



Vassilis Nitsiakos, Ioannis Manos, Georgios Agelopoulos,
Alik Angelidou, Vassilis Dalkavoukis (Eds.)

Balkan Border Crossings

Second Annual of the Konitsa Summer School

Vassilis Nitsiakos, Ioannis Manos,
Georgios Agelopoulos, Aliko Angelidou,
Vassilis Dalkavoukis (Eds.)

Balkan Border Crossings



Balkan Border Crossings

Contributions to Balkan Ethnography

Editors:

Vassilis Nitsiakos

Rajko Mursic

Ioannis Manos

Monograph III

LIT

Balkan Border Crossings

Second Annual of the Konitsa Summer School

edited by

Vassilis Nitsiakos, Ioannis Manos,
Georgios Agelopoulos, Alikì Angelidou
and Vassilis Dalkavoukis



ΔΗΜΟΣΙΑ ΒΙΒΛΙΟΘΗΚΗ ΚΟΝΙΤΣΑΣ
ΑΡ. ΕΙΣΑΓΟΓΗΣ <u>53347</u>
ΗΜΕΡ. ΕΙΣΑΓΟΓΗΣ _____
ΤΑΞΙΝ. ΑΡΙΘΜ. <u>305.8 ΚΩ</u>

κωδ. εγχ: 7569

LIT

Bibliographic information published by the Deutsche Nationalbibliothek

The Deutsche Nationalbibliothek lists this publication in the Deutsche Nationalbibliografie; detailed bibliographic data are available in the Internet at <http://dnb.d-nb.de>.

ISBN 978-3-643-80092-3

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

©LIT VERLAG GmbH & Co. KG Wien,

Zweigniederlassung Zürich 2011

Klosbachstr. 107

CH-8032 Zürich

Tel. +41 (0) 44-251 75 05

Fax +41 (0) 44-251 75 06

e-Mail: zuerich@lit-verlag.ch

<http://www.lit-verlag.ch>

LIT VERLAG Dr. W. Hopf

Berlin 2011

Fresnostr. 2

D-48159 Münster

Tel. +49 (0) 2 51-620 320

Fax +49 (0) 2 51-922 60 99

e-Mail: lit@lit-verlag.de

<http://www.lit-verlag.de>

Distribution:

In Germany: LIT Verlag Fresnostr. 2, D-48159 Münster

Tel. +49 (0) 2 51-620 32 22, Fax +49 (0) 2 51-922 60 99, e-mail: vertrieb@lit-verlag.de

In Austria: Medienlogistik Pichler-ÖBZ, e-mail: mlo@medien-logistik.at

In the UK: Global Book Marketing, e-mail: mo@centralbooks.com

CONTENTS

Editorial	7
A. On Theory and Method	
Thomas Hylland Eriksen Perilous Identity Politics, the Loss of the Primitive and an Anthropology that Matters. Some Reflections about Anthropology in the new Century	9
Vassilis Dalkavoukis From Ethnic to Ethno-local Identity. The Example of the Sarakatsani at Zagori (Epirus) in the Twentieth Century	29
Elefteria Deltsoy Greece, the Balkans and Europe in Anthropology	45
Radharani Pernarcic The Impossible Discourse	63
Vasiliki Kravva The Personal, the Local and the Political: Oral Histories as Valid Analytical and Methodological Tools	85
B. On borders	
James Verinis Ethnographic Features of the Landscape Along the Greek-Albanian Border: Agricultural Artifacts as Anthropological Data	103
Marija Krstić Shrines ("Eikonostasia") on the Greek-Albanian Border Line	119
Flora Giovannetti Shifting Meanings of Ethno-religious Boundaries at the Southern Albanian Border Area: Drawing Inspiration from the Case of Kosinë/Kosina	131
Georgia Kitsaki Ethnic Groups: Identities and Relationships in the Greek-Albanian Border	147
Gabriela Boangiu and Evangelia Matsouki Lived Borders – Between Belonging and Daily Crossing	153
Pinar Gümüs and Banu Acikdeniz Borders and boundaries in a border area: The case of an Asia Minor refugee settlement in Konitsa	165

Evangelia Matsouki

Claiming the Place. Commercialisation/National Memory 181

Christina Knechtli, Aleksandra Djuric-Milanovic and Marko Perožić

Singing for the Boar: Collective Identity and the Consumption of Tradition in the Greek-Albanian Border 191

Fenia Tsobanopoulou and Vassiliki Apostolopoulou

Oral Tradition across the Border: Reflections on/of Polyphonic Singing in a Greek-Albanian Context 201

Mimina Pateraki

Looking back, Moving forward. Parallel Polyphonic Representations of Historical and Contemporary Dance Practices in Leskovic 221

Georgia Sarikoudi

Social Borders and their Meaning in Repatriates Life 235

Ariadni Antoniadou, Chrisa Giannopoulou and**Maria Kapsioti**

Within the Community of Fourka: The Case of the 'Saint Maiden'- Discourses and Symbolic Meanings 245

Presentation of PhD and MA/MPhil theses

James Verinis 255

Maria Miruna Rădan 273

Course Syllabi 289

Author Index 353

Index of the Editors and Contributors 359

Editorial

The *Konitsa Summer School in Anthropology, Ethnography and Comparative Folklore of the Balkans* is now a well known academic institution among academics and students. Nearly four hundred students and forty professional scholars have participated in its academic, social and cultural activities.

This is the second volume of the School's Annual containing the proceedings of two years, 2007 and 2008, for practical reasons. There was a delay in the whole editing process and we decided to publish a double volume. The volume contains texts written by members of the teaching staff, papers delivered as lectures or especially prepared for the Annual, papers written by students based principally on their fieldwork exercise, presentations of ongoing PhD theses and, finally, the syllabi of the subjects of instruction. We would like to stress once more the emphasis put on students' participation, providing them with the opportunity to express their views and publish their work.

We express our deep gratitude to all colleagues and students alike, who have shared this wonderful and utterly stimulating academic and human experience with us. Special thanks go also to the Municipality of Konitsa for the material and moral support, the University of Ioannina for including this activity in its academic programme and all the Universities participating in the *Border Crossings Network*.

The Editors

Perilous identity politics, the loss of the primitive and an anthropology that matters. Some reflections upon anthropology in the new century

This essay is intended as a contribution to what Keith Hart (1998) has called 'the long conversation of anthropology'. My aim is straightforward. I am going to raise a few critical questions about the state of our art in the early twenty-first century, aided by a very limited, slanted and selective reading of the anthropology of the last century. This will be about some of our successes and some of our failures and, given the topic, it is almost inevitable that I shall also speculate somewhat on future prospects.

Allow me to begin with an anecdote from my home department, the Department of Social Anthropology at the University of Oslo. Back in the 1970s, the young and brilliant anthropologist Jorun Solheim wrote a rather knotty and theoretical article with the lengthy title, if my memory serves me correctly, 'Er det riktig å si at moderne antropologiske forskere som Barth og Bailey står på skuldrene til Raymond Firth?', in other words or in plain English, 'Is it correct to assume that modern anthropological scholars, such as Barth and Bailey, are "standing on the shoulders" of Raymond Firth?'. Generations of students had to read the mimeographed typescript, originally an exam paper, and an exceptional one at that, which concluded that there was a strong and clear continuity from Firth's reworking of functionalism to the transactional models devised by people like Barth and Bailey.

In 1989, the department decided to organise a grand celebration of its 25th anniversary, for reasons still obscure to me. A quarter-century is not an impressive time span and, besides, the foundation of the department was very much a technical and even terminological affair; before 1964, social anthropology had been taught in the same dilapidated building, aptly named Barracks B, by roughly the same staff, in the Section of Ethnography.

* Professor, University of Oslo.



Be this as it may, in connection with the celebration, Raymond Firth was invited over. Firth, then pushing 90 years old, gave two lectures during his visit, one of which was entitled 'The future of social anthropology', where he spoke of biotechnology, computers and other recent phenomena that demanded the attention of anthropologists. It was during question time after this lecture that a colleague, known for his quirky sense of humour, rose in the packed auditorium and asked the venerable old man: 'Is it true, Professor Firth, that Fredrik Barth and other contemporary anthropological scholars are standing on your shoulders?' Firth, vaguely sensing that he had been given a part in an in-joke, answered roundly and graciously that 'Well, if they do, at least that suggests that they can see further than me'.

