

ANGELS IN CYPRIOT RELIGIOUS FOLK SONGS. SYMBOLIC ARCHETYPICAL CHARACTERS IN THE WORLDVIEW OF POPULAR CHRISTIAN RELIGIOUSNESS IN CYPRUS

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Abstract: MARTÍN VICO, Ana María. *Angels in Cypriot Religious Folk Songs. Symbolic Archetypal Characters in the Worldview of Popular Christian Religiousness in Cyprus.* Cypriot religious folk songs constitute a manifestation of Greek Cypriot Christian identity across time. Their lyrics reveal an intratextual context in which the universe's order distinguishes between Earth, Heaven and Hell. In this worldview, angels are heavenly spiritual beings that present discernible biblical attributes and roles. Nevertheless, given the folk nature and popular religiousness of this lyrical poetry, these angels also differ from their canonical conception. Therefore, since different elements are provided, they are symbolic archetypal literary characters that Cypriot Greek people link to the biblical creation myth, Saint Mary and Jesus Christ's Passion and Resurrection. In addition, the archangels Gabriel and Michael are especially significant, for they are both alluded to on several notable occasions. Other religious references demonstrate that the people who created the songs may have had knowledge of additional features related to angels.

Keywords: *angels, Cypriot folk songs, symbolic archetypal characters, worldview, Christian religiousness*

Introduction

Cypriot religious folk songs find their roots in the history of the island of Cyprus. Over time, the Christian Greek Cypriot individuals who settled there developed their own folk music tradition, their anonymous lyrics were mainly composed in Cypriot Greek¹, and thus reflected their cultural identity. Given the conflicts between Christians and Muslims from the 12th century onwards, these religious songs were a way to reaffirm the religious identity of Christians². Consequently, both the songs and their lyrics, which are considered to be poems when they are detached from the music, constituted a very relevant part of the Cypriot oral folk tradition (Kliridis 2017, 33).

Certainly, the Cypriot author Nearchos Kliridis devoted the first part of his work *Κυπριακά Δημοτικά Τραγούδια* [Cypriot Folk Songs] to the aforementioned kind of songs³. In this anthology, the author included a significant number of songs, and the translations of their titles are as follows: *Hymn to Saint Mary, To Saint Mary, Rejoice for Ascetic Poetry, To Saint Mary and Various Saints*,

¹ For further details on Cypriot Greek dialect, cf. Nikolaos Kondosopoulos (2000, 196-197).

² According to Isabel de Cabo Ramon (2005, 192-193), Cyprus was conquered by the Arabs in 694 and invaded by the Ottoman Empire in 1571.

³ Cf. Nearchos Kliridis (2017, 41-201).

Saint Mary's Dream, *The Alphabet Song*, *The Song of the Soul*, *Hymn to the Deipara*, *There Is Avarice*, *Saint Lazarus' Song*⁴, *Saint Mary's Lament*⁵, *The Resurrection Song*⁶ and *Saint George's Song*⁷.

For the purpose of this article, the aforementioned poems are studied in order to identify and analyse information on angels. Taking into consideration their intratextual context, the intention here is to determine how they are represented (i.e., what their attributes and roles are), what they entail as literary characters, what they mean in the context of popular religiousness and, as a result of this, how they differ from their distinctive canonical features or aspects which are referred to in the Holy Bible.

Intratextual context of Cypriot religious folk songs

It should be specified that the intrinsic holistic context of Cypriot religious folk songs lies in the worldview revealed by these texts, that is to say, in the conception of the world according to Christian Greek Cypriot people from previous eras⁸. Through their verses, the existence of an archetypal biblical universe is observed, which consists of three distinct main parts: Earth, Heaven and Hell.

As the Creation is described in detail, the heavenly bodies are emphasized. The nature of Earth is underlined, as it comprises the sea, mountains, trees and fish (at this point, no other living beings are mentioned⁹, although the Holy Bible does refer to them¹⁰). Therefore, it is an immense work by God (and/or Jesus Christ¹¹), who metaphorically is an exceptional 'engineer'. Likewise, the world is a 'watch' that is wound up, the sun is a 'medallion' above it, the stars are a 'chain', and the moon is a 'key'¹². Nevertheless, just as it happened to 'the first mother' (Eve) in Genesis 3: 22-24, the Earth's land is the place where people are banished to¹³.

