



THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO PRESS JOURNALS

The Mediterranean as a Category of Regional Comparison: A Critical View

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Source: *Current Anthropology*, Vol. 30, No. 3 (Jun., 1989), pp. 399-406

Published by: The University of Chicago Press on behalf of Wenner-Gren Foundation for Anthropological Research

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2743537>

Accessed: 24-01-2017 10:46 UTC

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- sians than like *gallegos*? Are the Pisticcesi more like Libyans than like Piedmontese? Are Greeks more like Egyptians than other Balkan peoples? My answer is that the notion of the Mediterranean Basin as a "culture area" is more useful as a means of distancing Anglo-American scholars from the populations they study than as a way of making sense of the cultural homogeneities and differences that characterize the region.
- In his introduction to a recently published collection of papers, Gilmore (1987a:3) makes a rather straightforward statement in favour of the Mediterranean as a "culture area": "The Mediterranean Basin represents a *cultural* unity; . . . it shows both an internal cohesiveness in moral-cognitive terms and a perspicuous trait enclosure in space. Further, there is a general agreement that the honor/shame syndrome is diacritical to this coherence and differentiation." Curiously, however, even the collaborators in the volume he edits do not agree about this central tenet. Brandes and Giovannini, though their claims are far more moderate, would seem to support most of Gilmore's general conclusions; Davis would appear to maintain his previously stated non-committal position that "the mediterranean . . . is in no sense a homogeneous culture area" (Davis 1977:255); others, however, such as Marcus and Herzfeld, are quite openly in disagreement. The latter, in fact, ends his paper with a challenge: "we may one day be able to look back on 'Mediterranean anthropology' . . . as a culturally, politically, and historically localized discourse" (Herzfeld 1987:88).
- Now, Herzfeld's is not a voice in the wilderness: there is an increasing awareness that something is wrong with the notion of the Mediterranean as a culture area. Referring to what he calls the "*miseria*—amoral familism syndrome" in Mediterranean studies, Fernandez (1983:168) has warned us that "one must be aware how invidiously, if implicitly, this concurrent set of traits exalts the values of the northern core countries and justifies the subordinate condition of the southern peripheries." Llobera's (1986) attack is far more violent, and even though I disagree with him on most other points (see Pina-Cabral 1987), I do share his opinion (p. 30) that

The Mediterranean as a Category of Regional Comparison: A Critical View¹

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Are the Algarve mountaineers more like Moroccans than like *minhotos*? Are Andalusians more like Tuni-

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it has been largely due to the needs of Anglo-Saxon anthropological departments that the idea of the "Mediterranean" as a culture area has been constituted. Attempts to justify the Mediterranean as a unit are unconvincing for a variety of reasons, but mainly because the so-called typical traits of the area (agrarian dualism of scale, patron-client relationships, honour and shame syndrome) are far from materializing everywhere.

I would not necessarily agree with him that Mediterraneanists have "fevered minds" (p. 33), although, after reading Gilmore on what he calls "the flamboyant virility complexes of Mediterranean males" (1987a:16), one is sorely tempted.

In the hands of Herzfeld (1987:76) this critical approach assumes the characteristically two-sided aspect

which must surely be seen as one of his major contributions to this field:

Certainly those who sell the images of this [Mediterranean] quintessence to West European and North American tourists have rarely hesitated to exploit the image of the uniformly romanticized "Mediterranean culture." Ethnographers may have unwittingly contributed to the creation of this stereotype . . . , which also serves the interest of the industrialized nations who patronize the Mediterranean lands; an apparently primitive and homogeneous code of honor includes the delights of one-sided hospitality.

As has been argued by Herzfeld for the Greek case and myself for the Portuguese, the ambiguous "European-ness" of some southern European nations during most of the 20th century is a factor to be taken into account (see Herzfeld 1986:chap. 1; Herzfeld 1987:85; Pina-Cabral n.d.a). Their misgivings about their European identity both permitted the Mediterranean labelling and led them to collaborate with it.² The whole industry of tourism advertising cashes in on this ambiguity. From the Club Méditerranée to the latest Yugoslavian version of the Volkswagen Golf, called the "Mediterran," the *dolce far niente* becomes a positive economic asset. There is an ideological price to be paid for it, however. Economic underdevelopment is explained in moral terms by reference to the absence of a "work ethic"; anthropologists must be aware of this ideological function of the "*miseria*—amoral familism syndrome" for the creation and reproduction of which they are largely responsible.

