



## Panigyri: A Celebration of Life in a Greek Island Village

Alison Cadbury

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On one dark blue midnight in the late summer of 1971, I climbed down the ladder of the Evangelistria, a rusty old tub of a ship, and set foot on the soil of Paros, a medium-size island in the Aegean Sea. I had been drawn to the island by pictures of many-colored fishing boats and snow-white cubical houses, and was curious about the people who created such beauty. I intended to stay three weeks. I stayed, the first time, five years., and have visited often since then, fascinated by the island culture-at once spare and joyous, traditional but alive, pragmatic but grounded in spirituality. This book is an ode to the culture and the people of the village of Naousa, island of Paros in the Cyclades, Greece, as I knew them.

#### **Alison Cadbury**

Alison Cadbury has the sure touch of a born story-teller, which she combines with close observation of Greek village life. Most of what she writes she heard from her neighbors or saw for herself, living in Naousa, a village on the island of Paros. She is a good listener. If the tellers embroider a tale, they do so because they know she will absorb the smallest details and carry them into her own language. This is a book that will not only appeal to lovers of Greece but to those Greeks who have grown up in cities and never experienced what Seferis called the "rich order" that once characterized rural Greek life. Cadbury observes how the rituals, music, dancing and festivals create a life that is, as the villagers say, Kathiméra panigýri, "Everyday a celebration."

#### Gail Holst-Warhaft, Author, Road to Rembetika

Like sea salt scraped with a spoon from stones along the shore of the Greek Island Paros, these essays and stories bring the immediate taste of a way of life to the reader, a way of life that is at once austere and joyous, thrifty and generous. Island villagers from fisherfolk and farmers to priests, sweet bakers, and carpenters struggle to adapt millennia-old traditions as a global culture in the form of tourism deluges the peaceful village, challenging old values, changing even the landscape, the phrygana, the dry rocky land where sheep graze and bees burrow into blossoms of thyme and oregano.

Change also affects intimate relations, especially love and marriage: Ilias, the young socialist priest-to-be, determined to be "modern," is mated in the oldest tradition; a schoolteacher loses her lover to higher education; while traditionalist Thanasis falls in love with a liberated Swedish woman, with whom he forms a unique union.

The villagers are great storytellers. The mami, the midwife, tells a story of tragic love in days gone by, and white-haired Marina spins a tale of a fisherman who might have made friends with a mermaid. That fisherman, decades later, teaches a foreign painter what Greek art is really about.

Along with stories of life on the farms and the sea go traditional beliefs: why you should not hang your clothes out overnight, work on St. Michael's day, wash your hair in August, or marry in May. Women's work and pleasures inform their lives: embroidery, spinning, washing clothes, laying out and mourning the dead.

Seasonal activities are described in lyrical language: in Autumn the grape harvest and wine-making, in July the reaping and threshing of the wheat, in Spring the astounding flowering of the fields. Times and places

named for them keep a myriad saints and other holy persons alive in the minds of the villagers, as their miracles are celebrated not only with liturgy but with feasting and dancing.



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