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Greek whisky : the localization of a global commodity

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6. The location of whisky in the North Aegean

Men's traditional breeches have turned into blue jeans. Our vineyards have become illegal constructions and the wine has become whisky (*Skyrian News* 1993: 4, issue 204).

Introduction

In the recent past, various new beverages have become part of the social life of the inhabitants of the island of Skyros in the North Aegean. Among these commodities, imported alcoholic beverages and more specifically Scotch whisky stand as a sign of the specific forms that modernity takes locally. The increasing presence of imported beverages is evident in several aspects of the social life. From bars to *kafenion* (the Greek coffee house) and nightclubs, networks of inhabitants form to “go out” and drink whisky while others use the beverage while they play *poka* (Πόκα- a local version of poker). However, such consumption habits are not viewed by all Skyrians in as constructive and socially accepted a way as they are by a large majority of Athenians.

On the island of Skyros there are various consumers of alcohol and whisky who live in a dialectic relationship with imported beverages; people make themselves through alcohol and at the same time drinks/beverages are identified with particular persons. The locations of whisky vary, as do the “styles” of the islanders who drink the alcohol. Vagelis, for example, who owns the *Makedonia kafenion*, which serves mainly whisky to its customers (amounting to up to ninety per cent of the total consumption in his shop), claims “whisky is the national drink of Greece and the favorite beverage of my Skyrian customers”. Moreover, whisky accounts for forty per cent of the imported alcoholic beverages on the island at least according to Stamatis, the owner of the island's only liquor store, and the employees of the multinational alcohol companies Diageo and Pernod Ricard who come regularly to the island to arrange imports. On the other hand, the majority of Skyrians prefer to drink wine and *tsipouro* in the “traditional” *kafenion* (the coffee house), in the *konatsi* (the shepherds' country dwelling) and in various other locations. Such gatherings are usually characterized by commensality and they are constructive and constitutive of social relationships.

Therefore, this third trajectory of the study of Scotch whisky—on the island of Skyros—investigates the ways in which the processes of the consumption of the beverage are distributed across the social life (in contrast to wine and *tsipouro*). In order to understand this trajectory and the meanings of consumption in each context, it is necessary to outline the ways in which the islanders “make themselves at home”, drawing on local history, geography and my anthropological fieldwork before focusing on the places that Scotch takes up on the island.

Moreover, I have chosen to describe in detail the occupational groups of the island, their history, social relationships and consumption habits. These relationships

have been crystallized in time into two major social conceptions which correspond to notions of “shepherdness” (a style characterized by the moral values of shepherds) and “laborhood” (a style based on the alternative moral universe of laborers). These two notions have influenced the gender styles of the inhabitants and their relationship to matrilocal residence, household domestication or anti-domesticity. The meanings of gender style that one chooses to perform are also invested with modernness (*monterno*) or traditionality (*paradosi*), concepts that are of major importance in the distribution of alcohol and whisky in the social life of the inhabitants.

Therefore, by following the trajectory of Scotch on the island of Skyros, I expect to find how it has become embedded in the social life of the inhabitants, what its meanings are, and how it has become—and is becoming—localized.

The journey from Athens to the island of Skyros

In the North of the Aegean, close to the islands of Alonissos, Skiathos, and Skopelos, lies the island of Skyros.⁵² The area of Skyros measures almost 209 square kilometers and the population of the island is estimated at 2602 residents.⁵³ There are several mountains on the island as well as a big forest of pine trees. There are valleys used for agriculture and rocky landscapes where sheep and goats are herded. The island is actually divided into two different types of landscape. The northern part of the island is more fertile and less mountainous, while the southern part is full of mountains with relatively dry and rocky land.

The endless blue sea, which can be calm and transparent in summer and foamy and choppy in wintertime, separates the island from the mainland. The islanders feel that their island is unique and they are very eager to talk about their customs and traditions and the “old ways” and to revive them. They say that their life has been changing, that the past is no longer part of the present and the future, and that everything is transforming. Their local idiom is slowly vanishing and the young do not know the “old ways” any more; the young leave for Athens and traditions are lost. “We have become modern now”, say many islanders in a bitter and disappointed tone, yet they still believe that they are traditional in comparison to outsiders. Within this context, “tradition” has been a major concern for various agents ranging from those connected with European Union and State projects to local cultural associations for the preservation of tradition, folklorists and anthropologists. Tradition is usually seen as something static and stable, which has to be preserved and well kept, like a dusty room in a folklore museum that has the smell of the past or a chest containing the “old things” (*ta palea*) that is opened once a year during Carnival.

The journey from Athens to Skyros begins at the Evia bus station in Tris Gefires where the buses stand in a row according to their final destinations. Trips to Chalkida, Kimi and Aliveri are only a few of the usual daily journeys of the passengers who are waiting in the new waiting room filled with plastic chairs. The few shops around are the last resorts of supplies for the passengers. A bottle of water, a packet of cookies or

⁵² The island of Skyros is part of the group of islands called Sporades, which includes Skiathos, Skopelos and Alonissos. Skyros is twenty-two miles from the harbor of Kymi on the island of Evia, which is the daily destination of Skyros’s only ferry boat.

⁵³ While most anthropologists of Greece such as Campbell (1964), Danforth (1982), Friedl (1962), Herzfeld (1985), Papataxiarchis (1988), and Stewart (1991) have conducted fieldwork in very small communities, this ethnography deals with a slightly larger community.

some chips are regular purchases for the short trip. The bus sets off. The driver is listening to contemporary popular Greek music on Evia local radio as he drives through the narrow streets of various villages on his way to the port of Kymi. After three hours the bus arrives at the small port, where the new ship belonging to the local company Skyros Lines is moored. Next to the ship there are many small fishing boats waiting for their next adventure. The passengers from the bus run to the ticket kiosk. Within a few seconds a long queue has formed. Some passengers find acquaintances, good friends from school or from the army, neighbors or kin, and groups take shape. People move onto the ship after buying their tickets and sit on the deck; others prefer to have a few drinks in the café/bar of the luxurious common room. Some truck drivers order whisky while a company of fishermen drinks beer. The café/bar is packed with bottles of whisky of various sizes and brands, placed in the glass showcase like sports trophies.

Within two hours the ship has arrived at Linaria, the harbor of Skyros. Linaria is a small settlement with a few houses, some fish taverns, a few shops and a petrol station. Some relatives and friends of the travelers are waving from the harbor while shop owners and newspaper distributors wait for their commodities. Dozens of cars start up their engines in the ferryboat garage, which fills up with fumes. A long line of trucks, buses and cars is now heading towards the village. A few kilometers away a huge rock becomes visible on top of the hill by the sea. As the bus reaches the village, white houses can be sighted, which spread from the top of the hill to the bottom. After passing Agelis's gas station we enter the village, and after a while the bus parks opposite the neoclassical building that houses the primary school. The high school is a hundred meters away. Between the two schools is Paneris's supermarket, a reminder of the recent shift from neighborhood food stores (*bakalika*) to supermarkets selling all kinds of imported commodities and luxury goods. A few meters away, on the edge of the market, is Vagelis's *kafenion*, *Macedonia*, where the island's middle-aged laborers watch their football games, bet on poker games (*poka*) and take their whisky. Opposite *Macedonia* is another *kafenion* called *Sinantisis*, where building professionals meet up early in the morning to drink coffee or beer before leaving for work. Next to *Macedonia* is a car rental firm and a small office called *KEP* (Citizens' Assistance Centre), a relatively new institution promoted in all municipalities of Greece by the Ministry of the Interior in order to help citizens overcome bureaucracy.

Most travelers walk towards the *agora*, the main market street of the village and the centre of the social life of the island, and then disappear into the tiny streets to the left and right, called *sokakia*, which spread all over the hill like a labyrinth. The first thing visitors notice when they enter the *agora* is the *platia*, the central square where some of the modern bar-club hybrids and *kafenion* are situated opposite the town hall and the municipal library. Taxis are parked in the small parking space next to the square and the taxi drivers are drinking *frappés* as they wait for prospective customers. Further along, some groups of schoolmates are spread out at the few tables of *Akamatra*, the bar-*kafenion* run by Makis Trahanas, a repatriated Skyrian who used to own a bar in Athens. On the *platia* there are also two newsagents, where newspapers and magazines are available. Next to the press point on the square is a clothes shop, owned by a new Chinese refugee, and the National Bank of Greece, the only bank on the island.

As I walk further up into the market I see a pharmacy opposite a tavern (*psistaria*) and a butcher's shop next to a gift shop. Opposite the butcher's shop is another gift shop, which sells factory-made copies of Skyrian embroideries along with Chinese

mass-produced souvenirs and clothes. A few meters away is a DVD club and a computer/Internet store, places which are usually full of youngsters. Next to the computer store is the island's photo shop, situated next to a bar/coffee-shop and opposite a sweet shop (*zaharoplastio*).

After the sweet shop is Maritsa's *kafenion*, where shepherds and farmers spend their time in card games and discussion. Recently Maritsa's son Manolis tried to inject a more traditional esthetic into the space with renovations, and added a sign saying "Traditional *kafenion*" at the front. Next to Maritsa's is a bar/club/café, which was a *kafenion* until a few years ago. This "modern" café/club stands side by side with Maritsa's "traditional *kafenion*". The two establishments are separated by a real as well as a symbolic boundary: a small wall keeps separate the worlds of the two cafes and the imaginative categories of modernity and tradition.

On the opposite side of the street are a snack bar, a pizzeria and Lefteris's travel agency. Skyros Travel is the only tourist agency on the island and issues tickets for various destinations including Olympic Airways' Skyros-Athens route. Lefteris also collaborates with a Dutch charter company called Ross Holidays, which operates from May to October and usually brings in over five hundred tourists every year. The other "organized" tourists on the island are connected with the Skyros Centre, an alternative, new-age center established in 1976 and based in London. The Skyros Centre in the village offers an experience of local culture in combination with yoga, shamanism and creative writing. The center has been expanded to Atsitsa, an "isolated" location where more activities are offered in combination with a "back to nature" lifestyle. Atsitsa is the resort for adventurers who love nature and Skyros is the village-town for the participants who are more interested in culture.

Across the street is the shop owned by Stamatis Ftoulis, selling "traditional pottery art" as he claims, a form of ceramic which has come to be known as "Skyrian" in recent decades even though most objects are replicas of seventeenth and eighteenth-century Dutch, Italian, English and Chinese porcelain created for the European market. While plates and ceramics are bought by tourists as souvenirs, local women regard these objects as inalienable wealth in their dowry which is transferred from mother to daughter and displayed conspicuously in most households in the village. Houses are usually open, especially in summer, and local women are very proud to show off their material culture to the tourists. A less friendly spot where ceramics are also displayed is the cemetery. Very often women dressed in black walk through the backstreets of the market to the cemetery to light the oil lamps placed in front of the graves of their loved ones and clean what they think of as their "last homes" that symbolically resemble their real houses. The cemetery is situated a few minutes away from the market street and marks the boundary of the village as its entrance is on the village's main asphalt street.

Beyond Lefteris's travel agency we find the first crossroads of the market street. The alley that crosses the market street leads on the left to the police station, the village parking lot and the cemetery. To the left the alley is narrower and descends to the area of Kohylia, which was the poorest part of the island until a few decades ago. On the corner of the market street is Stamatis's *Cava* store, a cosmopolitan alcohol store that sells bottled Greek wines, various types of whisky and a variety of imported beverages. Stamatis runs the only alcohol store in the market and is the main distributor of alcoholic beverages on the island. On the other corner of the crossroad is another relatively new *kafenion*, where middle-aged shop-owners from the market, artisans and public servants spend their time in chat, card games, television and backgammon.

As I walk up towards the top of the hill I pass by another three cafés/bars (*Artistico*, *Rodon* and *Kalypso*), a bakery, a barber's shop, three clothes shops, two restaurants and a few other shops and mini-markets. Opposite Tsakamis's mini market is the island's central church where most weddings, baptisms and funerals take place. The last shop of the market sells traditional Skyrian art and is usually open during the tourist season.

I continue my walk towards the ancient acropolis or castle of Skyros, called Kastro, which lies at the top of the hill and houses the Monastery of Saint George, property of the monastic community of Mount Athos. The steep stone path extends to Rupert Brooke Square⁵⁴ and then comes to the oldest neighborhood of the island, known as *megali strata*, where the Skyros elite lived until the beginning of the twentieth century. The neighborhood is surrounded by Byzantine churches attached to each other and stone arches. The biggest church is "Virgin Mary of the *Arhontes*" or *arhontopanagia*, meaning Virgin Mary of the Noblemen. Neighbors sit and chat on the stone benches on the sides of the church.⁵⁵

At the end of the road is the front entrance of the *acropolis* and the gate to the monastery. Next to this gate, where an Athenian lion made of white marble lies as a reminder of the influences of classical Athens, is the house of my matrilineal uncle Mihalis, who gave me hospitality and provided precious information and contacts during my research. The view from this area is magnificent and the visitor can see most of the settlements on the island, including the structure of the village. On the western side, on the balcony of the monastery of the ancient *acropolis*, I can see the *agora* and the Kohylia area. Kohylia surrounds the western part of the village up to the market street, the *agora*, and it is the lowest area of the settlement. This is where many laborers and farmers reside. The area between the *agora* and the *arhontopanagia* is the second major part of the village, which used to be—and still is—where most of the shepherds dwell. The area above the church of the Virgin Mary, which surrounds the rock of the ancient acropolis and the monastery, is known as Kastro. The elite inhabited this area in the past. After the dictatorship the area gradually became a ghost town, occupied mainly in summer by Skyrian-Athenians and the foreigners who have bought houses in the area.

The small square next to the entrance of the monastery, called Kamantou, is a balcony on the east part of the Aegean. Standing high on the hill, the viewer can see an endless horizon filled with the blue of the archipelago and a few fishing boats far below in the sea. On the north side is a lowland (*kabos*) where vineyards grew until most of the local production was destroyed by phylloxera in the 1970s. Nowadays the whole area stretching from the edge of the lowland down towards the sea is built with the new-style houses of Skyros. A garden and a garage at the front, sometimes a lawn, and usually two floors are regular characteristics of the houses in this area. The rapid tourist and economic development has transformed the area between the sea and the *kabos* into a holiday resort for many foreigners, Skyrian Athenians, military personnel and lately also inhabitants who prefer to be close to the sea. The change in the

⁵⁴ The English poet Rupert Brooke, who was commissioned into the British Royal Naval Force, passed away from pneumonia on 23 April 1915 on his way to Gallipoli. He was buried on the island of Skyros where his grave remains today. A few years after his death, the Greek state founded the Square of Eternal Poetry on Skyros, where the statue of a young man was placed in his memory.

⁵⁵ On Skyros the stone bench attached to the house is called *pezoula* (πεζούλα). It is usually painted white and it is considered a continuation of the house where the outside sociability of the early evening, known as *sperisma*, takes place. *Sperisma* derives from *espera* or *speros* meaning the early evening time and it is the context for neighbor or maternal kin sociability.

landscape after the 1960s and 1970s included the construction of various hotels and houses, the Xenia Hotel and more recently beach bars and rooms to let, all over the seashore.

The seashore is divided into three main settlements that no longer possess borders. The oldest settlement is Magazia, which is on southern part of the seashore. Magazia was also the first area to develop tourism, with the Xenia Hotel being built there in the 1960s. The first bar on Skyros, owned by Stamatis Ftoulis, opened there and some others followed later. Nowadays the area is booming with hotels, bungalows and rooms to let and has kept its local character. After Magazia is the area of Molos, which used to be the largest community of fishermen on the island. Molos is recognizable by the small fishing port situated in front of an old white windmill that has been transformed into a tavern. In the winter, several boats are hauled onto the shore next to the small harbor to be protected from the winds and maintained by the fishermen. The rest of the time, fishing boats of various colors are in the water and can be seen leaving and entering the harbor early in the dawn and in the afternoon. When there is no wind, their old petrol engines can be heard kilometers away with their slow hypnotic pulse that resembles the social life of the island. The last and newest settlement of the seashore is Girismata. More than a decade ago, the largest hotel on Skyros, the Skyros Palace, was built there and various other houses followed that spread towards the *kabos* (meaning lowland) area. However, the proliferation of houses, rooms to let and small hotels has resulted in a chaotic buildup that has not been supervised by the municipality or any other authority.

On the rest of the island there are some smaller settlements of farmers and shepherds and an increasing number of houses owned by wealthy Athenians or inhabitants who prefer to stay on their own estates. The area of Kalamitsa, for example, in the south west next to the port of Linaria, has been transformed into a tourist, Skyrian-Athenian and Skyrian-American settlement with a bizarre pseudo-elitist aesthetic and is full of small villa estates. The development of the area has also resulted in the establishment of a small mini-market and a new Athenian-style restaurant.

