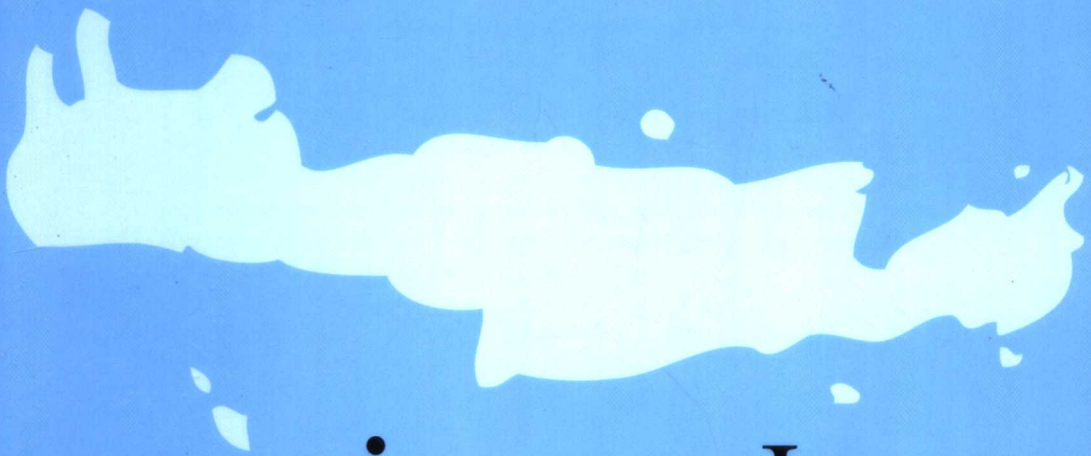

music and musicians in crete

Performance and Ethnography in Mediterranean Island Society

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Editor's Foreword

Kevin Dawe's study is the third in our series that focuses on the musical life of an island. Once again, it seems appropriate to note the fascination islands continue to exercise on the ethnomusicological imagination. We are intrigued, if only at some early stage of our inquiry, by the idea of a genuinely bounded cultural space, where what comes from within and what comes from without can be clearly distinguished. Our efforts to maintain this fantasy of wholeness are in vain, of course. Sometimes we learn from these efforts, and find new ways of talking about places, identities, processes of circulation, scales of analysis. Kevin Dawe has written just such a book, one in which the lives of Cretan lyra players are seen in multiple and overlapping contexts, contexts they manipulate, play with and explore. On a far periphery, facing Turkey, questions about Europe, Greece, and Crete in music attain a sharp and urgent focus.

Dawe's book is the result of extensive research and experience, not only as an ethnographer, but as a performing musician. It often takes a performing musician to give material objects their due. Ethnomusicology's "cultural turn" pushed the study of instruments ("organology") onto the back-burner some decades ago. Dawe's book, a study of the Cretan lyra and its players, suggests that this may be the time to bring this pot to the boil once again. Instruments, he hints, are not merely texts full of information about a society's musical ideas. They are objects with powers and agencies of their own, supplied by culture, and returned to it in roundabout and sometimes uncanny ways. Even as imaginary objects they strike up a lively relation with human subjects, as with the "air lyra" player you will see on page 127 (figure 5.11). If a new organology is to engage the "social life of things," to quote Appadurai, we must be able to sense, as Dawe does here, the complex powers and agencies that reside in instruments.

Many readers will be familiar with the remarkable work of Ross Daly, musical cosmopolitan par excellence. This has involved a re-imagination of Crete as a center, rather than a remote periphery, and a re-imagination of the circulation of music in the region before it was complicated, and inhibited, by the cul-

tural nationalisms of the nineteenth century. Dawe reminds readers of the local context of Daly's explorations, the dense and rich patterns of musical learning and exchange, the intense life of celebration and festivity in which they are embedded and on which they depend. In the process, we learn something about the "protomasters" of earlier years, and the lively music making of Dawe's own teacher, Dimítris Pasparákis. We see Daly, in other words, from a slightly unfamiliar angle. But it is one that, throughout this book, raises important questions about how we habitually constitute, and contest, the boundaries of European music.

