SAINT LAZARUS' CYPRIOT FOLK SONGS: INTERTEXTUALITY WITH THE HOLY BIBLE AND OTHER CULTURAL ASPECTS

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Abstract: MARTÍN VICO, Ana María. *Saint Lazarus' Cypriot Folk Songs: Intertextuality with the Holy Bible and Other Cultural Aspects.* Greek Cypriot folk songs belong to the Greek world's artistic expression. Among them, the religious songs may be highlighted because of their cultural interest. Certainly, the different versions of *Saint Lazarus' song* narrate the complete tale of this saint that is, what is said in the canonical text and what has been traditionally transmitted in Cyprus. They are related to the Holy Bible and contain diverse cultural elements. Thus, here the intertextuality between the referred texts and the cultural elements are studied. On the one hand, the poems are directly connected with the Book of Psalms, the Gospels and the Apocalypse. Different biblical events and characters (i.e. Lazarus of Bethany, Marta, Maria, Thomas the Apostle, Jesus, King David, Adam, the Virgin Mary and Saint Michael Archangel) can be identified, although there are differences between the source texts and the poems. On the other hand, the fact that the poem's versions were originated in different Cypriot geographical points have several significances, and we can distinguish references to other traditions and texts thanks to the used vocabulary in the poems. Consequently, we observe the meanings of *Saint Lazarus' song* for the Greek Cypriot culture.

Keywords: *Saint Lazarus, Cypriot folk songs, Cyprus, intertextuality, Holy Bible, cultural aspects, culturemes*

Introduction

Greek Cypriot folk songs belong to the Greek world's artistic expression. When abstracted from their musical context, these compositions may be considered as anonymous poems which reflect the nature of its origin: the genuine character of its culture and concerns (Tsarmas 1993, IX). This feature entails a wide thematic variety in which religious pieces (which constitutes an authentic expression of Orthodox Christian faith) may be highlighted because of their cultural interest. Among them, several praises, hymns, chants and songs can be distinguished. Here they are in our interest those songs which are dedicated to the biblical character Lazarus of Bethany, that are different versions of an only composition: the called *Saint Lazarus' song*.

For the purpose of this article, the study of the intertextuality between the aforementioned poems and the Holy Bible as well as the study of other related cultural aspects, the texts compiled by Nearchos Kliridis (2017, 60-110) have been analysed locating all their biblical and cultural references and consulting appropriate sources. Furthermore, it is worth pointing out the sense of the terms *intertextuality* and *cultural aspect*s that has been taken into account, i.e., the *intertextuality* as "the literal or allusive relation between different texts" and the *cultural aspects* as "the specific elements which belong to a differentiated cultural system".

Intertextuality with the Holy Bible

The intertextuality (also as cultural aspect) is a very noticeable characteristic of the Saint Lazarus' Cypriot folk songs for, as previously mentioned, this biblical character is the main theme of these poems. This means that there is an intrinsic relationship between him and the Holy Bible. When reading the previously mentioned compositions, they can be observed both the narration of Saint' Lazarus biblical legend and the saint's legend originated in Cyprus (which finally result in an only tale). Having said that, the legend's Bible narration of these poems becomes a new version of the one of the original text and it shapes the Cypriot legend's basis. As there are eight versions of the *Saint Lazarus' song*, it has to be admitted that there are eight different texts and this indicates that the literary play which is created by the intertextuality presents variations between them. Thus, it implies the existence of the main biblical theme and the inclusion of literal biblical expressions (which can be observed in the texts), although the poems' narrative content is not completely true to the Holy Scriptures and they present their own contents too. In fact, in the work of Nearchos Kliridis (2017, 74-86), the extracts which appear in more than one text (or which are very similar with each other) are indicated, that is, the first 22 verses of the third and the fourth version of the poem are identical, the verses 110-140 of the fourth version are almost the same of those of the fifth version, the verses 84-97 of the fourth version appear between the verses 92-116 of the fifth version, and the fifth and the sixth version of the poem are almost alike.