On the north side of the island there is a military and civil airport, part of a large army base. The transformation of social life on Skyros was also influenced by the construction of this military air base, which began in 1970 and was completed in 1976 (*Skyrian News* 1979: 1-7). The farmers who owned the land and the laborers who had bought land in the Trahi area received an indemnity from the State. Skyrians received considerable amounts of money that were subsequently invested in tourism and in buying apartments in Athens which could be given as dowry. A network of roads was constructed and the population of the island increased as several of the military construction workers married Skyrian women and stayed on the island. Nowadays the airport serves the charter flights from the Netherlands and Olympic Airways' flights from Athens and has recently been renovated. Next to the airport there are a few agricultural areas and a large pine forest, which covers the largest part of the northwest side of the island. The eastern side is the driest part of the island, where shepherding takes place and the highest mountains stand. The area of Vouno, for example, is the highest area of the island with a relatively large goat and sheep population and many shepherd families.

The island's economy nowadays is based on tourism, sheep and goat herding, small businesses and the army. There are at least 222 shepherding and goat-herding families and almost 38,000 sheep and goats on the island (Municipality of Skyros Information Office 2005). The rest of the inhabitants make their living as shop-

owners, laborers, farmers, fishermen, and public servants. The shepherd families own most of the shops in the *agora* and the politics of the island are still influenced by their large lineages. Names such as Mavrikos, Fergadis, Xanthoulis and Mavrogiorgis represent the largest extended shepherd lineages that own most of the property, land and the animals on the island.

Mesa and ekso. The cultural construction of place and identity on the island of Skyros

On Skyros there are various small settlements, but the majority of the islanders live in the only town-village, called the *horio*. In the *horio* houses are packed one over another in a cubistic style from the top to the bottom of the settlement. The heart of the *horio* is the *agora* or market street. The island's market street is at the foot of the hill and is the central meeting point of the inhabitants, chiefly the men. Life in *agora* begins between eight and nine o'clock in the morning and continues till nine to ten o'clock in the evening, with an afternoon break of four to five hours, usually from one to six. During summer, however, shops stay open longer as there are tourists on the island. Public events take place in *agora* all year, including Carnival, political debates and festivals. Within this context men frequent the bar, the *kafenion* (sort of coffee house) and the tavern. Women tend to socialize more often inside and around their houses, where they also dominate the family affairs. In some ways then "women are houses" (Stewart 1991: 49). This is especially the case if they are uxoriously settled in their dowered house. There they are responsible for keeping men and things in order, saving money (*oikonomia*) and organizing family life in general.

The *horio* is the center of the social life of the island and as such is also called "Skyros". The *horio* is divided into Kastro, the *Agora* (the shopping street including bars, *kafenion* and mini markets) and Kohylia, though there are no clear boundaries between these areas. The *Agora* is the major point of reference in the *horio* when somebody is giving directions, and is the most public and busy place both day and night. Leisure is almost synonymous with the *Agora* and people ask "*pame stin agora?*" ("shall we go to the Agora) when they want to invite you out or have a drink with you. The village is divided into *pano* (up) and *kato* (down), with the *pano* area usually referring to the Kastro area and *kato* to the *Agora*, Kohylia and the seashore. In daily conversations in terms of space, islanders also distinguish between *ekso* and *mesa*. *Ekso* means the outside and includes everything that is situated outside the village except the seashore in front of the castle with the areas of Molos and Magazia. The term is also associated with nature and wilderness as well as with supernatural beings and the devil, the *okso apo do*.⁵⁶

Interestingly the meaning of *ekso* has shifting meanings among the shepherds who refer to Athens and to the outside of *horio* (including their spaces of labor in the countryside) as *ekso*. Outside the *horio* (*ekso*) can be found, for example, the *konatsi* or shepherds' country dwelling.⁵⁷ This is male property and is viewed as a male space. It is where the shepherds or farmers sleep when they have long working periods; it is

⁵⁶ For a detailed analysis of the meanings of *έξω* on Naxos island and its relationship to the mythical creatures of *εξωτικά* see Charles Stewart (1991) *Demons and the Devil*, Princeton University Press.

⁵⁷ A *konatsi* is a small, simple construction usually made of stone and wood with a few small beds and a fireplace. In some cases there is also a vegetable garden next to the dwelling. Families associated with goat herding and shepherding usually own at least one *konatsi*.

where tools and wine are kept and where male drinking gatherings take place. The *konatsi* provides a solution for socializing for shepherds who cannot afford to drink and entertain themselves *mesa* in the matrilineal residence, the property of women. Socializing in the house is mainly a privilege of the matrilineal kin. The center of the household and the nuclear family in the village is *mesa* in the house, which is property of the women and is thought of as female space. The house is divided into *sfas* (bedroom), *sala* (living room) and *apokrevates* (kitchen). The right-hand wall in the entrance hall of the house is called the *kalos tihos*, meaning “good wall”, and this is where the decorative objects of the female dowry are usually placed. At the left-hand end of the good wall is the *fgou*, the fireplace, which is also decorated with pieces of the dowry and is painted white like the interior walls.

By contrast, the Skyrian-Athenians, migrants and laborers refer to Athens as *mesa* or “inside” (in opposition to the shepherds who refer to Athens as *ekso*), the term usually used for the *horio* or the house. This reference to Athens as *mesa* is not accidental, as will be demonstrated in the coming chapters. Athens as an imagined place is related to the values of cosmopolitanism expressed in a specific style adopted by present or past migrant-laborers. As such it has been appropriated as *mesa* and therefore close, part of the style of those who come and go between Skyros and the Capital and those who want to be identified with Athens. It is worth stating, then, that meanings of place—such as the dichotomy of *mesa/ekso* in the case of Skyros—are translocal and subject to the cultural style with which each network identifies and makes itself at home. Claims over cultural styles relate to the construction of places, their cultural meanings and associations (Ferguson 1999: 82-122).

In addition, the geographical location of a space and its cultural construction as a place is a translocal and transnational process. In anthropology, for example, it has been demonstrated that the connection of place and space with a clear cultural and ethnic identity is problematic for various reasons. As Gupta and Ferguson have argued, there are several major issues that problematize this relationship (Gupta and Ferguson 1992: 6-14). One of the most important is the case of those who inhabit borders—or, in the case of Skyros, the case of those migrant laborers who have been traveling between Athens and Skyros or have claimed a relationship with Athens. Such networks are neither “here” nor “there”, neither Skyrian nor Athenian, neither urban nor rural.

With regard to property relationships and inheritance, male shepherds usually do not inherit anything *mesa* in the village. As a result they usually own their flock and the land *ekso*. Women, on the other hand, inherit the house and the fertile land and they remain in control of the economics in the household. So in terms of place, property relationships can be articulated in the house, bilateral reckoning and the village structure are expressed in the cemetery (Bampilis 2002), and new income differentiations are related to the area where a person lives and entertains herself or himself. Within social space human action is organized in its relation to boundaries. Inside and outside (*mesa-ekso*), or *fridatsi*⁵⁸ and *mantra*⁵⁹ or up and down (*pano-kato*)

⁵⁸ The *fridatsi* (meaning “small eyebrow”) is a thin blue-grey line that surrounds almost every house in the village and is a symbolic boundary of the household. The line is always painted by women and is usually taken as a symbolic image of a woman’s eyebrows. It is painted once or twice a year, usually in spring and summer, and the same figure is also found on the graves in the cemetery. In the eyes of local women the *fridatsi* indicates the existence of a woman, and usually of a family. A well kept *fridatsi* is also a symbol of a clean, tidy, household-focused woman, thus expressing the central values of the gendered social life on the island.

are symbolic boundaries that define the neighborhood, the household, the grave, the professional space and the property. The social space organizes human action in various contexts such as the village, the market, the church, the household or the *kafenion*, all of which express different types of social relationships. As Zarkia has argued about Skyros, social relationships become meaningful mainly in reference and in relation to place (Zarkia 1991). However, place has translocal meanings—as the case of the symbolism of Athens as *mesa* demonstrates.

Despite the effectiveness of symbolic boundaries, their fluidity is unquestionable. For instance, the yard of a house—which I initially thought to be a private space—becomes a public space in the summer; houses that are closed in the cold evenings of winter open up in spring and summer; the *fridatsi*, which is not visible in the winter, is repainted and becomes visible in the spring; and the *kato* of the market during winter transforms into the sea shore and the fishing port during summer. The social categories of space change their meanings according to the occasion, time frame and relationship.

In terms of sociality, male gatherings take place in the market, the *kafenion*, the bar, the *konatsi* or the homes of single men. Men are expected to be social through drinking and sometimes singing. Women also sing, and especially in the context of *panigiria* (religious festivals) there is competitive singing of local songs, a practice that has continued for generations. Dance and dancing are not usual and tend to take place at weddings or in clubs and bars. As the inhabitants say, “on Skyros we sing and drink”.⁶⁰ Songs, small poems that people compose to use in everyday life, local sayings and generally the idiom with its local color are the major social contexts for reproducing and expressing the cultural particularity of the island. For instance, after I had spent almost a year on the island many Skyrians spoke to me in a very local idiom and expected me to answer back in the same vein.⁶¹

The inhabitants identify themselves as Skyrians mainly because they were born and live on the island of Skyros. Very long lineages called *soia* (or clans as they have come to be known in the anthropological literature) are not a prerequisite for a Skyrian identity, even though they are of major importance. On the contrary, there are Skyrians who do not have a long lineage because they are descended from migrants who have traveled in the Aegean for several hundred years. However, there are various levels of “Skyrianness”. A “real” Skyrian is a person who has a Skyrian mother and father—but anybody can claim a Skyrian identity by bilateral reckoning, either from the mother’s or the father’s side. Being born on the island is not a necessary requirement, especially in recent decades when parents have decided to go to Athens or Evia to give birth in a proper hospital. For example, people are still considered Skyrian even if they were born in another city or town and returned to the island as a newborn baby. The most important aspect is the level of kinship

⁵⁹ In opposition to the *fridatsi*, which is considered a female boundary, the *mantra* is a male boundary that covers the shepherding and herding spaces of milking and cheese making. It is usually a wall made from stones and branches of various trees and plants. The *mantra* boundaries incorporate religious symbols, such as crosses painted on the wall, which protect the flock.

⁶⁰ *Stin Skyro pinoume tse tragoudoume tis tavlas*

⁶¹ According to Herzfeld, language has a central role in the reproduction of social relationships and locality within the context of “cultural poetics” (1993: 2). The local dialects and idioms are therefore major processes of shaping and expressing cultural contexts. With urbanization, central education and the gradual shift towards the “formal Athenian accent and dialect”, the local idioms have been diminishing. However the persistence of younger people has resulted in a renegotiation of local identity through the practice of idiom in everyday life. Folklore studies and publications have also influenced further the reproduction of the language by younger generations.

association, and people are readily considered to be Skyrians if one parent comes from Skyros. Miltiadis Hatzigiannakis, for instance, who is currently the mayor of Skyros, is considered a Skyrian despite the fact he lived in Athens for most of his life. The major reason is that his maternal kin comes from the island. Likewise, in my case I was considered a Skyrian because I was engaged with my research on Skyros for a long period and my mother, Anna Christodoulou, was born and grew up on the island.

One of the first things the islanders asked me when I was first introduced was “*Pianu ise ?*” (“what is your family name?”). Another similar question could be “*ti soi ise*”, meaning “What is your lineage?” The *soi* is extended both matrilineally and patrilineally and is of great importance in socialization and establishment of social relationships. Already from school age, children are indoctrinated by their parents about the *soi* and their social relationships. Socializing with cousins and close relatives is desirable despite the fact that children do not follow these social conventions. *Soi* is also of great importance among the occupational partnerships such as the associations (*smihtes*) of shepherds who come together for milking and to produce cheese and wool. Generally speaking, the matrilocal or sometimes neolocal habitation results in extended relationships of the male partner with the male affines of the maternal lineage. In this sense the male affine relatives are likely to cooperate and establish bonds. Another term that inhabitants use for *soi* is *sira*, meaning “line” in Greek. However the term *sira* also represents the appropriate web of social relationships for each individual, including marriage, and social groupings related to other forms of socialization such as the school and the army. When I was present at discussions concerning the proper marriage for my uncle, for example, my grandmother would say, “She is in your line” (*ine tis siras su*) or “She is not in your line”.⁶² Therefore, *sira* in that specific context expresses the appropriate marriage for women and men coming from similar socio-economic backgrounds.

Ekso as a term may also be related to *eksoteriko* (abroad), everything situated outside of the geographical area of Greece. *Eksoteriko* usually refers to Western Europe and the U.S.A. where most visitors of Skyros come from. As such *eksoteriko* is highly valued, as life there is considered to be progressive and advanced. In addition, commodities might come from *eksoteriko* and these usually bring a high status. Scotch, for example, is from *eksoteriko* as are other imported beverages. However, the most common representation of *eksoteriko* relates to the English and Dutch tourists who come regularly to the island during the summer.

A major division which exists in almost all communities of Greece is that between inhabitants (*ntopious*) and outsiders or *xenous* (ξένους). This division can be understood as a continuation of the boundary between *mesa* and *ekso*, as inhabitants are from *mesa* and foreigners from *ekso*. On Skyros outsiders are usually divided between “Greeks” and “foreigners”. Greek *xeni* are usually divided between Athenians and the rest. Other Greek *xeni* are the brides and grooms of inhabitants who come from other areas of Greece. Male *xeni* are usually *fantari* or *aeropori* (soldiers or pilots who work in the military airport). Another category of Greek *xenos* is the person who comes from another area of Greece and is employed on Skyros as a public

⁶² Similarly, Papataxiarchis has noted in the case of the island of Lesbos that “the term *sira* is used in different contexts, to refer to the order of marriage priority among sisters, the turn of treating to a drink, or even as an indicator of class status. In all cases, therefore, a kind of rank order is implied, and the individuals are differentially placed in accordance with it” (1991: 172). This rank order applies also to the island of Skyros. Furthermore, on Skyros *sira* refers to the social position of the person in relation to the past hierarchical social system or the contemporary class differentiations. As such *sira* relates to social hierarchy and social differentiation

servant (*dimosios ipalilos*). Kostas, for example, who recently arrived on the island, is the manager of the Skyros airport. He was appointed by the national aviation agency and he lives on the island with his wife even though becoming part of the community is not an easy task. In most cases *xeni* are not considered part of the community, even though there are some foreigners who have managed to acquire a more local identity.

In all cases *xeni* or outsiders coming from *ekso* are considered to enjoy the benefits of Skyros without return. As the shepherds say, the outsiders “*afinoun tin kotsilia tous ke fevgoune*”, meaning they leave their shit and go. Athenians especially are considered to have this mentality of snobbery and disregard for the social life of the countryside, not to mention that they are sometimes viewed as the cause of all the problems in the community. Despite this uneasiness about the Athenians, various networks identify with Athens as a value and a “style”, as will be demonstrated in the coming chapters.

Social stratification and social differentiation

According to descriptions by Western European travelers, Skyros was dominated by religious sentiment and by the Monastery of Saint George (Antoniadis 1990). The monastery was founded in 964 by the Byzantine emperor Fokas and gradually became the centre of religious practice. The property of the monastery increased significantly and at different periods could be estimated at between forty and fifty per cent of the land of the island. As time went by, and more specifically within the twentieth century, the property of the monastery decreased dramatically for various constitutional and real estate reasons. For more than five hundred years the land on Skyros was mainly the property of the monastery and of the elite or *arhontes*. For hundreds of years the ecclesiastical authorities and the noblemen would rent their land to the rest of the Skyrians, mainly to shepherds and farmers, and would receive products and money in return. As a result, the political and religious elite was able to keep the social status and indeed become wealthier without coming into conflict with the other social strata that followed the rules of conduct with religious devotion.⁶³

The social differentiation on Skyros was evident until recently, with a hierarchical social stratification expressed in the terms of *arhontes* (noblemen), *tis agoras* (men of Agora), *tsopanides* or *kotsinogonati* (shepherds), *agrotas* (farmers), *psarades* or *xsipoliti* (fishermen) and *kohiliani* (laborers). Each occupational group had a distinct identity, which was expressed in clothing, residence and symbolic capital. The reckoning of bilateral descent in combination with relatively flexible endogamic rule resulted in the reproduction of this hierarchical social stratification, which remained part of the social life of Skyros for hundreds of years (De Sikke 1978, Zarkia 1996). Following the formation of the Greek state in 1828, Skyros became part of the national political organization. The governor of Greece appointed a commissioner for the island who tried to organize political life according to the principles of the new state. The old political system of *dimogerontia* was gradually replaced by a State authority, which led to a general decline of the elite structures of the island.

⁶³ Traces of the history of the island are existent in records that go back at least five hundred years. The records used for this part of the thesis and the most important collections of Skyrian history are a) the archive of Antoniadis, partly published by the Skyros Association in 1990 b) the archive of Oikonomidis, unpublished, property of National Literature Archive, c) the archive of museum Faltaits of Skyros, unpublished.

