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ANCIENT GREEK FOLKSONG TRADITION

Summary: The aim of my paper is to outline an overview of the collection of the *Carmina popularia*. In particular, I will criticise the *modus operandi* employed so far in arranging this *corpus* and meditate on what can be deemed ‘folk song’ in ancient Greece. As case studies, I shall take the five begging songs handed down to us. I shall also provide a revised text and a critical apparatus for each poem.

Key words: folksong, *carmina popularia*, begging songs, *eiresione*, *chelidonism*, *koronisma*

1. STATE OF THE ART

Since the 19th century, editors have gathered together a series of anonymous melic poems under the label *Carmina popularia*. They are characterized by their plain style and irregular metrical form and can neither be attributed to a genre nor to an authorial model. As a result, a *corpus* – or rather a *corpusculum* – has been formed, outside the official body of ‘high’ poetry, divided into specific *genera* and authors. In modern terms they would be defined as ‘popular/folk songs’ consisting of e.g. begging songs, love songs, work songs, war songs, nursery rhymes, dance songs, ritual songs and so on.

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1 This paper contains some of the most significant results featured in my Master Thesis entitled *I canti di questa della Grecia antica: edizione critica, traduzione e commento* (The Begging Songs of Ancient Greece: Critical Edition, Translation and Commentary). I defended it on 25th September 2013 at the University of Bologna. Professor Camillo Neri and Professor Federico Condello acted as supervisors.


In the wake of the pioneering efforts of Ilgen in 1797 (his publication was exclusively devoted to Begging Songs) and of Zell in 1826, the first systematic collection was that of Köster published in 1831. Several publications followed. Neri’s edition is based on Page’s sylloge (PMG 847–883, which is today seen as the most authoritative reference collection), and represents the most recent overall collection of melic ‘popular’ poems; a translation, a synthetic commentary and exhaustive bibliographical notes accompany it.

While most of these scholars provide an overview of songs that have never been incorporated into ‘high’ literature, they do not take into account the traditional background of these texts. Consequently, some specific issues and aspects are not dealt with. Here I refer specifically to (1) the preservation and transmission of this type of texts; (2) their relationship with ‘high’ and ‘official’ literature; (3) their relationship with modern folksong tradition. Therefore I am fully convinced that a new edition accompanied by a commentary is needed, in particular one that is aware of these specific challenges.

In order to fill this current gap in classical studies, I have decided to direct my PhD research efforts towards the preparation of a new corpus of Popularia.

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completed with a systematic commentary, revised text, critical apparatus and translation in modern English.

Let us look at the nature of this new collection. Is Page’s sylloge already complete and definitive or does it require revision and updating? In this latter case, the first step should consist in identifying, within Greek literature, those songs which merit inclusion in the category of Popularia. However, one question arises spontaneously.8

2. DID ANCIENT GREEK POPULAR POETRY EVER EXIST?

The definition of ‘popular’ has long been recognised as problematic – and not only in the narrow field of classical studies.9 The most common approaches used to define the notion of ‘a popular song’ or, more generally, ‘popular culture’ are based on binary opposites such as ‘low-high’, ‘many-few’, ‘oral-written’, ‘simple-complex’, ‘anonymous-authorial’, ‘periphery-centre’ and so forth. Nevertheless, each of these two-tier models involves a series of conceptual difficulties.

Take, for example, the case of the first two opposites: ‘low-high’ and ‘many-few’. They encompass a range of definitions, which can be termed either ‘quantitative’ or ‘qualitative’ respectively. The former implies a sort of aesthetic bias, following which all of the popular literature is to be seen as the product of talentless authors and thus catalogued as bad literature. It is rather like saying that in every era and society there have existed two completely distinct cultures: the culture of ordinary people and the culture of the elite. However, we are now well aware of the vagueness of boundaries separating learned culture and ‘popular’ culture. They are – it can no longer be denied – intersecting sets.

The latter definition has the definite plus of not using an evaluative criterion, merely a descriptive one. All the same, problems remain. It implies that the more a literary genre is well known and liked by people, the more popular it is. Although we manage to find “a figure over which something becomes popular culture, and below which it is just culture”,10 we could be faced with an excessively large amount of heterogeneous material.

Nor can we draw on the opposites ‘oral and written’ and regard the oral mode of diffusion as a guarantee of ‘popular songs’. Even if this were so, it would not ring true, because we would be forced to use a dichotomy that does not belong to all

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8 The query put by PALMISCIANO (n. 6).
9 For a general discussion, see e.g. HANSEN, W. (ed.): Anthology of Ancient Greek Popular Literature. Bloomington–Indianapolis 1998, xi–xxiii; BURKE, P.: Popular Culture in Early Modern Europe. Farnham 2009 (London 1978), xvi–xxvii; PARKER, H. N.: Toward a Definition of Popular Culture. H&T 50 (2011) 147–170. Needless to say, along with ‘popular’, terms as ‘folk’, ‘folkloric’ and ‘traditional’ all share similar definition problems: cf. e.g. YATROMANOLAKIS (n. 3) 264 (esp. ns. 6 and 9); MAGNANI: Carmina (n. 6) 560 n. 67.
societies of all ages.\textsuperscript{11} There appears to be a vicious circle: by adopting any one of the aforementioned definitions, some problems and ambiguities are indeed smoothed out, but others are created at the same time.