Now, the question is, do we see further than the people on whose shoulders we are perched, or has a nasty fog descended on the scenery? Clifford Geertz seems to have moved towards the latter position towards the end of his life, although he was frequently seen, by self-professed scientific anthropologists, as one who had paved the way for the horrors of postmodern obscurantism. In a recent book essay comparing James Clifford and Pierre Clastres – an unlikely pair, but offering a thought-provoking contrast – Geertz concludes: 'Whatever the flaws of his approach, Clastres knew where he was going, and he got there'. Clastres, in *Society Against the State*, describes a South American tribe struggling to retain its old way of life. Clifford, in his *Routes*, a book about travel, movement and ethnography, on the contrary 'seems stalled, unsteady, fumbling for direction', and his text has 'a hesitant, stuttering quality (what can I say? how can I say it? with what right do I do so?)'. Postmodernism taught a generation of anthropologists to dissect the menu without bothering to look at the banalities of the food; it concentrates on the wallpaper patterns instead of the quality of the woodwork, just as scholars with a neo-Darwinian bent – adherents of selfish-gene biology – appear to mistake the recipe for the food. The most evangelical expressions of neo-darwinism, representing a search for simple answers to complex questions, could be seen as resulting from despair at apparent postmodern fragmentation, but ironically neo-Darwinism deals in abstractions of a comparable kind to those of a Derrida or a Lyotard.

Is the party over? Anthropologists of my generation were somehow given the distinct impression that early-to-mid-twenty-century anthropology was sparkling with magic. It held a confident belief in its huge intellectual task and, quite evidently if usually muttered under one's breath or even denied up front, its moral mission consisting in improving the world, but especially improving the Western middle classes. Disdainful of the competition, be it quantitative social research, a-theoretical historiography or reductionist sociobiology, social anthropology held the banner high, but not so high as to make itself vulnerable to criticism for vulgarity and sensationalism. The era of anthropological identity politics properly began just after the Second World War, by which time the number of professionals and teachers in the discipline was sufficient for anthropological scholars not to have to worry about making their writings accessible or interesting to outsiders.

Haven't we all sat in social anthropology seminar rooms, whether in Oxford, Oslo or elsewhere, listening to presenters taking liberties with certain conventions of the discipline, only to be met with reactions of the generic kind '*Hmm... very interesting, fascinating even, but is it anthropology?*' In sum, and I do not want to go into details at this stage, there is a lack of openness in social anthropology, which is at best puzzling, at worst embarrassing. Some years ago, there was widespread professional concern with the ways in which our battered old concept of culture had been hijacked by academic non-anthropologists, while we were simultaneously busy dismantling it. Although anthropologists are nowadays everywhere outside the academy, the internal identity politics of our discipline are still militantly obsessed with boundary maintenance and gatekeeping. I can think of several departments which wouldn't dream of hiring a member of staff with a PhD in another subject than anthropology. Collaborating with academics in other disciplines is considered respectable as long as one doesn't 'lose one's professional identity as an anthropologist'. You know this as well as I do. But isn't this somewhat out of character for a discipline to which one of the truly foundational texts is Marcel Mauss's *The Gift*? Mauss begins his essay by distinguishing between the three phases of gift exchange: giving, receiving and returning the gift. Anthropologists, almost like Scandinavian aid donors, are perfectly happy to give their concepts and theories to outsiders, but

are less enthusiastic about the offered return gifts in the form of analyses inspired by anthropological thought but not part of it. There is a fear of impurity in anthropology, a fear which makes sense, perhaps, in the context of Mary Douglas' theory, but not in intellectual life.

This fear of impurity, or of intellectual contamination, is perhaps nowhere more evident than in the realm of popular anthropology, or public anthropology if you like. I have recently devoted a whole book to this topic (Eriksen 2006) and will not reiterate my argument about popularisation here. Attitudes to light-hearted 'popular anthropology', typically represented in this country (i.e. the UK) by Kate Fox and her very entertaining book *Watching the English* (Fox 2004) vary and, I think, should vary. However, there are different kinds of popular anthropology. One or two are plainly populist, commercial literature aiming to entertain but not to make substantial new contributions to knowledge about the condition of humanity. I have no grumbles against such books, but they fall outside the scope of the present concerns, which are about the ability of anthropology to contribute intellectually to the long conversation about humanity, not just the one about anthropology. It is disconcerting to note that on recent lists of the 100 most important intellectuals in the UK and the world respectively a grand total of one anthropologist was represented, namely Clifford Geertz, on the global list. Now that he is gone, the number would be nil.

You may not be interested in lists of this kind, but I could mention other examples, such as the very comprehensive bestseller lists on Amazon, the professional backgrounds of contributors to the *London Review of Books*, *Prospect* or the *New York Review of Books*, or a dozen similar indicators suggesting the wider intellectual significance of social anthropology. This is not a time for complacency. Anthropology has, in the past, succeeded spectacularly in combating racial prejudices and biological determinism, accounting for – and, at least in the case of Margaret Mead, contributing to – cultural change, and throwing unexpected analogies and thought-provoking contrasts into the world, sometimes succeeding in 'making the exotic familiar and the familiar exotic', to paraphrase Malinowski. Our failure to define a single public agenda over the last decades – and I am using the word 'public' loosely, to include the media, politics and general intellectual debate – is actually quite serious. It does

not mean that anthropologists are, generally, working with useless and irrelevant topics, that they are engaged in a self-enclosed activity of high sophistication akin to the 'glass bead game' described in Herman Hesse's last and most important novel, *Das Glasperlenspiel*, translated into English variously as *The Glass Bead Game* and as *Magister Ludi*. The glass bead game has no ulterior point beyond that of allowing its players to display their dazzling skill and intellectual dexterity and, as the novel shows so clearly, the singleminded commitment to the game demanded of its players makes them unfit for living in the world. Among other things, Hesse's novel is clearly a comment on self-enclosed, self-congratulatory academic pursuits with little relevance beyond the academy. Novelists and poets have been known to regard literary studies, not least in their poststructuralist versions, in such terms. But anthropology? Well, clearly no. What attracted many of us to anthropology in the first place – the possibility to raise fundamental philosophical questions while simultaneously engaging with the world of real existing people – is still there. But, and I regret this very deeply, it is increasingly to be found inside a cocoon.

One feature of contemporary anthropology which may contribute to its failure to attract intellectual interest from outside could be the absence of clear theoretical positions. As Bruce Knauft recently pointed out (Knauft 2006), theoretical perspectives are not so much absent in contemporary anthropology as they are mixed:

'[T]he reification and contestation of named "isms" and their progeny – materialism, Marxism, interpretivism, postmodernism, and even those that cultivate a distinctive subject position of politics or authorship, such as feminism or multiculturalism – are no longer as subject to explicit theorisation or paradigmatic contestation as they were 10 or 15 years ago, notwithstanding their enduring threads, lineaments, and academic politics. Theoretical disputes between paradigms or subject positions are no longer as prominent as they were.' (Knauft 2006: 408)

Knauft then gives a partial list of the 'first team' of American anthropology, noting that not a single one of them is associated with a partic-

ular theoretical paradigm. Perhaps what Knaft is really saying is that anthropology has become more like history (only less eloquent), an ideographic field of study, far from being a nomothetic science. But there is more to his argument than that. His view is that the opposing poles that defined anthropology for most of the last century have lost their magnetic force and are no longer seen as indispensable. Versions of Marxism, structuralism, hermeneutics and phenomenology, even healthy injections of structural-functionalism, have made their way into the shared theoretical toolbox of anthropologists to which nobody has a right of priority. In saying this, it is clear that Knaft is playing down a few real existing polarities, such as the rather deep gulf between interpretive anthropologists and neo-Darwinists, but as a diagnosis of American cultural anthropology and most European social anthropology it is fair enough. Knaft nevertheless uses the word 'post-paradigmatic' to designate contemporary sociocultural anthropology, but this usage of the term must remind us of Lévi-Strauss' Brazilians, or Baudrillard's Americans, who had ostensibly taken the journey directly from barbarism to decadence without passing through civilisation on the way.

