The Greek Peasant

by

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Arnold Rose was my teacher and my friend. I was fully aware, before his untimely death, of his sense that sociology needed a publication outlet of the sort provided by this Series; and I was dimly aware of his hope that his and Caroline's gift would meet that need. I am grateful to the American Sociological Association for providing me the opportunity to help fulfill Arnold's hope.

Sheldon Stryker
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To Sally, who knows better.

PREFACE

This study concerns the strategies of response and adaptation of Greek peasants subjected to major crises such as industrialization, emigration from the villages to Athens and abroad, political instability, military occupation, and war; both civil and international.

We will argue that the value system that the Greek has adopted historically is essentially in conflict with the value system necessary for adaptation to a modern, bureaucratic, industrialized and democratic state. This latter contains two basic elements: First, there is the myth created by Byzantine intellectuals that the people inhabiting the lands of ancient Greece are direct descendants of the ancient Hellenes (Campbell and Sherrard 1968: 24). This has come to mean that if a regeneration of the young Greek state were to take place, it would be through reliance on classical Greek culture, its language, art, and literature. The second dimension was intimately fused with the first in what is called the Megali (the Great Idea).¹

The Great Idea expresses the irredentist policies of the Greek nation that throw off Turkish rule. The idea of the revival of the Byzantine Empire and the desire to “replace the Crescent by the Cross” on the dome of St. Sophia, the symbol of eastern Christianity, became a driving force in Greek politics (Koty 1958: 274). In fact, many people still talk about a reuniting of all lands that are “rightfully Greek.”

To understand the values and culture of the modern Greek peasant, one must recognize how these myths have dominated, and continue to dominate his life. Greece is a Greek Orthodox state, and the Greek idea of the state involves a Greek people with a particular heritage and future. Religion and politics are, then, inevitably fused in Greek society. In Greek society a multi-racial people came to see themselves as members of the same corporate political body.

Some of the most significant characteristics of the Greek peasants’ value system emerged during their four-hundred-year subjugation to the Turks.
During the Byzantine period the majority of Greeks were peasants and shepherds, and in 1821 Greece was essentially non-Western. Since the Sultan regarded his Orthodox Christian subjects as a millet (nation) of which the Oecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople (the head of the Orthodox Church) was both the spiritual and worldly leader, the latter became, in essence, the head of a nation within a nation. The Church, then, came to assume primary importance in the culture of the country. The Church, whose language was Greek, assumed the duty of preserving not only the faith, but the Greek "nation," or Hellenism itself. Because there was no government to represent the Greek people, the church often became the center of social organization in the villages. Priests emerged as community leaders, fusing the Church and the Greek nation even more in the mind of the peasant.

In order to help administer the lands under the Ottoman Empire, the Sultan appointed, in addition to the Patriarch and members of the Synod, Phanariots, who were, in reality, public officials of considerable importance. Many of them were Greeks, who, like their religious counterparts, were committed to the education of the Greeks and the development of Greece. But their power depended on their ability to maintain order and collect the taxes within their provinces. Dual systems of authority existed in some areas, the Ottoman being directed from the top down and the Greek from the bottom up (Campbell and Sherrard 1968: 57), though real control was still vested in the Ottoman ruler and his representatives. This political system in time led to bribery, deceit, favoritism, and the arbitrary use of power. The only hope of the common man was to have a friend in power who could either help him in his particular trouble or arrange an appointment for him with someone else who could do so. It is little wonder that after four hundred years of extra-parliamentary democracy, today's Greeks believe—all too often rightly—that the one thing needed to move officials is "the right connections."

As a result, then, of Turkish domination, a characteristic pattern of behavior and values emerged which the modern peasant perpetuates. Because of their geographical isolation and the role of the local priest, the villages developed independent of one another, the church often serving as the focus of activities. People came to believe, and rightly so, that no issue's merits would suffice to induce political action; one had to have "connections," to bribe officials, and/or to have a patron to protect him. The suspicion, an almost inevitable consequence of their historic situation, led people to rely more closely on the family—not simply because Greece was an agricultural country, but rather because one's own relatives were often the only persons one could trust. The values evolving during this period, then, were patronage, mistrust, suspicion of bureaucracies and trust in the family unit, or at most, in the community.

We will argue that values developed to deal with crises at a given time may prove maladaptive later. This would seem to be so in the case of the values of the Greek peasant, whose traditional life-style is threatened today by urbanization and industrialization, and who must respond with new attitudes. The bureaucratization which inevitably accompanies modernization requires a "modern" man. For the moment, suffice it to say here that a modern society requires people to trust one another and to subscribe to universalistic, not particularistic ethic. In other words, a modern society requires the confident belief that appointment and promotion should be based on the universalistic criteria of merit, knowledge, and ability and not on the particularistic criteria of family and other "connections." Reliance on patronage, mistrust of all who are not kin, and suspicion of bureaucracies in general is maladaptive to twentieth-century industrial society.

The research on which this study is based was carried out after the coup of April, 1967, between September, 1968, and July, 1969. Two villages were selected for study and data were collected by participant observation, in-depth interviews, a questionnaire given to 150 men and women, village correspondence with friends and relatives, public documents, time logs, and school children's essays. The government in no way interfered, and after rapport had been established with the villagers, the political climate exerted probably little, if any, effect on their responses.

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1Campbell and Sherrard's book is probably the best source on the subject of the emergence of the modern Greek state; the historical discussion that here follows closely parallels theirs.
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CHAPTER 1

VARNAVAS AND MILESSI IN PLACE

From the Greek census, it is possible to distinguish five basic types of community in Greece: (1) nomadic scattered populations such as gypsies and shepherds, (2) rural populations, those of villages with less than 2,000 inhabitants, (3) semi-urban communities of from 2,000 to 10,000 inhabitants, (4) urban communities whose population exceeds 10,000, and, finally (5) urban agglomerations such as Athens and its surrounding suburbs, whose populations may exceed 1,000,000. What is significant here is that 43.8 percent of Greeks live in villages classified as rural, only 12.9 percent are in semi-urban areas, and 43.3 percent in urban areas. The total urban population in 1961 was 3,628,105. The combined populations of only four cities, greater Athens, Salonika, Patras, and Iraklion, account for 66 percent of all living in urban areas. In Athens alone, whose metropolitan area has a population of 1,852,709, live over half of the urban population. There is no half-way house in Greece. One is either a rural villager or an urban dweller (Statistical Yearbook of Greece 1968: 21-23, and Vlachos 1969: 57). Milessi, with its 320 inhabitants, falls into a group of villages that is representative of nearly half of the Greek population.

Milessi

The quickest way to reach Milessi from Athens is to go north on the National Highway that traverses Greece from north to south. About twenty-five miles north of Athens one turns off at the sign to Malakassa, a small village in the same commune as Milessi. The road climbs into the hills for about five miles, passing a small government munitions factory and several roadside shrines, dedicated to patron saints. - The shrines are the first step taken by a devotee toward the constructing of a church dedicated to his patron saint, in return for intercession for his health, or that of a member of his family, or for a good job or a good crop. - From the crest of the heavily wooded hillside, the southern arm of the Gulf of Euboea is visible in the bright blue Aegean sea. Below, on a steep ravine, sits the town of Milessi. The road makes an S through Milessi and continues on its way to Skala Oropou, whence the ferry sets out for Euboea.

At the top of the road and immediately to the left is the one-room village schoolhouse. Next come the village church and the home of the priest, and on the right is the village graveyard and a second church. The road drops through the village, passes by two coffeehouses, makes a sixty-degree bend by the large tree which shelters those waiting for the bus to Skala Oropou or Athens, passes the olive orchards and vineyards of the villagers, and is lost to sight. About a mile away, a dirt road leads to the town of Markopoulou, five miles to the east.

A concrete road approximately 100 yards long was built in 1965. It runs between the school house and the church, straight through the portion of the village that lies to the left of the road going to Skala Oropou. There is no access to it except for, at either end, a narrow dirt road, muddy in winter. It was built as a village improvement by a government loan, and the road provided work for some of the villagers for a short time, as well as a great deal of disagreement as to exactly whose house it was going to pass. It is used for walks, the mailman rides his scooter down it to deliver mail, as does the man who peddles vegetables from another village once a week, and the man from Skala Oropou who sells fish from a box tied to the back of his motorcycle. But usually the villagers' chickens and two turkeys are the only pedestrians.

This small town has five churches, one school, two small grocery stores selling a few canned goods and cheese made by the owners, and three coffeehouses. Of the latter, one is in the basement of a villager's house; the other two, which are fairly large, face the sea, fronting on the main highway. Normally they are closed during the week because their owners work in the government munitions plant down the road. Occasionally they are opened at night. On weekends 16mm. films, some of which are sure to be old American cowboy movies, are shown in the larger of the two coffee houses.

Typical of rural Greek villages, the economy of Milessi is Mediterranean. Paniyiotis, the village vice-president, grows wheat, has a few olive trees, a half-acre of grapes, and two goats that his wife, Maria, stokes each morning in the woods. She makes cheese for their household and occasionally from her dozen chickens has a few left over to sell to neighbors or one of the village grocery stores. Andreas, Paniyiotis' friend and the secretary of the village, has a few olives, perhaps an acre each year in wheat, enough grapes to make red retsina (resinated wine) for family and friends. His wife, too, watches after her goats and chickens. Some of the other men in the village try their hands at additional crops now and then: the giant beans that are used an hors d'oeuvre in restaurants and taverns, or if irrigation is possible, green beans, okra, tomatoes, cucumbers, and squash. It is a lucky farmer whose land is close enough to a stream for him to cultivate small crops for sale. Some-
times they take their crops to Athens themselves, instead of selling them through a broker.

But no matter what one grows in Milesi, life is hard. The villagers own about 700 acres of land under cultivation, the average size of landholdings per family being 4.9 acres. But these holdings are not conveniently adjacent to one another: they are usually broken up into at least four widely scattered plots (Agricultural Bank of Greece 1969: 1). The plots generally lie about one mile to the east, two miles to the west, two miles to the south, and three miles north.

One morning I went with Panaytou to his vineyard to see how the vines were pruned. As it was winter, we started late, at about 6:00 a.m. He saddled his mule with a pack saddle, hung his saw on one side and a rope for bringing back the cuttings for firewood, and we started out to the north. It took about one hour to reach his field. He worked for about two hours; then we talked and ate some of the food Maria had packed for us. Then, to see what the recent rains had done to his winter wheat, we walked toward the southwest for about forty-five minutes. The rains had been disastrous. He would have to borrow money to buy grain to eat, and seed grain for the next planting. We turned toward his home and were there in about an hour. When I commented on how rocky his wheat field was, he said, "Others have worse fields."

The land and soil are poor in Milesi. The average income of the Milesi farm family is $783 a year, of which over two-thirds come from farming, the rest from the sale of animal products (Agricultural Bank of Greece 1969: 1).

Varnavas

One leaves the National Highway for Polydendri, Kapandriton, Varnavas, and Grammatikion about six miles before the Milesi-Malakasa turnoff. But Varnavas is about six miles off the National Highway on a rough side road, full of chuckholes, and with continual switchbacks. Although Varnavas is 25 miles from Athens, and Milesi about 30, it takes about an hour and a half to go from Athens to Varnavas by bus, but only forty-five minutes to Milesi. Varnavas is located in a somewhat mountainous area about four miles due north of Lake Marathon, a large water reservoir. The road through the village is used principally by local villagers and those on their way to villages closer to the sea, and the Athenians and tourists going to the sea, who account for some of the traffic, generate business for the coffee houses. Another source of traffic for Varnavas, and one explanation of the minimum maintenance of the road, is the army's training camp about one mile northwest of the village. But the soldiers do not come to the town except to catch the bus when they have missed the military transport.

On the first day I visited Varnavas the sky was black, clouds covered the tops of the mountains, and cold heavy rain was driven by the autumn wind. The road was swept by water which ran off the hillsides and was in places colored a deep reddish-brown or yellow by eroding soil. The heavy rain was widening gulleys already deep and carrying topsoil into the torrential streams, to be washed southward toward the sea.

Varnavas sits on top of a plateau with gently rolling hills dividing the village. The road into it climbs up past rocky wheat fields on the right and left and then begins to level out toward its southern border. The gas station appears on the right, then a combination taverna, grocery store and fuel oil depot, while on the left is a small taverna and a grocery store. Behind is the village school house, surrounded by a red stone wall. In about fifty yards the road narrows so that there is room for only one car to pass safely at a time. Then comes the plateia (village square), about sixty feet across in both directions, bordered by six coffeehouses, one barber shop, one combination grocery store and taverna, a small appliance shop that is usually closed, and a small kiosk, where Mr. Taktis sells gum, cigarettes, aspirin, candy, balloons, newspapers, a few magazines, kites, string, and sundry other items. Mr. Taktis was wounded in the war and the granting of the license for his kiosk is one way in which he is "pensioned" by the government.

While most of the buildings in Milesi had had recent coats of whitewash and the whole village glistened as it stood out against the backdrop of the Aegean sea, Varnavas' raw, unfinished brick buildings against the barren and rocky hillsides presented a patchwork in brown and red. Varnavas is not a new village, but the people are adding to their houses, or building new ones. Are they more wealthy in Varnavas then? No, not really.

The average income per family in Varnavas is $834, income among the farmers being derived fairly evenly from the selling of produce and of sheep and goat's milk. The landholdings per family are smaller in Varnavas than in Milesi—4.4 acres, which, as in Milesi, are split into an average of more than four widely separated holdings.

Varnavas has 960 inhabitants, living in 241 separate houses, and like Milesi, it has a large number of small shops and businesses for its size. More than half of the owners live over their stores, or turn their front rooms into places of business. There are twenty-six commercial enterprises, not taking into account the dressmaking and hairdressing which a number of the women do for small fees. There are seven grocery stores, seven coffeehouses, two bakeries, two tavernas, two barbershops, one gas station, and some miscellaneous establishments. A taverna is a small restaurant, and a coffeehouse is just what its name implies, though a few alcoholic beverages, such as ouzo and brandy may be sold there. Retsina is served in both the coffeehouse and taverna.

With all these businesses competing for the patronage of the local people, it is not likely that anyone would make a living just from his business, although one or two people succeed in doing so. Normally, a small shop is run by the farmer's wife while he is in the fields, or on a job elsewhere; some open only at night, when he has returned from a day of work. Everyone seems to have his favorite coffeehouse and taverna, use of the latter, however, being chiefly on such special occasions as weddings and name-day celebrations. But the village square is lit by the light coming from the encircling coffeehouses until late at night. If a farmer is feuding with one of the coffeehouse owners he stays away from it, and expects his friends and relatives to do the same. The village president and his cronies usually go to the coffee-
house of the widow Melas. The president confided to me that he and his friends don’t want to associate with the donkeys in the village. When I saw him in other coffeehouses, he was quick to explain that one must circulate to find out what is going on.

Varnavas, being larger than Milesi, has more land under cultivation, and there is a greater variety of crops. Each farmer has his wheat, vines and olives “for security.” One never knows what disaster will befall his other crops, but the basic three provide him with “enough to live on.” “We can always get by until better times,” explained Krepis. His wife pastures one or two goats and tends a few chickens. “Then, we always can have a mouthful of cheese, a handful of olives, and a crust of bread,” say most of the villagers.

There is little or no attempt to change patterns of agriculture so that in time crops that would grow better in the region are identified and planted. An individual with little faith in the future will not hazard planting crops which take several years to bring him a profit, such as almond trees. Nor is he likely to experiment with new crops extensively because even if he fertilizes them and waters them, they might prove ill-fated. When erosion or changing markets and food stuffs make certain crops and methods of planting outdated, he does not easily give up the traditional ways. Meanwhile, the fragmentation of the land prevents the use of machinery that could speed the farmer’s work, and increase his yield. Although few could produce greater amounts of food, the villagers are unwilling to exchange their land, or sell it, because it is a form of security. Even those who work in Athens keep their land and plant crops, though it might be cheaper to buy food.

Another reason why consolidation of the land does not interest many of those who farm is explained by their fatalism: assuming that they could exchange land with others, to bring all their plots together, they still argue that if the crops on one small plot fail, at least they may not on another.

The government has been sending agricultural experts into the village to try to persuade the farmers to break away from traditional ways and to experiment with new crops, particularly those that would contribute to the cash economy. The village commune of Varnavas bought almond trees and vines at a low cost from the government and resold them to the villagers. Turkondonis, the head of the Agricultural Committee, has planted several hundred almond trees. They are now about three years from a marketable crop. A few figs are grown, but usually only for the household. Gigantes, the giant beans, green beans, okra, tomatoes, cabbage, cauliflower, and squash are grown by the farmers whose plots of land can be easily irrigated. This is a mountainous region, and there is no irrigation system for large fields, such as one finds on the plains. It would require a huge government investment to make the fields of Varnavas fertile, and the yield, because of the rocky ground, the heavy rains and erosion, would still be small. The government’s agricultural experts seek to make the life of the peasant a little less difficult by showing him how to prune his trees, spray his crops, and fertilize them. But one of their main problems is to find a way to halt the flight from the rural areas to the urban agglomerations.

In short, both villages are poor, there are few facilities, the land is fragmented, and life is difficult. Few villagers have a regular cash income, although some men work irregularly in Athens or local industries. Most of the regular incomes seem to be pensions of one sort or another. Although there is electricity, water in both still comes from a communal faucet. Bus service, although regular, is infrequent. There are no doctors. Each village has a school that goes up to the sixth grade; to go to high school children must make a round trip of between fifty and sixty miles to an Athenian suburb.

I chose Milesi and Varnavas for study in the first place because I wanted two villages which would be fairly typical of mainland villages in their general social structure, pattern of farming, per capita income, and so forth, and at the same time, were close enough to an urban agglomeration such as Athens, for the city to act as a magnet to those who wanted to leave. People in Milesi and Varnavas can, if they are willing to leave early in the morning and return late at night, work in Athens at whatever jobs they can find, usually unskilled labor. By virtue of their location, then, it would be easier, I reasoned, for them to leave the land if they wished. Family conflicts might emerge because of the children's wish to move to Athens for entertainment or a better way of life.

The physical proximity of the two villages to Athens has made a difference in their relations with the central government. Until the coup of April, 1967, there was a strong system of patronage. A villager might approach a person he considered to be his patron to ask him to intercede on behalf of his application for a loan from the Agricultural Bank or his appeal to the tax collector. Whether or not the patron actually did anything is beside the point. The villager believed that he was to some extent controlling his fate in this way; it had been part of his culture for over five hundred years. The political system was organized so that an individual's political strength depended on his establishing and maintaining local power bases; politics was a system of rewards, and he voted for the person who could do the most for him. This obviously inhibited the emergence of national political parties, since they could not be so broadbased as to satisfy all of the local "veto" groups.

Although some changes have been made since the coup of 1967, the ministries and types of office have remained basically the same (Tsouauissis 1967: V,3-4). One class of official, the nomarch, has charge of a specific region and department. There is, for example, a nomarch for Attica, or for Boetia. In many respects the nomarch is comparable to a governor in the United States. Before villages and communes may spend money on projects he must be consulted; nothing is done without his approval. But there are overlapping bureaucracies. The Ministry of Education makes decisions about the school system within the department over which the nomarch has jurisdiction. Policies are instituted, then, at higher levels of administration and the nomarch puts them into effect, sometimes interpreting them.

Before the coup, a citizen might have tried to control his destiny by appealing to the government at several different levels. He might have had a friend or relative in one of the ministries, who "knew somebody," and he would
that channel first. He might also have gone to the nomarch, for one of the more intriguing aspects of the Greek system of government is the fact that an ordinary citizen can have direct access to powerful men. (The nomarch of Attica, for example, on one day a week would see—and still does—anybody who lined up in the hall outside of his office.) This entrenched the patronage system, for appeals were seldom made on the merits of an issue; rather, the villager tried to find some personal connection to whom he could refer when he approached the nomarch.

When the military government took power it vowed to eliminate patronage. That it has failed to do so should come as no surprise. The old system of patronage has simply been replaced by a new one. The villager accepts the patron-client pattern of relationships as a way of dealing with uncertainty, and while the military regime has introduced different uncertainties into the system, it is still being dealt with by traditional means. Nomarchs, village councils, ministers, and numerous civil servants have been replaced by men close to the new regime. This means that the villager has had to look for new patrons, usually within the military sector. While the people of every administrative district have always had access to their nomarchs, they do not all try to intervene at the ministerial level. Milesi and Varnavas are close to Athens, and people there who are quarreling or who want something, can go to the central government by taking a short bus ride. The village president of Varnavas spent most of his time in Athens, appealing to "connections" he had in the new government. As he was returning from Athens, Krepis, the village secretary, or Turkondis, the head of the Agriculture Committee was on his way there, each to plead his own case or his relatives' on some issue. Their behavior is adaptive in that they can deal with their present situation; but maladaptive in that they are obstructing their own adjustment to a meritocracy or a world of cooperative endeavors.

I do not have actual data on villages more remote from Athens and the central government; however, my impressions from visiting several of them and reading the accounts of their social systems (Friedl 1962, Sanders 1962, Mendras 1958, and especially Fermor 1958 and 1966), suggest that the inhabitants are more likely to solve their problems by themselves, and to have a more stable community, if the government is not close at hand. Thus closeness to Athens and the central government may contribute to the disorganization of Milesi and Varnavas.

However, to assume that closeness to Athens means closeness to the values of modern, urban order, is incorrect. I was sitting in Yannis' coffeehouse when a man got off the bus to Kapandriton. He had a battered leather suitcase in his hand, and wore an old brown pork-pie hat and a tweed overcoat with padded shoulders that reached almost to his ankles. Announcing that the "dentist" had come to town, he borrowed one of Yannis' tables to set up outside. Anything new in the village always draws the crowd, and this stranger, unpacking strange gear from an old suitcase in the middle of the square was no exception. He began his pitch:

"I'm here to pull teeth with absolutely no pain... I have a medicine here that can make you feel nothing. It will be as though you were in a hypnotic trance." He then got out a large wooden mortar and pestle and began to mix a bright lilac liquid. "This liquid can be used instead of an injection. Those of you who are afraid of needles needn't worry." Pausing in his preparation, he began to wave a tattered book in front of the audience.

Here I have the testimonials of numerous people that I have helped. Their lives were miserable, they had backaches, and their sex lives were troubled—and all because of bad teeth. Our mouths, gums, and teeth all carry viruses. These are small organisms that can cause infections in your mouth and before you realize what is going on in you, you are dead. That's why I am here, with this miraculous medicine, to save you from death. Now who will be first?

There was much discussion among the crowd, and then old Mr. Cordelis came forward. The "dentist" took out a piece of cotton, and, after seating Mr. Cordelis, began the operation. "Gentlemen, do not think I am a real doctor, because I am not. All of the doctors have recognized the value of my medicine and profit from it. Do they think I am stupid?" Reaching into his suitcase he took out a small pack of white powder and began to rub some on Mr. Cordelis' gums and teeth.

I have heard of people saying that a man can die of heart attack. This is not the case. There is an artery in our hearts which goes back to our ears, and from there to our eyes, nose, and mouth. When a virus has infected this artery, it means that no blood can come through. The result is pain! Your gums ache. (The onlookers began gingerly to touch the backs of their necks and the sides of their mouths.) You get headaches, and as the infection grows worse the artery is destroyed and the man dies of a bad heart. Yes, gentlemen, this little virus can send you to the other world. You have often seen people about to collapse, but all they've got is a virus in their mouth! You need to keep your mouth clean and uninfected. Buying and using this medicine can give you a healthy mouth even if you have bad teeth.

He now took a pair of dentist's forceps, extracted Mr. Cordelis' tooth, and held it up for the crowd to admire. Admitting there was no pain, Mr. Cordelis had two more teeth pulled. Others, taking courage from his example, had their teeth pulled, and several bought packets of the miracle powder.

Why do people make use of this dentist's service instead of going to Athens, to a private dentist, or a government clinic? This village dentist makes an appeal to the people that shows them he is one of them. He has a medicine whose secret he will not sell. The villagers can see him performing, and the immediate results. To go to a dentist in Athens, whether private or public, is to confront "others." Bureaucracies, professions, and individuals representing them are all regarded with more than ordinary suspicion: "Why should I go to a dentist in Athens? He will just charge me more for what this man can do. Why should those dentists tell the truth? And yet those people in the cities pretend they do not lie!" As urban dwellers these officials and practitioners assume the ethical values of probity and professional integrity, and the villager has no faith in them.

The unique Greek peasant culture is strong in the two villages. Yet dislocation and change are already under way. Under Turkish domination, when the pressures on the land were not as great as they are now, the villagers' strategies of dealing with their life-situation were adaptive. World War II
and the Civil War which followed it reaffirmed basic values and increased the desire for security—or lack of conflict and change—among the villagers. Now, however, Greece has new requirements. More food must be produced. The country must move toward industrialization to provide the people with jobs, and to raise their standard of living. The villagers must cooperate with one another. Yet their custom of patronage, their desire for security, and their system of fatalistic beliefs inhibit ability to adjust to a changing world.

CHAPTER II

THE VILLAGES IN TIME

Milessi

In many ways the village of Milessi has been left behind by time. I sat in the white-washed coffeehouse and I listened to old Mr. Voulos tell how it was founded. He was interrupted and corrected by those who drifted in and out. Occasionally, Vathis, the village secretary, would elaborate on Voulos' remarks.

Milessi dates back to the early 1800s, but nobody really knows what happened until 1872. Lekas, the first settler, came when there was nothing there. All he had for shelter was a hollow tree, around which he arranged logs, branches, and stones to protect his family from wild animals. Lekas fed his family handfuls of boiled grain. With an old flintlock rifle he killed rabbits and birds for food. After three years, he convinced three friends from his native village to settle in Milessi with him. The four families were on land owned by a rich man called Siggros, to whom they proposed that he build a house in return for work on his land and payment in kind. Siggros did build them a small house and the families crowded in together. After seeing how well they worked and how productive they were, Siggros built them a larger house, with a stall for the animals and a storage room for the grain.

Six years after Lekas had arrived the families built a small church, Aghia Paraskevi, enlarging it as the years passed and their numbers increased. The village grew slowly through natural increase and immigration until by 1928 there were forty families, or about 170 people. Old Voulos noted that the children of one family married the children of another; he could remember only two strangers or foreigners—a gardener from an Athenian suburb and a forest guard—moving into the area.

Although the original arrangement with the landlord was adhered to,
people soon became discontented and felt that they were being exploited. When Siggros ran for state deputy, none of the people of Milessi voted for him; he lost the election and shortly thereafter died of a heart attack. Everyone in the coffee house agreed that he died because he could not bear the shame of losing the election and facing the villagers.

At this time, the government was instituting land reform measures, breaking up large land holdings in order to deal with the influx of refugees from areas occupied by the Turks. (After the Greek defeat in Anatolia in 1922, thousands of displaced Greeks and "exchanged" populations came to the mainland.) On the death of Siggros his land was divided among the forty families then living there. Each family, according to its size, got between eleven and twelve acres of land. The bulk of the land, about 800 acres, was given to the Amalian orphanage, but by trespassing upon it, most of the villagers increased their holdings.

I asked Voulous and the others in the coffeehouse if anything, other than the war, had ever happened in the village. They recalled the earthquake of 1938. The whole village was literally destroyed, and many people died, among them the teacher and her daughter and the priest and his son. The government helped with the rebuilding, and one of the sheds built then as temporary housing still stands at the edge of a hillside, housing one family. Tremors, occurring fairly regularly, remind the villagers constantly of this tragedy; many houses carry the scars of the tremors and of the continual erosion of the land. An average of one house a year in Milessi is destroyed by earth movements, either because it slides down the hill, or because it is so badly damaged by the settling of the earth as to be no longer habitable. Why don't the people move? "Where is there to move to?" asked Voulous. "And besides, we've lived here all our life."

Varnavas

Walking down the twisted, rocky streets of Varnavas one sees the walls of century-old houses and buildings crowded up against or attached to the raw brick houses built in recent years. Some say that the village dates back to 300 B.C.; and indeed, ancient artifacts, uncovered and authenticated there, give grounds for the belief that people have lived in this place since ancient times.

The village secretary, Krepis, was able to piece together some of the history of the village from the stories told him by his father and grandfather. At the beginning of the nineteenth century, they said, there were fifteen or twenty families in the village. Some had come from Euboea, a large island immediately off the eastern coast of mainland Greece, others from Cyprus and the Peloponnese, and still others from Albania—perhaps twenty or thirty of the oldest villagers can still speak an Albanian dialect. In 1801 the village had at least fifty families; in the oldest church in the village a weathered sign gives the names of the families who built it. The village grew naturally, and there was much intermarriage.