In view of such, albeit brief, considerations, clearly a univocal definition of ‘popular’ is still distant from general acceptance. The lack of this type of theorisation is much more evident in studies in antiquity.\textsuperscript{12}

To quote Yatromanolakis, “There is no doubt that in archaic, classical and Hellenistic Greece anonymously transmitted song-making traditions existed.”\textsuperscript{13} Indeed, there is no lack of information about this part of ancient culture.\textsuperscript{14} Traditional ritual songs are already attested in Homer’s poems. For instance, the λίνος, which is generally assumed to be a song of lamentation, possibly performed by particular categories of working people, is described in \textit{Il.} XVIII 569–572 as well as in Hdt. II 79. It is also opportune to quote Ath. XIV 618c–620a. In this passage, the erudite, through his sources, provides a sort of summary of the names, characteristics and origins of some songs that evidently belonged to the folkloric heritage of Greece. The songs dealt with are the following: ιμάιος (sung at millsstones); λίνος/αίλινος (sung by women working at a loom); ίουλος/ούλος (sung by wool-workers); καταβαυκαλήσεις (‘lullabies’); ύλής (sung at the ‘Swing/Noose’ Festival); Ατηνόρσης (sung by harvesters); others sung by hired labourers, bath-men or women winnowing grain; pastoral songs (βουκολιασμός and νόμις); funeral songs (ολοφυρμός, ιάλεμος and Βώρμος); songs in honour of Demeter (ιμαίος/ούλος), Apollo (φιληλιάς) and Artemis (οὐπιγγόι); wedding songs (ὑμέναιος); love songs (Καλύκη and Ἀρπαλύκη).

Nevertheless, it has to be clarified that no ancient Greek terms can be found that perfectly translate the modern category of ‘folk song’, as opposed to the authorial and literary production. There are occurrences of terms that derive from the same root as δῆμος, but none of them can be compared to the modern notions of ‘folk song’ or ‘folk culture’, whatever these last ones may mean.\textsuperscript{15} Among the most significant examples, it is worth mentioning the term δημώματα, which occurs in Stesich. \textit{PMGF} 212 and


\textsuperscript{12} Cf. PARKER (n. 9) 149f., n. 18.

\textsuperscript{13} YATROMANOLAKIS (n. 3) 264.

\textsuperscript{14} See PALMISCIANO (n. 6) 154f., 167, n. 44; MAGNANI: Carmina (n. 6) 559–563.

\textsuperscript{15} See NERI (n. 5) 194f.; PALMISCIANO (n. 6) 154, n. 6; YATROMANOLAKIS (n. 3) 265; MAGNANI: Carmina (n. 6) 560f.; LELLI, E.: \textit{Folklore antico e moderno. Una proposta di ricerca sulla cultura popolare greca e romana}. Pisa 2014, 29–31.
in its parodic version Ar. Pax 796–801. A scholium to Aristophanes’ passage glosses it as τὰ δημοσία ινδώματα and removes all doubt on its interpretation: δημόματα are the songs performed in public, as opposed to those composed for narrower ambi
tus, such as the symposium.\textsuperscript{16} When Plutarchus, in his Life of Pericles (30. 4), defines four lines of Aristophanes’ Acharnians as περιβόητα καὶ δημώδη στιχίδια (524–527), he is merely referring to the fame of those verses. Another example occurs in Plato’s Phaedo (61a): for the philosopher there is a sharp distinction between μουσική μεγί-
στη – that is, philosophy – and μουσική δημώδης, which includes all sorts of songs, musical performances and poetry.

The fact that the notion of ‘popular’ remained untheorised in the ancient Greek world should not surprise us. Indeed, marked categories such as ‘popular poetry’, ‘folk song’ and ‘folk culture’ are all conceptualisations that have become current in literary criticism since the 18th century and have been anachronistically related to ancient Greek literature only later.\textsuperscript{17} Hence, as mentioned above, the collection named Carmina popularia was created, albeit devoid of clear and well-defined criteria of composition.

We can in fact identify, among the songs of this corpus, a series of common features, which probably led to the creation of the corpus itself: anonymous author-ship; oral composition, performance and transmission; textual fluidity (the so-called ‘open tradition’); basic grammatical, lexical and syntactic structures; motley and frequently irregular metres and rhythms.\textsuperscript{18} Nevertheless, although these features could doubtlessly represent a precious starting point for interpreting and understanding ancient Greek folksong tradition as a whole, attention must be paid not to setting them as mere benchmarks. Otherwise, we would confine ourselves to studying sets of texts that are defined from the start as ‘popular’. In this way, the corpus of Popularia would remain in its current state: a capacious, all-welcoming box into which all of the material that has not found its place within the ‘official’ and ‘canonical’ literature has been rudely thrust.

Let us return to the question posed at the beginning of this section: has ancient Greek popular poetry ever existed? Whatever answer will be given, we should bear well in mind that terms as ‘folk’ and ‘popular’ were entirely foreign to ancient Greek culture. If we want to apply them to the textual output of ancient Greece, we should be aware of the historical perspectives that those terms entail.

Over the last few decades, scholars have embraced other different approaches, which to some extent tackle the issue of ancient Greek folksong tradition. For instance, Neri suggests contrasting the Carmina popularia with the ‘political’ – i.e. related to the life of the polis – genres: e.g. epic, didactic poetry, lyric, tragedy, comedy, scient-
ific, philosophical and historiographical prose. However, as the scholar acknowledges himself, the label ‘anti-political’ (ἀντὶ τῆς πόλεως) does not suit our texts, which were integral part of the civic framework. Although they concerned minor aspects of

\textsuperscript{16} Schol.\textsuperscript{RVTL}Ar. Pax 798 Holw.
\textsuperscript{17} Cf. NERI (n. 5) 195; YATROMANOLAKIS (n. 3) 263f.; MAGNANI: Carmina (n. 6) 559–564.
\textsuperscript{18} See PORDOMINGO (n. 6); NERI (n. 5) 196–198; MAGNANI: Carmina (n. 6) 564f.
the ‘political’ life, they were perfectly integrated into the festivals, rites and activities of the *polis*.

