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# Anthropology of the Mediterranean: Between Crisis and Renewal

Dionigi Albera

*During the 1960s and 1970s, the development of Anglophone anthropology in the Mediterranean produced several efforts to establish a circum-Mediterranean perspective. By the 1980s, several criticisms were directed against this young regional specialization. This paper examines the main arguments that substantiated the rejection of this comparative endeavour. It argues that the debate about Mediterranean anthropology has been marked by a narrowing of the field. Discussion was eminently “European”, concerned only the Anglophone production and focused almost exclusively on the theme of honour and shame. A vast group of studies were not taken into account, both in the establishing of the field and in its dismantling. A larger contextualization shows that a renewal of a Mediterranean level of comparison in anthropology is taking place in a more cosmopolite framework. A new epistemological space seems to be opening, which is not a simple return to the past.*

*Keywords:* Mediterranean; Anthropology; Regional Studies; Epistemology; Place

The Mediterranean does not occupy a central position in the symbolic geography of anthropology. This field of regional specialization was established rather late, and not without difficulties. It was in Anglophone milieus that the institutionalization of this branch of studies manifested itself most coherently. Because of the enormous visibility of studies that came from the recognized centres of the discipline, a simplified narrative is often offered. Once the Mediterranean preoccupations of several nineteenth-century ancestors of anthropology are rather rapidly noted, this story leaps immediately to the 1950s, when modern Anglo-American anthropology made its return to this field, equipped with conceptual tools acquired during explorations carried out in the meantime in different continents. After this comes the chronicle of ethnographical work's

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expansion in this region during the 1960s and 1970s: a period of prosperity and development, marked by ambitious attempts to define a comparative Mediterranean horizon. It was an ephemeral if precocious success however, and soon a crisis occurred. A flurry of criticism and doubts announced the decline of this comparative perspective in the 1980s.

This narrative coming from the point of view of the “centre” of the discipline excludes certain elements that make the field much larger and more colourful. A vast group of studies existed that were not taken into account by the dominating current, both in the establishing of this field and in its dismantling. Here, as an entry into the subject, I will follow the vicissitudes of this regional field of knowledge starting from the centre, that is, the body of research issuing from the “metropolises” of the discipline, and finish with a larger contextualization. This will show that after the crisis, a renewal takes place. Dominant for two decades, abolitionism seems now to give way to a more moderate reformism.

### **Growth of the Anthropology of the Mediterranean**

The development of Anglophone anthropology of the Mediterranean over the past decades rests on the growth of “modern” ethnographic research in this area, where “modern” stands for research done using the intensive fieldwork method established in the first decades of the twentieth century for university-trained scholars in British and American anthropology. After World War II, cultural and social anthropologists came to the Mediterranean area in growing numbers. This was but one manifestation of the worldwide expansion of the anthropological study of complex societies. Elsewhere, the growth of the research field was connected with transformations in the world political economy in the decades following World War II, and mainly with the process of decolonization. As Eric Wolf observed: “the pacific or pacified objects of our investigation, primitives and peasants alike, are ever more prone to define our field situation gun in hand” (1974: 257–8). The restricted opportunities for research in many corners of the globe helped shift anthropological research interests towards the Mediterranean area. Many anthropologists turned their attention to Europe and especially to Mediterranean Europe (Cole, 1977). The southern shores of the Mediterranean also became a refuge for ethnographers in quest of more accessible fields. Some years ago Clifford Geertz spelled out his reasons for moving to Morocco when the situation in Indonesia became explosive in the 1960s. He was looking for somewhere new, “writing retrospectively about Indonesia, thinking prospectively, and not very exactly, of all sorts of elsewhere: the Philippines, Uganda, Suriname, Bosnia, Madagascar” (1995: 116), when a casual discovery of Morocco originated a research project that involved several other anthropologists who worked in Morocco between 1965 and 1971.<sup>1</sup>

Ethnographic work in the Mediterranean region was articulated with the development of comparative approaches. Among different possible frameworks (national states, Southern Europe, Middle East, or some portions of those wholes), a circum-Mediterranean perspective was without doubt the larger one, the most ambitious—and also the most vague, as several critics would put it. In spite of the complexity of this

endeavour, several efforts were made to establish a circum-Mediterranean perspective, partially under the protective umbrella of Braudel's masterwork.

In the early 1960s Eric Wolf co-organized with William Schorger a research seminar at the University of Michigan on "Peasant Society and Culture", devoted to a comparison between the northern and southern shores of the Mediterranean. This seminar was followed by several conferences between 1963 and 1967.<sup>2</sup> At the same time Wolf and Schorger formed the University of Michigan Mediterranean Studies Group, and initiated the Project for the Study of Social Networks in the Mediterranean Area. This project aimed at the comparative investigation of social, economic, political, and religious networks mediating between different levels of group identification, and supported the fieldwork of no less than 15 anthropologists on both shores of the Mediterranean until the late 1960s (Silverman, 2001).

According to Schorger and Wolf (1969: 108), the Mediterranean "appeals to the anthropologist as a universe for internal comparison in consequence of cross-currents working between basic similarities deriving from common ecological circumstances and an inextricably shared history, and the regional differences such as those superficially identifiable as contrasts between economic regions, or between Eastern and Western Christianity, or, at the most general level, between Christian and Muslim zones". As Schorger later suggested, integrating both sides of the Mediterranean in the same comparative framework could allow for a better analysis of the level of practice and force the discussion "of the very necessary question as to what in this area is actually uniquely or even significantly Christian or Muslim, Greek or Turkish, Spanish or Moroccan" (Schorger, 1983: 542–3).

The path of British anthropology towards a Mediterranean sub-speciality started in the 1950s when, in Oxford, students of Evans-Pritchard and Peristiany (that is, Pitt-Rivers, Peters, Abou Zeid, Stirling and Campbell) turned to the study of rural communities in the Mediterranean region. Their work was at the heart of several international conferences organized by Peristiany and Pitt-Rivers (the first was in Burg Wartenstein in 1959). The first collection of papers issued from these conferences was edited in 1963 (Pitt-Rivers, 1963). In his introduction, Pitt-Rivers emphasized that in the Mediterranean, technological homogeneity is associated with cultural and ethnic diversity and a long history of contacts (1963: 10). The comparison Pitt-Rivers advocated—which was exemplified in the essays of the book—"is not the formal comparison of cultural features but the implicit comparison between different instances of similar phenomena" (1963: 11). This loose definition of the Mediterranean and the implicit comparison were perceptible in the important work written or edited by Pitt-Rivers and Peristiany over thirty years (Pitt-Rivers, 1963; Peristiany, 1965; 1968; 1976; 1989; Peristiany and Pitt-Rivers, 1992). The focus was always on unifying themes such as social values (honour and shame, hospitality, friendship), kinship and family, and the relation of local communities to the larger social units.

Various studies explored federating elements on the Mediterranean level, such as forms of violence or patronage (Black-Michaud, 1975; Gellner and Waterbury, 1977). Another implicit form of comparison could be found elsewhere in several ethnographical monographs, conceived by their authors as contributions to Mediterranean studies

(for example, Campbell, 1964: V; Boissevain, 1969: 1). More generally, the development of anthropological literature about the region gave birth to a common “library”, and to an intellectual community structured by cross-quotations and overlapping research themes.