Heaven, as the spiritual place where God resides, is located in the heights so that the Father is omnipresent and can see the actions of men¹⁴; note that this perception is clearly reflected in Job 31:2, for example. Additionally, floodgates can be found in Heaven (in this case, for the purpose of denoting its greatness¹⁵). Here it can also be disambiguated that the metaphors 'Kingdom of Heaven' and 'Gates of Paradise' allude to Saint Mary¹⁶.

⁴ Nearchos Kliridis (2017, 60-102) includes eight versions of *Saint Lazarus' Song*. The first is titled *The Raising of Lazarus the Fair*, and the fourth *Lazarus of the Four Days and Christ's Friend*.

⁵ Nearchos Kliridis (2017, 105-165) includes seven versions of *Saint Mary's Lament*. The first is titled *Saint Mary's Lamentation*, the sixth *Epitaphic Lament*, and the seventh *Saint Deipara's Lament*.

⁶ Nearchos Kliridis (2017, 168-187) includes five versions of *The Resurrection Song*. The second is titled *Poem of Christ's Resurrection*, and the fourth *Eulogy to the Saint and Praised Resurrection on the Third Day of our Lord Jesus Christ*.

⁷ Nearchos Kliridis (2017, 192-201) includes three versions of *Saint George's Song*.

⁸ For further details regarding the term *worldview*, cf. James W. Sire (2004, 23-50).

⁹ Cf. verses 1-45 of the sixth version of *Saint Mary's Lament*.

¹⁰ Cf. Genesis 1: 10-25.

¹¹ In verses 156-161 of the second version of *Saint Mary's Lament* and in verses 203-206 of the third version of the same song, Jesus Christ is referred to as the creator of the universe. This connects to the concept of the Sacred Trinity, which links the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit (cf. verses 214-215 of the fourth version of *Saint Mary's Lament*).

¹² Cf. verses 64-76 of *There is Avarice*.

¹³ Cf. verses 42-44 of *There is Avarice*.

¹⁴ Cf. verses 154-158 of *There is Avarice*.

¹⁵ Cf. verse 44 of the first version of *The Resurrection Song*.

¹⁶ Cf. verses 6-7 of *Hymn to Saint Mary*.

In contrast with Heaven (no heavenly material element is mentioned), and in a similar way to Matthew 13: 42, Luke 16: 23 and Apocalypse 20: 10-15, Hell is a place of fire, where there are scalding rivers, tar boils¹⁷ and Evil is its lord¹⁸. Also known as Hades, this is a location plunged into black shadows¹⁹, like in Matthew 8: 12, 22: 13 and 25: 30, and its gates are defended by guards²⁰. Besides, hordes of demons and damned suffering souls can be distinguished²¹.

As for human beings, they are thought to be incarnated souls which live ephemerally on Earth. It is even believed that when the body passes away, the soul travels to a 'distant place' which this immaterial identity does not know. There the souls live without torment but it is recalled that God has the power to dispense justice²² (this attribute of God is explicitly referred to in Psalm 75: 7).

Creation of the angels and the heavenly armies

Containing several differences, in the sixth version of *Saint Mary's Lament*, the poem begins by concisely relating the biblical myth of the *Creation, Temptation and Fall* (Genesis 1-3)²³. Verses 5-8 of the composition indicate that on Monday, God decreed the creation of cherubim and seraphs in order to place them by his throne²⁴. Additionally, these verses refer to the creation of the heavenly armies as well as all the archangels²⁵. Indeed, the archangels Michael²⁶ and Gabriel²⁷ are mentioned by their forenames. It may also be added that they are both recognised as the main taxiarches, which means that they are the angels who command God's armies. Concerning these hosts, verse 2 of *Hymn to Saint Mary* refers to the idea that their head is Virgin Mary. Later, in verse 17, it is inferred that archangels are holy entities which chant and accept Virgin Mary's companionship while singing²⁸.

