



## KLEPHTES OR ROBIN HOODS

Peter Adamis Abalinx 29 April 2017

Klephtes otherwise known as cattle rustlers, brigands, thieves and romanticised freedom fighters belong to another era. I wonder whether exist today?

In Greece, [Klephtes](#) became romanticised and eventually looked upon as freedom fighters and irregular forces of local chieftains that roamed the mountains, hills, glens and bush of Greece interior. The word kleptomania is a derivative of Klephtes and for those that suffer that malady, it is a serious sickness.

Here in Pellana and the Northern villages of Lakonia, Greece, it would appear that that the klephte has made a comeback and it is a direct result of the debt ridden nation attempts to rid itself of economic and crippling financial burdens. Burdens that are striking deep into the now empty pockets of a people known for their austerity in hard times and a love of life.

Recent changes to bailout conditions are making it almost impossible to survive and yet like their ancestors of old, the people persevere. The cities of Athens and Thessaloniki are most hit as people beg in the streets to eke out a living.

This reminds me of funds given to me by a good friend in Australia whom left an envelope in my mail box. The envelope had Australian dollars, with no name attached to it and I was perplexed as to the owner of the gift. The very next day, I received a phone call from the donor identifying himself and explaining what the money was for. He said to distribute the funds to needy and the poor. True to his request, I have begun to distribute funds every time I travel to a large city.

Yes the Greeks are certainly in need of a Metaxas who had the courage to say "OXI" to the Italian Ambassador when advised that Greece was about to be invaded. Greece needs someone with the courage to say enough is enough and that it can no longer allow its citizens to be treated as mere slaves. Although born in Pellana, I am still a guest and I do not wish to be seen as a critic of the Government or the measures it has taken to cater for the interests of its people. The facts speak for themselves and as all those who are students of history, you can fool some of the people some of the time, you cannot fool all of the people all of the time. Those I have met and still old enough to remember, say that life under the drachma was much simpler, easier and without the crippling taxes. Will the Klephtes become the modern Robin Hoods I wonder?

I lost my father last week and his funeral was held yesterday. Sometime in 2007, he too was the victim of Klephtes. The Klephtes were a young couple. As Dad had an open house policy and welcomed visitors, he was taken by surprise and robbed of his savings. It was a simple method that apparently worked well with the elderly, one klephte companion kept Dad distracted while the other slipped in saying they wished to use the lavatory. While the klephte was in the house it only took a quick few moments to go into the main bedroom, look into drawers and cupboards and rob Dad of his money. I remember it well as my wife, Yovanna and I happened to be in Nauplio, a seaside town relaxing when we received a distress call from Dad. Some could call it reparations for the misdeeds of an ancestor, another could say it was karma and as for me, I call it down right thievery.

I stated reparations and karma for the misdeeds of an ancestor of some 150 years ago. My Great Grandfather was a Klephte of renown and roamed the Taygetos Mountains, the wilds of Arcadia, the plains of Messenia and Lakonia cattle rustling and driving the stolen cattle hundreds of miles from their original location to be sold elsewhere. My great Grandfather teamed up with a famous Klephte known at the time by his pseudonym "Kalfa". "Kalfa" lived in one of the Northern villages of Lakonia and was affectionately known as an efficient and well organised klephte for the period. What I did find with my research was that cattle rustling at that time had nothing to do with being a freedom fighter as the Greek War of Independence was more than 50 years in the distant past.

I found that famine, hunger and taxes drove these people to resorting to cattle rustling to survive and feed their families. In the case of my Great grandfather, his days of cattle rustling came to an end when he was shot and crippled by an irate owner who saw him and his group of rustlers running off with his cattle. Although he managed to escape, his crippled body gave him away and funds sent by his son Peter who was living in America at the time were squandered in payments for legal fees and other court fines. These funds were supposed to be used for purchasing property for his son Peter and not for his legal fees. It has been said that my Great Grandfather on his death bed, took my Grandfather's leg and placed it on his neck asking him to forgive him. My Grandfather being a very compassionate and forgiving man forgave him and my Grandfather died in peace. Such was the way of life in those days.