The first settlers raised goats, cattle, and sheep on the rocky but green mountain slopes. As in Milessi, land holdings were small until the government began programs of reform. Previously, and during the Turkish occupation, there were essentially four ways in which land was owned. First, many lands were owned outright by the Sultan and/or deeded or granted to certain Greeks who maintained what were essentially fiefs. Property was also owned by commune, a group of small villages, or a village of some 500 people, who would decide how it should be used. Sometimes the inhabitants of independent villages or head villages (kephalochoria) owned land. Finally, much land was owned by monasteries and nunneries. The Turkish holdings, which were, of course, broken up after the War of Independence, usually passed as large tracts to wealthy Greek landlords, but the Land Reform Acts of 1917 turned much of the land back to private cultivators (Sanders 1962: 64-65).

Almost the whole area of Varnavas was owned by the Monastery of Petra-kí, which is near Athens. The village managed to secure title to the land after a series of court trials, and began farming it under a system by which a commune council, elected by the villagers, set land rents. Some of the first monies were used to begin construction of a church, the roads, and wells. In 1928 land was taken from a second monastery, and also from a rich landowner, Helen Ketzeki; over 1400 acres were deeded to 160 families. The villagers no longer had to pay in kind, and were able to cultivate and raise crops they could not raise before.

Krepis pointed out, though, that the villagers are now fighting exactly the opposite problem. Before 1967, when the colonels took power, the 2500 acres of forest were controlled by the communal council. If anyone trespassed, the commune dealt with the matter, usually in a lenient fashion. Most trespassing took the form of gathering firewood in the forest, pasturing sheep there, or hunting without permission. Now the government, according to Krepis, wants to take the land away from the commune. The villagers are indignant for they have used this area in this fashion for almost fifty years. In point of fact, they encroached on the land to such an extent that they have almost completely denuded it by overgrazing and taking firewood. Erosion is now a problem and the runoff from the forest carries silt to the lake of Marathon which is almost five miles away. But the villagers do not understand that as their problem.

The history of both villages is one of a constant struggle to acquire land. Great suffering has accompanied the villagers' patient efforts to become independent landowners; yet their plots are now broken into small, widely scattered parcels of land.

Milessi and Varnavas at War

Three wars have interrupted the life of these villages in the 20th century. Sitting in the sun in his yard, Balokís explained how he had managed to escape the draft in World War II: his boss, a civil engineer, knew a doctor, who issued him a certificate exempting him on medical grounds. Grandfather Balokís came and sat down beside his son, and worked himself into a com-
fortable position to tell about the war with the Turks in Anatolia. I asked him why he fought.

How should I know why we fought? We fought. What was it all for? We could not keep any of the land we won. Do you know we even got to Ankara? We got right outside, but we were so exhausted we could not make it any further. Those damn mountains, we could not pass them. The Turks fought like dogs, and we had already collapsed. We had no food, no supplies, and hundreds of casualties. The wounded lay there and died. I had the same bandage on my leg for eight days. But who was there to change it? We tore up our shirts for bandages. We killed goats and sheep in deserted villages. For months we had almost nothing but boiled meat. But we still fought. And what for? Do you know what happened to us? I was one of the first Greeks into Eskisehir (a town about 150 miles west of Ankara). Our group dropped down exhausted for the night. The next morning our own pilots bombed us before we could get our flag unfurled so they would know who we were. They finally stopped, but fifty of us got killed. We were being driven back; we were mad from deprivation and anxiety and we went crazy; we behaved like maniacs. We burnt villages as we retreated; raped women, killed babies. Those Turks we put in prison ships bound for Salonika we threw into the hold of the ship. When they asked for water we threw their canteens into the sea.

I found Helen Volgaris’ father, Dinos, in the coffeehouse and small grocery store she ran in Varnavas. Was he in the wars, I asked?

Of course. What madness it was then! All of us were crazy about the Megalo (great) Idea to take back Constantinople and Ankara too. The Turks weren’t any good as fighters, but they were good killers. How brutal they were I almost can’t describe. They raped girls, cut off people’s heads, ripped open stomachs. We didn’t bother Turkish villagers in the beginning but later we began to take revenge. We burnt villages, fields, killed animals. We did what they did!

Grandfather Volgaris’ brother, Demetri, had been in the war against the Turks, too. He told a similar story, pointing out why the Greeks lost the war.

I will never forget what I saw when I went into a little Greek town in Macedonia after the Turks had left. Everything had been destroyed. In the houses people’s heads were in one room, and their bodies in the next. The girls were raped and were laying naked, and dead, on the ground. The Greek general who was supposed to be guarding the town had been bribed by the Turks to remove his troops! I know, because I was there. We lost the war because of the corruptibility of our generals.

What the villagers carried home from the wars with the Turks was not just images of the Turks, but of their own armies being demoralized—or a belief that they were—which still prevails. When the villager talks about the “corruption” of the Army and the government, he means that certain officials are corrupt. The idea of The Army and The Great Idea transcend the particular situation, the loss of the war had nothing to do with the rightness or wrongness of the concepts. Simultaneously, the ideas are glorified and the system’s imperfections are recognized.

World War II and the Civil War that followed had an even profounder impact on the political attitudes of the villagers. The fascist troops of Italy were not able to defeat the Greeks and finally, by the first of June, 1941, Hitler’s troops gained control of Greece, except for some remote areas dominated by the guerillas.

World War II and the aftermath of the Civil War brought untold suffering
to all of Greece. A conservative estimate is that over 500,000 Greeks died as their direct or indirect result (Smothers, et. al. 1948: 72). In Athens, 2,000 Greeks died by starvation during the winter of 1942. The streets were empty of traffic and silent except “for the groans and death-rattles on strangely littered pavements where the clean-up vans hadn’t turned up yet for the afternoon’s work” (Andrews 1967: 30). When the Germans finally withdrew from mainland Greece in October, 1944, they destroyed much of the country’s life-support systems. They blew up railroad bridges, tunnels, and miles of track, dumped freight cars in the Corinth Canal, destroyed homes, burned barns, leveled schools and churches, shot horses, cows, sheep, and goats, cut down fruit trees, and poisoned wells (Heurtley, et. al. 1967: 143-151, and Sarandoglu, et. al. 1963: 4).

The fighting did not end with the retreat of the Germans. Civil War broke out between leftist and Communist guerilla forces on one side and the reorganized Greek army, equipped and aided by British and American forces, on the other. It lasted until 1949, and produced deep and lasting divisions among the Greek people (Campbell and Sherrard 1968: 173-185). It contributed to the refugee problem: 700,000 people from rural, northern Greece are estimated to have fled south. By the winter of 1949 over one-third of the population of Greece was dependent on aid from abroad.

Andreas, who lived in Milessi, remembered:

God only knows what we suffered in the village from the occupation of the Germans and the guerrillas. Which side would you favor? If you were with the Germans, the guerrillas would kill all of your family; if you were with the guerrillas, the Germans would. We starved during the war. Some of the people in the village even ate donkey meat. I had 120 sheep before the Germans came, and I sold the milk and cheese. The Germans thought that I had been supplying the guerrillas and they came for me. I was locked up for twenty days and slapped and kicked by a Greek interpreter. A Greek, not a German, beat me. We are the worst kind of traitors. I kept saying to myself, “Today you will leave, or tomorrow, but you will and then it will be your turn.” Another prisoner told me that they were going to kill half of my sheep one day, and the other half the next. After that I would be set free. They killed my sheep. Before they would let me go I had to get a certificate from them to show that I had not escaped. I was in their office and they were frying eggs and listening to the radio from Germany. The report of Hitler’s attempted assassination left them dumbfounded. The eggs burned.

During the German occupation guerrillas had killed twelve German soldiers close to the village and kept as prisoners twenty whom they later tortured and killed.

The Germans came to the town and began rounding all of the males up. We were to go to the church yard, and we knew there was going to be a massacre. The Germans went by one home and saw a man lying in bed. Because he was a cripple and couldn’t walk to the church, he was shot there. When the men of the village were being lined up in the church yard some friends of the Germans at Marathon told them the guerrillas were responsible, and not the villagers. So no one else was killed.

The memory of the war is still alive; the villagers’ impressions of World War II and its aftermath shape their current political and social values. Many Greeks are determined not to be involved in any form of conflict again.

To sum up: During the centuries of Turkish domination the Greek people developed the idea of themselves as a people and a nation, but they emerged as an essentially non-Western nation. The nation and church were one in their minds. They came to accept autonomy within the village and family, but the major decision-making power was a centralized bureaucracy. Power, flowing from the top down, was invoked by patronage and/or bribery, and there was little or no chance to practice any form of parliamentary democracy until after the Turks left. When independence finally came, a multi-party system evolved, grounded in personal patronage. The wars which devastated the country developed in many of the people a profound desire for stability and security. The meaning of all their experiences becomes clear when examined in detail in the life of the Greek peasant.
PART II
GROWING UP
IN A GREEK VILLAGE

CHAPTER III

THE FAMILY:
HONOR, PRIDE, AND SHAME

In 1967, when about 40 percent of the total Greek population was rural, the number of births to rural women accounted for slightly less than 40 percent of the total. The rural areas are certainly not outbreeding the urban centers. Bardis (1956) concluded that there seemed to be structural pressures toward a high birth rate in rural families, but these are apparently disappearing. Children, he reasoned, were desired as a form of social security for parents and a sign of male virility and God's favor. To be a sterile wife is regarded as a great disaster. Bardis also noted that early marriage of females was common, and birth control almost unknown (1956: 21). (The population of Greece tends to be stabilizing in the rural areas, but as a consequence, primarily, of out-migration.)

Birth

Alexandrous Antoniades was born in the public hospital in Athens, his mother, Maria, having decided, as many village women now do, to go to Athens instead of having a midwife or a relative to help her. The midwife would probably have come smelling heavily of garlic; and she might have fastened a few cloves of garlic around the baby's neck to ward off the Evil Eye to which infants and women are especially susceptible immediately after childbirth. Few still believe in the Evil Eye, but those who do see it as causing grievous suffering—dumbness, madness and perhaps even death (Lawson 1964: 10-12). Although Maria does not really believe in the Evil Eye, she did fasten around little Alexandrous' neck a small necklace of blue beads, supposedly especially effective in warding it off. When Maria goes back to the village and the villagers inquire after the health of her three children, they will add the ritual statement, "May they live for you!"
Maria's mother, Eleni, is in the hospital room, rocking the tightly swaddled Alexandrous in her arms. For about the next three months he will remain swaddled to "grow straight and tall." There are other women in the room, and there is a constant bustling about of relatives, coming in and out, bringing food, candy, small presents, and sometimes complete meals. In some cases, the relatives (a mother, or husband) may sleep overnight on the floor. Maria's room does not look like a room in an American hospital. The four beds in her room do not match, for each woman brought some of her best dowry linen to cover the bed and pillow, as well as their new baby. (In some of the more "modern" hospitals the mothers are being allowed less freedom to bring in their own clothing, food, and so on.) Covering the foot of her bed, Maria has a bright orange and red wool coverlet which she made when she was fourteen. Friedl (1958) aptly described the trip to the hospital as a family affair. Maria has not been left alone through her labors; nor would any member of her family, whatever their affliction.

Little Alexandrous will be nursed by his mother for more than fourteen months. No mother in the village uses a bottle to feed her infant. For a long time he will be on a demand schedule and his feedings will be private. No Greek mother is seen with her baby's head inside an open blouse, a common sight in western countries. Alexandrous will sleep for a long time in the same room as his mother and father, perhaps even until he is an adolescent.

As soon as possible after Maria has brought Alexandrous back to the village he will be baptized, so that he can wear a cross or have a small icon. His father, Costos, has already been receiving the congratulations and good wishes of his friends and neighbors. Costos now has two children, and one daughter. (When I asked Greek people how many children they had, they might quickly answer, then add, "Oh, pardon me, and I have one daughter too.") Costos is lucky, not just because he has two "children," but because he has only one daughter. He has only Kiki's dowry to concern himself with, and in that he will probably have the help of his two sons.

María and Costos asked Eleni and Marko Palamas to be the godparents at Alexandrous' christening. Traditionally the sponsors at their wedding should have been chosen, but if several children are born, the younger ones will have different godparents (Sanders 1962: 177). Sometimes local politicians or men who own businesses will be asked to be the koumbaros, the male godparent, because it is a way of establishing a set of mutual obligations, and reaffirming the principle of patronage. After the godparents have been selected, relatives and close friends are told of the ceremony. (In Athens, among the middle and upper classes, formal announcements would be sent out.) Alexandrous' mother will not attend the actual ceremony, because, since it is less than forty days after she gave birth, she is still "unclean." The Koumbaros, the priest, and the child are the central characters in what is truly a village drama.

The new baby will be christened Nikoli Alexandrous. Nikoli is the name of his great-grandfather, and Alexandrous will celebrate his saint's nameday, ignoring his birthday. The priest takes Alexandrous in his arms, turns him to the east, blows in his face to chase away evil spirits, makes the sign of the cross, and urges the fates to protect the child from temptation. He pours perfumed oil and warm water from a large copper basin into the baptismal font, and the smell of orange blossoms fills the air. He plunges the child into the water, raising him up and down three times (only once if he were a girl) while the watching crowd shouts in unison, "Nikoli!" The priest seals the nine openings of his body with holy oil, and Marko, the godfather, puts Nikoli Alexandrous into his bright blue baptismal dress. Marko follows the priest around the font three times as he chants and swings a censer of incense. At the end the crowd cheers and says, "May he live!" "May Nikoli live!"

The godfather is expected to pay the priest, and sometimes the cost is high, in this case about twenty dollars, which is a lot of money to Marko. The party then goes to the home of Alexandrous' parents, where Maria has laid out a large feast. Marko, because he is the godfather, is seated in a special place and waited on throughout the long afternoon and evening of the celebration. It's a happy time for all of the family and the ceremony cements ties with the extended family, some of whom will have come from neighboring villages or Athens, as well as ties they may wish to make with the family of the godparents.¹

Becoming Male or Female

From birth the process of a child's socialization into a system of values goes on. He is teased, shamed, taunted, beaten, kissed, hugged, and patted as he grows up. In Varnavas and Milessi the children are teased by uncles, grandmothers, mothers and fathers, with candy or sweet preserves. The adult tells the child to come to get a present, then snatches it away at the last minute and continues to do so until the child starts to cry or shout, at which point he is given the candy. Friedl (1962: 78) observed that mothers start to nurse their babies, pull the breast away, let the child begin again, and once more pull away. Only after the baby begins to squirm and cry is he fed. This behavior pattern is an important element in a larger one in Greek culture, a pattern of mistrust and deception which runs through nearly all social relations.

Up to a certain age, about when children begin school, they are allowed a great deal of freedom. While this does not extend to "talking back" to their parents, they may fight, destroy property, or refuse to eat or do simple chores, for which they will probably only be scolded. A reason given for such liberties is the parents' realization that all too soon their children's lives will be hard. "Let them alone! They'll suffer soon enough," is a common refrain.

Like a child in any culture, the Greek child engages in a great deal of imitative play at an early age. A little girl sweeps, and a little boy digs holes. But they are quickly chided by their parents if their role-play falls outside the bounds of expected male or female behavior. As the young boy grows up he is made to feel special and important by both parents. When the father returns from work he will first ask his wife what the "children," meaning the boys, did during the day. The mother will pat her son on the head, whispering "my child," as she tells him about "the three basic evils of the world: the fire, the woman, and the sea."—"Yes, my son, it's true, all other women are untrust-
worthy and treacherous." This value, coupled with Greek reverence for the role of mother, is bound to produce ambivalence in the growing boy’s attitude toward women (Spinellis, et. al. 1968). The male child is allowed more physical mobility than his sister: while her brother may go off to play soccer at the school yard, the young girl will be allowed to play only in and around the house.

The children in the villages begin to do what might be considered adult tasks at an early age. Maria Katski, now eleven, has been helping her mother cook since she was seven. She prepares a simple meal for the family when they come home from school in the afternoon, usually fried eggs and potatoes cooked over the small wood stove in the center of the living room. Her mother helps her father in the field most of the time except during the winter months, and Maria runs the house. “I used to play hide-and-seek, but now I only have time for my lessons and cleaning the house.” She complains because her brother and sister don’t help her. “I ask them to bring me water from the village well and they don’t do it, so I beat them. I have work to do here in the house and can’t go all the way to the well.” Maria and her mother quarrel when her mother is at home, and sometimes her mother beats her and her siblings. “My father only scolds us; he never beats us like mother says he will when she tells him what we have done during the day.”

Maria sleeps in the same room with her parents and brothers and sisters. She hopes that when she is married and has a family she and her husband will have a separate room. Her cousin, Koulia, who is a little younger than Maria (9), still plays games such as tag and sometimes builds little houses of soil so “that we can pretend to be housewives and mothers.” Sometimes she has to get water or feed the goat. When she grows up, what does she want?

I want blankets, sheets, dresses, and stockings. I want a husband who will be a good boy and go to the faucet and get the water for me so I won’t have to suffer like my mother. He will have to be very industrious. I want two children, both girls, so they can help me with the housework and bring water from the well.

Just as girls begin to imitate the mother and identify themselves with her role at an early age, boys, too, imitate the father when very young. Nikos Anatasios is now nine years old and has a seven-year-old sister. He helps his father in the field, hoeing, trimming the vines, picking up the olives that his father beats down with the long, flexible, rush thrasher, and picking grapes. He especially likes to help turn the screw on the grape press and watch the colors run out. He has a little dog that he plays with when he is home from school, and that follows him to the well when he gets water. Nikos is one of the few children in the village who has a bicycle. That is his favorite toy and he is the only one who rides it.

The Greek male child quickly learns the ritual that is expected of all males. When I went to talk to Andreas, and found that there was no one home, except Dino, a son aged ten, I was invited into the house and asked to wait because his father would be right back. Dino got me a chair, asked me if I were comfortable, and then without saying anything else went off to the kitchen. Soon he was back with the traditional sweets that one inevitably receives when he visits a Greek house: a small serving of cherry preserves on a plate with a spoon, a glass of water; and Dino had added a peeled apple, and a small glass of a sweet liqueur. Following the custom, I took the preserves, dropped the spoon in the water, and drank while Dino watched, pleased that everything had gone as it was supposed to. While I was eating the apple, Andreas returned, and I told him what Dino had done. He was very proud. The Greek male takes over the role of host in the home. His wife supports the role, but does not intrude, for the male is concerned that the proper ritual is performed and that his guest is made to feel welcome.

The mother’s role is dominant throughout the child’s life. Paniyoites’ wife said that she beat the children much more often than he did. Once when her older son would not come to the fields to feed the goats, and ran away, she followed him and caught him. She beat him so badly, according to her own account, that he was sick for two days. “Now when I recall this, I feel guilty and cry about it,” Maria says. “But he often says to me, ‘Mother, I remember that beating and the good it did me.’ And he has turned out to be a good, honest boy.”

Such guilt seems to be commonly felt by the mothers. Angie told how she had to go away and leave her child, Maria, by herself.

Then I found that she had been taking things out of our house and giving them to the neighbors. I caught her at it and beat her so badly that she never did it again. You know how hard our work is and we are under stress all day long. We beat our children for trivial reasons. It is not an effective way to get them to do what you want. They only become worse. Parents should reason with their children, and teach them to respect others and themselves. To get good results you should speak gently to them.

Nevertheless, every child I talked to could recall at least one severe beating by the father.

So, although Greece may appear at first glance to be a completely male-dominated society, the mother exercises her influence in numerous ways. She is around the children more frequently; she seems to be the primary disciplinarian; she continually chides her children and shapes their self-image; she bolsters, in particular, her male child’s ego by continually telling him that he will be an important man, that he will not have to take second place to anyone, and that other women are evil. I came to call what happens to the male child the Alexander complex. He is made to feel that the kingdom of Greece is his for the taking, and that if he does not get it, it is because someone tricked him out of it. (For a discussion of the difference between reality and appearance in the position of Greek peasant women see Friedl 1967: 97-108).

Greek Values

Seldom will a child be read to by parents, partly because illiteracy is common among adults in the village; but occasionally a grandparent, or mother or father, tells them little stories with a moral, such as those from Aesop’s Fables, or stories from the shadow theater which dramatize how the tricky Greek
Karaghiozi managed to fool the Jewish merchants, Moishe and Yacob, or the Turks.

Once, while waiting at Turkodonis’ house for him to return, I asked his boy,
Tulo, to tell me a story that he liked. He chose one from the shadow theater
which he liked because it showed how stupid the Turks were:

It was time for the election of the mayor, and the pasha did not want the old
mayor, Dionysus, to win. So he called Hatzaiwati, the place steward, and gave him
fifty pounds to find another candidate and make sure that he was elected. Hatzai-
wati decided to ask George, the uncle of Karaghiozi. He found George in the
mountains with his sheep, explained the plan to him, and gave him fifty pounds
to win the election. Now, Karaghiozi was always interested in finding ways to
gain good food, so he went to his uncle and urged him to run for the position
of mayor. He told him, though, that he needed to learn to speak nicely to the pasha.
He first tried to teach George to say, “Comment aller-vous? Bien!” But try as he
might, Uncle George could not say it. So Karaghiozi told George that he need only
say, “Of course, my pasha.” George went to see the pasha and was asked if he wanted to run for mayor. “Yes, my pasha.” Would George do whatever the pasha asked? “Of course, my pasha.” Would George make a good
speech? “Yes, my pasha.” Did George know that the pasha would have him
beaten if he lost the election? “Of course, my pasha.” Hatzaiwati gave some money
to Karaghiozi to make sure that people yelled and cheered at Uncle George’s
speech. George promised the people that he would build airplanes and roads,
and improve the village. He would put rollers under the farmers’ feet so that they
would travel more quickly. The people cheered and clapped. As soon as the first results came in, Karaghiozi told George he had won and to order a
banquet. During the banquet George found out that he had lost, and beat Karag-
ghiozi, but he didn’t care, because he had a good meal!

The man admired is crafty. The Greek child soon learns that cunning is re-
warded; there is, in fact, a term to refer to the child who is clever and bad at
the same time, poniyros (Friedl 1962: 80). “Hey, you little devil, Demetri,
come and let mamma give you some candy.” “Yes, a smart man can make a
lot of money.” “You have to know the tricks to get by in this world.” I do not
think it is stretching a point to suggest that four hundred years of Turkish oc-
cupation instilled in the peasants the values, deceit and cunning. It was a form
of adapting to the conqueror, corresponding to the same manner in which the
southern black in the United States coped with slavery. Almost every observer
of Greek society notes the stress on guile and secrecy in practically all aspects
of life. I had thought that other writers exaggerated in reporting that people
waiting for a bus are evasive about their destinations. But villagers actually
hide in their homes, or loiter around the coffee houses, giving no sign of going
anywhere, then run out and jump on the bus when it arrives. And on returning,
they are equally evasive.

A child comes to expect that even close relatives will be dishonest. I asked
a ten-year-old boy if he had celebrated his nameday and been given presents.
“No, I didn’t get any presents. My parents said they couldn’t buy me any
presents, but they bought other things.” A person socialized by teasing, decepti-
don, and ridicule comes eventually as a matter of course to suspect other’s
behavior. He begins carefully to hide his feelings for, if others knew what he
felt, he would be more vulnerable to attack. Clearly, this pattern of behavior
does not lend itself to the development of neighborly trust, cooperation or the
sharing of common goals. Whatever the behavior of another, the question will
be asked: “What will that person get out of it?” or “How will his actions harm
me?” The desire for secrecy and the need to guard one’s behavior sometimes
prevent what is going on from being known even to members of one’s immediate
family.

To illustrate: when Yannis Hristofis was seized by the local gendarmes one
day as he was leaving for the fields, his tearful wife tried to find out why, “Be-
cause he did not come to court!” This explanation made no sense to her. Yan-
nis told her what had happened only after she promised not to breathe a word
to anyone: he owed about $100 on a small tractor and had not been making
payments. His creditor approached him several times but, getting no satisfac-
tion, took him to court. The court ordered a hearing but Yannis did not come
because cases were heard in a village only four miles away, and he was afraid
that one of his neighbors would see him there and tell everyone in Varnavas.
Because he did not come, the court ordered him arrested and fined him $330
in addition to the money he already owed. Yannis wanted his wife to get him
out of prison before anyone found out, and meanwhile his children and neigh-
bors were told that he had found a job in Athens on a construction project and
would be away from home for a short time. Anastasia went to her brother-in-
law, Andreas, and pleaded with him to do something, but to keep absolutely
quiet about the affair, lest they should “all be ruined.” Andreas came to me
for advice. I got a lawyer in Athens, who, I could assure Andreas, would keep
quiet, to see what could be done. Yannis and his relatives had to pay his fine
of $330, close to one-third of any single family’s yearly income. Relatives be-
egan to put together the sum, but they still needed a large amount, and Yan-
nis’ godfather, who ran a large truck farm on the coast, made up the differ-
ence.

Children grow up in a culture in which secrecy and deceit are common parts
of everyday life. And so is lying. Parents lie to their children about little
things continually. “If you are quiet Niki, I will give you a sweet.” Niki may
or may not get the sweet; it has nothing to do with whether or not she was
quiet. “Yannis, go in the other room. Father has a present for you.” Yannis’
father is not home. In the coffee house, the conversation begins with the
words, “Now let me tell you a few lies.” “I am going to tell you a lie now, so
listen closely,” I was told while sitting in front of someone’s fire.

One learns to conceal his inner feelings and regulate his behavior in front of
strangers and those outside the family. This pattern of socialization is back-
uped by the immediate family, the extended family, other villagers, and
the school system. A child learns shame. “The quality of shame which the
villagers want to emphasize in their children is an inner sense of embarras-
ment at the thought of improperly revealing oneself—either the physical self
(modesty) or the inner emotional self (Friedl 1962: 85). A child is “ashamed”
if he is bashful. Women retreat from rooms where men are because they are
“ashamed.” One apologizes for his clothing when he is working in the muddy
fields. One is “ashamed” when he is caught in misconduct, or in exhibiting
bad manners.

Hearing his parents continually repeat stories about “others,” a child comes
to recognize that he is a member of a distinct family group that must guard
itself against “others.” In short, he learns that he is a member of an in-group
and his honor and the honor of his family depend on his support of it. Other
people’s behavior, both verbal and nonverbal, must be examined for motives.

Children of immediate neighbors will play with one another, or with the
children of one’s relatives. It would be unusual for a child to walk even fifty
yards to play in the yard of a child to whom he was not in some way related.
The little children have few toys, and play noisy games of tag, or keep-away
with someone’s hat. If their big brothers do not have the soccer ball, then the
little ones left at home may kick it back and forth to one another in the yard.
(Even though the children play rough games and frequently hit one another,
they are careful with their toys, which consequently last for some time. When
Kiki’s bicycle was broken, her ten-year-old brother spent one afternoon patching
it together with wire and odds and ends from his father’s storage shed.)
The younger children tease one another, tormenting the less agile or the men-
tally slower. In Milessi and Varnavas one of the children’s main sources of
amusement is throwing stones at the dogs; from some safe place where the
dogs cannot get at them they shower them with stones. They also look upon
any of the fruit peddlers or junk dealers passing through the village as fair
sport. As the junk peddler comes up the rocky road calling out “Old brass,
old copper!,” the children run along mocking him and making up variations
on his chant.

In quarrels the villagers quickly divide along family lines. The very struc-
ture of the Greek house reflects the desire for privacy and secrecy. To go from
one’s own front door to the front door of one’s neighbor who lives fifty feet
away, may involve a walk of over a block. Houses are enclosed with five- or
six-foot stone walls, or, if the villager can not afford the time or money for
stone walls, he may build walls of brush. If one family is not friendly with the
family next door, the two front doors are built facing in opposite directions.
Each family has its own outdoor cooking stove and shares no facilities with
others, even when it would be more convenient and practical to do so.

The Greek children guard their toys and do not share. Any major toy, a
bicycle, a soccer ball, an expensive doll, represents an important expenditure
for a village family. (A good soccer ball, for example, will cost about $10.)
Children signal to the neighbors and the neighbors’ children that their toy is a
piece of private property, not to be trespassed on. Many homes have display
dolls on the mantle piece. They are not to be played with; they serve a sym-
bolic purpose. Not sharing one’s toys with members of the out-group serves a
further purpose: it defines the boundaries of the system to a child, and repre-
sents a socially acceptable form of aggression.

One rainy afternoon we were in a coffee house in Varnavas talking to the
village president and some of his friends. My daughter Amy, who was about
two-and-a-half, was trying to play with the toys of the six-year-old daughter of
the owner, who became very upset. (When my wife got up to try and stop the
fight over the toy, she was simultaneously told by every adult in the coffee-
shop, “It’s O.K.! It’s O.K.!”) There is a merging, then, of the values relating
to secrecy and to possessiveness. They are both means by which the family
sets itself off from the out-group, and affirms the behavior that is regarded as
acceptable for the in-group.

