



Education and Culture DG

Lifelong Learning Programme

European Comenius Programm

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EUROPE



GREECE



CENTRAL MACEDONIA



The municipality Kilkis

- The municipality of Kilkis has 56.336 population, 17.430 people live only in the city. This area has got a lot of small villages, one of them is Neo Gunaikokastro.



The history of
Gynaikokastro
in the
prefecture of Kilkis

CASTLE OF GYNEKOKASTRON

1334 - 1383



In the center of the plain of Macedonia, on a fortified hill, overlooking the castle Gynaikokastro



HISTORY

The castle was built by Andronicus III Palaeologus (see fig), during the reign (1328-1341), with a probable date in 1334 [1], after redefining the Byzantine-Serbian border to the south.

The creation of the first served to halt the danger from the north-especially emerging dynamic-Serbs and the protection of Thessaloniki. Second serve as a gathering place and protect the crop of Macedonians plain. The name, "Gynekokastro", implying that the castle was powerful enough that female guards were sufficient to defend it.







*Traditional customs of
Greece*

“Christoxylo”



In the villages of northern Greece, on Christmas eve the landlord is looking in the fields and selects the most beautiful, the most robust, the thicker pine or olive log.

This is called **Christoxylo** and the wood will burn in the fireplace of the house throughout the twelve days of holiday, from Christmas until the Epiphany. The ash of wood protects houses and fields from bad luck. Before the landlord bears the Christoxylo, every housewife arranges to have a clean house, with great attention to the fireplace, so as not to stay any trace of the old ashes. The night before Christmas, when the whole family is gathered around the fireplace, the landlord of the house lights the new fire. According to the traditions, the burnt Christoxylo, warmed Christ in his manger.

The breaking of pomegranate

The morning of New Year, the family goes to church and the landlord keeps in his pocket a pomegranate.

Returning home, the landlord has to ring the doorbell

- it is not allowed to open the door himself with the

key - and so he is the first to enter the house, to bring

good luck, with the pomegranate in his hand. Entering

with his right foot, he breaks the pomegranate behind

the door, he throws it down with strength so as to

break it and to discard berries everywhere.

Children examine the berries, if they are crispy and

bright red. The redder and crispier they are the more

luck the family will have throughout the whole year.



“The epiphany”



- On the day of Epiphany January 6th, the priest, accompanied by pious drops the Cross in the waters as he wants to bless the waters of the sea or a river or lake.
- The catching of the Cross (the "grip of the Cross") is made by swimmers or divers. He who grabs the Cross kisses it first and afterwards he carries it from house to house. It is considered to bring good luck and a good year for everyone who kisses it.

The custom of "March" Bracelet March (Martis)



The "March" is an ancient custom, the Balkan diaspora. It is believed to have originated in ancient Greece, notably by the Eleusinian Mysteries. The participants of the Eleusinian Mysteries tied a thread, the "woof" in their right hand and their left leg.

The custom of "March" (March) bracelet



From the 1st until 31st of March , children wear around the wrist a bracelet made of twisted white and red thread, the “Martis” = "March". According to folk tradition, "March" protects the faces of children by the first sun of spring, not to get burned. It is made on the last day of February and children wear it on the first day of March, before leaving home

“Almond pastries”

- In Cyclades and Dodecanese there is an old custom after the wedding ceremony to give the guests homemade sweets made from almonds by the women relatives of the bride. They were the traditional sweets of the wedding. Today, although there are many other sweets, the islanders have kept this custom and offer marzipan, which is extremely tasty.



Klidonas



The Klidonas, the leap above the fire is a custom that is kept in our days. But in the old days children and adults were more interested in it than today. After jumping over the fire, the girls took a pot and filled it with water from three springs with the "silent water". It is called "silent water" because they were not allowed to talk to anyone. Then they put in the "rizikaria" pots various valuable objects and jewellery which would predict their future.

So they cover them with a white cloth, and on the day of St. John, a little child, picks up one of the objects and like Pythia would reveal the future to the concerned.