The timidity of contemporary anthropology contrasts sharply with the grand visions and ambitious theoretical programmes characteristic of early-to mid-twenty-century anthropologies. In this country, the end was announced as early as 1950 by Evans-Pritchard in his lecture '*Anthropology and history*'. Expanding on his earlier critique of Radcliffe-Brown's positivism, Evans-Pritchard now seemed content to see social anthropology as an interpretive discipline. This statement did not detract many of his contemporaries on both sides of the Atlantic from continuing to develop their distinctive and often hugely ambitious theoretical programmes, from Lévi-Straussian structuralism to Marxist anthropologies and the so-called cultural materialism of Marvin Harris, as the latest projection of what Edwin Ardener – another great Oxford man – called 'high modernism' in anthropology. In Ardener's view, modernism in anthropology ended around 1980, when the grand theories seemed to fizzle out. A decade later, Henrietta Moore suggested that anthropology as a unified discipline had ceased to exist (Moore 1996), having been replaced by a series of overlapping but distinct practices. This is clearly an overstatement at the very least. I can think of few academic professions with a stronger

collective identity than anthropologists, and perhaps this is where our current problem lies: we have, it appears, so much to tell each other that we forget to invite others to join the conversation and, similarly, have little time, on our own part, to join theirs.

I said that this is not a time for complacency, but it is also, like it or not, not a time for grand theory. Contemporary anthropologists commenting on the state of the art, from Wendy James to Kirsten Hastrup, from Talal Asad to Joao de Pina-Cabral, never seem to call for the resurgence of all-encompassing theories with an objectivist bent. Their caution is obviously well founded – as Evans-Pritchard noted more than half a century ago, the scientific programme of structural-functionalism had failed to yield a single ‘natural law of society’ – yet, what we have taken away from our students (and ourselves) is the joy and enlightenment involved in comparing and evaluating distinct theoretical programmes. For my own part, one of my great formative moments as an undergraduate was the departmental seminar, it must have been around 1982, when Eduardo Archetti accused Marvin Harris of being a vulgar Marxist, following Harris’s just-so materialist stories about cultural changes in American society. Things, we thought then, are more complex than they seem – but we remained Pyrrhic sceptics and not mere disillusioned sceptics in that we continued to believe that the answers were to be found somewhere.

Be this as it may. It is nonetheless a fact that when grand theory tries to return in this postmodern era, it recalls the famous formulation from *The Eighteenth Brumaire* of Louis Bonaparte about history repeating itself as farce. I am thinking, of course, of the evangelical movement known variously as sociobiology, evolutionary psychology and Darwinist social science. The après post hangover, which we are still trying to come to terms with, seems to be a time for good, solid work with sensible ambitions and a modest scope, not for grand visions about life, the universe and everything. Now, this is not a condition unique to anthropology, and it may not even be a problem when all is said and done. What is disconcerting is the fact that non-anthropologists no longer have a clear notion of what we are doing. ‘Anthropology is defined through its epistemology, not its object’ says Kirsten Hastrup. She is right in improving on Malinowski’s view that we study problems not peoples – the ethnographer’s

reflexivity is now an established and integral part of the process of inquiry – but we have to be able to offer something more tangible. Before immodestly offering my own suggestions, I suggest a brief detour. I am going to argue that the loss of the primitive to anthropology was like the loss of Eastern Europe to Western socialism.

* * *

Perhaps the last truly great theoretical contribution from anthropology – many of you will doubtless disagree with this – the last strikingly original perspective offered by anthropology to the world with enduring consequences – was Mary Douglas' *Purity and Danger*, published more than 40 years ago (Douglas 1966). She could still write as though the Lele were an autonomous society uncontaminated and uninfluenced by the wider colonial or neo-colonial world. Maybe that has something to do with the originality and timeless quality of her book. She could write from the much criticised, but commanding heights of the ethnographic present. This has been impossible for a long time. What we are now capable of producing is increasingly snapshots of societies undergoing historical change.

Now, the study of complex societies has been an accepted part of anthropology for a long time. In his BBC lectures, delivered in 1950 and published the following year, Evans-Pritchard (1951) takes a rather positive view of anthropological studies in complex societies, although he admits that British anthropologists have so far concentrated on the so-called primitive societies. Evans-Pritchard mentions a number of reasons for studying small-scale societies, but he fails to mention the most obvious reason, namely that knowledge of the full range of social and cultural variation which is necessary for anthropology to live up to its name, the study of humanity. Other anthropologists of Evans-Pritchard's generation and the next also supported his view that the study of complex societies should be part of our collective endeavour, and many undertook such studies themselves, but the most widespread view remained – and remains(?) – that the small-scale study should form the basis of social anthropology. This is quite obviously no longer the case, not least since small-scale societies have to be studied in their wider geographical and

historical context. It is almost as if Rivers and the diffusionists have struck back at Malinowski. Anthropology has been capable of handling this shift methodologically, but the question deserves to be raised as to whether the change has affected the anthropological imagination in any way. When, around 15 years ago, I decided to title my introductory textbook *Small Places – Large Issues*, borrowing a phrase from Geertz, there was already an element of wishful thinking in it; there was already the looming suspicion that anthropologists nowadays neither studied small places nor raised large issues.

Moreover, the theoretical onslaught by postmodernism and postcolonialism came at the least convenient time conceivable – as you will recall, it began in the early 1980s, just as anthropology was recovering from the often timely and pertinent but extremely demanding critiques from feminism and Marxism. As anthropology struggled to reinvent itself through taking in world history, imperialism and gender as constitutive features of its quest, new calls for radical change came from another direction. Complaints about closet positivism in anthropological terminology, the impossibility of objective comparison, the literary nature of anthropological texts and so on were heaped on top of existing complaints about the shortcomings of twenty-century modernist anthropology. In one sense, we recovered fully from these critiques by moving towards less ambitious (and, indeed, less coherent) theoretical frameworks and placing greater emphasis on the local. But in another sense, the general feeling must have been that the party was over and the magic was gone. From being a body of secret knowledge containing all the important keys to an understanding of the world, anthropology became just another mundane way of knowing, fraught with all the familiar contradictions and dilemmas of other lofty scientific projects and firmly pulled down to earth, into history, as an enterprise of ambiguous moral value. Enter the anthropology of transnationalism.

At this stage, it would be disingenuous not to, at least, consider the possibility that the loss of the primitive may have affected the confidence and intellectual creativity of anthropology.

There is a Gary Larson's cartoon which depicts a group of North American Indians about to hide away their stereo, their TVs and computers just as two bespectacled foreigners are approaching the village. One

of the native Americans shouts: '*Anthropologists! Anthropologists!*'. Larson's comment illustrates a reality which has loomed over our subject ever since Malinowski wrote the introduction to *Argonauts of the Western Pacific*, the end of the primitive. Today Malinowski's fears have in a certain sense been fulfilled. To quote Geertz again: cultural differences 'will doubtless remain - the French will never eat salted butter. But the good old days of widow burning and cannibalism are gone forever.' (Geertz 1986:105). Typical PhD projects in anthropology at the Scandinavian universities in recent years have dealt with identity politics in a North American Indian reserve, unemployed men in an Oslo suburb, second-generation Turkish girls in Drammen and their transnational links, youth of Mahgrébin origin in a Paris suburb, the 'dot com' hype in Swedish enterprise culture, and so on. Not much swidden agriculture, sharecropping or witchcraft there - and if African witchcraft is studied these days, it is likely to be seen as a reaction to neo-colonialism and the neoliberal policies of the World Bank. Witchcraft: yes. Magic: no.

Anthropology is still taught as a twenty-century discipline with a strong continuity from Malinowski, Boas and Mauss. Key terms are historical particularism and cultural relativism as a methodological device, intensive hands-on fieldwork and the total social fact. In spite of intervening attempts to fashion alternative projects - notably materialist anthropologies drawing their intellectual energy from Darwin or Marx, structuralism and methodological individualism - and in spite of scathing critiques of the entire project of anthropology, our students are still being taught the central tenets of early twentieth-century anthropology as noble guiding principles. If I am correct in this, we obviously need to ask if it is not time to reinvent ourselves.