As the children grow older they will have instilled in them another value
that is basic to the Greek society, and that is philotimo. There is no easy way
to translate this word for it means a multitude of things, simultaneously reff-
ering to honor, pride, shame, and self-esteem. One’s philotimo is the product
of the interaction between him and the small groups with which he associates.

Since the view of self in Greek society is so much dependent on the group, honor
is then not only the values of the individual in his own eyes, but also in the eyes
of the larger society. Thus, the central sanctioning force in the notion of an honorable
person is self-regard and shame vis-a-vis his group. Self-regard becomes then the
inner necessity with obligation to achieve identity with the image of the ideal self,
an ideal image which is basically a stereotype presented by society, with little
room for individual speculatition (Vlahos 1969: 95).

This means in essence that the individual is almost wholly identified with the
group, and the emergence of the individualist is inhibited (Pollis 1965: 29-47).

Philotimo is not a purely male characteristic, although the term is generally
applied to the male. The self-esteem of both males and females in Greece is
high. Using Rosenberg’s esteem scale (Rosenberg 1965), I found that over
ninety percent of males and females responded positively to all esteem items
and that there was no significant difference between the scores on the esteem
scales between men and women. In Greek society the person without philotimo
would be truly a hollow man. One’s sense of honor, then, means that he
does not let other people down, particularly members of his immediate (nu-
clear) and his extended family. Because of his philotimo he does not involve
himself in behavior that would shame his family, or in some cases even his
community (Sanders 1962: 283-284). He is judged by his in-group, and to
them he is trustworthy and sincere, responding to their generosity with more
of his own.

Within his in-group he is expected to fully respect, obey and follow authority. Out-
side of his in-group, he is expected to be competitive, outmaneuver his rivals, if
necessary cheat them, and defy any outside authority (Spinellis, et. al. 1969: 7).

This is one of the reasons for the hospitality shown by the Greek to the out-
sider. Not to show hospitality would be to shame one’s family. As Pitt-Rivers
(1968) has pointed out:

The law of hospitality is founded upon ambivalence. It imposes order through an
appeal to the sacred, makes the unknown knowable, and replaces conflict by
reciprocal honour. It does not eliminate the conflict altogether but places it in
abeyance and prohibits its expression (Pitts-Rivers 1968: 25).

Pitt-Rivers’ discussion applies to the situation of the stranger in a new com-
unity, but it can apply to relations within the community as well. Every
Greek outside of the in-group in the village is potentially an enemy. Therefore
ritualized hospitality is a means of dealing with potential conflict and fore-
stalling it, and a child cannot learn the ritual too early or too well.
Changing Roles and Life Styles

Contact with the city has introduced basic changes in the role of the male and the female in the Greek village, partly reflected in styles of clothing among the younger women. The widows, over the age of thirty-five or so, wear the traditional black skirt, black blouse or sweater, black scarf covering the head, and black lisle stockings. Mrs. Marina has worn her black widow’s scarf for 26 years, and has never had her hair cut in that time. It would be unthinkable for a widowed woman to remarry. If she did so, it would of necessity be someone from outside, and after her marriage she would leave the village, where, if she stayed, she would be shunned. The older women have their heads covered at all times. When I asked Panjiotis’ wife, Maria, why, she replied, “All moral women cover their heads.” The unmarried girls wear, by village standards, short skirts, their present hemlines reaching to the knee-cap. The village girl runs the ever-present risk of being branded immoral; her chances of being married to someone in the village will decrease, and her family may be obliged to pay a high dowry to marry her off if she is classed as a “questionable” girl.

Unlike the men, most of the women in Varnavas, Milesi and the other rural areas of Greece caught between changing values, adhere to old styles of life. Such a one is Marietta, who is twenty-three years old, and has two younger brothers. She did well in school but her father did not think it necessary for a girl to go to high school, for a woman’s place is at home doing housework. Since he could not afford to send all of the children to high school, he sent the older boy, Hercules. But Hercules failed in the first year, and so was sent to Athens to learn to be an electrician. Hercules fell in with bad company, and when his father found out that he was not going to technical school he brought him back to the village.

Marietta spends most of her time alone sewing and sometimes one of the village women pays her for making a dress. She has also been sewing and embroidering her dowry linens since the age of twelve, when she left school. When she can afford it she buys pulp magazines, similar in content to True Romance or True Confessions, at the kiosk. When her parents let her, she visits her friends or her cousins, and they sit and embroider and talk of their future husbands. She used to be able to stop and talk to young men in the village, but now that her parents have engaged her to a man thirteen years her senior from another village, they do not allow it. She still has not met her intended husband, but seems convinced her parents will have done as well as they could for her, considering the size of her dowry. Sometimes Hercules tells Marietta about life in Athens and what it would be like if she did not have to live in the village.

Nowadays women buy clothes from the stores in Athens or from the traveling peddler with his blue panel truck with the loud speaker on top, blaring bazouki music. He sells flower-print dresses, lisle stockings, trousers for the men, underwear, children’s clothing, and other sundries. He lets people buy on credit and pay a little each week on account. For women who do their own sewing a dry-goods merchant comes around about once a month with brightly colored cotton checks, gingham, and flower prints piled on both sides of his donkey. He also sells the red and white checkered oilcloth that covers most of the housewives’ tables.

It seems that the impact of an urban culture is most immediate in the case of the females. The changes that take place in the role of the women as a result of using some prepared foods, buying ready-made clothing, and traveling to Athens to see movies, for example, are significant. Not only have the village women become more mobile; they are more likely to be given higher education, hitherto enjoyed by men only; and they are more likely to marry city men. The urban male, more probably than the urban female, will marry a villager. Thus, while contact with the culture of Athens brings it about that females marry out of the village and live with the realities of an urban lifestyle, the young village males still must make forays into the city for jobs and entertainment.

Contact with an urban environment naturally has meant different things to the males. Many a villager is a farmer and at the same time an unskilled craftsman in Athens. The adolescent male, if he can secure a job in Athens to which he can commute by bus, will probably feel encouraged to take it. He does not, therefore, inevitably take his place beside his father in the field. Further, land fragmentation has meant that it is more and more impossible for a young man in the village to pursue the career of farming; thus he needs the urban job. Often the job is part-time or seasonal, so he combines farming with unskilled labor.

The urban job brings cash to the family and to the village. To the young man it means that he can treat his friends to coffee; more important, it brings him greater freedom from parental control. Some of his income will be spent on entertainment in the city, such as an occasional soccer game, a movie, or just sitting in an urban taverna.

With an increase in urban contact there also comes a growing desire in the male for urban products that he may or may not be able to buy. If possible, he wants sweaters made in Athens, instead of those knit by wives and sisters, and the imported goods and products he sees the Athenian bourgeois enjoy. The goods and services the city offers are a magnet; the young man will seek a job he does not like, in order to become an urban consumer. He may travel abroad to countries he dislikes, in search of work to increase his purchasing power. Of course, much of the money he gains he spends in fairly traditional ways which enhance his family’s position in the village.

As the young people marry and begin to raise families, they grow increasingly conscious of changing values and conditions. Parents of today’s generation in the village feel that children are being indulged. Mrs. Antoni told me:

We used to eat onions, bread and olives. If we did not want it we went to bed without food. Now children eat bananas, milk, and meat three times a week! When I was a child we never ate meat. Today I see my daughter spending all of
her money on food and medicine, and still the children are sick. I was never sick! Do you know where we slept? On the floor. We put a blanket down on the bare floor and we had one long pillow for the eight of us. We had to walk barefoot, or if it was cold we wrapped our feet in a piece of cloth and covered it with goatskin. If someone here was sick and you needed to take him to Athens, it took twelve hours. He would usually die on the way. Women never had good clothes when I was growing up.

Urban culture is also having a profound effect upon the elderly. As the older persons become less able to work full time in the fields, their role changes. If, as is usual, they live with middle-aged children, they take on small chores. Eleni Balokas’ mother, Maria, no longer performs the heavy chores of washing or going to the well for water; she watches the children when Eleni and Costos go to the fields. She prepares simple meals for the children when they come home from school in the early afternoon, and mends clothing that will be handed down until beyond repair from eldest to youngest with little regard for sex. Sometimes Maria will carry her distaff and spindle with her to spin woolen thread when she goes down the road to visit her friend, the widow Koula.

Koula’s husband died during the Civil War and, of course, she has worn black ever since. She sits outside her small white house, in the sun carding wool with two stiff wire brushes. Unlike Maria, she has her own little house behind her daughter and son-in-law’s home. Both Maria and Koula are respected by their families because of their age, and usually command the deference of younger people.

Niki’s father, Demetri, lives with her and her family. Demetri usually rises late in the morning, and one of the children—if they have not yet gone to school—brings him a cup of sweet Turkish coffee with bread and honey. At meal times old Demetri will be served before his son-in-law, although he does not take the place at the head of the table. During the day, he can usually be seen sitting in Peppi’s coffee house, leaning heavily on his black cane and arguing with another of the old villagers who no longer goes to the fields. Older males do not do older “woman’s work,” and would probably be insulted if asked. They would not wash dishes after a big family dinner, nor stoke out the goats for the day but they might be prevailed upon to watch the children for a short time.

Several of the old men who have pensions of one sort or another use the money, if they live alone, to buy the necessities of life, and they cook and clean for themselves. If, as is usually the case, they still have a little house beside, or behind, their children’s house, they will use their small income for buying tobacco, coffee at the local coffee houses for themselves and friends, and occasionally, toys for the grandchildren. In the coffee houses their opinions will be respectfully listened to, and even requested. It is considered quite proper, however, to ignore their advice. For the elderly life moves at a slower pace. They still participate in the yearly rhythms of the village and the passing of the days. They move slowly from one friend’s courtyard to another, catching the sun when it is a good day, drinking coffee inside when it is not. They know they deserve a rest.

Jason, who was sixty-nine when I met him, was born in Cyprus in 1900 and brought to Varnavas in 1908 when his father came there with the entire family of eight to work in the lignite mines. When Jason finished primary school his father took him to a friend in Athens who ran a taverna and got him a job as a waiter. He worked there from 1912 to 1918 but didn’t like it. As he says, finally I came back to the village and got a job with my father in the mines. Sometimes we worked at Grammatikon and other times at Skala Oropos. By 1940 I had saved enough money to buy a truck that I used to haul wood and coal. In the summer I worked in the fields and in the winter in the mines. My wife took my place in the mines when I couldn’t.

Jason stops to cough and sneeze; he suffers from emphysema. “Life in the mines was hell. We could hardly breathe from the coal dust. Our lamps burned blue, instead of red, from the dust. When we worked overtime we would not even bother to come out of the mines. We just dropped on the floors and slept.”

Death

While I was still in Varnavas, Jason died. An old man, he had been ailing for some time, and his family expected the end. They wrapped the body in a funeral shroud of Hecuba’s finest embroidered linen sheets and placed it in a pine coffin on two chairs. His hands were crossed and folded over a white handkerchief. Around his folded hands were wound his amber koumboloi (worry beads). A small tin icon of St. George, his patron saint, slaying the dragon, was placed on his coffin.

Here Jason lay in state for two days while relatives were notified and friends came to pay their respects to the dead and his widow. Those who approached the open coffin bowed and kissed the icon that had been placed at the head. Olive, orange, almond branches and fruit had been placed in his coffin. The crown that he wore at his wedding to Hecuba was on his head. All the mirrors in the room had been covered and the windows were closed so that only a small amount of light entered the room. Female relatives were sitting around the coffin whispering and moaning. Men would not normally be present, for it is the women who publicly demonstrate grief. Some of their behavior is ritualized, such as pulling at their hair; and some, especially the widows, perhaps even scratch their faces, until they bleed. As Jason was old, and his death expected, emotion was less in play.

As the priest came down the road from the church, the men, who had been waiting in the yard, stood up and the women inside came out to meet him. Beginning a chant, the priest entered, and the men followed to pick up the coffin and begin the procession up the steep road to the church and the graveyard behind. Jason’s eldest son, Michaeli, led the procession, carrying the coffin lid with his father’s initials carved on it. He was followed by the men with the coffin, one child carrying a cross and two others bearing large candelabra from the church, dripping wax; and then the priest, the members of the immediate family, and finally friends and distant relatives.

As soon as the coffin was out of the house the older women began the
funeral dirge, or miroiogy. “Father, you were so good to us, and so brave. Now, father, you are leaving your little house, never to return...” The miroiogy is partly ritualized and partly extemporaneous. It follows a definite rhythm and pattern, in which usually the older women are accomplished. If a family can afford it, they may ask one of the women in the village who is especially capable to lead in it. The female relatives joined in at certain parts with refrains and chants that echoed those of the leader of the singing. They would then stop and let someone else continue the miroiogy while they cried, threw back their heads, pulled at their black scarves and hair. As the procession proceeded up the road, people closed their doors and windows, and opened them again after the procession had gone by; they were keeping the “evil” from entering.

The procession entered the church and the coffin was placed in the middle of the nave on a table surrounded by the lighted candles. When the ceremony was over those present kissed Jason on his forehead, and his icon was placed in his hands. The miroiogy began again, as the men picked up the coffin and carried it to the back of the church. A woman came forward with a jar of water and poured it on the earth near the grave. The earth, water, and oil that had been placed in front of the icons in the room where he died were put in the coffin just before it was closed. As the coffin was lowered several people threw stones on it, saying, “May God pardon all of his sins.” The woman with the jar of water came forward and poured a little into the hands of those present, who washed their hands over the grave as a symbol of their forgiveness of the dead.

So far the funeral is a means of relieving the grief of the family through ritual, bringing distant members of the family together, and integrating the nuclear family with the village. It is normally a village ceremony with “enemies” and friends attending, uniting family and community.

Because many relatives had come, there was no room for them all in Jason and Hecuba’s small house, so they had arranged ahead of time to go afterward to Peppi’s taverna for the funeral feast. Here no meat was eaten, but cheese, olives, bread and wine were consumed in large quantity. In more prosperous times another feast would be held later in the evening. On the first anniversary of Jason’s death still another feast is provided for the dead and his surviving relatives.

To sum up: As socialization progresses a person comes to see that he is a member of a close-knit family group that protects him against the vicissitudes of fate and the larger society. Among children the older male child is dominant. This young Greek male, then, reaches adolescence and adulthood with high self-esteem, fully imbued with philotimo. But the child-rearing patterns inhibit his adoption of behavior patterns which are necessary for successful participation in industrial bureaucracies (Vassiliou 1968).

The image that the Greek male develops of females is an ambiguous one, because of his relationships with his mother, who has warned him that women are one of the three natural disasters. Spinellis and her colleagues (1968) coined a phrase, ingratiation with contempt, to describe male-female relations in Greece.

The male child comes to find that philotimo is dependent on an external self-image that is maintained by the in-group. Greece is what I would call a shame culture, as distinct from a guilt culture: behavior is regulated almost exclusively by the necessity to conform to the demands of the in-group. (This is similar to Riesman’s (1950) distinction between the inner-directed man, and the other-directed man: the former has “an internal gyroscope” to guide his behavior, the latter is guided by the restraints of the group.) The guilt-oriented person sees his life as controlled by himself, not the fates, and blames himself for failure. In the shame-oriented culture, failure to achieve in the larger world, at economic enterprises, in school, and in life in general, is attributed to the trickery and deceit of others. (Weber (1958) has suggested that guilt is one of the reasons men succeed in the market place.)

A shame culture is maladaptive for adjustment to a modern society because it prevents belief in the efficacy of individual initiative, and in personal worth. It is assumed with Weber that to succeed in an industrial bureaucracy one must believe it possible to shape one’s own destiny; that what is achieved is a result of individual effort, and that failure is one’s own fault. (This is similar to Du Bois’ view that effort-optimism is a focal value of the middle-class American (Du Bois 1955).) This is a view of men in modern, industrialized societies. It is obviously not the Greek view of life. But it is not self-distrust which shapes the Greek view of life most decisively.

When you do not trust your neighbor, cooperation is almost impossible. Banfield calls “amoral familism” the tendency to “maximize the material, short-run advantage of the nuclear family; (and) assume that all others will do likewise” (1958: 85). To give one illustration: In Varnavas the villagers must walk a long way to the communal well. One president decided that a water project would be instituted, ditches dug, pipes laid, and water brought either closer to some homes, or directly inside them. The village got as far as having the ditches dug, taking advantage of a law specifying that every adult male must contribute a certain number of hours per year to public projects. But one night, before the concrete pipes could be laid, someone broke them. The current explanation is that one of the families probably did not want the president to get credit for bringing water to the village. The intriguing fact is that none of the villagers I talked to seemed particularly angry; this was the way things were. Before new pipes were purchased, the heavy winter rains came and filled in most of the ditches that had been so laboriously dug. “Maybe we’ll have water when the government fixes it,” say the villagers.

1 The expectations that parents have of godparents are described in excellent detail by Andrews (1962: 208-211). He describes how he became a godparent, and what the “moral” nature of this obligation was.

2 Among the items used to measure esteem were these questions: (1) I feel I have a number of good qualities. (2) On the whole, I’m pretty satisfied with myself. (3) I wish I could have more respect for myself. (4) I am able to do things just as well as other people. (5) All in all, I feel that I am a success.
CHAPTER IV

SCHOOL

Nikoli, Yanni, and Demetri all sleep together in the same big bed. It is 6:30 A.M. and they are awakened by the sounds made by their mother and father as they move around in the big front room that serves them all as kitchen, living room, and bedroom during the winter months. Their father must hurry, because the bus leaves the village square for Athens in about ten minutes. He has managed to get a part-time job carrying bricks up long ramps for one of the new apartment houses going up in downtown Athens. Before he leaves, he shouts to his sons to get up to do their chores before school starts at 8:00. The boys, who have been sleeping in their underwear, scuffle with one another as they get out of bed and into their clothes, piled beside the bed on two chairs. Their mother has set out some honey, and the heavy brown bread that she bakes once a week; potatoes are frying in olive oil on the stove. As the children go about the business of getting their own breakfast together, their mother, Katsiki, shouts at them to eat more bread so that they won’t grow up skinny.

Each boy goes about his chores. It is washday, so eleven-year-old Nikoli, the oldest, cuts kindling for his mother to start a fire under the great black iron pot in the yard. Yanni, nine, puts the pack saddle and two large ten-gallon water cans on the donkey; he has just enough time to get to the well and back before school begins. Demetri, six, is the youngest, and his chores are the simplest. He scatters grain for the chickens in the yard. Afterwards, he goes to the stable to look for the three or four eggs that ought to be somewhere in the straw.

Nikoli and Yanni gather up their books, put on their jackets, and race for the schoolyard. Nikoli is in the last year of elementary school, the sixth grade, and Yanni is a fourth-grader. The school of Varnavas is very crowded and the children are taught in two sessions. The older boys will come home at 1:30 for their large midday meal, and their little brother, who is now in the first grade, will go to school from 2:00 until 6 o’clock in the evening.

School is free to all Greek children, and mandatory through the first six grades. Under the Papandreou government compulsory attendance was required for nine years instead of six, and tuition was free at all levels. Papandreou’s most dramatic innovation was to substitute demotike, or the popular, spoken language, for katharevousa, the language of the civil servant and the “educated.”

The military government which assumed power in 1967 changed things back to the way they were before the Papandreou regime. For example, the teaching of katharevousa was reintroduced. As one teacher complained, “Why don’t they make up their minds? First it’s the demotike, now the katharevousa. How do they expect us to control the children? How can we now tell them what they learned last year was wrong?”

The Greek educational system has 3 levels: primary, secondary, and higher. Practically every small village has a primary school, for it is a source of village pride that children should be educated. A child may begin the first grade as young as at the age of five and a half, and he must attend until the age of 14, if he does not complete school in the regular length of time. Those who are working at 13, however, can attend the primary schools which are held at night all over Greece, and may do so up to the age of 20 to complete the six-year course.

Few small villages can afford a high school, or gymnasium, as it is called in Europe, generally. Secondary education normally lasts six years; if away from home it can be expensive for the village family. The first three years are spent in the gymnasium, and the next three in the lyceum. The graduate of a primary school can enroll in a gymnasium without an entrance examination, but entrance into the lyceum usually requires an examination. What is studied in the lyceum determines whether, upon graduation, the student is allowed to matriculate into the university faculties of theology, philosophy, or the school of law (which is similar to a liberal arts program in the United States and is not preparation for the legal profession); or whether he will enter a university that teaches the natural sciences, medicine, and so forth. Secondary education is, then, divided into two basic curricula—theoretical and practical (Statistical Yearbook of Greece 1968: 77). The final step in a student’s career is attendance at one of the universities or polytechnical schools in Greece, or study abroad. Some village students go from the primary school to private schools in Athens and Salonica, to learn a trade or skill.

The National Educational System

In 1961, 98 percent of all Greek children aged six were in primary schools. Eighty-three percent of those over the age of twelve had completed primary education; 37 percent of those aged 12-17 were enrolled in high school or technical school; and, finally, 3.5 percent of those between the ages of 18-23 were enrolled in university (Tsoussis 1967: VI, 5).
Although, as might be expected, a high proportion of the children of professionals are enrolled in the universities, they do not make up a majority of the student bodies. If one looks at the occupational categories of clerks, farmers, fishermen, miners, and craftsmen, their children are seen to account for 51 percent of all students at the university. More and more of the Greek population, at all levels, are enjoying more years of schooling. In 1907, it was estimated that 40 percent of the population aged 10 and over was illiterate. The figure had been cut to 18 percent by 1961. The change for females was more dramatic. In 1907, 80 percent of females were classified as illiterate; in 1961, it was only 27 percent (Statistical Yearbook of Greece 1968: 79). Schools have also increased and by 1966 the number of lyceae stood at 774 (Statistical Yearbook . . . 1968: 3).

These figures do not make the distinction between the quality and the quantity of education. Greece spent 2.6 percent of her GNP in 1961 for education, which placed it on the same level as Turkey, and below industrialized countries such as Sweden, the United Kingdom, and West Germany, which spent almost twice as much of their GNP during comparable periods for education (Tsaousis 1967: VI, 20).

Greek children in grammar school and high school go to school six days a week. The first-grader normally spends between four to five hours a day at school; a student in the secondary schools spends on the average seven. But as was noted in the case of the village school, there may be six classes in one room at one time with sixty or more pupils. The teacher’s duty in situations like this is to maintain order. Students will be taught to sit quietly at their desks until it is their turn to have a lesson. To move around, talk, whisper, is to invite a beating from the teacher.

What are the children taught? There appears to be an overwhelming emphasis on Hellenism, or Greek culture. Approximately 40-45 percent of a student’s time will be spent learning the Greek language, (ancient and “modern,” i.e., katharevousa), a Greek history, which deals mostly with the glories of the Byzantine empire, and religion, or the role of Greek orthodoxy in preserving Christianity, and Greece as a Christian nation (Sanders 1962: 251-252, and Campbell and Sherrard 1968: 385-386). The training of the students, then, is not oriented toward the development of a modern industrial state. Nor does the school present the children with a realistic impression of their capabilities nor of the roles required of them in earning a living. It is true that there are trade schools, farm schools, and other places where a secondary student may go to learn to earn a living, but at the present time, the primary system is turned toward the past.

Under the supervision of the “competent services of the Ministry of National Education and Religion” (Statistical Yearbook 1968: 78), the school system is viewed by the government as a means of transmitting nationalistic and somewhat puritanical beliefs. Shortly after the colonels took power in 1967, they issued a series of edicts forbidding students to look at scandalous movie posters on their way home from school, the girls to wear miniskirts, the boys to have long hair, and they were urged to attend church services every Sunday. The girls are required to wear a uniform. As might be expected, few students paid attention to all of the demands. But the point is that the school curriculum is established in Athens, and it is clearly oriented toward the inculcation of Hellenism. The books that the children carry back and forth between school and home glorify the military history of Greece, and play down or completely ignore military disasters, such as that in Anatolia in 1922. For some students the only “history” is the War of Independence, when Greece threw off Turkish domination in 1821; Oxi Day, when Metaxas said “No!” to the Italians; and the revolution of April 21, 1967, when the colonels seized power.

For the villager, the school is the way out of misery for his children. What is taught and how it is taught he is not really in a position to judge. He knows that educated people are respected, and have jobs. Their children begin school as soon as they can, and if the family can afford it, and the children can pass the necessary examinations, they will continue through the university system.

Schools In The Villages

The status and authority of the husband and wife who teach the six grades between them is unquestioned. Chrisoula Stamou teaches grades four, five, and six, from 8:00 A.M., until 1:30 and his wife, Aghiro, takes the first three grades from 2:00 until 6:00. Yet even though the villager would not question their authority in the classroom, and though they could become village leaders, and an important force for change, they remain foreigners. They do not mix with the other villagers except to pass small talk in the street, and they do not visit the villagers at home to discuss the work of the children. They leave the village as quickly as they can after Saturday classes, and do not return until early Monday morning. Each evening, after Aghiro has finished her classes, the couple closes up the school house, shuts the windows and goes to the room at the back that is their home. There they have dinner with the social worker, who is from the same village as Aghiro—this almost automatically makes them friends in a village of foreigners—and they discuss how stupid their pupils are.

“Who would live here?” Chrisoula says as he gesticulates to the walls around him. “Look at those walls. We would never let our children live in this village.” They have a little girl of two and a half who lives in Athens with Aghiro’s mother because “the humidity of Varnavas made her sick.” There are patches of dark mold in their apartment and in the schoolroom, which have grown almost three feet from the ceiling down toward the floor. “There is no doctor in this village, no water, nothing,” they lament together. “Why do you stay there, then?” I asked. “Because we could do no better. We both applied for jobs in one of the Athenian suburbs, but we found out that the government assigned us here.” “When I first heard about it,” Aghiro said, “I cried and pulled my hair. And with this new government we are trapped for three years. It used to be that you could transfer after one year, but now they make you stay.”

Nikoli and Yanni are both in Mr. Stamou’s morning class. They sit quietly
at straight-backed desks built to seat two children each, but the forty-five children in the morning session sit three to a seat, three rows for the three grades. Mr. Stamou is gone from one row to the next, giving the lesson, which is usually rote memorization and repetition. If Nikolai or Yanni have not done their lessons or can't repeat the line of poetry that they have been given to memorize, the teacher will hit them with the back of his hand, or crack them across the knuckles or the top of the head with his wooden pointer. Yanni's assignment for the night before was to copy twenty-five lines from the history book. He has copied his twenty-five lines and is thus spared Mr. Stamou's wrath.

Whenever I visited the school, Mr. Stamou had the children stand and say, "Good day, Professor McNall." They always welcomed my visits because it meant that there was a break in their routine and they would get an extra recess. Those who hung around out of curiosity were chased from the room by Mr. Stamou's shouting, "Out, donkeys!" (The children would then go around to the side of the building to the window, or wait in the hall to hear if anything interesting was happening.) Stamou, too, seemed to welcome a break. Neither he nor his wife were reluctant to talk about the performance of the children, referring to them categorically as "these Varniotes," or "these boys and girls."

When the Stamouses first came to the village, the school was in disrepair and they had to have windows replaced and cracks plastered. The one-room building, which is about forty by twenty, was painted by the men from the army camp stationed nearby with a four-foot band of blue around the bottom and deep yellow on the top. In the winter it is extremely humid inside, and with the windows closed it is difficult for the pupils and teacher to see one another because of the smoke from the poorly ventilated wood- or coal-burning heater. When Stamou came there were no maps on the walls so he got old ones from the government which he uses in teaching history and geography. The charts are yellowed with age; one shows a picture of the Byzantine Empire, another is similar to a phenology chart, showing pictures of a man's head criss-crossed with dotted lines and printing to indicate what part of the head "thinks" what.

The government supplies the children with their school books, which, at the primary levels, are like comic books. Ionnis, in the third grade, carries six of these flimsy books in a shoulder bag, with his snack. There is one book each for natural history, geography, religion, general reading, arithmetic, and the history of Greece. Ionnis' lesson for the day had been to read the story of the handwriting on the wall, memorize it, and repeat it for the teacher. Children do not question what they are asked to do, nor do they ask questions about the subject matter in the classroom; they listen, copy, and recite after the teacher. There is very little explanation. The children's image of their teachers is probably best expressed in the words of Alexandria Elia, a fifth-grader who told me that she wanted to be a school teacher.

Ever since I began kindergarten I have wanted to be a teacher so that my life would not be like my parents'. I want to learn to read and write and become some-thing, even if it is a teacher. If I am a teacher I can put the children in a straight line and tell them to stand still. And if they do not know their assignment, I will beat them. I will get a bonus every month for my good work.

