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A VISIT TO SKYROS.

§ 1.—THE CARNIVAL.

IN March 1905 I went to Skyros for a week, primarily to see and photograph the Carnival masquerade described in *B.S.A.* vi. p. 125, by Mr. Lawson. I was there for the last of the three Sundays of Carnival, and the following Monday, when, to the scandal of the *Hegoumenos* of St. George of Skyros, it being the first day of Lent, the festival is at its height. Although the village sounds with the clatter of the bells of these strange figures all through Carnival, on this last Sunday the masqueraders, of whom Mr. Lawson has given an account, appear in the greatest numbers. A full set consists of three young men, disguised, one as an Old Man (*γέρος*), one as a Maid (*κορέλλα*), and one as a Frank (*Φράγκος*). The Frank's attire differs, but his distinctive features are a sheep-bell tied on at the waist behind, and a conch-shell to blow. He either has a cloth tied over his face, or wears a modern pasteboard mask. The *κορέλλα* is a boy dressed as a girl, generally with a modern mask, in the festal attire of a Skyrian bride. Carnival is thus a good opportunity to see the fine silk-embroidered skirts, sleeves, and kerchiefs of the women's full dress. The finest of these are old, though embroidery in silk is still practised. The third and most conspicuous of the trio, the Old Man (*γέρος*), is the masquerader described by Mr. Lawson. As I saw them (Fig. 1), a fully-dressed *γέρος* was attired as a grotesque shepherd plus a mask and bells, and it is indeed mainly the shepherds¹ who take this part: The upper part of the body down to the waist is clothed in a shepherd's

¹ Owing to their remote life, shepherds often preserve customs and ways lost by the classes who are in closer contact with modern life.

capote worn inside out to display the long fleecy nap like a sheepskin, which lines these garments. The hood of the capote is drawn up to cover the head and secured by a band, and the skirts are girt up to the waist, to give full play to the mass of bells. They wear the shepherds' baggy white breeches, white footless stockings and laced-over shoes (*τροχάδια*), and carry a sheep-hook. Round the waist are perhaps fifty to sixty large sheep-bells hung from the shoulders, to enable the wearer to support the weight. Each bell is attached to the hooped wooden collar worn by the sheep, and these wooden collars are simply strung on a cord round the waist, to keep the bells hanging fairly free to clash, as the wearer jumps up and down. The face is covered with a small skin or piece of fur like a hanging veil with holes cut for the eyes.¹ Very few Old Men wear the modern pasteboard mask, though some have the face uncovered, or wrapped in a cloth. But the full disguise is as I have described it above. The woolly capote worn inside out is an essential, nor did I see any masquerader wearing an animal's skin in place of it.² Thus attired the trio run capering down the street, the Frank leaping and blowing his conch, the *Koréλλα* dancing to shew off her skirts, and the heavily-laden Old Man halting every now and then with his two attendants and jumping up and down to make his bells clash, or indulge in the

FIG. 1.—MASQUERADER (*γέρος*) FROM SKYROS.

¹ This answers to the third variety of cape and mask noted by Mr. Lawson.

² Mr. Lawson speaks of goatskin capes. I could learn nothing of these.

favourite horse play of tripping people up with his long sheephook. The popular explanation of the custom is that the Old Men commemorate a shepherd who lost all his sheep through exposure to the snow, and came into the town at Carnival time with all their bells tied round him. The Old Man seems always the leader, and appears sometimes without the other two, whilst I never saw Franks or Maids except in attendance on Old Men.

On the Monday not many Old Men or Franks appear; it is the day of the *μετημφιεσμένοι*, when boys go about disguised as girls, or dressed like the shepherds, who on this day all come into the village in their best clothes, with silk shirts with embroidered fronts and lace sleeves, and white waistcoats and jackets. The waistcoats of the ploughmen on the other hand are generally crimson at the back, which is laced up the middle. More old embroideries are seen on this day than on the Sunday, so one gets a good idea of the women's festal dress, with its embroidered linen skirt and petticoat, to which is attached a vest of very fine silk with hanging sleeves embroidered with tinsel. Over this is worn a brocade bodice and a belt with large silver clasps.

The Carnival also offers a good opportunity of seeing the native dances. I saw the *ballo*, a kind of minuet for two men, or a man and a girl, and a lively dance called the *Papadhiá*, "The Parson's Wife," performed by four men, three of whom hand-in-hand are generally faced by the leader of the dance. The other usual dance is the *Kalés*,¹ a ring-dance of slower movements for men and girls together. This I did not see, but it seems to be the same as the ring-dance that is seen everywhere in Greece.

§ 2.—THE CHURCH OF THE EPISKOPI.