The political power of a ruling group was evident from the political bodies that were already constituted from the sixteenth century. The noblemen, called *arhontes*, first appeared in a written source in 1515 (Zarkia 1991: 33).⁶⁴ The noblemen were the only ones who could read and write; they were the first to wear western-style clothes and their consumption habits were very distinctive.⁶⁵ Women decorated their houses in an elaborate display of expensive porcelains and silver pieces from all over Europe and the Mediterranean, a custom that was later copied by other Skyrians. The distinction of the noblemen was also expressed in the *prikosimfona* (dowry agreements). The *aloni* was given from the mother to the daughter as part of her dowry and still today constitutes symbolic and material capital in the form of antique European porcelain, plates, pottery and embroidery.⁶⁶ In addition, houses and pieces of land were regular gifts from the family of the bride. The groom was able to use the dowry but it was never totally his own property; this can be understood as a result of the matrilineal kinship system of the island. In many cases there was the condition that everything would be retained by the woman in case of divorce or separation. An example of a dowry agreement which dates back to 1616 states:

We give to Kali our daughter: first the mercy of God, and then God gives through us a house in the area of the *kastro* [...], another two houses [...], one is given this day and the other one after my death [...], the field in the area of *nifiri*, the fig trees close to the sea shore, the field next to the field of Christ in *ninon*, the vineyard in *kambos* [...], another vineyard in *misokambia* [...], another vineyard in *mavrounas* [...], all our bees and the rents from our farms in the areas of *trahi*, *kalamia*, *psahra*, *sikamini*, *tremoutzi*, *lakkous*, *lole*, *bera kambo*, *hilidonia*, *aspous*, *paraskinia*, *ahili*, *kolithrous* [...]. And from our house four blankets, two made of silk and two imported bed sheet, ten pillows, [...], large and small towels, [...], two wooden bins, [...], a pan, a wine container, half the *louni* (*aloni*) of the house [...], completed dowry agreement in November of the year 1616. (Antoniadis 1990: 36, document 17)

The noblemen owned most of the land on the island, the best areas for pasturage, the farms, the olive plantations and the vineyards. They also owned the windmills, the olive presses and the cheese farms. Furthermore, the noblemen were the only ones who were allowed to be elected members of the political committees of the island.

⁶⁴ During the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries the governing body of Skyros was called *protogeri*. From 1607 to 1750 the political administration on the island was based on a body called *epitropi*, which means the commission. The local political administration during the 19th century was called *demogerontia* and it was responsible for negotiations with each new political establishment and would decide for all legal and property affairs. (Zarkia 1991: 23). The council of *demogerontia* was constituted by three or sometimes four men over thirty-five years old, with each having a certain responsibility. There was a secretary (*grammatikos*), a president and a person responsible for security in the countryside (*horafiaris*). These people were elected from the people of Skyros but had to be part of the local elite, the *arhontes* (Zarkia 1991: 23). The structure of *demogerontia* was formally abolished in 1833 by King Otto.

⁶⁵ Western-style clothes were the Venetian-style clothes that appeared after the third crusade and during the fifteenth century when the island came under Venetian rule. A remnant of this mentality is the figure of *fragos* in the carnival. *Frags* literally means “westerner” and this figure is dressed up in what inhabitants consider “ridiculous clothes”.

⁶⁶ The *aloni* or *luni* is part of the dowry of each woman and is transmitted by mother to daughter. It includes what is known on Skyros as *palea*, such as porcelain or brass plates, pottery, embroidery and other objects that decorate the interior of the house. It is considered inalienable wealth and only in exceptional cases such as wars and extreme poverty are there diversions in the career of these objects.

They were responsible for exports and imports, they represented the island in the Ottoman and European authorities, and they collected taxes (De Sike 1978: 69-78). In short, the noblemen held economic and political power on the island and were involved in many different social spheres. They would decide in most religious, property, economic and legal matters. They had the most expensive clothes, which were usually imported, and they were also known as *megalostatites* because they lived in the area stretching from the *kastro* to the area of *megali strata*. Their Byzantine names possibly reflect an association and descent from Byzantine noble families, but historical research is yet to examine this possibility.⁶⁷ Until the beginning of the twentieth century the life of the noblemen was dependent on the rent they received from the shepherds and farmers (Zarkia 1991: 36).



Figure 6.1 The shepherds' neighborhood (1960, Archive of Vernardis).

Until the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth there were six major groupings on the island, whose social position was based on their access to the means of production (De Sike 1978: 69-78). The mode of production for at least five hundred years, from the fifteenth to the twentieth century, remained largely unchanged, based on sheep/goat herding and agriculture. The means of production consisted of land and animals. The hierarchical social relationships of production were expressed in space. The *arhontes* lived in the area of the *kastro* and *sarous*, the shepherds in the area of the *agora* and *Agia Anna*, the “men of Agora” in the *agora* and in *Kohilia*, the farmers in *Kohilia* and in the countryside (“outside” or *ekso*), and the laborers in the *Kohilia* area. The few fishermen always lived close to the seashore in *Molos*. Of all these groups the *arhontes* had the strictest endogamic

⁶⁷ In the Byzantine era some islands were places of exile for noblemen during intrigues and power games among generals and the emperor. Skyros was a place of exile and it is possible that noblemen who arrived on the island were given property by the empire in order to be able to live.

restrictions in order to retain control of the means of production, a mentality that gradually changed.⁶⁸ Still today remnants of the past hierarchical differentiation are reproduced in local sayings.⁶⁹ Furthermore, until recently there were conflicts between the occupational groups and Mayor Labrou is recorded stating in his election speech in 1951 that “we have to remember that the usual fights between the shepherds and the laborers/peasants in relation to agricultural damage often resulted in killings.”⁷⁰

The distinct identity of each group was based on occupation/ownership, descent and residence. However, residence was not a necessary requirement for inclusion and wealth did not guarantee upward social mobility. In many instances people with higher incomes (such as seamen and successful shepherds) moved into the Kastro area but their status did not change. Similarly, successful farmers tried to become shepherds but did not succeed in being accepted as such. On the other hand, *arhontes* who moved into neighborhoods where shepherds lived retained their status and their spatial mobility did not affect their identity. As a rule, matrilineal residence in combination with specific endogamic rules influenced the spatial division of each group. In all groups, a house close to the family of the bride was given to married couples. If the bride’s family did not own an extra residence, another floor would be built above the residence of her maternal nuclear family. This custom is still visible and has shaped the structure of the village to a large extent.⁷¹

Another criterion for inclusion in the *arhontes* was the possession of symbolic capital objectified in the *palea*, meaning “the old objects”. The *arhontes* owned the majority and the most valued of the *palea*, which were gradually passed over to the rest of Skyrians. The *palea* included the dowry objects that decorated the houses (known as *aloni*) and also embroideries, clothes such as the bride’s dress (*alamena*), and objects in general that were passed on to each generation. Inheritance was matrilineal and these objects were considered inalienable like the *aloni*. Their value was based on their age, quality and career. Objects that were acquired as a result of divergences, as was the case in the Second World War, were not considered as valuable as objects passed on by a mother who was descended from a family of *arhontes*.

Those who lived in the Kohylia area, the lowest part around the castle hill, were called “*kohiliani*”, and they would take care of all kinds of hard work, particularly hard manual labor. They were hired by the noblemen and the shepherds to cultivate their land and to assist in milking and other shepherding and goat herding activities. They did not own any property or land and therefore they had no access to the means of production. They worked as farmers, artisans, carriers with mules, woodcutters and builders and in any kind of heavy labor. Their payment was not always satisfactory.

⁶⁸ The inheritance of their land was solely based on descent. Inter-class marriages sometimes took place and in this way a part of the means of production was passed over to shepherds. Mixed marriages would more likely occur between shepherds and noblemen than noblemen and laborers. The main reason was that the shepherds had control over the goats and sheep and were therefore situated in a higher position in relation to the laborers. The laborers were the lowest on the social scale and in many instances were exploited by the noblemen and the shepherds.

⁶⁹ The distinctions between *kotsinogonati*, *xipoliti* and *kohiliani* are still used by the older generation of Skyrians. Such distinctions are not related to the segregation of social life but to hierarchical descent and property transmission. Nowadays intermarriage among the mentioned occupational groups is possible.

⁷⁰ Booklet handed out during the commemoration of Georgios Labrou (1901-1965) on 20 August 2005, organized by the municipality of Skyros.

⁷¹ The characteristic stairs of the Skyrian houses, for example, are a product of this practice of matrilineal residence over the home of the wife’s family.

For example when they worked for shepherds they would receive yearly only ten goats and a pair of *trohadia*, the shepherds' hand-made sandals (Zarkia 1991).



Figure 6.2 View of the area of the *Kohilia* (1960, Archive of J. Vernardis).

These laborers were considered to have low status in Skyrian society and they were called *grunia*, which literally means “pigs”. Marriages with women from this area were not welcomed by the other strata on Skyros, as these women would have no dowry and would bring nothing but their reproductive capacity to the marriage (they came with only “*to mni sto heri*”, only their vagina in their hand). The men were not respected, as their wives would have to participate in the process of production and this was considered shameful, as ideally women should focus on childcare, the household, embroidery and religious ceremonies. Today such terms are still used by the shepherd families of Skyros to refer to the *parakatianous* (those without social status) who lived in Kohylia.

During the twentieth century two major processes influenced the hierarchical access to the means of production, which resulted in profound socioeconomic changes. Urban migration and gradual enrichment of the poorer social strata transformed the social categories of stratification and residence. Social space would no longer be related to social differentiation and access to wealth would be the privilege of the migrants and the large shepherd lineages. More specifically, at the beginning of the century the majority of the local elite bought houses in Athens, sold their property on Skyros to sustain their lives in the city, married Athenians and migrated to Athens. Most of these wealthy migrants received education and became lawyers, medical professionals, engineers and writers. This educated diaspora decided to establish an association of Skyrians in Athens (*Σύλλογος Σκυριανών*) and publish a newspaper to maintain their ties with their native place. The newspaper *Skyrian News* (*Σκυριανά Νέα*) was printed for the first time a few years before the

First World War and is still the major newspaper of the Skyrian diaspora. The Skyrian newspaper of Athens reproduced the political influence of the elite families who had migrated to Athens and played an important role in establishing an imagined community among the diaspora of Athens. Gradually the newspaper became the means to nationalize tradition and folklorize the local cosmologies. As such the newspaper articulated a discourse that incorporated the local into national and urban culture.

The tragic influenza epidemic of 1917 had a dramatic effect on the island, resulting in hundreds of deaths, further reducing the number of noble names, and decreasing the population in general. By the middle of the twentieth century only a few families of noble descent were still resident on Skyros (Zarkia 1991: 43).⁷² The migration of noblemen to Athens was followed by the “*men of Agora*” and finally by shepherds and laborers. Many migrants journeyed to the United States, including some descendants of shepherds, and returned to buy property on the island or to donate a part of their wealth (Mavrikou 2005: 11-111). As Mavrikou has described in her novel *O Amerikanos*, the Skyrian American diaspora was considered the most privileged group because they were able to become rich and upon their return would find a good bride, buy property and live a comfortable life.

Moreover, gradually the property of the *arhontes* was transferred to the shepherd and laboring families. The international economic crisis as a result of the two World Wars and the scarce agricultural and goat/sheep products raised the value of the labor of shepherds and laborers. The state agricultural reforms from 1917 to 1922 resulted in more ownership of the land by laborers, farmers and shepherds (Zarkia 1991: 36). The shepherds and laborers were slowly able to buy the windmills, the olive fields, the vineyards and the shops of the market and they started decorating their houses with the *palea*, the symbolic capital of the noblemen.

After the Second World War those laborers who were not able to find work on Skyros left the island to work on the mainland, became seamen, and received an education in order to make a career in the army or in public administration. Girls and women were employed in domestic service in Athens by extended families (*psihopedia*), wealthy Athenians or Skyrian noblemen in Athens. Many of these migrants would return to get married and build their household on the island, and some would keep a house there for their vacations.

These processes of migration and enrichment continued after the Second World War and affected the social life of the island. More importantly, these processes resulted in the repatriation of economically successful laborers who preferred to leave the mainland and return to Skyros (de Sike 1978: 69-78, Varsamos 1991: 8-9). Those who returned wanted to express their upward economic mobility and also tried to claim upward social and cultural mobility. Especially the laborers began during the 1960s to invest in the land, the old symbolic capital, small businesses, and tourism but they did not manage to climb the social ladder, which was under the political control of the merchants and shepherds. Gradually land lost its social symbolism of traditional hierarchy and the division of space in the village was no longer related to social stratification. Those farmers and merchants who bought houses in the Kastro area did not become members of the local elite. On the contrary, extreme wealth was seen as a threat to traditional values, despite the fact Skyrians admired material

⁷² There are a few families left that carry family names that were once considered noble. Yalouris, Faltaits from Faltagis, Oikonomidis, Maniatis, and Antoniadis are some of the names still found on the island that appeared in written sources before the founding of the Greek State.

possessions. The successful laborers who bought land close to the Trahi area and close to the seashore became even wealthier because in the first case they were able to sell their land to the Greek army for the construction of the large military air base and in the second case sold strips of land to Athenians, Skyrian-Athenians, Skyrians and foreigners.⁷³ Laborers who traveled regularly to the mainland invested in small businesses such as taxis, night entertainment and shops in the *agora*. Among this group of laborers, various individuals were gamblers who would come together to play *poka* in several *kafenion*.⁷⁴ Gambling was gradually introduced on the island and after a few years the first shop with football betting and national lottery tickets opened. Trade developed as a result of the increased population through the permanent personnel in the military base and the first ferry-boat (*Skyraki*) was bought by the newly established and locally based shipping company in 1980.⁷⁵

The newly rich Skyrians would spend their money on new consumption goods or property in Athens, and in some cases they would leave the island for the city (De Sike 1978: 77). The city (Athens) became a symbol of well-being and a comfortable life, and an “urban Athenian style” was widely appropriated by newly rich laborers who were not able to become members of the political establishment of shepherds. Within this context the “modern” became an expressive tactic of consumption of “urban Athenian” aesthetical forms among the laborers since the seventies. This mentality stood in opposition to the traditionality of the shepherds and farmers, which according to Persidis, was based on a non-consumerist lifestyle (1983: 7).

By contrast, until recently the shepherds mostly lived off their own products and were self-sufficient. Ever since the 16th century, if they did not own any land they would rent from the *arhontes* and pay in cheese, animals and other goods, in an economic relationship known as *trito*.⁷⁶ In many cases they would also have small farms for the production of their own vegetables. The fact that they always had a stable income from their products played a major role in the durability of this way of life. Especially during the migration period in the 1960s and in the 1970s they were the only occupational group of the island who did not migrate to Athens or abroad.⁷⁷ The profound relationship with the island in combination with the political power of these goat and sheep herding clans crystallized with time into a mentality characterized by concepts of Skyrianness and traditionality as these were understood by folklorists and local historians.

Until recently most women from shepherd, farming and fishing families were excluded from the production process, except for the women of laboring families

⁷³ The area of *Trahi*, where the airport was constructed, was the property of farmers and labourers; the majority of the property of shepherds was (and still is) in the village and in the south part of the island where goat herding takes place.

⁷⁴ *Poka* is the localized version of poker.

⁷⁵ Before the first ferry-boat was bought by SNE (Skyros shipping company) people were able to travel with fishing boats and a ferry boat of the Nomicos shipping group that would travel to the island once a week during the summer months.

⁷⁶ Even today *trito* is a non-monetary rental relationship paid in the form of products or animals.

⁷⁷ While the shepherds did not leave the island, since the 1960s and 1970s the migrants/laborers have been returning to visit their island with new cars and consumption goods from the capital. The tactics of consumption of these goods served as a way to distinguish themselves and thus became a means of expressing a “modern” and “urban” identity. For example, the clothes that shepherds wore till that time were related to their professional and social identity. The *vraka*, a type of large breeches, and the shoes called *trohadia* were the characteristic clothing of shepherds and farmers who owned land. Nowadays almost nobody wears these handmade clothes except for the shoes, which are still made and worn by many shepherds.

(*kohiliani*) who could be employed in farming. In all other spheres of production women were strictly restricted, and this is still the case with herding and fishing. While in the past women would not appear often in the Skyros market unless they were employed as low-paid laborers, in recent years not only have women socialized in the market but many shops are run by women and they are named with female names. Women work in various businesses including bars and *kafenion* and they usually run them together with their husbands. Older women from the Kohilia area still work as low skilled or unskilled laborers, such as cooks and cleaners in restaurants, while the younger generation are more likely to work in a bar or a shop. Generally speaking, women have more access to the island's market than in the past and they are much more involved in business.