In the life of the child school is all encompassing. Theoretically, the school-master and his wife are supposed to take the children to church each Sunday, but they leave for Athens on Saturday night. During the Saturday classes, the Stamouses warn the children that if they fail to go to church, their teachers will find out and punish them. The Stamouses tell the boys not to waste their time playing soccer after school, the girls not to play leap frog and tag, but to do their lessons. It has not been unusual for children to be cuffed or hit with the blackboard pointer in front of the class while the other children are urged to look on, all because they were playing instead of studying. Sometimes, in addition to being beaten for not doing homework, making noise in the classroom, or breaking some other rule, offending children are made to sit through the two recesses while the others play outside. Parents who find that their child has been beaten at school for not doing his lessons are likely to beat him again at home—especially if it is a boy. The teachers' expectations for the boys are clearly higher than they are for the girls, and their expectations reflect those of the parents. A girl may occasionally escape punishment for not having done her homework, but will be dismissed with the remark, "So, she is going to be a dressmaker (or hairdresser). What does she need to know?"

The children carry into the classroom the values of their parents, and sometimes their conflicts. Mrs. Stamou explained the cliques that were formed in the school ground by saying that the parents were friends, or that one group of parents had a grudge against another. Sometimes, says Mrs. Stamou, the children even curse one another! One day Phoimi jumped up in class and said that Evangelia had called her a whore. Evangelia denied it by pointing out that it was Phoimi and her mother who were whores and not she. How did she know? "My mother told me that your mother is no good." Both children were punished. It is Mrs. Stamou's theory that the children learn these words in their "uncivilized" mothers, as she calls them. "How can these women try to protect their honor by wearing a head scarf, and still call one another these awful names?"

Even though the Stamouses may feel that the children of the village are ignorant and lazy, and tell them so repeatedly in the classroom, they are quick to admit that they all have philotoimo. The children bring her and her husband small presents from home, sweets and rolls that their mothers have made. As the teachers point out, these children can control themselves, physically and emotionally, and they know their respective sex roles. The boys would get up when a female came in, and the girls were learning to be modest.

The parents' commitment to the school is attested by a concrete wall around the schoolhouse and yard, enclosing about three-quarters of an acre. While I was in the village, one of the projects of the men was the leveling of the entire school yard so that there would be more room for play, and space for an additional schoolroom to be built with the help of government funds. Every parent I talked to believed that education was the way out of the village for the child.
They were in complete agreement that a boy should go to the university if he could, but only about half of them felt it was worthwhile to send a girl beyond the six grades, or, at the most, through the first three years of high school.

All the children in the fourth, fifth, and sixth grades were asked to write a brief story, to be handed in to their teacher, about what they wanted to be when they grew up, and why. Paniyoites Peppas wants to be a writer. "Some children when they are very young dream of becoming pilots, great soccer players, and doctors. But I want to become a writer, because this job is nothing like a peasant's job. The peasant's job is very tiresome. I don't want a life like my parents."

Constantine Tsiminis also wants to be a writer.

What will I be when I grow up? My imagination takes flight, but only a few of the things I want to be, will I be. But is it possible for a child like myself to have only a few dreams about his future? No! Children dream of becoming spies, pilots, policemen, and so forth, but when they grow up and understand what is going on around them, they will all want to be scientists. I, like my classmates, have been dreaming. But I have gone my own way to find something that pleased me. I began to wander around the fields, roads, and forest paths, and came upon an exotic place, and stopped. This place was all green, and there were thousands of birds flying around and singing. As soon as they saw me, they came close and began singing to me. I was watching them and did not notice an old man had slipped out behind me and suddenly called out. I started to run, but he said, "Don't be afraid. Welcome to the place of glory." He looked like an old drunkard and I could hardly believe my ears. "I know you are scared," the old man continued, "but don't be." He patted me on the head, and when I asked him who he was he answered, "I am an old man who has suffered great injustices. I am a miserable man. I am a drunkard and only toward the end of my life did I realize what I should have been doing. I should have been a writer. Yes, my child. Yes. Listen, you will become a greater writer if you keep going your own way." He walked off into the forest, and then I decided that I would follow the long road as far as it leads.

All the boys in the three grades we sampled expressed preference for the professions of physician, teacher, "scientist," or positions in the civil service as heads of bureaus, ministries, and so forth. Their reasons were quite similar. Yanni is going to be an electrical engineer because "We children of the village see our fathers getting very tired in order for us to survive. We must study hard so that we will not suffer as much, and we can help our parents in their old age. Nikolaos Prelorentzos wants to become a doctor so that he will not have to "live like an animal, like my parents do."

A significant number of the boys said they wanted to be colonels, navy or army officers, or pilots. Essidors Tourkandonis wants to be a colonel after he graduates from military school, if he gets in, "because when our country needs help, I will take my soldiers and fight for the glory of Greece." George Stamos wants to be an army officer because it takes courage and brains, and "I want to offer my service to Greece so that I and other officers can destroy our enemies." Paniyoites Katsikis wants to be a pilot because "if an enemy attacks Greece I will help defend Greece with my iron bird and smash the enemy's airplanes and bomb his lines. Even if it is necessary to sacrifice my life for Greece, I will." Athanasios Adamis also wants to be a pilot to "fight against the enemies of Greece. I will also make money and come back to the village one day and give it to my mother."

Athenasios ended his paper with a poem that he had learned in school about pilots.

I want to become a pilot, fly through the clouds, and go anywhere.
I will come from above to see my mother. She will smile at me.
I will wave my arm at all of the staring people, and be gone into the clouds again.
Paraskevi Lepouris wants to be a dressmaker when she grows up.
When I am through with grade school I will make an effort to be a dressmaker so that I will not have to suffer as my parents do. Today my father had to get up very early and go to work in the mines. They work very hard and still they are poor. If God wills it I will become a hairdresser and open a beauty parlor in Athens and make so much money that I will be able to help my parents.

For the children to attain their objectives they will need more education than the village provides. Even the girls who want to be seamstresses and beauticians will have to go to trade schools. How many children actually leave the village for more education? Eight children of Mileisi go to the six-year high school (gymnasium and lyceum) in the town of Avlon, about ten miles away. They can go to the high school in Kifissia which is better, but the round trip fare costs almost three times what it is to go to Avlon. A special bus picks up those who want to go to the coeducational high school in Kifissia from Grammatikon, Varnavas, and Kapandriton. Twenty children from Varnavas ride the bus. Although bus fees in Greece are nominal by Western standards, it is sometimes the fare—from fifty to seventy-five cents—that keeps the child in the village. Too, there are the incidental expenses for clothing, a minimum amount of supplies, and, of course, food for the mid-day meal. If, for purposes of illustration, we say that the child attends two hundred days out of the year, then the cost per family is between $150 and $200 per year, which is between one-fifth and one-fourth of the total annual family income in Mileisi and Varnavas. If, as is often the case, there is more than one child, a decision is made as to which to keep at home, and which to send to school. If the choice is between a boy and a girl, the boy goes. The choice between two boys may not be made in favor of the elder son if the younger one is likely to do better in school. In some cases children are sent to live with relatives in Athens, or in towns where there are high schools, to reduce the cost of education. Both of the parents, and the children make great sacrifices for education.

At the present time, no one in Mileisi has ever taken the step from high school into the university. In Varnavas, five men have been university graduates, but two were killed in World War I. Today's children, or a few of them in each community, have hope. But they also believe that they will need a patron or someone to help them to get into university, and after that to get them a job. Some sort of civil service position is the most likely. The student wins his position because of patronage and because he has learned about Helenism—studied katharevousa, the language of official discourse, and ancient Greek history. He is not allowed to innovate: seniors make decisions, and one who challenges vested authority may lose his job. Young men sent abroad to learn the latest agriculture techniques, or who have learned them in their own schools, join the Ministry of Agriculture and are put to work organizing.
classes in outdated methods of spraying crops. As one young man lamented, “What can I do? Can I tell the farmers my way? No! If my superior heard about it, I would be fired.” Students train for jobs that are over-crowded, and sometimes non-existent; the jobs of most of them fall below their expectations. Their time is spent in intrigue and in imagining how to advance in a system that is essentially closed, so that one moves at the expense of someone else.

Yanni, Nikoli, Demetri, Iaonnis, come home from school and are expected to do their chores and their school work. They are exhorted by their parents to try harder. “Do you want to be an olive-picker all your life?” shouts Yanni’s mother. “If you like the village life so much, then don’t study,” says Demetri’s father when he returns from the field. Iaonnis is given a beating by his father, Costas, because he did not get his homework done by the time his father came home from his construction job, and he is forbidden to play soccer for one month. Yanni, Nikoli, and their village counterparts sit dutifully copying passages of Greek history from their flimsy books into their copy books for the inspection of the teacher the next day. They work and hope.

In summary: It is clear that traits and values learned in the home are reinforced in the school, which teaches Hellenism, by way of a “classical” education. The parents value the prestige of the classical education but refuse to see that it has little or no relevance to the job market.

School reinforces the value learned in the home that everything is possible to the boys. Consequently, male children express unrealistic occupational goals. This has serious consequences, for they come to believe that if they are not the first, then everything is lost. This inhibits a young man from accepting a position in a firm or bureaucracy where he must be subservient to another and accept a hierarchy of authority. Just as at home, the child in school is subject to shame and ridicule if his behavior is not what is expected of him. He learns he must control himself and conceal his inner thoughts. There are no rewards for breaking out of the mold.

Education is a luxury, used to define status. This is essentially dysfunctional, leading to an unrealistic conception of education and of careers. Children are not encouraged to engage in vocational or other programs that would raise the family’s standard of living without depleting their resources. If a child is sent to school in Athens it may mean that land is sold, marriages are postponed, and even the health of the family may suffer. If the son fails in his classical education, and/or fails to get a good job, his career is considered ruined. And the positions that many graduates do obtain are low-paying civil service jobs that allow them to support only their own nuclear families in the city, leaving not enough for them to help their families in the village.

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1 Katharevousa is in fact an artificial language that was developed by Korais during the eighteenth century. To preserve Greek nationality under Turkish domination, he believed it necessary to make over the Greek language on the model of classical Greek. Katharevousa became a mixture of ancient Greek and the spoken language of the educated middle classes.
Maria Balokas is fifty-eight years old and has two boys, one who works as a radio technician on a ship, and one in the army. She married Paniyotes Balokas when she was sixteen and he was twenty-four, after they had been engaged for two years. Maria had not known Paniyotes before the engagement; her parents had paid a matchmaker to find her a mate. She did not have to move far because she came from Skala Oropos, which is only five miles from Mileisi. When she was first introduced to Paniyotes she was afraid, and did not find him attractive. But her father and brothers assured her that he was a hard worker, and that was what counted; she was, after all, very poor and so not in a good bargaining position. She brought to her marriage about one acre of land on the sea, some sheep, two goats, the linens that she had been embroidering, and the blankets she had been making since childhood. They came to the small, new, two-room house that Paniyotes had built next to his parents' home on the hillside overlooking the bright Aegean Sea. Maria liked the house, because it was only about a hundred yards from the village well, and from her outdoor cooking oven she could see the water.

Maria had received a little money as part of her dowry, and with this and some that Paniyotes had saved they bought the necessary furnishings to set up housekeeping. In their bedroom-living room, which was separate from their kitchen, was a large double bed consisting of a two-inch cotton mattress laid over slats placed close together. Above it, since this was the main room in the house, hung the icons, which included a picture of St. Demetrios, the saint after whom Paniyotes was named on the day of his baptism, and one of the Virgin and the baby Jesus. This was the "best" icon, for it was a framed color-print, and both Jesus and the Virgin had halos made of tin. A small shelf held the oil light that burned before them.

In the room that served as the kitchen, they had placed a round wood-burning stove. Paniyotes had made shelves along one side of the wall and Maria put her pots, cooking utensils, and other household items on them, and covered them with a curtain of heavy unbleached muslin. Paniyotes built a galvanized sink into a corner of the kitchen, and ran a hose from the drain at the bottom through the wall and into the garden. Above the sink he built a shelf for the water can, so Maria could turn a spigot and have running water. Her mother had shown her how to cook in the outdoor oven, but in the first few days her new husband helped her solicitously.

Their first son, George, named after Paniyotes' father, was born about one year after they were married. Yanni was born eighteen months after George. They bought a bed for George and Yanni to sleep in together in the kitchen, so the boys had, in effect, their own bedroom, except in the cold winter months when the entire family slept there by the stove.

As Maria and Paniyotes have grown old together their small house has been enlarged and new things have been added on namedays, at Easter, and at other times when they felt they could spend money. Paniyotes built a stable for the donkey, goats, and chickens about five years after they moved in, and at the same time, a new outdoor toilet with a concrete floor. There is no seat, rough pine boards make up the sides, and the top is open to sun and stars. The rains wash clean the floor around the opening. When electricity came to the village they installed one bare lightbulb, hanging in the kitchen, and one in the bedroom-parlor. These lights are turned on only when absolutely necessary.

In the stable, where Paniyotes keeps the tools for his work, two large fifty-gallon barrels rest on their sides beneath the straw. Each time I visit Paniyotes, and remember to bring back the two-gallon plastic jug he gave me on my first visit, he fills it with his own red resinated wine.

In 1968, only three marriages were performed in Mileisi. Five women married men from other places, including Athens and Salonika, and went to live with their husbands. Marriages normally occur in the parish of the bridegroom; to marry elsewhere, the groom must obtain the written permission of the village priest. (One of the reasons for this is that the village priest has few sources of income, and the village wedding is one of the ways he makes from 15 to 20 dollars of extra money). In Varnavas in 1968, there were four marriages in and three outside the village. The priest said that the boys wanted bigger dowries than the girls from Varnavas could offer, and did not like dowries of homemade things.

**Table V.1**

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<tr>
<th>Age Category*</th>
<th>Males</th>
<th>Females</th>
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<td>20-24</td>
<td>37.5</td>
<td>80.8</td>
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<td>78.0</td>
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<td>45-49</td>
<td>6.0</td>
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</tbody>
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*Marriages per 1000 persons of each age category.


Dino's marriage follows a more modern mold than that of Paniyotes and Maria. Dino is thirty-two and is now engaged to a girl from Athens whom he met one Sunday in a large park downtown. He has been working in the construction trade as a plasterer for almost ten years. His parents wanted him to marry a girl from the village, but they have accepted his future wife because she is a "good moral girl, and will make a good housewife and mother." When Dino first brought up the subject at home there was a great deal of shouting. "For God's sake, mama, let me have my own life! I don't want to live in the village all my life!" Dino's girl is not only "moral;" she completed the first three years of secondary school before she got her job as a clerk in a large
department store. Now Dino’s younger brother has a chance to make a living from the family’s land and to support his girl, who is from the village.

Some couples are still brought together by matchmaking, but some couples marry for love. They meet through a job, in the square, or at church. When they tell their parents that they wish to marry this boy, or that girl, the family talks it over, consults with friends, and finally they get together to discuss the dowries. If the parents of either couple strongly object, the marriage is not likely to take place. If the couple marries over the objections of parents, the young people will not live in the parents’ village, because they will be shunned. Sometimes mild objections are overcome; sometimes Uncle Andreas or Aunt Eleni may be asked to intercede, to convince the parents that the marriage is a good one. Nevertheless, all the young couples in the village say, “My parents decided,” or “My brothers decided.”

The Dowry

The wedding that occurred in Varnavas in 1968 was between the owner of one of the coffee houses, Michael Kanellis, and a girl from the village, Sophia Andreades. He was thirty-five and she was twenty-four. “Only one more year and she would have been an old maid,” Mrs. Dragoumis said. Sophia and Michael had seen one another often during the Sunday promenade (or “marriage walk,” as it is sometimes called). In the village square the men drink cups of sweet Turkish coffee, swing their koumboloi, and watch the girls go past in their finery. Michael had seen Sophia many other times, for when business was slow he would stand in the door of his shop and watch people coming and going between their houses and their fields, the well, the church, or the Athens bus. On several occasions he had a chance to say a few words to Sophia as she took bread to the ovens of the village baker. Carrying close to twenty pounds of raw dough, she would be visibly tired by the time she reached the square, and Michael seized the chance to hurry and carry her load the rest of the way. He found her attractive and demure.

He talked to his father and mother, who knew the girl’s parents and liked them. Michael’s father had worked with Sophia’s in the mines at Grammatikon, and they had fought the communist guerrillas together in the Civil War. The two fathers agreed that the marriage would be good. The problem of the dowry now arose. How much? Would it be in land, cash, animals, and in what proportion? Sophia’s father was in a fair bargaining position, because Michael wanted to marry Sophia, and after thorough inquiry, his parents, friends, neighbors, and relatives had been satisfied that she was of good moral character. “All of my daughter’s references were very good. No one had ever seen her dating!”

At the time the marriage was proposed Sophia’s brothers were called in because the negotiations would ultimately affect their lives. If land were given as part of the dowry, there would be just that much less for the other children. But Sophia’s brothers saw it as their obligation to help their sister with her dowry. (In some cases, older brothers will postpone their own marriages until they have accumulated their sisters’ dowries, for the obligation to do so is instilled in them at a very early age.)

Sophia’s elder brother, who was working part-time in Athens in the construction trade, thought he could get his younger brother a job with him. If they were to save a certain amount each month they could raise a cash dowry. It is a common procedure in the village for a marriage to be arranged, after which two or three years may be spent accumulating the agreed-upon cash dowry; less frequently, a couple marries and is promised a portion of the dowry at a later date.

Michael had originally asked for a dowry of 100,000 drachmae ($3333,33) and some land. After some negotiating it was agreed that Sophia’s dowry would be just the 100,000 drachmae. Her father argued that her rukha (clothing, blankets, bedding, and so forth) was worth at least $500.00. The size of Sophia’s dowry was not unusual, even in a poor village; she was lucky to have two brothers to help make it up. Had she wanted to marry a man from the city, the dowry would have had to be even larger.

After the dowry settlement had been worked out, Michael, his father, and brother went to visit Sophia’s parents. (Michael’s mother, following village custom, stayed home.) Sophia brought out pieces of embroidered linen from her dowry for the men to take home to their families. She gave Michael’s father and brother each a brightly colored bag that she had woven herself.

About a week before the wedding, Michael and his friend Dino, who would be his best man and the godfather of a son if Michael and Sophia were to have one, took her dowry linens and trousseau to the new home. They had already gone shopping in Athens and purchased the house furnishings which were part of Sophia’s dowry. They piled the blankets, sheets, pillow cases, towels, coverlets, shawls, rugs, bags, and miscellaneous items that Sophia had been making since she was old enough to sew into a small cart and made several trips between the new house and Sophia’s. Into the six-foot tall glass wardrobe they managed to pile the blankets. Sophia had thirty. “What,” I asked, “are you going to do with thirty blankets?”—“It’s the custom.” The blankets indicate for all who care to look not only an industrious and moral bride, but a considerable investment, a value, merely in terms of wool and dye, of close to $30 each.

Gifts had already been arriving from relatives in other villages and Athens. These were arranged so that when all of the guests arrived on the following Sunday they would be able to see them. Most of the gifts came with the price tags on them, and relatives who brought gifts on the day of the wedding left on the price tags. (Perhaps it is expected that one who has moved away from the village will be more prosperous; after all, that is why one of the guests from Athens told everybody he was leaving, “so that he wouldn’t have to live like an animal.”) Mrs. Andreades, Sophia’s mother, said, “Even our poorest relatives will bring at least a ten-dollar gift!”

On the day of the wedding, Michael and Sophia went to church to take communion. They then returned to their separate homes for the wedding ceremony was not supposed to begin until three o’clock. Throughout the day
relatives kept arriving, and by late afternoon close to eighty people were crowded into Michael’s coffee house. The early arrivals ate cheese and bread, and drank a little wine. There would be a large meal after the wedding.

After Sophia returned home from communion, Dino, who was the “sponsor,” went with Michael’s brother and some of his friends to her home. There they beat on the door and demanded to be let in. The bride’s party bargained with them from behind the door. They started out at $1000 and came down to a drachma (about 3.3 cents) “entrance fee.” The groom’s party was let in after the token payment, and given traditional refreshments. (Dino, as the best man, had paid the rent for the bride’s gown, paid for the wedding crowns, and would pay the priest for the candles and the ceremony.)

One of the relatives who had come from Athens in a car drove Michael and his immediate family up the steep road to the church. After that the car went to get the bride on the other side of the village. Michael was waiting for her, dressed in a black suit with the two gold sovereigns pinned to his lapel. He handed Sophia a small bouquet of white flowers, kissed her, and they entered the crowded church together. The couple approached the priest and kissed the Gospel, upon which were resting two rings—one gold and the other silver—and two gilded wedding crowns. Two children holding large candles stood on either side of them. The priest began to read from the Gospels and then stopped, picked up the rings, put them on the right hands of bride and groom, then exchanged them, three times. The wedding crowns, joined by a ribbon, were placed on the couples’ heads by Dino, who had been standing behind them. He then began exchanging the crowns, while the priest read from the Gospels the story of the marriage at Cana. After this the couple were given a cup of red wine commemorating the marriage at Cana, and symbolizing the unhappiness that they must share (Bards 1966: 20). The priest then gave them honey and nuts to eat (to symbolize the happiness they would share!).

During parts of the ceremony a folk song was sung by one of Sophia’s aunts. When the singer reached a place in the song which tells how the wife is supposed to be afraid of the husband, the bride and groom scuffled while she tried to (and did) step on his foot. Tradition has it that if the bride steps on the groom’s foot, she will never have to be afraid of him. Finally it was time for the “dance of Isaiah,” when the priest, groom, bride, and best man went around the altar three times. The first three linked hands, and the best man held the wedding crowns over the heads of the couple. Then the guests threw rice and candy, so hard that the priest covered his head with the Gospels. After the third circuit, the final scriptures were read and the ceremony was complete. The couple kissed the Gospels and the priest’s hand, as did also the best man, the parents, and the relatives. (I went through the line with my daughter, but did not kiss the Gospels nor the priest’s hand. He rapped me sharply on the head with it instead.)

The wedding had been a happy affair for all concerned. Michael had built his own house and could not be subject to one of the worst forms of ridicule in the village: “He married her to have a place to live! What a place! With his mother-in-law!” A man in the village should establish himself before marriage. This is, of course, one of the reasons for the differences in the ages of bride and groom. Sometimes when a girl’s dowry is mostly land, and/or her father has no sons, a couple moves in with the bride’s family, (but they are expected to have a home of their own soon) and the groom is supposed to farm with the girl’s father. The crops and wheat from her dowry lands technically belong only to the young couple, but it would be inefficient and contrary to tradition not to share food and work with the parents. When there is no son, the son-in-law is expected to manage the property before it is ceded to him. A slight stigma, however, is attached to the soghambros, or the son-in-law who lives with his wife’s parents and works their land.

A bad marriage was made in the village during 1969, when Koula, shortly after her engagement, became pregnant. The date for the wedding was moved up, but her future husband, Costas, and his father decided that they could now ask for an increase in the dowry. In order to save the honor of the family, the bride’s family agreed. What the villagers could not understand is “why Koula’s brothers did nothing.” They were not clear about what they should have done to Costas: “Beat him, at the least.” “Something should have been done!” “Now Costas’ family scorches her.” After the wedding, when the marriage party went to Costas’ home for the traditional feast and everyone was seated, Costas’ brother got up, clapped his hands, and all of Koula’s relatives left. Nobody was supposed to know what was going on, but they did. Now the two families do not speak to one another.

The dowry system has, at least in the past, had important functions. First, it gave the new bride a sense of worth; she had, after all, contributed something basic to the marriage and Greek civil law protected her rights in her dowry property. If the dowry was in land, her permission had to be formally secured before her husband could sell it or exchange it for other land. Her informal consent was required before any money she might have inherited was spent. The dowry also linked the daughter to her family. The husband, to sell the lands of his wife, had to consult her parents, brothers, and sisters (Fried 1962: 65). If the bride had her dowry in land, she and her husband would return to her village during the year, to look after the land and collect part of the crops. Normally, the wife’s father and brothers would continue to farm her dowry property under an agreement whereby she and her husband would receive part of the crop. The dowry also more or less equalized the relationship between a sister and her brothers, for although they would divide the property of the family between them, sometimes she was given a dowry in excess of their inheritance and they would make up their “share” through their future wives’ dowries. In the long run, the social inequalities in a village community were reduced through the exchange of property across families, and down through the generations within the family.

The Changing Function of the Dowry

But now the dowry seems to be serving a destructive function. First, it has not been a tradition for village children to receive higher education, and to reduce the pressures on the land by getting jobs on the outside. Then the
system of patrimony has meant that land was fragmented in being divided between brothers. True, they may have made up their share, as noted, by their wives' inheritances, but the dowering of daughters meant that the land was further cut up, for certain parcels were labeled as theirs, and sometimes farmed by their husbands. After the land redistribution took place in the late 1920s, as has been remarked, the average size of the holdings per family was about twelve acres in contiguous fields. But the dowering of daughters, in a very short period of time caused such fragmentation of land that a given owner's total of only four or five acres might be scattered in six or seven plots.

The solution is, of course, to force some of the children off the land, for they cannot make a living from smaller and smaller parcels. And the pattern of dowering the daughter is changing. The fact that the majority of marriages of Milesi and Varnavas girls takes place outside the village is leading to a depletion of the villagers' economic resources. Girls in the village tell their parents, "I won't marry unless you engage me in Athens." Their reasons are simple, and were the same the children gave for wanting to leave: "I don't want a life like my parents." The parent is then put in the position of depending on a matchmaker or relative in Athens, or some other city, to find someone who will not only be acceptable to his daughter—she wants a man with a secure civil service job, if possible—but who will accept the dowry his daughter has to offer. These urban men do not want land; they want money. This has two serious consequences, one observable, the other not.

Andreas Balokas made a "good" marriage for his daughter. He and his wife were proud that she married a civil servant in Athens. But they had to provide a dowry of $5000.00, part of which they borrowed and part of which was the savings of their sons (who also have borrowed and have debts to pay for their own marriages). But the greatest part of the money was raised through the sale of land. If the land had been sold to a villager it would have remained in production, providing part of the economic base of the local population. In such a way work is generated, and money is spent in the small tavernas and coffee houses. But the Balokas' land at Milesi was sold to land speculators from Athens who wanted it because it is only one hour's drive from the capital and overlooks the sea. In the same way, several other villagers in Milesi, having to find urban husbands for their daughters, have sold land to speculators. Their incomes were already low, and the sale of their land reduces it further.

Varnavas, in contrast to Milesi, is hard to reach, and does not have a sea view. There is nothing there to attract builders of summer homes. In Varnavas, therefore, it was more difficult to raise the dowries necessary to "engage their daughters in Athens." Typically, the families of those who do marry out must borrow the money. This means that the brothers of a daughter "engaged in Athens" will have to find jobs other than theirs in the village to pay off these loans, for the philotimo of the family depends on the payment.

In the case of Andreas Bolakas' daughter, Maria, the match was to a thirty-six-year-old civil servant who had worked in the Ministry of Agriculture for nine years, and earned $200 a month. He and Maria would live in Athens on his salary and her dowry. This is one of the reasons dowries are wanted in cash. It takes the consent of the bride and her relatives to alienate land, but only the verbal consent of the wife to spend money. The dowry money helps them to pay the rent on a small apartment, and to buy their furniture and miscellaneous household items—the cost of living in Athens is very like the cost of living in any large city. Thus rural wealth is being used to subsidize the living of an increasing number of urban residents. Further, since only a small family can be accommodated in the small urban apartments, the nuclear family becomes isolated in the city, and extended family ties are severed. A girl may not return to the village except at the yearly carnival—she and her husband have no crops to look after—and she will join the ranks of the under- and unemployed in Athens, as the dowry wealth runs out.

In short, then, it seems as though the current pattern of marriage contributes to land fragmentation, breakdown of the extended family, depletion of rural economic resources, and widespread hopelessness among those who remain in the villages.

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1 In 1963, women aged 20 to 24 who lived in villages wanted an average of 2.39 children; those in cities wanted 2.18. Women over the age of 45, though, wanted four children if they lived in the village, and 3.80 if they lived in the cities. Of 100 wives in the youngest age category, 20 to 24, 30.6 villagers practiced some form of birth control, as did 82.5 city women. The older women, 45 and over, said that about 70 percent of those living in villages practiced some form of birth control, as compared with 75 percent in the cities.
CHAPTER VI

THE JOB

Daily Routines

In a Greek village a woman’s life centers around the home, while the man’s life is centered outside, and not just in the sense that his work takes him away from the house. He has more frequent contacts with other villagers, and with people outside of the village, either because he has a job somewhere else, or because he is in touch with the numerous officials that come to discuss the use of fertilizers, pruning of trees, and methods of planting. If major purchases are to be made, the man is the one who rides the bus to Athens or a neighboring village; rarely does his wife accompany him. He may go to a soccer game in Athens or its suburbs if he can afford it, perhaps taking his eldest son, but never his wife or daughter. Every Greek male serves in the armed forces, and in the course of time travels to remote towns. He may also have been temporarily employed in a factory abroad. The man in a Greek village, then, has seen more, done more, and experienced more than his wife.