It is time, then, for a rethinking of the notion of the Mediterranean—one that sees anthropologists as strategists, wheeler-dealers, and manipulators of power like Italian, Greek, and Spanish peasants. In this case it is academic power that is in question, but one should not forget that this is also political, also has central economic importance for the participants, and, finally, is also clearly subject to patron-client relations. I want to make it quite clear at this point, however, that I do not consider this fact sufficient to deny the scientific validity of social anthropology. The subjection of scientific knowledge to constant critical and reflexive scrutiny is not to my mind an argument against its validity but the primary condition of its privileged status.

Davis's "official version" of the history of Mediterraneanist anthropology in his *People of the Mediterranean* (1977) continues to be very valuable even though it is excessively Anglocentric. The important influence of American scholars with an interest in Latin America, such as Foster and Redfield, is unjustly forgotten. In spite of this, and as opposed to other areas of anthro-

pological expertise, this one has always seen a great deal of collaboration and dialogue between British and American scholars. Nevertheless, the conditions for British and American Mediterraneanism in the period which followed the Second World War were slightly different from both a theoretical and a political point of view.

The increased interest in Britain in the 1950s in the study of the Mediterranean was linked with a progressive distancing of anthropology from the British colonial effort. As Cutileiro (1971:x) has put it, "the university research machine mounted during the years of Empire was forced to aim at other regions. The Mediterranean Basin . . . preserves, for the English, some of the charms of the old Empire." The war had motivated a number of young people to work in Europe even though, for their Africanist supervisors, this was certainly conceived of as a "soft option"—even Evans-Pritchard, we are told, was not above aiming a gibe or two at his Mediterraneanist students. Davis has graphically described the sort of prejudice that confronted these early Europeanists (1977:7). Accusations that fieldwork in Europe was no fieldwork at all were serious threats to their careers as anthropologists. Colonial anthropology had indelibly marked the discipline; anthropology was the study of "primitive peoples," that is, non-Europeans without writing and (at the time), consequently, without history. For example, in Evans-Pritchard's texts of this period, the legitimating emphasis on primitiveness is still strongly present (see Evans-Pritchard 1965). Those who carried out fieldwork in Europe were in the same position as those who went to the Islamic Middle East and North Africa: the societies they studied were literate societies with long historical traditions; they were not recognizably primitive. By joining forces with their colleagues who studied North Africa and the Middle East and insisting that these were all societies with history (that is, with literate traditions), the brilliant Europeanists who studied at Oxford in the late 1950s managed to demarcate a field of their own and to legitimate it as social anthropology. Thus, the emphasis on history was not so much one of method, as Davis (1977:239–58), thought it should have been, as one of object definition.

One interesting aspect of British Mediterraneanism was the unwillingness of its proponents to stand by the notion that the Mediterranean should be seen as a "culture area." There was talk of the "Mediterranean world" and "Mediterranean peoples," but, as Schneider (1971) notes in her influential paper, statements of uniformity are not easy to come by. The way in which Campbell (1964:v) introduces his study of Greek shepherds is symptomatic: "The social forms which are described here have many interesting parallels in other parts of the Mediterranean world, and it is principally as a contribution to the study of social structures in this area that I offer my study." Similarly, little is said in Peristiany's introduction to *Honour and Shame* or, indeed, anywhere else in this pioneering volume in favour of Mediterranean unity. One is left with the distinct impression that the contributors are more interested in presenting a new "style of anthropological argument" (Davis 1987:22).