The three key persons mentioned - I suppose I should apologise for leaving out Radcliffe-Brown, but his enduring influence is more complicated - were all socially marginal in their societies. While Malinowski was an immigrant and Mauss was Jewish, Boas was both. Among the first recruits to the subject, there was a striking overrepresentation of people who had sound reasons to feel ill at ease in the society in which they lived, and the small networks of professional anthropologists at the outset of the Second World War included women, Jews, homosexuals, immigrants, Communists and uprooted cosmopolitans with a colonial

background. The anthropological communities were small and full of intellectual excitement, knowing that they were treading where no man or woman had trodden before. With the confidence of cult members, they were convinced that their brand of secret knowledge was capable of unlocking the hidden mysteries of culture and society.

The critical implications of social anthropology were obvious, although rarely brought to fruition in Britain. As you all know, the most successful application of anthropological cultural relativism in commenting on Western society was that of Margaret Mead with her books from the Pacific, initially focusing on gender roles and socialisation, later concentrating on the so-called problems of culture change. But Boas and Malinowski too, and French anthropologists of a more literary bent like Michel Leiris and Roger Caillois, also contributed to the debate over contemporary issues, often using examples from remote places to shed light on domestic matters. Indeed, Evans-Pritchard himself is on record as having said that his studies of Zande witchcraft could shed light on political processes in the Soviet Union.

Through most of the twentieth century, anthropology took much of its intellectual power from its ability to draw bold comparisons and make surprising contrasts, thereby creating a sense of wonder and strangeness (*Verfremdung*) in the wider world. For reasons well known to you, comparative anecdotes about Trobrianders, Kwakiutl or other 'Amongtha', to use George Stocking's term, stories are likely to incite as much disgust as naive wonder these days. The story about the painting in Kwame Nkrumah's presidential suite says it all. In the historian Herman Lebovics' account:

'It depicted, in a great surge of force, a giant Nkrumah breaking the chains of colonialism. The figure was surrounded by dramatic storm clouds and flashes of lightning. At his feet, fleeing towards the edge of the canvas, as if to avoid the storm and the wrath of the emancipator by leaving the frame, were three small figures. One was a pallid white man carrying a briefcase: a capitalist. The second scurried holding a Bible: a missionary. The third figure, smaller than the other two, but the most important for us, was a man carrying a book. Its title was

legible: *African Political Systems*. He's the anthropologist.' (Lebovics 2005)

In this image there is a dual implied critique of anthropology – it is about both colonialism and knowledge imperialism – but the most common interpretation sees it as an expression of the complicit role believed by many to have been played by anthropologists during colonialism. The book clutched by the anthropologist in the painting, Evans-Pritchard and Fortes' *African Political Systems*, could reasonably be read, in a slightly paranoid spirit, as a useful manual for the colonial service in a period when indirect rule was the preferred form of political domination in Africa. Now, the actual relationship between social anthropology and colonialism was far more complicated, both in France and Britain, than often assumed by leftist or postcolonial critics. As documented extensively by Jack Goody in *The Expansive Moment* (Goody 1995), the relationship with colonial authorities could be strained and difficult, although anthropologists doubtless received much practical assistance from the colonial office. As shown recently by Andre Gingrich (2005), German anthropology in the same period, that is the Nazi era, was consciously geared towards facilitating German colonial expansion in Africa following the military victory in Europe. Areas of specialisation among British and French anthropologists, too, tended to coincide with the areas ruled by their countrymen. Yet, as Goody shows, very little anthropological research was funded by colonial authorities – most of the money in the 'classic' era came from American research foundations – and the Cambridge 'applied anthropology' course for civil servants working in the colonies was never a great success. Be this as it may, the relationship between European social anthropology and colonialism remains ambiguous, a generation after the publication of Talal Asad's *Anthropology and the Colonial Encounter* (1973).

In America, the situation was different. One might have expected American anthropologists to have evaded allegations of hidden imperialism. Whereas French and British anthropologists described societies which were dominated politically by their own governments, a main project of American anthropology consisted in rescuing the rich heritage of Native American cultures from oblivion, documenting languages,

myths, customs and so on among people which might shortly disappear as culture-bearing groups. Nevertheless, as you well know, very articulate intellectuals with a Native American background, most famously Vine Deloria and his extremely critical book *Custer Died for your Sins* (1969), claimed that whereas European settlers had taken their land, their economy and their political autonomy, the anthropologists and other social scientists had stolen their last remaining resource, namely the right to define who they were.

More difficult to falsify than more or less flimsy allegations about complicity in colonial expansionism, criticism focusing on symbolic and definitional power continues to gnaw at anthropology's self-confidence. Contemporary anthropologists sensitised to the problems of representation have been for many years full of the sentiment described by Geertz as 'what can I say, how can I say it?'. Following books like Asad's and Deloria's, a considerable library of books and articles written in a similar, deeply critical vein have seen the light of day and as a result light-hearted comparisons between 'The West' and the 'Amongstas' have been relegated from academic anthropology to the realms of business studies and travel writing.

Good riddance, you may think, and rightly so, but I am personally convinced that the loss of the radical Other, those peoples formerly described as primitive, has been a more serious blow to sociocultural anthropology than we are usually prepared to admit. It was, after all, the ability to juxtapose the Western life with that of remote, usually small-scale societies that gave anthropology its identity in the wider world, and it contributed in no small degree to the intellectual confidence of its practitioners.

Now, more than 20 years have passed since Edwin Ardener proclaimed the end of modernism in social anthropology, where, admittedly, he chiefly argued about the decline of distinct theoretical programmes; but it has also been 20 years since the publication of *Writing Culture*. A number of bids for a rejuvenation or reorientation in anthropology have been submitted in the intervening years, while most of us – naturally – have got on with our work in a spirit of business nearly as usual. In the context of engaging with the world, it has been suggested that we relinquish cultural relativism and embrace human rights (Kearney 2004), that

we develop mixed methodologies to be able to study modern culture (Archetti 1994), that we take the study of history more seriously, and so on. Yet, the old confidence in the cosmic importance of what we are doing has faded. Naturally, when 'the natives' began to talk back, this did not just have a theoretical or epistemological significance: anthropologists were – and are – accustomed to seeing themselves as academic spokespersons for the small peoples, giving them a voice and visibility they would not otherwise have had. When the so-called natives have serious reservations about being described by anthropologists, since they see themselves as perfectly capable of identifying themselves, the anthropologists, it would seem, have to go elsewhere.

In the old spirit of cultural relativism, anthropologists tended to function as cultural radicals at home and cultural conservatives overseas. Now that we are all in principle consociates in Alfred Schütz's sense, that is people sharing the same time and space, as opposed to contemporaries who only share the same time, this formula, which was always objectionable anyway, has lost all credibility. Obsessed with everything that divides humanity for a hundred years, anthropology could now be ready to return to the commonalities, that which holds humanity together.

Exoticism has been a negatively charged word for a long time among anthropologists. Yet it remains a fact that, whereas it is easy to define a twentieth-century anthropology trapped in exoticist presuppositions – increasingly implicit as the century went on – it is much more difficult to delineate and define a twentieth-first-century anthropology completely devoid of 'radical Otherness' as a category.

There are a number of possibilities. The problem, the way I see it, is not the absence of non-exoticising anthropologies, but the difficulties in talking about the anthropological project as founded in a particular *Erkenntnisinteresse*, knowledge interest.

Quite a few years ago, an English anthropologist wrote, in a worried tone of voice: 'When the entire structure of the profession is called into doubt, it is hardly surprising that most British anthropologists still prefer to keep their heads firmly buried in the sand'. The context of this pronouncement was political radicalism and a critical questioning of the interests served, tacitly or openly, by anthropologists working in the societies that were by now known as the Third World. The author was Keith

Hart, writing in the *British Journal of Sociology* in 1974. His point of view was that the anthropology of his time was sterile and irrelevant outside the seminar room. More than 30 years on, this is still a concern not to be sneered at. It is still common to speak of anthropologists working outside of the academy as 'not working as anthropologists any more', as if preserving one's academic virginity was all that mattered.

Before we begin to discuss what a twenty-first-century anthropology ought to look like – and a wishy-washy, non-committal pluralism is not an acceptable answer – there are a few more points I should like to make concerning the relationship between academic anthropology and the non-academic social and political world.

