

## The use of katharevousa and the panhellenic demotic in Cypriot demotic songs

(*Kypraia Foni- Kalos irtan oi ksenoi mas*)

In a number of Cypriot demotic songs we encounter either the katharevousa or the panhellenic demotic intermixed with the Cypriot dialect. This, in my opinion, is due to various reasons, the most basic of which I'd like to set out below:

Among the populace were always those who would come into contact with the written word (archaic and katharevousa), either aurally, through the church liturgy, or through reading as well, when formal education first began in Cyprus. It was then only natural for all these new – to the everyday person – elements of language to pass through into popular verse. The use of new words lent a “more educated” air to the performer, but at the same time facilitated meter and rhyme, given that he had at his disposal two tools with which to work, the local dialect and the katharevousa. At the same time as those with a rudimentary knowledge of both the archaic and the katharevousa however felt free to create verse, so did individuals with a very good command of the language.

Another factor which led folk poets to choose to ignore the local dialect and to use the katharevousa was the direct or indirect urging of a large sector of intellectuals<sup>1</sup> who considered (erroneously, of course) the katharevousa as an indication of patriotism and superiority, and the local dialect representative of an inferior culture. Unfortunately, this perception persists in some circles to this very day.

Another reason is the very origin of some songs, from both Asia Minor and the Greek archipelago. Initially, these songs would be performed much like the original. Through however the constant use of these songs by the people, the process of adopting and incorporating them into local folk music, the musical style and the original verse was adapted to the local musical idiom and dialect, even though some words from the original verse were kept unchanged.

Through the same procedure, i.e. the constant use of these songs by the people, the passage of time led to a number of words being substituted by either words found in either the demotic form of the language or even the local dialect, resulting in the songs being handed down to us today having a verse which is, essentially, a mélange of the local dialect, the demotic form of Greek, and the katharevousa.

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<sup>1</sup> Centre for Scientific Research (Nicosia 1987). “Κυπριακά Δημώδη Άσματα” (Cypriot Demotic Songs) p.488

Chr. Palasis: «Η Πανήγυρις του Κατακλυσμού εν Λάρνακι την 10ην Ιουνίου 1918» (The Kataklysmos Festival in Larnaka on 10 June 1918)