During the 1970s there were attempts to develop a more explicit form of comparison (for example Schneider, 1971). This tendency climaxed with Davis’ survey of anthropological studies concerning the Mediterranean (1977), which was seen as the main achievement in the creation of this sub-speciality and which stimulated further work informed by a circum-Mediterranean comparative perspective (for example, Boissevain, 1979; Blok, 1981; Gilmore, 1982; Gilmore, 1987).

However, these efforts were made mainly by anthropologists working on the northern shores (see Hopkins, 1980). Specialists of the southern and eastern regions preferred a Middle-Eastern framework (that is, Gulick, 1976; Eickelman, 1981; Gilsenan, 1990). It must be pointed out that, even during this period of confidence in the future of the anthropology of the Mediterranean, this research agenda never managed to catalyze the majority of anthropological work carried out *in* the Mediterranean.

### **An Atmosphere of Crisis**

The crisis took hold progressively beginning in the 1980s, when the field of Mediterranean anthropology was shaken by a number of severe criticisms, in debates provoked by the attempts (themselves in some cases rather polemical) by Davis (1977), Boissevain (1979) and Gilmore (1982) to more explicitly define the contours of a social and cultural anthropology of the Mediterranean. Considered retrospectively, John Davis’s book, saluted at the time as the “milestone” marking the coming of age of a Mediterranean social anthropology (Boissevain, 1979: 81), turned out instead to be a stone thrown at a rocky mountainside, threatening to unleash a ruinous avalanche. Its attempt to give a fresh impetus to studies in this sector provoked self-critical discussions and a state of permanent agitation.

In all this one must not forget the larger context. The crisis of the Mediterranean as a category of regional comparison in anthropology was part of an epistemological conjuncture that undermined the efforts aimed at establishing comparative frameworks. The discipline as a whole was stricken with a sort of epistemological malaise. The symptoms, particularly virulent in the 1980s, had consequences that persisted in the following period.

In the 1990s, the epistemological horizons were marked, in anthropology as in other social sciences, by the development of a number of centres of interest designated by notions such as globalization, diasporas, transnationalism and hybridization. This dynamic in turn contributed to a decline of perspectives aimed at developing regional comparisons, which also had to defend itself against accusations that it neglected the porosity of borders, and the mobility of human beings, goods and cultural practices in an increasingly fluid world.

The eclipsing of a Mediterranean perspective in anthropology should thus be seen as a local episode within a much larger process.<sup>3</sup> But alongside external factors

linked to the epistemological and geopolitical environment, there were also internal factors and more specific reasons for doubt. Entering into the post-modern turbulence, Mediterranean anthropology was not equipped with a solid foundation. It manifested an imbalance in favour of the northern shore, where most protagonists of the comparative enterprise had worked. Even in the most auspicious period, the Mediterranean framework was not without problems. Certain authors who were very committed to this perspective felt required to explain their choice and to defend it. In addition, the field was never unified. The Mediterranean horizon was sometimes only a simple common reference, indeed a rather flexible one, for a series of monographic initiatives; in other cases there were attempts to arrive at a more formalized comparativism, not to mention that the different tendencies expressed a certain antagonism.<sup>4</sup>

How have the rejections of Mediterranean anthropology fared since the 1980s? It is possible to isolate three tendencies. The first critical axis concentrated on procedures of comparison and generalization. For a number of critics, the notion of the Mediterranean was too vast and diffuse. The societies it presumed to federate under a single comparative flag are in reality enormously different. The presupposed common traits are not uniformly distributed and are far from being present everywhere (Llobera 1986). Given that a large part of anthropological research in the Mediterranean was undertaken in rural communities, it was suggested that these ethnographies would hardly be representative. Many authors, including certain ones who were struggling to define a Mediterranean perspective, remarked that ethnographic research in this region showed a tendency to “tribalize”, to give preference to the most marginal zones of the region (Davis, 1977; Boissevain, 1979; Kenny and Kertzer, 1983). In an often-quoted article, Michael Herzfeld (1980) formulated a critical evaluation of the comparative analysis of social values: generalizations about honour and shame seemed to him counter-productive because they prematurely amalgamated a rich ethnographic diversity. Several times he stressed that a priori assumptions of Mediterranean cultural unity can subvert “the dialectic between particularistic ethnography and comparative analysis” (1984: 443).

This issue was also the core of a paper written collectively by the Southern European Research Group,<sup>5</sup> of which some members, such as Josep R. Llobera and Victoria Goddard, continued afterwards to be active in the “anti-Mediterraneanist” stance. The authors isolated two unsatisfactory notions of the Mediterranean as a unit of study in anthropological literature. The first, which they called “metaphysical”, is best illustrated by the work of Julian Pitt-Rivers, whose view of the Mediterranean as a unit was founded “upon certain common cultural traits that were assumed (rather than demonstrated) to have survived from some time in the past, be it the Roman Empire or the sixteenth century as analyzed by Braudel” (SERG 1981: 56). The other notion, which they called “atomistic”, was exemplified by Davis (1977), for whom the anthropology of the Mediterranean was equal to “the sum total of the ethnographies of the Mediterranean, which have been judiciously apportioned between the traditional categories of anthropology, such as kinship, political organization, religion, etc” (1981: 56). Moreover, they suggested that the tendency to reify monochromatically a highly heterogeneous

Mediterranean area was not an innocent exercise. According to Llobera, for instance, “it is largely due to the needs of Anglo-Saxon anthropological departments that the idea of the “Mediterranean” as a cultural area was constituted” (1986: 30).

These remarks bring us to the second set of criticisms, which saw in the “Mediterranean artifact” the manifestation of an Orientalist vision. The Mediterranean as drawn by anthropologists would be an assortment of ethnocentric and arbitrary projections of researchers coming from Northern Europe and the United States, who oriented the construction of a theoretical field around some strongly stereotyped federating themes (such as honour and shame, patronage, familism). It is in particular the pertinence, even the existence of the “complex of honour and shame” as a factor of cultural unity in the circum-Mediterranean area that was the subject of sharp criticism. It was suggested that such a direction in research had strong ideological connotations.<sup>6</sup> The most eloquent spokesman for this position, Michael Herzfeld, coined the term “Mediterraneanism”, following the model of “Orientalism” of Said, to suggest the reification of the Mediterranean territory as a zone of cultural difference by means of an ideological representation of Otherness (1984; 1987). In Herzfeld’s view, exoticism and ethnocentrism nourished the largest part of Mediterraneanist literature. In the same vein, Fernandez (1983: 170–71) warned of the risks of a projective reading that derives from “a long tradition of giving our deepest psychological impulses a Mediterranean embodiment”. He noted that there is a “set of traits—of such a generally negative quality as to amount to a stereotype—that lie in wait for the Mediterraneanist.” Thus, the stereotyped and ethnocentric vision of Southern man may implicitly exalt the values of the northern core countries, while at the same time justifying the subordinate condition of the southern peripheries.

