



THE PELLANA PANAGIRI FESTIVAL 2017

Peter Adamis Abalinx 23 September 2017

In days of old prior to the Hellenic Diaspora to the USA Canada and Australia in the early nineteen fifties and post WW2 and the Greek Civil war, the Pellaniotes would gather at the village of Pellana in their thousands. In those days it was not a festival but rather a meeting place, a watering hole, cattle yards where animals of all kind were sold or butchered for meat. It was also a time for the young to meet with each other, marriage proposals accepted and rejected, oral contracts, sale and purchase of fields, hoes and other assets. The sale, bargaining or loaning of locally grown or made products. Cloth material being sold and admired by the ladies who would purchase such items for the home with the sale of their own products and as such bartering for goods was another method of buy and sell.

Fruit of every kind could be purchased such as dried figs, oranges, grapes, wine, vinegar milk, cheese, meat freshly killed. Meat in the form of cattle, chickens, goats, and sheep would also be available. Boots, shoes, saddles for the donkeys, horses and asses that once roamed the countryside from one village to another. A myriad of farm implements, tools and iron work would be bought and sold or brought to the blacksmith to have the tool created. Other villagers from surrounding mountain strongholds such as Georgitsi, Kastania, Ragusa, Alevrou, Vergadeika, Agorgianni, Longanikos, Foundeika, Glekeika, Koniditsa, Sellasia, Kastri and Serveika to name a few would also come for the two days.

The village of Pellana ideally suited for such meetings easily housed and accommodated the many that came over the two day period. There were taverns at the Rassias castle, the Gouzoulis, the Morphies, Sigalos, Maheras, Filipopoulos, Maliaros, and at least another ten could be located. Then there was the inns that not only housed the weary traveller but also their animals. There would be one chap dragging the animals into the inns court yard forcing the owner to take shelter for the night in that particular inn, while others would make their way to a relative's home and stay the next two days or as long as they were able to conduct their transactions.

The village centre at the lower level was not what it is today all covered in concrete. In days of old the lower village centre sported a raised platform near where the water pumps are now located. It also had ancient arched ruins dating back to Hellenistic and post Spartan days which included a large pond where ducks and other animals would use to drink, swim and bathe in. This pond was fed by a waterfall of water that gushed out of rock in between the current homes of the Sigalos and Mihalopoulos homes and now that the modern method of pumping is used the water is no longer gushing down the small ravine but now forms a road which leads to the upper quarter of the village.

Sadly the ancient ruins have disappeared along with the two pillars and top supporting stone from the nearby field adjacent the Rassias castle have all but disappeared. In fact the field covers the Temple of Asclepius the God of healing. All of the temple foundations can be found under four to five metres of top soil. In their so called wisdom the village elders some 60 years ago decided to dig up the lower end of the Village centre and replacing the raised platform, ruins and pond. In the process they diggers found hundreds of ancient artefacts, all of which disappeared in one form or another. The remains of a two metre skeleton was also cut in half and the road widened to install the water pipes. All traces of the ancient inhabitants have since disappeared much to the chagrin of modern enlightened man.

Others who came with their animals for barter, sale or to loan their animals for breeding may make their temporary home on the outskirts of the village using the many deep wells located throughout the "gambo" or village gardens that dotted the landscape. Sadly that gambo has since been reduced and cut in half by the modern highway that is located some 1000 metres from the village centre. In such watering holes, land may have had to be organised prior to being allowed to remain, rented or they were lucky enough to remain cost free. During the day these intrepid travellers would make the final trek into the village and conduct their business. Mind you the village also housed some very bright, intelligent and schooled men who eked out a living writing, translating and preparing documents for those who were illiterate. To have had an education post WW2 was an advantage as many were unable to complete their education due to the disruption of studies during the Greek Civil War.

The Greek Civil war ripped many a family apart and the family structure almost ceased to exist as we know of it today. Especially when father and son, cousins, sisters and other relatives were against each other for believing and following opposing ideologies. Today the stigma and the stain is still felt in subtle ways and now and then a nod, turn of the head, a word, a remark or a gesture can bring out the past and then words may be said that one finds it difficult to reconcile with one another. Sadly many stories will go unheard of or be recorded because so many have since departed this world and only glimpses of that era remain in oral format which is a reminder that Homers Iliad and Odysseus survived the ravages of time.