2. As early as in 1971, Cutileiro had pointed out that an element of domination was implicit in the choice of anthropological fieldwork areas: "It is strange that there does not seem to exist a similar number of studies . . . about Dutch and Swedish communities, for example. Only the underdeveloped nations seem capable of patiently and tolerantly agreeing to the indiscreet presence of the anthropologist—apparently always a little paternalistic" (p. x).

than in founding a field of anthropological specialization. In fact, Pitt-Rivers and Caro Baroja go so far as to declare that their papers are about Western Europe and Southern Europe, respectively, thus implicitly denying Mediterranean unity. This is certainly a reflection of the influence of Evans-Pritchard's notion of the comparative method in social anthropology, which stresses fieldwork methodology and therefore insists on the greater sociological relevance of differences than of similarities. As it happens, the case he chooses to exemplify his point is the Mediterranean (1965:25):

If we are studying Mediterranean peoples, perhaps we should be less concerned with likenesses between them, the explanation of which may be racial, geographical, psychological and historical; but rather with the differences between them, where a sociological explanation is more likely to be relevant. We ask ourselves *how* a Greek differs from a Spaniard or an Italian, or a Spaniard from an Italian or a Greek; and then we ask ourselves *why*?

Davis's *People of the Mediterranean* is one of the first attempts to legitimate the Mediterranean as an area of specialization within British social anthropology. Following the British tradition, he refuses to propose cultural homogeneity for the Mediterranean; rather, it is "cultural contact" that gives the area its "unity." As he has recently put it, "the people of the Mediterranean have been engaged in conquest, commerce, colonialism, connubium and conversation for about five millennia, and it is impossible to imagine that in that period they have not created common institutions" (Davis 1987:22–23). Now, this would indeed be true if the Mediterranean Basin were an island and if each of the Mediterranean peoples had not been in close contact for five millennia or more with many, many other civilizations and cultures. Is it valid to say, for example, of Portuguese culture today that Islamic influence, which ceased in the 13th century, is more important than the African and Asiatic influences that have been operative ever since? I do not think so. I do not deny that some areas of southern Europe (namely, those that belonged to the Ottoman Empire) have been deeply influenced by Islamic culture and that the Islamic areas of the Mediterranean Basin have been very marked by European influence. For the study of these regions, this contact is important. What I fail to understand is why we should develop a special field of expertise in social anthropology to deal with a particular case of cultural contact and not with all the others. Responding to Herzfeld's claim that the notion of Mediterraneanness is inapt, Davis claims that this remains to be proven by fieldwork (Davis 1987:23). I feel that the contrary is the case: the onus is on Davis and his co-believers to prove that there is some special reason, in attempting to analyse social behaviour in these areas today, to single out the cultural contact that has taken place across the Mediterranean above all others.

For American cultural anthropology the problems of regional comparison presented themselves rather differently. The notion of culture area has been central to the

development of this tradition (see Herskovits 1967:102–21), and in this regard it is interesting to see how Friedl's (1962) explanation for anthropologists' having studied the Mediterranean Basin differs from the British ones. She starts from the same position, that anthropologists have specialized in the study of "primitive" peoples, but her definition of "primitiveness" is that "the cultures of these [primitive] peoples have received no significant recent influences from either of the two early centers of cultural development in the Euroasiatic continent" (p. 1). However, as she puts it, "because of a conviction that the techniques and insights developed through the study of primitive societies are useful for the description and analysis of all societies" (p. 2), anthropologists began to be interested in the study "of the co-heirs of their civilization."

The story is taken up by Fernandez (1983), who says that the Mediterraneanist impetus was also a response to a need for self-knowledge; because the United States is an immigrant country, the need for the knowledge of the cultural backgrounds of the immigrant populations was very strongly felt. His argument suggests an interesting explanation for the fact that so few American anthropologists have studied Portugal in comparison with Spain; it may be because Portuguese immigrants in the United States are often not considered Hispanic.³

It comes as no surprise, therefore, that the most open claims for Mediterranean unity have come from the United States and that there should be a vague irritation among our American colleagues with the British reticence in this field: "Those who began calling themselves Mediterraneanists did not clearly define their field of study; nor did they provide sufficient theoretical basis for its distinctiveness. Skeptics were not impressed" (Gilmore 1982:176). Within the highly competitive and specialized world of American academia, this concern with the identity of the Mediterranean must also be understood as a reflection of the strategic options of anthropologists who, like Gilmore, find that there is a payoff in being labelled "Mediterraneanist"—as a matter of fact, he repeatedly calls our attention to this (1982:176; 1987a:17).