The village coffee house draws the young working males after they return from the fields; it draws the older men in the village who no longer work in the fields; it brings the village males together on Sundays when they are not in the fields; and it brings them together on cold and rainy days when they cannot go to the fields. Photiades (1956 and 1965) notes that it is in the coffee house that the men gather, away from women, who do not come there except on rare occasions such as carnivals, when they sit quietly beside their husbands, or behind them. The men play cards, read the newspapers, drink sweet Turkish coffee or occasionally a small glass of ouzo. Problems of farming, running the village, adding a new room to the school, are discussed. Although usually the older men and the recognized leaders are deferred to, no one hesitates to offer an opinion no matter what the subject. People come and go, dropping in and out of conversations as they choose. If someone scores a particularly telling point in an argument, he probably leaves before the others can think of a suitable retort, for discussion is a means of practicing oratorical skills and wit. The man is admired who can not only put his opponents down, but do so in a witty way that alleviates hostility and makes the listeners laugh. They discuss more than matters in the village “Professor, what do you think of the moon shots? Do you think Kennedy was assassinated because he was a leftist? What do you think of the differences between Greek and American education? What are American girls really like? Do Americans have big families? What do you think about the dogma of the Orthodox Church?” These questions could produce discussions lasting one or four hours, depending on whether I had to leave to keep appointments. The questioner who asked a question usually had already prepared an argument to “prove” a particular point, i.e., all American girls are immoral, and their brothers have no philotimo, because they do not punish those who sleep with their sisters before marriage.

If you were to ask a man in a coffee house why he is not home helping his wife with her chores, carrying water, or watching the children, he would look at you as though you were crazy. If his wife is very sick, he might help cook, and watch the children. But it would be recognized by his family as “an unfortunate thing. What else can we do?”

Anastasi Stephanides, thirty-five, with three children aged seven, nine, and twelve, and one girl, Kiki, who is four, is married to Panos, who works in his fields and sometimes as a builder or carpenter’s helper in Athens. She passes a typical day in the winter as follows:

Anastasi is the first one up in her family. At five o’clock the smoke can barely be seen against the black sky as she starts the fire in the stove. The sun will not rise until six-thirty, half an hour after her husband will have left for his field. It is easy to dress for she has been sleeping in her heavy undergarments. She pulls on the lowered print dress that she has been wearing for the last two weeks, and over this a V-necked sweater, wraps her head in a heavy, white cotton scarf, puts a black cardigan sweater over her other sweater, buttons it up to the last button, and puts on a pair of plastic slippers.

It is her duty to keep the family healthy, for if one of them were to fall seriously ill they could not afford the expense of medicines or the trip down to Athens to see a doctor. She worries about Panos because he has had a cold for the last two days. Because he is gone from about five-thirty in the morning until seven in the evening she packs him a large lunch for his midday meal, and something to have when he takes breaks from his work at about eleven and four. She puts in some cheese, a half loaf of heavy dark bread, some olives wrapped in waxed paper, and one boiled egg. She fills a small bottle with resinated wine to go with his meals. Panos, now dressed and with his tools ready comes and sits down next to the small stove, which is beginning to glow in the half dark room. She takes potatoes and eggs, fried in olive oil, off the stove and lets them cool for about five minutes “because hot food is bad for you.” Panos eats from the pan, soaks up the remaining olive oil with pieces of bread, and leaves for the field.
Anastasi wakes the children and begins preparing their breakfast, which is the same, but smaller than her husband's. Her oldest boy now drinks coffee, and is allowed to make it for himself when there is room on the stove. The children are fed by seven o'clock. The diet of the Greek child is extremely high in carbohydrates, and meat and fish are served infrequently, but fortunately the bread which Anastasi keeps urging on her children is of unleavened flour. Cheese, olives, and olive oil make up the remainder of their dinner. An overweight child is a healthy child, and the mother who did not have chubby children would be the subject of the clacking tongues of her neighbors. (The villagers worried about our two children, who seemed "skinny" to them.)

After the children have been fed, Anastasi sets them about their morning tasks. She has decided that enough laundry has accumulated, for today to be a good day for the laundry: she has no routine and, typical of the village women, arranges her work to suit her mood. Sometimes dishes may be piled in the sink for two or three days, if there are enough extra ones in the house, and then all be washed in a wash tub outside in the sun. Kiki, who does not go to kindergarten because her mother wants company during the day, helps her mother carry the pile of dirty clothes to the yard. Anastasi builds a fire under the pot on the outdoor grill and sets up a galvanized, rectangular wash basin on two chairs. The job lasts about three hours.

Anastasi has a busy day, for her husband owns one of the village's combined grocery stores and coffeehouses. She stops her work to serve customers who stop by periodically for some item from the store. Her neighbor, Mrs. Zolotas, wants a pound of sugar and trades eggs from her chickens for it; later, Mrs. Panticides trades a large jar of olive oil for some of the eggs. Cash changes hands when a customer has nothing to trade, or when Anastasi cannot use what she is offered. No one stops for coffee during the day; Panos serves that when he comes home from work.

After the washing is done, it is time for sweeping. The inside of the house will be swept out, and then the courtyard. Anastasi sweeps her yard, porch and coffeehouse three more times during the day.

All the water in the house is used up by the washing and more is needed by the time Adam comes home from school, saddles the donkey and takes the two ten-gallon milk cans to the well. Between washing, getting water, watching Kiki, minding the store, cleaning the house and preparing food, Anastasi's day goes quickly. At two-thirty her three boys come home for the day and to the large midday meal which is served in every house. The meal is the same as breakfast—potatoes and eggs—with the addition of cheese, olives, and boiled greens. Now that Adam is home, Anastasi can leave him in charge of the store, and do a job that she had been putting off for several days because of the cold—she walks over the hill in back of their house and down toward the forest to pick a variety of greens, depending upon the time of the year, or the family's meals: dandelions, purslane, and plants similar to pokeweed and pigweed. Depending on the season, she may also go to the small vegetable garden Panos planted on their half-acre of land, to pick tomatoes, okra, beans, or cucumbers. When she reaches home, she finds the children are not doing their homework and threatens to tell their father. She settles them down again at copying pages from the lessons into their writing book, and begins to make plans for supper.

Panos comes home at 7:00, quickly washes and sits down to eat. He is served first and has his own place. Kiki and her mother eat from the same plate, while the three brothers eat from one plate. The family has boiled beans with tomato sauce, sardines, bread, and olives, and Panos has a glass of wine. Anastasi tells Panos that the children did not study. He gives them a mild lecture on the need to study hard. "Do you want to be like me?" he says in a tired voice.

While the family is eating, the first customer comes into the coffeehouse. It is popular, because it is warm and brightly lit in the evenings, and Panos and Anastasi are well liked. Anastasi gets up to make Turkish coffee and clear away the family's dinner dishes; tomorrow she will wash them. Soon eight or nine men are in the shop, an average crowd for the evening. Panos had the foresight to buy a mechanical "soccer game." Laughing and talking, the players insert a drachma and get five balls, which they try to drive through the goal by working a set of rods. Around ten o'clock the last player leaves the shop and Anastasi and Panos clean up and shut the doors. They are in bed by ten-thirty. Anastasi lies awake for about half an hour, listening to the breathing of the four children asleep in the room with them, thinking about the boys' education and how they will find the money for Kiki's dowry.

In spring, summer, and fall, Anastasi's days are even longer, for she helps her husband in the fields in addition to her normal household tasks. The children are expected to help as much as they can, but she does most of the work. She is only thirty-five, but looks older. With no postpartum care, the births of several children takes its toll on most village women. Anastasi that she took an injection the last time she was pregnant, and aborted her child. "I feel alright about it though, now. I confessed to the priest." Her friend Paki Kousoulas was not so lucky with her attempt at abortion: she used her own methods and the child is mentally retarded. "What can I do now? We will have to give a tremendous dowry to get her married off."

Some women make extra money during the spring and summer with their small plots of land or they hire out to other farmers to pick grapes, olives, or to snap the suckers off the grape vines. They are paid about $2.00 a day. The attitudes toward women working has changed, but some of the older villagers, particularly the men, feel that a woman's place is in the home, or beside her husband in his fields. Egli's sixty-eight-year-old husband, Yannis, said, "No! No! Women should stay at home. They should not be emancipated. If women worked who would prepare the meals? Besides they are needed in the fields. Next, if women had money they would go to Athens by themselves and buy things without consulting their husbands."

All the adolescents and middle-aged people we interviewed, however, said it is all right for women to work, that with the extra income the family can raise its standard of living or educate the children or provide dowries for the daughters. Girls thought that if they could get jobs they could use the money
for their dowries and clothes and boys would spend their money to educate the children they eventually have. No members of the second or third generation saw work as contributing to a lowering of the women’s morals: “It depends on the girl. The job will not make her different.”

The Changing Seasons

Andreas Balokas, the village secretary in Milessi, receives a small income to supplement what he earns from his six plots: olives on one, grain on three, vines on two. “Why aren’t they all together, Andreas? You work even harder.” “Yes,” he replied, “but who can tell what will happen? Maybe the hail will fall on my wheat fields here. If it does, I will still have my other plot. I will have something to eat.”

In many respects the work of the men proceeds in the same fashion as that of the women. They break up their daily routines so as to make their tasks less onerous. Instead of trimming vines three days in a row and finishing the job, the farmer may prune his olives on the second day. Trips to the market for fertilizer and seed are introduced to break up the monotony; in fact, it is not unusual for a man to go to town to get fertilizer one day, seed on the next, and a long-needed piece of equipment on a third, the craving for variety superceding rationality. Going and coming from their fields they stop at the coffeehouse to talk with friends and have a coffee. If they linger too long because of a good conservation the field will wait until the next day.

In the working seasons the day is long. Andreas works hard and comes home exhausted. And, as he is quick to note, it could all be destroyed overnight. “The rain, the sun, the frost, they could all destroy me. I fight with lies. I fool myself into thinking I will survive.” To work hard to support your family is expected of a man with philotimo. But work is not seen as something which brings dignity; one works to eat. In a sentence-completion form I asked several villagers to complete the sentence, “A job is . . . ” — a test which demonstrated that to them jobs were a way to earn a living. “A good job . . . ” is a job that provides security. It is stable, commands a fixed income, and is not subject to vicissitudes of fortune.

In late October or early November, before the rains come, Andreas plows the plots to be sown with winter wheat. His plots are small and scattered. A sign posted in the window of one of the coffeehouses announces that all wishing to have deep plowing done by the large tractor must register with the village Agricultural Committee; but only those whose plots are level can make use of it, and Andreas is not among them.

He leaves early in the mornings with his mule, a plow and harness tied to the pack saddle. Sometimes he and a friend work together, first on the land of one, then on that of the other, one man guiding the plow behind the mule, putting his weight on it, the other guiding the mule on the steep, rocky hillside plots. After the plowing, grain is broadcast by hand. Last year's harvest was not good, and Andreas bought his allotment of wheat for seed and food from the government. Because there are six in his family he was allowed 460 lbs. of wheat at a cost of about $25.00.

After the fall sowing, the pace slackens. Andreas still has to prune his grape vines, but he is in no hurry. Each time he prunes he brings back the dried cuttings for Maria to use for building flash fires in the outdoor oven. If he is lucky, the plowing and sowing are done before the rains come. Sometimes the rains come immediately after the planting, washing the seed into the stream at the bottom of the hill and leaving the fields so muddy that if, as may happen, the rains continue, it becomes out of the question to replant. During the winter he has time to catch up on his duties as village secretary, and to visit with his friends around the warm stoves in the coffeehouses. Close friends visit one another to talk and drink last summer's home-made wine.

The spring work may begin in the middle of February. The farmer goes out to prune his olives, and begin plowing for the planting of vegetables. As soon as the weather warms, the weeds must be plowed from between the rows of vines. Andreas plants spinach for the first time, because his friend Paniyotes had luck with it last year. He and his wife Maria also plant squash, cucumbers, onions, garlic, beans, potatoes, and tomatoes. Soon the suckers must be snapped off the vines. Throughout the spring and into the summer the vegetables need to be watered, weeded, and eventually picked. His wife and children may have to carry buckets of water to irrigate the plants, but Andreas is fortunate in having a gasoline pump to draw water from the stream close to his field.

Toward the end of spring, or even as early as April, the grain begins to bend with the weight of the ripe kernels. Then it must be harvested before rain or hail destroys it. Farmers with large plots, or several farmers with adjacent plots of grain may use the combine that the government takes around the locality, as it does the large tractor; but Andreas has to use his long scythe. Maria follows him with a rake with blunt wooden teeth. Sheaves of grain are made up, and carried on the donkey to the roadside, where they are picked up and taken to the mill. The marble threshing floors where Andreas and Maria threshed and winnowed their grain by hand only a few years ago are still visible at the edge of the village.

The work on the garden carries the family into summer, when they rise early and go to bed late, sometimes leaving for the fields at five-thirty and not returning until seven-thirty at night. Toward the end of August, when the grapes are ready, the whole family takes into the fields the large reed baskets that will later be used to gather olives. Basket after basket is carried to the roadside, to be picked up by the truck from the Agricultural Association. The Association pays about four cents a pound for the grapes, which gives the Balokas a little extra money.

Enough grapes are kept to make about 100 gallons of wine for the family. Andreas borrows a press from his friend, Paniyotes. A simple mechanism with oaken sides that fit into a ring to make a cylinder, the press has a top which, by being turned by a long pole, crushes the grapes in the cylinder below so that the juice comes gushing out at the bottom, filtered usually through a piece of cheese cloth. The pulp that remains becomes fertilizer in
the gardens, while the grape juice goes into the large storage barrels. Andreas, who likes his wine sweet leaves his grapes late on the vine for a higher concentration of sugar. To begin the fermentation, yeast is added together with resin to obtain the characteristic flavor of Greek wine. To get his supply of resin, Andreas makes V-shaped cuts in the trunks of trees in the government forest in the springtime, and nails tin cans at the bottom of the cuts into which the resin collects when the sap begins to flow.

The olives are harvested in the autumn at a more leisurely pace than the summer crops. The same press that made the wine is now used to press out the olive oil. Some olives are preserved in brine to eat with meals throughout the year. Some villagers take their olives to one of the olive mills and give back about 10 percent of the oil as payment. Few villagers sell olives, or olive oil; they use practically all themselves. When they do have a good crop they may trade some of it to the grocery stores for sugar, or sell it in one of the markets in the larger villages at about $1.00 a kilo. The average tree in Milessi and Varnavas produces about twenty kilos. Since a village family may use up to five hundred kilos of oil a year, it is important to have their own source.

The farmer often talks about the risks of farming and the backbreaking labor and his desire to escape from it. Yet behind all of this there is still some attachment to the occupation. Farming is hard, but the routine can be broken up: one can stop and talk to his friends, and sometimes two men will go to one man’s field one day, and the other’s the next day so as not to be without company. They know from personal experience and the stories of others that a job in Athens or abroad demands a routinized schedule with little time for sociability. Perhaps most important to him, however, is that a farmer is his own boss, subservient to no one. Theoretically, he can get up when he chooses and quit when he chooses. He can plant what he wants, and sell what he wants. If he wishes to celebrate his, or a friend’s nameday, he can do so.

Even though crops may fail, still, as has been noted, the farmer’s family usually has something to eat, and the farm provides security in that its routines and tasks are well known. The rhythm of the seasons introduces a form of predictability that is not always present in urban jobs. The farmer would like to work in the city, but only if in a job from which there is practically no chance of getting fired and a steady, even if low, income.

Alternatives to Farming

Twenty men of Milessi ride the Skala Oropos bus to the National Highway and Malakassa, where they work in a government munitions factory, for which they are paid from $2.75 to $3.30 a day, depending on how long they have been employed there. Normally, they also raise the traditional crops, and plant vegetable gardens which their wives tend. They work six days a week and are regarded by the rest of the villagers as extremely fortunate in having a stable source of income. Several of the other villagers in Milessi and Varnavas used to work in the coal mines, which however, are now closed because they were unprofitable. Sometimes the men go to the mines and dig the soft coal for their own use.

In Varnavas, too, about twenty of the men take the sixty-three bus to Athens each morning and return at night. They are carpenters, plasterers, painters, or unskilled laborers; often they obtain work from relatives or through the intervention of friends—not always steady jobs, but the carpenters and craftsmen who earn up to $8.00 a day are well paid by village standards. They, too, supplement this income with farming. Some, like Panos, Demetri, Yannis, and Andreas do not want to work for other people; one works for someone else only in order to eat. Some quit, even when the pay is good. As Panos says, "I can rest when I want to in my fields. I want to be my own boss!"

A number of businesses in Athens are run by one man employing none but relatives, a circumstance described in Alexander’s study of Greek industrialists. In 1961, 95.4 percent of all Greek industrial firms were either individual proprietorships or partnerships; only 0.4 percent were corporations. Of all manufacturing establishments, 94.5 percent employed less than 9 employees (Alexander 1964, and Taoussis 1967: IX, 21). In 1963, there were 122,000 industrial and handicraft establishments with an average of 3.8 employees (Statistical Yearbook of Greece 1968: 178).

A few of the villagers have other occupations. Dino, who is twenty-six, has herded sheep and goats since he finished primary school at the age of thirteen. A broker comes from Athens twice a week to pick up the milk, paying an average of 20e a kilo. Since his flock is large, Dino makes almost $18.00 a week. Yorgo, the wealthiest person in Varnavas, described by the villagers as “lucky because he dealt in the black market during the war,” bought a taxi cab and a taverna and boasts the only telephone in the village. The villagers pay him to use it in emergencies. Similarly, if relatives need to reach someone in the village, they call Yorgo or his wife, who finds the one asked for, who pays them a small fee for the service. Yorgo uses his taxi to run people to the next village when, for instance, they miss the bus, or need to go to court, and occasionally to take Army officers from the camp behind Varnavas to Athens.

For a variety of reasons the same persons engage in several occupations at once. Obviously, they need all the money they can get. But if they do not concentrate all their efforts in one occupation it is because they are hedging on the uncertainty of the future. They may lose their jobs in Athens; if so, they need their coffee houses and farms to fall back on. Moreover, important among Greek values is independence, and a businessman is proud to be one, no matter how small the enterprise may be. There is pride in owning a taverna or a coffeehouse, even if one makes little or no money on the venture, for it is always possible that one might.

Although a number of separate businesses compete for the limited spending money of the inhabitants, no one cuts prices to drive out competitors, because he could not afford to do so, and because buying at a given store or frequenting a particular coffeehouse chiefly follows family loyalties, friendships, and feuds.
A constant source of income in the village comes in the form of subsidies and small pensions—for war veterans, for farmers who cannot work their land, and for the disabled. The pension of a farmer is about $10 per month (Statistical Yearbook of Greece 1968: 75). Some villagers have pensions from the Social Insurance Organization, and the National Crop and Social Insurance Agency. Relief from some of the burdens of village life comes in the form of government-subsidized health care. The government subsidizes grain production (paying about $4.00 an acre), sells the farmers vines, trees, fertilizers, and other agricultural products at low cost and rents for nominal fees the tractors and combines that are used on some of the farms. An attempt is being made to make the villages more nearly self-subsistent, in order to slow the flight of the people from the land into Athens and the other urban areas.

Values and Jobs

The desire for independence, coupled with a general mistrust of one's neighbor, prevents the villager from pooling his resources and maximizing the effects of his labor. This is true of Dino, and several others, who sell milk to the broker who comes from Athens twice a week, but who would almost double their profit if they were to market their milk together in Athens, or sell it as cheese. I asked Dino and two of the other farmers who own sheep when we were all in the coffeehouse why they did not sell their milk in Athens. "How would we get it there?" "Constantine has a motorcycle, doesn't he?" I pointed out. (It was the three-wheeled kind with a box on the back.) "And doesn't he go to Athens at least twice a week?" There began a series of replies: "How could we trust him?" "Maybe he would make more of a profit than we would." "What if the motorcycle tipped over?" "How can we be sure he would go when we wanted him to?" One of the most important objections seemed to be that the broker gave them loans before Easter and before the New Year so that they could buy clothes and presents. He had also intervened for them in legal cases, or had told them that he had. Thus they would lose a patron if they sold their milk by themselves. But later Dino followed me out, and confided that he would be willing to sell his milk in Athens if he could find a way to do it. Would I help him? When I asked him why he did not want to join with the others and pay Constantine to take the milk, he replied, "Because they would cheat me!" Yorgo, too, is afraid to take chances: "How can I sell my milk in Athens? I have no patron." he explains.

If Dino were to take his milk to Athens, and the others saw it was profitable, they, too, would somehow get theirs there. But to try something new, and fail, is worse than not trying at all. A farmer who plants a new crop for the first time does not tell his neighbors until it is harvested, and then only if the crop is good. This is one of the reasons for occupational specialization. As Friedl noted in Vasilika, the villagers do not step out of bounds of their expertise. If a window is broken, the glazier is called in. If brick work is needed for a simple outdoor fireplace, a brick layer comes (Friedl 1962: 34-37). There is some overlap in occupational specialization in Varnavas and Milesi, but the worker apologizes for it. If he is adding a room to his own house and pouring his own concrete and laying his own foundation—and doing a good job—he excuses himself by saying that he cannot afford to have it done.

Some of the villagers take their beans, cucumbers, and squash to the weekly markets in the suburbs of Athens, in which vegetables, game birds, poultry, eggs, and miscellaneous items are sold. One day I asked several of them why they did not rent a truck together and take all their products in at once, instead of each going every time. The responses were the same as in the case of the milk: "Where would we store the vegetables before we took them to the market?" "Who would go?" "How would we divide the money?" This time Mr. Kritik followed me out, and said that he would be interested—although he had made most of the objections—because his son-in-law had a three-wheeled motorcycle and between the two of them they could make a lot of money. "Yes, a smart man can make a lot of money."

Fate and untrustworthy neighbors lock the villager into a way of life difficult to escape. Luck explains why the wicked flourish as the green bay tree. "Katsikis has his truck because he took money from the Jews to help them flee Greece during the German occupation. He made a real fortune. He was stupid, illiterate, and lucky. What counts most is luck."

Without luck, the villagers consider their lot as hard indeed. When I first went to Varnavas and the villagers were trying to find out what I could do for them, and whether I was really from the government, I was presented a petition:

Dear Professor:

Our village has many needs. We pay for electricity and yet we have no lights outside of our houses so that we can go out at night. We have no paved roads, and by the time we reach our fields we are too tired to work. We have no bus service. We have had to abandon our fields because they are barren and now the Forest Service is trying to seize them. As for fertilizers, the Agricultural Committee buys them from the Agricultural Bank, and then sells them to us at exorbitant prices. Why has our Fate left us to live in this barren place?

1The growing acceptance of women working has been traced by Lambiri in her description of the changes that took place in the town of Megara when a factory opened there. There were initial problems with the women's new roles, but in time opposition vanished (Lambiri 1965). In Varnavas and Milesi women and their husbands seem to welcome any legitimate source of income.

2The pattern of land use described here is typical of the mountainous and semimountainous areas of Epirus, Thessaly, Euboea and Central Greece. Of the total land area in 1958, 15.1 percent was cultivated, pastures (this was barren land, scrub growth, and denuded forest) made up 45.8 percent, 33.1 percent was forest or woods, and 6.0 percent was in the category, "other." In level communes approximately half of the land is cultivated. Under the heading, "cultivated," of the mountainous and semimountainous areas just described 51.0 percent is in field crops, such as cereals and potatoes, vines make up only 3.8 percent, about 23 percent is fallow and the remainder is in orchards: olive, walnut, apple, almond, and cherry.
CHAPTER VII

DISPENSING GRACE

The Priest

As Spiros passed the hillcrest where the church of the Apostles Peter and Paul rises up, he crossed himself. He saw the priest in the yard, and after the priest had turned away, he spat three times, because priests are bad luck. The hills that flank the National Highway running from Athens to Salonika proclaim in painted white rocks that: “Greece is a Christian Nation!”

The Greek Orthodox church is autocephalous: the Patriarch of Constantinople at Istanbul is the titular head but for all practical purposes it is run by the Metropolitan of Athens. Ninety-eight percent of all Greeks are Greek Orthodox. There are some limits to the freedom of the Greek Orthodox church, though, as, like the schools, the church is controlled by the Ministry of Education and Religion. There is, then, an intertwining of religious, political, educational, and basic social institutions.

The priests of the villages may differ from the people they minister to because of their life experiences and education, and as a consequence may not be readily accepted by the villagers. The priest in Milesi began his life as a soldier, unlike the priest in Varnavas, who came directly from a monastery to his present position. The priest in Milesi was married before ordination, as is often the case. Father George is now a widower, however. After being discharged from the Army he went to the gymnasium and then the seminary for three years, after which he was sent to a Greek community in Rumania for two and one-half years, then to the Greek community of Rostov on the Black Sea for a year and a half. He escaped by paying a ship’s captain to take him to Casablanca where he stayed for five years, then made his way to Addis Ababa, where he was taken in and fed by an Italian colonel. He finally returned to Greece in 1940, because of the death of his mother, and was sent by the church to Larissa where he had a church which was dedicated to the Prophet Elijah. Here he was caught up in the Civil War and endured poverty and hunger with the local people. He was sent to Milesi by his bishop in 1952.

Milesi’s 320 inhabitants have six churches. St. Demetrius, which can hold a crowd of about one hundred people (Orthodox congregations stand) is the largest (20’ x 25’) and the one used most frequently. The other, smaller churches are seldom used. Built by families to fulfill promises they made to their saints in return for favors, they are now used for masses only on special occasions such as a nameday ceremony for the church and its builder. Normally, though, there will not be a service unless the builder’s prayers have been answered.

Varnavas has nine churches, and the “monastery” of Metamorphosis, which is about a mile west of the village by footpath. The monk, who oversees the activities of ten nuns, can barely get his pickup truck over the narrow rocky track. The monastery has no relationship with the village. Occasionally the monk will come to Varnavas to buy something at one of the grocery stores, while one or two nuns wait for him in the cab. The monk is the subject of much sidekicking in the village: “It must be a manly person that can live with ten women.” The nuns sell eggs and wool sweaters, blankets, and dresses which they make on an automatic knitting machine. Sometimes villagers take carded wool from their flocks to the monastery to be made into sweaters and blankets in return for a part of the wool. The monastery is small and its furnishings spartan. Signs on the walls say: “God’s Watching You!” and posted lists specify “don’ts” for visiting women: “Do not dress in an indecent way. Do not wear open-necked dresses. Do not paint your face. Do not cut your hair. Do not wear pants because women who do are disliked by God.”

The two village priests are relatively well-off by village standards. Both receive salaries from the government of approximately $120.00 a month, supplemented by fees from funerals, weddings, baptisms, and sometimes from the consecrating of the site of a new house. And the villagers must pay their “debts” to their priest or they will find themselves without his services. If a priest feels that he has been slighted in what he was given for performing a ceremony, he may not hear confession, he may not bless bread that is brought to the church, he may not conduct the “promised” masses in the other churches of the village. In fact, in at least one case, the relatives of a dead man had to plead with the priest to perform the funeral rites; apparently, they had not paid him enough for a wedding.

There is a Church Committee of five in each village to help the priest take care of the church, repair it, make improvements, and look after finances. In the past, the Church Committee was responsible for an unsuccessful project to sell church candles in the vestibule of the main churches in order to buy new icons.

In both Varnavas and Milesi the churches own thirty-five olive trees and about fifteen acres of land, which provide additional income for the priests.
The latter make arrangements with a man in each village, who harvests the olives and gives the priest half the oil; the land is rented, and the church is paid in kind. The collections taken up on Sunday seldom amount to more than two or three dollars, but the villagers are not worried about the poverty of church or priest.

Neither priest is close to the people. First, a priest is feared as well as respected, yet he is needed on numerous ritual occasions. Perhaps one of the reasons why people stay away from the priests is that they confess to them. Villages are small, and the life in them is intense; but so also is the Greek villagers’ desire for privacy and secrecy, and they do not trust a priest who knows their secrets. In Milessi, in fact, the priest has not confessed anyone for several years; a priest is sent from Athens for the purpose. Villagers in Varnavas frequently go to the priest at Grammatikon or Kapandriton to confess, and the villagers from Grammatikon come to the priest at Varnavas.

In both villages, attendance at the Sunday mass is meager: seven or eight in Milessi and perhaps fifteen or twenty in Varnavas. In Varnavas, a Sunday school program has been instituted after the regular mass but although the children have been told by the school teachers to go, only a handful do so. The moral and religious education of children is seen as women’s responsibility and the church serves mostly the women.

