



VENLA SYKÄRI

Words as Events

Cretan Mantinádes in Performance and Composition

Studia Fennica
Folkloristica

Studia Fennica
Folkloristica 18

THE FINNISH LITERATURE SOCIETY (SKS) was founded in 1831 and has, from the very beginning, engaged in publishing operations. It nowadays publishes literature in the fields of ethnology and folkloristics, linguistics, literary research and cultural history.

The first volume of the *Studia Fennica* series appeared in 1933. Since 1992, the series has been divided into three thematic subseries: *Ethnologica*, *Folkloristica* and *Linguistica*. Two additional subseries were formed in 2002, *Historica* and *Litteraria*. The subseries *Anthropologica* was formed in 2007.

In addition to its publishing activities, the Finnish Literature Society maintains research activities and infrastructures, an archive containing folklore and literary collections, a research library and promotes Finnish literature abroad.

STUDIA FENNICA EDITORIAL BOARD

Markku Haakana, professor, University of Helsinki, Finland

Timo Kaartinen, professor, University of Helsinki, Finland

Pauli Kettunen, professor, University of Helsinki, Finland

Leena Kirstinä, professor, University of Jyväskylä, Finland

Hanna Snellman, professor, University of Jyväskylä, Finland

Lotte Tarkka, professor, University of Helsinki, Finland

Johanna Ilmakunnas, secretary of the board, Finnish Literature Society, Finland

EDITORIAL OFFICE

SKS

P.O. Box 259

FI-00171 Helsinki

www.finlit.fi

Venla Sykäri

Words as Events

*Cretan Mandinádes in Performance
and Composition*

Finnish Literature Society • Helsinki



Studia Fennica Folkloristica 18

The publication has undergone a peer review.



VERTAISARVIOITU
KOLLEGIALT GRANSKAD
PEER-REVIEWED
www.tsv.fi/tunnus

The open access publication of this volume has received part funding via Helsinki University Library.

© 2011 Venla Sykäri and SKS
License CC-BY-NC-ND 4.0 International

A digital edition of a printed book first published in 2011 by the Finnish Literature Society.

Cover Design: Timo Numminen

EPUB: eLibris Media Oy

ISBN 978-952-222-261-9 (Print)

ISBN 978-952-222-778-2 (PDF)

ISBN 978-952-222-777-5 (EPUB)

ISSN 0085-6835 (Studia Fennica)

ISSN 1235-1946 (Studia Fennica Folkloristica)

DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.21435/sff.18>

This work is licensed under a Creative Commons CC-BY-NC-ND 4.0 International License.

To view a copy of the license, please visit <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>



A free open access version of the book is available at <http://dx.doi.org/10.21435/sff.18> or by scanning this QR code with your mobile device.

Contents

PREFACE AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	7
Note on transliteration	17
I INTRODUCTION	19
Mantinádes in Crete: a poetic tradition across the time	19
In the crossroads of composition and communicating	25
Rhymed poetry	26
Short, communicative forms	27
Research on mantinádes and related traditions	28
Local literature and discourses on mantinádes	35
Research as engagement	37
Research questions	37
Fieldwork	39
Methodology and methods of research and analysis	43
Ethical considerations	48
Data	49
The field	50
Local terminology	51
Outline of the chapters	52
II THEORETICAL FRAME OF INTERPRETATION	54
The register	57
Focus on performance	61
Performance arena as a frame of experience	61
Contextualization	61
Strategies of meaning	62
Dialogism	64
Creativity and competence	65
Conceptualizing improvisation	69
Perceptions of improvisation among folklore scholarship	70
Improvisation in music	73
Improvisation and metrical registers	75
Poems as text and process: the double-identity	79
III CRETE AND TRADITIONAL PERFORMANCE CONTEXTS	81
Crete as historical, social and cultural setting	81
Cretan music, dance and song	86
<i>Rizítika</i> songs of the western Crete	92
Shared performance arena, the <i>gléndi</i>	93
The traditional <i>gléndi</i>	93
The <i>gléndi</i> and the dances in eastern Crete	96
The <i>gléndi</i> in the <i>rizítika</i> area of western Crete	97
Poetic confrontations	98
Transformations of the <i>gléndi</i>	100
Casual singing events	104
<i>Kantáda</i>	115