A third type of criticism insisted on the fact that power asymmetry in the international anthropological field led Anglophone anthropologists to establish a “monological” authority, while ignoring the works of native researchers. This kind of criticism was made especially by Southern European anthropologists (Esteva Fabregat, 1979; Papadoupoulos, 1979; Llobera, 1986; Albera, 1988; Pina Cabral, 1989).

In the face of rising criticism, it seems as if the Mediterranean comparative perspective progressively lost its impetus. Certain authors such as David Gilmore persisted in defending with conviction this comparative approach. A book he edited in 1987 proposed an inventory on the by-then hotly contested classic theme of honour and shame, bringing together authors of different orientations. But, despite Gilmore’s efforts in the introduction, the attempt ended up instead showing the distance between the positions.

Furthermore, this work drew reprimands from Portuguese anthropologist Joao Pina Cabral in an influential article that seemed to close the debate. Although Gilmore was the principal target, the author recapitulated the whole of the discussion and efficiently exposed the three types of criticism mentioned above. By giving voice to a diffuse malaise—“there is an increasing awareness that something is wrong with the notion of the Mediterranean as a culture area”, it announced (1989: 399)—this article drew down the curtain on Mediterranean anthropology. As Llobera and Herzfeld had already suggested, for Pina Cabral, considering the Mediterranean basin as a “culture

area” served largely to separate Anglo-American researchers from the populations they studied (1989: 399).<sup>7</sup> It was an instrument that served more to legitimize academic authority than to develop fruitful comparisons (1989: 401).

In the 1990s, despite certain efforts to renew a comparative perspective on the Mediterranean basin (for example Magnarella, 1992), discussion of the “Mediterranean” as a category slowly lost its momentum. Quotation marks thus became indispensable to mark a distancing, and this branch of studies became from then on synonymous with “out-dated dusty orientation” far away from the challenges of the discipline’s new work programme. The anti-Mediterraneanist camp appeared to have carried the day.

When, in a monograph about a pilgrimage to a Greek island, Jill Dubisch (1995: 194–200) devoted several pages to the theme of honour and shame in Mediterranean anthropology, it was not in order to take up the question again, nor to participate in a debate she judged to be “sterile”. Neither was it in order to attack concepts she thought were already dead. It was on the contrary to mark her distance from an out-of-date style of discourse and ethnographic authority, and especially to understand, by means of a reflexive effort, why this construction had been able to exercise a considerable influence on her earlier ethnographic work.

The new phase of anthropology was marked by dispersed ethnographic research that tried to be politically correct and was often influenced by cultural studies. The partial eclipse of the “Mediterranean” as a comparative category in anthropological discourse ceded more and more place to an “anthropology of Europe”. This change seemed to be linked to certain major events that deepened existing divisions and transformed the Mediterranean into a border: on one hand the resurgence of political Islam, on the other the consolidation of the European Union (see Driessen, 2001a). A book by Goddard, Llobera and Shore (1994) was a kind of manifesto connecting the establishment of European anthropology to the dissolution of Mediterranean anthropology. A text by Goddard was explicitly devoted to this question, and in the introduction the three authors followed the stages of the slow emergence of European anthropology. In this respect Mediterranean anthropology was considered to be a damaging digression, a pernicious mistake now fortunately abandoned. Thus, the primitivism of honour and shame ceded its place to the new agenda of European anthropology (Goddard, Llobera and Shore, 1994: 22). They noted with satisfaction that the term “Europe” replaced from then on “Mediterranean” in the titles of books, articles and research projects. It was a sign of a new era, they announced, in a rather messianic mode. The time of polemics seemed to be over. Or almost. Indeed, they predicted that, although beaten, the Mediterraneanist discourse would probably survive by itself because of the political and academic interests that were associated with it (1994: 23).

The debates on Mediterranean anthropology echoed outside the field. And it must be said that it was the “anti-Mediterraneanism”, with its renowned authors, that echoed the loudest. The strongly critical essay by Joao Pina Cabral (1989) was, for example, cited by Kuper (1994) in an important discussion about contemporary anthropological practice as an example of the native point of view. Seen from afar, Mediterranean anthropology was impoverished by over-reductivism, sliding easily towards simplification, if not caricature. Let us consider for example a text by Passaro (1997), published



in one of the most influential books of the 1990s, in which the author reflected on her research experience on lesbian and feminist activists in Paris and on the homeless in New York. In a paragraph entitled “*The field*” as prison-house, or “*the Mediterranean*”, Passaro made a rather extravagant detour through Mediterranean anthropology, presented as a sort of archaic, colonialist, imperialist contrast to the sophisticated and ultra politically-correct nature of the author’s approach. This detour was justified by an episode in her research itinerary: in 1987 Passaro presented funding proposals to undertake field work on lesbians and feminist activists in France, and received replies questioning the status of Paris as an ethnographic area and inviting her to study instead questions of gender in a Mediterranean context. This provided the occasion for a tirade against the epistemological “prison” represented by the Mediterranean. All the clichés were there, in the space of a page. While for Braudel the Mediterranean was “an ecological unit”, she told us, anthropological literature that began with the monographs of Pitt-Rivers and Campbell had defined it as a culture area characterized by the presence of codes of honour and shame in gender relations of a hierarchical nature. This “culture area” brought to life an imperial nostalgia, opposing the primitivism of the Mediterranean with the modernity of Europe. Passaro took certain arguments from Herzfeld and Pina Cabral, and radicalized them. In particular, she reduced the meaning of Mediterranean anthropology to anthropologists’ desire to obtain “practical advantages” in building professional niches and obtaining funds for research, which led them to neglect the political and theoretical limits of their enterprise.

One may wonder if the spreading of clichés and the creation of caricatured hypes of this sort are not an indication of some simplifications in the debates on Mediterranean anthropology. To answer this question, it is useful to examine in more detail the main arguments of those hostile to this level of comparison.

### **A Polemical Mimicry**

First of all, some precision is needed. We must not imagine a homogeneous front of opponents. The three types of criticisms I have identified sometimes were developed independently. The fact of criticizing certain aspects of Mediterranean anthropology did not necessarily imply a global refusal of this comparative perspective.<sup>8</sup> Even among the opponents who proposed a more articulate and radical vision—the most engaged were probably Llobera, Herzfeld, Goddard and Pina Cabral—the tone was different (Pina Cabral and especially Llobera were the most vehement), and alternative propositions did not coincide.

Critiques of the choice of a comparative Mediterranean horizon pointed out real inconveniences, but they tended sometimes to exaggerate for polemical purposes. Some authors presented the field in a too-monochromatic light and ended up caricaturing the positions of certain “founding fathers”. For instance, Pitt-Rivers or Peristiany always rejected the model of the culture area which hurried commentators willingly attributed to them. The same thing was true for John Davis, the main spokesman of a more explicit comparativism. Indeed, reference to the classical concept of the culture area was rather sporadic in the field of Mediterranean studies.