As indicated above, several kinds of angels are mentioned (cherubim, seraphs and archangels). Nevertheless, the meaning of this can be observed in verse 23 of *Hymn to the Deipara*. At this point, the Greek word ασώματα (< ασώματος, -η, -ο) is mentioned. This lexical unit is a neuter substantive adjective in its plural form. It describes the complete group of incorporeal beings which constitutes the heavenly choruses²⁹. Consequently, the existence of their corresponding

¹⁷ Cf. verses 139-141 of *There is Avarice*.

¹⁸ Cf. verse 31 of the six version of *Saint Mary's Lament*.

¹⁹ Cf. verse 88 of the first version of *Saint Lazarus' Song*.

²⁰ Cf. verse 105 of the eight version of *Saint Lazarus' Song*.

²¹ Cf. verse 90 of the first version of *Saint Lazarus' Song*.

²² Cf. verses 1-4 of *The Song of the Soul*.

²³ Cf. verses 1-50 of the *Epitaph Lament* (sixth version of *Saint Mary's Lament*).

²⁴ In the Bible, cherubim are mentioned for the first time in Exodus 25: 18-22, as they will decorate the Ark of the Covenant covering the artefact with their wings. For further details regarding their physical features, cf. 1 Kings 6: 24-25, 2 Chronicles 3: 11-12, Ezechiel 10: 14 and Ezechiel 41: 18. Regarding seraphs, Flora Macallan (2007, 40) reports that they are the closest angels to God's throne, cf. Isaiah 6:2.

²⁵ For further details on the heavenly armies, cf. Genesis 32: 1-2, Judges 5: 20, Job 19: 12, Psalms 91: 11-12, Isaiah 40: 26, Matthew 13:41, Apocalypse 7:2 and Apocalypse 12: 7.

²⁶ For further details on archangel Michael, cf. Joshua 5: 13-15, Daniel 10: 13-21, Daniel 12: 1, Jude 1: 9 and Apocalypse 12: 7-9.

²⁷ For further details on archangel Gabriel, cf. Daniel 8: 16, Daniel 9: 21, Luke 1: 19-26 and Enoch 10: 9 and 20: 7.

²⁸ In verse 177 of the fifth version of *Saint Mary's Lament* and in verse 145 of the seventh version, Joseph of Arimathea uses the vocative Δέσποινα των Αγγέλων (i.e. 'Lady of the Angels') to address Virgin Mary.

²⁹ Cf. Panagiota Papadopoulou (2007, 31).

hierarchies may be asserted³⁰. Furthermore, in the aforementioned verse (which has Virgin Mary as its referent), the metaphor 'Ἕμνος των Ασωμάτων (literally, 'Hymn of the Incorporeal Beings') indicates that all heavenly angels sing to Mary, praising her.

Angels

Although it is not mentioned in the Holy Bible, in verses 38-39 of the fifth version of *Saint Mary's Lament*, the poem's poetic voice declares that when they heard Virgin Mary lamenting the Passion of Christ³¹, the heavenly angels trembled and were surprised.

Recalling that indicated in the Gospels, verses 85-100 of the second version of *Saint Mary's Lament* narrate the last moments of Christ's life, when he drank vinegar and gall from a sponge³² and finally committed his spirit to the Father³³. Immediately after this event, the text indicates the extraordinary phenomena that would have taken place³⁴. Furthermore, in verses 97-98, it adds of its own accord that the angels took fright before the sanctuary was destroyed, in order to emphasize this particular event.

In a similar manner to Matthew 5-7, in verses 21-28 of the first version of *The Resurrection Song*, and in the context where Jesus had been buried for three days, it is said that an angel from Heaven appeared above his sepulchre as lightning at midnight, rolled away the stone that hid the tomb, sat down in it and announced the miracle of the Resurrection to the guards, who were frightened and blinded³⁵. Additionally, this angel speaks as follows in verses 25-26: «/Ιδού ανέστη ο Χριστός και τι τον εξητείτε;/ Τον θάνατον επάτησεν, ανέστη ως προείπε/», i.e. "Behold, Christ came back to life and do you seek him?/ He stepped on death, came back to life as he predicted".