IV	THE POETIC LANGUAGE	117
	Origins of the metrical structure and the emergence of the <i>mantináda</i>	117
	Poetic form and means	121
	Thematic contents.....	127
	Couplets as building blocks.....	132
	<i>Mantinádes</i> “continued” (<i>sinehómenes</i>)	132
	Narrative songs.....	135
V	THE MULTIDIMENSIONAL PERFORMANCE.....	138
	Recited performances	139
	Poems embedded in speech.....	141
	Stories of past performances	146
	Presentation of poetic inventiveness	149
	Performance as gendered and shared experience	150
	Participation, improvisation and meaning	152
	Thematic continuation.....	153
	Statements/ideas enclosed in the imagery.....	154
	Contextual relevance	155
	Internal fitting.....	156
	Written and media contexts	157
	Written arenas	158
	When television substituted the <i>paréa</i>	159
	Mobile phone messages	160
	Individual and shared: problems implied by the double-identity in modern arenas.....	161
VI	COMPOSITION.....	162
	Internalizing the tradition	162
	Local definitions of composition	166
	Rhyming and structuring the verse order	168
	Inventing meaning through rhyme	171
	The ideal of coherence: building an image.....	172
	Motivations for composing.....	176
	Verbal interaction	177
	Composition for emotional self-expression	180
	Capturing a theme	182
	The creativity of making the point: reframing.....	185
	Commanding a poetic world as a productive language	191
VII	A THEORY OF DIALOGIC ORAL POETRY	195
	Dialogic oral poetry.....	195
	Individuals and tradition	196
	Four aspects of creativity.....	198
	The self-dependent poem and the economy of tradition	200
	The plural aesthetics of performance and composition.....	202
	From oral to modern performance arenas	205
	Performative, contextual and textual dialogue	206
	BIBLIOGRAPHY AND PRIMARY SOURCES	210
	INDEX	220

Preface and acknowledgements

The Cretan rhyming couplets, the *mantinádes*, are short, compact poems which contain an independent message created either for the needs of a particular occasion, or to encapsulate a larger proverbial, philosophical or lyrical idea. This research approaches the *mantinádes* as a special poetic language, a *register*, and studies how these extemporized or memorized units are performed and composed, and also explores the larger principles that underlie the communication, self-expression and creativity in the genre.

The need for studies on short, conversational traditions to balance the understanding of oral poetry has been acknowledged in several sources. New approaches to longer narrative, epic and mythic traditions and to improvised contest poetry have provided in-depth insights into the dynamics and aesthetics of composition in performance, as well as to the processes of encoding and decoding of the textual units within performative discourses. Short poetry genres that favor spontaneity in communication and constant production of new texts, however, appeal to quite different human needs.

In Greece and the surrounding Mediterranean areas, several especially anthropological articles and books based on fieldwork carried out in the 1970s and 1980s, already provide good insights into the uses of the compact units of oral poetry. When I encountered the *mantinádes* in Crete at the end of the 1990s, I felt there was a need for an up-to-date study that would address the change that had been created by the adaptation of the poetic activities in the modern society during the past twenty to thirty years. Yet an even greater gap in the literature was the need for a comprehensive study presenting this type of poetic register and its use in traditional performances and composition. In addition, it was clear that the significance attributed to the new, seemingly context-less performances in the written and mass media arenas was intimately drawn from the ideals immanent in the traditional poetic expression; furthermore, many Cretans were fluent in both arenas. This meant that any conclusions could only be inferred from a full image of the tradition.

The need for a comprehensive study was further enhanced by my experience that *mantinádes* were at the same time an overwhelmingly versatile and uniformly conceptualized song and speech genre in Crete. Indeed, the couplet model has been widespread in the southern Greek

islands since the fifteenth century and it is still popular and living, especially in Crete. Although significant differences have existed until the 1980s in the performative practices between the different parts of Crete concerning how, where and with which instruments *mantinádes* were sung (if instruments were used), the rhyming couplet model is something that is felt to be emblematic of the entire island of Crete. Besides their being exchanged in culturally institutionalized singing events, these poems are widely composed for personal pleasure, and they occur embedded in casual speech to an extent which points to a language-like conception of the poetic model.