THE town of Skyros is built on the western and northern slopes of a hill which rises steeply on the east side from the sea and is crowned by a rock that springs precipitously from the slopes on all sides. On the top of this crag are the deserted houses of the old castle-town of Skyros, surrounded by Venetian and remains of Hellenic walls. There is only one entrance to this castle, on the northern side, and the modern town streams down the hill from this entrance as if the houses had flowed out of a leak

¹ This is the dialect form for *καλός*.

in the old walls. Entering the old gate of the castle under a tower with a white marble lion over the door, one passes through a covered way to an open space in front of the church of St. George of Skyros, and the house of the Hegoumenos. Here is buried a great jar which is uncovered at each feast of St. George, and filled with wine, which the Saint miraculously multiplies.¹ Sometimes, it is said, it even runs over the lip of the jar, a miracle worthy of the genial Saint, who, according to a folk-song, first hides a girl in the wall of his church, and then at the lover's prayer discloses her.² His severer side is shewn by the wonder-working picture in the church which 'sees well from afar,' and punishes any one who defrauds the monastery of its dues. Next comes a vaulted passage and a zigzag walled path up the rock, and one reaches the iron-plated door of the castle itself. Except for the guardian, all the houses are now deserted, after having been for some time used as storehouses, for the security of modern times makes it unnecessary to live in such a crow's-nest as this old walled village, perched on the top of its precipitous rock, and only accessible by this one well-guarded entrance. Just inside the door, past the guardian's house, and only separated from the rampart by the little street, is the Episkopi, the ruined church of the Bishops of Skyros, dedicated to the *Κοίμησις τῆς Θεοτόκου*.

In front of the church lies a fragment of a marble cornice said to have fallen from the façade in an earthquake sometime in the last century, which gives us the date of the building. It runs: †ΕΤΟΥΣ ΘΥΓ̄ ΕΠΙ ΒΑΣΙΛΕΙΑΣ ΛΕΟΝΤΟΣ ΚΑΙ ΑΛΕΞΑΝΔΡΟΥ ΕΠΙ ΣΑΒΑ ΜΗΤΡΟΠΟΛΙΤΟΥ ΑΘΗΝΩΝ ΚΑΙ ΣΑΒΑ ΕΠΙΣΚΟΠΟΥ ΤΩΝ ΩΔΕ † 'In the year 895 A.D. in the reign of Leo and Alexander in the time of Sabas Metropolitan of Athens and Sabas, Bishop of this place.' Leo reigned from 886-911, and his brother Alexander from 911-912. Now Photius was Patriarch of Constantinople from 857-867 and again from 877-886, and Le Quien *Oriens Christianus*, ii, p. 171, states that a synod held to restore Photius after the death of Ignatius, and so about 877, was attended by Sabas, Bishop of Athens. Further, this Sabas was in fact a Metropolitan Bishop, for about the time of Photius (*Oriens Christianus* ii, p. 167), Athens

¹ Mr. Bosanquet reminds me of the church of the Drunken St. George in Paros, mentioned by Bent, *The Cyclades*, p. 373. In Pontus also we have ὁ τρελλὰς ἅγιος Γεώργιος; see 'Αθηνᾶ, ii. 1890, p. 237, footnote 4.

² Passow, *Carmina Popularia*, dlxxxvii gives one of the many versions that have been published.

was made a metropolitan see, with ten subject bishoprics, one of which was Skyros. The year of the inscription thus fits perfectly with the history of the time, and it clearly was set up on the church which was probably erected at that time, when the new bishopric was formed. That the first bishop of Skyros was called Sabas appears only on this inscription. That the remains of the church as they stand go back to this period, nothing seems to contradict. The ground-plan (see Fig. 2) is oblong, with an ante-

FIG. 2.—PLAN OF THE CHURCH OF THE EPIKOPI, SKYROS.

church which probably had a lean-to roof. Over the door of this are the remains of a structure which held the bell, and fell only recently. The roof was entirely barrel-vaulted, the central compartment having been the highest, and those in the four corners the lowest. The north-east and south-east areas have now been entirely shut off and are still used as chapels. The rest of the church is not used, and the central vault and the three in the north-west part have fallen in. The north-west pier has also

vanished. The east-end is remarkable for its elevated marble throne with arms ending in small marble pillars. At the two inner corners of the seat rise the octagonal pillars which divide the three lights of the window, which is now nearly walled up. Exactly how the central light was contrived with the back of the throne is not clear, as so much of the marble is covered with plaster, and the ground outside this end of the church has risen to within two feet of the eaves. The steps have also been stripped of their marble covering. Remains of a fresco with the words of the Communion on the back of the throne shew that when this had ceased to be used all the space was plastered over, and painted with the fresco of the Eucharist usual in this place. The oblong marble capitals are carved with crosses with foliated feet. In the chancel lie three marble pillars square below and octagonal above, that clearly belong to a *templon* almost exactly the same as that in the church of Daou in Attica, drawn in *B.S.A.* ix, p. 390, Fig. 2. The marble slabs that formed the lower part of the *templon* have gone, but marks on the sides of the pillars shew the original arrangement. The church is paved with marble slabs, now much broken. Built for Sabas, the first bishop, in it was buried in 1837 Gregorios, the last bishop of Skyros, since when with the desertion of the upper town this church, so closely connected with the island-see, has been left to share the ruin of the surrounding houses. Only on Saturday and Sunday the old guardian comes according to Greek custom to burn a little incense beneath the broken vaults.

