Mediterranean: Prospect and Retrospect

Mediterranean: Prospect and Retrospect opens up a space of encounter with leading scholars, writers and academic practitioners in and of the Mediterranean. These are purposely solicited, non-peer-reviewed features intended to generate intuitive reflection on the state of Mediterranean Studies, the many and diverse approaches to it and its understandings, past and present.

ANTHROPOLOGY AND FILM IN A VILLAGE OF EPIRUS (1974-1988)*

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Over a full fifteen years, I spent many months of my life in Epirus, working as an anthropologist and filmmaker. In addition to a few articles in English, French and Greek, the main output of my work has been a series of documentary films on the theme of rural out-migration. I had started out by working in Ghana, Niger and Ivory Coast in West Africa, but my situation at home made it difficult for me to work in Africa and so, I set out to find a closer base for fieldwork in Europe. When I was in Paris in the late 60s, and the Junta had come to power in Greece, I met a number of Greek political refugees. It was as a result of their influence that I decided to go and work in Greece. I knew Spanish but had no knowledge at all of Greek, not even the alphabet, so I had to start by learning the Greek language.

This is the first time I have had the opportunity to tell readers about the anthropological and cinematographic work I undertook in a village of Epirus over the span of those fifteen years.

Instead of analysing the theoretical framework on which my work is based, the content of my films or my ideas on anthropological cinema, I have decided to recount my experiences as they occurred, rather than editing out the revealing and anecdotal aspects of the story or omitting the social and political context in which I was working. This is, therefore, more a narrative than a monograph.

Prologue: Political Context and Choice of Village

I arrived in the village of Ano Ravenia in March 1974, accompanied by Maria Pantazidou who was to act as my interpreter. I had just started learning Greek. The Junta was still in power and out of its desire to emerge from isolation, the Centre for Social Science Research in Athens (EKKE) proposed to my Laboratory Director at CNRS in Paris, Henri Mendras, who was a rural sociologist,[1] that I undertake research in rural Greece. L'EKKE offered me a grant and the rental of a vehicle. My Greek friends, who had been exiled to Paris around Philippe Iliou, thought it over and considered that I should accept this proposal. They wished Greece to avoid the suffering Spain had undergone after being cut off from the rest of the world for political reasons and thought that I could serve as their messenger. I was willing to accept EKKE's offer of payment for the rental car but asked that the grant be allocated to the village itself. This sum was used by the village to repair the roof of a building used by the community. As a result, I arrived in Ano Ravenia as a 'benefactor'.[2] Benefactors were well known in this poor and mountainous region of Epirus where out-migration had been rampant for a long time. It was not unusual to find *émigrés* bequeathing large sums to their home village after having 'made a fortune' and even building schools, and this was, indeed, the case in Ano Ravenia.

Fig.1 The village 1974.

For a village like Ano Ravenia, where 240 inhabitants lived on sheep-raising and subsistence agriculture, and the elderly were propped up by stipends or pensions, the arrival of two women in 1974, one, a foreigner, coming to 'study' the life of the village in the depths of winter, was like being lined up for interrogation. But why did I choose Ano Ravenia?

Our first contact had been with the MP for Janina, Frontzos, from the right wing party in parliament, out of a job since the takeover by the Colonels, the imposition of dictatorship and the suppression of elections. He proposed a list of a dozen villages to choose from in his political

constituency. We visited them all. After eliminating those in which a police post had been planted in the middle of the village, those which did not have even a school and those which were relatively deserted, we decided to choose Ano Ravenia. We did not know at that time that the presence of a primary school or even a nursery in these villages was not a real indicator as it was the consequence of a policy of sedentarisation and integration of the Vlach nomadic communities, which were plentiful in the region and in Ano Ravenia, in particular. It was still wintertime and the inhabitants had only one heated room in their houses. We had to find a house for ourselves. The mayor, Kostas Oikonomou, had the keys to a house whose owners had gone off to Athens, in fact. The house was completely empty but Frontzos had set up an itinerant dance troupe in Janina, so he lent us things from the store of blankets and kitchen stuff they used to use.