A more prolific approach – and also more complex due to the variety of the subjects examined – is undoubtedly what stems from the observations of Rossi about the so-called ‘submerged literature’:

By ‘submerged literature’ I mean [...] texts which were mistreated from the very beginning of their transmission, and even texts which were not transmitted at all. These texts benefited of neither control nor protection, either because no community had any interest in their preservation, or because it was in the interest of a community that they be concealed, and even suppressed (as in the instance of everything that had to do with the mysteries). It is the case, however, that while a good deal of these texts have engaged us in a game of hide-and-seek, their part in shaping Greek culture as we know it was in fact considerable: there would be a great deal to gain if we could bring them back to light, although only parts of the whole may be recovered. For some time I have been thinking about the advantages of arranging these texts into a collection, which should display the (very few) fully preserved texts first, then the fragments, and finally the *testimonia*. The task would not be easy to accomplish, but deserves to be attempted.

The scholar also lists a series of texts and of typologies of texts, which should feature in this supposed collection of ‘submerged literature’. The seventh position is occupied by the very *Carmina Popularia*.

A research group of Rossi’s pupils has developed this project further, by coordinating a series of seminars (2011–2014) and publishing some of the results in a recent

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19 See NERI (n. 5) 198f. CF. MAGNANI: Carmina (n. 6) 565.
21 ROSSI (n. 20) 172: “Tutto quello che è compreso nella sezione *Carmina popularia* dei *Poetae melici Graeci* di Page, considerando che ci sono soltanto i frammenti di testo, mentre bisognerebbe integrare con titoli, testimonianze etc. Importanti i canti di lavoro, i lamenti funebri, i canti di nozze, tutti testimoniati fin da Omero.” On the necessity of arranging a collection also of the *testimonia*, cf. MAGNANI: Carmina (n. 6) 570f.: the scholar calls for a census of some particular anonymous *corpora*, sporadically quoted by the sources.
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volume on this topic.\(^\text{22}\) Their inquiry aims to “understand what part of ancient Greek textual production became ‘submerged’, in what manner, and why”\(^\text{23}\) and, to this end, their approach privileges the ‘context’ of the textual production, that is to say the occasion and performance of texts themselves.

As it can be readily noted, more work remains to be done in advancing our understanding of what the texts collected in the Carmina popularia really were and meant in ancient Greek times. And in identifying methodological approaches that may take into account the variety and complexity of this particular typology of texts. For this purpose, I repeat, I am convinced that a new corpus of Popularia\(^\text{24}\) is needed.

3. THE BEGGING SONGS

Here is an example of what I have in mind when talking about a new corpus of Popularia. I would like to focus on the specific case of begging songs.

Begging songs belong to the European ethnographic heritage. They were mostly performed by groups of young people, who, either dressed up in costumes or not, or making use of extemporaneous totems or not, would on festive occasions\(^\text{25}\) go from home to home, asking for gifts such as food and drink. Scholars of folklore studies have formulated various hypotheses about the origin of begging songs, but they are generally traced back to the ancient seasonal rites of the rural world, which in both the pagan and Christian era often merged into the more traditional ritual calendar.

The ancient Greek sources hand us down five begging songs (see infra, App.): the chelidonisma or ‘swallow song’ (F 1), the koronisma or ‘crow song’ (F 2), the Samian eiresione (F 3), the Attic eiresione (F 4) and the song of Sicilian shepherds (F 5).\(^\text{26}\) These entire song-texts stem – more or less directly – from a common tradition,

\(^\text{22}\) COLESANTI–GIORDANO (n. 2): the names of the scholars who have composed this research group are listed on p. 1 n. 4. One of them, Palmisciano, came to propose a definition of ‘popular’ so as to be applied to ancient Greek literature (see infra, § 4).

\(^\text{23}\) ERCOLANI (n. 11) 16.

\(^\text{24}\) Even the definition of carmina can turn out ambiguous and misleading: cf. MAGNANI: Carmina (n. 6) 544.


but only F 1 and F 5 have been included without exception in the corpora of Popularia. This is the risk we run if we apply the aforementioned blurred and ill-defined collection criteria too strictly. In fact using them excludes FF 2–4 from Page’s edition (PMG), given their authorial (or pseudo-authorial) character and/or their regular metrical form. Therefore, it is necessary to revisit these poems on the grounds of their common belonging to the begging tradition of ancient Greece.

The koronisma and the chelidonisma are transmitted in succession by Deipnosophistae of Athenaeus (VIII 359e–360d), in a small section devoted to ἄγερμος (‘begging’) and the songs that accompanied it. Both texts represent a reworking of two ancient begging songs, handed down from generation to generation and performed on the occasion of special events.

As Theognis informs us,27 the chelidonisma was a song that accompanied traditional begging in Rhodes, called χελιδονίζειν and was presumably performed by children (cf. l. 20) to celebrate the arrival of spring (cf. ll. 1–5).28 This context of performance is confirmed by similar modern songs, stemming – more or less directly – from the Greek text and still performed in some areas of Greece, during the Easter holidays or in spring. We can get a glimpse of the very similar opening lines of some chelidonismata collected by Passow:

«Χελιδόνι ἔρχεται, Θάλασσαν ἀπέρασε».
«Χελιδόνι ἔρχεται Άρ’ τ’ιν άπαρη θάλασσαν».
«Ἡρθε, ἥρθε χελιδόνα, Ἡρθε κ’ι ἄλλη μελιηδόνα».29

may be fragmentary – and the testimonia, which may all stem from the same attidographic sources: cf. PALUMBO STRACCA: I canti II (n. 26) 259–262.