First, regarding the invisibility of anthropology in the public sphere and policy, there is a terrible possibility that people out there know perfectly well what anthropologists do and have some fairly sound notions about the way we reason about the world – but they are not interested! Only last week, I went out to have a few drinks with some friends, and one of them spoke of a development project in Malawi. Whereas the Europeans were keen to build wells and schools, local chiefs had told the development officers that the first priority should really be to secure funding for rainmaking rituals, which are very expensive and involve large expenditures on food and so on. Of course everybody had a laugh at this, but a few years back I might have taken on the social responsibility of the anthropologist by saying something about local priorities and the importance of getting to know people really well before embarking on development projects funded and managed by foreigners. However, everyone present knew this argument backwards and forwards already, but it didn't matter. On a more general note, it is clear that in recent years there has been a perceptible impatience in the European public spheres, e.g. in questions to do with immigration and the cultural diversity brought through them. One possible response to this situation might be to accept a countercultural position, which would come easily to many anthropologists, who are used to represent minority views, but which would ultimately be a gesture of resignation.

Second, grand theory remains a temptation in spite of the many years of 'the end of modernism'. Some time back in the 1980s, Ernest Gellner claimed that the success of postmodernism was due to a great

demand, among students and academics, for obscurity. Today, it seems as if the intellectual public, certainly in the Anglophone world, is more inclined to be enthusiastic about simple answers to complex questions, as witnessed in the current popularity of selfish-gene biology. Although evolutionist adaptationism can be illuminating and may shed light on many of the topics we work with as social anthropologists, it is ultimately a kind of anti-anthropology, since it rejects irreducible complexity in favour of single-factor causalities.

Third, the supreme symbolic power of the academy can no longer be taken for granted, and this seems to have had some unfortunate consequences for our activities in the public sphere. If you are going to have an argument with a journalist or someone else with a much poorer formal education than yourself, it will now be an argument between equals. Many of us have experienced that if we say something slightly controversial in the seminar room, we may expect a polite discussion afterwards, but saying the same thing in the media may lead to vigorous and often extremely passionate disagreement. Against this kind of controversy we have no instant means of protection other than keeping mum. Naturally, it would be totally irresponsible of an anthropologist who has knowledge which is relevant for, say, warfare in Iraq or Afghanistan not to share it with the greater public for the fear of controversy. Yet it seems that this mechanism, ultimately one of self-preservation, functions far too often and has reduced the amount of necessary public interventions of anthropologists to a historical low in the English-speaking countries.

* * *

Let me now, by way not so much of concluding but trying to open up a discussion, suggest some ways in which we might begin to think, collectively, about the relevance of social anthropology in a century of disenchantment.

The continued importance of ethnographic fieldwork is, I think, beyond questioning, although methodological pluralism has been with us for a long time. What passes for qualitative data in sociology is a weak soup indeed, compared to the thickness of the ethnographic stew – consisting of an elephant of empirical stuff and a rabbit of theory, to use

Godfrey Lienhardt's metaphor, but cooked in such a way that the taste of the rabbit comes through in every spoonful.

Moreover, and this is an epistemological point closely related to the methodological one, Kirsten Hastrup is right in saying that anthropology is 'defined by its epistemology rather than its object' (Hastrup 2005: 146) – as a form of anti-fundamentalist knowledge, which she describes with the term 'pragmatic enlightenment'. It is the enlightenment of Diderot rather than that of Voltaire, a soft-spoken enlightenment which is self-aware and knows that there is more than one truth, that two descriptions are better than one, to quote Bateson. I am less happy, incidentally, with Hastrup's view that '...it is possible to believe in some sort of progress – not in the sense of belief in a unidirectional history or a teleological drive towards the perfect social state, but rather in acknowledging the possibility of learning from history.' (Hastrup 2005: 147) There has got to be more to it than that. But Hastrup's main point is well taken: Anthropology can no longer deal in absolute truth and, as we sometimes tell our students, if you have problems coping with complexity, you might want to study another subject.

These internally uncontroversial points about methodology and epistemology have, I should like to argue, the potential of catapulting anthropological knowledge and thought back to the centre stage of intellectual life and to make major contributions to policy and development issues. When this impact has failed to materialise, the short explanation is probably that we are too obsessed with our academic identity. Thus the perilous identity politics of my title.

Now the question is how a twentieth-first-century social and cultural anthropology without a shred of residual exoticism, but armed with a superior methodology and epistemology can conceivably make a difference in the world at large. Jonathan Benthall thinks we should set ourselves modest aims. A few years ago, he wrote that 'theoretically, anthropology ought perhaps to be the queen of the social sciences' (Benthall 2002: 10). He then adds, immediately, that it should probably be seen as a 'service discipline' instead; small, but with the potential to influence 'more mainstream disciplines'. But could it not be precisely its slightly countercultural character, which enables it to look at the world with fresh eyes from unexpected angles, that has the potential of placing anthropology in a

central location? The myths of uniqueness that defined twentieth-century anthropology were very helpful in internal identity politics, but they simultaneously created strong and impenetrable outward boundaries. If anthropology continues to surround itself internally with a mystical aura, the trade-off will consist in it being undersold externally.

A possible solution might consist in making a real effort to study the basic institutions of society – any society – essentially through ethnographic methods, in the same way as we should – again – begin to address the central intellectual questions of today, in the domains of development, democracy, rights, human nature and the environmental crisis. This is being done already, but in too modest a way to make a proper impact. But let me return to the empirical questions. Rather than studying down, we have to begin to study sideways and up. Up to now, as far as the ranking of the social sciences goes, the economist says important things; the sociologist says useful things; but the anthropologist says fascinating things.

Arguably, saying fascinating things, whether good for a laugh or not, may be better than saying nothing, but we can do better. Anthropological studies of everyday life in a modern society, municipal politics, diplomacy, government corporations, schools, hospitals and even military academies exist, but most of them focus too much on culture and too little on the features of the social organisation, in its formal as well as informal aspects. The crowded field of minority studies, in no way matched by an equal interest in majority studies, may indicate that anthropologists (and certain other social scientists) are happy on the margins. This is ultimately unproductive and may boost tendencies of cocooning. Anthropology should confidently locate its focus of enquiry to the centre of society, using ethnographic methods not so much to create wonderment and surprise, but to reveal hidden or unacknowledged features of mainstream society. In this way we would be able to generate knowledge which is not only truthful, but also relevant and – dare I say it – useful.

There is no particular reason why anthropologists should confine themselves primarily to work 'at home' or become a less cosmopolitan or global discipline. The point is that, just as our predecessors took on the central institutions in their small-scale societies, we should now do the

same thing in large-scale societies. This professional bias places us, incidentally, in a privileged position when it comes to globalisation research.

During the lecture mentioned a while ago, Raymond Firth was asked about his choice of fieldsite in the Pacific. He replied that, since social anthropologists study universal problems of society, they might as well do it in places where it is pleasant to spend a while. In this context, I would say that since social anthropologists can study anything, they might as well apply their phenomenal methodological toolbox to places where important things happen, and not be afraid of explaining to others what they are doing.

In conclusion, either we place ourselves immodestly at the centre stage of intellectual life and of the societies studied through our methods – through our superior methodology, our ability to raise relevant questions and apply them to the key arenas and our insistence on telling the whole story and not just a slanted version of it – or anthropology could very quickly come to be seen as an anachronism from the twentieth century, unable to make its small facts speak to the big issues.