Lazarus of Bethany's biblical legend is narrated by the Gospel According to John[1], so this is the original source that must be consulted firstly. In summary, this Gospel relates the raising of Saint Lazarus. Equally, the *Saint Lazarus' song* does it too. However, this poem usually adds that Lazarus escaped from the Jews in Bethany, arrived in Cyprus, turned a vineyard into a salt lake, was named bishop of Larnaca by the apostles, lived and passed away in the aforesaid city (where a church was built in his honour) and even his relics were transported to Constantinople.

The title of the poem's first version, *The raising of the fair Saint Lazarus*, describes Lazarus as *fair*. This adjective is commonly used when referring to saint characters. However, the simple fact of using it determines his conception. In the same way, the title of the poem's fourth version, *Lazarus of the Four Days and Christ's friend*, describes the saint as *the person who was dead for four days* and was *Christ's friend*. But this manner of describing and conceiving Lazarus is not used in the other poems, as their title is just *Saint Lazarus' song*.

The verse 2 of the first version of the poem is revealing because it announces Jesus' Resurrection just as it happens in the chapter 11 of the Gospel According to John, predicting life's victory over death by means of Lazarus' raising. In other words, summarizes briefly the chapter 11's message.

Afterwards, the triumphal entry into Jerusalem, which is told by the Gospels[2] is referred to in the verses 5-6 of the same version. In this case, however, there is just an exhortation with which children are asked to bear branches and sing the *Hosanna*[3]. Therefore, these verses don't explain how the triumphal entry happened.

The verses 13-14 of the first version almost reproduce the verse 4 of the Gospel According to John. To take a concrete example, while the biblical verse says «When Jesus heard that, he said, This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby[4]», the poem doesn't include the subordinate clause and modifies the second part of the coordinate clause, as it says that «for God would glorify his name thereby». Similarly, the

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[1] Cf. John: 1.

[2] Cf. Mathew 21: 1-11, Mark 11: 1-11, Luke 19: 28-44 and John 12: 12-19.

[3] For more details regarding the *Hosanna*, see Gerhard Kittel and Gerhard Friedrich (1995, 682-684).

[4] This verse holds the previously indicated life's victory over death (cf. John: 20, chapter in which Jesus' Resurrection is narrated).

verses 15-76 of the poem (very faithful to the Holy Bible) recreates the biblical verses 5-57 with a dialogue. But the detail given by the verses 77-79 of the poem, in which they tell that the high priests decided to kill Lazarus, belong to the verse 10 of the chapter 12.

Marta and Maria, who are Lazarus' sisters, take part in his tale too. What is interesting is how they are described[5]. The referred verses in the previous footnote want to say that the sisters were affectionate and had a clean heart. Besides, it is said that they were good housekeepers[6]. These considerations express the both sisters' virtues according to old thinking and values.

In the same way, the poem provides information that describes how Lazarus was like. He would be a beloved friend of Jesus and fall gravely ill because he would reveal the Lord as a god[7]. It is even highlighted that the saint was dead for four days, which is the reason why he is named *Lazarus of the Four Days*[8]. As he descended into Hades, he wore in his forehead the death's mark[9] and he would never smile again[10]. As a matter of fact, there is an only recreated verbal intervention by Lazarus[11] and some references to other no-literal interventions[12], and the verse 99 of the six version tells that the saint didn't speak in the moment after having been resurrected. The work that he carried out in Cyprus is also described as it is said that he was bishop[13]. Besides, it is deduced that he was not a sinner, if we base on the fact that it is said that the person to whom he asked for a grape considered that *the saint was a sinner as he or she really was* [14].