27 The chelidonisma is quoted by Athenaeus through Theognis’ work Περὶ τῶν ἐν Ῥόδῳ θυσιῶν (FGrHist 526 F 1). See MORELLI, G.: Un antico carme popolare rodiese. SIFC 35 (1963) 121–160, here 126–132; according to the scholar, Athenaeus quoted Theognis through the Ροδιακά, an anonymous work of the 1st or 2nd century AD, which in its turn derives from Pamphilus’ treatise Περὶ γλωσσῶν καὶ ὀνομάτων (1st century AD). Cf. already WILAMOWITZ-MOELLENDORFF, U. VON: Vita Homeri et Hesiodi. Bonn 1916, 57. It is without doubt hard to wholeheartedly endorse Morelli’s reconstruction and assert with absolute certainty that there existed a collection of Ροδιακά between Pamphilus and Athenaeus. Notwithstanding this, it is quite sure that Athenaeus did not employ Theognis first-hand. It is more likely that he exploited, directly or not, Pamphilus’ work. Cf. MAGNANI: Note marginali (n. 6) 51–53.

28 Theognis (Ath. VIII 360b–d) writes that the Rhodian swallow begging is held τῷ Βοηδρομιῶνι μηνί. However, according to most scholars, Theognis (or the manuscript tradition) wrongly substituted the Rhodian month Badromios (February–March) for the Attic form Boedromion (September–October): see SMYTH (n. 5) 507; EDMONDS (n. 5) 527, n. 2; MORELLI (n. 27) 121f., n. 1; ADRADOS, F. R.: La canción rodia de la golondrina y la cerámica de Tera. Emerita 42 (1974) 47–68 (=ADRADOS, F. R.: El mundo de la lírica griega antigua. Madrid 1981, 311–331), here 47, n. 1; De STEFANI, C.: Fenice di Colofone fr. 2 Diehl1. Introduzione, testo critico, comment. SCO 47.2 (2000) 81–121, here 83, n. 10; NERI (n. 5) 203. According to MAGNANI: Note marginali (n. 6) 53–56, this misunderstanding in Athenaeus or in his source may bring us even closer to the origin of the written tradition of the poem.

29 PASSOW, A.: Popularia carmina Graeciae recentioris. Lipsiae 1860, 225–227 nos. 305, 307 (Thessaly), 307a (Thessaly). Today there are a number of websites that feature some of κάλαντα τῆς ἄνοιξης (‘spring carols’), categorised by regions and cities of Greece: see e.g. <http://amplokaristes.blogspot.it/>
As regards the koronisma, the context in which it was performed is a matter of debate. Neither the ancient sources nor the comparisons with modern folksong tradition can help us with this issue. In general, the koronisma is regarded as the autumnal or winter equivalent of the chelidonisma.

It may also be remembered that the swallow and the crow, in whose honour songs were performed, were ostensibly represented through a stylized disguise, or a notched (maybe painted) wood totem of the same bird. In this regard, I may refer to a video, in it, a cortège of men and boys from Neochori perform the κάλαντα τῆς ἀνοιξης ('spring carol') around the town. Performers are holding the image of a swallow that they spin with a piece of string not unlike a spinning top.

In the light of these considerations, both the chelidonisma and the koronisma appear to be part of the folkloric heritage of ancient Greece. However, the koronisma has been systematically excluded from the various collections of the Carmina popularia, because of its authorial character and its regular metre. It was composed by Phoenix of Colophon in choliamb and therefore ascribed to the Hellenistic iambic production. On the contrary, the chelidonisma, which is an anonymous poem written in aeolic-choriambic and iambic metres, has appeared under that label since the earliest editions of Greek lyrics. It is legitimate to wonder how valid this exclusion is.

According to Theognis, the swallow song was strictly related to the begging that happened in Rhodes. Cleobulus first introduced this practice in Lindos, “when...
there was need in that city of a collection of money”. Taken at face value, this account implies that the tyrant of Lindos reinvented the ancient propitiatory rite connected with the arrival of spring – maybe widespread in other areas of the island as well as of the entire Greek world – for the purpose of a ‘daring economic policy’.\(^{37}\) This information, however, may well be unreliable. Indeed, it is now common knowledge that witnesses may be biased and their claims often completely baseless, when they state that an illustrious character, such as Cleobulus, ‘invented’ a particular tradition, especially a literary one.\(^{38}\) It therefore seems unwise to say, on the basis of this anecdote, that Athenaeus’ version reproduces the *chelidonisma* as it was really composed and diffused in Rhodes at the time of Cleobulus (7th/6th century BC): it would be like believing in the authenticity of the maxims of the Seven Wise Men.

To refute Theognis’ autoschediasmos does not mean to deny the Rhodian origin of the *chelidonisma* quoted in *Deipnosophistae*. Or rather, it is most plausible that the song in its turn stemmed from an ancient tradition, maybe even earlier than the 7th century BC and widespread well beyond the boundaries of Rhodes itself. However, assigning a precise date to it is an arduous task.\(^{39}\) Nor is it possible to obtain a linguistic as well as a metrical uniformity.\(^{40}\)

Therefore, I believe that a conservative approach should be adopted when constituting the text of the *chelidonisma*. The aim here should not be to restore the *chelidonisma* sung by children of Rhodes around the end of the 7th century BC, but more realistically to edit the song that Athenaeus and his source knew.

As a result, the metrical structure of the *chelidonisma* appears to be based on simple and basic rhythms. Aeolic-choriambic sequences (cf. ll. 1–13) and iambic *cola* (cf. ll. 14–20) are, indeed, recurring rhythms of ritual songs.\(^{41}\) The traditional and archaic character of the poem is also confirmed by the paratactic construction, elliptical expressions, figures of iterations and syntactical and grammatical parallelisms.

On the other hand, the poem’s language seems to betray a varied and more ‘literary’ nature: the conservation of -ᾱ(-) (cf. ll. 4, 6, 15, 16, 19), the presence of the...
Ionism/epicism μιν (l. 17), the verbal endings in -μες (ll. 13 and 15) and the aforementioned genitive τυρῶ (l. 9) – besides the respective Attic forms – recall the literary Doric of Hellenistic age (similar to that of Theocritus and Callimachus).