The initial motivation for this research was thus to provide a descriptive book which I would have wanted to have found when I first became aware of the tradition. This took place when I spent five months at the University of Crete in Rethimno as a foreign exchange student of Modern Greek in 1997. In hindsight, I am happy that I did not find a book published on this topic. What ensued from my becoming familiar with a living field at such an early phase of my studies was that I was able to follow a path of folklore studies which combined periods of fieldwork and related studies throughout my master's thesis and doctoral dissertation work. I had the opportunity to stay in Crete for several longer periods, and later visited the island once a year, with the overall fieldwork covering a total time span of twelve years. As a result, I acquired very different layers of data through fieldwork and the data interacted with my academic learning. Even the most basic information on the situations and the ways in which *mantinádes* were performed all had to be constructed through fieldwork conversations, and these conversations soon led to an extended academic discussion on the ideas and values of poetic self-expression.

When I first began this study in 1997, the ethnopoeitics and performance-centered approaches to verbal art were becoming established in Finnish Folklore studies that provide the scholarly background for framing the research questions in this study. The earlier studies on *mantinádes* carried out by Samuel Baud-Bovy (1936), Anna Caraveli (1982, 1985) and Michael Herzfeld (1981, 1985a, 1985b) helped me to understand the plurality of the poetic experience, to ground and focus my perception in the field, and to go for more than was easily available. To ground my own inquiry as an *ethnographic register analysis* of the *mantinádes*, as I conceptualize this research now, I was primarily assisted by the close analysis of these researchers' fieldwork. I was also able to combine Albert Lord's model (1960) of seeing the register from the singers' point of view with the later approaches of John Miles Foley, who had brought the study of the metrically defined oral poetry methodologically to a new starting point (esp. 1991, 1995). I could further enlarge this methodological and theoretical basis by drawing on Charles Briggs' comprehensive study on the conversational Mexicano genres (1988).

In Crete, however, my attention was particularly captured by the locals' eager introduction of the poems as poems in their own right. When I inquired about *mantinádes*, especially old people often recited to me poems. These separate poems were performed with great pride, often accompanied by

an intense, affirmative eye-contact or even by the phrase: *See, it has a lot of meaning!* The people clearly valued the way these miniature poems captured an idea as such; they were also well worth performing. The discourse to which they bound the poem was, however, not evident from the situational, circumstantial context, to an outsider like me, and several times I continued to wonder *why* the particular poem that was performed was so meaningful. This motivated me to search for an explanation for the cultural and artistic values and processes beyond those types of performances that were explained to me as being culturally institutionalized. I therefore turned to search for the factors that were the basis for their perceptions, the creating of their meanings, in addition to the actual performative realizations. I was encouraged to envision such a task as a creative intellectual challenge, especially by one of Michael Herzfeld's phrases: "Context, by which the meaning of a text is locally recognized, may be verbal as well as circumstantial or social: words, too, are 'events'" (1981:139). The title of this study, *Words as Events*, includes an acknowledgement of this intellectual challenge.

When I was conducting the early stages of my fieldwork in 2001–2003, I also had the opportunity to participate in analyzing the Finnish *kalevala-meter* lyric poetry in the folklore archives. I worked with the researcher Senni Timonen for short periods of altogether eight months.¹ The perception of an essentially language-like characteristic of the poetic tradition in Crete was very similar to this experience. The analysis itself, the depth of Senni Timonen's experience, and our detailed conversations during our joint work, all made me intimately familiar with another flexible poetic register, as well as with the creativity of the poetic self-expression as a vehicle for diverse processes of problem solving and consolation. Timonen's long research career culminated in a dissertation on the *kalevala-meter* lyric poems in 2004. In addition, a year later, the dissertation by Lotte Tarkka on the singing of the *kalevala-meter* poetry as a cultural system in the historical Vuokkiniemi parish posed new interpretations which were also near to my own research questions. Although my fieldwork periods in Crete and concerns with the short forms of oral poetry separated me from the mainstream of contemporary folklore research in Finland, the work of these researchers, as well as that of Lauri Harvilahti, and of my peer, the doctoral student Kati Kallio, kept me constantly in connection with the broader ideas of oral poetry.²

Interpreting the threads of evidence that emerged from my fieldwork first took several paths beyond the core areas of the folklore discipline, or even linguistic anthropology, which is closely related to the sphere of this

1 After a period of archive practice that is required in the folklore studies, I continued in the Finnish Literary Society for a total of eight months (2001–2004) in a project of indexing the thematic units of the *kalevala-meter* lyric poetry. This work consisted of going systematically through the related poetic motives and their appearance in the individual poems. The work was carried out sub-group by sub-group from preliminary handwritten cards by checking the references and by writing a comment on each motive.