Frontzos had asked the mayor to welcome us and he tried to explain to the villagers that our presence there would bring only 'good things' to the village. But almost immediately, I realised that it would be our behaviour, our personalities and friendly relationships with the villagers that would enable us to integrate into village life and carry out our research in a productive way. We would have to take care.

Maria my interpreter and I were introduced to the village by a right wing MP but at the same time, we met an agricultural engineer in the village called Mitsos. He was a Communist and he lived a little way out of town. He had been arrested, imprisoned during the civil war, and stripped of his rights on political grounds. Consequently, he could no longer work as an agricultural engineer for the Government. After trying out a few different kinds of jobs, he decided to settle in his home village and raise sheep.

Fig.2 Mitsos, 1975.

The situation was complicated: we did not do anything actually 'wrong' but the sole fact of our asking questions and hanging around with Mitsos made us suspect. He lived outside the village and our visits to him were spied on by the whole village. I decided that we would go to his place less often but stay longer. It was his home village, his mother lived there, he knew everyone very well and as a result, he was a very valuable informant for us ... even though he listened regularly to Soviet broadcasts and set his watch to Moscow time!

When I was in Paris I had got to know a great rebel, Nikos Katharosporis, who was a political refugee. He was suffering from cancer and had asked me to go and see one of his friends, an old rebel like himself, a doctor in Janina, Dr. Scopoulis. We went to see him, and naturally, Mitsos also went quite often to this same doctor. During one of his visits, the doctor told him about us and assured him that we could be trusted. In this way, we gained entry to the village via both a right-wing MP and a left wing member of the Opposition. This proved a great advantage because Mitsos then immediately told us which villagers were police informants and presented us with a perspective on things that differed considerably from the information we had gleaned from other informants.

The village's proximity to Albania, a mere 40 kilometres away, meant that the village was in a strict surveillance zone, overseen by the Second Bureau and the army. To stay there, we had to obtain specific authorisation, which we did. There was no police post in the village but still, many times in the early morning, the police would arrive at our house and demand to see our papers.

People in Greece and elsewhere have constantly asked, "Why did I choose this village rather than another? What was of interest in that particular place?" Actually, it was the fact that Ano Ravenia was very representative of Greek villages and there were many like it in Epirus, in particular. It was a place with poor soil and as a result, a village which had been more affected than others by out-migration. These factors all contributed to it being selected because I wanted to study a village transformed by out-migration. I had worked in West Africa on migration from the Sahel to the Coast, and I wanted to understand the phenomenon of emigration at its point of origin. Why does a person decide to emigrate? And then, what happens in a village when most of the people have left? These were the questions I wished to address.

Words and Language

Declaring oneself an anthropologist in a Greek village produces a unique response. Whereas elsewhere in the world it would be necessary to add some explanation, in a village in Greece, this statement is greeted by an acknowledgment, "Ah ... *anthropologos*!" and the word is repeated as if the meaning were crystal clear. But this does not mean that our respondent has understood what we have come to do in that village. It is just the fact that the word can be pronounced and repeated easily because it is a Greek word! I had already realised the importance of knowing Greek when making films in Greece. As I saw it, either you could speak Greek and you, therefore, 'existed', or you spoke no Greek and therefore, no one could really see you because you had no identity other than being a foreign tourist.[3] I know this because on my first trip, as far as the villagers were concerned, only Maria existed. This presented a problem for me because Maria was not particularly interested in finding out about the village and was acting as my intermediary but, as far as they were concerned, I was of absolutely no interest since I did not speak their language.

I remember one day, the village doctor came to see patients in the village and some villagers actually saw me speaking English to him in the café. They were so happy to see that I could converse with someone other than Maria, they bought me a *tsipouro*![4]

Fig. 3 Papaiannis Lazaridis, Baptism 1975.

On my second trip there, I stayed with the Greek Orthodox priest (Παπασ in Greek) and learnt Greek grammar from his son, a student instructor. As a result, I spoke some Greek, of course, not very well, but I no longer had to use an interpreter to mediate. The villagers were astonished not only that I could talk but that I could also 'write'! They were convinced that their language was one of the most difficult in the world to learn, and so they appreciated my efforts and showed great patience with me, taking time to repeat what they were trying to say so that I could understand them.