In a sense, the village priest’s education is wasted because he no longer serves as a force for community action as was the case in the days of Turkish occupation. For one thing, under the Turks, the priest was the Greek village government, a role now, of course, assumed by the elected village councils. Then, as schools were introduced, a second source of leadership came to the village. Once responsible for religion, government, and education, the church is now responsible only for religion. Under the Turks it was not infrequent for the priest to act as anarbiter between the Greek community and Turkish powers. The church also controlled some basic economic resources that could be distributed, making the priest, for all practical purposes, a patron. He is so no longer. There has been talk of making the priest more active by giving him agricultural training. But the priest is defined now, as we were informed by several women, as “close to God.” Could a man so defined play a more active and secular role with any success?

Although the two priests have lived in their villages for almost fifteen years, they are referred to as “foreigners.” Both say they have tried for years to involve themselves in village affairs, but are always met with: “Mind your own business. You’re a foreigner.” In one village, they say, the priest is out of his mind: “He makes us stay away from the church. He forgets the service and asks us to help him out. Then sometimes he even leaves in the middle of the service if someone is making too much noise. He scolds the women who wear lipstick, so they have stopped going.” In the other village the males claim that they cannot go to church or confession because the priest is a homosexual, and makes “advances;” and the women do not go, because they allege the priest is immoral.

The priest may bring criticism on himself. To illustrate: In Milessi, on the Carnival just before Lent, males and females dress in one another’s clothing for a day, and the women are allowed in the coffeehouses. On the night of the Carnival the priest got drunk! He dressed in women’s clothes, just like some of the men. We could not believe our eyes! He showed his legs, made obscene suggestions, and forced us to dance with him. My husband said that he could never respect the priest any more and would never kiss his hand again. We said, “Father, shame on you! Stop this!” And he said, “Am I not a human being?” I couldn’t stand any more, and neither could some of the other villagers, so we left.

Inside the churches, the small congregations talk and laugh, and some leave before Holy Communion is offered. “If I died, they would not even notice,” lamented the priest at Milessi. “No one comes to visit me, and I have to clean the church by myself.” A woman used to wash his clothes as her contribution to the church, but now he has to hire a woman to wash, and occasionally he has her clean the church.

His home, directly beside the church and enclosed with it by a common wall, is small (12’ x 20’) and divided into two rooms which serve as his study, kitchen, and living room. Here are his personal icons, a picture of King Constantine, and photographs of his nieces and nephews in the United States, who send him small amounts of money on his payday. Most of the time when alone he plays his radio or record player. He has several chickens and a duck outside his door; the few eggs he gets from them are a basic part of his meals. Bread made by village families and stamped with the Orthodox cross is brought to him to be blessed. Part of it he uses for communion, and part for his own consumption.

The altar screen of the Church of Peter and Paul bears an icon of Peter on one side, and one of Paul on the other, together with Christ and the Virgin. During service the priest moves back and forth between the altar, which lies behind the altar screen, and the main part of the church. Women are not permitted behind the screen. Many of the villagers’ personal icons are kept in the altar area. Around the walls of the church are other icons, dedicated to various saints. Hanging on the main icons are small pieces of tin in the shapes of hands, feet, legs, heads, entire bodies, and sometimes a house, placed there by, for example, a villager who had a crippled leg, or a sore foot, represented by the bits of tin, and who prayed to the saint to be healed. The small metal houses are usually put there by people who hope to have homes of their own or who want the “evil” exorcised from their houses.

The priest’s sermons are in the tongue of the people, demotike, although the Gospels are read in New Testament Greek, and the liturgy is read in the Greek of the fourth century. Depending on the occasion, and sometimes the mood of the priest, the service lasts from one to three hours. There are a few hard-backed pews on the side walls for the oldest people to rest on. One of the villagers swings an incense-filled censer during the chanting and sermon. As the service goes on, the children, to the annoyance of the priest, come and go noisily. Sometimes he teaches them to chant the hymns of the church, leading them slowly through the verses and waiting for their responses. They
also learn ritualized prayers both in church and as part of their regular lessons in school. The priest believes that children should begin confession at the age of ten, but few do so.

Although people may feel uneasy about priests, and/or question a given one's behavior, there is unwavering loyalty to the idea of the Greek Church. The villagers say that they should go to church “because God expects it of us, and we would be like animals if we did not go.” No villager would bury a relative without a priest, begin building a house without having the priest hallow the ground, or fail to baptize a child. When I asked, “What would you do to change religion in the community? Would you want more Sunday schools . . . ?” every single person interpreted the question as, “Do you want to change your religious affiliation?”. I was met with blank stares, and sometimes the statement, “What do you mean, change my religion? There is only one religion—the Orthodox religion.” Explaining what I meant made no difference, because all they heard was a question about change. Anastasi said, “The church must be unchanging. We need to preserve what has been passed down to us exactly as it is. We do not have the right to change it.”

The priests periodically perform rites of exorcism. One of them told me:

There was a couple in the village who could not make love. They brought me their clothes to have the curse removed from them. They had no idea who had performed this magic on them. I told them that the Church recognized that it was possible for people with evil purposes to afflict parts of one's body. I prayed over their clothes and after that everything was all right.

He went on to add that normally two or three couples a week bring their clothes to him. But, as with the rite of confession, the villagers from Varnavas take their clothes, as a rule, to the priest in Grammatikon, and the villagers from Grammatikon bring theirs to Varnavas.

Sometimes the priests are called upon to deal with people who have been “possessed.” One priest related:

She was very weak, this woman. She had low morals. The Devil usually possesses weak people. She would tremble and fall into a coma and then the Devil would speak through her mouth. She said that she would destroy God and all of his sheep, and cursed the priesthood. While she shouted I pretended not to hear her and continued to say prayers. The Devil left and entered her body three times. Finally, on the fourth try, I drove the Devil from her body. This woman has not been possessed now for over twenty years.

The priests also “cure” moral problems by common sense.

An unmarried girl came to me and confessed that she was pregnant and that she was going to kill the child as soon as it was born. I told her that she had already committed one crime by getting pregnant without God's blessing, and that the only way God would forgive her is if she breast-fed the baby before she did anything to it. I frightened her and told her all the things that God would do to her if she did not promise to breast-feed the baby. After she had the baby and had fed it, she could not kill it. She got married to the father of the child, and now no one in the village speaks of this anymore.

The priest, then, stands between the villagers and the unknown.

There are two elements in the villagers' religion: the ritual for dealing with the unknown and saving one's soul, and the Orthodox tradition with which the Greek nation is identified as a Christian, Byzantine State. Greek religion, of course, is syncretic, a combination of Christian dogma, and pre-Christian Greek myth and folklore. Parallels between the two are obvious, as Miller and Lawson have pointed out (Miller 1905: 73; Lawson 1964). The sun god, Helios,

. . . has been succeeded by the Prophet Elias . . . ; the Virgin has replaced Athena Parthenos, and the Parthenon in the Middle Ages was the Church of St. Mary, whether as a Greek Cathedral or as a Latin minster. St. Dionysios has de-throned Dionysus; St. George and the Dragon are the Christian version of Theseus and the Minotaur, so that the Theseum naturally became in Christian times the Church of St. George (Sanders 1962: 259).

This syncretism continues to be reinforced through religious rituals which combine early Greek polytheism and its pantheon of gods, cults and divinities with modern Christianity. Devils, spirits, elves, nymphs, and the Evil Eye still frequent the villages of Milessi and Varnavas.

Folktales and Festivals

The God of the villager is all powerful and wrathful, and his ways are not to be understood by mortals. This is one of the reasons why people have personal saints.

When I asked Spiro if praying to a saint would heal the sick, he replied:

If you believe in the saint you can be cured. Of course, it also depends on God's will. If God wants you to die, you will die; you cannot do away with God's will. Those who insult others, gossip, and are bad Christians suffer more when they become sick. They are not cured. That is how God punishes them.

Why would God do this? "Because God is powerful and dominates people's fates. God determines everything. We have a boy who was born a mongoloid. I don't know why. It was God's will!"

Paniyotes asked me if I had heard the story of the snake:

There was a man who had a dream about snakes. His Fates had told him that he would die of a snake bite. He locked himself in the house and stayed home from his fields. He grew poor, because only his wife and children could work. One day they brought him a bunch of grapes. A small snake was coiled inside and when he picked up the grapes it bit him, and he died. There is no way to trick the Fates.

Maria Balokas told me about what happened to her and her brother:

My brother was coming back from the mines late one evening and decided to take a short-cut through the woods that led by the stream. As he rounded a turn in the path he saw a ghost sitting on a rock. The ghost looked like a priest to him. Not stopping to look back, he turned and ran back the way he had come and arrived home exhausted an hour later. Our family was convinced that he had seen the ghost of a dead priest, or the Devil disguised as a priest. We knew that he saw it,too, for Yanni is neither stupid or crazy.

She then told a story about herself:

Once I had to leave the house at three in the morning to take our vegetables to the market in Kapandriton. As I was walking across the fields I heard a cock crowing. I knew something was wrong, because cocks do not crow at that time of night. Finally I saw it. It was riding on the back of a donkey, with the reins in its beak. It crossed in front of me, and disappeared over the hill. I knew it was the Devil.

Maria crossed herself repeatedly as she told these stories.
The supernatural beings that occur most frequently in the stories of the villagers are the Nereids, or Nymphs. These beings are not confined to the water as they were in ancient times, but inhabit dark forests, barren windy hills and caves and other dark places. Their form varies, but they are usually female, and always evil. (The capriciousness and cruelty of the Nereids, and the fact that they are female subtly reinforce the villagers' fear of “the three evils: fire, sea, and woman.”)

One night when Yorgos was out with his sheep, he fell asleep. He said:

I woke up and there were two women who looked very much like two women from the village except that they had on gold and white gowns. (These are the clothes in which Nereids normally appear.) The older woman asked me if I wanted to sleep with her daughter. I knew then that they were evil. I stirred up the fire, and they disappeared in a whirlwind.

Old Mrs. Kerimis remembers the time when she took the sheep out to pasture:

I was sitting on the side of the hill watching the flock, and from out of nowhere my husband appeared and began beating me with a stick. I screamed and begged him to stop, but he didn’t. My real husband came and found me and took me to the priest. When I woke up he was praying over me to drive out the Devil. I knew it was real because when my husband found me I was cut and bruised. I had black and blue marks all over my body for almost two weeks.

Gina Politii, returning from the fields after taking her father his lunch, walked down by the stream and heard laughter and singing coming from the pool. She ran home and tried to tell her mother, but her mother, who was pregnant, and afraid the baby would be marked, would not listen. She put a candle in the doorway so that the flame would prevent the evil spirits from following Gina into the house.

Another woman said:

Suddenly, my daughter could not move one of her legs. She got up one morning and fell to the floor. I knew it must be the Devil’s doing so I went to Mrs. Psilos, who knows about these things. She said that I needed a hair as long as my child. I brought it to her, and she went inside but she would not let me follow. I saw her drop it in a basin of water. Soon she returned and told me that my child was not afflicted by the Devil. But she did not get well. I went to the priest, who took my daughter behind the church, and then brought her back to me. He said that I was to take her home on the donkey and as soon as I lifted her down at home she would be able to walk. She did.

“Yes,” Maria Sourapa said, “there are people in the village who believe in the Evil Eye. There are some who can possess people, although we don’t know who they are.” The Evil Eye, which can cause nausea and headaches, and even bring death, is best exorcised by praying, or by burning the stump or a candle left over from a religious holiday, such as Easter, or by pouring oil and water on a votive candle. Some of the older women recommended drinking salt water to disperse the evil spirits, while others burn special incense and say prayers. But most of the older people try to ward off the Evil Eye by wearing blue beads or a small sack of charcoal and salt around their necks. Two or three younger people wore these amulets; these were the sheep-herds who sometimes had to stay out with the flocks during the long evenings. Babies are protected, as noted before, by a necklace of blue beads, or by a black spot behind the ear.

The use of magic by the villagers seems to follow expected patterns. Certain people are deemed the most susceptible to the Evil Eye, e.g., young children, all who travel in the fields late at night, women during childbirth, the family with a dead relative in the house. The latter may have died of an undiagnosed contagious disease to which the family may be susceptible. The greater the uncertainty the “more” the magic. As prenatal and postpartum care increase, and as the risk of contagious disease diminishes, the felt need for protection against the Evil Eye may well grow less.

Almost all the villagers, then, have either had some encounter with evil spirits, or immediate relatives have told about such experiences. Relating these stories, they cross themselves, look around, and keep moving their chairs. They are reluctant to use the word “Devil,” or “Nereid,” and once they use it they say, “You know who I mean. Them. The one I was just talking about.” The stories of these “actual” events are reinforced by beliefs about Nereids, Nymphs, and Devils.

Other beliefs in the village are associated with special events. February the third is St. Simeon’s Day, the day of the saint who received Jesus at the Temple as a child, when pregnant women must be especially cautious for their unborn children can be easily “marked.” If a woman puts her hands on her back, the baby will have a birth mark there. “I knew a woman in Grammatikon who thought about watermelon on St. Simeon’s day and now her baby has a red mark on its cheek,” said Mrs. Papalasis. Pregnant women also keep away from knives and other sharp objects on this day, and avoid work as much as they possibly can, because anything might hurt the child. “My mother used to make sweet dough balls on St. Simeon’s day if she was pregnant,” continued Mrs. Papalasis. “She thought one could sweeten the Fates and make them leave the unborn child alone. Do you think the Fates will have time to catch all of the children that are now being born in hospitals?”

The first of May is a pleasant time for it marks the beginning of spring, and the children carry new kites to the top of the hills. Fathers often take the day off from the fields to fly kites with their sons. On the night before, families make wreaths of myrtle which include a thistle and a clove of garlic, the latter to ward off the Evil Eye, the former to ward off enemies. On the third of May, St. Mavra’s day, (Mavra means black), everything comes to a halt. If one cuts or sews, it is believed, the work will turn black, or one will get black spots on his hands. In Varnavas they believe that it is the day of the thunderbolts, and that if they work in their fields the crops will be destroyed. Anastasi said that her grandmother told her about a man who worked on St. Mavra’s Day whose fields were completely destroyed, while nothing happened to the field of his neighbor, which was adjacent, because the neighbor did not work. “Do you really believe these stories, Anastasi?” I asked. She hesitated, and said, “I don’t know. It would be better not to tempt the Fates. And be-
sides, why should we work on this day? We work hard enough the rest of the year!"

The beginning of the spring festivals, the Carnival period, three weeks prior to Lent, lasts in some villages for three weeks. In Milessi, as noted, the villagers changed roles—the men wearing women’s clothing and the women men—but this did not occur in Varnavas. The last week of the Carnival period is referred to as Cheese Week, when the villagers prepare for the Lenten fast and eat only cheese, milk and eggs. The final Sunday before Lent, however, is generally a time of feasting and dancing. In Milessi, if the weather allows, the villagers gather in their fields for picnics; in Varnavas they do not. In both villages there is dancing in the square in the late afternoon, but the women, young and old, no longer dance in their national costumes as they once did. The young girls liked modern dances and their mothers were mortified when people drove out to the village to see them in their costumes—"What do they think we are, performing bears?" The last meal of the day is usually of eggs, and in the villages and throughout Greece they say: "With this egg I close my mouth, and with an egg I will open my mouth,"—the last referring to the traditional red Easter eggs.

Clean Monday is the first day of Lent and with it fasting begins. The women clean their pots and pans and usually air all their blankets. In Milessi the children fly their kites with the help of their fathers. On the next day, at school, "The children can tell whether somebody hasn’t been fasting," said the school teacher. "They can smell the cheese." The school teacher and his wife do not fast. "It would ruin our health. But we do not let the villagers know about it." There are reasons other than religious for fasting. Food is, after all, scarce at this time of year.

Easter, which normally falls in April, is the most important celebration of all. The week before Holy week, Palm week, is sometimes referred to as "Dumb Week," for no church service is held, except on Friday, the Eve of Lazarus. On Palm Sunday, villagers who have not been in church since the Christmas holidays make their appearance. The floor of the church is covered with myrtle, bay, and laurel branches and clusters of these boughs, with small crosses woven from palm leaves purchased by the Church Committee, make up a vaya. After the service these are given by the priest to each parishoner and they will later be seen stuck in the frames of the family icon or above the mantle, to bring good luck. Girls who are newly wed or pregnant are likely to attend, for the vaya is good for fertility and easy birth.

Maundy Thursday is a busy day, set aside by most villagers for housecleaning and whitewashing. Early in the morning they mix large buckets of whitewash, which they roll on the walls of their houses, outdoor ovens, stables, and anything else that was painted white the year before. Then shutters and sills are trimmed in blue or green. Children and women dye the traditional red Easter eggs on this day. The first egg in the bowl becomes the egg of the Virgin Mary and has protective properties. Other eggs are taken to the church in a basket to be blessed by the priest. They are placed under the altar behind the altar screen, until "Christ has risen." These eggs also have special properties, although no one seems to know exactly what they are. Anastasi remembers that her father used to take the shells from the eggs and place them by the newly-planted trees, saying, "May these trees bear fruit." She does not follow the custom. The housewives bake their Easter buns on Maundy Thursday. With the little girls helping, they make small buns in the shape of people, baskets, and eggs. One large sweet roll, covered with almonds, walnuts, or other nuts and always with a red Easter egg in the center, is made for the entire family.

Good Friday is a day of quiet. All offices and shops are closed by law, and no one eats, or goes to his fields. The priest rings a funeral knell at noon, and most go to the Epitaphios, which is the ritual of the removal of Christ from the cross and his funeral procession to the tomb. The villagers, one by one, bring flowers and lemon leaves and, after kissing the bier, which is placed on a platform, lay their offerings of flowers upon it. When it is finally dark, a beautiful candlelight procession begins. The priest goes first down the hill toward the square carrying a large gold cross from the church, followed by two men carrying the bier. Behind them come the silent villagers, each holding a dark yellow candle. The priest turns right and begins the circuitous route past the eight other churches in the village, at each of which the procession stops while he pronounces a brief invocation. When they have come to the last church, they turn back toward the graveyard of the Church of St. Peter and Paul, where the bier is carried over the graves. The procession then goes into the church, passing under the bier, which is held aloft over the door, and the ceremony ends with a short sermon.

On Saturday preparations for the festivities of Easter begin in earnest. The small grocery stores are covered with myrtle and bay leaves and butchered lambs hang from the rafters. At the Easter service which is usually held at midnight nearly every village is present. The dark candles of Friday are replaced by white ones, those of the children being tied with colored bows. The church is in total darkness. The priest comes into the nave with a large candle, saying, "Come and partake of the Eternal Light and glorify Christ who has risen from the dead." The villagers crowd around and light their candles from the priest's and soon the whole church is bright. The priest passes out through the main door, chanting "Christ has risen," in which the congregation joins him. Then they file down the hill, shielding their candles against the night winds as they take them home to be placed before the family icon. There is a late meal whose first course is eggs. Paniyioites picks up a red egg from the bowl and says, "With an egg I closed my mouth; with this egg I open it."

Early in the morning Paniyioites digs a shallow pit in his yard for his lamb. Beginning with small pine branches, he goes on to use large pieces of oak or olive which will form a deep base of coals. The lamb is spitted, salted, and rubbed with rosemary. Paniyioites sits in his chair for the next five hours, turning the lamb and talking with friends and relatives. Easter draws the sons, daughters, nephews, nieces, and cousins back home; in fact, Athens is deserted on Easter by people who have gone back to their native villages to celebrate. Family ties are strengthened as the immigrants to the city come home bring-
ing flowers and candy and tales of their good fortune. They do not have to write to tell their relatives they are coming; it is expected.

The main meal is a time of great gaiety and happiness. The remaining red eggs are passed around and people tap their eggs against each other. If your egg breaks your neighbor’s, you may keep his. But you give it back, because it is Easter.

Next to Easter, the paniyiri, which is the celebration of the village’s name day, is the most important festival of the year. Villagers and relatives who have moved away do their best to return for it. When the “birthday” of the Apostles Peter and Paul arrives, on the last two days in June, Varnavas celebrates. Traveling carnivals come to the celebration, which lasts from late Friday afternoon until late Sunday evening. The highlight of the paniyiri is Saturday evening, when a bouzouki band comes from Athens.

Michael Kanellis wanted a crowd at his coffee house, and he and Sophia decided to risk paying a band. On Saturday evening the villagers began arriving early, and both Sophia and Michael were kept busy filling orders. Families, with their children of all ages, crowded close together, and Michael and Sophia had to squeeze between chairs and pass food over people’s heads. Michael had had three lambs roasting since noon on a new outdoor spit, for this was one of the few evenings when men would spend money freely on food and drink for their entire families. The women had spent the afternoon washing their hair and putting it up and they did not seem the same women who went to their fields with heads covered, wearing heavy lisle stockings, cotton dresses, and thick wool sweaters. Anastasi was not wearing a head scarf and had put on lipstick. “Times have changed. My husband likes me this way, too.” Village men who were not seated wandered around, bottles of beer in hand, talking to their friends. The young men from Grammatikon and Kapandriton were also there, looking over the Varnavas girls, nudging one another, grinning, and swinging their worry beads.

If boys who were ready to marry saw girls they liked, they asked their fathers to find out about them. Usually the young men hesitated to speak themselves, and the girls looked at the ground and smiled—but they were making contact. Boys would not ask girls they did not know to dance, and no women would dance in front of the bouzouki players with any but their husbands for fear of criticism by other villagers.

Soon the musicians arrived and began to tune their instruments and set up their equipment. The dances began slowly, with about twelve people, nine men and three women, their arms around one another’s shoulders, moving around in a circle, swaying in and out. After they had limbered up, some of the young men began the high steps and kicks that make the dance an exciting test of athletic prowess. There were young ladies in the crowd to impress tonight. One young worker from Grammatikon began the dip to the ground, coming up holding the shoulders of the men on each side of him, kicking high and lifting himself up almost five feet from the ground. After one of these dances someone in the circle would give the band two or three dollars; after the next time a different man would pay. Those who made special requests so they could do their best dances paid for the privilege. As two young men from Grammatikon began an elaborate dance, the women in the band began to chant encouragement, “Hey Grammatikos! What men! Where are the men from Varnavas? Hey!” Soon young men from Varnavas who could pay for the challenge, were dancing. The villagers clapped, whistled and shouted encouragement far into the night. Children fell asleep on their mother’s laps and wives smiled to themselves. This was the only time that year they had been out with their husbands. But there would be another paniyiri next year.

The New Year, not Christmas, is the main winter holiday. For the Christmas Eve supper, which is not nearly as elaborate as that at the New Year, the housewife bakes a “Christ bread” for the first course. A knife is dipped in honey and the sign of the Cross is made three times over the loaf, after which a thin slice is given to each member of the family to be eaten with honey. The loaf is then put on the mantle or sideboard, where it remains until Epiphany.

New Year’s day is dedicated to St. Basil, one of the Fathers of the Orthodox Church. In Varnavas the children go in small groups to sing Christmas carols in front of the various houses, and are rewarded with a drachma or a sweet. St. Basil “visits” the family on New Year’s Day, so before the family goes to bed a meal is laid out for him, including a specially prepared St. Basil’s cake. As Saint Basil, as patron saint, takes special interest in the welfare of the farmer, his animals and his crops, a variety of rituals are performed in the hope that he will give good crops next year, and look after the animals. Paniyotes goes out to his stall late in the evening and leaves a piece of St. Basil’s cake in the stable with the animals, and makes sure they have clean straw and are combed, to please the saint.

In all its traditional rituals the church mitigates the personal, individualistic values of honor, pride, shame, and secrecy that separate village families from one another. Campbell, discussing the Sarakatsani, a group of northern Greek shepherds, makes the point that:

Christian beliefs are accommodated with the particularistic values of honour and prestige through the idea of the holy archetypal family. The institutions of family life and honour are thereby sanctified. At the same time the sanctity of the family marks a limit to the ways in which one man may exploit another (Campbell 1965: 169).

A universalistic religion, according to Max Weber, offers the adherent a rhetoric which, among other things, tells him to “love his neighbor,” and to trust him (Weber 1958), whereas a particularistic religion, like the Greek Orthodox, allows him to anthropomorphize his world, and draws him away from universalistic explanations and relationships. Thus Hecuba scolds her icon: “Why have you failed me? I have been so faithful to you. I have done as you promised.” In a particularistic religion the individual locates explanations of his problems and the solutions of them outside of himself, putting the blame on Fate, the Gods, or his Saint, while the universalistic religion tends to look for his problems and their solution in himself. A particularistic
religious system, however, does not develop universalistically-minded men who can take their places in a modern industrialized world, where achievement is expected on the basis of merit, where subservience to others is accepted, as in a bureaucracy, and where others are trusted to obey the same rules as oneself. The meshing of these values in the Greek peasant, then, contributes to the development of a cultural and personality system that ill equips him to deal with certain aspects of modern bureaucratic society.

1 The flying of kites in Varnavas on the first of May is not typical throughout Greece, for Clean Monday is the day that most people reserve for this traditional festivity. For a description and catalogue of the major Greek festivals see Megas' excellent work (1963).

Part III
THE VILLAGE AND THE LARGER SOCIETY
CHAPTER VIII

VILLAGE POLITICS AND THE CENTRAL GOVERNMENT

I have seen too many governments. I have heard too many promises. I have come to believe in no one and trust no one. A government takes power, and before its turn runs out, someone else has taken power. I have seen this for 72 years. This time it will be no different.

As concerns the relations between the villagers, their efforts at cooperation, and their attitude toward the central government, one must know that this research took place during the year after the extra-parliamentary government took power in April, 1967, and the shifts in Athens brought about some changes in the village government. However, the relationships among the villagers and their relationship to the central government remain basically the same as they were prior to the coup.  

Church and School

A variety of committees are responsible for directing many of the day-to-day affairs of the villagers. There is the Church Committee, which is usually composed of five members including the priest. The priest makes up a list of suggestions for committee members every three years and sends it to the bishop for his approval. Normally the members are the wealthier and older men whom the rest look up to, such as Anastasios Nicolaou, a farmer who owns one of the village grocery stores, and two trucks for taking the farm produce of his family and neighbors to the market in Athens. The Committee collects money for the Church of Peter and Paul and its projects and charities. When a young man was killed by the Germans, leaving a widow and two young children, the Church Committee raised $100 for them from among the villagers.

In each village there is a School Committee, made up of from three to five members. It has virtually no power: the curriculum is established in Athens, the books are decided upon in Athens, and the teacher is sent from Athens. Complaints to the Ministry of Education and Religion about, for instance, the teacher, might or might not get results. Teachers are reluctant to be sent to the poorer rural villages, and do not take pains to hide their dissatisfaction. But the next teacher might be worse.

The School Committee is usually responsible for suggesting repairs and improvements to the school house, yet it commands no resources to carry out its tasks, and must appeal to the Village Council for the required labor. The village, however, can help, since all males over the age of 15 contribute to it about ten days’ work a year and those who cannot (because of jobs in Athens, for example) are fined six dollars, which goes into the village treasury. One year the village had the men build a wall around the school; the next year, several days’ work was devoted to terracing the hill behind the school house to make a flat area where the children could play ball. The School Committee must decide how to raise money to add another wing to the school building.

The Agricultural Committee

There are two divisions of the main Agricultural Committee for the villages. First, there is an Agricultural Committee of credit, which gets loans from the Agricultural Bank for those of the committee and village who want to borrow for seed, farm machinery, and so forth. Thus the villager does not have to go to Athens and apply to strangers at the Agricultural Bank for credit. The members of this Committee used to be elected by the villagers but are now appointed by the nomarch. (This is not a radical break with tradition, for other committee members have been appointed in the past by the nomarchs, for instance, all members of the School Committee since 1936.)

The other part of the Agricultural Committee, the supervisory body, is concerned with everything other than credit. This is the supervisory committee, which makes arrangements for the government tractors to plow and to repair the roads to the fields, sells the villagers seed for cultivation, and grants them subsidies for certain crops. In recent years the Agricultural Committee has received new strains of vines from the Ministry of Agriculture and new almond and apple trees. The five members of this supervisory and administrative committee used to be elected but now it, too, is appointed by the nomarch. Like other committees in the village, it has no power to influence policies of the Ministry of Agriculture, to which it is subservient; it implements decisions made in Athens, and allocates government resources to the farmer. However, because of its relationship to the well-being of the farmer it is of great importance to him. Its members receive numerous complaints. Said Mrs. Turcondonis,

Everyone is mad at my husband. He is president of the Agricultural Committee, you know, and has many responsibilities. People paid my husband for some new vines that he had got from the Ministry of Agriculture, and out of the bundles of 50, maybe six or seven were no good. This wasn’t his fault. Everyone com-
plained and accused him of cheating them. A man came from the Ministry of Agriculture and told the people that the bad vines would be replaced without cost. But who apologized to my husband? He gets tired and worried, and has even had to spend his own money. No one helps him, even though there are five other people on the committee. My husband is going to go and tell the nomarch that none of these other people are doing anything, so he will kick them off. No one must know, though. My husband, like the others, was elected. They aren’t doing anything because they probably expect to be replaced. My husband gave the nomarch his resignation, but it wasn’t accepted.