2 Of the Finnish scholars, Lauri Honko is also widely known for his research on epic poetry (esp. 1998) and Pertti Anttonen (1994; 2009) and Tom Dubois (1995) have contributed to the research on Finnish oral poetry from an ethnopoetic perspective.

study. I had few practical models to study the spontaneity emerging as a characteristic of the tradition and the Cretan impressions seemed to fall only partially within the perspectives given by other studies. I participated in seminars organized among the social sciences and education, semiotics and philosophy, and ethnomusicology and dance, and these gave me specific insights from those areas of study. Some of these concerns proved to be useful for verbalizing the characteristics of the Cretan tradition; others showed that several disciplines currently share the very same issues concerning human thinking and self-expression that I encountered in my research. One of the terms which made me look outside of the core of the folklore research was improvisation. My use of that term was initially questioned by both my mentors in a seminar in October 2003, and after reconstructing what it can signify regarding the tradition of *mantinádes*, in the final writing period from April 2009 to March 2010, it also introduced me better to the literary and text-centered folklore research history. The biases of this paradigm, something I first envisioned as a subject of a brief historical exploration, still turned out to be at odds with conceptualizing the creative personal agency particularly in composition – and this agency therefore grew into a major theme of the present study.

Through an ethnographic register approach, this study aims to clarify the ways in which the productive poetic tradition of the *mantinádes* allows creativity and an experience of meaningfulness for the poets and performers. I felt very early on that the “restrictions” of the structure played a decisive role in generating impulses of creativity, and along with the inconvenience I felt over the lack of information about the poetic registers and their role in several anthropological studies capturing sociocultural themes, I noticed that the basic problem of the research available was that it did not grant access to the world of resources available to the performers and composers of poetry. By a register approach, I therefore mean that I will focus on the poetic language, the register, as well as on how, where, when and by whom, to whom and between whom, this register can be used. This type of focus on the dialectical relationship between the system and its individual usages is, of course, not new, but already present in the Prague School’s early approaches towards sociolinguistics from the twenties and thirties (see Fine 1984: 31–32), and in particular in the discussion carried out by Jakobson and Bogatyrev (1980 [1929]) on reshaping the meaning of Saussure’s terms *langue* and *parole*.

Ethnographic means that this aim is endeavored through the experience of individuals engaged in the tradition. The orientations to this experience are constructed here by combining the researcher’s observation and participation in the performances to focusing on these matters in repeated conversations. The present study therefore examines how the contemporary people in Crete understand and conceptualize their own tradition. In other words, this analysis will explore how they still practice or recollect the collective singing and acoustic musical ways of celebration and entertainment that form their very recent past, how they perform and compose these poems today, as well as how they value the access to this shared potentiality and evaluate its individual renditions.

As Steven Caton observes, the ethnographic appropriation of an oral poem concerns two distinct but interdependent processes: understanding and interpretation. Whereas native speakers may be confronted by the challenge of interpretation while they may automatically understand the expression, a foreign ethnographer is also confronted by the problem of understanding. This understanding concerns a complex set of linguistic features as well as background information on the concrete and cultural references. (Caton 1990: 16–18; see also Caraveli 1982)

Understanding is also a primary method in most human research. But unlike many other types of ethnographic work, in this type, the participation in the conversations and knowledge production, is the essential prerequisite for understanding to a degree which also stands firmly and visibly in the final product. Several ethnographic studies, and essentially those on short forms (Briggs 1988; Caton 1990; Herzfeld 1981), were of great help in making me conscious that rather than a disadvantage, my engagement in the research dialogue would be the necessary tool for grasping the ways in which people express themselves in this kind of speech genre. Understanding the several, often very elliptic levels of the apt poetic expression demanded that I learn a profound system of the ideals of communication in Crete and essentially their verbal ways of challenging the interlocutor to engage in the discourse. In brief, the dialogic structures of the tradition were also imposed on the structure of the fieldwork. After accepting to learn not just new information, but a new way of communicating, being a foreigner was nonetheless very rewarding. The advantage is that people are motivated to explain and explore in conversation things which normally are self-evident.