Martin Stokes

Acknowledgments

I have become increasingly grateful over the years to those mentors and peers who shaped my first approaches to many of the themes and issues arising in this book. I continue to treasure their constructive criticism and friendly advice. Martin Stokes has been a solid advisor and mentor since I began my research on Cretan music in 1990. It is an extraordinarily happy coincidence for me that this book, based on my PhD which Martin supervised, should now find a published home in the Scarecrow series for which he is jointly responsible. I am truly indebted to Martin for all his patient support and continued interest in my work, including his detailed reading and extremely helpful comments on drafts of this book. Philip Bohlman also read my drafts and I very much appreciate his advice and comments. I have been fortunate to have such sound counsel. I have also very much appreciated the friendship and friendly advice of the following people along the way: John Baily, Roddy Beaton, Andy Bennett, John Blacking, Stephen Blum, Reg Byron, Martin Clayton, David Cooper, Jane Cowan, Ross Daly, Frank Denyer, Markos Dragoumis and family, Vic Gammon, Bob Gilmore, Trevor Herbert, David Hughes, Yvonne Hunt, Colin Irwin, Othani Kimiko, Michaelis "sunglasses" Kolitákis and family, Tony Langlois, Irene Loutzaki, Richard Middleton, Dimítris Pasparákis and family, Goffredo Plastino, Jonathan Stock, Suzel Riley, Ime Dan Ukpanah, and Um Hae-kyung. I am extremely grateful to Ian Sapiro, who not only prepared a camera-ready copy of this book but also kept me on target.

My parents first introduced me to the delights of Crete and its people in 1981. I met my wife, Moira, whilst writing up the first part of my Cretan fieldwork as a PhD student in Belfast. So I dedicate this book to family and friends in Crete and elsewhere. The spirit of the Cretan tradition seems big enough to envelop the world and any dedication in relation to it, musical or otherwise, is heartfelt.

Over time, significant portions of this book have appeared elsewhere. I thank the publishers for permission to make use of the following (now substantially revised) materials:

- "Performance on a Mediterranean Theme: Musicians and Masculinity in Crete," Pp. 117–30 in *The Mediterranean in Music: Critical Perspectives, Common Concerns, Cultural Differences*, edited with D. Cooper, Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2005, parts now incorporated into chapter 1
- "Bandleaders in Crete: Musicians and Entrepreneurs in a Greek Island Economy," *The British Journal of Ethnomusicology* 7 (1998): 23–44, forms the basis of chapter 2
- "The Engendered Lyra: Music, Poetry and Manhood in Crete," *The British Journal of Ethnomusicology* 5 (1996): 93–112, forms the basis of chapter 3
- "Lyres and the Body Politic: Studying Musical Instruments in the Cretan Musical Landscape," *Popular Music and Society* 26, No. 3 (2003): 263–83, forms the basis of chapter 5
- "Minotaurs or Musonauts? Cretan Music and 'World Music,'" *Popular Music* 18 (1999): 209–25, forms the basis of chapter 6
- "Roots Music in the Global Village: Cretan Ways of Dealing with the World at Large," *World of Music* 42, No. 3 (2000): 47–66, forms the basis of chapter 7

Contents

Chapter 1

Introduction

> You've drunk and eaten well, my lads, on festive shores,
> Until the feast within you turned to dance and laughter,
> Love-bites and idle chatter that dissolved in flesh;
> But in myself the meat turned monstrous, the wine rose,
> A sea chant leapt within me, rushed to knock me down,
> Until I longed to sing this song—make way my brothers!
> (Kazantzákis, in Friar 1982: 48)

> Business stopped, customers and clerks alike stopped what they were doing and stood in silence or tapped their feet and hummed to themselves. The bow danced across the strings, the little bells bobbled, the insinuating music rose up in little whirlpools; round and round it went, like a tornado gathering in intensity and then dying away, and like a tornado sweeping all before it, into its vortex. (Doren 1974: 73)

In the autumn of 1990, a long-term interest in the Mediterranean area and its musical instruments became the focus of my doctoral research program in ethnomusicology. I set my sights on pilot fieldwork in Athens, the Aegean, and the southern Greek islands. But as a guitarist and one time *sitar* player it was not the plucked lutes of the area that grabbed my attention so much as an upright bowed lute (a type of fiddle, if you will) called the *lyra* as found on the Greek island of Crete and which I first encountered in situ in 1989. I had the good fortune to be able to conduct fieldwork on the music of Crete throughout the 1990s, the decade upon which this book is based. Returning several times to Crete, each and every time I went back, a new sea of possibilities surrounded me. This concerned me somewhat as it seemed to me as if the shoreline of my initial thesis was not so much being eroded by the passage of time but rather it was being transformed by waves of change that were rolling up on *my* beach, and adding new and interesting dimensions to *my* study! Social and economic change might not only add new dimensions to musical practices in Crete but even change, perhaps irrevocably, the very music I was writing about.[1] My study might have