Even surrounded by methodological precautions, the choice of a Mediterranean comparative framework undeniably presented the risk of ending up with a metaphysical or atomistic vision and of neglecting variations within this vast space. The critics were not wrong in that. The problem was especially serious in attempts to arrive at an explicit comparativism, as in the case of John Davis, through organizing widely-dispersed monographic fragments into a rather traditional grid. However, clinical examination of the shortcomings of Mediterranean anthropology did not result in an efficient therapy.

In general, doubts about the pan-Mediterranean perspective revealed an obsession with homogeneity, which showed a hidden influence of the conceptual model of cultural areas.<sup>9</sup> Several authors reasoned on the basis of the quest for traits that must be present everywhere. In criticizing the idea of the Mediterranean as a supposed “culture area”, they were nevertheless faithful to this model, cultivating the aspiration to build more coherent and homogenous comparative entities. The alternative divisions proposed were far from satisfactory. Entities such as Europe or the Middle East were not necessarily safer candidates for organizing the exercise of comparison. In short, all divisions have their historical baggage and inevitably bring with them risks and inadequacies.<sup>10</sup>

Even in regard to ethnocentrism, exoticism, and stereotypes, underlined by the second set of criticisms, the remarks were not meaningless. The concentration on a limited number of research themes, and especially on questions connected to honour and shame, was real.<sup>11</sup> Certain forms of ethnocentrism and exoticism partially oriented anthropological theorizing about the Mediterranean, defining a set of dominant themes of interest that artificially accentuated the contrast between northern Europe and the Mediterranean.<sup>12</sup> There are sediments of symbols and meanings concerning the Mediterranean in European history, which give the South a great emotional strength and a maieutic role.<sup>13</sup> The Mediterranean’s liminal position—emphasized by the Grand Tour tradition and perpetuated by more prosaic tourist journeys—makes immersion in the past (in *our* past) possible through visiting archaeological sites and being in contact with a supposedly-freer Southern emotional life. Thus it is not surprising that a number of biases influenced anthropological investigation in the Mediterranean area.

Yet it is possible to apply the same scheme of interpretation to several criticisms of the pan-Mediterranean perspective that were seemingly not exempt from stereotyping and ethnocentrism. The vision that accentuates the division between southern Europe and the rest of the Mediterranean has a long tradition in European thought and is very influential in contemporary political rhetoric. It is not difficult to detect the presence of an ideological and ethnocentric bias in the refusal to situate European and Muslim peoples in the same comparative field. Take, for example, this quotation: “If Gilmore and Delaney had not begun by comparing an Andalusian town with a remote Central Anatolian village, Qadhafi’s Libya, Cretan shepherds, and the warring hill tribesmen of Eastern Morocco and, instead, had compared it with its Portuguese, Spanish, and Southern French neighbours, the results might not have proven so ludicrous” (Pina Cabral, 1989: 404). The use of expressions like “Qadhafi’s Libya” or “warring hill

tribesmen”, in opposition to European “neighbours”, does not seem devoid of ideological resonance. Reading articles such as the one by Pina Cabral, one has the impression that whilst he was denouncing the pitfalls of an Orientalist approach applied to southern Europe, the author was simply moving the boundaries of Orientalism. All references he makes to the Muslim world invariably stress the immobility and rigidity of its cultural framework. Pina Cabral proposes a circumspect comparative approach, starting with adjacent spaces from the linguistic, religious, political, economical and historical points of view, and moving gradually to larger comparisons. Here is an example of the “stratified” regional comparison he has in mind: “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” (1989: 404). It is not clear if, once at the Eurasian level, the whole of the Mediterranean would be included in this perspective. In any case an immense detour towards the Pacific Ocean would be necessary to get through the Straits of Gibraltar.

The third group of critiques was probably the most justified. The field is infinitely larger than the one taken into account by Anglophone studies. Davis’s bibliography had large gaps; as for D. Gilmore, he candidly declared that he was taking into account only work written in English. Yet one should carefully avoid over-simplification. For instance, since the beginnings of the development of a Mediterranean speciality in anthropology, an important role was played by “insider” scholars, such as Caro-Baroja, Peristiany and Abou-Zeid. Quite paradoxically, the accusation of northern ethnocentrism focused on the study of honour and shame that was initiated and encouraged by John Peristiany, a Cypriot anthropologist,<sup>14</sup> not to mention the role that Julio Caro-Baroja had in the definition of this line of research. Indeed, it was the discussions launched in the 1950s by a trio composed of Julian Pitt-Rivers, Julio Caro-Baroja and John Peristiany that led to the collective works published beginning in the 1960s. Peristiany’s commitment to dialogue between “the view from afar” and “the view from inside” was present not only in his efforts to develop social sciences in Greece, but also in the organization of a series of international conferences concerning the anthropological study of the Mediterranean. In this context, as was observed by Pitt-Rivers, Peristiany insisted on the need “to consider the views of Mediterranean scholars of Mediterranean countries with the preferential status they should have” (Pitt-Rivers 1994: 26). Indeed, native anthropologists played an important role in the development of Mediterraneanist literature and also in the analysis of honour. The working group at the heart of the elaboration of Mediterranean anthropology had several non-English participants, such as Chiva, Tentori and Bourdieu. A certain number of students trained at Oxford went back to their countries to do field work, such as Abou-Zeid, Cutileiro and Lison-Tolosana—the latter in the village where he was born.

Despite these efforts, the dialogue was limited. As a metropolitan sub-speciality in Anglophone academia, Mediterranean anthropology remained quite impermeable to works conducted in different, peripheral anthropological styles. This seems related mainly to the reliance on the fieldwork method of “modern” anthropology and to the focus on a limited number of topics. For instance Davis (1977: v) saw the Mediterranean

as a rather dusty museum of pre-modern techniques of anthropological research. The landmark for him was the “modern” research strategy that combined structural analysis and intensive fieldwork. Thus it is not surprising that the works discussed at length in his comparative analysis were almost invariably those produced within this tradition.

Even the international debate on the legitimacy of a Mediterranean anthropology showed the same insularity. The inadequacy of a pan-Mediterranean perspective was mainly argued on the basis of discussion of research on honour and shame. Other themes for which there exist longstanding traditions of anthropological research outside British and North-American anthropology (for example material culture, technology, food, magic and religion, and healing practices) were completely neglected. Nor were perspectives with a Mediterranean focus by authors such as Jacques Berque (see Bromberger, 1997), Ernesto De Martino (1975), Germaine Tillion (1966), André-Georges Haudricourt (1962), or Charles Parain (1936) mentioned. A discussion of the prospects of a pan-Mediterranean approach in anthropology is bound to be limited without an examination of this much wider body of work.<sup>15</sup> The same trend towards withdrawal into Anglo-American tradition is seen also in some attempts to define an anthropology of Europe. In their book-manifesto, Goddard, Llobera and Shore observe: “We ask, what have been the achievements of the past four decades of anthropological forays into Europe? When addressing this question we have focused predominantly on the Anglo-Saxon tradition of anthropology” (1994: 1).