As a foreign student of the *mantinádes*, however, I have had the benefit of receiving help from a native Greek within easy reach. After the initial period of studies and preliminary fieldwork in Rethimno in the spring 1997, my attempts to understand the Cretan and Greek music led me to become acquainted in May 1999 – when I had already organized my return to Rethimno for studies and fieldwork for the academic year 1999/2000 – with the percussionist Yannis Hadziharalambous, an Athens-born expert in the Balkan and eastern rhythmical traditions, who later become my husband. By that time, he had lived in Crete for most of the preceding eight years, and his sharp ear and his insider experience of the deeply idiomatic Greek and Cretan expressions have complemented my pursuits in indispensable ways.

Being a couple facilitated enormously our move to a village environment. During March and April 2001, we stayed for the first time in a small village which came to be my temporary residence during all the longer and shorter periods of fieldwork until the end of 2007. The village is situated in the Milopotamos valley, and I will refer to this community in the following pages simply as the ‘Village’. In March 2003, I completed my master’s thesis on the *mantinádes* (Sykäri 2003) and in the beginning of the 2004, I received a doctoral research grant for three years from the Finnish Cultural Foundation, which allowed me to plan a long-term study and to return to Crete for eight months that same year. Although I was unable to carry out my research exclusively in the Village, we rented the same house again because in this village, I felt truly welcomed, and the house with a garden

which I could tend as my own, as well as the great mountain views, provided a well-needed nest. Although a deep sympathy towards my being Finnish has contributed to my easy acceptance in many fieldwork situations, these outermost corners of Europe are socially and culturally very different, which becomes more evident during a longer stay. For most of this time, my partner accompanied me in my fieldwork, providing help in the transcription of the recordings and in the everyday means of conversing and understanding the peculiarities of the idiomatic and dialectally complicated linguistic expressions.

Before my stay in the Village, my informants had been mainly men, who still were much more easily contacted in Crete. I was therefore happy to continue the close relationships with the two ordinary village women, Despina Papadaki and Agapi Moshovaki, who had become important informants during my first stay in 2001. Both women were in their early seventies at that time. Together, these friends introduced me most practically to their everyday verbal dexterity and to their creative associating through memories. Still at that time, Despina spontaneously composed *ex tempore*, although her memory and health already started to fail her. She also recurrently explained to me her moral principles by reciting her poems. Agapi had the skill to complement any situation by inserting a poem from her inexhaustible poetic reserves. Having lived all her life in this Village, she also used to contribute to our discussions with stories of past performances. I am happy that these women, to whom my gratitude has grown so great over the years, wanted me to use their names, although, unlike most of the other persons featuring with their name in this book, they are known as performers only within their close circles.

Later, the decision to stay in the Village brought still one more advantage: I became familiar with Kostoula Papadoyanni, a middle-aged woman talented in composition, whose growing ambition I was able to follow and I conversed with her over a five-year period. She also has the extraordinary skill to verbalize the processes of composition, providing a unique source for an extended discussion on these matters. By placing special emphasis on the insights that I had developed due to my familiarity with these three women, I wish to point to the fact that although men may be principal actors in musical public performances, both sexes equally speak the shared poetic idiom.

One of those composers with whom I had the pleasure to talk several times over the years is Mitsos Stavrakakis from Iraklio. His grasp of analysis in our conversations helped me to understand the background and mental frame of reference which the contemporary adult male poets have in their traditional singing events. As a consequence, his insightful descriptions of the traditional ways of singing and communicating occupy a special place in this work. I also enjoyed the expressive sarcasm of Aristidis Heretis from Anoya during our several meetings starting from 1999. Yet another contributor, beginning in 2004, was the instrument builder Antonis Stefanakis from Zaros and my conversations with him widened the scope of the village life and expressional means. In addition, Katerina Kornarou, born in the region of Merambello, later married in Milopotamos, provided me

with hours of recollections of her childhood and youth in eastern Crete, and performed her *mantináda* and song-compositions during our conversations. Another valuable source of information, who began contributing in 2004, was Yorgos Sifakis from Rethimno, and he has also given me many hours of his time for our detailed conversations. His recent contribution in providing me with audio material that was recorded in the singing events complements the present study in indispensable ways.