I want to insist that I do not believe that such exercises in the legitimation of academic authority are in and of themselves to be avoided at all costs. I am well aware that all scientific writing carries a component of legitimation of authority, a claim of scientific paternity rights. My only contention is that the "honour-and-shame syndrome" and the "Mediterranean culture-area complex" are not as useful as tools for social anthropological comparison as they are as tools for the legitimation of academic authority. It seems to me that, although we cannot avoid the second, we should give priority to the first.

3. As Francis Rogers of Harvard University argued during the "Iberian identities" conference in Berkeley, California, in 1987, Portuguese immigrants to the United States have steadfastly and on the whole successfully refused to be classified as Hispanics, as this label has had strong pejorative overtones.

I shall not return here to the long-debated issue of whether the "honour-and-shame syndrome" is unique to Mediterranean lands or whether it exists at all (see Herzfeld 1980). (In the collection of papers edited by Gilmore, there is nearly total disagreement on this.) Gilmore's attempt to define the Mediterranean world in terms of "a gender-based honor-and-shame moral system" (1987a:17) does, however, demand some commentary, for it is singularly ethnocentric.

Any attempt to explain phenomena associated with cultural regionalism in terms of individual psychological development is, to my mind, doomed to failure. As psychological processes affect all men or women similarly, which characteristics will be attributed to which culture becomes a matter of choice. As Fernandez (1983:170) has pointed out, "there is now a long tradition of giving our deepest psychological impulses a Mediterranean embodiment." Thus, Gilmore ends up suggesting the existence of social facts such as "the flamboyant virility complexes of Mediterranean males," "Mediterranean masculinity cults," "Mediterranean sexual ideologies," and "Mediterranean female chastity codes." What precisely are the empirical referents of these notions?

As for his claims regarding the Mediterranean-specificity of the "erotization" or "libidinization" of social reputation, I cannot make any sense of them. The gender-specificity of moral values seems to me to apply to the whole of pre-modern Europe and to continue to apply to many areas of the so-called Western world. And does he fail to know that, throughout the whole area of English linguistic influence, testicles are metaphors for courage? What does he think is the meaning of Texas cowboy gear? And what is so specifically Mediterranean about the absence of male initiation rites? Is the fascination with phallic symbolism in any way specific to the Mediterranean (Delaney 1987:39)? As for the structural features that "impede a solid male gender identity" and encourage too close an association with the mother, even if that sort of argument were valid at individual level I fail to see how it could affect the various Mediterranean cultures equally because, if this were the case, it would then apply to practically the whole Western world. The association that he finds between "Mediterranean malehood" and transvestism and homosexual rape strikes me as strange: has he not read of barrack rapes elsewhere in the world?

The strangest thing about all these statements is that, when Gilmore gets down to describing Andalusians (1987b:90-103), he fails to find any of the phantoms he has previously erected. As does Davis, he claims that this only shows that more research is needed and that the tendencies exist but are "obscured" (p. 101). But, if this is so, why do they not also exist in England or Germany, where pub and bar behaviour is far more agonistic and violent than in Andalusia? Nearby, across the Portuguese border, Cutileiro (1971:xxiv, my translation) makes a similar assessment:

In the taverns and cafés groups of men are not in constant competition for "greater worth"; an agonistic

element is doubtless present, but it is watered down by the considerations that the system of friendship enforces. The bragger and the man touchy about his honour have no place in this society; or, when they do, it is as deviant, pathological cases.

One is therefore tempted to think that one of the reasons middle-class and upper-middle-class young Anglo-American scholars are so deeply impressed with the agonistic display of malehood among southern European peasants is that they are so ignorant of working-class behaviour in their own countries of origin.

Once again, are Andalusians more like Tunisians than like *gallegos*? Is there no "libidinization" of honour among the populations of northwestern Iberia? Because if there is, why are the Bretons and the Irish not included? After all, they are very similar. Of course, we know that we cannot call these Mediterraneans, as the word would then altogether lose its meaning. But, as it turns out, the behaviour of Andalusians is far more akin to that of their fellow Spaniards to the north and Portuguese to the west than to that of North African Muslims. The "libidinization" of honour seems to me unsatisfactory as a distinguishing trait, first because it is impossible to define it with sufficient precision for its presence to be verified, second because it can be found elsewhere, and third because its supposed effects in a Christian and an Islamic context are so distinct.