References

- Archetti, E., 1994, *Exploring the Written. Anthropology and the Multiplicity of Writing*, Universitetsforlaget, Oslo.
- Asad, T., 1973, *Anthropology and the Colonial Encounter*, Ithaca Press, London.
- Benthall, J., 2002, 'General introduction', in Benthall J. (ed.), *The Best of Anthropology Today*, Routledge, London, 1-15.
- Deloria, V.jr., 1969, *Custer Died for your Sins: An Indian Manifesto*, Macmillan, New York.
- Firth, R., 1989, *The future of social anthropology*, Lecture given at the Department of Social Anthropology, University of Oslo, 1989.
- Fox, K., 2004, *Watching the English: The Hidden Rules of English Behaviour*, Hodder & Stoughton, London.
- Geertz, C., 1986, 'The uses of diversity', *Michigan Quarterly Review* 25 (1): 105-123.
- 1998, 'Deep hanging out'. *New York Review of Books*. 45 (16): 69–72.
- Goody, J., 1995, *The Expansive Moment: Anthropology in Britain and Africa 1918–1970*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge

- Hart, K., 1974, 'Anthropology and the colonial encounter' (book review), *British Journal of Sociology* 25 (2): 265–266.
- 1998, *The place of the 1989 Cambridge Anthropological Expedition to the Torres Straits in the history of British social anthropology*, Conference paper presented at 'Anthropology and Psychology: The Legacy of the Torres Straits Expedition', University of Cambridge, 10-12 August 1998.
- Hastrup, K., 2005, 'Social anthropology: Towards a pragmatic enlightenment?', *Social Anthropology* 13 (2): 133-149.
- Hesse, H., 1943, *Das Glasperlenspiel*, Fretz & Wasmuth, Zürich.
- Kearney, M., 2004, *Changing Fields of Anthropology: From Local to Global*, Rowman & Littlefield, Oxford
- Knauft, B., 2006, 'Anthropology in the middle', *Anthropological Theory* 6 (4): 407-430.
- Lebovics, H., 2005, 'On the origins of the Mission du Patrimoine Ethnologique', *Ethnologies comparées* 8: 1-21.
- Solheim, J., 1975, *Er det riktig å si at moderne antropologiske forskere som Barth og Bailey 'står på skuldrene til' Raymond Firth?*, Department of Social Anthropology, University of Oslo, Mimeo

From ethnic to ethno-local identity: The example of the Sarakatsani at Zagori (Epirus) in the twentieth century

What is an ethnic group? Under what conditions does it arise? Is it something stable and 'eternal' or something flexible, negotiable and historically defined? In other words, is an ethnic group a type of essence or a type of social and historical construction?

Anthropologists seem to have generally answered¹ this question by suggesting the second route. But if an ethnic group is a construction, this suggests that it can be transformed through pressure, contact or incorporation within a larger society. In twentieth-century Balkan history, that is the age of nation-making, ethnic identity posed a serious 'problem' in terms of political and military power². Today, the challenge of globalisation pushes ethnic identity in two opposing directions. On the one hand, we witness an increasing homogenisation of ethnic / cultural identity through the 'centralisation / concentration and differentiation' of the global 'ethnic market'³ and the almost complete disappearance of many non-western cultures, as Eriksen (2006: 457-461) stresses. On the other hand, we also see a turn to more narrow expressions of ethnic identity connected with space⁴.

In this context, contemporary anthropology has criticised (Marcus 1992: 313) and even abandoned the term 'identity' as unable to describe

*Lecturer, Democritus University of Thrace.

¹ See, for example, Barth (1969), De Vos, Romanucci and Ross (1982), Verdery (1993), Eriksen (1993), Vermeulen and Coorens (1994), Banks 1996 etc.

² See Kitromilides (1989) about the confusion between the terms 'ethnic', 'national' and 'national minority' within the Balkans. See also Cowan and Brown (2000: 1-27), where the authors sum up the questions and the relevant bibliographic references about Macedonia.

³ I am referring to Verdery's argument (1994: 52) about 'capital [which] continues to accumulate through simultaneous processes of centralisation / concentration and differentiation: centralising and concentrating capital, differentiating products and markets [...] Both processes have been apparent during the last decade or two [...] A company like Benetton is representative of these combined processes, with its world-wide production and distribution network and its marketing based in a variety of styles, permuted from numerous "ethnic traditions" [...]'

⁴ See, for example, the term 'glocal' (Eriksen 2006), which refers to the adaptation of global (Western) culture into local patterns.

the 'multiple positionalities' (Moore 1994: 81) and 'hybrid subjects' (Alarcón 1997: 292-293) of individuals, focusing instead on concepts, such as 'person' and 'self' (Cohen 1994). Another tendency in anthropological theory stresses the 'collective' character of identity (Giddens 1991; Hall 1996) as a more useful analytical tool, insofar as collective identity provides protection for individuals who face the destruction of their traditional forms of life. As an ethnographer who has to decide which theory is the most appropriate in specific situations, I believe that a) theoretical choice is connected to the type of field and b) the fieldwork itself reflects back on the theory, producing new assumptions and questions.

In this paper I will attempt to address the first issue by using empirical examples from my fieldwork material. My field of study is Zagori, in Epirus, Northern Greece⁵. Zagori consists of 45 villages and is a very poor region. It is very mountainous and the terrain is mainly rocky. With little soil to farm, agriculture has always been restricted and sheep rearing is the traditional occupation of the inhabitants. The high meadows of Zagori have been characterised as some of the best in Northern Greece (Makris 1990: 97), but they can be used only in the summer, as they are usually covered by snow from November to May. During these months, the larger flocks are moved to the coastal areas of Epirus or to Thessaly, while the smaller ones are kept in the villages, in stables or under the houses.

The Ottoman occupation of Zagori, which started in 1430, created profound changes in the everyday life of the inhabitants. The Zagorians negotiated their surrender to the Ottomans and thus managed to retain a level of autonomy and self government. The tax they were required to pay for autonomy had a lasting influence on their social life; a hundred Zagorians had to travel to Istanbul to take care of the horses of the Ottoman army as grooms for six months per year (Lambridis 1889: 5-9). This was the beginning of a way of life which has been described as 'traveling' (*taxidiotismos*) (Lazaridis 1983) or 'migration' (*metikesia*) (Dalkavoukis 1999) and has shaped the character of healthy Zagorian men since. Apart from grooming, the migrants used to work in religious buildings and on the streets of Istanbul, doing anything they could to earn enough money to return home. The migrants soon, however, became engaged in com-

⁵ About Zagori, see in German Kahl (1999).

mercial activities, as the Ottomans disdained such activities due to religious beliefs⁶.

The development of commercial activity had important consequences for both the Zagorians and their homeland. Commercial companies were formed with branches in the Balkans or Eastern and Central Europe (Stoianovich 1960; Füves 1965), which reproduced the pattern of migration from Zagori, because the new companies needed reliable staff. Furthermore, as the migrants came into contact with the ideas of the Enlightenment and nation building, they founded schools in every village. This act reinforced migration from Zagori, especially in the nineteenth century, when young students from Zagori had the chance to continue their studies in Ioannina, the nearest city, or at the University of Athens (Dalkavoukis 1999: 66-92). In the mid-nineteenth century, the lack of men in Zagori prompted a local historian to write: 'There is no real marital life in Zagori' (Lambridis 1868: 119). The time was, therefore, ripe for the Sarakatsani⁷ to appear front stage.

In Greece, one of the most popular conversations among folklorists, especially among the older generation and non-academic community, revolves around the origin of the Sarakatsani (Exarchos 1994). Although there is no indisputable evidence about their origin, folklorists have formulated contradictory theories, claiming ancient Greek origins for the group (Chatzimichali 1957; Poulianos 1996) or, alternatively, Vlach origins (Exarchos 1994). The Vlachs are another pastoral ethnic group in Northern Greece. Both of these theories have developed within the context of the national unification of Greece and are currently reproduced in terms of the ethnic competition between the Sarakatsani and the Vlachs. On the one hand, the assertion by the Sarakatsani of their ancient Greek origin provides them with pedigree and status that makes them feel 'more Greek' than the Vlachs. On the other hand, the address 'Vlachs' is commonly used to refer to all pastoral groups in Northern Greece as a

⁶ See Tsoukalas (1985: 275) and Mehlan (1939: 234). This behaviour was not the same for Arabs, who developed commercial activities to a sufficient degree from the thirteenth century (see Rodinson 1980).

⁷ About Sarakatsani, see Höeg (1925-1926), Chatzimichali (1957), Campbell (1964), Kavadias (1965), Chang (1993) and Dalkavoukis (2005).

result of their professional occupation of sheep and goat rearing, and this leads people to confuse the two groups. Currently, the relation between the Sarakatsani and the Vlachs is a prominent issue in ethnic studies in Greece.

We will not discuss further the origin of the Sarakatsani, as the important issue is not so much their origin as their collective identity, especially its construction in ethnic terms and its development as an ethno-local identity. We will, therefore, turn to the relationship between the Sarakatsani and Zagori.