The perceived importance of oral communication in Greece also influenced the way in which the film shoot was organised. Jean Rouch[5] had encouraged us to do our filming ourselves and to find a sound recordist in the community in which we were filming. This is, after all, what we did in West Africa with great success. In a Greek village, however, not only was it impossible to find a young boy who would agree to give up his time to such a task and commit himself to it over a long period, it soon became apparent that it was preferable for me (in the absence of a film crew) not to be concealed behind a camera as it was necessary for the people to be able to speak freely and converse with me between shots.

I have always been very concerned about the value of the spoken word in my films. For me, allowing people the freedom to speak and giving prominence to the dialogue spoken by those being filmed is vital.

Research Methodology and Film Equipment

The work of an anthropologist in a rural environment generally starts with a long and continuous period of field work, which will span the seasons and last about a year, followed up by several visits of shorter duration. In this case, though, I decided to proceed in a different way, making one or two trips to the field each year over a period of fifteen years. This synchronised well with the rhythm of life in a Greek village because the villagers who had left to work abroad or in the city came back every year for a month in the summer to meet up with

members of their families. My choice was therefore, in tune with the cultural norms. What was unusual was the fact that we arrived for the first time in winter.

In 1974, I began by getting to know the village. I investigated the civic archives and the economic data, tracked down the good informants (who were, most often, women) and I filled my notebooks, all the while, writing a daily journal. The village women who engaged in 'chatting' or 'gossip' (κουτσομπολιά), in fact, were great repositories of information, expert at telling stories and family histories and explaining the way marriage strategies worked locally within families. Their interest and expertise in this domain enabled me to conduct my own private research into the forms of address used and the ways in which family members would be referred to within families.

Fig. 4 Spinning wool 1975.

On the very first field trip I started to shoot using a 16 mm mechanical camera, a Beaulieu, lent to me by Jean Rouch. A small motor had been attached to the camera, and as a result it made a huge racket. Moreover, the sound had to be recorded separately on a tape recorder, no shot could last longer than ten seconds and every 3 minutes, I had to change the film reel.

I filmed some scenes of school children at the feast on the 25th of March in 1974 with this camera, the threshing of the wheat and some scenes at Mitsos' place.[6] But the camera immediately broke down! In Janina, a photographer took it apart and succeeded in giving it a new breath of life ... but that was short-lived.[7]

I realised then that I needed professional equipment. The audiovisual department at CNRS took stock and realising that I was still pursuing my aim to film in Greece, allocated me a crew of two people: a cameraman and a professional sound recordist.

Interpersonal Relationships and Cultural Context

Anthropologists know the importance of interpersonal relations in collecting information. In cinematographic work, it is the quality of the relationships established over long periods of time which allow the anthropologist-turned-filmmaker to capture the way things are, without feeling compelled to draft a written script before the filming or imposing demands on the 'actors'.[8] The more s/he is able to count on solid and confident relationships with his or her

'actors', the more s/he will feel free to allow the concept of the film and the cinematographic strategy to evolve during filming.

When an anthropologist goes into a village community to do research, it is almost impossible to avoid managing one's relationships with the locals. It is important to be sure to treat all inhabitants equally so as not to create jealousies between them. Anthropologists often practise triangulation, transmitting information collected from one person to another, in order to acquire a more rounded picture of the situation, be it affirmation or contradiction. This is a technique which works well, assuming, of course, that sources are never mentioned.

As someone who has chosen to study 'everyday life', observing long and profound stints of 'live moments' was vital. Consequently, the writing of a film script (along the model of a fiction film) would seem contrary to and even diametrically opposed to, a film designed as anthropological film: you cannot film the lives of people before they have actually lived them!

