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EUROPE OBSERVED

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Julian Pitt-Rivers. Since the publication of his classic study *People of the Sierra* in 1954, he has become the doyen of social anthropologists working in the Mediterranean. He has been Professor of Social Anthropology at the École Pratique des

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Peter Loizos is Senior Lecturer in Social Anthropology at the London School of Economics, and formerly the editor of *Man*. He has a wide knowledge of the politics and ethnography of Cyprus. He is the author of *The Greek Gift. Politics in a Cypriot Village* (1975); and *The Heart Grown Bitter. A Chronicle of Cypriot War Refugees* (1981). With Evthymios Papataxiarchis he has recently edited a collective work, *Contested Identities. Gender and Kinship in Modern Greece* (1991).

Introduction¹

British and American social anthropologists only turned to the intensive study of European societies after the Second World War. The intellectual descendants of Malinowski and Boas applied to this study of European communities the methods of intensive fieldwork with participant observation which had been developed between the wars in the study of other regions of the world, and were by then accepted as the preferred method for collecting anthropological evidence. In France and most other European countries, however, it was not until the 1960s and 1970s that the older ethnological tradition began seriously to face the challenge of this method of fieldwork.

Since then work has progressed at a very fast pace and the number of studies carried out from this methodological perspective has steadily increased. This is the case not only in studies published in English. In all southern European countries new departments of social or cultural anthropology are involved in ambitious research programmes. This has been accompanied by a gradual change in what is expected of fieldworkers, specifically the need to consider historical evidence. The importance of social history is perhaps particularly clear to European anthropologists who are studying their own societies.

At the same time, the 1980s witnessed a new interest in the discussion of the theoretical conditions of fieldwork. The growing literature on the topic is evidence of this preoccupation, which seems to be very much part of our *zeitgeist*, permeating as it does most national and theoretical traditions in social and cultural anthropology.

It is, therefore, surprising that so little has been written about the problems and conditions of fieldwork in Mediterranean and Atlantic Europe. Apart from a few short texts (cf. Boissevain 1970, Friedl 1970) anthropologists seem to have shunned the subject. One possible reason for this silence is their unwillingness to risk the prejudiced judgement of colleagues who carried out fieldwork in more exotic places and who felt that

working in Europe was not a sufficient challenge to the fieldworker (cf. Davis 1977).

In 1986, Pina-Cabral organised a Working Group at the Third Congress of the European Society for Rural Sociology (which took place in Braga, Portugal) with the intention of investigating different opinions about fieldwork in this broad region. The discussion was heated, revealing that the subject was far more polemical than we had expected. Indeed, so polemical were the exchanges that they continued beyond the limits of the congress into the pages of the journal *Current Anthropology*. Clearly, the debate had been long overdue.

Encouraged by the response, we decided to bring together a collection of papers with the intention of throwing some light on the history of fieldwork in this area, on the conditions under which it is being carried out today and also on its relation to other disciplines, particularly social history, which we feel has had the greatest recent impact on fieldwork methods. No attempt has been made to reproduce the debate as it developed in Braga, as this would have produced a virtually unreadable volume. Covering a wide variety of settings, as well as a number of not always reconcilable opinions, the papers presented here are intended as an assessment of present trends in anthropological research in Mediterranean and Atlantic Europe. In particular, attention has been given to the creative exchange between anthropology and history, to the influence of personal factors such as gender, class affiliation, language and nationality, in fieldwork practices; and to the recent emergence of national trends of anthropological research in southern European countries.

There is one further issue to be noted. The British and American postwar fieldworkers did not think of themselves as Europeanists, preferring the designation of Mediterraneanist. They stressed the similarities and continuities between the southern and the northern shores of the Mediterranean Sea at the expense of those existing between Mediterranean and Atlantic Europe. To a younger generation of fieldworkers studying Atlantic Spain, Portugal or France, this view appears increasingly problematic (see Pina-Cabral 1989, Gilmore 1990, Pina-Cabral 1991). Some contributors to this volume would support the latter point of view, but even they would not regard the option

for abandoning the Mediterraneanist label as a radical criticism of it, but rather as a reasoned challenge to the long-established practice in Anglophone anthropology of dividing Western Europe in two for the purposes of ethnographic comparison.

It is not our intention to summarise the arguments of the papers which follow, but it may be helpful to draw attention, briefly, to particular interests of each contributor. Thus Pina-Cabral claims that the necessary existence of a 'point of view' in all ethnographic writing should be explicitly recognised, and he doubts the continued utility of the metaphor of 'translation' which is so commonly employed to describe the ethnographic task.