Let us try to follow the thread of this reasoning. Considerations concerning critiques of Mediterranean anthropology that I have just developed follow the sort of argument as in “yes, it is rather true, but...” Negative evaluations of this field of studies are not without meaning, far from it, but sometimes they exaggerate for the purposes of polemics and do not pay enough attention to distinctions and nuances. In addition, the *pars destruens* does not go along with a convincing *pars construens*. Further, these judgments are often hindered by the same limitations they denounce so strongly. One could say that here we are in the presence of what could be called, to use René Girard’s formula, a form of “polemical mimicry”.

To resume: The debate about Mediterranean anthropology has been marked by a narrowing of the field.<sup>16</sup> Discussion has been eminently “European”, just as Mediterranean anthropology had been above all an enterprise designed by researchers working on the northern shore. It concerned only the Anglophone production and, in this field, focused almost exclusively on the theme of honour and shame. The debate thus produced the same “imperial” attitude that it criticized. The crisis of Mediterranean anthropology was proclaimed in the name of seeking homogeneous and stable comparative frameworks. By virtue of a declared European belonging, certain Orientalist schemas were simply relocated. Voices that were not in English had no impact on the international scene.

### **A Renewal Coming from the Periphery**

Some recent works announce a renewal of a Mediterranean level of comparison in anthropology. A new epistemological space seems to be opening, which is not a simple

return to the past. The effort to avoid fragmentation of research and to realize a renewed comparativism implies an enlargement of perspectives via a conversation with national traditions of research that remained marginalized for a long time, and by means of a closer dialogue with other disciplines, first of all history.

The presence of some native voices in the international debate about Mediterranean anthropology since the 1980s must not lead to error. They are only an infinitesimal part of a polyphony that is still largely unheard. They represent only the emergence, within hegemonic anthropology on the planetary scale (the world of important journals and publications in English), of basic movements in the Mediterranean countries, lost in the maze of languages and places of publication that remain largely invisible. We can point out, as an example, the contrast between the strong influence of the seven-page article by Pina Cabral (perceived as spokesman of the native vision and gravedigger of Anglophone Mediterranean anthropology centred on the idea of honour) and the almost minimal impact of a book published the same year in Italy (Fiume 1989), which proposed an ample and articulate discussion of the theme of honour, with interventions by John Davis and by Jane and Peter Schneider, alongside researchers of different disciplines (anthropologists, historians, specialists in oral literature, sociologists) and multiple nationalities: Italians, French, Tunisians and Palestinians.

A more attentive examination of national profiles would show that the lines of evolution of the anthropological concern with the Mediterranean do not necessarily coincide. For example, the formalization of a Mediterranean anthropology developed late in France and as a counter trend, when compared to British and American movement. A first attempt, still rather preliminary, had coincided with the activities of a working group on the Mediterranean that came together in the 1970s at the Musée de l'Homme under the direction of Roger Bastide.<sup>17</sup> Another partial attempt at institutionalization of a Mediterranean perspective in anthropology developed around Germaine Tillion. Her comparative model centred on kinship was the basis of a series of Parisian meetings and seminars that led to two collective publications (Breteau *et al.*, 1981; 1993). This line of research, marked by a strong historical orientation, was deepened in other works (Bonte, 1994). Another path overlapped more directly with the tradition begun by Peristiany and Pitt-Rivers.<sup>18</sup> A book by Peristiany (Peristiany and Handman, 1989) emerged as the symbol of this collaboration, almost like the passing of the baton. It was the publication in French of proceedings from a conference held in Marseille that brought together some members of the old guard of the group constituted in 1959 in Burg Wartenstein, along with other French contributions. Since then, the formalization of a Mediterranean anthropology took place, especially at the University of Aix-en-Provence, around Christian Bromberger and Georges Ravis-Giordani, who in the 1980s created a research team pursuing this line of research.<sup>19</sup>

It is possible to follow other paths showing that Mediterranean anthropology did not become obsolete everywhere. Certain journals created in the 1990s kept open and renewed this perspective from the periphery (geographic and disciplinary).<sup>20</sup> During recent years several works have revisited Mediterranean anthropology, often uniting anthropologists of the “metropolis” and researchers from Mediterranean countries.<sup>21</sup> Broadening the focus, one can see that the state of the field is more mitigated than one

might suspect while only looking at trends coming from the “centre”. A reopening of the discussion about the Mediterranean is taking place, with orientations that tend to abandon the definitive judgments of the preceding phase.<sup>22</sup> For instance a conference organized in Aix-en-Provence in 1997 proposed to try to circumnavigate the polemical excesses of debates about this field, to prolong genealogical reconstructions beyond the “classic” phase of Anglophone anthropology, and to encourage a cumulative vision by drawing attention to the contribution of research traditions that remained peripheral. The proceedings of the conference (Albera, Blok and Bromberger, 2001) did not propose a unified vision of the Mediterranean. It was rather a survey that marked out possible grounds for agreement between authors whose positions are often different.

Recent works which are marking an increased interest in a comparative Mediterranean perspective show a certain number of common orientations. Several authors recognize the necessity of avoiding particularism in research and of developing a cumulative perspective which critically acknowledges the resources of knowledge established in the past. One can note several signs of a refusal to throw out the Mediterranean with the bath water, to use Bromberger and Durand’s expression (2001), even if this does not mean a denial of the pertinence of several criticisms formulated since the 1980s (Marques, 1999; Magrini, 2003; Bonifacic, 1999; Haller, 2000; Giordano, 2001; Viazzo, 2003; Sciama, 2003; Sant Cassia and Schäfer, 2005). It is a reformism aware of difficulties inherent in the handling of inevitably connoted categories, such as “Mediterranean”, but also of the impossibility of constructing pure and antiseptic conceptual frameworks (Albera, 1999; Albera and Blok, 2001; Driessen, 1999; 2001a; 2001b).

It has been argued that the Mediterranean functions as a heuristic bridge endowed with “prophylactic virtues”, in order to avoid the pitfalls of Eurocentrism and of ethnocentrism (Bromberger and Durand, 2001: 741; Burke, 2001: 99).<sup>23</sup> Certainly, the risks of essentialism remain. To a certain degree, the attraction of essentialism is endemic, and the model of cultural areas is only the most visible manifestation of a trend immanent in anthropological production, which consists in freezing relations between culture and place. That suggests the adoption of a modest reflexive posture, multiplying the ramparts against the essentialism, while recognizing such defences as temporary and partial.<sup>24</sup> To avoid sliding towards the reification of cultural and social phenomena, the Mediterranean should be envisaged rather as a *context* than as an *object* of study in itself, adopting a flexible approach, which considers that differences overlap with similarities, forming complex and changing configurations that can be sorted out using the notion of “family resemblances” proposed by Wittgenstein. Observed correspondences can sometimes be overall similarities, sometimes similarities of detail (Albera and Blok, 2001). Constructing polythetic notions permits one to surmount partitions inherent in “cultural areas” approach<sup>25</sup> and to generate a comparative work with variable geometry. It is a set of “family resemblances” that is evident in the Mediterranean region. These elements obviously do not carry a Mediterranean copyright; indeed they often occur elsewhere. It is their heightening that should interest us: “it is in terms of intensity and modulation, of institutional recognition, and not in terms of presence or absence”, that we should take them into account (Bromberger and Durand, 2001: 735).