The village Panagiri also attracted the thieves, shysters, con artists and the carpet baggers similar to those that followed in the wake of the American Civil war some 200 years ago. The Panagiri of old also was a place to obtain information of the outside world when transport was limited to donkeys, horses, by foot or the visitor returning from overseas. Yes the Pellana festival has come a long way and has transformed itself into a festival of which many old and new flock to hear the bands play, mix with friends and relatives, have a great time, sharing stories and

catching up with local and of news abroad. Gossip was rife, Field Police would be ever watchful, local elders on the lookout for any mischievous behaviour, feuds could be settled or started anew and elder's thoughts and guidance sought to find a solution to problems vexing members. Yes the Pellana Panagiri of old was a hub of activity and communication or miscommunication was also rife.

I remember having my first taste of the Pellana Panagiri in September 1973 when I visited the village while posted to Singapore/Malaya and was able to witness the atmosphere back then. During that period the village still thronged with many people and it was held by a number of families, including the Sigalos, Dimos, Morphies, Gouzoulis, Varoutsios and many others. The second experience I had was in 2013 when I came to Greece with Dad and I had the opportunity to pay the band to play the song "THE VOUNO, (The Mountain) for dad who was unable to attend but could hear it in the cottage located on a small knoll some 500 paces from the village centre. While the song was being played, I had tears in my eyes as I knew that it would be the last time Dad would hear it in his place of birth. The Panagiri was hosted by Spiros Dimos, Aunt Giannoula Morphis and Sigalos families. Sadly my fears realised when he passed away in April this year as he was preparing to come to Greece.

This year, I attended the first evening with my cousin Chris Glekas and his wife and his best man Arthur Papastathis. It was a prelude to the following day's festivities where it was difficult to find parking let alone a seat as the village area at Aunt Giannoulas was packed. This year Aunt Giannoula Morphis was the only one to host the Panagiri while the others had ceased or scaled down their contribution. Still Aunt Giannoula put on a great show resplendent with a band, singers and back up crew assisting with the cooking of the meat, serving on tables and carrying out other chores associated with the Panagiri. Visitors from the surrounding villagers still attended and there were many visitors from abroad who had come specifically for the Pellana Panagiri. Sad to say that it is a sign of the times that numbers are reduced each year, but that can be explained due to the many who have since left and gone to other Western nations to escape the current financial crisis, poverty and lack of employment opportunities.

This evening at the time of writing, I attended the second evening for a short time, taking photographs, saying hi to friends and relatives alike and also catching up with others that I had not seen for some time. Unfortunately due to a local bug that I happened to pick up I could not stay long and left saying my good byes to good friends and relatives alike. In summation, no one knows the future and I for one do hope that I have the opportunity to revisit the village and partake in the festivities such as the Pellana Panagiri once again. After all it is embedded within me no matter where I go and live. May health and good ageing come to enable one to enjoy life as it should be!

2015 and 2016 for me were years of reflection, treatment and recovery. 2017 has so far been good and one hopes that it will continue to be so. I know not to dwell on what could have been but to ensure that whatever time we have left is not squandered 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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ΟΡΕΚΤΙΚΑ	
ΧΩΡΙΑΤΙΚΗ ΣΑΛΑΤΑ	5€
ΦΕΤΑ	3€
ΣΦΕΛΑ χωριάτικη	3€
ΠΑΤΑΤΕΣ ΤΗΓΑΝΙΤΕΣ	3€
ΤΖΑΤΖΙΚΙ	3€
ΚΡΕΑΤΙΚΑ	
ΓΟΥΡΟΥΝΟΠΟΥΛΑ	15€ ΤΟ ΚΙΛΟ
ΣΟΥΒΛΑΚΙ	1,5€
ΛΟΥΚΑΝΙΚΟ χωριάτικο	3€
ΓΙΔΑ ΒΡΑΣΤΗ η μερίδα	5€
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Amstel 330ml	2€
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Ουίσκυ 0.7 lt φιάλη	50€
ΕΠΙΔΟΡΠΙΟ	
Καρυδόπιτα	2€
Καλώς ήρθατε στο πανηγύρι του Αγιάνη του Σκούλη κοκροπώλου	
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