The Sarakatsani appeared in Zagori in the late eighteenth century. In the beginning, they were used as shepherds in the flocks of the Zagorians, but they gradually started developing their own flocks from the middle of the nineteenth century (Tsoumanis 1981). At that time the majority of the Zagorians were migrants, so the high meadows of Zagori were available to the newcomers. The former not only had to pay rent for the fields to the communities of Zagori, but they also paid a tax for using the communal water reservoirs. In addition to this tax, the Sarakatsani used to pay the communities a certain amount for their products, such as cheese or meat. The communities, from their side, had to facilitate the process of producing goods by repairing the buildings or building new ones in the mountains (*stanes*). The whole system was supported by an official agreement between the communities and the Sarakatsani leaders, which was renewed at the end of April of each year (Dalkavoukis 2005).

The economic structure we described above had an important influence on the way of living of the Sarakatsani. First of all, they were forced to form concrete groups in order to deal with the demands of the Zagorians. The rent for the fields was so high that the Sarakatsani who owned small flocks (between 50 and 300 sheep) were not able to rent on their own. As they were not members of the communities as such, they had no right to the free use of the fields. Hence, they were forced to cooperate with others, who owned huge flocks (between 500 and 2000 sheep) and who had the economic power to pay the rent. These larger groups of Sarakatsani, named *tseligata*, were a kind of pastoral company, where the richer shepherds invested the necessary capital and the poorer ones offered their small flocks and, of course, their labour. The leader of each *tseligato* (*tseligas*) was responsible for the families of the shepherds who

worked for him and sometimes operated as a banker for them: lending money to families when necessary, but also restricting their payment. Finally, as the *tseligas* was the only man in *tseligato* who could read and write, he also became the administrator of the group and was able to exploit his shepherds⁸.

These working conditions defined the everyday life in the *tseligato*. A typical *tseligato* was based on consanguineal kinship, so it was a kind of a large family. This element, and also the fact that a *tseligato* had to compete with others in order to rent the best meadow, led Campbell (1964: 150-212) to stress that family was the most significant structure in the social life of the Sarakatsani. Shepherds had to trust their leader, who was usually a relative of theirs, and they were learning how to take care of the flocks since they were children. The shepherds' wives produced clothes, blankets and woolen carpets from the sheeps' wool for their own families. They were also under the moral supervision of their husbands or, in the case of the unmarried women, of their fathers and brothers. The honour of the extended family depended on two factors: the first was the positive action of the men, who had to be effective in work and in protecting the family from attack, the second was women's behaviour. Women had to be patient housewives, good mothers and strict mothers-in-laws for their sons' wives. It was said that the less the men mentioned the name of a woman, the more that woman was respected in the community.

The restricted social life of the Sarakatsani led to two opposing and significant processes. The first regarded marriage strategies. The leader of the family was responsible for the marriage of the young members of his *tseligato*, both men and women, and he used to choose husbands and wives according to the interests of the family. He tried to form alliances with strong members of the community of the Sarakatsani through marriage, in order to avoid competition with other *tseligata* or to take advantage of their position. These prescriptive marriage alliances led to endogamy among the Sarakatsani, which enforced their collective identity, but

⁸ In the Greek bibliography we can find a romantic analysis of the *tseligato*, according to which the *tseligato* was a mechanism of social care (see Karavidas 1931). The full economic function of the *tseligato* has been analysed by Nitsiakos (1987).

simultaneously alienated them from the surrounding society. This disadvantage was balanced by the second process, that of pursuing protection from godfathers, who usually belonged to the upper strata of the surrounding society and were normally connected with the political authorities. The Sarakatsani repaid for this protection by voting for the godfather's preferred candidate in the elections. This function of the Sarakatsani community has been described as 'patronage' (Campbell 1964: 213-262).

This brief analysis of the structures of Sarakatsani community can provide us with material to describe their ethnic identity from a semiotic point of view. Furthermore, we can compare the social life of the Sarakatsani with that of the Zagorians, in order to understand the manner in which contact between these two different communities enforced the collective identity of the Sarakatsani and encouraged them to reproduce it as an ethnic one⁹.

As Fredric Barth stresses (1994: 12):

'ethnic groups and their features are produced under particular interactional, historical, economic and political circumstances: they are highly situational, not primordial [...] The cultural differences of primary significance for ethnicity are those that people use to mark the distinction, the boundary, and not the analyst's ideas of what is most aboriginal or characteristic in their culture'.

Following Barth, we should: a) examine the conditions under which the ethnic identity of the Sarakatsani appeared, and b) mark out the symbols of this identity, as they arise from the ethnographic fieldwork in Zagori. As for the first task, we have already indicated the position of each group: the Zagorians used to live in the villages, while the Sarakatsani lived outside the settlements.

⁹ Many scholars suggest that the ethnic identity of a group presupposes contact and interrelationship. Eriksen, for example, stresses (1993: 9-10) that '[...] ethnic groups remain more or less discrete, but they are aware of – and in contact with – members of other ethnic groups. Moreover, these groups or categories are in a sense created through that very contact. Group identities must always be defined in relation to that which they are not – in other words, in relation to non-members of the group'.

The majority of men from Zagori worked as merchants, employees or teachers in an area stretching from central Europe to Egypt and Asia Minor, while their families in the villages reared small flocks for domestic use. The Sarakatsani, on the other hand, used to spend their whole life rearing flocks of sheep in *tselegata*. They were referred to as 'Vlachs' (in the professional meaning of the term) and accepted this definition. The differentiation between the two groups at this level was crucial for the numerous divergences in their everyday life and not least for the cultural differences between the two groups. The most important of these cultural differences, as symbols of collective identity, are outlined below.

The two groups inhabited completely different types of residence. The Zagorians lived in houses built of stone, with enough room for each of their activities. On the ground floor there was room for keeping small flocks or storing goods for the winter. On the upper floor there were at least three rooms. The first one was the living room for the winter (*chimoniatiko*) with a fireplace. The second room, named *odas*, was for the social events of the family and the third was the 'secret room' (*mistiko*), which the family used to keep closed in order to guard precious possessions from outsiders. The kitchen was normally in the yard, which was surrounded by a high wall, so that curious neighbours or villagers could not gaze in. The furniture of the house was analogous to the financial strength of the family and it often consisted of pieces bought in the places where the migrants used to work (Stamatopoulou 1987).

The extended family of the Sarakatsani, on the other hand, used to live in a one-room straw hut. It was a circular construction with a skeleton of thin wooden sticks, which were bound on the top. This skeleton was covered by straw from top to bottom, so that it was protected from rain. On the top of the hut the Sarakatsani used to place a wooden cross, in order to prevent evil from coming inside (Moutsopoulos 1994). This hut had only one opening, a kind of door, which of course could not lock. Although it was not a permanent construction, it was effective for the purpose it had been built. The impermanence of this dwelling functioned as an important semiotic signifier. In contrast to the stable constructions of the Zagorians, the hut signified the temporary character of the Sarakatsani as well as their lower social position. Finally, for the Zagorians, the straw hut was construed as the house of a stranger.

We can discern the same semiotic function in the food habits of each group, as well as in their dress and house keeping, although there is not enough time to deal with these issues in detail. In addition to the forms of residence, we can identify the most characteristic symbolic expressions of their respective cultures in terms of: a) pie making, b) the material used for their trousers and c) the musical habits of each group. As for the first, the typical pie of the Sarakatsani was a pastry without crust (Chatzimichali 1957: 324), which was cooked with a gruel mixed with different vegetables, usually wild vegetables found on the mountains. The Zagorians cooked a similar pie, which they prefer to call 'zagorian pie'. This pie was cooked with a crust and a filling from vegetables or meat or anything else they could combine with crust. Although pies are common to all regions of Greece as traditional food (Loukopoulos 1984: 113-116; Arnot 1975: 300), the Sarakatsani and the Zagorians dispute the paternity of their particular pie. This disagreement provides us with an interesting field in order to study the ethnic relations between the two groups, especially at the present time, when traditional pies have become a major attraction for the visitors of Zagori.

The material used to make trousers has also a symbolic meaning. The Sarakatsani traditionally made their trousers from sheeps' wool, while the Zagorians bought their trousers from shops. This differentiation reflected their different occupations. For the members of the two groups, though, it had an additional function: the Zagorians used to treat a man who was dressed in woolen trousers as impolite and violent. From their side, the Sarakatsani considered a man who was not dressed in this way as not a 'real' man, implying he was feminine¹⁰.