The role of differences cannot be reduced to the mingling with similarities that gives rise to polythetic wholes. The Mediterranean can also be seen as a web of historically constituted (that is, humanly-generated) differences, like a space of contrasts and differences sometimes explicitly maintained and in any case endlessly reiterated. As Magrini has noted, “the Mediterranean is fascinating because it represents better than others a place in which one encounters countless diversities, and because it enables us to observe the ways in which these diversities manage to coexist, ignore each other, know each other, come into conflict, or blend” (1999: 174–5). Christian Bromberger has stressed the importance of this dimension, which is for him essentially associated with contrasting religious affiliations, in order to understand the Mediterranean world. Judaism, Christianity and Islam have formed a system of contrasts via an ensemble of reciprocal oppositions, illustrated by religious performances, eating behaviours and body practices. An anthropology of each of the monotheisms cannot be realized in isolation, due to the dialogical construction carried out by each of them, in a perpetual play of mirrors.<sup>26</sup> These phenomena offer a stimulating background for the study of contemporary phenomena of identity creolization and polarization, which are both antithetical and overlapping (Bromberger, 2001; Bromberger and Durand, 2001).

The renewed interest in Mediterranean anthropology is also encouraged by interdisciplinary transfers. When, in the 1980s–90s, Mediterranean anthropology lost its prestige in international anthropological milieus—and was sometimes even scorned—it continued to exercise a considerable influence in other research domains, particularly historiography. This is true for several writers of microhistory, a trend that began in Italy and has experienced significant international development.<sup>27</sup> One can further cite historical studies on the new testament,<sup>28</sup> on ancient Athens and Rome (Cohen, 1991; 1995; Saller, 1994), and on Greece in the nineteenth century (Gallant, 2000). The book by P. Horden and N. Purcell (2000) constitutes the most accomplished example of historians’ consumption of Mediterraneanist anthropological literature. The perspective utilized in this vast fresco embracing the history of the Mediterranean over three millennia is focused on the relationships to the environment, seen in a sophisticated manner. For Horden and Purcell the two basic ingredients that unite the Mediterranean world, and which make it an object for study in the long term, are, on the one hand, the extreme topographical fragmentation and, on the other hand, the strong connectivity between microregions. This analytical model allows them innovative readings of urban and agrarian history, of the mobility of goods and people, and of religious phenomena. The two last chapters of their work present a discussion of the contributions of anthropology to the knowledge of the Mediterranean. The exploration of certain microecologies examined by anthropological monographs allows them to identify the vestiges of a Mediterranean history that during the twentieth century is losing its unity. Further, they choose to approach head-on the theme of honour and shame in order to verify its pertinence in relation to their vision of Mediterranean history. It is a great challenge carried out in the very field in which criticisms of Mediterranean anthropology seemed to have more convincingly carried the day.<sup>29</sup> The two historians thus realized a vast survey that included varied ethnographic and historical materials on honour and shame. This enquiry suggests that a non-aristocratic honour “is far better attested in the

region's past than a number of students of honour—historians, literary scholars and anthropologists—have maintained” (2000: 521) Dismantling the main assertions of anti-Mediterraneist polemic against honour and shame, Horden and Purcell show that the analysis of honour was not a futile exercise, merely the fruit of an Orientalist “imperial nostalgia”. It is thus possible to retrieve anthropological knowledge that others would have preferred to store away with the fossils of a distant intellectual past and to regenerate it thanks to its interweaving with history. More generally, Horden and Purcell's book proposes a reconsideration of the “classic” monographic studies of villages within a sophisticated approach. What fashionable anthropological milieus have perhaps rather hastily rejected as the result of a tendency to “tribalize”, acquires a new heuristic value. Horden and Purcell show the way to an interdisciplinary approach where certain pitfalls of a comparativism restricted to an “atomistic” organization of a wealth of ethnographic fragments are avoided.

Several consonances can be pointed out between the perspectives proposed by Horden and Purcell and those developed by certain recent works that mark a renewal of anthropological interest in the Mediterranean. One sees in both the suggestion of family resemblances, polythetic notions, differences which resemble each other. Horden and Purcell accord a major importance to ecological dynamics however, and propose a ‘stronger’ approach. Further, for them in the twentieth century the Mediterranean is losing its unity and it becomes impossible to speak in terms of a common Mediterranean history, in the “strong” meaning than they accord to this notion. Yet we need to ask up to what point will the “weaker” sense of the category of Mediterranean, as proposed by some anthropologists, continue in this period and, especially, nowadays characterized as it is by a growing globalization of economies and societies?

### **What Future for the Mediterranean?**

It seems possible to suggest that the legacy of Mediterranean history—in the narrow sense of Horden and Purcell—associated with the dissonant heritage of political, religious and economic history, still allows for the possibility to construct transversal objects. For example, a comparative anthropology of the three monotheisms has not lost its significance, and one cannot find a more appropriate framework than the Mediterranean to develop this enterprise (see Kerrou, 1998). The Barcelona process, for one, confers a renewed pertinence on the reflexive study of the very construction of the Mediterranean category by local actors and political institutions (Driessen, 1999; 2001b). The Mediterranean basin offers as well a fruitful context to examine the reverberations of the process of globalization in situations both different and contiguous from social, cultural and economic points of view.

The dizzying transformations experienced by the whole of the planet often lead to abandoning the old tradition of situating ethnographic studies in domains of regional expertise for, instead, confronting the larger context of transnational connections in the “brave new world” of globalization. This trend goes hand in hand with the abandonment of the study of consolidated themes in the quest for new objects. Nevertheless, even anthropological studies of globalization can lead to the construction



of stereotypes. As Lederman noted, they are becoming routine, “such as the study of essentially unessentializable peoples (migrants, refugees, gypsies) in inherently post-modern spaces (airports, franchise restaurants)” (1998: 436). A larger vision suggests that these processes are not taking place in a void, that they are situated in local contexts created by history, with their idiosyncrasies. The understanding of contemporary phenomena does not necessarily mean forgetting the anthropology of yesterday and the day before yesterday. In order to diminish the risks of “thin” description in research on globalization, it could be useful to locate global processes within regional fields of knowledge, within situated disciplinary discourse. This presupposes the existence of an organized professional community and conditions allowing for forms of verification (Lederman, 1998: 442–3).

To affirm, as a Mediterraneanist act of faith, that other regional levels of comparison (such as Europe, the Middle East, Eurasia) present no heuristic usefulness would be patently absurd. Everything depends on the object one proposes to study and on the prudence with which one manipulates conceptual tools. But it seems possible to suggest that, after a partial eclipse, the Mediterranean is coming back as a plausible framework for comparative endeavours. If in the future the notion of the Mediterranean can again be valuable in anthropology, it is precisely because of certain “weaknesses” that the anti-Mediterraneist polemic has underlined: its fluid and hybrid character, its conflicts, and the differences that underpin it.