Therefore, it is not far-fetched to assume that the chelidonisma, as known to Theognis and transmitted by Athenaeus, is a ‘literary’ version or – at least – one of the first written versions, probably dating from the 3rd or the 2nd century BC, of an ancient and traditional song.\(^{42}\) It is no surprise that the original chelidonisma was reworked and adapted to literary use during the Hellenistic age. Indeed, in this period the erudite passion of Alexandrian poets for folklore and local mores, as well as for the literary recycling of ritual and traditional materials, was widespread.\(^{43}\) Another example is Phoenix’s koronisma.

The koronisma displays the typical mechanisms of beggars: minimal requests; blessings for whoever donates something; veiled threats of jinx for those who do not satisfy the beggars’ demands; asking for charity as payment for the musical entertainment provided. The main purpose of Phoenix’s poem was to rework in literary terms a song performed in the begging tradition.\(^{44}\) This same operation has been identified in the chelidonisma, although in the koronisma the poetic element is more defined. This may be noticed, for example, in the use of the choliamb and in the literary Ionic language.

Analogous considerations can be made for the two eiresional. On 1st May, at Abingdon near Oxford, young people used to intone the following chant:

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“We’ve been rambling all the night,
And sometime of this day;
And now returning back again,
We bring a garland gay.
A garland gay we bring you here;
And at your door we stand;
It is a sprout well budded out,
The work of our Lord’s hand.”\(^{45}\)
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The examples of chants such as this are unlimited. They are part of ancient pagan traditions of vegetable and plant worship that still survive in some rural pockets of modern Europe. One well-known example is the ‘May tree’ or the ‘May pole’. It was the tradition of European peasants during traditional festivals to hold high a branch or a tree so as to bring home to each village the blessing that only the tree spirit was able to bestow.46

Such propitiatory rituals were also widespread in the Greek world: one of these was called εἰρεσιώνη. 47 This term indicated a big olive or laurel branch, wrapped in wool (possibly white and purple-stained) bandages and laden with all sorts of fruits. 48 In Athens, for example, the εἰρεσιώνη was carried in a procession, presumably by boys, at the Pyanepsia in honour of Apollo, to whom it was then offered. On that occasion, twigs were also fastened on the door of every house as a good omen – like the surviving custom to hang up a twig of mistletoe in houses – and were annually burned and replaced with new samples. In addition, and more pertinently, while carrying the May tree was accompanied by chants, so too the ancient Greeks used to perform traditional songs during the ritual of eiresione. There are two songs of this type handed down to us: the so-called Samian eiresione and the Attic eiresione.

The former is part of the fifteen epigrams attributed to Homer and is contained in the pseudo-Herodotean Life of Homer (33. 467–480 All.), whereas the latter eiresione is cited by a number of witnesses (twelve in all) ranging from Plutarchus’ Lives

46 Cf. Frazer (n. 45) 120: “In spring or early summer or even on Midsummer Day, it was and still is in many parts of Europe the custom to go out to the woods, cut down a tree and bring it into the village, where it is set up amid general rejoicings; or the people cut branches in the woods, and fasten them on every house. The intention of these customs is to bring home to the village, and to each house, the blessings which the tree-spirit has in its power to bestow. Hence the custom in some places of planting a May-tree before every house, or of carrying the village May-tree from door to door, that every household may receive its share of the blessing.” Vestiges of these ancient rituals are surely the greasy pole, a traditional fiesta game, and the Christmas tree (albeit the latter in a different season of the year). On tree worship and related rites, see Mannhardt, W.: Wald- und Feldkulte. Vol. I–II. Berlin 1904–1905 (1875–1877) I; Levi–Mantovani (n. 25) 180–185; Frazer (n. 45) 120–135.


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(1st or 2nd century) to the Collections of Proverbs by Michael Apostolius (15th century).

In the Samian eiresione, a mocking and threatening tone can be detected similar to what occurs in the chelidonisma, which is underscored by a comparable metrical structure. On one hand, the chelidonisma shows a succession of aeolic-choriambic sequences and iambic trimeters – as I have mentioned above, typically ritual rhythms. On the other hand, in the Samian eiresione, the analogous minatory παρακαταλογή in iambic metre is preceded by a series of hexameters, which represent both the metre of the literary reference model (Homer), and “the oldest and the most folkloric of metres”.

The formal structure of the Samian eiresione also bears a striking resemblance to that of the koronisma. In the same way, it starts off with blandishments towards the landlord, proceeds with a series of blessings for the whole family, in particular, wishes for wedded bliss, and concludes with the insistent requests from the beggars.

It can be therefore inferred that the Samian eiresione is part of the tradition of begging songs, handed down through the literary channel, such as in the case of the chelidonisma and the koronisma. However, like the koronisma, it has been excluded from the Carmina popularia, because of its higher poetic level and/or its attribution to Homer.

The Attic eiresione did not share a better fate. Although it is impossible to clarify the exact origin of the refrain – which could either be entirely ‘popular’, belong to the literary channel or be mediated by the latter – the attic eiresione is without a doubt a traditional song. Nevertheless, it has been omitted from most editions of the Carmina popularia, on the basis of the argumentations of Bergk, who dealt with the Attic refrain separately due to its metrical uniformity. Again, this exclusion seems to be not only unjustified but also contradictory, if we think of the hexameter as the metre of tradition pur excellence and the favourite medium for oracular sentences, riddles, rigmaroles and magic formulæ.

