



CUSTOMS AND TRADITIONS RELATING TO RECURRENT ASTRONOMICAL PHENOMENA

1. THE CRETAN DAVETI

It is said that even today during full moon nights in eastern Crete a ceremony called Daveti takes place. It is a magic ceremony that includes magical circles, special Cretan knives with black hilts and invocations.

Anyone who wants to learn to play the lyre well goes to a deserted crossroads at night and there he draws a circle on the ground with the special knife, he enters the circle, he sits and plays. The Fairies come in a little while and they walk around him. Their purpose is not good, they want to destroy him.

But since they cannot enter the circle, they try to fool him and pull him out. They call him with sweet words, beautiful songs, but if he is wise, he must keep playing the lyre undisturbed, without getting out of the circle.

Since they do not succeed, they call him to get out of the circle and promise to teach him to play the lyre better.

However, he does not respond. Then they ask him for the lyre. The lyre player gives it but he does not come out of the circle. If he comes out, his hand or foot is cut off him or he gets crazy. Then a Fairy begins to play the lyre artistically and she returns the lyre hoping that the lyre player will be convinced to get out of the circle to hurt him.

This happens all night until dawn. Just before the end they ask him to give them something of his own, and in return they will teach him to play the lyre well. The lyre player usually gives his nail. The Fairies teach him to play the lyre skillfully and they are lost at dawn.

2. FAIRIES AND PIXIES

In many parts of Greece - mostly in the islands – people believed that on the night of the full moon, fairies and pixies came and touched with their wand anyone they found giving out love. They fled just before dawn, being enchanted themselves too, offering oblivion and forgiveness.

3. WITCES OF EPIRUS AND THESSALY

It is said that on full moon nights in many villages of Thessaly witches gather in the rivers. They wash their hair in crystal clear waters, they make honey pies and invoke the moon of August so as to steal some of the precious moon dust that heals the bewitched ladies and has the power to change and transform everything.

Also in Epirus, in the past, there was a widespread popular belief that witches and especially magicians had the ability to find out the demons so that they would reveal to them various secrets and future facts. Moreover, the magicians had the power to subdue a demon who would serve them by fulfilling an order or mission.

4. THE CAPTIVITY OF THE MOON

The moon plays an important role in the practice of magic. The criterion for being a capable witch is if she can "pull down the moon". The witches make a pie in order to capture the moon; and as the moon comes closer to eat the pie the witches capture it and so the moon becomes a subject of the witches.

When the moon comes down from the sky the witches trap it and torture it until it tells them everything they want to learn. When the witches torment the moon there is bad weather and it groans and it can be heard by many people.

5. BELIEFS AND SUPERSTITIONS

Moon phases are specifically considered in people's lives before starting work or major events. So it is good for someone to start some work when the moon is waxing. Also when someone progresses in his work he is considered to be born under full moon. The opposite is believed for the waning of the moon. At that time people do not plant because the plants may droop • they do not do the laundry because the fabrics may be damaged • they do not dry vegetables or fish • they do not cut wood because it may rot • they do not prune the vines because they get sick etc.

Those who see the new moon for the first time (when the moon cannot be seen at all) carry out symbolic actions indicating its effect on them. For example, they slap their palms and jump three times wishing they are always healthy as they are that moment, or shuffle the money in their wallet so as it is always full. It is bad to see the new moon for the first time when sitting.

If someone cuts his hair during the moon's waxing, his hair will grow faster, and if someone cuts his hair during the moon's waning his hair will grow slower but it will be stronger. - If a woman gives birth during the moon's waxing, her next child will be of the same sex. If she gives birth during the waning of the moon, her next child will be of the opposite sex of the first.

When the moon is red they say that someone will die.

Never fall asleep immediately under the full moon, because it can bring illness, or even death.

The beliefs concerning the sun refer primarily to its sunset, because darkness follows it, and secondly to its eclipse, which brings darkness and it may be a sign of disasters.

For this reason, it is believed that whatever is born- man or animal- during the sunset does not advance, contrary to what is born during the sunrise.

Sweeping at sunset is considered to be a bad thing. If someone gives some vinegar from his home after sunset, the rest will sour.

This presentation was created by students taking part in the programme
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