to be continued indefinitely, I thought, as I waited to see how these changes panned out musically. I urgently needed to consider not just how to play the lyra but also how to study in much greater detail the culture and society of which it remains a significant part. My study would need to continue to explore links between musical and social practices and try to ask deep and probing questions about the ways in which these practices came together in performance, as expressive culture, and in the working lives of musicians. To this end, my research was extended well beyond a calendar year (the basic and even customary period of time for ethnographic research). So as much as this book is an ethnography, it is also a social historical and theoretical study, because it not only documents and draws on encounters with Cretan music within a ten-year period (1990–2000) but also incorporates several years of reflection and theorizing up away from the field.

This study is probably the first sustained analysis and book-length ethnography of Cretan lyra music[2] to appear in print.[3] It is certainly the first monograph to focus on the working lives of musicians in Crete, drawing on the theories, methods, and analytical techniques of ethnomusicology, anthropology, cultural studies, popular music studies, material culture studies, and gender studies. This broad ranging discussion combines both textual analyses (transcription of musical and extra-musical sounds, verbalizations and poetry, iconography) with socio-cultural methods of analysis (ethnography of musical performance, participant observation, and interviews). Throughout the book I have found it necessary and appropriate to use transcriptions, figures, tables, and photographs to try and represent (musical) performance as both multidimensional and multimedia. Lyra music takes its meaning from more than sound alone. There is no CD to accompany this book. Lyra music is furnished by an industry that sells both live celebration and studio recordings and these can be acquired relatively easily via the Internet.[4]

An Ethnomusicological Approach

This book does not represent a detailed history of music making in Crete (historical musicology); neither is it a critical overview of all scholarly articles ever written about music on the island (historiography), although these approaches also make up the ethnomusicological approach taken here. There is a relatively small literature that provides for the analysis of the musical structures of Cretan music in all its forms (including lyra music), and this study adds to that literature.[5] There is also a significant body of anthropological writing on Greece and Crete that has been highly influential in ethnomusicological studies of the Mediterranean, including my own work and the work of a new generation of Greek ethnomusicologists.[6] The aim of this study is to bring both musicological and anthropological approaches together in order to present a more holistic model of music-making activity through first-hand observation and analysis of performances in context. I focus on lyra music, which is largely music for dancing and

music mostly made by men.[7] This direction of my research and publication not only reflects the endeavor of recent ethnomusicological scholarship but also shows up a lack of any such treatment in the study of lyra music. The aim here is to provide a document of and testimony to the working lives of a small group of musicians, working in a single genre in a specified locality, and during a particular period in Crete's history. The emphasis is on how "traditional" musicians[8] have managed to eke out a living on a ledge in a changing society drawn increasingly into a rapidly globalizing world.[9]

One needs to look no further than the Mediterranean to discover how these more recent social and cultural trends have reconfigured some musical practices; even Alexis Zorba, the lead character in Nikos Kazantzákis's novel, traveled the Aegean and the Balkans with his beloved *santuri*.[10] But at the time of writing, Mediterranean musicians, especially the superstars of Mediterranean music, move well beyond Mediterranean shores to travel the world. Khaled, Amir Diab, Giorgos Dalaras, Paco de Lucía, and many others are perhaps the new breed of Mediterranean musician, living at home and/or abroad, and in their music drawing on very local sounds as well as those from well beyond the Mediterranean. The Mediterranean and its musicians come well within the reach of global media, international music industry, and that mighty enabler of self-redefinition world music.[11] Notions of a Mediterranean music are clearly articulated by the world music industry even if musicians from the Mediterranean area do not always acknowledge similarities and influences in their work. Groups such as Radio Tarifa and Bustan Abraham or individual artists like Ross Daly and Luís Delgado continue to explore musics across the Mediterranean. Many locally based musicians regularly criss-cross the Mediterranean on tour, in concert, or on recording sessions and there have been extensive collaborations between them.[12]