There is another song requiring our analysis: the so-called Siculorum mendica cantilena (F 5). Like the chelidonisma, it appears in the main editions of the Carmina popularia. In brief, this Sicilian refrain comes down to us through the scholiographic corpus of bucolic poets and more precisely in the section devoted to εὕρεσις τῶν βουκολικῶν (Proleg. Theocr. B Wend.). This is a short treatise on the origin of bucolic poetry, which provides three etiological anecdotes on the subject. According to the third (cf. Proleg. Theocr. Ba 2. 21 – Bb 3. 15 Wend.), bucolic poetry first appeared

49 Cf. the testimonia in F 4.
50 FURLEY (n. 44) 16; cf. n. 21.
51 On the similarities between the Samian eiresione and the two bird songs, cf. MARKWALD (n. 26) 251f.
52 With the exceptions of DIEHL (n. 5) (Carm. pop. 2) and EDMONDS (n. 5) (Carm. pop. 17).
54 Cf. WEST: Greek Metre (n. 41) 35.

in Syracuse, when, after an episode of bloody civil strife, the citizens celebrated the goddess Artemis, as she was believed to have re-established peace and harmony. The celebration was conducted with songs and gifts that became part of a traditional ritual. From that time onwards singing contests were held during the festivals in honour of Artemis: the winners received the loaf carried by the defeated antagonists and were able to remain in Syracuse; the losers had to roam from village to village begging for charity and singing entertaining and blessing-filled songs in return.

To sum up, all the songs we have looked at so far demonstrate that the begging tradition has its roots in ancient propitiatory rituals. These were then merged and institutionalised into more or less official celebrations. Ancient Greeks (mostly children and young people) usually sang these songs and chants for the purpose of collecting small gifts (generally food or drink), in exchange for prosperity and wealth.

The texts, especially the longer ones (FF 1–3), reveal a similar structure characterized by four essential features:

- The captatio benevolentiae addressed to landlords (cf. e.g. FF 1. 6–9; 2. 1, 4, 18; 3. 1f.);
- Blessings for the whole family (cf. e.g. FF 2. 10–14; 3. 8–10; 5. 1f.);
- Demands for gifts (cf. e.g. FF 1. 6–12; 2. 1–7);
- Joking threats in case of refusal (cf. e.g. FF 1. 13–18; 3. 14f.).

Other recurring themes stand out. These include the topos of the god ἐποικίδιος (cf. FF 2. 8; 3. 3–5; 5. 1f.) and the formulaic expressions beggars employ to get people to open their front doors (cf. FF 1. 19; 2. 8; 3. 3) or menacingly ask for offers: cf. FF 1. 14; 3. 14. In these last two passages, the same two ellipses are found: a lack of apodosis in the first conditional sentence and no verb in the protasis of the following conditional sentence. The general meaning is: “if you give us something, that’s fine and we will go away; if you don’t, we won’t leave you in peace / we shall not stay”.

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57 We can observe more closely F 1. 13 πότερ’ ἀπίωμες ἢ λαβώμεθα. This blackmail, which announces the far more explicit threats that follow, has an equivalent in the modern motto ‘Trick or treat?’ – the slogan chanted by children who call at houses to solicit gifts at Halloween. Cf. CAMPBELL (n. 29) 446f.

58 Such a topos also occurs also in Hippon. fr. 44,1f. Dg. ἐμοὶ δὲ Πλοῦτος – ἔστι γὰρ λίην τυφλός – / ἐς τᾠκί’ ἐλθὼν οὐδάμ’ εἶπεν κτλ., Ar. Pl. 230ff. σύ δ’, ὦ κράτιστε Πλοῦτε πάντων δαιμόνων, / εἴπον μὲ’ ἐμοί δέ δεῦρ’ εἰπθ’ κτλ., 790ff., Plut. Quaest. conv. VI 8. 693f Εξ’ Βούλιμον, ἐσοὶ δὲ Πλοῦτον καὶ ᾿Υγίειαν. In F 5. 1f. the beggars invite the landlord to salute (δέξαι) good fortune (τὰν ἀγαθὰν τύχαν) and health (τὰν ὑγίειαν). However, in this case the two terms might also indicate well-being and the respective divine personifications: cf. e.g. Paus. V 15. 6 Τύχης ἐστίν ᾿ἀγαθὴς βουμός, ᾿ΙΧ 39. 5 τὸ δὲ ὀκτῆμα … Τύχης ἐρώταν ᾿ἀγαθή, Ραως. V 26. 2 parά δὲ τοῦ ναοῦ τοῦ μεγάλου τὴν ἐν ἀντίστροφη πλευράν ἀνάθηκαν ἄλλα [scil. ἀνάθημα] … καὶ θεοῦ ἀθής Ἀσκληπίου καὶ ᾿Υγίειαν, ᾿ΙΧ 26. 8 τὸ δὲ ἀγάλμα τὸ Διονύσου καὶ ἀθής Τύχης, ἑπόρθη δὲ ᾿Υγίειας.

59 Cf. Agamemnon’s speech in II. 1 135ff. ἀλλ’ εἰ μὲν δόσουσιν γέρας μεγάθυμοι Ἀχιλλός / ᾿Ιόκληντες κατὰ ὑμῶν ὅπως ἀνάθηκαν ἄλλα: also in this case, the apodosis is implied but easily deducible.
In addition, we can have a look at another pattern, which occurs in F 1. 1 and F 3. 11. The first section of the *chelidonisma* (ll. 1–5) is devoted to the arrival of the swallow: the bird that, already for the ancient Greeks, was the emblem of returning spring.⁶⁰ The *incipit* ἥλθ᾿, ἥλθε χελιδών, still retained in the modern carols with the same words (“ήρθε ήρθε χελίδονα”) or similar expressions (“χελιδόνα ἐρχεται”),⁶¹ immediately makes such an image vivid. Indeed, the repetition of the verb assumes a plain literary and rhythmical function: it stresses the cyclical return of the swallow.⁶² In the case of the Samian *eiresione*, the reference to the opening words of the *chelidonisma* (ll. 1–3) is apparent. It is a reference that is highlighted by the syntactic structure, with the analogous repetition of the main verb: the *eiresione* or, even better, its personified spirit, will cyclically return just like the swallow in spring and, just like the arrival of the swallow, the arrival of the tree spirit represents a sort of New Year’s Day blessing.⁶³

### 4. FINAL REMARK

In the current state of research and studies, the need to review the reference corpus in terms of both omissions and additions is apparent.⁶⁴ This should be based on an exhaustive census of texts which have as yet not been taken into account (e.g. ‘the songs of sailors’, *P. Oxy.* 425, 1383), or which have not been included intentionally in the sylloge by earlier editors. Furthermore, more work remains to be done in defining the concept of ‘popular’ in the ancient Greek world.