The villager expects, then, that the committee operates in the same fashion as he believes all government agencies work, that is to say, that the members use their position to aid relatives and friends and to discriminate against others. In such matters as the distribution of fertilizer, and the order in which fields are plowed and crops bought, the local supervisory committee perpetuates the patronage system and the beliefs that go with it. There is, after all, a limit to willingness and capacity to work together for everyone’s welfare, and within those limits committee members work only for the welfare of their immediate families.

The Agricultural Committee is also supposed to buy the extra wheat and grapes of the villagers and deliver them to one of the central storehouses in an adjoining village. Demetri Sotirou said,

Last summer I kept asking Turcondonis when it was going to be my turn to have my grapes picked up. Every time I would ask he would say, “Not yet. Not yet.” Finally, my grapes were actually spoiling on the vines. By this time the Agricultural Committee had already collected all the grapes they were supposed to from the village. So I had to take my grapes to the large market, and to Athens. Of course I got more money that way; the corporation only paid 20¢ a kilo, but in Athens, I got 30¢. They were supposed to take 60 percent of my production but didn’t. I’ll get even with Turcondonis. Do you know that he gets a pension for a mental disability from World War II? He got it because he had a friend that he served with who was a doctor. How can a person who is mentally ill be president of the Agricultural Committee and a member of the village Council? If I could only get the certificate which shows that he is getting a pension for mental disability I could get him thrown out! I went with my lawyer to IKA (the Greek Social Security Agency), but they said only Turcondonis could get the certificate.

The Village Council

A town or village receives certain services from the Greek government according to the size of its population and its classification as an administrative unit. A village classified as a commune normally has one school and five elected village officials. When two adjacent villages do not meet the minimum population of a commune, 500 residents, they are classified as in the same commune by the central government. As are Milleisi and Malakassa. These two jointly elect a “Village (communal) Council,” with representatives from both, and share the same secretary, who has his office in Malakassa. Each village has its own school. Nevertheless, the villages engage in joint projects, such as the water project, which is partly financed by the commune as a whole. The income of the commune is taken into account when the salaries of the secre-
best to represent the village when he goes to Athens, or to the local court at Kapanidriton. He is also expected to buy coffee and drinks for visitors and when he is with others in the coffeehouses; he does not “take home” his salary. The secretary and his assistant, both of whom have always been appointed by the nomarch, divide between them usually 30 percent of the yearly communal income. Following the decision of the Village Council in 1968, the secretary got $50 a month and his assistant $18. After a number of years of service there are stipulated increases. Besides keeping the records of the Council’s meetings, the secretary keeps the vital statistics for the village. This takes little time. He also keeps the land registry, voting registration records and records of baptisms, and updates the genealogical records of village families when necessary. He sends copies of the birth registry of males to the Ministries of Domestic Affairs and Defense, makes out the bills for water and electricity and when needed, birth certificates or pension certificates, for example, charging a small fee for his services. The secretary and his assistant are the closest thing there is to permanent, paid civil servants in the village.

The secretary works in an office filled with posters sent out by the government for him to display on his walls and in the windows of the coffeehouses. There are posters praising the revolution of 1967, comparing it with the War of Independence in 1821, and posters celebrating the anniversary of NATO. The pictures of King Constantine and his bride have been moved lower down on the wall and a picture of George Papadopoulos is centered above them. Papers, government handbills, village records, and numerous other items are stacked against the wall.

There is turnover among members of the Council, not just because of the changes that occurred with the coup. It is confined to within a fairly limited population, however, for only the more important men in the village are elected for a four-year term. While serving their four years they are the objects of the villagers’ ire if the Council, especially the president, is thought to have let them down. (The Council decides whether to sue a villager who, for example, has not paid a debt. It seems that in these two villages persuasion and peer pressure are not sufficient means of social control. The courts are constantly resorted to.)

The village of Miliessi which, as was noted, belongs to the same commune as Malakassa, had, before the coup, the vice-president, the assistant to the secretary of the commune, and one adviser, while the president, two advisers, and the secretary came from Malakassa. After the coup, the pattern remained the same; the incumbents changed, but the secretary and his assistant remained. When I first came, in 1968, it was explained to me that the new president had been appointed because he had served with Patakos, the Minister of Interior, in the war. Panayiotes was supposedly made vice-president because he knew one of the colonels, and the explanations were of the same nature for the previous appointees to office. One example from Miliessi-Malakassa will illustrate how patronage and favoritism enter into local government, and simultaneously, what problems emerged when the central government replaced the elected village leaders with appointed ones:

The priest, who was a friend of Panayiotes, the vice president, motioned for me to come over and sit with him under the plane tree by the church. “Hey, have you heard? They got rid of Petros, the old president. He just got a notice from the nomarch that he was going to be replaced by Thanes. It’s all because of the water.” I asked him to explain what the water system in Malakassa had to do with the replacing of the president.

Well, Thanes is a member of the family which claims it owns the land that the commune gets its water from. Since the commune has been pumping water from there, the people have paid over $75,000 to the commune for the use of the water. Now Thanes and his family say that the money should be going to them and not the commune.

But how did Thanes manage to become president?

Well, you know that Petros was made president because he knew Patakos. Thanes, though, knows a man who is a friend of Papadopoulos’ secretary. And even before he became president, he managed to get Constantine appointed as an adviser, and now Constantine is on his side. They are both working on Evangelos, the adviser from Miliessi, to come over to their side. What they will do is call a Council meeting, and because there are three of them, they will be able to decide that the commune should pay the money to Thanes’ family, and they will have won.

(A caveat must be entered here: all village council decisions are subject to the veto of the nomarch.) Panayiotes has said that he will not stand for it,” continued the priest. “He said that if they lose they will go directly to Patakos himself and present their case. Panayiotes and the other commune adviser, Yorgo, think that Thanes must be trying to get Andreas, the assistant secretary, fired from his job.” Why? “Because the adviser who is with Thanes, Constantine, has accused Andreas of stealing building materials from the yard of the school house and is threatening to take him to court.”

Andreas’ wife, Maria, said the reason that Petros had been thrown out and replaced by Thanes was that the rest of the Council and the secretary, Yannis, had gone to the nomarch in Athens and asked him to replace the president because he was shutting off people’s water. “He got better, but it was too late. Now we have Thanes and he is even worse.”

In about a week, several of the people in the village were not speaking to Andreas, who explained it thus:

They are jealous. I am now getting $50 a month from serving as assistant to the secretary, and using my motorcycle to bring supplies for the Agricultural Cooperative from Skala Oropos. But there are other reasons. There is a Communist adviser, Yorgo, who is against me.

I asked why the Papadopoulos government would appoint a Communist to the Village Council. Andreas shrugged his shoulders and went on with the reasons people were against him: “The water pipes for the new village water project pass through our land, and people think I will be able to get water easier than anyone else. People are jealous. Anyhow, it is all the fault of this Communist; he is the source of evil.”

Maria told me that people did not understand what was happening.
It was Petros who told Andreas to cut off the water to those who did not pay the $25 for being hooked up. They think he is responsible. We don’t want to pay either, but it’s the law. The real trouble, though, is the Communist. He told people not to pay the $25 and then when Andreas turned off the water the people tried to beat him. I had to call the police from Skala Oropos and they came and stopped it. No one will testify against this Communist because they are afraid of him. He is revengeful and might kill them if the government changes.

At the end of 1969, when I left the village, the commune was suing Thanis for the water rights. Andreas was suing Yorgo, the “communist” member of the Village Council for slander, and half of the village was not on speaking terms with Panayoites, the vice-president, because he had taken the side of Andreas.

As new leaders replaced old ones in a manner new to the villagers, there was an attempt to explain in fairly traditional ways who got appointed. The new village officers “must have known” someone to get their positions. But this was an unfamiliar kind of patronage, i.e., military patronage. Established patterns of authority within the village were upset and new, and additional, divisions were introduced into local politics. The issue of the water system in Milessi illustrated the point that people viewed the local government with mistrust and believed that the village officials were trying to maximize gains for themselves and their immediate families. Intrigue and gossip play an inevitable role in this system, and no real form of parliamentary democracy has developed.

The Village and the Courts

To the villager the courts are just another example of the establishing and asserting of the central government’s authority over the village. Since few villages have a local court, the lawyers, the judges, and others who determine one’s fate all come from the outside. The courts are seen by the villager not as an institution to protect him against neighbors and the government but as one to be manipulated so as to gain some advantage over them. For in his eyes, justice is done when he personally benefits and sees someone else suffer as a result of a court hearing. A suit is brought against a neighbor as a means of equalizing a relationship or of allowing the plaintiff to gain the advantage in terms of money, or prestige. It is shameful to lose a suit, not because one is shown in the wrong or loses money, but because honor and prestige suffer as someone else gains. The villager believes that the courts can be approached and influenced in the same way as all government bureaucracies, namely through patronage. As the following example shows, the operation of the judicial system serves only to reinforce this belief.

In Varnas a concrete stairway runs directly in front of old Mr. Peppas’ house to the roof of Anastasian Peppas’ grocery store. The latter does not plan to build on top of his grocery store, and no one goes up there to sit. Built during the night, it intrudes on the land of Yannis Peppas, who was going to tear down his father’s old house and build a new one there but is now prevented from doing so by the staircase. Yannis is a second cousin by marriage of Vassilis Peppas, son of Anastasian, the owner of the grocery store.

Anastasion is the uncle of Nicolaos Turcondonis, the new village president, who before taking office had never lived in the village. It is supposed that he was appointed to his position because his brother is a colonel in the Greek intelligence forces.

When, on the morning after the staircase was built Yannis saw it, he with his brother, Evangelos, began to attack it with sledge hammers. The president, his uncle, and their families, rushed out of the grocery store and started throwing stones at Yannis and Evangelos until the police intervened. Yannis brought in a civil engineer, who told the president that the staircase should be torn down not only because it was on Yannis’ property, but also because it encroached on the road, which was going to be widened. Yannis and his family thought that everything was over when Anastasion Peppas and the president told him that they would tear down the staircase and not go to court, if Yannis would build a metal staircase behind the grocery store, spiraling to the top of the store. Yannis agreed. He and Evangelos went out the next day and proceeded to tear down the steps. The head of the police in Kapandriton was called by the president, who told him that Yannis was destroying his property and they must come and protect it, because he now had a “license” that allowed him to rebuild the staircase.

They had managed to get a license that the police said they could do nothing about. The president’s brother, the colonel, had used his influence to overturn the decision of the civil engineer. We went to Athens to find out what happened, and a woman in the Department of City Planning said that a colonel in the Greek intelligence forces had come and asked for the permit to build a staircase. She said that she did not know it had already been built, nor that it was on someone else’s property.

While Yannis and Evangelos were in Athens finding out how the president and his uncle got the permit for the steps, the latter two were rebuilding them, and Vassilis Peppas’ wife spent her day shouting at the sister of Yannis and Evangelos, Martha, “You see, we did what we wanted. We have won! Now you are going to die of your misery and unhappiness. There is nothing you can do.” Martha’s brother, Yannis, had taken $500 of the money she had saved for her dowry furniture to pay the lawyer and the expenses of the civil engineer. Martha cried:

Now I will have to wait another six months to have my wedding. The president is trying to win a psychological war. He’ll try to take everything we have. If he can build a staircase on our property, what will prevent him from taking our land? My brothers will not stop fighting, though; our family’s honor is at stake. What is even worse, though, is the way Vassilis’ wife behaves. When I go by the grocery store, she comes running out and says, “We have beaten you, you little whore. Oh, yes, we have.” And then when she passes by our coffeehouse and I am working inside, she beats on the windows and sticks her tongue out at me and says, “You little whore, what do you expect to win?” Me, a whore! I was so upset I went to the priest. He told me to pray to God. I asked him if he couldn’t go to Vassilis’ wife and ask her to be quiet because I couldn’t stand anymore. He said, “Martha, I am afraid that if they think I am on your side they will hurt me. I’ll try to speak indirectly about this in Church on Sunday. I would suggest that you talk to Vassilis himself. He is a reasonable man.”

The Peppas family was not the only one involved in law suits. Two women
were suing one another for damages in the court in Kapandriton, each having accused the other of calling her a whore. They had torn one another’s clothes in a fight provoked by the name-calling. One family was suing another because their donkey strayed into their garden. Another suit was instigated by the daughters of one family who had called the wife in another a whore at the village well. As the school teachers both said, “These people are always suing one another. They spend almost as much time in court as they do in their fields. And what do they get out of it? Nothing! The lawyer eats them up.”

At the present time, then, it appears that no moral cohesion is created by local government. Most of the committees are without real power, and the Village Council’s decisions are subject to the reversal of the nomarch. Villagers spend much time making direct appeals to the nomarch, ministers, and other government officials. The sources of control are outside the village.

The Central Government

Of the obvious representatives from the outside a leading one is the tax collector, who comes from Kapandriton. He walks about the village looking to see if improvements are being made and trying to decide what the taxes for a particular family should be. He takes account of the villagers’ attempts to hide all real sources of income from him. His decisions can be appealed in the courts, but the procedure is long, complicated, and expensive for the taxpayer, because he will have to pay a lawyer and lose time at work. The appeal to lower taxes and adjust them is made personally to the tax collector, and this, of course, perpetuates a system of patronage and favoritism.

Milesi has a forest guard provided by the government, who is supposed to see that people do not cut down the young pine trees planted to stop soil erosion and to make sure that goats and sheep are kept away. There is a farm guard in Varnavas, to make sure that people and animals do not trespass on their neighbors’ property. Because the guards must live in the villages, they are quite lenient in their application of the law. Their pay is $50 a month, so there is an incentive for them to make friends, rather than enemies.

Neither Milesi or Varnavas has a rural policeman. The police come when called because of occasional fights or they make merely routine calls. Spiro was fined $25 because his dog bit two children when they were going to school. The gendarmes had told him to keep the dogs tied up, and when they found them running loose he was fined. They may take people who have been subpoenaed to court down to Kapandriton, where the cases will be tried, and they serve as an emergency transportation service if someone must go to Athens because of illness, for example. There is no crime, in either Varnavas or Milesi which requires a policeman walking the beat. No one is going to be attacked at night or robbed.

The people of the villages are skeptical about what they will get from any government. In Varnavas they are concerned about their struggle with the Forest Service, with whom they are disputing the ownership of the forest lands. Villagers are fined for trespassing on land which they have always used for grazing, gathering wood, and sometimes have actually tilled. When they allow their lands to lie fallow and then attempt to move back on them by cutting brush they are prohibited from doing so by the police sent from Kapandriton by the Forest Service. Rumors circulated during 1968 and 1969 that the “government” was going to move the entire village to the other side of the mountain so that their farming activities would not lead to erosion and the consequent muddying of the Marathon reservoir some five miles to the south. This situation existed under the previous government, and now the Ministry of Agriculture has taken the matter under advisement. Some villagers are optimistic and say that, “This government is for the farmers; they will not let our land be taken away.” Others feel like the man who said, “I am 72 years old; I trust no one.”

Indicative of the villagers’ ambivalence about centralized authority was their reaction to the liquidation of the peasants’ debts to the Agricultural Bank, one of the first acts of Papadopoulos’ government. There were two reasons: one had to do with their desire to win the support of the farmers, and the other with the fact that many of the debts had existed for years and were uncollectable. As one old woman told me, “It saved us. Now we can make some plans for the future and save our money to send our children to school and not worry about the debt to the Bank.” Many others echoed this sentiment. But still others felt like Sotirious Boukis, who said, “The people who profited were the ones with debts. Yannis went and borrowed money for a tractor he could not afford. Now look what has happened. He has a tractor and I have none. The government should have used the money to help everyone.”

Among the “experts” sent to the village by the government are civil engineers who arrive to build roads or water systems. Having little or no training, they receive their appointments by way of patronage. To illustrate: In 1966, the village of Milesi began to build a general water system, water being a major problem. The commune made their request to the nomarch for funds to aid them, and for someone to be sent to engineer the project. A large concrete and stone fountain was built in the center of the village at which the animals could drink and the women could get water. Concrete pipes were then run from this fountain up through the village to a well. The pipes were buried about two feet in the clay soil, which drops at a minimum of 18 inches a year. (The church of the Three Archangels, which is on the path of the water pipe, has been split almost in two by the shifting earth.) The broken church, the eroded soil, the fact that two houses were sliding over the hill, were all sufficient proof to the villagers that this clay soil was going to continue to slide. The engineer laid the pipes and had the wet slippery soil packed firmly around them. After the first heavy rainfall the water system was useless. The president, carrying the complaint from the Village Council, went to the “men from the Ministry” to have them solve the problem. After the village had waited two years, an engineer came to tell them the soil was slipping. The Ministry of Agriculture and the Ministry of Social Welfare had both been informed about the plight of the village, and more men from the Ministries came out to “survey” the problem. A geologist informed the villagers that
there was no more danger for at least two more years; that is, their houses would not fall over the edge of the ravine in that time.

I was continually asked if I could not get the government to “fix the water tank,” to “give the village a loan to build a new school” or to “give them better pensions.” Sometimes I would be approached by an individual with a special plea, “Won’t you help me go to the police and tell them that Yannis has been trespassing on my land?”

The Ministry of Agriculture sends someone to the village about twice a month: a worker to try to get the young people to form associations for learning better techniques of farming and homemaking, a female worker to start a handicraft class in the village, and to encourage the women to sell their products. As this young lady said, “They accused me of overcharging them for the materials they were using. When I suggested that we have an exhibition in the village, I was asked, ‘What will we have to pay you?’”

When a social worker sent by the YMCA in Athens received a shipment of clothing from the United States, she went about to distribute it to the villagers by telling several women to tell their friends and relatives about it. “I thought the word would spread quickly. When it came time to distribute the clothing, the only people that showed up were the women I had mentioned the clothing to the day before. They had told no one! Not even their neighbors.” (A word of caution: After listening to the social worker describe the lack of cooperation among the villagers, and their constant litigation, the assistant to the secretary interrupted her with the words, “Be honest. It’s bad, but not that bad.”)

Given a group of people who honor and protect their immediate families, who assume that others are not to be trusted, and that one is surrounded by enemies: and add a situation in which the villager has little say in the decisions that affect his day-to-day life, little control over the school system, the police, the government experts. Add, too, a subsistence economy, on land that is difficult to farm. There then emerges a situation in which each believes that he advances only at the expense of his fellow man. If Yannis proposes that the new road take a certain route, one must ask himself, “What will Yannis get out of it if the road goes that way? If I help Yannis, what will he get that I won’t?” The suits brought against one’s neighbor are the best indication of the pressures within the village. Suing takes the place of a blood vendetta as a way of getting back at a neighbor for real and imagined insults. Pride and honor become dependent on shaming him.

George Foster’s concept of the limited good offers a means to interpret the village mentality (1965). He argues that in peasant societies people view their total environment as made up of valued things that are in short supply: land, wealth, health, friendship and love, manliness and honor, and so forth. Some of Foster’s critics argue that not all peasant societies see such things as love and friendship as limited (Kennedy 1966). Nevertheless, in many peasant societies there are things seen as finite and desired. What they are may vary from country to country; in Greece land, jobs, and wealth are in short supply,
as are also patrons with wealth and influence. Education, too, is viewed as a limited good.

As Foster notes, in such a society the individual tends to believe that he cannot get ahead unless it is at another’s expense. Conversely, if someone else succeeds it must be at his expense, although he may not immediately see how. There is a tendency for him to try to increase, as in the system of amoral familism defined by Banfield (1958), his own family’s short-run gains in the belief that everyone else is doing the same. Moreover, actions of officials, elected or appointed, are assumed to be determined in the light of personal advantage. Justice is seen as a procedure for gaining what is scarce.

This is why it is almost impossible for a village political system to operate in an open and democratic fashion and why there is little or no attempt to accomplish goals by organized action. Where individual family action and well-being are given priority, there is relatively little cooperation and decisions and projects are determined by outside authority. In such a case authority meets with little or no effective resistance.

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1 I have tried to blend incidents from each village together so that it would be difficult, if not impossible, to identify a specific actor in either of the villages. We never put ourselves in the position of condemning or praising the government which took power in 1967, but have tried to let the villagers speak for themselves, echoing their opinions, not ours.

2 Normally one percent of the money that comes from the sale of crops goes into the communal treasury. Two percent of the money from crop sales goes into the farmer’s National Crop and Social Insurance Agency. Several farmers try to hold jobs where deductions are also made for the normal social security organization in order to receive benefits from both agencies.
CHAPTER IX

MOBILITY

Pressures to Leave

Migration from the village has as dramatic effects on those who stay as on those who leave. Some of the reasons are seen in a typical letter home, written by Menelaius to his wife, Voula, who remained behind in the village while he established himself in Athens so that he could send for her.

My beloved little Voula:

It has taken me some time to write and think of all I want to say to you. If I say too much, I'll say nothing. But I must tell you what is on my heart. Life here in Athens has great variety. All kinds of things happen that make life both pleasant and unpleasant here. People are constantly coming and going and full of energy, life and action. You have to admire their cunning, cleverness, and eagerness. One has to live in the city for awhile before his mind awakes from the stupor that it falls into when one lives in the village. Everything is beautiful here and you find everything you want. Little Voula, I know you understand me and understand that I want you with me as soon as possible. ... I meet with some of my old friends from the village after work and we talk. ... Cousin Dino arrived yesterday and is staying with me while I try to help him get located and find a job. I might be able to get him on with me at the bottling plant. ... The $50 I enclosed is for the furniture for our new apartment. Take some of it and buy a present for you and the baby.

Kisses to all, Menelaius.

Historically Greece has experienced a great deal of internal and external migration. Several circumstances contribute to the willingness of the villager to migrate temporarily or permanently from his home. The Civil War created populations of refugees who fled from the battles in northern Greece; World War II saw people moving back and forth across the country; and after the defeat in Anatolia refugee populations came from Turkey. Thus warfare created a people used to moving, either because they were displaced, or because of wars which took them away from their villages.

A second factor that contributes to mobility is the fact that Greece has been occupied in recent years by people from developed countries. Some Greeks learned to speak German during the Occupation, and many learned English because of the British and American presence in their country. Even a limited ability to speak a foreign language eases migration. Many Greeks seek temporary employment in West German factories, or go to Australia or the U.S.A. “to seek their fortune,” for, for some years, West Germany, Australia, and the United States have had jobs which, since they call for a minimum of skills, Greek immigrants can fill.

A third factor in mobility is that Greece is a maritime nation. Various tax laws have made it easy for ships of other nations to register under the Greek flag, increasing the number of jobs in shipping. Even before the tax laws, there were many Greek ships with Greek crews, flying under other flags. Greek ships call at ports throughout the world, and the sailors write to their families about opportunities in Australia, Japan, and America.

All of these conditions are related to another reason why Greeks have moved—the economic one. Waves of emigration have occurred after major crop failures and depressions such as those between 1882 and 1886. Once abroad, the emigrants served as a magnet to others, particularly since they began to send money back to Greece. Money was necessary, of course, to pay taxes and build up the dowries of girls left at home (Vlahos 1968: 56-60).

Demetrios Dideris, who was born in Milessi in 1938, left the village at the age of twenty. He came from a family of seven and had one brother and three sisters. When he was about 18, his father was killed in a mining accident, which left him and his younger brother, Yannis, with the major responsibility for farming the family’s ten acres of olives, grapes, and wheat. Their income was so low that it was difficult to keep the family alive, and Demetrios and Yannis worried about the dowries of their three sisters. First Demetrios left, and got a job at Grammatikon in the same mines where his father had been killed. Then, through a friend from Milessi, he got a job as an unskilled builder in Athens, leaving his brother to take care of the farm. Yet Demetrios felt that he was not saving enough money for his sisters’ dowries. He had been home to Milessi on Easter, at Christmas, and had come with some of his friends from Athens for the paniyiri, at which times he, Yannis, and his mother would discuss the problem of farming the land and the dowries. He left Athens for Germany in 1959 with his cousin from the village. They worked in the mines for seven years, saving their money and sending money home to the family continually. Finally, in 1966, he returned home. He had enough for his youngest sister to marry and gave her a house as her dowry. Some of the family’s land and cash that he had saved helped the second sister marry. Demetrios now helps Yannis farm the land, and is thinking of getting married to one of the girls in the village. Yannis is planning on going to Australia or West Germany, wherever he can find a job.

Migration from the village to Athens, or abroad, is associated with several personal characteristics, causing an important impact on the village. First, Greeks immigrating abroad in 1967 fell primarily in the 20 to 24 and 25 to 29
age brackets (Statistical Yearbook 1968: 45), and the emigrants from Vonavas and Milessi also fell into these age ranges, both male and female. The young leave: the women because they marry young; the men because they have not yet married and need money to do so and to help their sisters to marry.

There also seems to be a tendency in Milessi and Vonavas for an equal out-migration of males and females. It is interesting that all of the villagers, young and old, male and female, see the female as the one who burns to move away from the village. “Ah,” said Maria, “how I would like to move to Athens and live like a human being. To be away from the chickens and olives is all that I want.”

“I want to be able to go over to the sink and turn on the water like my cousin in Athens,” says Paki. “She has a good life. She can go out with her friends and see the sights in Athens, and sometimes she goes to a movie. She’s not an olive-picker anymore.” Practically all of the young women liked nothing about the village: in contrast, women of 35 or older admitted that there were good things about it. Although males would list the desire to escape the suffering of their parents and an agricultural way of life, they were more likely to list “lack of work” as the main reason for not staying in the village.

The story of Alexandrouts and his brother, Theodore Stamatis, is typical of those who permanently migrate. Their family had seven members, two boys, three girls and the parents. First Alexandrouts, the oldest, left the village to get a job in Athens. From there he sent money home to help his parents and his sisters. In 1958, he left Vonavas permanently for Australia, where he moved into a community of Greeks in Sydney. He and a fellow countryman began as common laborers in the construction industry, but eventually owned their own small firm, specializing in building hotels and motels. In 1964, he sent for his brother, Theodore. Theodore married a Greek girl from the Peloponnese who lived in the Greek community in Sydney. With both brothers sending money home, the sisters had cash dowries and made good marriages. One sister married a clerk from Athens, the other an electrician. Theodore and Alexandrouts decided to give up their claim to the family’s house and lands and their third sister married a man from Grammatikon, who moved to her village to begin helping her elderly parents with the farming. The lands were her dowry.

The villages lose their educated young people to the urban areas and other countries. Those who manage to finish primary schooling and at least the first three years of secondary schooling feel that there are no opportunities for them at home. And, indeed, in Milessi and Vonavas there are none, if one discounts farming and marginal businesses such as a taverna or coffeehouse. Among the school children of Vonavas and Milessi I did not find a single one who planned on staying in the village, even among the girls. They all talked about the need of education so that they could move out, so that “we will not have to live like animals.” Some, indeed, will leave for higher education. Consequently, the village is drained of its potential leaders every year, and the “hopelessness” of the future of the village is echoed in the school rooms, in the homes, and in children’s conversations. The community council, instead of being a council of notables, is becoming a council of those who could not get out. The village’s eyes are turned toward Athens and the outside world, and he does not care much what happens locally; especially, he sees no necessity to participate in cooperative endeavors that are designed to make village life easier.

We asked villagers whose duty they thought it was to initiate local projects: should the villagers, as opposed to the central government, concern themselves with water projects, or the controlling of erosion? Inevitably the response was: “It is their duty to do these things. Why should I concern myself?” The no-march, the ministers, “they” should solve the problems of the village. The village belongs to no intermediate associations or veto groups that take him beyond the boundaries of his immediate family and make him feel that he is participating in a meaningful manner in self-government. As Nisbet (1953), Kornhauser (1959), and others have pointed out, to prevent the development of anomie and normlessness, the situations in which mass politics emerge, one must feel that he is part of a group with a meaningful stake in the world. The agricultural cooperatives, the School Committee, the Church Committee, and, of late, the Village Councils concern themselves with problems that bring no changes in the villages. Order is imposed from the outside through the police, the forest and farm guards, and the other numerous governmental agencies. While anomie and normlessness are often felt to be conditions unique to urban agglomerations, they may also exist in a village which is losing its best young people to the urban centers, that has a weak economic base, that cannot see a pattern of change for the better, nor imagine how to cooperate to achieve one. Where is the “primariness” in Milessi and Vonavas? Where is the “primariness” of the village family?