However, the tasks of housekeeping and childcare are still performed solely by all women, as in the rest of Greece. The advantages of bilateral reckoning in combination with female matrimony and matrilocal residence should not be overemphasized, as women still do a great deal of domestic labor. Other restrictions are still part of local life, such as the avoidance of appearing in public for long periods except in cases of communal rituals, religious festivals and shopping. This absence is especially striking in the empty cold winter streets of the *agora* and *kastro* where people are rarely seen, and if they are seen they are more likely to be men.

Finally, during the twentieth century the political life of Skyros was not characterized by conflict and segmentation as in other areas of Greece. The left and the right were not major criteria of differentiation in local politics and during the Civil War the islanders harshly criticized those who took sides or tried to take lives in the name of political ideology, as had happened in most areas of Greece. More specifically, the descendants of the few noble families and the "*men of Agora*" who had migrated to Athens kept their political links mainly through the Skyrian newspaper of Athens and continued to influence the island life. For example, Giorgos Labrou and Mihalis Stefanidis were the children of men of *Agora* who received an education in Athens, the first as a medical doctor and the second as a lawyer. In 1934 the two men ran as candidates in the local Skyrian elections and won. Their political careers were abruptly brought to an end by the Second World War but were later resumed continued and profoundly influenced the post-war history of Skyros. The first post-war election was in 1947 and was won by Emmanuel Papageorgiou with the support of Labrou. In 1951 Labrou decided to run for mayor of the municipality, competing against the medical doctor Nikolaou, and in the same year Skyros became a municipality.⁷⁸ Labrou won the elections and "modernized" the island in various ways. Many streets were built during this period through the institution of "communal work". The water system was completed in 1954 and the drainage system in the same period; the Aspus-Kalikri road was built in 1952; the electricity system began expanding with the building of the Xenia Hotel in 1959; the fish port of Molos was built in 1964; and a public school was built in 1960. Labrou was re-elected in 1964 but passed away the following year. Since then various mayors have been elected, including Tsakamis, Aggelis and Hatzigiannakis. However, there has not been a clear party division as in the National elections between New Democracy and PASOK. On the contrary, like various other mayors in the past, the most recent mayor is independent. The mayor embodies the interests of the island and in that sense he is

⁷⁸ The municipality is a political unit. It is governed by the municipal council and the mayor (δήμαρχος) and the politicians are elected every four years in public elections. The municipality is responsible for a number of issues including public works, public security and hygiene.

expected to be above national party politics, which are viewed as neglecting the Skyrian social life. Regularly shepherds and other inhabitants refer to the State as “*Kratos en krati*” literally meaning the State within the State, to express their deep disappointment in the Greek State, its inefficacy and—above all—its neglect of own their place.

Making a living on the island

As noted in the previous sections, social life on Skyros was dominated by the *arhontes* for at least four hundred years and was gradually transformed during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The socioeconomic changes affected the position of the elite and new occupational groups appeared on the social landscape. The *arhontes* disappeared and shepherds as well as farmers were able to gain access to the traditional means of production. Laborers tended to migrate and work in various other areas of Greece after the Second World War. However, they returned and gradually developed into an economically successful group that took up opportunities for innovation in tourism, construction work, entertainment and trade (Zarkia 1996: 144-173) and claimed an urban style (Ferguson 1999). More specifically,

They were the first to receive the tourists, the first who had to cope with them, the first who realized that things were changing. [...]. As their situation was favorable they were the first to invest in “rooms to let”, bars and restaurants, sometimes simply by converting their shop to a supermarket or their workplace into a souvenir shop. Having long been somehow “culturally marginal” they became the innovators in their society [...]. Their capital was small, as was their investment. But in fact their decisions were advanced and innovating. (Zarkia 1996: 150)

Despite their innovations and their economic success, laborers do not usually have access to the political structures of Skyros and the large lineages of shepherds. Furthermore, their long cultural marginality produced an urban style that adapted practices and consumption habits favorable among the Athenian style of entertainment. This process of claiming and practicing an urban style has been a relatively new pattern among those who cannot and do not want to identify with the matrilocal domesticated shepherds. For example, Nikos Tsalapatani, a regular consumer of Scotch who has adopted an urban style, is descended from a poor Skyrian family of laborers and has become a successful and wealthy laborer and businessman. He described his life as follows:

I was born in 1949. I come from a poor family of four boys and two girls. I was the fourth. I went to school here but I had to work with my father, who was a fisherman. As a result I had to quit school because I had to spend a lot of time selling fish. We were so poor that we had to steal oil from the church to eat. Gradually I started working as a construction worker and got paid very well. I survived like this for some years until I went into the army. After the army I decided to work as a sailor and I liked it a lot. I traveled all over the world and I saw a lot of new places. After a few trips I came to live on Skyros.

Nikos Tsalapatanis is one among several new rich Skyrians who has been able to make a living as a seaman and later as a carpenter. He left Skyros during the 1970s to live and learn his craft in Athens. However, after a few years he decided to become a seaman so he could save some money and start a family. During the time he was working as a seaman he met his wife on the island of Skyros (she is from Australia) and they decided to get married and live in Athens. After a few years in Athens Nikos changed his mind and decided to go back with his family and live on Skyros. Unfortunately Nikos's marriage did not last, as he was not able to deal with several problems that arose in the relationship with his wife. Nikos continued his work as a carpenter and decided to invest his profits in some rooms to let and later in a bar and a nightclub. These leisure spaces in which he invested his money are identified with his Athenian style of entertainment and his preference for Scotch whisky and imported beverages.

Despite the upward economic mobility of many laborers, these networks were not able to access the social hierarchy and take part in the political life of the island. On the contrary, there has been a cultural marginalization of many laborers that is expressed in local sayings such as "*parakatinos*" (second-rate class). For example, in one interview Nikos Tsalapatanis made the surprising statement: "I am not a Skyrian. Everybody on Skyros belongs to a kin group or is related to the extended shepherd families. I don't have a large lineage (*soi*). How can I be a Skyrian?"

Another major distinction is between *eksohinous* (those who work *ekso*) and *horianous* (those who work *mesa* in *horio*). Those who work *ekso* are usually the shepherds and the farmers, while those who work *mesa* are usually the men of Agora and the laborers. This distinction implies that those who are *eksohini* are expected not to be in control of the money earned. Women will be in control of the economics of the matrilineal household and of the money earned by the men. On the other hand, the laborers and the men of Agora are in contact with commoditization and exchange money regularly. As a result they are expected to be in control of their money.

The men of Agora own or rent retail shops, mini-markets, *kafenion*, restaurants, bars and similar businesses, which are all situated in the *agora*. Other occupations in the market include traders in various commodities, shop-owners and professionals. Those who work in the *agora* are usually the best educated of the island and include enterprising migrants who, like the migrant laborers, have returned to the island. The men of Agora have usually studied outside Skyros at technical schools or universities and as such they are the most cosmopolitan. They are also likely to speak a foreign language, usually English.

The State jobs are related either to the army or to public services such as the municipality (*dimos*), the National Bank of Greece, the National Telecommunication Company, the Public Electricity Company and so on. These are considered the most "secure" occupations and to become a public servant (*dimosios ipalilos*) is the ultimate value for the majority of the islanders. The pension scheme, the permanent contract for each position and the average salary are considered the most rewarding aspects of these occupations. In addition, throughout the winter the island's economy depends on the permanent military personnel and the soldiers doing their service on the military base on the island. The army purchases food and consumer products from the Skyros market and many businesses therefore remain open during the winter. The soldiers are also regular customers in the bars, clubs, restaurants and market shops. Despite the fact that many inhabitants are not happy about the presence of the army on their island, most agree that the army is one of their major sources of income. Over the last generation, marriages of local women to military personnel or public servants

have become preferred as Skyrians think that state occupations are secure and women should look for men with stable jobs (*kati stathero*). Stable jobs are always related to the state, although the salaries are low. Shepherding or farming alone is not considered the ideal occupation for men any more, but combined with other part-time work these jobs can be rewarding to a certain extent.

In many cases shepherds are also employed as public servants. Laborers and fishermen rarely have access to this type of public occupation, which require connections to the large lineages involved in politics. The shepherds are the most likely to acquire a position as public servants on the island. The long *soi* lineages determine the results of the local elections and influence deeply the political life of the island. As a consequence, members of a large *soi* lineage are more likely to receive positions as advisors of the municipality, find a State job and a State indemnity.

Those shepherds who are employed in State jobs for example, divide their time between their flocks/herds and their major occupation. However, those shepherds who are also public servants are less interested in their fathers' occupation and have neglected to learn the local systems of animal classification, the production processes for cheese and the rules of conduct. In one of my visits to a shepherd's *konatsi*, for example, I encountered a conflict between the son and the father. The son of *Barba Nikos Kumiotis*, one of the shepherds of Vuno, works in a State job offered by the municipality. Talking about the future of their occupation, the father said, "The young do not know the job any more; there are many things that they don't know how to do". The son replied,

When my father dies, I will have to divide my life between shepherding and my full-time municipal job. Even though this is going to be difficult, I will have to do it because others will laugh in my face if I sell my father's flock. What else can I do? [...] Whatever I do, how am I going to find a woman if I am a shepherd? Women nowadays don't like that.

Those who get State jobs no longer regard shepherding as a priority in their working lives. On the contrary, they are very critical of this occupation, which is considered by the Athenians to be backward and not modern. In that sense many young shepherds try to imagine more possibilities and attractive occupations to raise their income. They feel that they should also be modern in order to succeed in their lives by leaving aside this profession which is for the uneducated and for the *vlahus* or *kotsinogonatus*, as they say.⁷⁹ The term *kotsinogonati* means "those with red knees" and is used as a pejorative expression for those shepherds who have shepherding as a way of life and as a mentality. (The most reasonable explanation I was given for this name is the fact that most shepherds move their flocks in areas where there is red ground, specifically in the Vuno area, and as a result their feet and knees are colored red).

An additional source of income for the shepherds is E.U. funding, which supports both their own production and feed for their animals. Lately the K.E.P. (*kentro eksipiretisis tou politis*) or Citizens' Assistance Center has played a vital role in the incorporation of state subsidies into the local economy. New business plans and

⁷⁹ The term *Vlahos* (Βλάχος) on the island of Skyros does not relate to the ethnic group of Vlachs in the North of Greece. It is used in a pejorative manner by the Athenians and Skyrians and refers to a rural or local style of backwardness.

tourist projects have been partially or totally funded and as a result a number of new hotels and businesses have been established on the island. However, the result of funding for shepherding has been to increase the herds without any modernization of the production of cheese or other products, because shepherds are paid according to the number of animals they own. Thus the flocks do not have as much space or food as they had in the past because resources are limited and their population has increased significantly.

The number of farmers gradually becoming landowners has been reduced, especially since the main agricultural areas of Trahi and Kabos were sold to the Greek army. The few farmers now live outside the *horio*, mainly in the Trahi and Kalamitsa areas. They grow potatoes, seasonal vegetables and fruits and they also have a few animals like chickens, sheep and cows. Most of the farmers' children leave for Athens to work as laborers, receive an education in technical professions, or work in the army. The family of Tzanis, for example, who grew potatoes in the Trahi area for many decades, moved to Athens after their father passed away. The older son, Giannis, decided to start a career in the army and Giorgos, the youngest, has become a laborer in construction work.

The last occupational group is the fishermen, also mockingly called "barefoot" (*xsipoliti*) by other Skyrians because they tend not to wear shoes when they are working. Another possible explanation is that the word "barefoot" connotes their relative poverty and an inability to dress themselves properly. Their incomes are relatively low in comparison to the other occupational groups on the island, as during winter the strong winds are an obstacle to fishing and there is no stability in the production process. Generally speaking, the number of fishermen has decreased and the younger men do not want to be fishermen.

Gender styles

As Ferguson has noted, the term "cultural style" refers to practices that signify differences or to processes of social differentiation (Ferguson 1999: 95). Styles are not total modes of behavior but tools of imagining and belonging with a wide range of referential categories, mechanisms of placing and placement into social categories such as gender. While femininity and masculinity stand as opposing categories, this opposition does not guarantee their homogeneity. On the contrary, there is a plurality of gender negotiation as various authors have argued (Archetti 1999, Papataxiarchis 1998).

On Skyros gender styles are deeply influenced by the conceptualizations and the practices of persons in relation to the household and their domestication, issues that are widely discussed on the island. While a large majority of Skyrians identify with these values, a network of laborers who practice an urban style of entertainment identified with the Athenian contemporary popular musical scene (see chapter 4) challenge these dominant notions. Within this context such anti-domesticity is a major value.

For example, past or present migrant laborers who have been moving between Skyros and *mesa* (Athens) identify broadly with the popular culture of Athens, the *laiko* musical scene, the consumption of whisky and a style of dominant or assertive masculinity. Within these networks assertive masculinity is a form of symbolic capital in opposition to the disciplined and ordered domesticity of manhood as expressed in the values of the matrilineal household of shepherds, public servants or the majority of

the men of Agora. Domesticated householders represent the mainstream values of the community in opposition to the mainstream “Athenian” style of entertainment and they cannot afford economic excesses, gambling, drinking or extended sexual relationships outside the context of marriage. Laborers, on the other hand, not only negotiate their masculine identities through an assertive sexuality but also divorce in some cases.

A major consequence of the anti-domestic style is courtship with foreign women who can accept non-marital relationships, with the men avoiding extended matrilineal kin sociability and bilateral obligations. For instance, among the laborers I encountered two cases of men who were not married but had children (one with a foreign woman and one with a Greek woman) and also many cases of divorce. While in the past divorce was not usually considered an option, I recorded more than fifteen divorced couples on Skyros. However, couples who have had children and divorced once the children were grown up are seen as more productive and are more socially accepted.⁸⁰ In particular, a divorced woman who has given birth and raised the children is much more valued and respected than a divorced woman without children. As various ethnographers have elaborated, womanhood is fulfilled and structured in relation to birth (Campbell 1964, Papataxiarchis 1991: 6). This differentiation should also be understood within the context of motherhood and sexuality. As Papataxiarchis and Loizos have argued, the sexuality of married women who do not give birth is viewed as threatening to the social order and the household, while mothers seem to have fulfilled their proper role (1991: 223). The value of motherhood is central within all Greek communities and especially in areas where the Orthodox Church has customarily projected the Virgin Mary as a symbol.

Despite the anti-domestic discourse of laborers, the general morality is for a person to be valued as *nikokiris* (meaning a man or a woman who is focused and looks after the household and the family), as *timios* (an honest person) and *kinonikos* (a social and community-oriented person).⁸¹ As *Thia* Maria, the wife of a shepherd who lives in the neighborhood of my matrilineal uncle, told me,

A good man or a woman should be polite, devoted to his or her family and the children and put the household as a priority over his life. This is a moral and communal obligation. The man should be *nikokiris* and the woman *nikokira*; they should be hardworking, economic-oriented and social.⁸²

⁸⁰ By contrast with the comments of du Boulay, Skyrians consider half-siblings from the same father to be “real” siblings, while half-siblings from the same mother are not so close and are called “*muladerfia*” (du Boulay 1994: 258). The explanation I was given was the “power of sperm” or the “seeding”, which has also been noted by various ethnographers in South-Eastern Europe such as Delaney (1991) and Papataxiarchis (1988) who have examined the monogenetic theory. In this context men are viewed as having superior sexual powers. In addition, siblings from the same father have the same name and in that sense are considered to carry the family name, especially males.

⁸¹ The role of *nikokirio* has been elaborated by various ethnographers of Greece. It signifies “an economically and politically autonomous, corporate, conjugal household: this is the ideal social environment to which men and women can bring their distinct identities and abilities to create a new family” (Loizos and Papataxiarchis 1991: 6).

⁸² As Papataxiarchis and Loizos have stressed, the household is particularly emphasized as a status symbol in communities where the church has taken on the role of political-cultural representation and leadership, especially during the Ottoman era, and has acted as a guarantor of customary law on marriage and kinship (1991: 6). In the case of Skyros all dowry agreements from the 16th century onwards and possibly earlier took place under the supervision of a priest, and most documents incorporated religious elements.

A typical expression of embarrassment and non-social behavior in the Skyrian dialect is “*gia mana nikotserio*” (what a household!). The social disapprobation for those who reject *nikokirio* shows the social significance of the institution and the symbolic status of the concept. Marriage is a central rite of passage for an individual on the island, and once a man and a woman come together in “holy union” they are expected to stay together for the rest of their lives in a nuclear family. Accordingly, divorced men and women are considered to be unsuccessful and an embarrassment for their families. In particular those who practice matrilineal residence cannot afford to lose their household, their family or property transmitted through *iso* agreements.⁸³ Despite the social criticism and the difficulties involved, however, the number of divorces has gradually increased in recent years among laborers who do not relate to a matrilineal matrilineal residence.