Finally, as far as music and dance are concerned, the Zagorians did not play any musical instruments themselves and hired local gypsy musicians for their festivals (Lambridis 1868: 112). The Sarakatsani, on the other hand, were more self-sufficient, due to the fact that they used to sing at their own family festivals or marriages, although, like the Zagorians, they did not play musical instruments either¹¹. The Sarakatsani ha-

¹⁰ Campbell (1964: 213) asserts that, according to the Sarakatsani system of values, Zagorians were 'lacking in manliness, courage and generosity'.

¹¹ My older Sarakatsani informants told me that the Sarakatsani used to 'dance with the mouth', which means that they used to sing and dance at the same time.

bit of singing while they danced led to difficulties for the Sarakatsani in adjusting to the dance pattern of the Zagorians, when they came into the settlements and started taking part in the community festivals.

These cultural expressions described above could be characterised as 'ethnognomonic traits' in the frame of a 'cultural totemism' in Zagori (Schwartz 1982: 106-108). They enabled people to distinguish between friends and opponents and moreover to develop survival strategies in their everyday lives. Finally, such cultural expressions were essential elements in the code of communication between the two ethnic groups. The reproduction of the economic and social structure of Zagori endowed these expressions with an apparent stability and permanence over time. This apparent stability was seriously disrupted by what Hobsbawm has called the 'short twentieth century' (Hobsbawm 1994).

The integration of Zagori into the Greek state in 1913 was immediately followed by an official government census of the population (1913-14)¹². During this census, the Sarakatsani were not counted as citizens of the region due to the fact that they were neither members of the communities in the past nor did they own properties in the settlements in the present. They may also have been absent at the time of the census, so the community leaders refused to include them in the lists of the new citizens. This was an act of necessity for the communities, since the tax the Sarakatsani pay was the only source of income for the communities. As a result, the national authorities confirmed a non official separation of the population in Zagori and they instituted this separation as an ethnic one, calling the Sarakatsani 'tent dwellers'.¹³

The situation became more pressing for the Sarakatsani after 1922, when more than 1.5 million refugees came to Greece from Asia Minor. The refugees were settled in the places where the Sarakatsani used to stay in the winter, so it became extremely difficult for them to preserve their flocks. It has been noted that this process destroyed almost 50 per cent of the flocks and led shepherds to accept more onerous working conditions

¹² See 'Census of the population of Zagori at 1913' in *Epirotic Society* (Ηπειρωτική Εταιρεία), 1988, 14, , 250-256.

¹³ I found this definition not only in the Community documents but also in the bank accounts of the Sarakatsani, when they used to borrow money.

in the *tseligata* (Nitsiakos 1987: 282-283). This development led the Sarakatsani and other shepherds to form syndicates and cooperatives in order to pressurise the government to resolve their problems (Dalkavoukis 2005). Finally, an effective solution was achieved in 1938, when communities were forced to accept the landless shepherds as members (Dalkavoukis 2004). Nonetheless, despite the fact that in 1939 the first members of the Sarakatsani groups became official citizens of Zagori, the process did not effectively start until 1950, after World War II and the Greek Civil War. By 1950 the majority of the Zagorians had left their villages as a result of the destruction of their property, so the Sarakatsani could find cheap houses to buy.

The renewal of the population of Zagori after 1950 led to an increase in contact between the Sarakatsani and the Zagorians. This process influenced the everyday life of the Sarakatsani, who gradually started to change many of their customs. They lived in houses instead of straw huts, they adapted their traditional clothing and food to the patterns of the villagers. Although they continued rearing sheep, they restricted the size of the flocks, so that they could stable their animals in the winter. Many Sarakatsani became permanent inhabitants and their children started going to school in the villages. The extended families were gradually broken down and replaced by smaller nuclear families and a lot of the younger men emigrated to Germany or Sweden as industrial workers. Others left rural life and joined urban occupations, such as butchers or greengrocers, in Ioannina or Athens, or they studied at the University from the mid 1960s. In short, as every single expression of the Sarakatsani social life became similar to that of the Zagorians, nobody could any longer discern any difference between the two groups. In this context, the Sarakatsani produced a new collective identity, one that we could call an 'ethno-local identity': they defined themselves as 'the Sarakatsani of Zagori' or 'Zagorian Sarakatsani' (Dalkavoukis 2005). In the rest of this paper we will examine the factors that led them to reserve their ethnonym in this new identity and the function it has today.

After the Sarakatsani established themselves in the villages, with the consequent increase in their contacts with the Zagorians, an inevitable process of assimilation took place. Milton Yinger (1994: 68-166) describes four possible phases of assimilation: a) *acculturation*, a cultural phase,

during which a group of people accepts the system of values and rules of the rest of society, b) *integration*, a structural phase, which implies that a group of people shares the same rights and political position and opportunities with the rest, c) *identification*, a psychological phase, which is characterised by a fluent sense of belonging, and finally, d) *amalgamation*, a biological phase, which implies that a group of people is not separated from the rest of the society by physical difference.

The fact that the Sarakatsani choose to reserve their ethnonym in their new identity suggests that identification has only partially taken place. Although integration and acculturation were completed since 1938 and consolidated during the following generation, there is a kind of restricted amalgamation that prevents the Sarakatsani from feeling Zagorians. Many of the Sarakatsani informants have noted that there haven't been any marriages between the Sarakatsani and the Zagorians until now, a fact that evidently shows that they feel 'strangers', a kind of community within the community of Zagori. Moreover, the older of these informants accused the Zagorians of racism (Dalkavoukis 2005), because the latter did not accept them into the settlements in the past. Thus, the 'ethnic memory' of the Sarakatsani is still alive and influences their identity today.

In addition to the reasons presented above, we can also refer to the ethnographic fieldwork that marked the ethnonym 'Sarakatsani' instead of 'Vlachs' and was used by the Sarakatsani as a form of self definition. As a result, the Sarakatsani derive status from their own ethnic identity, which they choose to combine with local elements. Moreover, the Zagorians do not accept them as fully acculturated either, because the Sarakatsani insist on referring to their particular culture, origin etc., so the Zagorians collude with the use of this ethno-local definition of the Sarakatsani. The ethno-local identity of the Sarakatsani, therefore, seems to be a matter of 'collective defense' from both sides and within a context of ethnic competition.

In conclusion, we would argue that the case of the Sarakatsani of Zagori provides the ethnographer with an opportunity to study the process of an emerging and developing ethnic identity in a specific context. As a result, we believe that it confirms the assumption that the term

'identity' still has a collective character and is useful not only for individuals but also for anthropologists as an effective analytical tool.

Furthermore, this study not only confirms the situational and psychological character of ethnic identity but also shows that the application of semiotics can be extremely effective for a 'thick description' of culture that is necessary in an ethnographic approach. As Clifford Geertz stressed (1973: 5):

'The concept of culture [...] is essentially a semiotic one. Believing, with Max Weber, that man is an animal suspended in webs of significance he himself has spun, I take culture to be those webs, and the analysis of it to be therefore not an experimental science in search of law but an interpretive one in search of meaning. It is explication I am after, construing social expressions on their surface enigmatical.'

References

- Alarcón, N., 1997, 'The theoretical subjects of *This Bridge Called My Back* and Anglo-American feminism', in Nicholson L. (ed.), *The Second Wave*, Routledge, London and New York, 289-299.
- Arnott, L. M., 1975, *Gastronomy. The Anthropology of food and food habits*, Mouton Publishers, The Hague..
- Banks, M., 1996, *Ethnicity: Anthropological Constructions*, Routledge, London.
- Barth, F., 1969. *Ethnic groups and boundaries. The social organisation of cultural difference*, Universities Forlaget / Allen & Unwin, Bergen and London.
- 1994, 'Enduring and emerging issues in the analysis of ethnicity', in Vermeulen H., and Cooren C. (eds.), *The Anthropology of Ethnicity*, Het Spinhuis, Amsterdam, 11-32.
- Campbell, K. J., 1964, *Honour, Family and Patronage*, Clarendon Press - Oxford, London.
- Chang, C., 1993, 'Pastoral Transhumance in the Southern Balkans as a Social Ideology: Ethnoarcheological Research in Northern Greece', *American Anthropologist* 95 (3): 687-703.