The question of “place” cannot simply be tossed out, replaced by literary narration about individual encounters or by the study of fluxes and deterritorialized networks. The whole history of the discipline suggests that we need “places” in which to situate the subjects and objects of anthropological discourse. Certainly, the risks of essentialism are constant. However, epistemological vigilance against this tendency can use, as a defence mechanism, a more abstract notion of *space*, constructed through analysis, which does not require a direct superposition between culture and place. In this perspective the Mediterranean can be seen as a fluid space, inside of which one can adopt many levels of comparison. It is a flexible space, of variable geometry, that can open onto other spaces and allow for other triangulations.

The return to a comparative Mediterranean dimension that seems to be occurring can permit the retrieval of a certain number of still-fertile elements in the central approach—Anglo-American anthropology—and their overlapping with other less-known contributions. The problem in this case is one of communication: intricate fields of interest, various intellectual heritages and linguistic divides are considerable factors limiting the exchange and the development of the field.<sup>30</sup> Yet the crisis of the “modern” paradigm is increasing the space for cross-fertilization and dialogue. In this manner the Mediterranean seems to offer an experimental context to approach a group of problems with which the discipline is confronted as a whole.

### By Way of Conclusion

During the twentieth century, international anthropology was constituted in a limited number of “metropolises”: primarily the United Kingdom, the United States and

France. The visibility of peripheral anthropological schools was constantly limited, in spite of the precocity of their formation and the value of theoretical developments in certain countries like Brazil, Mexico or India. The processes of decolonization and globalization radically changed the political and moral context of ethnographic work. However, the crisis of the bases of the discipline which marked the last decades did not modify the asymmetry between centre and periphery. Even the reflexive turn did not put an end to bibliographical and epistemological protectionism of metropolitan anthropology. Although disputed, the distinction between countries which are producers of data and countries which are producers of theories remains. During the last years there has even been a reinforcement of American hegemony on a disseminated anthropological world. The agenda of the anthropology of the United States, anchored in the socio-political context of the greatest planetary power, is powerfully influencing, in a more or less direct way, almost all national anthropologies. The crisis of anthropology in the United States becomes “the crisis of anthropology”. For the development of a more plural anthropology it seems necessary to establish forms of horizontal communication between peripheral national traditions. In this perspective, the creation of a world anthropologies network has been recently proposed. This project stems from the recognition of a disjuncture between dominant and subaltern anthropologies and aims at developing an organization of anthropological knowledge that incorporates styles and concerns of peripheral anthropology.<sup>31</sup> From this point of view, the creation of regional forums could make it possible to reach a critical mass and to acquire a major visibility vis-à-vis the crushing impact of the centre. One can thus design the Mediterranean like a metaphor to map out and explore a different anchoring of the membership in a partially-unified scientific field, to mark out an intellectual development starting from the periphery—what is equivalent, so to speak, with a displacement of the Archimedean point in the anthropological perspective. The reopening of Mediterranean studies could encourage a better reciprocal acquaintance between peripheral anthropological schools.

This movement can rely on the richness and the variety of the anthropological traditions in this area. The heterogeneity of the situations in the countries around the Mediterranean is extreme. If French anthropology belongs undoubtedly to the “metropolis” of the discipline (even if partially handicapped by linguistic difference), other national anthropological traditions are well established but little known beyond their borders. At the other extreme, one finds countries which in the past were the object of colonial anthropology: here, after independence, anthropology has been often blocked or even prohibited, but in recent years it is showing some interesting developments in spite of the difficulties. In this regional space there are divergent disciplinary stories, distinct institutional configurations, different research practices and disparate forms of “contamination” with other disciplines. All this can represent a fertile laboratory to work towards a methodological and epistemological reform of the discipline.

This issue has been dealt with by a recent book (Albera and Tozy, 2005) which examines the dissemination of academic anthropology in a number of Mediterranean countries and proposes that the Mediterranean could be conceived as a collaborative arena of discussion and exchange between metropolitan and peripheral anthropologies. In

this way, such a regional focus could contribute to a more plural landscape of world anthropologies.

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### Notes

- [1] This indecision was resolved by a wholly unforeseen possibility that materialized during a conference in Cambridge in 1963. "During the course of it, at some intermission in some pub or other, I poured out my 'where next?' anxieties to one of the younger and less over-socialized British participants—I can, alas, no longer remember who it was—and he said, "You should go to Morocco: it is safe, it is dry, it is open, it is beautiful, there are French schools, the food is good, and it is Islamic". The logical force of this argument, bereft as it was of scientific argumentation, was so overwhelming that, immediately the conference ended, I fled to Morocco rather than returning to Chicago. I drove about the country talking to various sorts of officials and looking at various sorts of walls, gates, minarets, and alleyways for several weeks, and decided on the spot and with almost nothing in the way of either plan or rationale—it was beautiful and it was Islamic—to organize a long-term, multi-researcher study there" (Geertz, 1995: 117).
- [2] In Ann Arbor, in Aix-en-Provence and in Canterbury. The results appeared in 1969 as a special issue of *Anthropological Quarterly* (vol. 42, no. 3).
- [3] The same phenomenon has been remarked in other regions. See for example Blaiser and Muller (1997), Lederman (1998), Steedly (1999).
- [4] It suffices to recall the debate between Pitt-Rivers (1978) and Davis (1978). The study that proposed the largest and most ambitious attempt to design an anthropological approach concerning the Mediterranean, that of John Davis (1977), was marked by a critical attitude towards the methods of most of the studies on which it was based. It was a solitary and promethean plea for a more resolutely comparative and historical approach.
- [5] The group included Anne M. Bailey, Annabelle Black, Victoria Goddard, Olivia Harris, Josep R. Llobera, Jill Mortimer, Brian J. O'Neill, Sandra Satterlee and Nukhet Sirman.
- [6] Herzfeld 1980; 1984; 1987; Wikan 1984; Llobera 1986; Lever 1986; Pina Cabral 1989.
- [7] Pina Cabral stressed his dissent with the idea of a Mediterranean cultural distinctiveness in regard to male status. He argued that the gender-specificity of moral values seemed to apply "to the whole of pre-modern Europe and to continue to apply to many areas of the so-called Western world". After noting that pub and bar behaviour is far more agonistic and violent in England or Germany than in Andalusia, he concluded: "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 manhood among southern European peasants is that they are so ignorant of working-class behaviour in their own countries of origin" (1989: 402).
- [8] Certain authors vacillate. This is the case with Chris Shore, who, after having written an anti-Mediterraneanist pamphlet in 1994 (Goddard, Llobera and Shore, 1994), proposed the following year the exploitation of literary sources for the anthropological study of the Mediterranean (Shore, 1995).
- [9] See on this subject Albera and Blok 2001.
- [10] To take ethno-nations as units for comparisons within states, as Llobera did in 1986, does not seem entirely innocent and appears somewhat sinister in light of events that later occurred in the Balkans. In addition we note this author's wavering between alternative propositions to

the Mediterranean: in 1981, it is southern Europe; in 1986, south-west Europe; in 1994, just Europe.