It is actually the discovery of the unexpected, the spontaneous nature of life which makes documentary cinema unique, special and enriching. Even if the subject of a film seems identical to, or comparable to that of a film shot on the same occasion,[9] the cultural context and the way the 'actors' express their views and behave in the film will be different and related to their cultural norms. This explains why the format imposed on filmmakers by certain TV channels presents an irreconcilable obstacle for anthropologists trying to give free rein to their subject and the people concerned. The way the 'actors' live and their personal relationships with the anthropologist will determine the nature of the film project and strategies which will be used when making the film.

David MacDougall[10] showed us how the same filming strategies could not be used to film a free-speaking and sociable population of people who liked to talk and communicate with the outside world like the Turkana in East Africa, and the Aborigines of Australia, for example, a people who have been rejected by the dominant culture and still suffer from their status as an oppressed minority.

Filmmaking strategies need to be adapted to the people being filmed. By adhering to the requirement of getting to know the people over a long period of time and acquiring a deep understanding of the milieu, and the language, the anthropologist distinguishes her/himself from the documentary filmmaker. These strategies enable him/her to act rather as a mediator in presenting to an audience what should be a more accurate portrait of the people.

The Project: Film, its Relevance and the Cinematographic Approach

What, then, does an anthropological film project consist of?

A new film project is conceived once the filmmaker has weighed up the various factors which define the character of that particular film and realises that applying a previously applied model in this context will not produce the desired result.

A film project, documentary or fiction, is the fruit of an individual imagination. The producer, before beginning to film, has a mental image of what the film will turn out to be. It is precisely because imagination plays such an important role in this process that it is difficult to work with someone else on a film project. Although filmmaking is more often a collective enterprise than a solitary activity, it is a type of creative process which will, nevertheless, become the work and responsibility of a single person.

Jean Renoir, the French filmmaker, said à propos of fiction films that "Everything is in the script". For anthropological films, one might say, "Everything is in the concept", something which is itself the product of the research and imagination of the filmmaker.

Not all anthropological research topics are appropriate for filming. Theoretical constructions that some anthropologists like to research are not suitable topics for film since they do not deal with the impacts these configurations have on human beings. Above all, a film allows us to visualise and transmit those intimate emotions and feelings which are difficult to empathise with from a written text. To reproduce direct speech and through it, to convey the thoughts of those being filmed, is critical in anthropology. And again, it is essential that the images and words recorded have meaning for 'the actors'!

For example, in whatever village in Greece one might go into, it would be normal to find that the people living there would be extremely excited by elections, whether national or local, and anyone could film the event with some success. However, in a village like Ano Ravenia, in decline as a result of out-migration, it is the absence, the emptiness, the monotony of daily life and alienation from 'the outside world' (Piault 1981) which the locals are most concerned about. Most of their conversation revolves around the fact of living in this vacuum.

A film should be viewed as meaningful not only to the filmmaker in terms of his/her own criteria but to the people filmed and their criteria as to what is important. This search for deeper meaning is without doubt, at the heart of all anthropological and filmmaking endeavours.

In addition to choosing the subject matter and the social group to be studied, understanding one's relationships with the people to be filmed and determining the activities to be shot on camera, it is also important to bear in mind practical considerations. No film project can be put together without working out the amount of time required for filming, assembling the film crew, deciding the best time of year to shoot, setting up the filming schedule, and assessing the kind of human and technical resources one has to work with. It is clear that one person shooting long takes will not achieve the same result as a film crew shooting shorter takes. Perhaps it will be necessary to adapt and even modify the subject of the film as the film evolves, and to recognise that all is not possible. Last but not least, the kinds of choices one will be able to make will be determined by the budget.

My study concerned daily life in a Greek village critically affected by emigration. From the beginning, I chose to film daily life in a series of films showing different facets of life as it was being lived in a village, deserted by its inhabitants. To film daily life was relatively unusual in the 1970s. Jean Rouch himself declared that he would never try to do it because it appeared too complicated and too difficult.