My initial aim was to find a focus within a Mediterranean context in which I could learn how to play, what would be for me, a new musical tradition. But I also wanted to observe the working lives of musicians, drawing on my own experience of working as a semi-professional musician on the county band circuit in England. I was not concerned whether the musicians I might work with were as well-known as George Dalaras or Amir Diab, nor was I necessarily interested in local recording industries at that time. Rather, I was keen to find out more about the locally based musician for whom studio work was an occasional and peripheral activity. I was more interested in musicians playing local scenes and circuits, just as I had done in England. In a Greek context, I wanted to find out more about musicians playing traditional music, music that had very little to do with pop music or world music. Not that I thought that such a musician would be any more of an authentic performer than his peers in pop or world music. I wanted to observe the working life of local musicians at close quarters, not follow them around as part of a star system or celebrity circus. I also wanted to learn a strong and vibrant local music tradition, old music rather than new music but not necessarily unrecorded music. I had read much about the survival of local musical traditions in Greece, perhaps more than anywhere else in Mediter-

ranean Europe. But I was also wary of the ways in which some writers waxed lyrical about certain instruments, and through the romance of it all wondered whether "survival" meant "up until ten years ago" or "staged." I had also listened to several recordings of both city- and village-based musics from that country. As a player of string instruments I found much to interest me in the music of Greece, from *bouzouki* (long-necked plucked lute) to violins but also discovered new and unusual sounds emanating from various kinds of bagpipes and string instruments employing, for instance, microtonality. I looked hard at string instrument-based music in Greece. My ears took me first to bouzouki music in Athens. After a short period learning the bouzouki in situ (1989–1990), I heard for the first time music from the Greek island of Crete, a place I had visited before but returned to briefly in 1989. I was smitten on my first hearing of lyra music. I had heard it played live, in the hands of one of Ross Daly's students in Athens, and this had made me determined to go back to the island. At this time, my attention had also been grabbed by a reading of Michael Herzfeld's *The Poetics of Manhood* (Herzfeld 1985), a book based on his ethnographic research in a Cretan mountain village. On reading this book, I remembered just how much the people, culture, and landscape of the island had fired my own imagination on a short trip to Crete in 1981. Now I had the music and the anthropology to look into as well! There was little doubt in my mind that a potential research project was beginning to shape up in a Mediterranean context and that I had found a desirable and even viable focus. It also seemed to me as if this focus would enable me to develop not only as an instrumentalist but also as an anthropologist of music. I would go to Crete with the intention of conducting an ethnomusicological fieldwork project in which I would not only learn to play the music of the island but also try to understand its meaning, role, and significance witin Cretan society, largely through the work of professional musicians.

After some time in the field, following up leads, sometimes reaching dead ends, and trying to come to terms with any idealistic tendencies in my approach, I began to firm up what I believed to be a feasible, realistic, and doable project. My aims and objectives became clear. I wanted to understand what it meant to be a musician in the lyra music ensemble of Crete during the 1990s and to make the vital connections between music, culture, and society surprisingly understudied in terms of lyra music, its performers, and the lyra itself. I believed it crucial to gain an understanding of Cretan lyra music as a product not just of celebration events but also of a local music industry and the media.[13] This would necessitate a study of the relationship between but also analysis of relevant musical, verbal, and visual material (including the promotional materials of the music industry). I would need to employ a wide range of theoretical and methodological approaches (in time and in tune with current ethnomusicological research) as it seemed absolutely necessary to explore concepts of "tradition" and "modernity" in relation to lyra music, and investigate aspects of its continuity and change in relation to the culture and society of which it is a part. My response to this line of questioning developed over time.

I saw the need to focus on musicians, their lives, their music, and what it

meant to be a man and a musician in Crete, as well as explore Cretan notions of musicianship as an engendered practice or collection of skills and core values. A thorough ethnographic study was absolutely necessary to do this. I found it necessary to critically assess my approach to gender and music in a Cretan context in relation to recent literature on gender and sexuality within and without a Mediterranean context, but also in relation to the classics of Greek ethnography. After all, the musicians I worked with were all men and the role of women in lyra music was obviously something in need of investigation. Women were certainly conspicuous by their near absence in lyra music. I needed to explore musicians' work patterns and business practices, along with the managerial/social skills and systems of exchange that seemed to inform them.

My research began to emphasize the fact that lyra music takes its meaning not from sound alone but also from the use of words and images, and the ways in which music, poetry, and the presentation of the body coalesce or find intertextual expression not just in performance but also in promotional materials. The ethnography of performance would need to be a central theme as I observed very early on that it was at celebration events (in village or town) that one could see the essential dynamic that exists between all the elements that make up lyra music, and aspects of a communal performance were clearly crucial to its existence. Those elements creating a unique dynamic at live performances included musical themes and manhood ideals, symbolic and economic exchange, gunfire, bravura, and the involvement of a large audience of dancers and revellers. Elements of the performances I observed, for example, at wedding celebrations, carried over into other aspects of and activities within the daily life of musicians, villagers, and others and included skills of social interaction, negotiation, management, and diplomacy. Herzfeld (1985) notes some of these features in his ethnography of a Cretan mountain village.

