

Chapter 18

WOMEN'S LIFE IN ASVESTOHorION

WHEN the men came home they related their experience in foreign lands. In order to show fidelity and the sadness which they experienced during their husband's absence, the wives lived with great simplicity and a sparse diet.

They wore clean and simple clothes, they did not dance

nor have good times; they did not exchange visits with those celebrating holidays, except with very close relatives and only during the more important holidays. Likewise they did not go through the street of the marketplace or the community coffee-house out of respect, but also in order to avoid the glances of those lingering in the coffee-houses who would watch them.

During the time their husbands were absent, they worked diligently, preparing their husband's clothes, and attended to the cultivation of the vineyards in which only the women took part, usually aided by friends or family compatriots, thus securing for their husband his wine and raki.

These toiling women actively celebrated the return of their husband from abroad during the winter season, at a public celebration in Asvestohorion.

It was then that the dances and celebrations took place. During Sundays and holidays they took part in the official dance in the Garden Square to which crowds of women came dressed in costly and colorful holiday attire making these marvelous and enjoyable affairs.

The dances were accompanied by domestic musical organs, especially by sheepskin drums (daoulia), and with violins from the neighboring village of Hortiati. Later all the dancers and the audience sang songs which were harmonized by the steps of each dance.

The usual songs for the dances were as follows:

1st Jumping Dance

For forty days I have been thinking of going to the Confessor, but I do not find him alone. Very early one Sunday I go and find him in his cell. Father, absolve me, ask about my sins. Your sins are many. Do not fall in love again.

If you, Father, deny the holy bread and liturgy, then I will deny the young lady that I love.

2nd Another Similar Dance

I am going crazy my dear mother for a neighbor girl of mine. Go, mother and tell her, talk to her secretly. Gladly my dear son, I'll take my spindle (distaff) with me. She takes her spindle and goes. She finds the girl knitting (embroidering). Good morning to you willowy one. Welcome my precious mother. My daughter, my son loves you and is ashamed to tell you. If he loves me and is ashamed, why does he come to my house. Tell him to come in the morning so we may drink coffee together for love has no shame.

3rd Jumping Dance

Once I went to Smyrna. My friends married me off, and they gave me a wife who ate enough for five to ten people. She also ate a sardine and emptied the barrel too. She was a hard worker, five months to finish a spindle. On Monday she does a wash and on Tuesday a halfhearted wash. She hangs the wash on Wednesday and picks it up on Thursday. On Friday she patches and irons on Saturday. On Sundays she changes, but she still has lice.

4th Greek Folk Dance (Syrτος)

Hey, Sun my dear Sun, who takes time to set. You visited many lands, from East to West. Have you seen or thought about a marble ship. There are many ships in the sea. I do not know which one you are looking for. There are Turkish, French, and Greek ships too. When they finished the all day battle the Greeks were victorious and they captured all the Turkish ships, and of all the French ships too. Only one was saved, which had a cross at its bow and golden masts. Back of the bow, there sat three French girls. One is playing a tambourine, the other the lute and the third, the youngest, is playing with the Captain.

5th Dance Tsamikos

On top of a three-pointed mountain, a mother and her two daughters were picking fennel; and while they were picking, they found a wounded youth. The daughter tells her mother, Mother let us take him home to cure him. Since we have no home, what do we want of the stranger? Mother, let us take him and make a groom of him. The mother tells her daughter, yes daughter, let's take him and make a groom of him and heal him at home.

6th Dance Syrto

I am tired dear mother of embroidering handkerchiefs; so I'm going to stop, I want to get married. I'll marry young Mr. John and become a rich lady. Wait my dear daughter another year to gather the wheat, sesame, and to help with the wines; then I shall marry you off in the towns of Baltos (the marsh). I don't want to be married in the towns of the marshes, I want to get married in Asvestohorion to the spry youths who wear their fezes tipped over and crumbled. Who wear buttoned-up shoes and have love and a heart.

7th Dance Kalamantianos

A young lady at the window was planting basil, black are the eyes I love and I asked her for a sprig. She gave me a sweet kiss. I won't tell anybody. Won't you tell me what to do? Should I die or should I live, or should I take the knife and kill myself?

During the absence of the husbands in foreign lands, their families were supported by the grocers of Asvestohorion who gave them credit and willingly supplied them with all the necessary foods.

The families also obtained credit from the doctor of Asvestohorion, who, at that time, was Efthymios Boutouras

from Baltzia, and from whom the people received good and willing care for forty years.

The first duty of the husbands, upon returning from abroad, was to pay off the debts and thank all of the creditors.

Such aid given to the inhabitants of Asvestohorion was a sign of cooperation among our townspeople.

Chapter 19

ECONOMIC RESULTS

TO us, the economic benefits of migration were very helpful because of the income from foreign lands. However, there resulted a total disregard of farming so that eventually many inhabitants did not even know where their small plots of land which were given to them by their parents were located.

Often the families of those whose husbands emigrated had a hard time making a living, lacking even the bare necessities.

For this reason, those who went abroad hastened to help their forsaken and poor relatives with the money obtained from their work. The lack of money was felt by many of those who emigrated, who lavishly spent their hard earned funds at nightly celebrations during their short stay at home.

In order to help their families and to cover the expenses of their voyage, they borrowed money at high interest, often putting up their wife's jewelry for collateral with the Jews of Salonica, particularly the well known Bouhor, a notorious

extortionist who was always willing to help the Asvesto-
horites, but at very high rate of interest.