

Cambridge University Press

0521560950 - Tradition and Modernity in the Mediterranean: The Wedding as Symbolic Struggle -

Vassos Argyrou

Frontmatter/Prelims

[More information](#)

Cambridge Studies in Social and Cultural Anthropology

101

TRADITION AND MODERNITY IN THE MEDITERRANEAN

The subject of Vassos Argyrou's study is modernization, as reflected in the changing nature of wedding celebrations in Cyprus over two generations. He argues that modernization is not a process that makes a society "modern," but a legitimizing discourse. It is an idiom that Greek Cypriots employ to represent, and contest, relationships between social classes, old and young, men and women, the city and the village. It is also the way in which they conceptualize, and submit to, the symbolic domination of Europe.

Cambridge University Press

0521560950 - Tradition and Modernity in the Mediterranean: The Wedding as Symbolic Struggle -

Vassos Argyrou

Frontmatter/Prelims

[More information](#)

Cambridge Studies in Social and Cultural Anthropology

The monograph series Cambridge Studies in Social and Cultural Anthropology publishes analytical ethnographies, comparative works and contributions to theory. All combine an expert and critical command of ethnography and a sophisticated engagement with current theoretical debates.

Cambridge University Press

0521560950 - Tradition and Modernity in the Mediterranean: The Wedding as Symbolic Struggle -

Vassos Argyrou

Frontmatter/Prelims

[More information](#)

TRADITION AND MODERNITY IN THE MEDITERRANEAN

The wedding as symbolic struggle

VASSOS ARGYROU

College of the Holy Cross, Worcester, Massachusetts



Cambridge University Press
 0521560950 - Tradition and Modernity in the Mediterranean: The Wedding as Symbolic Struggle -
 Vassos Argyrou
 Frontmatter/Prelims
[More information](#)

Published by the Press Syndicate of the University of Cambridge
 The Pitt Building, Trumpington Street, Cambridge CB2 1RP
 40 West 20th Street, New York, NY 10011-4211, USA
 10 Stamford Road, Oakleigh, Melbourne 3166, Australia

© Cambridge University Press 1996

First published 1996

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

Library of Congress cataloguing in publication data

Argyrou, Vassos.

Tradition and modernity in the Mediterranean : the wedding as symbolic struggle /
 Vassos Argyrou.

p. cm. – (Cambridge studies in social and cultural anthropology; 101)

Includes bibliographical references.

ISBN 0-521-56095-0

1. Marriage customs and rites – Cyprus. 2. Social change – Cyprus. 3. Social classes –
 Cyprus. 4. Cyprus – Social life and customs.

I. Title. II. Series.

GT2774.5.C93A74 1996

392'.5'095693–dc20

95-37466
 CIP

ISBN 0 521 560950 hardback

Transferred to digital printing 2004

Cambridge University Press

0521560950 - Tradition and Modernity in the Mediterranean: The Wedding as Symbolic Struggle -

Vassos Argyrou

Frontmatter/Prelims

[More information](#)

To my mother
and in memory of my father

Cambridge University Press

0521560950 - Tradition and Modernity in the Mediterranean: The Wedding as Symbolic Struggle -

Vassos Argyrou

Frontmatter/Prelims

[More information](#)

This is because knowledge is not made for understanding;
it is made for cutting.

Michel Foucault, *Nietzsche, Genealogy, History*

Contents

<i>List of illustrations</i>	<i>page</i> xi
<i>Acknowledgments</i>	xii
Introduction	1
Preliminaries	1
Questions of method	4
Weddings	9
1 The island of Aphrodite	14
The capital	15
Paphos	22
Modernity and unintended consequences	30
2 Nationalism and the poverty of imagination	38
A brief history	39
Politics and the Eurocentric ideology	43
Two ways of being Greek?	49
The “exotic” within	57
3 The weddings of the 1930s	60
Rites of passage	61
Weddings as potlatches	72
4 The meaning of change	79
“Of vigilance and virgins”	80
Time and meaning	95
A flood of guests	101
	vii

viii	<i>Contents</i>	
5	Distinction and symbolic class struggle	111
	Definitions	111
	Going to weddings	113
	Visions and divisions	130
	Analysis	137
6	Anthropology and the specter of “monoculture”	153
	Reifications	154
	The consequences of strategy	157
	Politics	166
7	The dialectics of symbolic domination	170
	Recognition and resistance	171
	Denials	177
	<i>Appendix</i>	184
	<i>Notes</i>	185
	<i>References</i>	198
	<i>Index</i>	205

Cambridge University Press

0521560950 - Tradition and Modernity in the Mediterranean: The Wedding as Symbolic Struggle -

Vassos Argyrou

Frontmatter/Prelims

[More information](#)

Illustrations

Plates

1	A view of Nicosia	page 17
2	An imposing modern structure	18
3	The neoclassical center of Paphos	24
4	A view of Paphos from Konia village	24
5	An abandoned village house	34
6	The <i>zosimon</i> of the bride in a contemporary “village” wedding	66
7	An old man with the <i>vraka</i> and the <i>tsangaropoines</i>	70
8	The crowning	119
9	Dancing around the bridal mattress	120
10	“Just married,” just copying . . .	126
11	Flower decoration at a “champagne” wedding	127
12	Champagne for everyone	128

Figures

1	Sketch map of Cyprus	8
2	Layout of hotel reception area	147

Acknowledgments

The present study has been made possible by the generous help that I received from many sources. I wish to acknowledge grants from Indiana University and Reed College and note that they are not responsible for the opinions expressed here.

Joëlle Bahloul, William Corsaro, Peter Loizos, and Christopher Peebles read earlier versions of the manuscript and provided generous feedback. I owe an enormous debt of gratitude to Michael Herzfeld – teacher and friend – who has supported my work from the beginning, and still does so today, in far too many ways to mention here. I also wish to thank Jessica Kuper at Cambridge University Press for her encouragement and patience.

In Cyprus relatives did everything they could to help. I am particularly grateful to my family – my mother, Theodosia, to whom this work is co-dedicated, my sister, Angela, my brother, Lakis, and my niece, Maria. Many thanks also to my friends for their encouragement, good advice, and great sense of humor, in particular, Demetris and Liz Aristidou, Glafkos Christofides, Jimmy Demetriou, George and Dora Georgallis, George and Eleni Lambrou, Pambos and George Constantinou, Yiannis Papadakis, Egli Pittaka, and Maro Stavrou – *ya sas pethkia*.

Finally, I wish to thank the people who tolerated my presence at their weddings, often as an uninvited guest. Most of all, I am grateful to all those who were kind enough to talk to me about their lives and answer my often intrusive questions with patience and humor, particularly the old village men and women, the “endangered species” of Cyprus. Without them, this work would have never been possible.