When Thomas the Apostle intervenes in the verses 24-25 of the first version of the poem, he is not named by his epithet *Didymus*, i.e., *Twin*[15]. Besides, the used speech verb is not *to say* but *to shout*, and it is emphasized by a declined substantive with adverbial value, (figuratively) *with a great eagerness*. Although this fact can be related to its poetic purposes, it successes in underling Thomas' statement. It announces that *he and his fellowdisciples may die along with Jesus,* that is, that Jesus' disciples will die buy they also will resurrect because they will do together with the Lord. With respect to the other apostle they are alluded but not their proper names[16].

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[5] Cf. verses 15-16 of the seventh version.

[6] Cf. verse 30 of the eighth version.

[7] Cf. verses 14-15 of the first version.

[8] Cf. verses 37, 60 and 86 of the first version, verses 42-44 of the fourth version, verses 44 and 65-66 of the fifth version, verses 43-44 and 67-68 of the sixth version, verse 129 of the seventh version.

[9] Cf. verse 84 of the first version.

[10] Cf. verses 85-86 of the first version, verses 147-149 of the third version, verses 130-141 of the fourth version, verses 150-155 of the fifth version, verse 147 of the sixth version, verse 95 of the seventh version.

[11] Cf. verses 100-113 of the eighth version.

[12] Cf. verses 102-105 of the fourth version, verse 122 of the fifth version, verse 124 of the sixth version.

[13] Cf. verses 61-62 of the second version, verses 139-142 of the third version, verses 120-123 of the fourth version, verses 141-142 of the sixth version, verses 115-122 of the seventh version.

[14] Cf. verses 110-111 of the fourth version.

[15] Cf. John 11: 16.

[16] Cf. verses 17, 20, 44 and 61 of the second version, verse 140 of the third version, verse 121 of the fourth version, verse 141 of the fifth version, verse 141 of the sixth version, and verses 24 and 116 of the seventh version.

Concerning Jesus, some his healing miracles are mentioned[17]. The mentioned miracles are the cure of the blindness[18], the deafness[19], the leprosy[20] and the paralysis[21] and even the resurrection of deceased people[22].

The Holy Bible refers the dual nature of Christ[23], who is considered to be God's human son and perfect deity. The Cypriot poem usually makes reference to this nature in an explanatory way[24]. Besides, the word θεάνθρωπος (/theánthropos/), which can be literally translated as *God-man*, is used in the verse 40 of the first version referring to him.

The verse 31 of the poem summarizes the verse 24 of the chapter 11 according to John when it mentions the *Parousia*, the *Second Advent* or *Second Coming of Christ*, which is clearly explained in Apocalypse 1: 4-8. The *Parousia* is also mentioned in the verses 68-70 of the third version and it is described as a horrible and frightening day.

Moreover, the Passion of the Christ[25] is just alluded in the verse 5 of the third version and in the verse 7 of the fifth version.

The King David is alluded in the second version of the poem. The verse 49 indicates that he was prophet of the tale which is narrated next, that is, the triumphal entry into Jerusalem and the complete tale of Saint Lazarus. However, according to the Book of Psalms, King David's prophecies are different, and the poem doesn't mention the Israelite king's prophecy about Lazarus' raising[26].

Adam, the first man who was created by God according to the Holy Bible [27], is mentioned in the verses 120-127 of the eighth version. In these verses it is said that Adam was in the hell, God took him out from there and placed him in the Paradise, so he was smiling and fortunate.

Finally, the phraseme *gnashing of teeth* (which expresses the torment's anguish) appears in the verses 91-92 of the first version, the verse 141 of the fourth version, the verse 89 of the fifth version and the verse 91 of the sixth version. This expression is characteristic of the Holy Bible and it is used with the referred sense, for example, in Luke 13: 28, Mathew 8: 12, Mathew 13: 42, Mathew 22: 13 and Mathew 25: 30.