The role of the aforementioned *mantinadolóyi*, *mantináda*-composers, and the specialists of the tradition, with whom I could talk repeatedly, has been fundamental in my understanding of the *mantinádes*. In the various regions of Crete, I also conversed with Aleksandra Pateraki (Dzermiado), Kostas Kontoyannis (Rethimno), Kostas Mangoufakis (Ano Vianos), Lefteris Kalomiris (Anoya) and Nikolis Nikiforos (Rethimno), and many others. Several performers in Crete, who welcomed my passing by with creative challenges, remain anonymous, because in most of these casual meetings, I did not ask their names or their permission to disclose their identification in this study. Many of these anonymous performers, however, indeed helped me recognize the power of the casual recitals of poems as *performances*. Naturally, I had in-depth conversations with several people in the Village from 1999 up to 2009.

In addition to these poets and performers, many people have contributed to my work by informing, helping, advising and conversing with me during these twelve years. For example, Ross Daly and Yannis Tsouhlarakis helped me find some relevant bibliography and interviewees. In November 2005, the violinist Vangelis Vardakis with the *laóuto*-player Manolis Liapakis from Ierapetra, offered me an in-depth introduction to the cultural sphere of eastern Crete and to its different music, dance and singing traditions. The traditions of western Crete were originally disclosed by several people in Frankokastello and Sfakia during my early trips in 1997–1999, and in the spring and summer of 2006 by Stelios Tsiburakis from Hania, and his mother Irini and father Maximos, a recognized performer of the *rizítika* songs and *mantinádes* of his time.

Besides all these people who helped me understand the tradition and register of the *mantinádes*, other people assisted in getting started and organizing the fieldwork and living arrangements in Crete. During the spring 1997, my friend Judy Preston, a student at the University of Birmingham at that time, accompanied me on many of the early experiences. A rethimniot friend, Manolis Papadakis, took me like a family member to various events, village weddings and *parées*. Later, especially three people helped me far beyond the normal boundaries of friendship and played decisive roles in my fieldwork: Roula Koumentakakou, Mihalís Troulis and Vasilis Kalivianakis. Without the trust of Mihalís, and the practical help, the friendship and genuine interest of Roula and Vasili at various problems and times, I would have returned home many times. In addition to their concrete help, these three people and their families were irreplaceable for maintaining my spiritual resources.

In the academic world as well, several people have contributed to the practical side of my research: Risto Pekka Pennanen, a friend throughout

this project, got me in contact with Chris Williams, who through e-mail directions kindly instructed me on the basic knowledge of Cretan music during the winter 1998–1999. Chris then connected me to Alexis Politis, a professor and now manager of the Department of Philology at the University of Crete. All three have read and contributed to this manuscript at various stages.

The staff at the Department of Folklore Studies at the University of Helsinki has always been extremely positive towards my research. Professors Anna-Leena Siikala and Satu Apo encouraged me in several seminars in which I first presented my ideas. Docent Pertti Anttonen has read my drafts and has offered very helpful, constructive criticism. Docent Lauri Harvilahti has been my supervisor from the first seminar for my master's thesis, guiding me to the essential literature right from the beginning. Having carried out long periods of fieldwork in several countries himself, he warmly welcomed my idea for extended fieldwork and always supported my own, independent processes of analysis and digested forms of reporting of them in academic studies. During the last years of finalizing my arguments, I received close assistance from my second supervisor, Professor Lotte Tarkka, who has read every single clause I have written several times. In addition to this, with her I could very easily ask various questions and problems that I was formulating in casual conversation. This was particularly significant to me, since it allowed me to continue the production of knowledge through the dialogue that I had internalized during my fieldwork. If I ever felt lonely in relation to the academic discourse during the long fieldwork periods, her keen interest and skills as a conversant have significantly warded off this feeling. For the same reason of allowing detailed discussion both on the subject matter and on the research process, the friendships I have shared with the researcher Senni Timonen and the doctoral students Kati Kallio and Joonas Ahola has been highly valuable to me. So many evolving ideas took form while exchanging thoughts, reading and commenting on other's papers, and particularly with Joonas, through our discussions on theories and concepts. I also benefited greatly from the conversations with the anthropologist Timo Kaartinen during a year-long seminar on linguistic anthropology, as well as with Professor John Miles Foley during his visits and seminars in Helsinki in 2006 and in Viena Karelia in 2007.