Following on his work in Andalusia, and particularly his book *Metaphors of Masculinity*, Stanley Brandes asks whether 'a fieldworker's gender automatically confers advantages or limitations in data collection'. An introspective investigation of his own fieldwork leads the author to conclude that this is not always necessarily the case and that the anthropologist's own adoption of what he perceives as being local sex-roles often explains the gender-specificity of many ethnographies.

Malcolm Chapman approaches two problematic areas for field anthropologists: the question of language use and the difficulty of working with a large population. In particular he describes the problems he faced in Brittany in attempting to learn and use Breton as opposed to French, and on the relation between linguistic use and self-consciously historical categories of belonging.

Julie Makris reports on the methodological problems arising from research into vendettas in Crete. She interweaves historical and demographic methods in an attempt to overcome the limitations of either set of procedures. A similar concern is demonstrated by Gregory Smith, who analyses the process of agrarian reform in a small Italian town. He shows that historical and anthropological research procedures can be used as critical complements of each other.

Michael Herzfeld's chapter is a plea for a stronger ethnographic interest in the local use of media, as well as for greater attention to the local forms of historical discourse. The author notes that, while ethnographers have certainly commented on the predilection of male Greek villagers for political debate, ethnographies give little evidence about the linguistic and sty-

listic indices that would increase our understanding of the relations between peasants and the political elite whether in the convergence of their outlooks or in their mutual opposition.

William Douglass gives us an overview of present-day research trends in European social anthropology with particular reference to the use of historical and documentary material and to the recent emergence of national traditions of anthropological research in southern Europe.

Commenting on the already long history of anthropological research, Julian Pitt-Rivers stresses the relevance of personal factors in fieldwork, while at the same time he argues that, 'Although practically unattainable, objectivity must be assumed to be theoretically conceivable.'

John Campbell contributes a retrospective appraisal of the conditions under which he worked among the Sarakatsan shepherds of northern Greece in the mid-1950s. This was the first fieldwork to be attempted in Greece.² He discusses the influence of British Africanist anthropology on his work, particularly the views of Evans-Pritchard.

The book concludes with a chapter in which Peter Loizos brings together the contributions to the volume. He suggests that ethnography may be 'continuous' and that there is a sense in which the production of anthropological texts is always open-ended and exploratory rather than sharply bounded and definitive.

João de Pina-Cabral
John Campbell

NOTES

1. In the first chapter of this book João de Pina-Cabral discusses the principal problems which in different ways are debated by the contributors to this collection. And in the concluding chapter Peter Loizos draws together the particular arguments presented by the other authors. This introduction, therefore, is limited to a general statement of our purpose in editing the volume, and to brief indications of its content.
2. But only a matter of weeks before Ernestine Friedl began her fieldwork research in Boeotia.

Acknowledgement

We wish to express our gratitude to Dr Peter Loizos for his generous and wise advice in assisting our efforts to organise this volume. He is not, of course, responsible for any shortcomings it may have.

J. P-C.
J. K. C.

1 Against Translation: The Role of the Researcher in the Production of Ethnographic Knowledge*

João de Pina-Cabral

Over the past few years we have witnessed a resurgence of interest in fieldwork with participant observation among younger social anthropologists.¹ Some colleagues criticise this tendency as a return to 'traditional descriptive roles' (Llobera 1986: 32). This seems to me a conservative way of interpreting what is in fact a creative attitude (cf. Loizos 1987 and Pina-Cabral 1987). Confronted with the progressive decay of the 'grand theories' which dominated social anthropology in the 1970s, and being unwilling or unable to disregard the serious erosion of analytic categories which took place at that time, younger anthropologists found it necessary to turn again to empirical research as the means for creative thinking.

However, the conditions for the production of ethnographic knowledge have changed considerably since the time of the early Mediterraneanist ethnographers. It is relatively easy to grasp how the enormous cultural, economic and political changes which have taken place in southern European countries since the 1950s have radically altered the conditions under which fieldwork is carried out. But conditions within the discip-

* I am grateful to John Campbell and to Peter Loizos for a series of very profitable discussions which preceded the writing of this paper and for Michael Herzfeld's comments on a later draft. I also want to thank Raul Iturra for having suggested a long time ago that I should look into the methodological problems of participant observation in southern Europe. When the paper was written, I was Calouste Gulbenkian Research Fellow in Portuguese Studies at the University of Southampton. I wish to thank both the Gulbenkian Foundation and the Advanced Studies Committee of this university for their generous support.