Other cultural aspects

The eight poems about Lazarus' legend were located by Nearchos Kliridis (2017, 60-110) in different geographical points of Cyprus, i.e., Agros, Zodia, Dali, Pano Kivides (in Limassol) and Larnaca, although the origin of the last two versions compiled by Nearchos remains unknown. Consequently, we have to distinguish several significances: a) the song was and is widely known there, b) the song was and is an important text because of its impact in its context, c) the different

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[17] Cf. verse 53 of the first version, verses 17-18 of the third version, verses 19-25 of the fifth version, verses 21-26 of the sixth version.

[18] Cf. Mathew 9: 27-31, Mathew 20: 29-34, Mark 8: 22-26, Mark 10: 46-52, Luke 18: 35-43, John 9: 1-41.

[19] Cf. Mark 7: 31-37.

[20] Cf. Mathew 8: 1-4, Mark 1: 40-45, Luke 5: 12-16, Luke 17: 11-19.

[21] Cf. Mathew 8: 5-13, Mathew 9: 1-8, Mathew 12: 9-14, Mark 2: 1-12, Mark 3: 1-6, Luke 5: 17-26, Luke 6: 6-11, Luke 7: 1-10., Luke 13: 10-17, John 5: 1-18.

[22] Mark 5: 38-43, Luke 7: 11-17, Luke 8: 49-56.

[23] Cf. John 1: 14, Colossians 2: 9.

[24] Cf. verse 47 of the first version of the poem, verses 21, 22, 87, 116 and 117 of the third version, verses 30, 31, 76 and 77 of the fourth version, verses 83-84 of the fifth version, verses 85-86 of the sixth version, verse 71 of the seventh version.

[25] Cf. Matthew 26: 1-28, Mark 14: 1-15; Luke 22: 1-23, John 18: 1-19.

[26] Cf. Ps. 16: 9-11.

[27] Cf. Genesis 1-3.

geographical points, which are indeed diverse cultural focuses, can be related to the particular versions' dissemination[28] and d) the legend is essentially associated with Larnaca[29], which becomes a pilgrimage site.

In this sense, the tie between Saint Lazarus, his legend and Cyprus represent a kind of honour or pride for Orthodox Cypriots. This fact can be observed in the poems. Thus, the verse 83 of the first version says that Lazarus chose Larnaca as his only homeland and the verse of the version considers Larnaca as a divine land. Besides, and regarding what has been said above, the verses 100-103 express that Cyprus feels pride and is glad because that city harbours the temple in which Lazarus was originally interred and pilgrims from around the world visit it. According to the poem, Saint Lazarus and his extraordinary experiences were so well-known that their news spread[30].

Another expression of devotion to Lazarus is the celebration of his saint's day. This is referred in the verses 104-116, in which it is explained that Saint Lazarus prays for the good Christians in Easter[31] and they celebrate it. Their subsequent hope is the arrival of Jesus' Resurrection.

Similarly, the texts mention the Larnaca's Salt Lake[32]. The indicated verses narrate that Lazarus arrived in Larnaca, asked a man (or a woman[33]) for grapes in a vineyard and, as he (or she) refused, the saint turned the vineyard into the salt lake. Although this tale shows an act of divine justice, the final result becomes a godsend (since it produces salt and makes profits) and thus it explains the importance of this famous place from a religious perspective.

The second version of the poem explains even the reasons why the public of the song should listen to it. The verses 6-10 say that the purpose is the benefit of the listeners so that they learn about Saint Lazarus' tale.

The language which was used for composing the poems was the Cypriot Greek. So they can be recognized their dialectal phonological, morphological, syntactic and lexical characteristics[34]. Nevertheless, the dialect is overshadowed by the religious textual typology, whose distinctive sign is the use of a strong vocabulary that finds its roots in Ancient Greek. In any case and having in mind the style of the liturgical language's complexity that Greek Cypriot Orthodox parishioners face, the resultant texts are pleasant and easy to remember.