Among the shepherds, a man who is considered *nikokiris* is supposed to have his own wine and should offer it in drinking sessions. Getting drunk is considered embarrassing, however, and is not encouraged among friends. The only cases where drunkenness is accepted are Saint’s-day celebrations (*panigiria*), weddings, Carnival, and all-male drinking gatherings outside of the village. Laborers, on the other hand, are more likely to get drunk, gamble, entertain themselves until late in the night, express their economic success in conspicuous consumption and establish relationships with foreign women. In other words they are more associated with excess and an unproductive eroticism. When such networks “go out”, they have the habit of booking a table with a bottle of whisky in a club, a practice that imitates the Athenian popular “style”. That is the case for example at Tzivaeri, a seasonal *bouzoukia* with live Greek music.

Although the elders and the “domesticated” shepherds and their families do not consider these practices constructive, this assertive masculinity can attract social criticism. One evening, for example, I was sitting with my neighbors *Thia* Maria, her husband, her daughter and her son-in-law. The son-in-law, who is a “domesticated” shepherd in his forties, offered me some whisky and after a while he started saying that when he was young and unmarried he was able to “go out” and drink with his friends. After marriage, however, he could no longer come home late at night, couldn’t drink as much and couldn’t enjoy himself as he used to do in the past. His wife became very upset and slightly embarrassed and said, “Why don’t you go out? You can go any time!” *Thia* Maria, the wife’s mother, disapproved of her daughter’s anger and tried to calm things down by saying also that he should “go out” (*volta*). After this scene *Thia* Maria spoke to her son-in-law in a motherly manner, saying, “What do you want to do in *Agora*? Can’t you see that it is for the young and for people who don’t have households?” The market street is therefore used as a metaphor for an unproductive mentality of drinking and gambling which opposes the household values. In cases like this, Skyrians will “talk about you” (*se kouventiazoun*), as my grandmother always says to my uncle and her son, a seaman in his forties (*naftikos*) who has a relationship with a woman but is not married. The fact that his girlfriend is Ukrainian and works in a bar complicates the family tensions. “What are the people of the island saying about you now? is that a *nikotsirio*?”

⁸³ The *iso* (*iso*) meaning “equal” could be translated as “equivalence”, implying the equivalence of the bride with property. *Iso* is an informal dowry agreement, despite the fact more property is given after the *iso* has been signed. I should also mention that women are also allowed to propose marriage to the man. This involves a visit to the house of the groom by the bride accompanied by an old relative. Then the *iso* can be discussed and later can be written down.

Generally speaking, the majority of metaphors in contemporary Skyros (as in many other areas of the world) are related to food and drink.⁸⁴ For example, when I was involved in endless political discussions about the mayors of Skyros I often encountered the expression “he ate everything” (*ta efage ola*), accompanied by a symbolic gesture to convey eating. The meaning of this expression is that the mayors took advantage of the treasury and the money of their municipality and spent public funds. Drinking might also have negative connotations when used in a literal form; “He is drinking”, I was often told, and a disapproving gesture would also allude to the inappropriate character of this habit. Drinking is considered a major socializing activity but when “someone is drinking” (*pini*), or “goes around” (*girnai*) meaning someone regularly consumes large amounts of alcohol, this is a threat to his household and to the community. As such “drinking” might express a highly anti-domestic persona that threatens the values of *nikokirio*.

Drinking alone is a highly stigmatizing activity. It is rarely encouraged as it can be seen as a problem; people who do it are socially excluded and rarely taken seriously as they can become *bekris* (drunkard) and *alkolikos* (alcoholic). This fear should be understood within the general context of drinking alone and drinking with a company (*parea*), a division that has been described by various ethnographers of Greece (Gefou-Madianou 1992, Papataxiarchis 1991, Cowan 1991). Drinking with a company (*parea*) is a high value and it is the major practice of socializing among men. This practice of drinking with a *parea* has been understood as a constructive activity that reproduces social relationships and constitutes a major arena of gender negotiation (Gefou-Madianou 1992).

Although the alcoholic beverages that Skyrians consume depend mainly on gender and occupational group, there are some common terms in relation to drinking that are widely used among the participants of this study. The concept of “*parea*” (παρέα), mentioned earlier, refers to the group of persons who come together to socialize in various contexts. However, in the matrilocal and in some cases neolocal society of Skyros, women tend to socialize more often *mesa* (in the house and neighborhood) with their kin and establish matrifocal alliances. This has as a result the socialization of most men *ekso* in other spaces outside of the home, in which relationships are constructed more on the basis of occupational background rather than kinship. It has been observed that in similar communities where male leisure is excluded from the household, men establish emotional attachments of friendship in opposition to kinship (Papataxiarchis 1991).

While women might socialize more *mesa* and men *ekso*, this does not imply that men are public and women private. As will be demonstrated, shepherds and farmers prefer to be private when they drink heavily in the *konatsi*. Similarly, the consumption of whisky among the laborers might take place in private spaces such as the back room of the *kafenion Makedonia* (or at least be concealed) to the extent that drinking is accompanied with gambling. Women, on the other hand, avoid drinking heavily in public but might drink in moderation during church festivals. Women also consume alcohol at communal events such as weddings, name days and celebrations of saints and the majority might also drink at home with food or on visits of friends, relatives or neighborhood members. Generally speaking women are not heavy drinkers and they are stigmatized as “immoral” if they are seen drunk in any context. Gefou

⁸⁴ Food is a major symbolic category which expresses various sociocultural relationships. As Sutton has illustrated, memory and food are interconnected in Kalimnos (1998) and gender is shaped by food habits (Herzfeld 1985, Cowan 1990).

Madianou has noted that in various areas of Greece female drinking is interpreted as a lack of self control and self respect, which is an indication of an uncontrolled sexuality and hence threatens the household by exposing it to social critique (1992: 16).

Moreover gender styles are reproduced through material culture and more specifically through the exchange of alcoholic beverages and food. In many cases the alcohol exchanged and consumed by women is usually a sweet liqueur, which is home-made and is considered a “female drink” (*ginekio poto*). The sweet liqueurs are usually consumed on visits by friends or at family gatherings and they are given as treats only to women by the housewife. These liqueurs are made from several fruits and are very high in alcohol content. Fruits such as cherries, morellos, mandarins, mulberries, quinces and pomegranates are the basis of the beverage.⁸⁵ Other drinks that might be exchanged among women in a household include Scotch, brandy (*cognac*) and sweet wine. While drinking in such contexts is encouraged among women, the consumption of alcohol does not usually take place in the presence of men. The beverages are usually drunk during *sperisma*, the late afternoon/early evening gathering of neighborhood members and matrilineal female relatives. While men are not necessarily excluded from such contexts, it is more common that they will socialize in the market or in more private places with their friends. On all these occasions the bottles of cognac, sweet wine and sweet liqueur are kept in the liquor cabinet of the house, a female domain. Furthermore, alcohol is not to be consumed in the house except in moderation. For that reason the “alcohol store” is under the supervision of the women, who will decide under what circumstances the beverages are going to be consumed. Liquors, imported beverages, and whisky are thus be consumed only on visits by neighbors (*episkepsis*, επισκέψεις), *giortes* (γιορτές), at evening gatherings (*sperisma*, σπέρισμα), during construction work as “gifts” to construction workers while having breaks, and at weddings and funerals.

Especially among the domesticated shepherd families and *men of Agora* families, the alcohol is kept by the housewife in a concealed place of the household in the *sala* (living room), usually a small dusty cabinet in a hidden corner next to the sofa, under the television or in a place that is not easily accessed by the men of the house. Therefore, in a matrilocal domesticated household, that is in a *nikokirio*, women have the power over the sphere of alcohol, which is used in a domestic manner. Within this context men cannot access and drink the alcohol, which is property of the woman.

One of the beverages of major importance among women is “cognac”, the Greek brandy, which is the base of the homemade “female” liqueurs.⁸⁶ Brandy has become embedded in Greek social life and it is a main drink of socialization in various communities. More importantly it is the spirit used in many rituals and home gatherings among family members. Papataxiarchis has observed the same processes on the island of Lesbos, noting that coffee and cognac are usually used among family members (1992: 233). On Skyros as in other areas of Greece, “cognac” is also a symbol of death. It is used during the night when family and friends lament the dead

⁸⁵ While on fieldwork I collected several recipes for these liqueurs. Each recipe depends on the “sweetness” of the fruit which is be adjusted with sugar. The quantity made is usually 2 liters of cognac mixed in a big glass bottle with one and a half kilo of sugar or more with the pits (50-100) of the desired fruit. In the case of oranges, mandarins or quinces, the peel (4-5 fruits) is used to flavor the beverage.

⁸⁶ The word *cognac* in Greek refers usually to Greek-made brandy but as a term includes all kind of brandy. *Cognac* is a localized term, probably as a result of a French style of education and an adaptation of French words in modern Greek.

and it is also drunk after the funeral, by men only, in one of the market's *kafenion*. In addition, cognac is consumed by both men and women in domestic contexts. The spirit is also a gift for family celebrations and family visits. Formal occasions require a good bottle of cognac, which is "kept" in the liquor cabinet for future family gatherings and formal visits. In this context cognac has emerged as a symbol of family continuity, collective drinking and family union and is deeply entangled with domesticity especially among the shepherds and the men of Agora families.

Another division on Skyros that reproduces gender styles is between beverages *me meze* and *horis meze*, that is drinks accompanied by small quantities of food called *meze* and drinks to be taken on their own without food. *Meze* on Skyros is usually consumed by men and consists of a piece of Skyrian cheese (*kefalotyri*), some olives and bread. *Meze* is usually be consumed outside the home, *ekso* in the countryside or in the *Agora* and it symbolically opposes the sphere of food which is a feminine and a household based domain. "Real" food is considered to be the food made in the household by the housewife, in contrast to the *meze* offered in the *kafenion* or even the meals prepared by men in the *konatsi*, such as fried eggs, cheese and olives. Meals in the home are prepared only by the women (the housewife, sisters, and daughters) and the housewife usually serves the food. There are rarely any guests, although family meals are not totally a private context. The table is a major activity where family disputes, tensions, hierarchy, status, and conjugal relationships are expressed.⁸⁷ Dinners among friends are not common, although a drinking session might be accompanied by food or *meze*. In everyday life exchanging gifts of food is not a common practice, but food is usually offered as a gift at religious ceremonies on saints' days, at weddings and for death rituals. Alcoholic beverages, however, are regular gifts among the community, as will be discussed below. The alcohol consumed with *meze* is usually wine but *tsipouro* and *ouzo* should also be consumed with *meze*. By contrast, women do not exchange or eat *meze*. The alcoholic beverages exchanged by the women are usually *cognac* or fruit liquor, which are usually offered with a sweet (*gliko tou koutaliou* or *sokolataki*) or a *loukoumi* (a type of sweet covered in powdered sugar). However, they might also be offered without any sweets. Similarly in recent times, beverages (*pota*) that are consumed by men in the bars and *kafenion* of *Agora* are not drunk with *meze*. In one of the first bars established in the market (*Renaissance*), for example, the owner (a sailor working on trade ships) said, "My bar was probably one of the first, and for that reason customers did not know how to drink imported beverages. Customers would come in and say 'You don't have any *meze*; how are we supposed to drink without eating?'"

A major differentiation between food exchange and alcohol exchange lies in *kerasma*.⁸⁸ *Kerasma* is a customary offering of alcohol to people which might follow the Maussian structure of offer-acceptance-return depending on the context and the relationship. According to Papataxiarchis, "the very gesture of friendliness is articulated as a treat to a drink" (1991: 64). This gesture might also take the meaning of greeting, but in general it is for treating friends. It follows that *kerasma* is reciprocal but it can take the form of a gift without return.

⁸⁷Kotsoni, for example, has illustrated the importance of the table in interfamily relationships in the South Aegean and how it is connected to various other aspects of social life (2001: 96-137).

⁸⁸ Within forty days of a death, the family of the deceased offers wine to the external kin, friends and neighbors for forgiveness. *Ouzo* usually accompanies the first dance of the married couple in the house. Brandy or Scotch is usually given after a funeral in the coffeehouse.

Traditionality and modernity “inside” “out”

One is not born traditional; one chooses to become traditional by constant innovation. (Latour 2002: 76)

According to Zarkia, Skyros went through three phases of transformation in relation to conceptualizations of modernity and tradition (1996: 159). The first phase was that of “urban attraction”, which was characterized by an “urban aesthetic” influenced by conceptions of city life and its new elements (1960s). Skyrians wanted to see and construct themselves in opposition to peasants, the “village aesthetic”, herding and agriculture and the local identity, expressed in clothing and architecture. For example, after the Second World War most shepherds started to wear blue jeans and many houses were furnished with imported Athenian furniture, plastic chairs and aluminum frames. New houses adapted an urban style with new spaces and small gardens, and the Kastro and *Agora* areas were gradually transformed. Many Skyrians wanted to be modern—and as such urban—in their everyday lifestyles. This shift resulted in a negation of signs connected with peasants and herders that had been part of the Skyrian settlement for hundreds of years. There are stories of peddlers exchanging precious antique objects from the *aloni* and the interior of houses for Athenian clothes or small gadgets. In short, traditionality was regarded as a backward and negative concept and involved an inferiority complex of the peasantry.

The second period was characterized by an imitation of what was conceived as a Western European and urban aesthetic, which was further expressed in various aspects of social life (1970s and 1980s). Zarkia describes a gradual shift in the mentality of the inhabitants and the migrants from Athens who initially avoided the “ambassador’s” *kafenion* because it was a place for shepherds and farmers.⁸⁹ However, tourists thought the *kafenion* was an “authentic traditional” place and therefore its clientele increased. The Skyrians gradually imitated the foreigners and became aware of others’ interest in “tradition”. This period coincided with the development of tourism on the island and also with the foundation of the Skyros museum of folk art. That was the period when “things” became “objects” with a price, when the cultural aspects of Skyrian life started to be of great interest for outsiders and became part of the national heritage of Greece. Islanders realized that there was a possibility that they were not peasants but rather a living museum of tradition, an island with culture. Tourists coming from afar paid to see them in their environment filmed them and studied them; this meant that Skyrians were interesting—or at least this is what “outsiders” such as tourists and folklorists thought.

A transitional voice from these times has been traced in the local newspaper *Skyrian News* (Skyrian News 1984: 7-9). The paper became a stage for many debates between traditionalists and modernists. For example, an article was published about the negative aspects of tradition: tradition was presented as a mentality that had brought a difficult and hierarchical life to the poor on Skyros in specific historical periods. Mr. Persidis, a local folklorist and historian, published an argument against this simple materialistic interpretation in his article “What is tradition and what is its value?” (*pia I paradosi ke pia I aksia tis*). He argued that tradition is a national good, claiming that it represents a better past in comparison to the modern present and is a

⁸⁹ The “ambassador’s” coffeehouse was located where Lefteris’s travel agency is now. “Ambassador” was the owner’s nickname because he always welcomed all types of different clients and was well dressed.

culture created by the people for the people, in opposition to the modern culture created by companies and television. Persidis's arguments resembled those of the majority of the folklorists who played an active role in convincing Skyrians that "tradition is the materialized expression of the mental and material life of people, an expression of their cultural idiosyncrasy, their national identity" (Skyrian News 1984: 7).

In the third and most recent period came the actual capitalization of traditionality (the end of the 1980s, the 1990s and the first decade of the 21st century). Objects made by artisans became traditional artifacts, rituals such as Carnival were organized in such a way as to attract more outsiders, Skyrians became proud of their herding and farming heritage, architecture was sometimes adapted to foreign taste, and tradition emerged victorious over the stigma of peasantry. In the past decade local associations for the preservation of tradition have been established, local "traditional artifacts" have proliferated, and the "traditional Aegean" aesthetic of the Cyclades—the most touristy of the Greek islands—has been used by entrepreneurs in their new hotels and guest houses. As a consequence a local style as a mode of signification has successfully been reproduced in contrast to the Athenian style that many laborers perform.

Clearly the shifting meanings of modernity and traditionality have been influenced by the relationship between "outsiders" and "insiders". Skyrians gradually realized that they wanted to present what "outsiders" thought was their tradition. Moreover, Skyrians wanted to "rediscover" and "preserve" it, as various local historians and folklorists have argued (Varsamos 1991: 8-9, Persidis 1984: 7-9). To be modern was not as good any more, or at least not good in relation to "outsiders".

Nowadays these categorizations are extended to various aspects of social life such as food and drink. Stamatis Ftoulis, for example, a traditional pottery artist had a cosmopolitan style in the past as he was the first bar owner (1967). Now he has adopted a local style and views tradition as "his" own innovation. Nowadays Stamatis sells his Skyrian wine he produces himself, together with his Skyrian pottery.