Beyond this, what are "Mediterranean female chastity codes"? Why do we compare a situation like Andalusia, where women work in the fields, inherit and remain in control of their property, are not veiled or cloistered, talk to men freely, and so forth, and where residence patterns tend to reinforce matrifocality, with the rather more extreme enforcement of female chastity in Islamic regions? Would not a comparison with the remainder of Western Europe be more apposite?

I must also take issue with the supposed "atomistic and isolated" nature of Mediterranean families (e.g., Brandes 1987:132). This does not seem at all obvious to me—or, indeed, to most of those who have carefully examined the issues (see Handman 1981:102-3). What is "atomistic" about the patrilineages that are found in parts of the Balkans, the Middle East, and North Africa? What is "isolated" about Sicilian families and their complex systems of association with kin? How would one find a way of describing a single "type of family organization" that includes the matrifocal sibling-vicinalities that Davis describes, the divided households of the small mountain hamlets of Algarve, the kindreds of Aragón, the Corsican families, the stem-family households of the Pyrenean region (which, incidentally, are found right in the middle of the Mediterranean Sea in Formentera [Bestard 1985]), the various types of Italian families, and, finally, the *zadruga*? All of these are instances in which descent and bridewealth are absent and the conjugal unit is the central reproductive nucleus. Eastward and southward from the Balkans, in areas where patrilineal descent is encountered, the diversity will be even more marked.

The "Mediterranean family" is a stereotype reinforced

by the fact that each anthropologist is turned towards "his" community, interpreting it and comparing it with others by means of models of ethical behaviour (such as "honour and shame"), with little concern for sociostructural features. If anything, this tendency seems to be on the increase. In *The Poetics of Manhood*, Herzfeld (1985) writes a superbly researched monograph in which the role of agnatic kinship is discussed at length without ever giving us any data on household composition or patterns of economic cooperation.

Much of the responsibility for the diffusion of the "Mediterranean family" stereotype is due to Schneider's (1971) "Of Vigilance and Virgins." Schneider reworks Sir Henry Maine's classic model,⁴ adapting it to a rather expanded concept of the Mediterranean that includes the Fulani as well as the inhabitants of Somaliland (p. 12). As in Maine (e.g., 1885:64–65), the passage from pastoralism to agriculture and then the influence of cities⁵ are made the determining factors in the shift from a society based on status to a society based on contract—that is, from a society in which the main social units are corporate groups to one in which individualism rules. "The conditions which have fragmented the economic and political structure into its minimal, nuclear family components, have also fragmented the family. Familism is in some ways a mask for individualism" (Schneider 1971:11).

Characteristically, synchronic difference is explained away as diachronic difference. We are introduced to a few "survivals": "On the historically isolated islands of Sardinia and Corsica, and to some extent in the Balkans, rudiments of lineage and clan remain" (p. 8). The difference between the dominant models of familial reproduction within Christian and Islamic civilizations are also explained in an evolutionistic manner: "Christianity, the source of so many of the rules governing domestic life on the European side [of the Mediterranean], is also not 'opposed' to Islam. It simply went further to advance the hegemony of agriculture, and did so in regions in which agriculture had the best chance" (pp. 19–20). Thus, in that whole half of the Mediterranean in which "the nuclear family" seems less useful as a descriptive model, North Africa and the Middle East, we are told that it is present but "embedded" in a "joint patrilocal and sometimes polygynous household" (p. 7).

Although, admittedly, at the time Schneider was writing, the enormous amount of material that is today available was largely non-existent, more careful study of the structural features of the societies in question would have prevented some of these excessive generalizations. Much of the problem, it would seem, lies with the notion of "culture area." As Ehrlich and Henderson (1968:564) have indicated, the notion was developed in "the natural-history stage of anthropology that was

concerned with the orderly description of the cultures of the world," and it gave central importance to the geographical and ecological determination of culture (Herskovits 1967:108). To this day it is associated with a rather simplistic ecological determinism—a preoccupation with "materialist" or "environmental" parameters (e.g., Boissevain 1979:83–84). As Gilmore (1982:178) stresses, "the relatively uniform Mediterranean ecology is a safe start"; the problem, as Aceves (1979) pointed out long ago, is where to go from there. The failure of such an approach to cope both with the complexity of historical determination and with the ensuing sociostructural differentiation will become patent to anyone who attempts to fit the abundant material on family patterns that we possess today to the tripartite model of Mediterranean family types that Boissevain (1976) constructed by means of a correlation with ecotypes.