It is hard to deny that in the 21st century, ancient Greek folksong tradition still requires the detailed attention of scholars and experts.⁶⁵

### APPENDIX

**F 1**


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⁶⁰ Cf. THOMPSON (n. 29) 319. This topic occurs, for example, in the proverb μί α χελιδών έαρ οὐ ποιεῖ, from which the equivalent proverb of the modern languages derives (cf. R. TOSI in *DSLG* 549f.).

⁶¹ Cf. supra, § 3.

⁶² Cf. PORDOMINGO (n. 6) 472.

⁶³ Cf. also Ar. *Av.* 679 ἥλθες, ἥλθες, ὤφθης. In Aristophanes’ passage the similarity is due not only to the use of the same verb as in the *chelidonisma*, but also because the verb repetition emphasises the emotional connection with the interlocutor. It is not excluded that this passage could have directly been influenced by the text of the *chelidonisma*: cf. MAGNANI: Note marginali (n. 6) 54.

⁶⁴ Cf. MAGNANI: Carmina (n. 6) 570.


(N) ἦλθ’, ἦλθε χελίδων
καλὰς ὥρας ἄγουσα,
καὶ καλοὺς ἐνιαυτοὺς,
ἐπὶ γαστέρα λευκά,
κἀπὶ νῶτα μέλαινα. 5
παλάθαν οὐ προκυκλεῖς
ἐκ πίονος οἴκου
οἴνου τε δέπαστρον
τυρῶ τε κάνυστρον; 10
† καὶ πυρῶνα † χελιδὼν
καὶ λεκιθίταν
οὐκ ἀπωθεῖται.
πότερ’ ἀπίωμες ἢ λαβώμεθα;
εἰ μέν τι δώσεις· εἰ δὲ μή,
οὐκ ἐάσομεν· ἤ τὰν θύραν φέρωμες ἢ τὸ ὑπέρθυρον
ἢ τὰν γυναῖκα τὰν ἔσω καθημέναν;
μικρὰ μέν ἐστι, ῥᾳδίως μιν οἴσομεν.
ἂν δὴ φέρῃς τι, μέγα δὴ τι φέροις.
ἀνοίγ’ ἄνοιγε τὰν θύραν χελίδων· 15
οὐ γὰρ γέροντες ἐσμεν, ἀλλὰ παιδία.

Metr.: ll. 1, 4, 7–9 reiziana (rei: blkkluU); ll. 2, 3, 5 pherecrateans (pher: xxlkkluU); l. 6 acephalic choriambic dimeter ( ^2choB: xxxlwwlU); l. 10 corrupt (reizianum or pherecratean?); l. 11 adonean (a d: lwwluU); l. 12 hypodochium (hδ: lwlluU); l. 13 acephalic reizianum (o adonean) + hypodochium (^rei hδ: kkkku|lklkuU); ll. 14–17, 19f. iambic trimeters (3ia: xlklxZlkZlxlkuU); l. 18 iambic metron + acephalic choriambic dimeter (ia ^2choB: klku|xxxlwwlU).

Codd.: ACE (I) – M (II).

|| 1 ἦνθ᾿ ἦνθε Hermann2 || 2 ῥα ὥρας Ilgen || 3 καὶ καλοὺς I, II : καὶ post Hermann2 del. edd. pl. (καλούς τ᾿
Crusius2, prob. Wilamowitz2) || 5 κἀπὶ I(A) : ἐπὶ I(CE), II, post Hermann2 edd. pl. : κ᾿ ἐπὶ Ahrens1 : ᾿πὶ Use-
ner : κἠπὶ Wilamowitz 1 | μέλανα I(A) : ννα Usener || 6 οὐ προκυκλεῖς I : σὺ προκύκλει post Hermann 2
edd. pl. (τὺ Morelli, iam προκυκλεῖν Casaubon) : σὺ προκυκλεῖν Usener (οὖν Ilgen, iam προκυκλέων Casau-
bon) : alia alii | 7 (παλάθαν–) οἴκου; dist. Ahrens 1 | οἴκω Edmonds || 8 οἴνω Edmonds || 9 τυρῶ I(A) :
‑ τῦρον I(CE), edd. pl. : κανν‐ I(A) || 10 καὶ πυρῶνα I(A), Martín Vázquez 2 (iam καὶ deleto Hermann’) : καὶ πυρῶν ἁ I(CE), Palumbo Stracca (πυρῶν fort. emendatum lectionem pro τυρῶν cens. Kaibel) : πυρῶν τε vel καὶ πυρὰ dub. Hermann’ : (τυρῶν τ. κ.) καταφύγῃ ἢ Ahrens’ : καὶ πυ-
να Bergk (iam πύρων Ilgen), recce. Page, Campbell1, De Stefani, Neri, Olson : καταφύγῃ δια. Bergk2,3,4,
Dindorf : θοῦ- Ahrens’ || 16 τὰν έ. I : κάν έ. I, II | (ή τ. 0. . . . . . . η τ. γ.--) καθημέναν; dist. Martin Vázquez’ ||
17 μὲν I : γὰρ dub. Bergk2,3,4 | μὲν I : ννν Meineke, rec. Palumbo Stracca | οἴσομεν I(AE) : -μει Ι(C) : -μεις Schweighäuser, rec. Palumbo Stracca : οἴσομες Morelli || 18 varie temptatum | φέρος ί Ι(A) : -ρος τι Ι(CE) : θης ὑπέρθυρον I(AE) : -οστὶ τι
Page | φέρος I : -οστὸ Bergk2,3,4 || 20 post 17 dub. traeic. De Stefani | οἰσμές Ed-
monds : ἐστι - Morelli.