In verses 35-43 of the first version of *The Resurrection Song*, the poetic voice addresses its audience in order to celebrate Easter and listen to the Good News, that is to say, the Resurrection of Jesus. As a consequence of the joy caused by the Resurrection, in verses 41-43 it is imagined that the angels were glad for the miracle, the sky cleared and they chanted in the company of the holy apostles.

In verses 84-91 of the first version of *The Resurrection Song*, after the Myrrhbearers³⁶ had met the risen Christ and ran to communicate this to the apostles, Saint Peter visited Jesus' sepulchre and found only the Sudarium, the Mandyllion and the Holy Shroud (these three relics are mentioned here)³⁷. Although this does not happen in the Holy Bible, in verses 90-91 the angels said to Peter: /[...] «Εδώ, τίνα ζητείτε;/ Τον Ναζωραϊον Ιησούν; Ανέστη ως προείπε!;/, i.e., /[...] "Here, what are you looking for?/ For Jesus the Nazarene? He came back to life as he predicted!"³⁸.

Similarly, verse 41 of the aforementioned poem can also be found in the second version of the previous text (entitled *Poem of Christ's Resurrection*). In this case, it is verse 15, «/οι άγγελοι εχάρησαν κι ο ουρανός εξέστη/» (/"the angels rejoiced and the sky cleared"/).

³⁰ The hierarchy of the angels was first determined by the Christian theologian and philosopher Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite (Macallan 2007, 38).

³¹ Cf. Matthew 26-27, Mark 14-15, Luke 22-24 and John 12-19.

³² Cf. Matthew 27: 34-48, Mark 15: 36, Luke 23: 36 and John 19: 29-30.

³³ Cf. Matthew 27: 50, Mark 15: 37, Luke 23: 46 and John 19: 30.

³⁴ Cf. Matthew 27: 51-53, Mark 15: 38 and Luke 23: 44-45.

³⁵ Cf. Matthew 28: 5-7 and 62-66.

³⁶ For further details on the Myrrhbearers, cf. Jesús Castellano Cervera (1999, 129-130).

³⁷ For further details on the terms *Sudarium*, *Mandyllion* and *Holy Shroud*, cf. John C. Iannone (2009).

³⁸ Cf. Luke 24: 12 and John 20: 3-10.

Further on, in verses 40-41 of the *Poem of Christ's Resurrection*, it is affirmed that, once the holy women had gone to visit Jesus Christ's sepulchre (on the third day after his death), an angel exhorted them to spread the news of Jesus' Resurrection. Again, it can be observed that the text includes a quotation of angel's words: /[...] «Δράματε, λέγετέτο, / πως αναστήθην ο Χριστός και ομιλήσετέ το.»/, i.e. /[...] "Run, announce it, /that Christ came back to life and talk about it"/. Note that, although this incident is narrated in Matthew 28: 1-7, Mark 16: 1-7 and Luke 24: 1-7, it is closer to the first two of these Gospels.

In verses 76-80 of the *Poem of Christ's Resurrection*, it is said that Saint Longinus and other men (the guardians of Christ's sepulchre) saw the apparition of an angel, which had taken the form of lightning, and were scared. Consequently, in the next strophe, they flee and the Myrrhbearers discover that the tomb is empty. However, the Holy Bible alludes to the saint in John 19: 34, for in this verse it is said that a soldier pierced the side of Christ with a lance.

In verses 41-44 of the third version of *The Resurrection Song*, it is said that a heavenly angel appeared at Christ's sepulchre at midnight in the form of lightning. Thus, the tomb's guards were dazzled, trembled with fear, fell over and ran away. But in Matthew 27: 62-66, where the biblical episode of *The Guard at the Tomb* is narrated, this information is not given.