Useful as it is for museological purposes, the notion of "culture area" proves deficient as a comparative tool as soon as sociological and historical considerations get the upper hand. The question of what a "trait" is and which "trait complexes" should be chosen as distinctive does not seem to have been satisfactorily resolved. Moreover, it is unclear to what extent the Mediterranean can be considered a "culture area." In the first place, according to Herskovits (1967:103), some cultural homogeneity is a definite condition for a culture area. The sharing of a single trait would not seem to suffice; some accumulation of different traits is implicit, at least in Herskovits's account (pp. 104–5). In the second place, as Benedict and Herskovits argued, the notion proves unsatisfactory in regions "where the distribution of geographic differences among the various peoples is overlain by the class stratification that is the consequence of the high level of specialization that characterizes vast population aggregates" (p. 119, my translation).

The reader will probably now expect me to take the sort of position that some call "cultural particularism"—a refusal to compare, an insistence on treating each unit of study as unique. This is certainly a safe attitude and one that is on the whole in agreement with Evans-Pritchard's tenets. However, it is, to my mind, merely a postponement of the task that must sooner or later be confronted. Therefore, in the remainder of this paper, I want to advance an argument in favour of regional comparison.

Without some form of contextualization, implicit or explicit, ethnographic knowledge would be meaningless. I can think of at least three reasons that this need for contextualization should lead us to attempt to produce schemes of regional comparison.

First, we have to learn to do without the universalistic categories of institutional description that we have inherited from evolutionist anthropology—troublesome notions such as kinship, corporateness, magic, religion, totemism, etc. As Needham (1971:xix–xx) has suggested, we need "to rely more directly on the indigenous categories and think [more readily] in terms of these." This means that we need historically informed and regionally specific processes of contextualization. If Gilmore (1987a) and Delaney (1987) had not begun by com-

4. For a critique of the continued reference to this model in the study of European family patterns, see Pina-Cabral (n.d.b).

5. "I propose that the agricultural communities of the Mediterranean can also be arranged on a continuum, at one end of which they are dominated by pastoralism and at the other end by the administrative hierarchies of the state" (Schneider 1971:11).

paring an Andalusian town with a remote Central Anatolian village, with Qadhafi's Libya, with Cretan shepherds, and with the warring hill tribesmen of eastern Morocco and, instead, had compared it with its Portuguese, Spanish, and southern French neighbours, then the results might not have proven so ludicrous.

Second, the option of naïvely studying "villages," "communities," "tribes," or "societies" is no longer open to us: we rely increasingly on cultural, social, and geographic contextualization to assess the meaning of the sample we are studying. Moreover, the enormous increase in the number of ethnographic accounts available to the neophyte also means that no one goes into the field unprimed.

Third, we can no longer pretend that an element of comparison is not present in any choice of references. The practice of ignoring the colleagues who did research next door has to be abandoned. Quoting other ethnographers is engaging in comparison. But the increasing bulk of the academic production with which we are faced in social anthropology (particularly if we do not limit ourselves to the *lingua franca*) is daunting. How can anyone continue to claim that not much fieldwork is being done (Davis 1987:23)? We need categories of regional comparison that can delimit fields of expertise, if for no other reason than to legitimate our academic production and to subject it to critical checks (see Brandes 1987:121).

I disagree with Brandes, however, when he argues that scholars interested in "controlled comparison" were concerned with "the origins of particular elements of the social structure and value systems" and not with "the careful description of such elements, and in particular the underlying structural relationships among these elements" (p. 124). Though this may well have been true of Eggan and Nadel, whom he cites, it is not necessarily so in the case of Evans-Pritchard's advocacy of the method. The latter, for example, states that "circumstances where the societies compared have much in common structurally, culturally and environmentally would seem to offer the best opportunity for detailed and controlled comparative treatment, which would be an intensive as contrasted with a statistical study" (1965:27). Scholars who have recently practiced this method or argued in its favour, such as Kuper (1982), Barnes (1985), Josselin de Jong (1985), and Rivière (1984), have done so with a profound concern for structural considerations. It is indeed true that structuralist anthropology and applied psychoanalysis (Brandes 1987:124— and why not Marxism also?) have revealed the proximity of societies that are physically far apart. But it is also true that they have failed to bring about the great revelations that they promised, and an increasing number of people are finding it necessary to return to less ambitious modes of comparison that maintain greater respect for the cultural specificity of the data.