In fact, at the time I started to work in Epirus the majority of films being made in France which qualified as 'ethnographic' featured religious rituals or processes in which people made things, and these often had an in-built, self-contained structure. And because synch sound cameras were not yet within the reach of all anthropologists, sound recordings, which were done separately, were conjoined to the film during the editing. There was no dialogue and no subtitles but usually a commentary, often spoken and written by the anthropologist. This resembled a university lecture. The goal of these films was specifically to record those aspects of life in danger of disappearing, describe them, and then explain them.

In the USA, some anthropologists were already making film series which focussed on the same community[11] and it was not until 1972, at a Festival of Sociological and Anthropological

Film in Venice, that we were able to see the first 'anthropological film'[12] in which dialogue, spoken by 'actors' in the vernacular, was carefully subtitled. We discovered on this occasion that these communities, living so far away from us, actually shared our daily interests and were not exclusively interested in their religious rituals, as some ethnologists had previously led us to believe![13] Adults and children actually talked to each other and cracked jokes ... like everyone else in the world!

This film was a great surprise and another genre of documentary cinema was born in the field of anthropology. At that point, I decided that I would pursue this particular documentary path myself. I was attracted by the prospect of observing daily life up close and in a more intimate fashion than previously and was convinced: I wouldn't consider filming the Epirote series in any other way. The films would have to be shown in the original Greek, accompanied by subtitles in French or in English.

It is futile now to say how much this affected the costs of making these films and the effort required, but the fact is that the process became much more complex and more expensive.[14] But how else could I go ahead in view of the fact that I was purporting to film 'daily life' I wanted to respect the views of those being filmed, and I wanted to create a more intimate relationship between those filmed and the audience?

Translation of dialogue using subtitles effectively eliminated the use of 'voice off' commentary and allowed us to develop a much greater intimacy between the people filmed and the public. This also gave us the chance to make observational films which no longer transformed people into 'objects' but allowed them to express themselves, unconstrainedly, in their own language. Perhaps it was the subtitling of documentaries, shot in foreign countries in little known or unknown languages, which actually contributed to the opening up of a new stage in the development of anthropological cinema and permitted the 'observation of everyday life'.

Choice of Subject and the First Film

All documentary filmmakers know that it is important to avoid casting one's net too wide and that it is simpler to make a film with a restricted group of people, even with a single 'actor', than to attempt to portray a whole community. I was aware of that fact but, nevertheless, decided to devote my first film to Ano Ravenia and the whole village. As an anthropologist who had been working on this project for several years already, I thought that it was essential for me not to choose some individuals over others.

When I shot my first film in Epirus, *Every day is not a feast day*,[15] I announced that anyone who wished to be involved could be in the film. Everyone who was filmed does appear in the film. I wanted to establish a good relation with the villagers just as much as I wanted to make a successful film.

Fig. 5 The Feast of St. Constantine and St. Helen 1978.

The film was shot in two sessions, 1978 and 1979, a year apart. To ensure positive collaboration with the villagers, in 1978, in between the two shoots, I organised a screening of the rough cut at the Greek Radio and Television Studios (ERT) in Athens.[16] A large number of villagers who had been around at the time of the first film shoot, and appeared in the film, came to the screening, about fifty altogether. They quickly spread the word in the village that the film was fine, even 'quite interesting' for the village, and it was 'a good thing' to join in my project. It seems that the villagers who were resident in Athens at the time quickly grasped the way my films could act to conserve certain village and family memories which could be transmitted to their descendants.[17]

I organised the first shoot around the Feast of St. Constantine and St. Helene, since many emigrants would normally return to their village at that time. But when I saw the rushes, I was disappointed: any foreigner attending the feast could have shot the material I filmed! My deep and intimate understanding of the village context did not come through.

At that point, I decided to do some more filming the following year at Easter. It would be a less spectacular event, but one in which it would be possible to get closer to more families and enter their houses ... and this second shoot, despite the fact that it had to be done mostly in the rain, was clearly more productive.[18]

Distribution and Progress

With this film, I began to travel. I was invited to screen it at different festivals and universities in the UK and many other countries. In the UK, Peter Loizos[19] invited me to LSE and then suggested to Colin Young, Director of the National Film School at Beaconsfield, that I show the film to his students. This was a critical stage in my work as a cinematographer.