In verses 65-76 of the fourth version of *The Resurrection Song*, what happened on the third day of Jesus' death is narrated. At six o'clock in the morning, at the place where the sepulchre was located, an enormous earthquake occurred and an angel appeared, frightening the tomb's guards. This angel is characterized as αστραπηφόρος (< αστραπή + -φόρος, i.e., 'lightning' + 'the one who wears'). This means that the angel was clothed in lightning. Here, it may be recalled that these details are mentioned in Matthew 28: 2-4.

In verses 85-98 of the same poem, it is said that the Myrrhbearers visit the sepulchre, see two men dressed in white near the back of the tomb and think that the men are angels. Immediately afterwards, the text's poetic voice affirms that one of these angels talks to the holy women. Indeed, here it can be distinguished that there are seven verses written in direct speech, recreating the words of the angel. This being announces the Resurrection, refers to the empty sepulchre and the shroud as evidence of the miracle, and exhorts the women to look for him in Galilee. Nevertheless, in Luke 24: 1-12, the deduction that the men were angels is not made, the conversation differs and thus the reason why Galilee is mentioned (there, Christ predicted his Passion and Resurrection).

Archangels

In verses 20-29 of the first version of *Saint Mary's Lament*, the mother of Christ expresses that she is glad to have given birth to him. Afterwards, she also mentions that her son created a tree with twelve branches, i.e. the twelve apostles. In addition, she adds a metaphor in verse 25: «/όρνεα τα πετούμενα είναι οι αρχαγγέλοι/», i.e., "/the archangels are flying raptors/"³⁹.

In verses 100-104 of the first version of *Saint Mary's Lament*, archangel Gabriel is alluded to as Άγγελος της Δέσποινας ('Angel of our Lady'). When Virgin Mary collapses because of Christ's death, this spiritual being addresses her in order to convince her to keep on living and save the world.

Gabriel is also mentioned in verses 29-30 of *Hymn to the Deipara*, which recalls the *Annunciation to the Blessed Virgin Mary in the City of Nazareth*. Note that the content of the verses alludes to

³⁹ According to the Holy Bible, angels are winged beings, cf. Exodus 25: 20, Exodus 37: 9, 1 Kings 6: 27, 1 Kings 8: 6-7, 1 Chronicles 28: 18, 2 Chronicles 3: 11-13, 2 Chronicles 5: 7-8, Isaiah 6: 2, Ezekiel 10: 5-21 and 11: 22.

Note that Glenn Peers (2001, 28) considers the assimilation of birds and angels in Byzantine iconography.

the Holy Bible, Luke 1: 26-38. Indeed, the poem's poetic voice declares «/Ο Γαβριήλ ο θαυμαστός εν Ναζαρέτ τη πόλει/ το Χαίρε Σοι προσφώνησε, καθώς το ξέρουν όλοι/», i.e., “/In the city of Nazareth, the admirable Gabriel / addressed the Hail Mary to you, as everybody knows/”.

In verses 15-17 of the fifth version of *Saint Mary's Lament*, the Virgin Mary addresses archangel Gabriel. She complains because the words the archangel said to her in the Annunciation (in the poem, «/[...] χείρε Δέσποινα, ο Κύριος δικός σου/», i.e. “/[...] Hail Lady, the Lord is with you/”) should have been different, for she would never have thought that she would suffer for her son. Likewise, in verses 122-123 of the sixth version of *Saint Mary's Lament*, the Virgin Mary also addresses archangel Gabriel. In this case, she uses linguistic style similar to the previous one and expresses the same communicative intention: «/[...] Χαίρε Δέσποινα! Ο Κύριος Υιός σου!/», i.e., “/Hail Lady! The Lord is your Son!/”⁴⁰.