The choice of any approach that emphasizes culture at the expense of sociostructural factors seems unsatisfactory. Our analyses have to be constructed in such a way as to allow for the complexity of the interrelation be-

tween action and cognition (see Ortner 1984). Therefore we cannot base our regional comparisons on categories derived from the identification of "traits" such as the "honour-and-shame syndrome." Rather, we have to attempt to assess the degree of sociocultural uniformity and differentiation within a historical and sociological framework. This is increasingly important, for we are living in a world in which difference is no longer the result of mutual ignorance but is increasingly and constantly being recreated. What better example of "the reinvention of difference" (Clifford 1988:15) than Davis's Libyan material?

How, then, would I redivide the Mediterranean? I do not have a vocation for the drawing of boundaries, and, in any case, I would not claim sufficient erudition to undertake such a task. Moreover, it seems to me that regional comparison has to be a stratified undertaking: for example, the fact that the Iberian Peninsula and its surroundings give evidence of considerable cultural continuity does not detract from the postulation of Western European cultural uniformity, or even of European cultural uniformity or, ultimately, Eurasian cultural uniformity (see Goody 1973). My suggestion is that we start from the level of subregional comparison and work our way towards wider and wider levels of comparison. There has to be a constant dialectic between what we generalize for one level and what we generalize for the levels above and below it. A town may have many quarters, just as a district may have many towns, a region many districts, and so on. In other words, all ethnography is an exercise in comparison—minuscule subregional comparison.

Thus, we should abandon trying to define an area largely on the basis of political and academic interests and then defy anyone to prove that it is not a "culture area," as Davis does. Rather, we should work toward regional comparison and let our *ethnologisch studieveld* (Josselin de Jong 1985, Barnes 1985) construct itself slowly out of our joint and increasingly more wide-ranging efforts.

For the moment, it seems to me, the obvious task at hand is to compare societies in adjoining linguistic, religious, political, economic, and historical spaces and then move on to slightly more embracing comparisons. Why have anthropologists avoided comparing Mediterranean Europe with Atlantic Europe, whilst dedicating so much ink and paper to the more distant links between the northern and southern edges of the Mediterranean? This odd preference survives in the face both of arguments to the contrary (see Aceves 1979) and of the patent impossibility of demonstrating its comparative usefulness. Even though, in 1982, Gilmore still feels that "we need to know more conclusively what the continuities really are that make north and south [of the Mediterranean] more than simply adjacent culture zones sharing a similar environment," his faith in the anthropology of the Mediterranean as "a legitimate subspecialty" does not seem to be shaken (p. 199).

Furthermore, relative cultural homogeneity cannot be assessed ahistorically. The conditions of marked under-

development that have characterized southern Europe in the post-war period are fast changing. The physical similarities between Moroccan and Spanish villages that probably struck the ethnographers of the 1950s may be less apparent in the 1990s. Today, male enforcement of female chastity in Andalusia (and, according to Gilmore [1987b] himself, there does not seem to be all that much of it) must surely appear radically distinct from practices in Morocco, Libya, or Saudi Arabia. This can be interpreted in two ways: either the similarities in the 1950s were only superficial or political and economic changes since the 1960s have resulted in a redrawing of the ethnographic map. Because all similarity is relative, both interpretations may well be correct.

One thing remains certain, and that is that there was an element of circularity in the argument of Mediterraneanists who went to the most remote and least developed villages to find that the Mediterranean was a culture area. In the 1950s, the ruralist emphasis of social anthropology meant that the central characteristics of European Christian civilisation and Islam—their urban traditions in commerce and learning—were neglected. As Brandes (1987:126) notes, “it is hardly coincidental that discussions of honor and shame derive from observations in villages and small towns. These are the settings that anthropologists have selected to differentiate Mediterranean peoples from themselves. Urbanites presumably provide less striking differences.” As a matter of fact, the very title that Davis chose for his book is significant, for it is a reference to Pitt-Rivers’s (1954) *People of the Sierra*—that is, a ruralist metaphor that permits the “mediterranean” to be treated as an agglomeration of villages in spite of the fact that it has earlier been defined by reference to the “cultural contact” undertaken in the cities by merchants, administrators, and learned men.