In a contrasting case, Stamatis the cava owner, who has adopted an urban style, has an extensive collection of Greek wines in his alcohol store and claims a distinctive knowledge of tasting, gained through his long experience. He stated that "Skyrians do not know how to make wine" and thinks that the local product in general is not comparable in quality to his own imported bottled wine. Despite the fact that his brother is a local artisan who also makes his own wine, Stamatis wants to differentiate himself from rural production and the "local" taste. In the eyes of Stamatis, traditionality is not found in the production of the Skyrian wine but in the "local" bottled wines around Greece. Another form of differentiation for Stamatis is the narration of his travels abroad (in Skyrian: *ekso* of Skyros or in *eksoteriko*) that were sponsored by the large multinational corporations Diageo and Pernod Ricard. A certain volume of sales is rewarded by the large alcohol multinational corporations with "gift" trips to the Americas, Southeast Asia or Europe, depending on the season. When we met with Stamatis he always liked to talk about the luxurious hotels of Asia, the "foreign" and cosmopolitan new tastes he discovered on each continent, and the luxury of his travels. In addition he has an elaborate collection of single malts in his store and he always drinks imported beverages when he is in a bar. The majority of his profit is from imported beverages and specifically whisky, which is sold in the island's bars, clubs, supermarkets and *kafenion*. The alcoholic beverages he sells are from *eksoteriko* and as such fit his cosmopolitan aura, which is focused on the various conceptualizations of *ekso*.

Those who do not identify themselves with the cosmopolitanism of Stamatis, with *eksoteriko* or products from *ekso* capitalize their style with the “local”, “traditional” wine. Stamatis’s brother Giorgos, for example, makes his own Skyrian wine despite the fact that he buys the must from mainland Evia. While an increasing number of Skyrians are buying must from Evia, there is a claim that this is their wine and their product. This selective memory of the production process, the most important aspect of the creation of wine, is not necessarily felt as alienating; rather, it is dressed with traditionality, locality and personal identity.

This transformation from an innovative and new form of making wine to an “authentic” and “traditional” product should be understood within the context of the capitalization of traditionality and the adoption of a “local” style. Giorgos, the brother of Stamatis the *cava* owner, claims to be a “traditional” artisan who was taught “the art of carving” on the island and has run his own wood-carving business since then. The business has been financially rewarding, especially because in the past few decades more and more Skyrian Athenians and outsiders have become interested in making their houses “traditional” with a “local” aesthetic. Giorgos does not associate himself with his brother’s cosmopolitanism and believes that “traditionality” is the highest value. “Being a traditional artisan is a way of life”, he told me at one of our regular *tsipouro* meetings in Manolis’s *kafenion*.

Similarly Takis, who is the owner of *Rodon*, one of the most popular bars in the winter, makes his own wine from his vineyards. After November his wine is sold in the bar next to the bottles of whisky and rum and for the majority of the customers it is the most preferred beverage. Takis, who is also descended from a family of farmers, believes that wine is the most “authentically” Skyrian drink and does not produce and sell it in order to make a large profit; on the contrary, he claims that there is not so much profit with his own wine as with the imported beverages. While his style has a cosmopolitan aura because he owns a bar and he plays and listens to a wide range of ethnic and electronic music, he has adopted a local style. He is very proud of his farming background and the fact that his father was the owner of a *kafenion*. He imagines *Rodon* as a “modern *kafenion*”, an extension of the traditionality of the past which is expressed in black and white photographs of “old traditional Skyros” on the walls. Wine is part of this local identity and this is what he would always offer to his customers if the commodity chain of whisky was not so successful. He identifies himself against the cosmopolitanism of Stamatis, despite the fact Stamatis is his importer, and on the last day before my departure from the island to return to the Netherlands he told me, “If you really want to know about whisky, you should understand that Stamatis started it all. He’s the one who imports and delivers it and he is the one who tells us what to buy. That’s why we drink whisky now instead of wine”. Takis’s reaction can be interpreted in the context of his dislike for the changes in drinking habits. However, he does not want to imagine himself as one of the innovators on Skyros despite the fact he has owned one of the most island’s successful bars since the 1990s. Furthermore he is married to a woman from abroad (*ekso*) and, like Stamatis, he is a regular traveler to *eksoteriko*. Takis also frequently refers to his travels and he often receives postcards from his foreign clientele, which he places on the wall next to the bar. While Takis is able to move easily between cosmopolitanism and localism, the laborers or shepherds of Skyros do not have this competence.

Regular customers of *Rodon* who are shepherds prefer to order Takis’s wine, which is placed next to the bottles of imported beverages and whisky. They will rarely get drunk (unless there is a celebration or festival) and they will regularly discuss the

Carnival, a festival that expresses shepherd culture. Regularly also local political discussions take place during the evenings, in contrast with the football discussions that laborers have in the *kafenion* of Macedonia and Synantisis. In short, the style of discussion among the shepherds focuses on Skyros as a place while the discussions of the laborers relate to national and popular culture subjects. This mode of signification is also evident in the names of *kafenion* that these two networks socialize. The *kafenion* of the shepherds is called after the owners, Barba Giannis or Maritsa. Another *kafenion* where shepherds and *men of Agora* socialize is called “The Traditional” (*to paradosiakon*, *το Παραδοσιακόν*). Laborers, on the other hand socialize in *Macedonia*, a name that was chosen in order to express the Greekness of the geographical area of Macedonia in the national political debate about the cultural identity of the Republic of Macedonia.⁹⁰ While laborers are not necessarily nationalistic, they claim a connection with the “national” as they cannot claim a connection with the local politics. The ancient sun of Macedonia found in the grave of the father of Alexander the Great is placed strategically next to the name of the *kafenion* *Makedonia* in the entrance door.



Figure 6.3 The “Traditional *kafenion*” (*To Paradosiakon*).

Moreover, most laborers—unlike the shepherds—can afford to express their urban style with new cars, gambling, expensive clothes, their own houses, and expressive drinking habits (manifested in whisky). Nikos Tsalapatanis exhibits a characteristically assertive masculinity and a breach with domesticity and identifies with the cosmopolitan popular style of Athens expressed in music, his leisure habits and whisky. When we spend time together he is usually not wearing a shirt and he

⁹⁰ See Danforth (1997) and Karakasidou (1997).

talks very proudly of his masculine body. His expressive sexuality is also evident as he talks about the women he had in the past and the women from Eastern Europe who work in his hotel. He is also very proud of the endless sexual adventures of his young son, who has more opportunities now in his bar, saying excitedly, “Maria Mavrikou the filmmaker said she wants to make a film about *kamaki* and she is going to film my son! Isn’t that amazing?”⁹¹ Therefore Nikos’s urban anti-domestic style is also expressed in the practices of his son and more specifically in his *kamaki* strategies and male seduction techniques.

By contrast, shepherds and *men of Agora* families think about what others say about their style and they do not want to be discussed (*den thelume na mas sizitane*). The community and the household are values that they think need to be taught to younger children and the children of shepherds especially are willing to get married and set up a household early in their lives. Expressive sexuality is not encouraged among younger shepherds in their relationships as assertiveness in the domestic sphere might bring problems in the matrilocal rule of residence. Laborers, on the other hand, who identify with anti-domesticity (and anti-matrilocality), learn to express their assertiveness and masculinity freely.

Drinking *mesa* and *ekso*. The consumption of alcohol in the *konatsi*, *kafenion* and bar

The konatsi

Generally speaking the social life on Skyros, as in most areas of Greece, is structured around commensality and large-scale drinking and eating occasions. The dinner parties or the drinking sessions that take place among men are basic socializing rituals and are fundamental for the establishment and reproduction of social relations. In most cases it is unthinkable to maintain a social relationship without drinking and eating. The absence of men from companies on such occasions can be harshly criticized.

The dominant urban and local styles on Skyros are reproduced and manifested in the organization of space in *agora*. The association of space with social life has been a dominant theme in anthropology and in Greek ethnography. The major example is the division between women/private and men/public, which has been criticized by various scholars such as Papataxiarchis (1991). As will be demonstrated in this part of the thesis, men are also very private in relation to drunkenness and femininity is also negotiated publicly in the spaces of the bar and *cafeteria*. In this section I limit my examination to some particular spaces that have been overlooked by Greek ethnography and, more particularly, the men’s country dwelling (*konatsi*), the *kafenion* and the bar.

A major division when Skyrians are drinking alcohol is between drinking *ekso* and drinking *mesa*. Laborers are very likely to drink *mesa* at home until the early

⁹¹ *Kamaki* means the harpoon for spearing fish. It is used as a masculine metaphor for the “art of seduction”. *Kamaki* might take the form of a collective activity and might bring men into a club, an association for the advancement of *kamaki*. Such associations were widely established in several areas that faced massive tourism and institutionalized several rules of the proper “ars erotica” in relation to foreign women (Zinovieff 1991: 203-220). Nowadays the term might be used as a metaphor for the first interaction with women.

hours of the morning while their children and wives are asleep. I have been present at various such cases of heavy drinking of Scotch that could last until the morning when the laborers have to leave for work. In addition, drinking *ekso* among the networks of laborers is related to heavy drinking when “going out” in *agora* and might include booking a table of whisky in a small club or bar.

Shepherds, on the other hand, have a different style of drinking. The expression “come for a wine” (*ela gia kana kراسi*) expresses an open invitation to visit someone and share food and wine with him or the group accompanying him. As noted at the beginning of the chapter, the categories of *mesa* and *ekso* represent a spatial division that extends to various aspects of social life. While drinking *mesa* might imply drinking in the house, the “domesticated” male householders who have to follow the rules of matrilocality cannot afford to drink at home. Drinking in the presence of parents and the women of the family is considered restricting, as men cannot enjoy and cannot express their inner problems and thoughts. Exceptional cases are family celebrations, religious ceremonies and various rituals.

Drinking *mesa sto horio* might also mean drinking in the *Agora*, and this is the more usual scenario for most men. However, as noted in the introduction, drunkenness is not an accepted social practice in public, especially for shepherds. For this reason, when shepherds want to drink heavily, they drink *ekso* of the *horio*. The space used for such purposes is the *konatsi*, the shepherd’s country dwelling. Most such dwellings are very simple constructions built out of stones with a wooden ceiling. There is usually only one large room where beds, a table and some chairs and a fireplace are situated. Usually the *konatsi* is a space where only men come together, and as such it is a context where masculine identity is reproduced and negotiated. Women are not welcome there, especially on days when work has to be done. The *konatsi* is the property of the man and is transmitted patrilineally to the sons of the family, as opposed to the house in the village, which is transmitted matrilineally to the daughters. As such it is part of the property of the shepherds and the farmers together with their lands and flocks.

The *konatsi* is also the place where wine is stored. On Skyros there are no cellars. The wine is usually placed in a wooden barrel facing the north, in what is supposed to be the coolest area of the house. The wine requires “cool” or even “cold” spots and in that sense the north-facing part is considered ideal. The wine is used after working or when taking breaks from work with food. More importantly, it is used extensively in parties (*mazoksi*) usually during autumn and winter months. Most male gatherings take place during winter and the saying goes that “wine is drunk in the months that include the letter ‘r’” excluding the four spring and summer months.

In the matriloal and bilateral society of Skyros the *konatsi* is a resort for the “domesticated” shepherds and single men who cannot socialize, drink and make a noise in the female-dominated houses of the village. In contrast to the house, the *konatsi* provides an ideal opportunity for men to come together with friends from similar age groups, to drink, sing and discuss (*kounvenda*). According to Papataxiarchis, “*kouvenda* is an ongoing commentary on events or people, premised on an already shared point of view. The expression *kouvenda na yinete* suggests a purposeless discussion that leads nowhere: the words exchanged in *kouvenda* carry no binding force” (1998: 172). Similarly on Skyros *kouvenda* is the major activity of table companions. Usually men sit around the fireplace with wine and discuss in this way. After a few glasses the interlocutors start cooking.

The drinking parties in the country dwelling take place among the most intimate friends and drinking in such contexts is a highly bonding communal activity. The

“real” friends are the drinking partners on such occasions who know how to keep private the investment of emotions and experiences. Drunkenness may be a part of the gatherings at the *konatsi* and in that sense it is a private matter. The fear of drunkenness in public spaces is a metaphor for fear of a state of female passivity, an ideology that also exists in various other areas of Greece as well as in Athens (Paptaxiarchis 1991).

The food in the *konatsi* depends on what the participants bring with them. Drinking without eating is a highly inappropriate activity. It is usual for cheese, bread and olives to be stored in the *konatsi*. The guests bring five or ten-liter containers of wine, usually from their own production. The amount depends on how many days the company is planning to drink. There are cases where drinking parties have gone on for three days, sometimes including naps and a rest in the evening. In these drinking parties the most desired dish is rooster with pasta (*petines me mekaronia*). The rooster is a metaphor for masculinity in many contexts. For example, Skyrian embroidery depicting a rooster is a common gift from mothers to sons or newly married grooms. If the owner of the *konatsi* does not have a rooster there is a possibility to steal one from a neighboring coop. This practice is considered appropriate for such occasions (and was even more so in the past) and many interlocutors referred to it with enthusiasm.

Herzfeld has observed the institutionalization of the stealing of goats and sheep among the shepherds of Crete, who create enemies or partners on the basis of stealing (1985). This activity on Skyros is not only found among shepherds but also among farmers. In the past, the stealing of animals between farmers and shepherds was more widespread but the stealing of animals is still practiced nowadays, especially as the goats and sheep on Skyros are not kept in pens but can roam freely on the mountainside and on the Northeast side, on the mountain of Kohylas. The man who steals the animal is considered a cunning and capable man who takes risks that reward both his reputation and his stomach. Such actions can be interpreted within a general context of anti-commodification that friendship and male bonding entails among shepherds. In the *konatsi*, the wine should not be a commodity but the product of one’s own labor and food ideally should be stolen or be part of the flock.

The kafenion

Drinking in the *agora* might take place in a *kafenion* or a bar. According to Cowan, the *kafenion* is a major space for male socializing and “it is here that manhood is expressed, reputations are negotiated, and social relationships are enlivened through endless card playing, political debate, competitive talk, and reciprocal hospitality” (1990: 71).⁹² In addition the *kafenion* is in a way what the house is for the women, it is the “house of men” (Paptaxiarchis 1988: 205-250). While in the past the island’s market was filled with *kafenion*, gradually they disappeared and now there are only two left in the main market and another two at the entrance to the village. According to Stamatis Ftoulis who was the first bar owner and later owner of a night club:

I was the first one to open a bar on the island, in 1967. It was a time when youngsters would come to the island and only find traditional *kafenion*. The

⁹² Various anthropologists have analyzed the institution since Campbell, including Herzfeld, Cowan and Papataxiarchis.

kafenion would serve food and wine. Wine was produced by each *kafenion* so the customers were used to each distinct taste. I remember more than thirty *kafenion* in the market and now there are only bars. I left the island in my twenties and went to Athens to become a singer but my career wasn't so successful. In Athens I indulged in the life of bars and clubs and there I decided I should open a club on Skyros. My first bar was *Mágia*, which was close to the sea. We were a company of forty youngsters and my friends supported my project despite the fact that the club was not so professional. After a while the people in that neighborhood began complaining about the noise and they pushed me out. As a result I opened a new place close to my house, the *Ipokambos*. A few years later I bought a very big club which is still the major club for entertainment, called *Skyropoula*. The main drinks were vermouth and whisky. While I used to buy vermouth very cheaply, whisky was much more expensive. But I bought it from a guy who used to work in the coast guard and he had access to cheap imported authentic whisky. However, most Skyrians didn't like the imported beverages in the beginning and they called them *kolofarka*, meaning that these drinks were for *poustis* (passive male homosexual) and for *aderfes* (also a passive male homosexual with an expressive feminine style). They didn't know the taste; that's why they said this... Gradually, though, this changed and as time went by Skyrians insisted on drinking whisky and imported beverages. In 1974, I decided to rent the club to Sideras because I wanted to focus on traditional pottery. Since then I have my shops with Skyrian art and Sideras rents the club from me.

Nowadays in the *agora* there are seven bars, four *kafenion* and two cafeterias where the various networks come together to socialize over alcohol or other beverages. Each place has different regular customers, but the customers at the bars circulate from bar to bar while the customers of *kafenion* tend to remain devoted to one place. In addition, while the patrons of bars and cafes are more mixed in terms of gender, age, education and professional background, the *kafenion* are male spaces where the social codes of inclusion and exclusion are appropriated and practiced.

The most popular *kafenion* is the one belonging to Manolis, called "The Traditional" and situated in the center of the market opposite Stamatis's *cava*. No doubt the *kafenion* has adopted a local "traditional" style which is expressed in the simple chairs and tables (found in the older *kafenion* of Skyros), the nostalgic photos of old Skyros and the beverages that people drink there. Usually the *kafenion* is run by Manolis's wife, who is responsible for cooking and taking orders. While women are excluded from most *kafenion*, it is acceptable for them to work in the *kafenion* if they are part of the owner's family. Most inhabitants who socialize there are shepherds, public servants, shop-owners, farmers and artisans who engage in card playing (usually without betting or betting in exchange for small treats), backgammon and discussion. The television is usually on in the background, with the daily news at eight being the centre of attention. The main beverages served in this *kafenion* are coffee, soft drinks, beer, ouzo, *tsipouro* and wine, and whisky is not the most popular drink there. Manolis stated that "I always buy a bottle of whisky for the *kafenion*, usually Johnnie Walker. There are customers who ask for it and I have to serve it", meaning that non-regular laborers who have an urban style might request Scotch if they go there. The bachelors of the island also socialize in this *kafenion* with the married men of a similar or older age. Soft drinks are usually drunk by Manolis's children when they play there after school, by his wife and by older men who do not

want to take coffee or alcohol. “Greek coffee” (ελληνικός) is usually drunk in the mornings and during the afternoon by most customers, while wine is drunk when there is a good *meze* in the kitchen and especially when Manolis’s wife has cooked. Beer, *tsipouro* and *ouzo* are drunk regularly with or without *meze*; however, *meze* usually accompanies the drinks if a group of men starts drinking.