The plan is almost exactly that of the Church of the Protaton at Karyés on Mount Athos.¹ The rounded apses, the absence of a dome, the piers instead of columns, the absence of side choirs are common to both. The only differences are that the Protaton has an extra narthex on the north side, and a flat roof instead of barrel vaults. The Protaton was redecorated in the time of Andronicus II (1282-1328) after a fire, and it is unknown how much of the tenth century church of St. Athanasius had survived. This resemblance however to the Church of Skyros casts a light on the question, and makes it clear that the Protaton is in plan at least a work of the tenth century, and the wooden roof may possibly

¹ For a plan and description of the Protaton see Brockhaus, *Die Kunst in den Athosklöstern*, pp. 23, ff. The plan here given of the Skyros church should no doubt have two side-apses, one on each side of the main apse. I did not mark them, because outside, the earth rises so high as to cover them, supposing them to be of the same height as the side apses of the Protaton, and the side chapels in which they would be visible inside I found locked. Of their existence there can be no doubt.

replace an earlier vaulting destroyed with the upper part of the walls by the fire in the thirteenth century. The churches have the same dedication, the *Κολυμήσις τῆς Θεοτόκου*, and it may be that they are due to the same architect. The posts of the side-doors of the *πρόθεσις* and *διακονικόν* in the Protaton are exactly the same in design as those that now lie on the pavement of the apse of the church at Skyros, and belonged to the old *templon*. The original *templon* of the Protaton is now screened by a later wooden structure, and I did not observe if any old stone side-pillars of the central door are visible from inside.

This type of church may be due to the influence of Asia Minor traced by Strzygowski. The use of barrel-vaults in the Skyros church is very eastern, cf. Strzygowski's plan (*Kleinasien*, p. 153, Fig. 122) of a *Kreuzkuppelbasilica* from Trebizond, the native district of St. Athanasius, the builder of the Protaton. He also gives (p. 139, Fig. 105) the plan of a baptistery at Aladscha Kisli in Cappadocia (? fifth century¹), differing from the Protaton only in the absence of a narthex and in having only one apse sunk in a straight eastern façade. Its four corner spaces are more shut off, in which respect the Protaton occupies a middle position between this and the Skyros Church.

§ 3.—LATE MYCENAEAN AND GEOMETRIC VASES.

Shortly before my visit an interesting tomb was discovered by some men digging for clay for bricks. It was not far from the sea, a few yards from the right bank of the little river which waters the gardens in the valley and then debouches a little to the north of the town. The rapid inroads of the sea in this region,—the marble remains which Tournefort saw (I. p. 171) by the chapel (of St. Demetrius) may, it is said, now be seen under the water two or three hundred metres from the land,—have no doubt destroyed many ancient remains in this flat ground, and this encroachment still continues. Three churches have now been submerged.

The tomb in question is described as having been square and built of stone. It contained a number of vases, but unfortunately also some gold wire. Cupidity gave rise to a quarrel, and that there should be nothing to quarrel about, most of the vases were broken. The remains

¹ Rogers, *Baptism*, p. 327, quotes this church as of the sixth century.

are shewn in Fig. 3. There were also a small jug and cup that were broken from a clay ring, or 'crown,' to which had been fastened some fifteen of these little vessels, jug and cup alternately. This class of object is spoken of in the Palaikastro report of 1904-5, *B.S.A.* x. p. 224, and it is a great pity that this example was destroyed. The vase *a* in the figure has a distinctly Mycenaean decoration on the shoulder and in the

FIG. 3.—VASES FROM SKYROS. (Scale 1:4.)

striped handle, whilst *b* presents an extremely archaic form. It was perhaps covered with a black glaze. *c* has the yellow slip and red to brown glaze of *a*, and in shape recalls the latest Mycenaean vases of Crete. The tomb must belong to the latest Mycenaean times. From another tomb come the vases *d*, *e*, *f*, *g*, from which I saw also another like *e*, and another like *g*.

They are clearly later than *a-c*, and of geometric style, but it is a geometric that has nothing in common with the Dipylon geometric of the mainland, any more than the Late Mycenaean style of *a-c* has anything in common with the Late Mycenaean of Mycenae and Ialysus. In fact both sets are like the corresponding vases in Crete, and it would seem then that in Skyros, as in Crete, the Mycenaean style degenerated along native lines, untouched by the mainland influence that brought the later style of Mycenae and the style of the Dipylon potter. The isolation of Crete at this time was already known, but these vases indicate that this extended to other islands. In the island-world lingered the old Aegean culture that on the mainland was being swept away by invasions and alien streams of influence.

R. M. DAWKINS.