Today, the Klephte is alive and well. I have my suspicions that the modern Klephte of today lives amongst us and not far from my mother's and father's cottage on the outskirts of the village of Pellana. I say this because of the many break-ins and robberies that have occurred in the villages of Pellana, Georgitsi, Kastania, Alevrou, Pardali, Agorgianni, Kollines and surrounding villages. The Klephtes are merely after money, jewellery, gold and precious stones that can easily be sold. They are not at this stage interested in food, clothing, appliances and other material things that can be easily traced by the Police who I feel are under resourced and manned. I must commend the local Police as they are doing a marvellous job in roaming the backwaters of the State of Lakonia, seeking out known Klephtes.

There is a story of the compassionate Policeman who traced stolen goods belonging to him, to the person who received the goods and was able to track down the thief. The Klephte when confronted by the Policeman, begged forgiveness, pleading that he was stealing to survive and feed his family. The Klephte's family also begged the Policeman for clemency and not to lay charges against the Klephte. The Policeman who is related to me, forgave the klephte who is also related to me and took back the stolen goods. The grandfather of this Klephte was the same who was wined and dined by my father when he was building his cottage, only to go to the local Archaeological department to report my father for not seeking approval to dig before developing the foundations. My father may have forgiven the man in question, but ensured that the tale was not forgotten and passed it onto me.

All of the above must come to a close and I guess this is where my saga with the Klephtes comes into play. On Thursday 27 April 2017 the day before my father passed away, I travelled to Sparta along the new highway which is now only ten minutes rather than 30 minutes by the old road. My cousin Chris Glekas a retired Policeman took me into his car in order for me to purchase computer materials amongst other household goods. We were absent for no more than 60 minutes maximum, returning by the same road to find that the cottage had been ransacked and robbed. Although I am not at liberty to say what was missing due to an ongoing investigation, the Police were summoned and in due courses attended. To them it was a simple case of Klephtes seeking money and precious stones to be sold for narcotics and not for food or other life necessities.

To me it was an outrage and I made it known that I like my relative the Police intend to hunt down the klephte and take whatever action is necessary to retrieve items that were removed. I am here until October and will return again until the Klephte is identified. On the day of my father's burial, I visited all the taverns in the village and left them with funds to drink to my father's passing and to his memory. I also left them with message that I was disgusted to return back to my place of birth and find that I was robbed in my own parent's cottage. I said that I felt that the Klephte was amongst us upon which they did not appear to be surprised. I stood my ground amidst the howls of apologies, denials and shouts of it must the work of gypsies. Gypsies my arse and what utter bullshit.

Once the damage was done, I took immediate reaction and called in the firm responsible to make repairs as soon as possible. I am very fortunate that I have good friends and networks that came to my aid in my time of need. Those networks I had built up over a period of some 45 years, of which have been very loyal and informative throughout those years. These days I now have a new sleeping companion and its name is called "machete". This "Machete" companion has seen service in the jungles of Malaysia, Papua New Guinea and the Far North of Queensland Australia. Although "Machete" is not as lovely and warm as my wife, but I can tell you that "Machete" curls its self well into my hands at night and can normally be found sleeping under the pillow. The "Machete" is normally used to chop meat but I am sure that it can be used to defend oneself in time of need.

As for the modern day Klephte, what can I say other to state that they are thieves of the worst kind and have nothing to do with famine, survival or to feed their families? They are plain and simple stealing from their own and they live amongst us. They are not Robin hoods, there is no Sherwood Forest and there certainly is no bad Sherriff of Nottingham. I for one forgave many during my battle with cancer, but it would appear that I am not as forgiving as my Grandfather and father at this point in time. I intend to use all of my resources in identifying, shaming, exposing and if need be take whatever action is necessary to safe guard my interests whilst I am living in my place of birth. Fear is not my companion and never will be until death decides to pay me a visit in the distant future. This is not a piece of Greek melodrama but real life in the backwoods of North Lakonia, Greece.

2015 and 2016 for me were years of reflection, treatment and recovery. Not to dwell on what could have been but to ensure that whatever time we have left is not squander in futile objectives that lead to nowhere. I intend to make life more meaningful and worthwhile, worthy of those who had a hand in making me who I am today. Life as we know it can only be sustained by vigilance and with that vigilance comes responsibility. Let us hope that 2017 is a good one.



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