F 2


Ἀσθενοὶ, κορώνῃ χεῖρα πρόσδοτε κριθέων
τῇ παιδὶ τῶπόλλωνος, ἢ λέκος πυρῶν
ἢ ἄρτον ἢ ἤμαιθον ἢ ὅτι τις χρῄζει·
δότ' ὦγαθοί, τι τῶν ἕκαστος ἐν χερσίν
καὶ τῷ γέροντι πατρὶ κοῦρον εἰς χεῖρας
καὶ μητρὶ κούρην εἰς τὰ γοῦνα κατθείη,
θάλος τρέφειν γυναῖκα τοῖσι κασιγνήτοις.
ἐγὼ δ' ὅκου πόδες φέρωσιν ἀμείβομαι Μούσῃσι πρὸς θύρῃς ᾄδων,
καὶ δόντι καὶ μὴ δόντι πλεύνα τῶν Γύγεω.

* * *

ἄλλα ὄγαθοι, ἀπορέξαθ᾽ ὅν μυχὸς πλουτεῖ·
δός, ὦ ἄναξ, δὸς καὶ σὺ πολλά μοι νύμφη·
νόμος κορώνῃ χεῖρα δοῦν᾿ ἐπαιτούσῃ.

tosait' ἀείδω' δός τι καὶ καταχρήσει. (N)
δῶμα προσετραπόμεσθ' ἀνδρὸς μέγα δυναμένοιο, δὲ μέγα μὲν δύναται, μέγα δὲ βρέμει, ὁδὸς αἰεί.

† κυρβαίη † δ' αἰεὶ κατὰ καρδόπου ἱπποῖ. 5

eι μὲν τι δῶσεις· εἰ δὲ μὴ, οὐχ ἑστήξομεν,

† πέρσαι τῷ Ἀπόλλωνος γυιάτι, δός τι ἄντομαι ἀντίλυος ἀγυιέστω, δός Ludwich 1,2 : πέρσαϲ Ἀπόλλωνος λιγυαστάδου dub. All. : πέρσει᾿ Ἀπόλλωνος λιγυαστάδου.
ANCIENT GREEK FOLKSONG TRADITION

δός Wilamowitz1, rec. Diehl, Edmonds, West, prob. Schönbächer: πέρσαι(α). / τῷ Απόλλωνις, γώναι, τι δός Martin Vázquez: † πέρσαι † Πέρσαι ἀγνώτητα, δός dub. Lambin: alia alii | post h.v. desunt nonnulli versus || 14 ante h.v. καὶ add. I, II | καὶ μ. West | ἐλήξομεν II(G) || 15 nonnulli versus ||

E 4

Edd.: *Carm. pop.* 17 Edmonds = 2 Diehl.

Εἰρεσιώνη σῶκα φέρει καὶ πίονας ἄρτους καὶ μέλι ἐν κοτύλῃ καὶ κύλικ’ εὔζωρον, ὡς ἂν μεθύουσα καθεύδῃ.

Metr.: dactylic hexameters (6da^: lylyülZkZklZyülyluU).

Codd.: UMA (I) – L (II) – VEΘM (III) – VEΘNBarbAld (IV) – Pm (V) – GBZ (VI, VII) – PSMOQR (VIII) – AMG (IX) – L (X) – L (XI) – NDO (XII).

F 5

Edd.: *Carm. pop.* 36 Neri = PMG 882 = 19 Edmonds = 38 Diehl = 23 Smyth = 42 Bergk3,4 = 30 Bergk2 = 18 Bergk1 = 33 Schneidewin.
Test.: *Proleg. Theocr.* Bb 3. 2–15 Wend.


Metr.: II. 1 and 3 glyconics (gl: xi 1 kkl kl U; v. 2 pherceatan (pher: xo kl u); v. 4 corrupt (phere-cratean?).

Codd.: KE'AT,


Sigla employed in the critical apparatus

Ahrens¹ = AHRENS (n. 38) 478f.
Bergk = BERGK ¹ ² ³ ⁴ = BERGK (n. 5).
Bernasconi = BERNASCONI (n. 54).
Campbell¹ = CAMPBELL (n. 29).
Casaubon = ap. Schweighäuser [q.v.].
Cerrato = CERRATO (n. 6).
Crusius¹ = CRUSIUS, O.: Herondae mimiambi. Accedunt Phoenicis coronistae, Mattii mimiamthorum fragmenta. Lipsiae 1892¹ (1894² [1898], 1900³, 1905⁴ [1908], 1914⁵).
Daléchamp = ap. Schweighäuser [q.v.].
De Stefani = DE STEFANI (n. 28).
Diehl = DIEHL (n. 5).
Edmonds = EDMONDS (n. 5).
Furley = FURLEY (n. 43).
Ilgen = IGEN (n. 4).
Lambin = LAMBIN (n. 6).
Leutsch = LEUTSCH, E. V.: Zu Phoenix von Kolophon. Philologus 11 (1856) 244.
Magnelli = ap. DE STEFANI (n. 28).
Markwald = MARKWALD (n. 26).
Morelli = MORELLI (n. 27).