When Colin Young saw the film, he said, 'What a masterpiece, but you do not know exactly what a documentary film is!' I quizzed myself as to what he might mean. I knew that beneath this typical English irony, he had posed a fundamental theoretical question of cinematography which was at the heart of my film.

I insisted that I hear his critique, but he declared that he would only do so if he could see the film on an editing table. We spent four hours looking at the first half-hour of the film and I began to understand what this genre of observational film was that was then being taught in the USA and the UK. Some elements of this observational film style were already visible in my film, but I had taken advantage of the chance of collaborating with a professional cameraman who knew how to do everything, and what had occurred was 'a mixing of genres'. This is what upset Colin Young and why he pointed this out to me at the editing table.

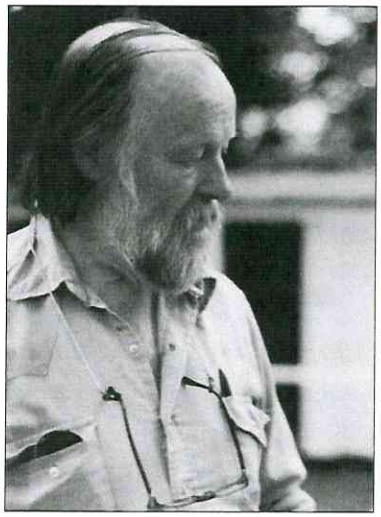

Fig. 6 Colin Young, 1985.

Because Colin Young was very interested in anthropology, and I had declared my enthusiasm to learn more about cinema, its techniques and its language, Colin made me an associate of the NFTS for a period of four years, according to him, because his students 'would have a lot to learn from collaborating with me on my filming in Epirus'. The documentary section of the NFTS, directed by an American, Herb di Gioia, was of a very high level and the lecturers encouraged the development of creativity.

Since the first moment of my collaboration with the NFTS, I have tried to respect the 'language of documentary' in observational cinema. It is based on a few simple precepts, such as shooting and then editing each shot individually without cutting. In recognition of the fact that a film is the result of all the choices made by the filmmaker at every stage of production, it is appropriate to show, at the very least, what one has decided to film, that is, the action as it unfolds in its entirety, so that the audience is free to form an opinion about what is on the screen without either commentary or explanation.

In this way, many of the traditional processes associated with journalism and in particular, editing, were rejected in favour of a more 'authentic' and less manipulated film language.

The Village and the Crew

To produce the six films of the series in Epirus, all shot in 16 mm, I worked with three different crews. The first two films, *Every day is not a Feast Day* and *Thread of the Needle* were shot with the technical assistance of professional film crews. The sound recordist for the first was Manon Barbault, a Quebecoise, wife of the cameraman, Philippe Lavalette, from CNRS and perhaps as a result of the villagers' influence (they were astonished that a year after their marriage, they had not produced a child) they conceived their first child during that shoot. The baby was born just before the second film trip, and so Manon was replaced by a sound engineer from CNRS, Francois Didio. He was from a military family and a staunch Catholic, and so naturally, when he entered the church, he adopted a serious and deeply religious pose, much to the astonishment of the priest's wife! Clearly, Francois had not been told that an Orthodox church in a Greek village was more a meeting place and a place to chat, than a quiet and sombre place of worship!

Neither of the technicians spoke Greek and strangely, perhaps, this was an advantage. Many of my Greek friends were astonished that male technicians were able to penetrate the houses, kitchens and even the bedroom of a young bride. This is because they were 'invisible' or considered to be so. As I noted earlier, "If you don't speak Greek, you don't really exist!"

Fig. 7 Manon Barbault to left of centre, with two children from Ano Ravenia 1978.

The shooting of the three subsequent films, *Let's Get Married*, *My Family and Me* and *A Hard Life* was done by a different film crew: Graham Johnston on camera, a Scottish student at the NFTS and a French anthropologist, Georges Nivoix, an English speaker who wanted to train as a film maker, on sound. Our common language was English therefore, and again, the technicians did not speak Greek. Some other means of communication would have to be developed. It turned out that Graham was a fervent football player who played with the young kids and his reputation spread far beyond the village such that when the Ano Ravenia team was to play against Kato Ravenia, the Kato team cancelled the match for fear of playing against the Scot!