Regarding the lexical aspects, the use of the word *Hades* (< ancient Ἅιδης [áidis]) may be noted. If the *Dictionary of Standard Modern Greek* is consulted (Greek Language Centre 2008), the existence of two definitions can be distinguished. Although it is utilized by the Greek folk tradition too, the first one is of pagan origin (as it comes from ancient Greek mythology) and its meaning is that of the *underworld*. Besides, the *Hades* is personified because it is able to feel and behave like a person does[35]. For its part, the second one means *hell* just as it is considered by the Christian religions. In the poem, we recognize the first sense but the word *hell* (κόλαση [kólasi] also appears. It wants to say that, in this Orthodox text, various aspects from two different traditions coexist as

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[28]   The distances between the different geographical points could be taken into account in order to consider the spaces in which the dissemination started.

[29]   In the different poems, Larnaca is also named Kition (the name of the city-kingdom which was located in the contemporary Larnaca). With respect to this city, its neighborhood Skala is mentioned as the place in which the Church of Saint Lazarus is located.

[30]   Cf. verses 59-60 of the second version.

[31]   Saint Lazarus' day is celebrated the Saturday before the Palm Sunday.

[32]   Cf. verse 59 of the second version, verse 32 of the third version, verse 116 of the fourth version, verse 139 of the fifth version, verse 120 of the sixth version.

[33]   The sex of this character varies according to the text.

[34]   For more details regarding the Cypriot Greek, see Nikolaos Kondosopulos (2000, 196-197).

[35]   Cf. verses 90-92 of the fifth version and verses 92-94 of the sixth version.

they do in secular contexts. In any case, we speak about a place which is inhabited by demons and damned souls[36].

The *swallow* is a recurrent element in the Greek world's literature. It is even the theme of the songs named χελιδονίσματα (/jelidonísmata/)[37]. Thus, it must be said that it is mentioned in these poems too, it brings the Resurrection's news[38] and thus it has the literary function of the symbols.

Moreover, the verses 112-114 mention several specialties of the Cypriot and/or Greek cuisine. In this way, they reflect their importance for the Easter traditions in Cyprus. Linguistically, these elaborations are culturemes which cannot be translated by using equivalent terms. The words we refer to are βλαούνες (/vlaúnes/)[39], αυκοτές (/afkotés/)[40], κουλούρια γυριστά (/kulúria giristá/)[41], αυγά κοκκινιστά (/afgá kokkinistá/)[42] and αυγά ευλογημένα (/afgá eflogiména/)[43].

In the linguistic plane (but also in the literary one), the eight poems present a final body text in which the poetic voice expresses itself with desiderative intention. The hope which is expressed varies according to the text, but we must say that the one of the eighth versions is completely different from the others, for it firstly provides a reflection about God's pity in the verses 117-127. Afterwards, we distinguish a prayer in which several different religious figures are alluded to, i.e., Jesus[44], the Virgin Mary[45], Saint Lazarus[46] and Saint Michael Archangel[47].

Other religious texts associated with the poem at issue are the *Trisagion* and the *Angelic Hymn*. When these texts are referred to, the verses 166-174 of the fourth version tell that Jesus is sung these songs.

It should not be forgotten that Leo VI Sophos, Byzantine Emperor, is mentioned[48]. In the poem, the transfer of Lazarus' relics to Constantinople is attributed to this emperor. The verses of the version explain that the reason of this act was that Leo VI missed them. Furthermore, the verses of the version tell how the transfer was carried out: the saint's relics were cautiously transferred with his intact head, neck, feet and hands and very valuable presents. Subsequently, it is said that the relics were the cause of several miracles [49].

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[36] Cf. verse 90 of the first version, verse 136 of the fourth version, verse 155 of the fifth version, verse 151 of the sixth version and verses 133-134 of the seventh version.

[37] For more details regarding the χελιδονίσματα, see Linos Politis (1994, 97).

[38] Cf. verses 159-165 of the fourth version.