The next *kafenion* is situated a few meters away from Manolis’s, and it is the place where customarily the older generations of Skyrians socialize. It is the older of the market’s *kafenion*, dating back to 1956. The style of this *kafenion* has not changed since the time it was established and only recently the son of the owner added new “traditional” tables in it. The owner, *Barba* Giannis, passed away a few years ago and his widow, Maritsa, is the only one left on the island to keep up the business.⁹³ During the summer months and Carnival, their sons come to the island to run the business. The *kafenion* is empty most of the time while Maritsa is usually asleep in a chair or watching television. Unfortunately she cannot walk very well, so ordering is a long and painful experience for her. Even so, Maritsa is always in the *kafenion*, which is almost her home or, as she claims, her life. The beverages drunk in Maritsa’s *kafenion* are “traditional” and usually include ouzo, wine, *tsipouro*, brandy and beer. Coffee and tea are also served in the morning and in the afternoon while most alcoholic beverages are drunk in the evenings with card playing.

The other two *kafenion*, called *Makedonia* and *Sinantisis* are situated in the margins of *Agora*. They have a modern urban style and are opposite each other. Both *kafenion* have Athenian-style chairs and tables, whisky advertisements on their walls and proper bars to serve the beverages. This is where groups of laborers come to spend some of their time. Kostas, the owner of *Sinantisis*, is a man in his sixties who has been doing this work for at least twenty years. He has lived most of his life Skyros, working as an unskilled laborer in all kinds of jobs. After he got married he decided to invest all his money in this small *kafenion*, which is under his house. Kostas is regularly in the *pro-po* (football and betting agency) and he likes taking risks. In his *kafenion* there are regular card bets when patrons play *poka*. He is a regular whisky drinker and the beverages served in his *kafenion* are usually beer and Scotch. *Sinantisis* (meaning “the meeting”) is a place where people from the building trade (construction laborers and traders) spend their time. The place can be busy from early in the morning when builders come together before they go to work. Coffee and sometimes beer are taken in the morning hours, while whisky and other beverages are drunk in the evening. *Sinantisis* is less popular and busy than *Makedonia*.

Makedonia is even more urban and Athenian than *Sinantisis*. It has a big television screen for sports and more comfortable tables to play cards, backgammon and drink coffee and other beverages. This is the *kafenion* where laborers and some shop-owners of Skyros come together to socialize and play cards, betting on their games. The semi-legal character of card games with large sums of money and property involved (in the concealed room at the back) is the main reason for the owner’s skepticism in relation to newcomers. In my case, I was introduced to the *kafenion* by the owner’s son called Giorgos, and thus I was able to spend time there and regularly discuss several issues.

According to Vagelis, the father of Giorgos and the boss of *Makedonia*,

My shop has been open for fourteen years. Whisky is the main drink consumed here and more particularly Cutty Sark and Johnny [meaning Johnny Walker]. It

⁹³ It is the custom on the island to call the older people Uncle “Μπάμπας” and Aunt “Θειά”.

is usually drunk by men over forty years old. In general, Skyrians and my customers drink mostly whisky; this is our national drink.

Makedonia, the property of Vagelis, serves mainly whisky to its customers during the evenings and is thought of as a concealed place by many Skyrians. Takis, the owner of the *Rodon* bar, for example, and my matrilineal uncle Mihalis, characterized *Makedonia* as a “modern card club” because betting with cards takes place there. The style of the *kafenion* is based on the “cosmopolitan” aesthetic of Vagelis who has added a bar next to the entrance and high stools, imitating the bars on the island. Behind the bar various different types of whisky are on display, along with a few bottles of Vodka. In an attempt to explain the aesthetic of drinking, Vagelis said, “Here we like foreign drinks (*xena pota, apo ekso*). Skyrians look down on Greek drinks; you can’t go to the bar and order an *ouzo*...” Thus the cosmopolitan style of Vagelis’s *kafenion* is expressed in the consumption of whisky which comes from *ekso* and is connected to a “superior” aesthetic in relation to locally made beverages. Greek alcoholic products are not prestigious enough and are considered by the networks of *Makedonia* to be the habit of old and poor men.⁹⁴

Vagelis is not originally from Skyros. He migrated to the island during the 1980s from mainland Evia and since then he has established an extended network of customers who are mainly interested in whisky drinking and betting. Sports are also a regular point of reference and when there are football matches the *kafenion* fills up with men watching the games on the big screen next to the entrance. Betting is also part of football games and bets are usually placed before the match.

Vagelis, like his customers, has adopted an urban style which is identified with contemporary popular Greek music and an Athenian style of entertainment. However, he does not enjoy the seasonal *bouzoukia* of Skyros, which is rarely open. He prefers when he has free time to go *mesa* to the urban centers of Athens or Chalkida to find a good *bouzoukia*. Similarly, the laborers who are regulars there like Nikos Tsalapatanis “go out” to the local bars but prefer Chalkida or Athens for “big nights”, as there they can find the singers they prefer there.

The bar

The distribution of alcoholic beverages before the 1970s was based on the local network of *kafenion* and taverns, which would receive the wine from the producer. The amount of wine distributed was much greater than today and wine was also exported to the mainland. *Ouzo* and *tsipouro* were not made on the island but were imported and sold in grocery shops. A few islanders would make home-made *tsipouro*, the amounts of which were very small. It was not distributed but kept in homes to be offered to guests. Whisky was not found in *kafenion* or other spaces of the *agora* and it was a luxury good imported by a few Skyrian-Athenians and the

⁹⁴ A term that is used on a popular level and is also part of the vocabulary of whisky drinkers on Skyros island is the term “*katharo*” (καθαρό), which literally means “clean”. The term has been used in opposition to “non-clean” whiskies which are home-brewed and illegally brewed spirits of unknown origin. However, it should be clear that the term *katharo* is also related to a mentality of purity existent since the linguistic debate in Greece (glossikon zitima) as Herzfeld has noted (1989). The obsession with the purity of the language (*katharevousa*), the purity of Greekness, pure Europeaness in opposition to “unclean” Turkishness and other such dichotomies should be understood within the context of “disemia”.

laborers who traveled *mesa-ekso*. One of the transitional voices is Nikos Tsalapatanis, who lived through the change in consumption practices and is himself a regular whisky drinker and a customer of the *Makedonia kafenion*. He recalls:

The first time I saw whisky was in 1959. A friend of my father's called Vlaikos owned a *kaiki*⁹⁵ and he used it to transport stone and retail goods from Volos. On some trips he would bring back a bottle of whisky and he would drink it with my father. Before I went into the army around 1967, *Ipokambos* [Stamatis Ftoulis's bar] was founded. There whisky was only drunk by a few people as it was a bit expensive for us. Later on, another bar opened, called *Moreno*, and that stayed open until 1977. However, both bars were outside the island's market...

Most imported drinks became widely available during the 1970s when the first bars and discos opened on the island. "On the Rocks" was a place where inhabitants would dance disco and drink whisky, rum and other imported drinks. Most tourists at that time would spend time there, and it was also an important socializing place for younger Skyrians. The place was open in the summer, like all the night clubs. After 1984, however, its owner, Stamatis, decided with his colleagues to close the place and invest in a *cava* with imported drinks as there was no importer on the island and their club had to order all its drinks from Athens. The *cava* opened in 1986 and since then Stamatis has been the only distributor on the island.

During the 1980s the first supermarkets also began to appear. Skyrians who used to be grocers decided to sell more processed consumer goods and expand their business. The first grocer who made his shop into a supermarket told me, "I opened the supermarket in 1981. I used to stock wine, *tsipouro* and *ouzo* as the islanders didn't use whisky and imported drinks at that time. At the end of the eighties I had to sell whisky as well because there was a demand for it". In the 1990s more bars opened in the market while several *kafenion* were closed down. *Rodon* and *Artistico* are two of the bars that opened during that period. Today there are almost ten bars in the main market of the island and only four *kafenion* left.

Therefore, a major institution that emerged on the island of Skyros during the 1970s and capitalized on Scotch whisky for its style is the bar. The bar represents an "Athenian" view of leisure, which first became popular in urban contexts in Greece during the 1970s and gradually became part of the countryside too. Bars are socializing spaces for both men and women (in contrast to the *konatsi* and the *kafenion*), and the main alcoholic beverages are "foreign" (*xena pota* or beverages from *ekso*) spirits such as rum and whisky. The first bars on Skyros appeared in the market during the 1970s and their number gradually increased to nine. The center for socializing is the actual bar where customers order their drinks. Next to the bar there are always high stools and tables for two or four customers. Nowadays the bars on Skyros are open all seasons except *Kalypso*, the bar where the foreigners, Athenians and cosmopolitans (or would-be cosmopolitans) spend their time during summer, Easter and Carnival. Inhabitants usually avoid this bar, which they regard as being for snobbish people who are not related to Skyros and do not participate in the social life of the island—despite the fact that it was one of the first bars opened in the market.

While some anthropologists in Greece have thought of bars as modern and *kafenion* as traditional, this division does not apply in the case of Skyros (Cowan

⁹⁵ *Kaiki* is a particular type of fishing boat used in the Aegean Sea.

1991, Paptaxiarchis 1992, Papagaroufali 1992). Takis's bar, *Rodon*, for example, has appropriated a more "local" style. He thinks of his own bar as a form of *kafenion*, a continuation of the career of his father who was also a *kafenion* owner. In addition, in the place where the bar is situated there used to be a *kafenion* before the Second World War. The style of the bar expresses this type of aesthetic with its painted green wooden tables and chairs, wood stove in the centre and Takis's local wine, which he produces himself. Furthermore activities that are usually part of the *kafenion* also take place in the bar, such as card playing (though not as often as in *Makedonia*), backgammon and political discussions.

Vagelis, on the other hand, who is the owner of the *kafenion Makedonia*, has adopted a bar style for his *kafenion* and has even added a bar to serve imported beverages and Scotch to his customers. The beverages in his *kafenion* are the beverages that are usually served in a bar and the modern style of the chairs and the tables imitates an Athenian cafeteria.

While the age group in *Rodon* varies, in *Makedonia* and in most *kafenion* the men are usually between thirty-five and sixty years old. The bar clearly expresses youthfulness, despite the fact that all age groups between eighteen and fifty are regularly there. However, the bar is a rite of passage from childhood to adulthood, especially for men, and the place that teenagers learn to perform a style of "modernness". Teenagers in their groups gradually attend the drinking sessions of older islanders in these spaces and gradually they "learn to drink"; they embody the dispositions of drinking but above all they learn their limits and obstacles because they must be in control of themselves as their elders are. Drunkenness is not encouraged in these contexts. Girls might accompany these groups but they are moderate; like most women, they avoid drinking heavily.

A slightly different setting from the bar is the *baraki*, a smaller and cozier setting where customers mainly stand and do not sit, as there is not enough space for tables.⁹⁶ A typical example is *Artistico*, situated just a few meters away from *Rodon*. *Artistico* is usually packed, as it can hardly accommodate twenty to thirty standing persons. Nevertheless it is the place where inhabitants dance to island Greek music and the owner, Sakis, prefers to play Greek popular music on most occasions. Sakis has adopted a cosmopolitan style with clothes inspired by American westerns and the rock scene, such as high boots, and he is always drinking whisky and smoking Marlboros. Similarly, the bar has an "American" style with photographs of New York and a saloon door as an entrance to the toilet.

Leisure gatherings in all bars take place in the evening only, and mostly on weekends. Bars might be open until four or five o'clock in the morning (especially Sakis), depending on the customers and the season (summer, Carnival, Easter etc.). In any case most bars will be full after eleven or twelve on Saturday evening unless the bar is also a cafeteria.⁹⁷ The bar-cafeteria is a new kind of leisure space, initiated by Makis Trahanas who was the owner of a similar business in Exarhia in Athens. After he closed down his business in Athens he invested on Skyros. Makis's cafeteria is also a hybrid of "traditional" and "modern" space incorporating Athenian design with an old bicycle hanging from the ceiling and built-in wooden elements reminiscent of the houses in the village. During the day the cafeteria is the socializing place for

⁹⁶*Baraki* is also sometimes known as *orthadiko*, meaning a standing-bar, but the category also encompasses clubs or *clubakia*.

⁹⁷Cowan has elaborated on the emergence of the *kafeteria* in rural Greece (1990: 73-75), describing it as a hybrid establishment combining aspects of a bar and *zaharoplastio*.

schoolchildren, soldiers and inhabitants and serves coffee, hot chocolate, tea and other beverages. At night the place gradually transforms into a bar, which also serves also “European” and “American” drinks and plays “foreign” music.

While bars and cafeterias are for mostly men, the *zaharoplastion* (sweet shop) on the island is a common family (domestic-oriented) space for various inhabitants, both men and women, especially during summer. The sweet shop is a space where local and other sweets are made, including *baklava*, *kantaifi* and *pastes*, and these are usually served with juice or soft drinks. Alcohol is not regularly served there despite the fact that the shop sells a wide variety of whiskies and liqueurs. According to the owner, “the beverages and more specifically whisky are usually bought as gifts to accompany sweets for *episkepsis* (visits) or *giortes* (celebrations) in the community”. On name-day celebrations, birthdays or family gatherings it is customary to offer some sweets with an alcoholic beverage, and inhabitants will buy their gifts from these shops. While in the past cognac was the main gift on such occasions, nowadays whisky is the rule. Both sweet shops (the second one is situated in the shopping street) sell whisky such as Cutty Sark, Dimple, and Johnnie Walker, which are the usual gifts for a man. In case of a female celebration, Campari and vodka are usually preferred.

The symbolism of Scotch whisky in gambling

Various anthropologists have observed the value attached to card games on the islands of the Aegean and the competitive or reciprocal aspects of different games (Herzfeld 1986, Papataxiarchis 1991). Papataxiarchis, for example, notes that on the island of Lesbos

The card game of *poka* (poker) and the throwing of dice are popular avenues for competition among men. *Xeri*, however, is markedly different in many respects. First it is the only card game that remains part of the realm of commensality, since no money stakes are at use. What is at stake in *xeri* is the right to *kerasma*, awarded to those who lose. *Xeri* then, focuses on the honorific side of *kerasma*. The defeated side honors the winners by offering them a brandy or a soft drink. The treating becomes a penalty for losing that does not require future reciprocation. (1991: 166)

Xeri (a popular card game in various places in Greece) is played in Manolis’s (the Traditional) and Maritsa’s *kafenion*, where there is no money stake but the losing parties pay the bills of the winners. In winter Maritsa’s *kafenion* has few regular customers who are mostly domesticated shepherds. They are between fifty and eighty years old, with sunburned and wrinkled faces from their work, and they spend most of their time outside of the village (*ekso*). In the evenings, usually between six and nine o’clock, men gather next to the wood stove to play *prefa* or *xeri*. The shepherds usually drink *tsipouro* or *ouzo* while they play, which are the main alcoholic spirits for consumption in the *kafenion*. As in Manolis’s *kafenion*, good friends come together in pairs to play *xeri*. During the game and depending on which round, the losers will ask Maritsa for shots of *ouzo* or *tsipouro*. However, because Maritsa is not able to move quickly as she has problems with her feet, one of the losers will bring the drinks. At the end, those who lost each round will pay the cost.

The losers of the game will be obliged to buy the *tsipouro* or ouzo for the winners as an honorary gesture, an offering that does not require immediate return or future reciprocation. However, the rivalry of the game will be continued in the following days or weeks and the position of the loser will shift with the position of the winner, making the offering of the drink a regular form of exchange among friends who play cards. The reciprocation of the rivalry of the game results in the unspoken obligation to play cards again and again and therefore to return the stake (Mauss 1991: 16-18). The obligation to give and the obligation to receive can be understood as forms of exchange over long periods of time that strengthen the bonds of the players of the teams and reproduce the sentiments of friendship.

The refusal to play cards again and thus to return or receive the stakes might result in the weakening of social relationships, as card playing is one of the major activities of the *kafenion*. Furthermore the participants in the game cannot be exempt from such a relationship as they might be viewed as exempting themselves from mutual ties and reciprocation. Once the drinking gift is given in a card game, there are several expressions that might be uttered by the losers such as “We’ll see next time” (*tha dume*). These create a time continuum in relation to the game. Such expectations from the side of the losers express their willingness to reciprocate. However, the players are not interested in the actual monetary value of the stake but in their reputation as winners.