A special privilege of the academic process is provided by the pre-examination of the doctoral dissertation by two specialists before its final submission for public defense. Thus the moment I really needed a dialogue from the outside, I was able to entrust my manuscript to the criticism of Pekka Hakamies, professor of folklore studies from the University of Turku, and Michael Herzfeld, professor of anthropology from Harvard University. Their reports verified that some of my central arguments were already accessible, and they both gave me valuable ideas for strengthening my vague arguments, as well as for shaping and correcting the final text. Unfortunately, I did not have time to adapt some of the additional bibliography referred to by them. Michael Herzfeld has also kindly accepted to be my opponent in the final task of my doctoral defense. It is hard to express my appreciation for the opportunity of having an opponent whose vast experience in the field and



A view from the garden, Milopotamos, spring 2006. My daily solitary tending of my landlord's small garden balanced the extroversion of the fieldwork and also created extended emotional ties to the Village. In the beginning, the villagers were astonished at my sense of duty for a garden not my own – something which in the long run certainly contributed to their approving attitude towards me.

whose insightful writings about the specific social and cultural environment of my subject matter have initiated and served as points of reference for so many ideas taken under examination in this study.

I extend my profound gratitude to all these direct contributors to my study; to the funding institutions, the Finnish Literary Society and the Finnish Cultural Foundation, whose generous fellowships first enabled me to undertake this long-term study and then to carry it on to the end; and to the Finnish Literary Society, who decided to publish my study in the series of *Studia Fennica Folkloristica*. My warmest thanks are due to Jussi Korhonen, who initially planted the seed for my interest in Modern Greek culture during the Modern Greek language classes at the University of Helsinki. I also wish to thank all the doctoral students and staff of folklore studies, who have contributed to a pleasant working atmosphere at the University of Helsinki, the staff of the Finnish Literary Society's library, as well as Johanna Ilmakunnas for her editorial skills and patient guidance through the process of preparing the manuscript for printing. I am grateful to Manolis Tzirakis for generously sharing with me some photographs from his private archives, which were collected during his biographic study of some famous Cretan dancers and musicians. Although most of these photographs are not dated, they add valuable depth to the historical description. Finally, Kate Moore helped me with the English text. I am profoundly grateful for her professional, yet cheerful contribution. All errors that remain are naturally my responsibility alone. Translations of the Cretan poetic texts are my own,

and the responsibility for all decisions concerning the linguistic forms is my own.

The support and joy of my friends and family made this all worthwhile. Special heartfelt thanks go to my husband, Yannis Hadziharalambous. We met during the initial stages of this project, and during 1999–2005, he participated in my fieldwork on several occasions. He has been the first one to inspect the correctness of the metrical lines, as well as the chief conversant and support in each phase of the study. In addition to this study, our extended stay in the Village and daily living in a countryside house with a garden had another consequence: after these years, living exclusively in town was unthinkable – besides sharing the life that produced this study, Yannis now kindly shares the loan for our own garden and country house in Finland.

Words as Events introduces the tradition of short, communicative rhyming couplets, the *mantinádes*, as still sung and recited in a variety of performance situations on the island of Crete. Recently, these poems have also entered modern mass media and they are widely being exchanged as text messages by Cretans. Focusing on the multi-functionality of the short form, Sykäre demonstrates how the traditional register gives voice to individual experiences in spontaneous utterances. The local focus on communicative economy and artistry is further examined in a close analysis of the processes and ideals of composition. By analyzing how the “restrictions” of form and performative conventions in fact generate impulses of creativity, the author creates a theoretical approach that is sensitive to the special characteristics of the short, rhymed poetic traditions.

In this interdisciplinary study, the reader is invited to become familiar with the current folklore theory of oral poetry, which has a long tradition in Finland. The author combines the results of earlier folkloristic and anthropological insights, and extends the theoretical concerns further to address questions of spontaneity and individual agency. The research data has been produced in communicative interactions during long-term fieldwork. As a result, the short, rhymed poetry, often neglected by scholars in earlier research paradigms, can now be seen in new light – specifically as dialogic poetry – through its extended, multi-layered dialogic qualities.



STUDIA FENNICA
FOLKLORISTICA 18
ISBN 978-952-222-261-9
86.14
www.finlit.fi/kirjat