A GREEK TRADITION

NAMED “MOMOGERI”





- *Momogeri* or *Momoeri* is a Pontic custom which dates back to ancient times. The custom which today is primarily a satirical one, was usually performed during the pre Christmas period (Dec 15) up until the middle of January (Jan 15).
- The residents of Old Gynekokastro come from the area of Artochant of Caucasus. They brought with them apart from their few belongings, habits and traditions. Most data come from the period of Turkish rule and aimed at raising the morale of Pontus.
- The main role in it was the "Kotsamania", better known as "Momogeri". They are found in all parts of the Black Sea. The audience is mentally transformed to Pontus where through jokes, profanity, teasing and satire a climate of joy and fun is created.



- "Kotsamania" essentially means in Turkish the very large, so this is a variant of the word "Momogeri. In the folk tradition we find the origins of this custom when we refer to the Dionysiac worship. The "Momos" refers to Hesiod's Theogony as the God of Laughter and Satyr.
- In ancient Greece, "The Dionysia Fields" was celebrated in the month Poseideona the same time that the Pontiac custom was taking place. Also the kidnapping of the bride brings us to the kidnapping of the Maenads by Satyrs in Greek Mythology.
- Certainly over the years it received many influences from the theatrical events of the Byzantine and medieval theatrical performance as the long coexistence with the Turks.



- It looks like an ancient tragedy.
- At the beginning we have the entrance to the dance, which is led and ruled under the dictation of the top Momogerus.
- In the performance the following characters take place: the devil mind mainly the old man and the old woman, the viewers, the householders. The devil generally does anything that would cause laughter to viewers. The old woman and the old man tease the audience and sometimes quarrel, sometimes reconcile. Generally, they offer plenty of laughter. Brides provoke viewers with their maiden modesty, to kidnap them and it is then, that the kidnapper is arrested and tried for his actions.
In the end all the participants in the performance go from door to door to cheer up and tease all the residents of the village.

- The Momogeri were twelve and symbolized the twelve months of the year. The custom was performed at the New Year period to welcome the new year.
- The starting point was the courtyard of the church or the schoolyard.



The “matsouki”



- The custom of carrying a stick “matsouki” also comes from Caucasus and is a significant element of the performance.
- The main protagonists are more often sixteen persons. The “momogeri”, the dancers with foustaneles have as a duty to protect the bride from whoever tries every time to grab her. When this happens what follows is the prosecution and arrest of the kidnapper. The Momogeri begin and end the show with dance.



- The “momogeri” under the guidance of the leader are engaged in dance with discipline. In hands holding a rod with the help of which they execute the commands of a leader. This is the first dancer who controls and coordinates all movements. They dance to Pontian rhythms are accompanied by lyre and tabor.



- In such an atmosphere of joy and mirth the soul of the custom, the pragkalon, can not be skipped. Dressed with white clothes, animal-shaped hood, tail fox and hunched back, has the role to cause fuss, to disturb and entertain with tricks the audience. He is the leader of the team and he who does all the mischief. He also provokes the audience to grab the bride.



- A smaller role is played by the doctor, who examines the bride and tries to find if she has been sexually abused by their abductors. At the same time he teases the people watching as well.



- The bride symbolizes the good that comes with the new year and is played by a young man with fair features to resemble a woman with the help of make-up. He wears a gown and veil and men's shoes to be able to move comfortably and of course to dance.



- The dance group has to make the viewers participate, sympathize, and become part of the whole custom throughout the festival. This of course lies in the ability of all the ‘actors’.

MOMOGERI

- Throughout the performance the “actors” are followed by musicians and dancers marching in phalanx, with the tallest being always in front. The greatest challenge that day is the challenge of laughter, by the entertainers. This is achieved only when the actors (theatrical persons) are capable and they know that their role is to caricature and defect the weaknesses of both spectators and the householders, reminding them that nobody is perfect.



This custom dates back from about 1950. The money that is collected by the “Momogeri” custom is always given to school or to church for the villagers’ needs. It is represented even today, especially in areas where there is a strong element of Pontiac people.

Last but not least,

Our school !

SECONDARY SCHOOL
OF
NEO GUNAIKOKASTRO





The teachers` room



Our school has got 12 teacher and 45 students





Thank you for your passion!

We're really looking forward to
your visit.

See you in Greece!