- [11] This phenomenon is far from being specific to Mediterranean anthropology. Anthropological theory has produced distinctions in which epistemology and geography overlap. If that is true for classical moments in the history of the discipline, this metonymy, by which a concept appears to sum up the anthropological concern with an entire geographical area, is reinforced in the study of complex civilizations. This is the sense of the critique made by Appadurai (1986), when he observed that a series of gatekeeping concepts seemed to have monopolized the theoretical field in several cases—and he cited in particular the hierarchy in India, filial piety in China, and the complex of honour and shame in the Mediterranean area. In this way attention was focused on a visible phenomenon, via a simplification that contributed to the creation of a common language among specialists (Appadurai, 1988).
- [12] This aspect was the object of a reflective scrutiny by Pitt-Rivers (1994: 25). In discussing his long-standing collaboration with Peristiany, he argued that their respective visions of the Mediterranean were complementary rather than identical. Peristiany's "anthropology was founded upon his African experience, yet his vision of the Mediterranean contained a great deal of introspection as well, for he was himself a very 'Mediterranean man'". Pitt-Rivers' approach, on the contrary, "was that of a convert who found in the Mediterranean a critique of, and thus an escape from, the society in which he had been born and bred". Thus identification was at work in Peristiany ("one may discern in Peristiany's orientation a certain tendency to take Greeks as the essence of Mediterraneans and to ignore those who do not measure up to the Hellenic yardstick") and contrast in Pitt-Rivers ("my own vision of Mediterraneans... contained a somewhat naïve attempt to identify them by the ways in which they differ from those who peopled my English childhood"). See also Friedl 1995.
- [13] Furthermore, one must not underestimate the fact that the same symbolic geography that opposes a rational North to an emotional South operates on different scales (see Fernandez 1988). A sceptical reader might wonder if Goddard, Llobera and Shore (1994) were not reproducing the same stereotyped opposition within southern Europe when they evoked the North of Portugal, Catalonia, Provence and Lombardy as places that escape "Mediterranean" values, as opposed to Andalusia and Sicily, for example (1994: 22).
- [14] Apparently Peristiany's assumption of the role of a "native" anthropologist was not fully appreciated in Oxford and, according to Campbell, "this decision to work in Cyprus was seen in Oxford as an almost heretical initiative since the validity of an anthropologist's perceptions were believed to lie in the very act of studying, and immersing oneself in, the thought processes of a culture entirely different from one's own". It seems that Evans-Pritchard was particularly irritated at this "deviation" of John Peristiany's interests from the social anthropology of East Africa. Thus, "despite John Peristiany's personal affection for Evans-Pritchard, this negative attitude towards Mediterranean studies in the Oxford Institute of Social Anthropology at this time played its part in persuading him to move to Greece after he had received an invitation from UNESCO to establish a social sciences centre in Athens" (Campbell, 1994: 18).
- [15] For explorations in this direction, see Bromberger 2001; Capo 1999b; Ferrié and Boetsch 1992.
- [16] The narrowing of the field that marked the crisis of Mediterranean anthropology is also manifest in a nearly complete lack of discussion with other disciplines that have developed knowledge about the Mediterranean. If the birth of ethnographical research in Mediterranean countries does not coincide with Pitt-Rivers' monograph, as the canonical chronology suggests, the use of the Mediterranean as an analytical tool does not begin with Anglophone anthropology (nor with F. Braudel, the only patron saint invoked by the latter and by his critics). The invention of the Mediterranean in social sciences goes back at least to the nineteenth century. A long and complex genealogy shows that the Mediterranean has been involved as an analytical instrument in several fields: human geography, history, political science... These representations of the Mediterranean in turn overlap with other more vast and ancient filiations: literary or philosophical, scholarly or popular. See for example Bourguet *et al.* (1998) and Fabre and Ilbert (2000).

- [17] This work would lead to the publication of two fascicules about holidays and about food stocks, and of a collective work about the practices and representations of space. See Bromberger 2001: 77, n. 1.
- [18] The translation of Pitt-Rivers' book (1977) and of an anthology of Mediterraneanist texts in the Anglo-American tradition (Kayser 1986) contributed to this dialogue.
- [19] Several comparative Mediterranean publications followed (Ravis-Giordani, 1987; Bromberger, 1997). The Institut d'Ethnologie Méditerranéenne et Comparative was a founding member of the Maison Méditerranéenne des Sciences de l'Homme, established in Aix-en-Provence in 1997.
- [20] The journal *Méditerranéens/Méditerranéennes* (in which ethnography is mixed with other genres, such as photographs, reports, poems) was created in 1990 by Kenneth Brown. The interdisciplinary *Journal of Mediterranean Studies: History, Culture, and Society in the Mediterranean World* was founded by Paul Sant Cassia in 1991 and is published by the University of Malta. Tullia Magrini initiated in 1996 the multimedia Web journal *Music & Anthropology: Journal of Musical Anthropology of the Mediterranean*, based in Bologna.
- [21] Fiume (1989), Magrini (1993), Capo Zmegac (1999a), Roque (2000), Albera, Blok and Bromberger (2001). An experiment in the same direction was coordinated by German researchers (Greverus *et al.* 2000; 2001).
- [22] In several works, Paul Sant Cassia (1991; 1993; 2003) has contributed to keeping this discussion open.
- [23] On the basis of the same awareness of the risks Eurocentrism, Hann (2003) recently proposed the adoption of a Euroasian comparative framework.
- [24] This posture has been provocatively defined as "critical essentialism" (see Albera 1999).
- [25] This is a point that has been stressed, in a more general way, by Appadurai (1988).
- [26] This approach has some precedents in the Mediterraneanist tradition (Wolf 1969; Schorger and Wolf 1969; Schorger 1983: 542–3). Evans-Pritchard argued that anthropologists studying Mediterranean peoples should be less concerned with likenesses than with differences between them (1965: 25). Including the study of differences and contrasts in the agenda of comparative analysis was also envisaged by Pitt-Rivers, for whom "a past of four thousand years of continual contact" means that in the Mediterranean differentiation between societies and culture was originated by reciprocal acquaintance and not by lack of contacts (1983: 14). Yet this perspective was partially eclipsed by the prevailing quest for similarities.
- [27] See Grendi 1980, Raggio 1990, Cavallo and Cerutti 1991, Torre 1995. Blok's monograph (1974) was translated into the eponymous collection of Einaudi.
- [28] The references are numerous. See for example Malina 1993; 2001; Malina and Neyrey 1991; Moxnes 1991; 1996; Neyrey 1996; 1998; 1999; 2001.
- [29] For a subsequent discussion with Herzfeld, see Herzfeld (2005); Horden (2005); Horden and Purcell (2005).
- [30] In order to encourage dialogue, the *Association d'Anthropologie Méditerranéenne* (ADAM) was created in 1998. Its aims are to promote anthropological research in the Mediterranean world, favouring exchanges between different anthropological traditions, to foster the circulation of information and knowledge, and to overcome linguistic and epistemological barriers.
- [31] For a programmatic statement of the project for a world anthropologies network, see "A conversation about a world anthropologies network", *Social Anthropology*, 2003, vol. II, n. 2, pp. 265–9.

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