The lyra is a musical instrument that appeared to have tremendous symbolic power and significance in Crete. I wanted to analyze the role of the lyra in Cretan society in some detail and take the opportunity to explore the relevance of a large but select literature in sociology and material culture studies. I wanted not only to investigate the relationship between music and technology in a Cretan context, exploring the culture of musical instrument making, but also to try out best fit ideas about objects as agential in social life (see Appadurai 1986; Miller 2003, 2005), perhaps even regarding them as akin to social beings in terms of their influence and affect (see Gell 1998). I also needed to explore how local notions of masculinity and bodily presentation were brought to bear upon the lyra. Musical instruments are, of course, emblematic of certain times and places, a point which comes through with force in terms of the lyra but also in terms of other musical instruments that inhabited the Cretan musical landscape. I learned to play the basic lyra repertoire and in this book I analyze the music I was given to play, noting pedagogical issues that came up in the classroom and beyond out into the world of the celebration. The celebration is a perpetual learning ground and is the context in which, in many ways, lyra music is defined and passed on to the next generation.

Over time it became clear to me that, in the Cretan context, "tradition" and "modernity" should not be simply characterized as a dichotomy or necessarily seen as synonymous with the old and the new, the inside and the outside, or the local and the global (nor a simple move in progress from the "traditional" to the "modern"). They might be all or some of these. Notions of "tradition" and "modernity" are related to complex issues about nation, identity, politics, and place, and worked out as part of a local value system. In probing this local value system, I wanted to try and reveal the effects of incoming non-local cultural phenomena on local cultural practices, so my study had to include a study of the possible effects of globalization on the Cretan musical landscape.

I tried to realize my aims and objectives by sticking very closely to this agenda, even as I began to theorize up,[14] and by continuing to work within a specific and particular cultural context through a focused case study of lyra music and musicians in the field.

Figure 1.1: First signs of musical life

Into the Field

> "Come outside," he said. "The *santuri* isn't at home between four walls. It's wild and needs open spaces." We went out. The stars sparkled. The Milky Way flowed from one side of the sky to the other. The sea was frothing. We sat down on the pebbles and the waves licked our feet. "When you're broke, you have a good time," said Zorba. "What, us give up? Come here, *santuri*!" (Kazantzákis 1988 [1961]: 183)

Fieldwork in Crete was a time of discovery. I was young and impressionable, hankering for wild and open soundscapes. How much of that experience still lives with me is hard to say. How can one measure the impact or assess the value of friendship with field notes, sociability with sound recordings, and trust with transcription? I certainly cannot separate out these and all the other elements that made up that experience. What I do know with some certainty is that the year I spent on the island deeply affected me in many ways and still profoundly affects my approach as an ethnomusicologist. Happily, the stars still sparkle when I look in the direction of constellation ethnomusicology, that is, I think of the study of music as firmly embedded, thought about, talked about, laughed at, argued over, and contested in the daily existence of living, breathing human beings. In Crete, therefore, there were no informants, only teachers. There was culture contact as subsumed by human contact. How many times had I sat on the shoreline between hope and despair only to be rescued by the writings of Kazantzákis, by a kind word from my music teacher or a friendly jibe from a villager? I do not remember exactly how many Zorbas had pointed to the Milky Way and the wild open spaces and declared a love of life, a woman's eyes, Crete, music, poetry, and dance. But I argue that these interactions were as important as time spent on field notes and transcriptions to my understanding and reading of Cretan musical culture. For sure, this intense personal engagement with the locals helped me to elicit from them what their musical culture meant to them, whilst finding out about its various modes of production and consumption. My learning grounds were not just some pebbly beach, but a variety of musical contexts. These included celebrations lasting fifteen hours, music lessons, interviews over coffee with record producers in a smoky office, haggles over the price of a cassette in the market, time spent hanging out with musicians in the local music store, and the observation of studio recording techniques.