Generally speaking when persons come together regularly, the inhabitants of Skyros say that these persons “receive and give” (*ehoun pare dose / έχουν πάρε δώσε*), meaning that a person has regular interaction with someone. The expression might also refer to any form of social relationship including friendships, sexual affairs, economic affairs, and even legal cases. As such “to receive and to give” is viewed as the essence of social relationships within Skyrian society.

Makedonia kafenion, by contrast, where the consumption rate of whisky is an average of 24 bottles per week (ninety percent of the total consumption being Cutty Sark), the central card game is *poka* (poker), which is not necessarily related to friendship. On the contrary, the players of the *poka* table should not be good friends or relatives. Ideally the players “know” each other but do not have regularly *pare/dose*. Compared with the players of *xeri*, a few Skyrians are gamblers (*tzogadori*) and participate in the gambling network of *Makedonia*.

Poka is a highly competitive game with money stakes that sometimes expand to property and pieces of land. The game is highly individualistic and never involves cooperation with other players or playing in groups (as in *xeri*). Participation in the game is limited to a few times a month or sometimes these are spaced with long periods of time as the losers of the money stakes cannot afford to play very often. As a result, the constitution of the group of *poka* players changes regularly. The players usually show up in the evenings after seven o’clock and the games continue until late, sometimes till the morning hours.

The busiest gambling periods take place in the wintertime and, more specifically, during December, January and February when laborers do not have to work as much (mainly because of bad weather conditions). The period before New Year’s Eve is especially competitive as gambling during this period is an institutionalized practice all over Greece.

During the busiest periods of gambling, there might be “big games” (*megala pehnidia*). What characterizes big games is the number of participants at the table, their socioeconomic status and the amount of money involved. Usually big games might involve stakes higher than one thousand euros (which is the average monthly

salary of an unskilled laborer) but there are cases in which pieces of land are the stake. In one of my regular visits to the island's notary, I was informed that there are at least five cases of property transactions every year as a result of gambling. In addition, the son of the owner of *Makedonia* referred to a story of a man who is the owner of a *zaharoplastion*. He told me that K. is a regular and experienced *tzogadoros* and managed to make a large profit in a big game. He was able to win a large piece of land close to the *horio* and nowadays he is using it for his own business.

During the big games the doors of the *kafenion* are closed and sometimes the door might be locked from inside. Vagelis, the owner of *Makedonia*, conceals the game from unwanted customers late at night. In addition, there is a second kind of concealment, which is more regular. At *Makedonia* there are two *poka* tables, one in front of the entrance and the other in a semi-private room at the back of the *kafenion*. The concealed room is behind the bar of the *kafenion*; it has small curtains on the two windows facing the bar, a large table with a green cloth and leather sofas. The front table of *Makedonia* is used by the regular players for small stakes and is busy most of the time. In both settings players bet with plastic counters given by Vagelis. At the end of a game Vagelis will exchange the counters for cash unless the stakes are high enough. In that case, the loser will pay the money individually to the winner.

At both tables whisky plays a central role. Usually all players drink the beverage without ice and Scotch is considered an integral part of the style of a player. While at *xeri* the right of *kerasma* (treating to a drink) is awarded to those who lose, in *poka* this right is awarded to the winners. The amount of whisky should always be limited to five or maximally six drinks during the evening because more alcohol is considered to bring drunkenness, which is not desirable within the context of the *poka* game. Whisky is usually served diluted with water and ice to make it lighter. The amount of ice is different for each customer, a detail that is known to Vagelis who serves the beverages. Vagelis is always asking the customers about their drink loudly in an affirmative manner such as "Cutty Sark with ice and water?" and then the customers will agree. This process of naming the exact way that someone drinks the beverage (despite the fact the owner of the *kafenion* knows this) is also a way of asserting an individual identity and making it public. In *poka*, winning is a gradual process that might take a long time, especially when there are many players in the game. As the winner proceeds, he is obliged to invite his fellow players to a drink. The dialog is usually "will you drink something?" The other party answers with a short "Yes" and then the winner loudly announces the drinks for his table, "one for Giorgos and one for Giannis". It is clear, then, that within this context whisky is an obligation in the moral code of the winner.

According to Vagelis, the owner of the *kafenion*, this treat is a way of balancing the unequal relationship between loser and winner, and in that sense it effects a smooth game. Within this perspective whisky is seen as fuel for the game as it keeps the players "calm" (*psihremia*), a necessary condition of *poka*. This drinking gift will be without return, as the accumulation of the money of the players by the winner requires a minimum kind of compensation. This form of gift is therefore expressing the success of the winner and is a form of exchange that transcends the utilitarian calculus. Such gifts can be the gifts of pity, such as those given to street beggars and those who are desperate, or gifts in the form of charitable donations and voluntary work. These gifts cannot be understood with a utilitarian ideology but can be compared to the "sun which dispenses energy-wealth-without any return" (Bataille quoted in Botting and Wilson 1997: 189).

Generosity, then, is a characteristic of a good gambler who is able to give by taking the risk to lose. The good gambler will be able to spend (*eksodo*) outside of his household, he will treat (*kerasma*) other players to a Scotch and he will be in control of his economics (in contrast to the domesticated shepherds). In any case gambling is an *eksodo*. It would then be relevant to state that the concept of spending namely *eksodo* (the verb is *ksodevo*) “derives from *eksodos*, exit, and implies an outward movement. In some sense, then, money “comes out” in gambling” (Papataxiarchis 1988: 268). This suggests that gambling is symbolically placed *ekso* in contrast to *ikonomia*, the savings of the household that stay *mesa* in the house. To save and to give the money *mesa* is a characteristic of the domesticated householders who look after their *nikokirio*, while to spend and to give money *ekso* is an anti-domestic practice that characterizes conspicuous consumption and consumption in general. In most cases to consume (na *katanolono*) is viewed as the same practice as *ksodema*. Consequently, consumption is also placed *ekso* of the sphere of the household and might be viewed as a highly anti-domestic activity.

As already noted, women are in control of the economics of the household among the matrilocal domesticated householders. As a result, they are the ones who usually manage the male income which is used for the needs of the household and for *ikonomia* (savings). Gambling is not viewed as an integral part of the household needs and no income or property will be used in such a context unless the amount spent for taking a risk is small (such as in a lottery called a *lahio* or a *pro-po* football bet). Small amounts might be regularly spent in the lottery store of the *Agora* but they are not viewed as *tzogos* (gambling).

By contrast, the network of gamblers of Makedonia who are mainly skilled or unskilled laborers and *horiani*, avoid and are avoided by the matrilocal residence rule; they might marry women from *ekso* and from *eksoteriko*, some are divorced, and those who are married are in control of the economics of the household because the income they receive comes from *merokamato* (daily work) labor, construction work (with payment depending on what was constructed) and market occupations. The first two spheres require the total administration of the economics by the men, as they need money to buy tools, building materials and other goods to be used for their work. Moreover, these two spheres are opposed to the matrimonial system because they are not related to the land transmitted to the women or to any other valuables as in the case of shepherds. With regard to the occupations of *Agora* there is a similar logic with the occupations of laborers, with one major difference. While most shops in *Agora* are property of shepherds, some are rented to descendants of *kohiliani*, some to descendants of farmers and some to Skyrian-Athenians who arrived on the island during and after the construction of the military airport. Among those who rent the shops, a few Skyrian Athenians who do not follow the matrilocal rule and are in control of their own shops (usually their wives do not work in their shops) are also gamblers, as they are able to gain a excess profit from their work and they can afford the criticism as a result of their Athenian background. In all cases, the matrimonial property of a woman is inalienable and as a result no gambler who might have a matrilocal residence is able to afford the social criticism if he *ksodepsi* (spends) his wife's property.

Therefore, in the context of card playing in the *kafenion*, there are two distinct forms of consumption that correspond to two different forms of spending on beverages. The first stake which is evident in the “traditional” coffeehouse is related to a socializing experience among friends. There the domesticated householders and the unmarried shepherds and men of *Agora* come together to play *xeri* in pairs and

those who lose will spend on buying the *tsipouro* for the winners. They will avoid Scotch or *cognac*, which are consumed on extraordinary family occasions and are kept in the liquor cabinet of the women. The *tsipouro* will mean that the food becomes *meze* (Papataxiarchis 1991) and as such it will reproduce the masculine ideology of the *kafenion*. However, the gender style of the men who play *xeri* is not based on an assertive masculinity and is not related to the urban style that many laborers claim. In addition, the matrilocal rule and the kinship obligations that follow this relationship limit the amount of money that the patrons of the “traditional” *kafenion* can spend. A major cause is the fact that “men do not have money” (*oi antres den ehun lefta*) as *kiria* Maria told me, meaning that married shepherds give the money they earn to the household and therefore to the woman. Similarly, the unmarried shepherds and the *men of Agora* will give a part of their money to their family or sisters (common bank accounts are a very common strategy) to save for their own shake. As a result the participants will pay small amounts of money for the *kerasma* and their stakes cannot be excessive as they should be looking after their household, saving and not spending their wives’ money.

Clearly gambling opposes the spheres of shepherds’ domesticity, the *nikokirio mesa sto horio* and the mainstream family values of the inhabitants of the island. In addition, gambling might seem like an irrational practice if viewed under the light of economic theory, or more importantly if it is understood as the opposite pole of constructive card playing and drinking, evident in *xeri* and *kerasma*. While the stakes at *xeri* and the game itself reproduce the social relationships of the participants, this is not the case for the game of *poka* and the gift of Scotch offered by the winners. It is therefore worth researching the role of gambling and the symbolism of Scotch in the context of gambling.

The laborers and the *men of Agora* who are patrons in the *Makedonia kafenion* are *horiani* and they are in control of their own money in their neolocal residence or in their divorced or unmarried life. They might have an excess of wealth as a result of their upward economic mobility since the 1970s, and they are willing to spend it more conspicuously in whisky in their nightlife in order to invest in an urban Athenian style to oppose the matrilocal and kinship obligations. Moreover, they are willing to risk their excess wealth in betting in *poka*, an anti-domestic practice that opposes the spheres of the matrilocal household. Gambling should therefore be understood as an integral part of the style of those who want to make themselves through taking risks, by opposing the matrilocal management of the money and the disciplined domesticity of the values of the shepherds and of those who are *eksohini*. By investing in an urban Athenian style of modernness evident in their excessive consumption habits, they oppose a major value of *nikokirio*, the *ikonomia* (savings). As a result Scotch whisky, which is a *kseno poto* and comes from *ekso*, is intertwined with an Athenian modernness. Moreover, the association of the beverage with gambling and the fact that is given as a treat by the winner materialize Scotch into a symbol of profit. Within this context the *kerasma* of Scotch becomes a gift without return that expresses a profit (an amount of money), which is not returned and not reciprocated.

Therefore *poka* as well as the drinking gift of whisky in the context of the card game is entirely opposed to *nikokirio* because it involves spending large amounts of money outside the context of the family. In addition, in the sphere of the household there are no gifts without return as exchanging food and beverages is a major form of socialization and a way of reproducing social relationships. On the other hand, within the *soi*-based society of Skyros the shepherds do not accept those card game challenges that go against their matrilocal and “domesticated” character; they cannot

afford to “be discussed” (*na tus sizitane*) and lose large amounts of money (that usually they cannot afford as *eksohini*). Therefore, the gift of Scotch should be interpreted as a symbolic practice which deconstructs the material constraints of the players and affirms their upward economic mobility, which is not necessarily related to the political and social privileges of the domesticated shepherds. In that sense the consumption of Scotch challenges the hegemonic cultural values of the socially powerful domesticated shepherds and the beverage is placed at the centre of an alternative moral universe that promotes consumption or spending, and relates to the realm of Athens.

Consumption and cultural marginality

The socioeconomic changes that took place on Skyros until the beginning of the twentieth century resulted in the decline of the elite group of *arhontes* who were the main owners of the means of production and the landowners together with the ecclesiastical elite of the monastery of St. George. Gradually the extended lineages of shepherds, the *soia*, were able to acquire the land, the shops of *Agora*, the old symbolic capital of the *arhontes* (which is a part of the *aloni*), and they became the most influential occupational group in the political and social life of the island. By contrast, those who were known as *kohiliani* and *parakatiani*, became laborers and some among them migrated to Athens and abroad. Among those laborers who had migrated *mesa*, those who were successful with their work returned to the island and continued their skilled labor. The gradual increase of the value of labor and the economic success of the laborers who had migrated to Athens resulted in their upward economic mobility. However, this upward economic mobility did not bring any political and social influence. On the contrary, the laborers remained politically and culturally marginal.

Moreover, the conceptions of cultural coherence held by the inhabitants is radically different between laborers and shepherds. This dichotomy has invested the meanings of shepherds with traditionality and *locality* (*mesa*) and the meanings of laborers with modernness and *ekso*.

Furthermore, the notions of shepherd and labor culture noted above are related to the gender styles that persons choose to perform. On Skyros gender styles are deeply influenced by the conceptualizations and the practice of persons in relation to the *nikokirio* (household) and their domestication. The general morality is for a person to be valued as *nikokiris* (meaning a man or a woman who is focused and looks after the household and the family), as *timios* (an honest person) and *kinonikos* (a social and community-oriented person). These widely shared cultural values are claimed and performed among the matrilocal shepherd householders, who use the matrimonial capital of their wives and are obliged to focus on matrilineal kinship relationships. Within this perspective, consumption (*ksodema*) outside of the context of the household is viewed as contradictory to the values of *nikokirio* and the savings of the family.

However, among the single, married or divorced laborers, there are some who do not identify with the *soi*-based society of Skyros and the matrilocal domestication and they avoid the obligations that such a marital relationship might entail. They express an assertive masculinity, they might engage into courtship with foreign women (from *ekso*), they drink imported beverages (from *ekso* or *ksena pota*) and they do *eksoda*

(they spend and consume). They can afford conspicuous consumption and they can express their breach from domesticity by gambling or staying up late at night in the bar and in the *kafenion*. The majority of those laborers consume Scotch whisky in an anti-commensal manner.

Day, Papataxiarchis and Stewart have argued that such “oppositional identities” might be observed among various marginal groups who wish to define themselves in contrast to the dominant cultural values of more powerful neighbors (1999: 1-24). This is done in a systematic and conscious manner, which can be understood as an adoption of a “style” (Ferguson 1999). In such cases marginal networks consider themselves as “outside” society beyond the reach of the prevailing neighbors and they place themselves at the centre of an alternative moral universe in contrast to the dominant one. As a result they are able to replace the experience of dependence with the notion of cultural difference (Day, Papataxiarchis and Stewart 1999: 1-24). Within this context marginal people are able to challenge or even transform the hegemonic practices and interpretations by denying the social hierarchy in favor of feelings of autonomous and equal social relationships. In addition, such marginal people have a focus on the present moment since any future transcendence such as religious belief and practice is associated with the dominant order and might be conceived as a strategy for control and authority (Day, Papataxiarchis and Stewart 1999: 1-24).

Among the Skyrian laborers, for example, a minority are gamblers (*tzogadori*) who focus even more on their own marginality and the luck of the moment. The gamblers come together in Vagelis’s *kafenion*, where they play *poka* and place at stake large amounts of money and property. There they “bring off” their urban and anti-domestic style, as they totally oppose the sphere of the household, the *oikonomia* (saving and being rational in their economics) and the matrilocal obligations of domesticity. By taking large risks and finally by treating or being treated to a Scotch whisky (a major symbol of the Athenian urban style), they express an anti-domestic discourse as well as an upward economic mobility. As a result the gamblers of the *kafenion* localize Scotch as a symbol of profit (*kerdos*).

The domesticated shepherds, on the other hand, and the majority of the men of *Agora* prefer to socialize in the traditional *kafenion* and in Maritsa’s establishment. When they drink heavily as a group they prefer to drink wine in the *konatsi* in a private sphere. When they spend time in the *kafenion* they prefer to discuss local politics, playing backgammon and playing *xeri*. The game of *xeri* lies in diametrical opposition to the game of *poka*. The players involved in *xeri* are friends, they play in pairs and the losers of each game pay small stakes of *tsipouro* or ouzo to the winners. In the game of *poka*, the players are not friends, there are no partnerships and each player is highly individualistic. There are large stakes each time (at least in comparison to *xeri*) and the winner treats the losers to Scotch whisky.

Thus, Scotch whisky is a beverage for the *horianous* and for those who are in control of their own economics. It encapsulates the notions of modernness and laborhood (especially in relation to Athens) and it opposes the values of domesticity. Furthermore, it expresses an outward movement (*ine kseno poto, apo to ekso-teriko*), which is appropriated and localized by the laborers who make their style with *kso-dema* (spending) and identify with the nightlife culture of Athens.