[39] Sesame Rolls, which are consumed after Resurrection Sunday.

[40] Sesame pastry sheets, which are consumed during Holy Week.

[41] White sesame roscas.

[42] Boiled eggs in natural tomato sauce.

[43] Easter boiled eggs.

[44] Cf. verse 118 of the first version, verse 76 of the second version, verse 159 of the third version, verse 179 of the fourth version, verse 165 of the fifth version, verse 168 of the sixth version and verse 155 of the seventh version.

[45] Cf. verse 118 of the first version, verse 76 of the second version, verse 159 of the third version, verse 179 of the fourth version, verse 165 of the fifth version, verse 168 of the sixth version and verse 155 of the seventh version.

[46] Cf. verse 118 of the first version, verse 76 of the second version, verse 160 of the third version, verse 180 of the fourth version, verse 169 of the fifth version, verse 172 of the sixth version and verse 156 of the seventh version.

[47] Cf. verse 77 of the second version, verse 167 of the fifth version and verse 170 of the sixth version.

[48] C.f. verse 78 of the second version, verse 151 of the third version, verses 144-145 of the fourth version, verses 158-159 of the fifth version, verses 159-160 of the sixth version and verse 135 of the seventh version.

[49] Cf. verse 78 of the second version, verse 151 of the third version, verses 144-145 of the fourth version, verses 158-159 of the fifth version, verses 159-160 of the sixth version and verse 135 of the seventh version.

Conclusion

The different versions of the *Saint Lazarus' song* contribute to the configuration of the Greek Cypriot collective imagination and religion, for they spread a legend which is consolidated by its own dissemination and memorization. They also show the Cypriot Orthodox Church and its filigrees' knowledge of the relevance of their faith's evidences and the need of praying and celebrating their faith. This fact implies the existence of a well-known character in the Greek Cypriot culture. Evidently, this character is Saint Lazarus, to whom extraordinary events are linked because of its legend, a reason of faith and devotion for Cypriot Orthodox Christian.

Despite the existence of a common referent, those poems' verses which differ and offer other *new* information are proof of the texts' evolution and diversification. Given that literary texts are partly product of one or more traditions, this *new* information entails changes in the involved tradition (or traditions). Even the fact that each of the versions of the *Saint Lazarus' song* presents its own informative elements shows that there are little subtle differences in the same Cypriot tradition.

When we delve into the common and similar extracts of the different versions of the poem, we understand their interrelations. Thus, they are related to one another the third version and the fourth, the fourth and the fifth, the fifth and the sixth, and vice versa. These connections indicate the directions of the relations between the diverse cultural geographical points, i.e., Dali-Pano Kivides, Pano Kivides-Larnaca and Larnaca-Larnaca.

Analysing the intertextuality between *Saint Lazarus' song* and the Holy Bible allows us to observe the biblical information which they wanted to transmit (i.e. the above referred biblical events), to identify some of the characters that played an important role in the Cypriot Orthodox Christianity or that were very recognized by this religion (i.e. Jesus Christ, the Virgin Mary, Thomas the Apostle, Lazarus of Bethany and his sisters Marta and Maria, King David, Adam and Saint Michael Archangel), and to know the genuine characteristics that the Orthodox people configured and accepted culturally (i.e. the new added information that differ of the canonical one).

Similarly, the study of the other mentioned cultural aspects lead us to several conclusions: a) the Orthodox Greek Cypriot people felt that their land had been chosen and blessed by saint Lazarus, b), the fact that *Saint Lazarus' song* is a folk piece doesn't mean the oversight of the religious linguistic style, c) in the poems they converge canonical religious traditions and texts and several elements from the Greek world, and d) the song's listening by the receivers had at least the purpose of getting benefits.

In short, Saint Lazarus' Cypriot folk songs are paradigm of the fact that different texts and cultural elements can be used by a culture in order to spread and strengthen some of the characteristics which shape its identity and express its shared feeling.

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