In verses 44-50 of the sixth version of *Saint Mary's Lament*, after the biblical passages mentioned above, God's solution to the *Fall* (Genesis 3) is indicated. Accordingly, the liberation of Adam, Eve and their descendants finds its origins in the Annunciation. In this case, however, only the name Αρχάγγελος (‘Archangel’) is mentioned, and it may be deduced that this refers to Gabriel due to the context. Indeed, verses 48-50 include an angel's quotation, i.e., «/[...] Χαίρε Δέσποινα, Χαίρε Χαριτωμένη,/ Υιόν και λόγον του Θεού είσαι αγκαστρωμένη,/ γιατί θα πολευτερωθούν όλοι οι κολασμένοι/» (i.e. “/Hail Lady, hail, full of Grace,/ you are with child by the Word of God,/ because all the damned souls will be released/”). Note the linguistic style used and the purpose of the speech.

Furthermore, verses 229-230 of the second version of *Saint Mary's Lament* describe how archangel Michael is called by Virgin Mary after the Descent from the Cross, where the mother of Christ reproduces some words from the archangel: «/[...] Χαίρε Δέσποινα! Επκίασαν τον Υιόν σου;/» (“/Hail Lady! Did they apprehend your Son?/”). As in the previous information, it may be observed that this speech of archangel Michael's is not canonical. However, this heavenly being expresses itself in a similar manner to archangel Gabriel's known canonical words⁴¹.

Inspired by Luke 23: 56 and John 19: 20, verses 283-289 of the third version of *Saint Mary's Lament* indicate that, after the deceased body of Christ was perfumed and shrouded, archangels quickly went to it in order to chant in honour of Jesus and to lay him to rest with the help of Joseph of Arimathea. Immediately after, it is mentioned that the angels sang in the same way as Joseph.

Archangel Michael is referred to several times: in verses 76-77 of the first version of *Saint Lazarus' Song*, in verses 167-168 of the fifth version of this song and in verses 168-173 of the sixth version. On each occasion, Saint Michael is mentioned in order to pray for his shelter.

Moreover, although this is not mentioned in the Holy Scriptures, according to verses 105-107 of the first version of *Saint Mary's Lament*, archangel Michael is the one on her right supporting her (archangel Gabriel's role is explained above). Nevertheless, in verses 124-131 of the seventh version of the same text, it is said that archangel Michael is on the right of Virgin Mary and archangel Gabriel on her left. Next, the poem includes a quotation from the first archangel, who addresses Mary in order to calm her down and stop her from taking her own life due to the pain she feels.

⁴⁰ Cf. Luke 1: 26-38.

⁴¹ For further details regarding the Descent from the Cross, cf. John 19: 38: 42.

Angels and archangels

In verses 100-113 of the eighth version of *Saint Lazarus' Song*, the poem recreates the voice of this saint⁴², who addresses Hell, informing its guardians and all its supporters throughout the ages of the coming of Christ. According to him, Jesus would have the company of both angels and archangels in order to defeat Hell and end the lives of the damned souls.

As for verse 3 of the poem entitled *To Saint Mary and Various Saints*, both angels and archangels are the second kind of divine entity referred to when the poetic voice addresses some divine beings and affirms that they do intercede for believers. Indeed, Virgin Mary is mentioned first and then, after the angels and archangels, the apostles and the forenames of diverse saints such as Prodomos of the Lord (John the Baptist)⁴³, Stephen Protomartyr, Victor, Menas, Vincent, Demetrius, Theodore, Great Martyr George, Saint Nicholas, servant of Christ, Athanasius and Charalampos⁴⁴.

Other aspects

On one hand, in verses 171-172 of the fourth version of *Saint Lazarus' Song*, it is declared that people sing the *Trisagion* (i.e., /Ἄγιος ὁ Θεός, Ἄγιος Ἰσχυρός, Ἄγιος Αθάνατος/). Afterwards, there is a parenthetical apposition, the syntagma τὸν Ὑμνον τὸν Ἀγγελικόν (< ὁ Ὑμνος ὁ Ἀγγελικός, *Angelic Hymn*). However, it must be clarified that both names make reference to the same hymn. Therefore, the *Trisagion* is elevated to the category of heavenly hymn.