In order to spend some time away from the local musical community and my intense engagement with it, I found my own space along the harbor wall at Iraklion. This was a place of departures and returns. In my case, it was a return to collect my thoughts, complete my field notes, and reflect on trips into the interior. Walking the breakwater and seeking shade in the Venetian Fort perched quayside was conducive to reflection and meditation. Here I entered a kind of liminal state where I could play with my understanding of what was going on musically in Crete, relive my experiences of performance events and interviews, and try out new ideas in my mind (my very own interior). The harbor wall was (in 1990) and still is a part of the breakwater for a busy ferry port where ships travel between Crete and the rest of Greece, Israel, and Egypt. For me, at the time, it seemed the harbor was the departure point for the rest of the world, only I was not leaving and my odyssey lay inland. Passenger jets flew in noisily overhead from the rest of Europe and landed at the international airport located but a few miles away. Charter flights and cargo ferries left again according to the rhythm of the seasons heading far out over the horizon. As I shifted my gaze inland from the frothing blue sea, the island loomed large in front of me. It was an imposing sight from the breakwater as the largely grey and often-ramshackle

urban landscape fell back upon the hills and the wide streets beckoned me to enter once again into heart of the island. It is easy to see with hindsight, what a precious time this was. I was on the edge of something big, a notion that was confirmed by my every trip back into the interior.

Figure 1.2: The Venetian Fort at Iraklion Harbor (1990)

Figure 1.3: Looking eastwards across Iraklion City (1990)

Stretching for at least a mile out into the Sea of Crete, the breakwater was also something of a metaphor for my out-on-a-limb experience of fieldwork in Crete. I had stepped ashore not as a scholar of classics or anthropology, though both were represented among my aspirations, but as a musician and naturalist. I was not alone, of course, in having interests in both music and natural history. Laur-

ence Picken, a celebrated scholar of both music and biological sciences at Cambridge, had published his book on the *Folk Musical Instruments of Turkey* some fifteen years before (see Picken 1975). I had read this book as an undergraduate and marvelled. Moving with ease between Chinese mythology and genetic theory, life's rich tapestry was captured by Picken working systematically and in an analytical style not cramped by disciplinary boundaries. One might say that he found a way of combining all his interests! In my own way, I was trying to do the same. I was inspired by Picken's focus on musical instruments and the incredible detail of his documentation (from materials of construction to tunings, from basic repertoire to social and cultural role). In the end, it seemed to me as if the musical instruments he wrote about were rooted not only in the musical cultures of Turkey but also in the very soil upon which musicians walked. In short, it seemed to me as if Picken was talking about the ecology of musical instruments within a Turkish context.

I had also read Ellen Frye's book, *The Marble Threshing Floor*, which, to my mind, also reflected upon what one might call a musical ecology. In her book, Greek identity and folksongs are seen as rooted in an "endless struggle against the elements" (Frye 1973: 3). She vividly places each and every song in a social environment, and many of the rural songs seem embedded in and arising out of farming, herding, and fishing, all occupations dependent upon the land and sea, and requiring intimate knowledge of a local ecology. Musicians play for dancing upon the marble threshing floor, a richly symbolic place where the wheat is separated from the chaff, in more ways than one. Again, music in this book is portrayed as deeply embedded in a regional landscape, however much, in fact, the regional landscape is constructed by politicians.

I do not wish to try and deconstruct Picken or Frye in the light of current thinking in the social sciences. Both of these books are classic publications of their time and place and will remain standard works in their field. There are, of course, elements of my interpretation of these books that reflect an ideological approach. Such an approach, as it appears above, may be seen as romantic and even essentialist. I had to carefully assess what exactly it was that I wanted to study and achieve in a Cretan context if I was to step out of this mold and stay away from making connections that were theoretically flawed from the start, if not outside the bounds of my knowledge and understanding. I was not, after all, a professional ecologist. The scope of a musical fieldwork study would have to be kept in check, and my theory and method would have to be carefully chosen and rigorously applied. Clearly, it must be said that the ethnographer does not arrive cold on the scene, as an objective observer (see Clifford and Marcus 1986), but on a scene that is known through multiple, prior experiences. I was also aware that film, television, and travel were influencing my thinking. I had watched *Zorba the Greek* (1964), *The Lotus-Eaters* (1972–1973), and *Who Pays the Ferryman?* (1977), perhaps the best known film and television serials to be set on Crete. I had also visited the island with my parents nearly nine years earlier (in 1981). The people, the archaeology, the landscape, the flora and fauna still fascinated me but this time it was different: I was on my own. I began to