englishman, had her wedding in his village church “the traditional way.” I was also told that in some bour-

- geois weddings, a fiddler is hired to play traditional songs. It is important to point out, however, that the people who indulge in these romantic practices are widely recognized to have transcended their village origins and hence do not run the risk of being thought of as “peasants.” Moreover, such practices are an instance of what Bourdieu (1984) called “strategies of condescension,” tactics whose aim is to enhance one’s name and prestige by negating *symbolically* the real social distance that separates one from one’s inferiors.
- 27 And so is an equally recent phenomenon at middle-class weddings, the practice of having the best women or bridesmaids wear exactly the same kind of dresses.
- 28 The word “events” was used in English.
- 29 Or so a tourist guide explained to a group of Germans during one of my visits.
- 30 On the recasting of local dependence on, and domination by industrialized countries – implicit in tourism – as moral superiority through the provision of hospitality, see Herzfeld (1987b).
- 31 The term *khomatsia*, from *khoma* (soil), is meant to emphasize its “messiness.”
- 32 Although he does not draw the same conclusion, Charsley (1991:85) makes a similar point about Scottish weddings: “The only children commonly attending weddings are bridesmaids, flower girls or pages, and brothers and sisters of the couple . . . Receptions are seen as essentially adult events at which children, if they are not positively out of place, could scarcely justify the cost of including them.”
- 33 Indeed, children tend to monopolize the dancing floor and the band is often forced to make announcements to the effect that “*ta mora na katsoun ya na khorepsoun i meghali* ([it’s time for] the children to sit down so that the adults can dance).”
- 34 The last three terms require further explanation. They refer to three different work tasks and express the division of labor in the Cypriot construction industry. The *sieras* is responsible for setting the iron structures; the *kaloupsis* for the wooden molds that are placed around these structures and are filled with concrete; and the *khtistis* for doing the actual brick-work. All three are considered to be working-class jobs *par excellence* and, for many, they epitomize the urban *khorkatis* (peasant).
- 35 In a further irony, in Europe it is now considered acceptable – indeed, almost *de rigueur* – to drink red wine lightly chilled (Herzfeld, personal communication).
- 6 Anthropology and the specter of “monoculture”**
- 1 An agricultural region in eastern Cyprus, now under Turkish occupation.
- 2 See the discussion in connection with the supernatural in Greece in Steward (1991:117–120).
- 3 In quotes because Giddens’s analysis is selective. It is only the West that is post-structuralist, according to Giddens. Other societies are still plagued by the inability to transform structures. For a critique of structuralism in Greek ethnography see Herzfeld (1987a).
- 4 For a trenchant critique of the notion that the thinking subject is the deter-

- mining force in history see Foucault's (1984) essay "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History."
- 5 For a critical review of Faubion's book see Argyrou (1995).
  - 6 Abu-Lughod (1986), for instance, has argued that although Bedouin society has been penetrated by consumerism, Bedouin identity is not endangered. It is grounded in a much more stable setting, the social structure, and the way that Bedouins conceptualize their relations with one another and the outside world (cf. Said 1978).
  - 7 See, for instance, Pitt-Rivers (1977), Davis (1977), Bossevain (1979), Brandes (1980), and more recently Abu-Lughod (1986).
  - 8 Moffatt (1989) reports that a similar distinction is made by many male college students in the United States. For these students – Moffatt calls them "neo-traditionalists" – girls are either "good women" or "sluts." The attitude is summed up in the reasoning of one student in this group: "Men have the right to experiment sexually for a few years. There are a lot of female sluts out there with whom to so experiment. And once I have gotten this out of my system, I will then look for a good woman for a long-term relationship (or for a wife)" (1989:204).
  - 9 In a recent scandal involving a member of the British royal family and her American friend, one of the local tabloids indignantly pointed out that her behavior made the prince (her husband) look not only a "fool" but also a "cuckold" (Evening Standard, August 21, 1992).
  - 10 For a critique of Taussig and more generally of the view that non-Western societies are characterized by the morality of gift exchange see the collection of essays edited by Parry and Bloch (1989).
  - 11 As Sahlins (1976:216) put it in another context, "Money is to the West as kinship is to the Rest."
  - 12 "The Flats" is the fictitious name of the community that Stack studied.
  - 13 Hochschild (1983) provides a penetrating analysis of the strategies required to persuade customers, and of the training that employees undergo to be persuaded themselves. In practicing their profession, airline employees are involved in "deep acting," acting made real enough so that both parties no longer perceive it as such.
  - 14 Hochschild (1983:3–9) has drawn a parallel between workers being alienated from their product and airline employees becoming alienated from their emotions.
  - 15 In his analysis of the "artistic field," Bourdieu (1980) has been uncharacteristically ethnocentric. His insistence on two distinct logics – one capitalist, the other pre-capitalist – reifies both the West and the Other. Moreover, the argument that the pre-capitalist logic "lives on" in the art business smacks of Tylorian survivalism and evolutionism.
  - 16 The comment is not meant to deny the sensibilities of particular subjectivities, only to place them in their proper social context.
  - 17 The following draws on Bourdieu's (1984) distinction between different kinds of capital or power, as well as between volume and composition of one's total capital.

## 7 The dialectics of symbolic domination

- 1 According to this perception, women are cheated when they concede to having sex with someone who has promised to marry them but does not keep his promise. The view is in accord with the popular understanding of women as “credulous” and likely to be taken advantage of (du Boulay 1974:101–120).
- 2 In his book on the Athenian elite, Faubion (1993:166–183) presents a female persona which is in many ways similar to the one that I depict here.
- 3 This is not to say that they necessarily wish to adopt the modern sexual ethic. Most older village and working-class women find the new morality disgraceful. As they often characteristically put it, “Women today have gone wild and cannot be controlled.” Still, this is largely a virtue made of necessity – they reject what they objectively cannot have access to.
- 4 To call feminism a hegemonic identity is in no way intended to cast doubt on the value of gender equality. It is, rather, to draw attention to issues that feminist anthropologists themselves are increasingly becoming aware of. As di Leonardo (1991:1–2) put it in the introduction to a recent collection of essays: “Western feminist scholars twenty years ago had a sharp, taken-for-granted starting point: to expose sexism in public and private life, to alter the male-biased presumptions of scholarly and popular culture. We now see both the adjective of location – we are *Western* feminists, and there are others – and the noun’s contingent, historically determined existence” (emphasis in the original).
- 5 This raises important theoretical questions about “practice theory” and its emphasis on the active side of human agency. As Ortner (1984) has pointed out, although clearly people make their own history, it is rarely the history that they set out to make. In short, it is a history that they never *intended*.
- 6 Fabian does not actually make this point, but it is implied by his reasoning.
- 7 In a recent anthropological work on the *National Geographic*, Lutz and Collins (1993:13) “chart the tendency of the magazine to idealize and render exotic third-world peoples.” In particular, “photographs show these people as either cut off from the flow of world events or involved in a singular story of progress from tradition to modernity.”
- 8 It would seem that the notion of “doubt” as one of the primary characteristics of modernity has a lot of currency in the social sciences. See, for instance, Giddens (1979, 1984) and Faubion (1993).
- 9 It is hardly necessary here to go into details as to how such images are institutionalized and reproduced as scientific knowledge. One needs only to consult any introductory textbook to come across such notions as income per capita, gross national product, life expectancy, birth and mortality rates, and the like.

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