Now, in the late 1980s, conditions have changed. Anthropology is no longer a ruralist stronghold (e.g., Hirschon 1988, MacDonough 1986, Kenny and Kertzer 1983), and political and economic changes in Europe have meant that greater integration between Mediterranean and Atlantic Europe is becoming apparent,⁶ whilst the development of Mediterranean Islamic cultures has not been along the lines that the advocates of modernization had expected. As Clifford (1988:17) has put it, “Everywhere in the world distinctions are being destroyed and created. . . . In the last decades of the twentieth century, ethnography begins from the inescapable fact that Westerners are not the only ones going places in the modern world.”

At least as far as southern European countries are con-

cerned, yet another factor has to be taken into account. Anglo-American Mediterraneanist anthropology has been very prolific. Whatever their hopes, Gilmore and his Anglo-American colleagues are not the only “heirs to this intellectual legacy” (Brandes 1987:121). Today, the major departments of social anthropology of southern European countries are staffed by graduates of Anglo-American universities, most of whom not only legitimate their academic authority by carrying Anglo-American degrees and Mediterraneanist knowledge but also publish in English—the scientific *lingua franca* of our age. We must overlook the excessive attacks of those who find it difficult to acknowledge the debt that they owe to the British and American traditions of anthropology (Llobera 1987, Moreno-Navarro 1986). One thing, however, is certain: if the ethnocentrism that the work of people like Gilmore exudes is distasteful to his American colleagues (Fernandez 1983), it is even more so to social anthropologists in southern European countries. Whatever the failures and shortcomings that hindsight may have revealed in the work of the pioneers, such blatantly ethnocentric and unsubstantiated generalizations will not be encountered in the early works of Pitt-Rivers, Campbell, Stirling, or Friedl.

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6. The new trends in political discourse, namely, those associated with the growth of supranational political institutions in Europe, seem to be having an effect on Europeanist anthropology, as Cuisinier (1979:3) predicted. The redrawing of disciplinary boundaries with ethnology that is taking place throughout Europe may be seen as one of these effects. Another is that nationalism and regionalism, themes that our immediate predecessors deemed unworthy of ethnographic or theoretical interest, have become proper subjects of anthropological attention.

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The Unkel Symposia: The Beginnings of a Debate in West German Archaeology?¹

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The most recent Unkel Symposium, the fifth in a series initiated in 1983, was held at the Jugendhof Rheinland, near Bonn, Federal Republic of Germany, September 15-18, 1988. About 25 German, Swiss, and Dutch archaeologists gathered to listen to papers on and discuss problems of continuity and discontinuity, centre and periphery with reference to the Roman Empire and its northern neighbours. The symposium was organised by the Unkel Kreis in conjunction with the Landschaftsverband Rheinland (the regional administration for the Rhineland) and had received grant support from the West German foundation Henkel-Stiftung.

The Unkel Kreis (Unkel Circle) was set up in 1983 to initiate a debate on aims and theory in German archaeology. Basically, there had been no such debate for decades (Härke n.d.). Up to the Second World War, German prehistorians—foremost among them Paul Reinecke (chronology), Carl Schuchhardt (excavation techniques), and Gustaf Kossinna (interpretation of distributions of finds)—had made significant contributions to the development of archaeology as a discipline. Kossinna, in particular, had influenced an entire generation of European archaeologists, and his definition of an archaeological "culture" had been adopted with hardly any modification by Childe. His ethnic interpretation of prehistoric cultures had, however, been exploited after his death (in 1931) by the Nazis. From 1933 to 1945, archaeology had supplied arguments to bolster the racist Nazi ideology and to justify the aggressive expansionism of the Third Reich. Since then West German archaeologists had been suffering from the "Kossinna syndrome" (Smolla 1980). Reacting to the political exploitation of the ethnic paradigm before 1945 and the unquestioning adoption of an evolutionary paradigm in East Germany thereafter, they had discarded theory altogether and retreated into a passive

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