Mobility is another threat to the family. Andriades and his friend Paniyotes felt that they had done well for their daughters because they “had married them in Athens.” Paniyotes, telling us about his relationship with his daughter since the marriage, said, “I went to visit her in her new apartment in Athens, and she would not even let me spend the night there. They didn’t take me to a coffeehouse, and when her husband came home he didn’t even offer me a sweet. What has happened to their philotimo since they have moved to Athens?” His friend Andriades, as well as others in the village, recounted similar stories. They were not welcome in the homes of their children who now lived in Athens, or other cities. The dowry system which prevailed in the past served, as has been explained, to tie the families closer together, but the city bridegroom wants money, not land, and money does not hold families together as land does. Namby celebrations, Christmas, and New Year’s are bringing decreasing numbers of former villagers back home from the city, although they still come at Easter and the village’s Paniyiri. As old Mrs. Peppas sat in her yard washing dishes in a large galvanized tub, she said,

Look at all of these dishes! My husband and I waited hand and foot on our children for three days after they had decided to honor us with a visit on Easter. I cooked for them, and Petrous even killed two of our laying chickens. What for?
They don't ask us to visit them. They don't send us money anymore. We're just left here to die.

It seems that the present dowry system is beginning to exacerbate the relationships between those who remain in the village and those who leave.

**Pressures to Stay**

The work pattern of men in Varnavas and Milessi who travel two hours or more a day to and from their jobs in Athens or other villages indicates that they would prefer to work at home, if only there were work. They have chosen to stay in the village, even though they have jobs in town. Certainly there are forces which pull them back to the village: they already have a home there and they would not want to go to the expense of getting an apartment in Athens; they have friends there; they have land there on which they grow crops to supplement their incomes; and finally, they say they like it there. When I ask what they like about their village the men say: “I like the climate, the view, the fresh air. It is peaceful here. My friends are here. People are nice. I was born here. My family is here. We have a school and a church here.”

It is not the same in the case of women, because no matter what happens in the village their role is essentially unchanged. They are likely to say: “I like nothing about this place.” Young females, especially, also play down the unfavorable aspects of city life, whereas males, both old and young, admit that there are things about Athens they do not like: “The noise is terrible. It is so dirty. People there are corrupt and have no morals. It is too expensive.”

Young males (again, the breaking point was at about thirty-five), say that they like Athens because of entertainment and jobs, whereas those over thirty-five prefer to remain in the village. Perhaps one reason why the male is more likely to respond favorably is the security offered by the land, for if he gets tired of his job he can farm; he does not have to work for someone else. “Panos had a good job as a carpenter in Athens,” said Anastasia, “but he quit because he didn’t like the schedule.” A number of males vacillate between employment in Athens and working their land. I ask them why they continue to farm, and point out that they would have a higher standard of living if they keep just the job they had in Athens. Their responses took a definite pattern: “Well, one never knows. We might lose our jobs and then what would we do if we had let our fields go fallow?” Another reason why the male is more willing to stay if work is available, while the female wants to leave, is that the former has much more freedom in the village than does the latter. In Athens, the women know they can go shopping by themselves; they can go to movies; they can, in their own words, “live like human beings.” The female in the village is subjected to continual scrutiny, while the anonymity of the urban setting offers her freedom.

Whether abroad, or in Greece, the movement is cityward. In late 1959, the National Statistical Service of Greece carried out an exploratory study of the migration from rural to urban areas. The analysis of four villages and the follow-up questions included in a pilot census in early 1960 and the Population Census of March 1961 provide useful material for comparison with the situations in Milessi and Varnavas. Two of the four villages, Aghios Mammis and Langadia, were agricultural communities with increasing pressure on the land, because of rising birth rates, falling productivity, and so forth. Aghios Mammis had a population of 389, excluding juveniles and married women, and for Langadia the corresponding figure was 604. In the first, 43 individuals (excluding juveniles and married women) moved out; the comparable figure for Langadia was 137. Particularly important, however, are the figures for returning migrants: 3 in Aghios Mammis and 11 in Langadia (National Statistical Service 1962: 15). Those who return are, of course, potential carriers of new values.

The reasons why the Greek returns from abroad are complicated. Certainly family ties draw him back, but there is also the fact that the work schedules of foreign countries do not match his. Takis, writing to his fiancée in the village, explains to her the problems of living in the United States:

Vetta,

How can I stand it? Everyday I must work from eight until four-thirty, which means that I must get up five days a week at six-forty-five. Change is what I ask in my life, not this routine. Can you think of me home in one or two years? This is a country for adventures. But what moves me is to live as I want, and do what I want... I suffer but I won't give up. I'll try harder.

The Greek who goes abroad does try hard; he works long hours but he endures the western work schedule only long enough to make his money and come home.

Yorgo spent three years working in West Germany in a textile factory. “I could hardly stand it. But now look at me. No one can tell me what to do!” Yorgo bought a motorcycle with his savings, and goes to Skala Oropos each day when the small boats come in. He buys enough fish to fill the wooden box on the back of his motorcycle, and then goes to the villages in the surrounding hills, honking a brass horn, and selling fish by the handful to the housewives. He has a small set of brass scales which he balances across his handlebars when weighing purchases.

Sometimes girls or women leave Greece for work abroad with a husband, father, relative, or friend from their village; rarely alone. But they, too, have difficulty adjusting to new demands. Hans Sturin, in discussing the problems of the Greek women employed in a German chemical factory, notes that they never reach the work norms of the German women employed at the same tasks. One of the main problems is cultural. The Greek women are used to breaking their work routine as they see fit. The regularized schedule that is imposed on them produces severe problems. (Sturin 1968). Even though they may have worked a ten- or twelve-hour day in the fields, it was broken by the large midday meal at which the family gathered and laughed and talked. Field work also is broken by story-telling, and it varies from month to month, as well.

Once the villager has moved, either to a city in Greece or abroad, contacts with his village take a few obvious forms. First, there are the visits at Easter
and other special occasions. Marshall (1938) describes the return of an immigrant son to his village.

When a son was returning for a visit, the whole town walked out a mile or so to welcome him. Mounted like a medieval knight on the finest horse in the village, the visitor rode proudly with head back and chest thrust forward, for the admiration of the crowd. In this land of frugal living his ruddy cheeks, thick neck, and stomach round by German beer were greatly admired as proofs of prosperity. Everything about him was wonderful, from his shaven neck to his handsome American boots. For days he stood treat at the coffeehouse for all comers... (Marshall 1938: 74).

Most of the contact that we found between villagers and their departed relatives was, however, through letters, parcels, and cash. The amount of money that the Greek emigrant sends home each year is a large part of the pull exerted on the village. In fact, in 1967, emigrant remittances totaled close to 232 million dollars. This was almost twice the gross income derived from the entire tourist industry, 127 million dollars (Statistical Yearbook of Greece 1968: 336). The remittances are a “pull” in the sense that the recipient in the village may use the money to move, or he may want to move in order to make money himself. The effect of the return of the immigrant, of money sent from abroad, and of letters from Athens or Australia about the wonders of the new country is, in the end, to pull the villager away from farming.

The Pull of the City

In the same way, family ties pull the villager to the city. Extended kinship ties can provide opportunities in the city which do not exist in the village. Relatives may be a source of new jobs in an urban area, either by employing the villager or finding him a job. They may help finance part of his moving or provide temporary housing while he looks for work. The 1960 study by the Greek Statistical Bureau revealed that, in all, eighty-nine percent of all females and seventy-five percent of all males were “pulled” from the village by friends, relatives, and other villagers who were already established in cities (Greek Statistical Bureau 1962: 26-27). Of those moving from the villages, one-third stated that a relative had preceded them to their destination, and one-quarter stated that they had been followed to their place of destination (Greek Statistical Bureau 1962: 31-33).

The Greek word, asstifilia, refers specifically to love of the urban condition and the life of the metropolis. It is the urban life-style after which the villager lusted, and tries to model his own life. Friedl, in discussing emulation among the villagers of Vasiliki, makes use of the concept of “lagging emulation,” meaning that people attempt to emulate the strata of society that have a distinctive status, but in this they lag, because the group imitated is one which reached its acme as a prestige symbol for the higher social group at an earlier period in its history, and is now obsolescent (Friedl 1964: 589). In the case of Vasilika, the villagers set the highest value on the white-collar positions, particularly those which require a classical education. This is true in Varnavas and Milesi, as well. The effect, as has been noted, is to encourage village school children to believe that only an education in a gymnasium is worth-while. They aspire to civil service positions, and train for jobs that are not only over-crowded, but may be obsolescent or not even in existence by the time they are ready. Emulation, then, mitigates against strong vocational programs and any deviation from classical training in the grade school and high school, even though classical education has become nonfunctional.

In Varnavas there is one television set. The wealthiest man in town installed one in his grocery store in the expectation that business would increase as people came to see what, for the villager, was truly a novelty. His business fell off. The reason was explained to me in the same way by various informants: “Just because he has a television set, he thinks everyone will come running to him. I have my pride.” The implication was that he would be letting his emotions show and shaming himself if he congratulated his neighbor on his good fortune.

But even though business may have temporarily fallen off, the impact of the set has not. Several other families who can ill afford the cost of color television sets (it comes to about the yearly family income in Milesi or Varnavas) are planning to make down payments on them. In the village status is determined to a great extent by visible objects that can be emulated. And these must be objects from the city. Several wily antique dealers have gone into rural villages with plastic dishes, or table clothes, for example and traded them for old, valuable dowry linens, hand-made wooden bowls and spoons, pewter plates and mugs, and so forth. A radio, a phonograph, or a new suit will be bought at the expense of a child’s education. Niki could not be sent to school because of the cost of the bus tickets, but her family saved enough to buy a radio. The men who go back and forth between Varnavas or Milesi and Athens each day bring home the desire for the goods of Athens; not the climate of Athens, nor its educational facilities, but its goods. The children who are taken for special trips to Athens on their nimated, the women who go to visit a relative in Athens, want the status symbols of an urban existence: the dresses, the suits, the shoes. It is, of course, no new idea to the villager that one must create a certain appearance. Men go to work in their fields in suits. True, they are old, but one apologizes if he is not well dressed. Anyone found chopping wood with his sleeves rolled up first of all excusses his appearance. Each Sunday the men dress in their best clothes and join in the perpeto, walking around swinging worry beads, and talking to friends. They may finger one another’s clothing, if the material is new, and do not hesitate to ask how much something cost, although they may be given no answer. (This was one of the more unnerving aspects of my first encounter with people in the villages. “How much did your camera cost? Your jacket? Where did your umbrella come from? How much did your suit cost? How much money do you make?”)

How does one explain in terms of hard facts and statistics what happens to an individual when a wealth of consumer products that he did not even know existed becomes suddenly available? How can one record the anger, bitterness, and despair seen in a person’s face when he looks at the new radio his neighbor has set in his window and turned up for all to hear? Inside the house the plastic dolls bought in Athens attest to the family’s status, as does the shiny
venered bed frame that has replaced the old one carved out of cherry. The
dign of a good woman has been, for centuries, to weave, sew and dye her own
cloth and make her dowry linens by herself. No now girl in the village wants
dowry of hand-made things. Goods, no matter how flimsy, must be ready-
made. Home-made dishes are not prestigious fare; one opens cans in front of
his guests to show that he can afford canned goods.
The role of women is changing under the impact of consumer goods and the
desire for them; so, too, of the male. If the local economy is not expanding,
then for all practical purposes one advances himself at the expense of his
neighbor. (If anything, the economy of the village has contracted, since one
must earn money by seeking a job in Athens or another village.) I would
argue that one reason why the villagers of Varnavas and Milies seek redress
from one another for every kind of imagined affront is that they see this as a
way of getting ahead of their neighbor, not only psychologically but economi-
cally as well. “If I see Yannis and collect, I will be able to buy that new
radio.” Up till now no one has managed to advance himself very far in this
manner because of the cost of litigation. But the neighbor loses, too, because
he has to pay his lawyer and the fine imposed on him by the judge, and so he
will not be buying a new radio, either.
Emulation has also had an effect on patterns of marriage. Recall the proud
villager’s statement that he had married his daughter well: “...in Athens,
and to a civil servant.” As Thorstein Veblen theorized, one form of conspicu-
ous consumption was to make the woman idle and pay for her retirement from
the world of work. Although it may cost parents and sons dearly, there is
prestige to be gained by providing a large dowry and marrying a daughter in
Athens. But this is lagging emulation, because among the wealthy and
educated in Athens there is a trend away from arranged marriage and toward
peer marriage. The dowry, while it is becoming less significant among the
urban elite, seems to be increasing in importance in the villages; (Friedel notes
the same pattern in Vasilika.) and in size; now it is necessary for the daughter
to have a dowry of between $4,000 and $5,000 to be married in Athens. But
the persons most available for models to the villagers are not those who have
historically been the elite, but the rising urban bourgeoisie, the relatives who
emulate the nouvelle riche, and ape their behavior in the village. Thus, the
villager’s striving for status in the face of a tide of consumer goods takes the
form of buying the symbols of bourgeois position.
There is no honor to be had from remaining a villager. Farming is de-
demeaned as an occupation, and this is probably why the Agricultural Ministry
has difficulty in getting farmers to accept new methods. Why be a better
farmer, when what one wants is to become a city man?

Effects of Migration
The problem, of course, is even wider than this. Each year a number of
Greeks leave their country to seek temporary or permanent jobs abroad. In
1966, 87,000 Greeks permanently emigrated, and 62,000 left temporarily; in
1967, the figures were 43,000 and 60,000, respectively. (The drop in the figure
for permanent emigration was due partly to changes in the emigration laws.)
This meant that about 2 percent of the Greek population left in each year
Those who have been emigrating to other countries permanently are the
skilled and talented but recent laws have made it more difficult, and in some
cases impossible, for such people to leave. The illiterate, the underemployed
farmers, the villagers, could still leave, but these, having no negotiable skills,
are thereby locked into their positions. Unless the Greek economy grows at
a rapid rate and absorbs them, rural and urban poverty will increase and rela-
tionships among the villagers will grow worse.1
Those who do not leave their country present another pattern of migra-
tion that is in some ways disturbing to the government. In Varnavas and
Milies the villagers who left home between 1960 and 1969, and/or who had
left prior to that time and for whom information was available, all had as their
initial destination Athens. The 1960 study conducted by the National Statisti-
cal Service showed that 75 percent of all out-migrants from the villages stud-
ied went to urban areas, 60 percent of the total going to Athens (National
Statistical Service 1962: 16). The jobs they take in Athens are whatever they
can get. The urban areas are, therefore, faced with a problem of severe under-
employment. The unemployment figures for Greece obscure to some extent the
fact that most Greek commercial concerns are family enterprises, family mem-
bers make up a large part of the work force and there is much “busy work.”
In 1961, about 3,640,000 people were defined as “economically active,”
meaning that they had worked ten hours or more prior to the week they were
interviewed, or usually worked. Out of this total, 1,042,000 were unpaid family
members, most of whom were employed as farmers (Statistical Yearbook
1968:120-121).

1 Friedel believes that lagging emulation leads to an extension of kinship ties. She sees
the wealthier families in the village as using a “wider range of bilateral and affinal
kinship connections in the dyadic contract form... than do the less prosperous vil-
agers” (Friedel 1964: 574). She describes the wealthier farmers as having their married
children live with them. She also notes among the poorer villages a separation of
households. The key seems to be wealth. But in Varnavas and Milies, all grown chil-
ren who can tend to move away from their parents’ household; only the poorest live
with their parents. In these two villages, it is important for the bridegroom to have his
own house before marriage if he expects to live in the village, and he and his parents
build him a “dowry house” as soon as they can afford it. This, and the self-isolation of
the urban daughters, contribute to the breakdown of extended family ties.

2 There is also the possibility that with increasing urbanization, underemployment, and
rising expectation, the potentiality for urban unrest is greatly increased. It is likely that
a government will remain in power that is able to industrialize the country rapidly and
to control inflation. Where parliamentary democracy exists, it tends to be rightist.
When Hellenism is coupled with the need for development, the role of the armed forces
is enhanced, for the army becomes the repository of national virtues, and may be de-

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Chapter X

THE VILLAGER CONFRONTS
THE FUTURE

Sources of Conflict

Certain characteristics seem to be essential to the very existence and functioning of modern industrial societies. Pre-industrial societies had been characterized by a type of bureaucracy, but only in the contemporary, Western bureaucracies are found most of the characteristics attributed by Weber to the modern form. A modern bureaucratic organization is essentially both formal and involuntary. Bureaucracies dominate the life of modern industrial man, shaping his private and his public life. The type of authority the bureaucracy exerts, and therefore of assent to it, varies. Of Weber’s three basic types of authority—traditional, charismatic and rational-legal (Weber 1958)—the latter characterizes a bureaucracy or a formal organization (McNall 1971: 85-87).

Briefly, to resume the distinguishing characteristics of a modern bureaucratic system: Business is conducted on a regular basis by officials whose rights, duties, and privileges are specifically restricted by rules and regulations. Each position in it is part of a hierarchy of authority; in the chain of command power may not be usurped from the bottom up, nor from the top down. Written business documents signalize its contractual nature, decisions follow the rules and are recorded so that, ideally, the same information and conditions will always lead to the same decision. The officers, while they are responsible for the resources they command, do not own them. This means that the bureaucrat is supposed to make the most of the resources that he controls to achieve in the most efficient manner possible the goals of the organization. If the goal of an organization, e.g., the Ministry of Agriculture, is increasing the crops, then decisions will be made so as to maximize crop production. A bureaucracy is a meritocracy.
Bureaucracies demand adherence to universalistic goals, as distinct from particularistic ones. A modern bureaucratized state also requires the regularization of life, and the routinization, or standardization, of everyday living: family and religious life must take second place to the factory. And because the individual’s contribution to the total system is to some future goal, gratification must often be deferred. Work is valued because if it can not bring the worker a better life, it can certainly do so for his children or his children’s children. (See discussion of the role of the Protestant ethic in modernization, in Eisenstadt 1968.)

A modern industrial state favors small family units over large ones for a variety of reasons. For one thing, as Chino (1955) found among Detroit automobile workers, there is a tendency not to care about losing jobs as long as the extended family is there to fall back on. The small family, then, introduces a form of insecurity conducive to valuing work. The modern worker is isolated; his security comes typically from being on a regular payroll. Furthermore, extended family ties become less important as the modern man begins his ascent in what is supposed to be an open class system.

As we have said, a modern society demands an adherence to system, or universal, rather than individual goals (Parsons and Shils 1951: 79-106). Individualism is to be played down as a threat to the existence of the mutual trust and understanding by which business is conducted (Weber 1958: 302-322). Bellah (1957) found that these values of universalism strongly aided the development of capitalism in Japan. (It would be fair to translate the word “capitalism” as “modern industrial system.” In fact, both Bellah and Weber talk about a rationalistic work ethos coupled with a bureaucratic, economic system—which is what is meant by capitalism.)

Corresponding to the modern state (Inkeles 1966: 141-144), is a modern man willing to accept new experience. He is democratic, in that he accepts diversity of opinion, and believes in the dignity of others, or women and children, for example. He is time-oriented and the regularization of his time involves planning and organizing for the future. The modern man, moreover, believes that events can be explained and that he can control them through science and technology. Finally, modern man subscribes to the principle that people should be rewarded according to their contributions to society and not because of personal connections. Of this modern man, modern society requires “modern social relations” (Smelser 1966: 110-121). Patterns of tribal or traditional authority must give way to political systems of universal suffrage, political parties, and general participation. Education is remodeled to reduce illiteracy and oriented to increasing the number of people with technical skills. Traditional religious systems and beliefs give way to secularized beliefs.

A word of caution is necessary here. We are not talking about how things ought to be in a modern society; we are not suggesting that any of this is “a good thing.” We are saying that certain forms of economic systems dominate in the world today (in countries such as Japan, Germany, the United States) and influence development in the modernizing countries (such as Greece, Mexico and the Philippines). Here, too, educational institutions are “Western” and perhaps to the detriment of these societies, as Illich (1970) has noted. Factories are established and run on Western models, i.e., people must come to work at a certain time, eat at a certain time, go home at a certain time.

The Greek peasant is faced with the necessity of adapting to this modern order. The drama and pathos of his struggle to participate in the affluent future are matched in practically all developing countries. Myrdal (1968: 34) describes the same drama in Asian countries:

This drama has its unity in a set of inner conflicts operating on people’s minds: between their high-pitched aspirations and the bitter experience of harsh reality; between the desire for change and improvement and mental reservations and inhibitions about accepting the consequences and paying the price.

How, then, does the Greek with his values look as a future industrial man?

Hellenism continues to stress a classical education, and, as has been remarked, the villager aspires to learn the artificial language of the bureaucrats, the Katharevousa. But if a modern society requires a maximum number of people with technical skills who earn and keep their positions on the basis of their skills, then the Greek educational system is irrelevant, even demoralizing. So, too, is a system of patronage such as prevails in village society. Responding to particularistic criteria, the system is, by definition, the antithesis of a modern bureaucracy.

The religious system which is part and parcel of Hellenism, also retards the emergence of the peasant as a modern man. The world of the Greek villager is anthropomorphized and particularistic, as is, too, Greek Orthodoxy itself, referring, as it does, all problems, solutions, and explanations to icons and the saints. Greek Orthodoxy, in short, contains all of the elements that Goode enumerates to distinguish magic from religion (Goode 1951). In fact, the case of the Greek villager exemplifies Mailinowski’s view that magic comes into play when the individual has done everything he can—planted his crops and watered them—and now must await the decision of the Fates (Malinowski 1955).

Circumstances seem unfavorable to the replacement of magic by science and rational procedures. The population is 98 percent Greek Orthodox, and other denominations, while tolerated, are prohibited by law from proselytizing. Thus there is no counter-ideology. Lantenari has pointed out that some Christian missionary movements in Africa actually gave rise to the intense nationalist local politics simply because they challenged traditional values, creating an impetus for change (1963). (Willem’s discussion of the growth of Pentecostalism in South America also illustrates religion’s political repercussions (1967)). As things are, anyone who challenges the ideology of the Greek state or of the Greek Church, would be branded as not only a heretic, but a “communist.” Lack of opportunity to question dogma, whether political or religious, hampers adjustment to a world in which alternative views must be tolerated.

We adapted Rockeath’s open- and closed-minded scale (1960) to the Greek community, asking the villagers such questions as, “One should reserve judgment until all opinions are heard. We need to rely on leaders or experts whom
we can trust in this complicated world.” First, the villagers scored extremely high on closed-mindedness but more important is the consistency of their responses; they displayed little diversity of opinion, and see no need for it.

Patronage, which, as noted, is antagonistic to the universalistic values of modern man, enters into nearly all aspects of village life. Prior to 1967, Greece was a multi-party country, with a parliament made up of deputies from the various regions, coalition politics being the rule. Often left and right united to defeat the center. But the villager was not unaware of the “practical” nature of much of politics in Athens. The return of a deputy to parliament depended, then, not so much on his performance in parliament as on his establishing a power base and maintaining local village ties by patronage. Put the other way: the villager involved himself in the political process through the medium of the patron.

The economic system and the system of patronage are also related. Loans of money and jobs are distributed on the basis of patronage. It will be remembered that one-third of the active Greek labor force is unpaid family laborers and that over ninety percent of the corporations in Greece are owned by single families or partnerships employing less than nine people, who are sons, cousins, uncles, and nephews. It is expected that one will help his own first. If a relative is inefficient, he is not fired, nor is he if he decides to go home early. Clearly, this leads to a tendency not to rationalize the use of time, and therefore not to plan for the future. It is here that the values of patronage, the economic system, and Greek family feelings merge. The “insecurity” which is the lot of the man in a nuclear family in the bureaucracies of the modern world is on the whole not felt in the Greek village.

As has been shown, during early socialization the young male comes to believe not only that he is destined for great things, but that he advances at the expense of others through luck, cunning, and sometimes deceit. He learns to support the in-group at the expense of the out-group. He does not enter into cooperative endeavors; he almost automatically questions the motives of those who suggest cooperation. It follows that participation in politics, particularly participatory democracy, is shunned, because political officials are suspected of acting not for the public good, but for their own. (And, indeed, the past history of patronage in politics would support this belief.) In brief, child-rearing patterns prevent the male child from adopting the behavior patterns necessary for successful participation in industrial bureaucracies.

The educational system supports the values and idea of Hellenism. The school teachers reinforce the values of the parents by socializing the children in the same manner that the parents do, i.e., through shame and ridicule. Church and school are merged not just in the Ministry which supervises both, but in the school lessons which deal with religion, the school prayers, and the relationships between the idea of a Greek state and people, and the role of the church.

One characteristic of Greek society is conducive to industrialization, namely, its open class system. There is a certain amount of rigidity in Athenian society of the nouveau riche, but for all practical purposes a man is accepted into circles of power and prestige if he makes his living as a merchant, an owner of trucks, or ships. Mobility is encouraged. If, however, the Greek villager is to adopt the behavior patterns necessary to modern enterprises, he must learn to see mobility as dependent on merit. Although we have dealt with the elements of Greek village life separately, it is not possible to see these elements—the religious, political, economic, and educational aspects of the culture, or its family life—apart. The strategies which the Greek villager developed to cope with the crises that beset him in a long history of wars, occupation, famine, out-migration and emigration brought stability but they are not adequate to cope with the crisis confronting him now. For easy transition from a pre-industrial society to an industrial one, the culture needs to be open, flexible, and receptive to change. In Greece, the factors which Beals identifies as facilitating this transition are missing (1967).

We believe that the conclusions drawn here can be generalized to many of the villages in mainland Greece. The villages of the islands and in the remote areas of Macedonia are not yet experiencing the pains of industrialization, but roads reach out to them, too, and pull them into the modern world. Islanders and villagers leave for Athens and abroad, and return, carrying the seeds of change.

The Future

What the future holds for the two villages depends partly on their location. Milesi is on a good road about one hour out of Athens, overlooking the blue Aegean, and lands are being bought speculatively in the surrounding hills. An increase in the tourist industry will affect the economy, particularly the tavernas and coffeehouses and any villagers who can rent rooms. In 1969 some were going to build small houses for the tourist trade. It is likely that much of the steeper land, difficult to farm but with a beautiful view, will be sold for this purpose. Money will be available to marry village girls “in Athens.”

The fate of Varnavas will be different. Its mountainous terrain has its Gothic attraction, but the road to it is rough and difficult, and it is almost twice as far from the sea as Milesi. If traffic increases, it is likely that a bypass road would have to be built to the southeast because the present road goes through the village square at two right angles, allowing space for only one car at a time. The villagers hope that the road will be improved not only to their village, but also to the nearby monastery, in the belief that tourists would come and visit it—an unlikely outcome, for it has no historic interest, no mosaics, and can boast no miracles. The development of a village water system would make the life of the women easier, and increase the agricultural output and the diversity of crops, if they can be irrigated.

But for these villages to deal with the problems they face, there must be a community, a group of people willing and able to work together for common goals. One way of creating this might be to give back to the villagers some real control over their lives. There is no reason why they could not practice parliamentary democracy. They need to vote on a water project and how to finance
it, and to discuss the merits of volunteer labor for a water project, or the leveling of the school yard. The numerous committees which already exist could be given more functional autonomy.

The villages need trusted and respected leaders. It might be possible to pay teachers added bonuses for staying on for an extended time instead of rotating them after a short period. The educated person is respected. The priest's role can also be changed; that is being discussed by the church hierarchy at the present time. There is no doubt but that people will resist it, but priests with training in vocational education and agriculture can play a significant role in improving the lot of the villagers.

That land reform is needed is obvious to both villagers and the government, which is currently instituting programs of consolidation. Yet once the land is consolidated, if that is possible, what is to prevent fragmentation all over again, given the laws of inheritance? It would seem not unreasonable to do two things: In the first place, to allow children to inherit jointly, as they now do, but not to split the plots; the sons would have either to buy another out or farm the land jointly, and hence more efficiently. Sale of lands to provide for the dowry of the village girl who wants to move is a more difficult problem. At the present time it takes the consent of the wife's extended family to alienate land which is part of her dowry, but her informal consent, only, to spend dowry money. Secondly, to pass laws which would require the consent of the bride's relatives to the alienation of any dowry property. In this manner the ties between the villagers and their urban daughter and her relatives may be strengthened by the couple's return to the village to discuss the alienation of the wife's property. And it might reduce the tendency to give dowries in cash. Land, if it were the dowry, could be treated as part of a common unit, to be farmed as a common unit, so preventing land fragmentation. This would also reduce the use of rural wealth to support a growing proportion of the urban population.

It is hoped that the school system will be changed in the near future. Even the availability of free bus service for students wishing to attend the secondary schools would help their transition into an industrial society. Changes in the school system would have to be oriented toward making technical careers possible and acceptable. In Athens and other cities this shift is already appearing, as those who have classical educations find that firms wanting engineers and scientists will not employ them. In the bureaucracy, it is to be hoped, the introduction of a true civil service system, promotion being based on merit, will accompany the modernization of the educational system.

The villagers of Varanavas and Milies have seen the future and they want to participate in it. It will not be easy for them or their children. But they are willing to work for what they want. There is little doubt that they will succeed if they sacrifice certain traditional patterns.

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1 This is not to suggest that if a Greek or anyone else does not conform to this model he fails as modern man. This model is offered merely as a contrast, to highlight their unique characteristics.

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