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The book presents life stories of settled Romani families in the ancient crossroads town of Iraklia (Jumaya). Its focus is Romani instrumentalists, trios of two double-reed pipes (zurna) and a bass drum (dauli), who preside over celebrations and rites of passage, playing the favorite songs of their patrons. The book’s soundscape CD evokes this world by moving through the marketplace, the cafes and homes of the Roma neighborhood, the town church, and several New Year’s parties.

Throughout the trip I was also taken by the presence of bells in the countryside, in local villages, and in winter festivals. This CD features these keynote sounds of animal bells, town and church bells, and belled festival performers interacting with Romani instrumental trios, as well as with bagpipes (gaida) and frame drums (defi). – Steven Feld
1. BELLED GOATS OF ASSIROS

At the outskirts of Assiros we encountered a herdsman whose goats were adorned with brilliant tiny bells. The herdsman’s dog wasn’t very happy about me getting so close to the goats, which led to some menacing standoffs and colorful commentary.

AVK: Goats and sheep have been ever-present in Greece for millennia. The term ghido-provata lumps them together as beloved sources of milk, yogurt, meat, wool, and skins for drums or bagpipes. Sounds of their bells approaching, tinkling from a slope or valley where no animal is visible, punctuated by a dog’s bark here and there or a herder’s whistle or a curse in frustration, are heard throughout the countryside.

2. BELLED SHEEP OF DORKAS

Toward dusk we passed through Dorkas, just as a shepherd was bringing his herd of sheep home for the night. As the shepherd walked toward and past me, I heard subtle sounds of static and a newscast. Only then did I look over and see that he had a transistor radio in his back pocket.

AVK: Herds are walked through commons or over harvested fields by a shepherd, whose job is to insure that the animals always have the best available fodder and that they do not infringe on gardens or other cultivated areas. These days on the commons one finds transistor radios and cellphones, and the hut by the sheepfold may have a TV with VCR and a small satellite dish.
3. NEW YEAR AT SOHOS

We arrived for a New Year's party in Sohos to the sounds of bells in the town center. Just around the bend was a small and intensely smoky cafe, where men were having a midday meal, and calling the tunes for the trio of Zissis Hindzos, Aristidis Dramalis, and Yiannis Dramalis. One high point of the afternoon was this medley of table songs.
CK: On this track you hear a typical men's café scene, featuring soul music "à la Turka" (a Greek description of improvisations on the old modal systems of the Ottoman era). The two zurna players follow a well-traveled "road" or mode called Hijazkiar from the Balkans through the Ottoman and Arab worlds to Asia. The medley includes "the famed Vlach woman," "who is the one coming down," and "as many mountains as I have traveled" (songs remembered and named by key vocal lines).
4. **ARAPIDES FESTIVAL AT NIHISIANI**

The first sound I heard at Nikisiani was the resonant church bell and broadcast voice of the chanter. Later, as the town began to fill up for the festival, I heard the church bells from afar, overlapping a transaction I was recording with vendors of roasted chestnuts. Gradually boys and men dressed in bells took over the soundscape of the afternoon.

**CK:** Nikisiani is one of the prominent towns of Pangaion. Because its townspeople have kept seasonal celebrations alive, their events are covered by Greek media, studied by folklorists and anthropologists, and encouraged by politicians and businessmen who want to boost tourism. Arapides means Arali literally, but is a term for carnival mummers in blackface or maskers at Lent, here applied to men masked and adorned with bells making the rounds on Epiphany, the twelfth day or end of the Christmas season.
Taverna. The instrumentalists began seated but soon started to move around with the crowd, urging the dancers on and responding to their requests. I joined the party to record from the perspective of the dancing participants. About midway through the evening belled dancers from the afternoon’s festival rushed through the restaurant’s small entranceway and made their way onto the dance floor to stir up the crowd.

CK: *This party sequence begins with a generic tik from the Pontic tradition, and a zembekiko danced to an “island song” called “aman aman Xiotissa,” “aman aman the woman from Xios.” The dancing continues with a tsifititli turkiko using a carnival song for St. John’s Day and “ton kathrefti min itas,” “don’t look in the mirror,” finishing up with a syrto kalamatiano medley for line dancing. The instrumentalists may keep the music flowing for an hour or more without a break if dancers with tips keep coming forward.*
grab or dance with someone passing by, taking the playful role of the ritual clown or the carnival figure that overturns the everyday social order. The Madziris trio, featuring father and son Kostas and Ilias and Elias Dimanos, played as the crowds swelled into the plaza. Their last song was overtaken when two dancers with bells assaulted the bass drummer.

CK: Before being drowned out by the “old men,” the trio was playing a jumping syrto, “ta evzonakia,” “the warriors.”
AVK: The custom of wearing and parading with bells is widespread in island and mainland Greece. Sounding together in rich antiphony, bells make the village audible, just as they make the presence of a herd of sheep or goats audible to a shepherd in the dark of night or in a distant valley. Greek “old women” create a comparable deep antiphony when they gather to weep, wail, and sing lamentations for the dead. This same antiphonal participation also intensifies parties and celebrations.

7. FESTIVAL PARADE AT KALI VRISSI

Later in the afternoon a large procession made its way through the town. The parade was led by men with bagpipes and, behind them and at their sides, others with frame drums. Farther back in the parade were numerous boys and men with costumes of bells. As the procession reversed course, the bells gradually overwhelmed the sound of the instruments.
CK: Here is another reeds-and-drums sound that has deep roots across Eurasia. One tune works for the whole parade and for a festival which combines a mock wedding with a parody of all known religions from pagan-dionysianism to post-papal-authoritarianism.

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Photographs by Dick Blau; Text by Charles and Angeliki Vellou Keil; Soundscapes by Steven Feld; Foreword by Ian Hancock

Interweaving first-person narratives, photographs, cultural commentary, and soundscapes, this companion volume provides an unprecedented view of settled Romani lives in the Balkans.

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Come party with Romani instrumental trios and belled festival performers in a Balkan countryside that pulses with animal, town, and church bells.

1. BELLED GOATS OF ASSIROS 4:21
2. BELLED SHEEP OF DORKAS 4:10
3. NEW YEAR AT SOHOS 10:40
4. ARAPIDES FESTIVAL AT NIKISIANI 7:33
5. TAVERNA PARTY AT NIKISIANI 15:11
6. BABOUYERA FESTIVAL AT KALI VRISSI 9:44
7. FESTIVAL PARADE AT KALI VRISSI 11:25

Soundscapes by Steven Feld  Photographs by Dick Blau
Notes by Steven Feld, Angeliki Vellou Keil, and Charles Keil