On the other hand, in verses 81-84 of the first version of *Saint Mary's Lament*, Christ announces the end of the world and his descent into Hades in order to release his prophets, i.e. his ascendants. As the prophets' last destination is New Jerusalem, this holy city is mentioned in verse 84. It should be recalled that according to the Holy Bible, the aforementioned place is related to angels, for it would have twelve gates guarded by twelve angels and an angel would have told John the Apostle the measurements of New Jerusalem. Similarly, New Jerusalem is also mentioned in verse 143 of the fifth version of *Saint Mary's Lament*, for Christ announces his Resurrection on the third day and that he is going to release Adam, Eve and even those who are in Hell. Afterwards, in verses 94-103 of the seventh version of *Saint Mary's Lament*, which narrates Christ's death, the poem's poetic voice mentions in reported speech a promise of Christ, that he will ascend prophets to New Jerusalem.

In verses 150-155 of the second version of *Saint Mary's Lament* and in verses 189-194 of the third version, Mary remembers Simeon's prophecy that a flaming sword will pierce her heart and cut her entrails⁴⁵. As this type of sword is a majestic symbolic object which connects to diverse myths, finding its origin in the Book of Genesis (3:24) and has even been given to angels in multiple artworks, this adds a very strong emphasis that represents Mary's pain.

⁴² For further details on Saint Lazarus, cf. John 11: 1-44.

⁴³ Note that John the Baptist is the first saint to be mentioned in the poem. The reason may be found in the fact that he occupies a privileged place within the Orthodox calendar.

For further details on John the Baptist, cf. Emmanouil G. Varvounis (2017, 165-167).

⁴⁴ Here, it may be recalled that «saints and patrons has been drawn both for Greece and other Mediterranean countries (Campbell 1964: 342; Pina-Cabral 1986: 163) and it applies on Naxos as well. A person becomes a saint (*agiázei*) in return for displaying exemplary faith and sacrifice for God. After death such a person is accepted into heaven and charged with a power to intercede in human affairs on behalf of God» (Stewart 1991, 65).

⁴⁵ For further details of Simeon's prophecy, cf. Luke 2: 25-35.

Conclusion

In Cypriot religious folk songs, angels are characters that are already known by their audience. Thus, they belong to the collective imagination of their listeners and do not need to be introduced in a very complex way.

Their physical features are occasionally described, and when this happens, they are archetypal characteristics based on the Holy Scriptures. It should be added parenthetically, that comparative study of the representation of angels in both Cypriot religious folk songs and icons of the Cypriot Orthodox churches (for example those found in the Church of Panagia Angeloktisti⁴⁶) would be revealing. Likewise, their psyche is not shaped on the basis of a dynamic and/or complicated psychology. Thus, the angels are flat characters.

As for the roles they play, it should be emphasized that they are messengers from Heaven that contact religiously honourable individuals. By the same token, angels strengthen certain dramatic scenes which are recreated in the poems and hence the mental images that are produced.

Furthermore, it can be said that archangels Gabriel and Michael are those mentioned here (note that archangel Raphael, who appears in Tobit 5 and is recognised by the Orthodox Churches, is not mentioned). Hence, the Annunciation is a biblical passage which is frequently alluded to, and the fact that archangel Michael is referred to in prayers with other religious figures such as Christ, Saint Mary and Saint Lazarus, indicates the relevance of Saint Michael in popular Cypriot religiosity. Therefore, it can be asserted that the texts reflect deep devotion to both of the main archangels.

It should be added that there is recurrent intertextuality between the Holy Bible and the songs. In spite of the differences analysed, the angels' behaviours, speeches and even linguistic style are always close to those identified in the Scriptures.

In conclusion, given their condition as spiritual beings that are connected to God, meet the aforementioned characteristics and carry out the aforementioned special tasks, they constitute an archetypal symbol of divinity, peace, magnificent beauty and joy. Certainly, these angels present Christian values which are already known, but, as they appear in the context of a specific worldview related to a very particular culture, it should be emphasized that they present their own characteristics and even differences which have their origins in their folk nature and popular religiousness.

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⁴⁶ Panagia Angeloktisti (transcription of Παναγία Αγγελόκτιστη) is located in the village of Kiti (Cyprus).

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