Fig. 8 Graham Johnston in Zurich, 1983.

The sixth film, *Charcoal Makers* was filmed by a former student from the NFTS, Susie Arnott and I managed the sound. A two-person crew seemed to me to be the optimum.

The Film Series

After making the first film on the village as a whole, *Every day is not a Feast Day*, which explored the contrast between the monotony of everyday life in the village and the re-invigoration of its lost vitality on those feast days when the emigrants return, I wanted to give a chance for the women to speak. I had actually spent most of my time with them. They knew most details about the village and could talk about them. But in the 1970s in a mountain village, despite their freedom to speak, married women could not be given the right to speak and to express themselves in front of a camera! Only men, their husbands, were entitled to speak publicly.

I decided to film conversations with young girls, and this produced *Thread of the Needle*. Split between the desire to be in the film and struck by a bit of timidity, they asked if they could bring along the embroideries or tapestries they were working on for their trousseaux. To get the conversation flowing, I asked Anna Triantaphyllou, a friend of Janina's who was about their age, to start up a discussion, but quite quickly the young girls started to discuss the issues they wanted to talk about without prompting.

This film explores the opinions, ideas, and judgments of a group of young girls who stay on in the village awaiting their wedding, the sole event of great importance in their life, as becomes clear in the film. Initially, I considered this film to be rather insignificant because it consisted solely of conversations and the filming only lasted half a day, but now as more than thirty years have passed, I can see that it is much better than I thought. I am even finding a few more positive aspects to it. This unpretentious film actually reveals quite a lot about Greek village society at the end of the 1970s, and in fact, my university colleagues abroad, who specialise in the study of Mediterranean societies, show this film regularly to their students. The young girls' dialogue is very spontaneous. And since nowadays we are drowning in films which have been produced in the formats required by TV producers, this film, despite its imperfections, is a breath of fresh air and naturalness, something quite rare and precious these days.

Fig.9 Vivi and friends, 1979.

At a recent projection at CNRS in 2011, the audience were enchanted by this film and someone asked me how I chose those particularly charming young girls. There was no 'casting', however: all the young girls in the village appeared in the film.

The third film, *My Family and Me* also aims to engage the audience emotionally even though it deals with the problems engendered by out-migration. This film is about observing relationships within a family, split by migration. A young boy of thirteen, Thanasaki, lived with his grandparents in the village while his parents and his little brother lived in Zurich in Switzerland. It's a film which I allowed to evolve as it went along, and I worked on it over a period of four years. On several occasions in Greece, I had observed the difficulties of trying to represent the rifts which occur in a family when the grandparents stay on in the village and their children and grandchildren live in the city. I had been touched by the films made by Ozu[20] and by a Swedish television documentary, filmed in a mountain village in Epirus. That film showed that most parents had emigrated to Sweden, leaving their children behind in the care of their grandparents.[21] The situation of children, living abandoned by their parents, would seem to have produced a significant number of children affected by autism.

Fig. 10 Thanasaki films his grandparents, 1983.

Overall, I wanted to observe the situation of a village family affected by migration and I had a hypothesis: Thanasaki was more attached to his grandparents and to his grandfather, in particular, than to his own father.

I abandoned my role as investigator and refrained from putting questions to members of the family; in this case, I wanted to try to elicit the responses to my questions by observing everyday life. It was only at the end of the shoot, in the last sequence, that I put a question to Thanasaki. The father replied, "The boy prefers his grandfather ... " and this confirmed my hypothesis.

This was a film that involved three different shoots: one in winter in the village, one in summer when his parents came on holiday, and the last at Christmas the following year when we invited the grandfather and Thanasaki to Zurich. I wanted to discover if family relationships could be explored by observing and filming 'live' moments of interaction without asking a single question, that is, without trying to 'make something happen' and by reducing interviews to a minimum. In fact, there is only one single interview in this film, but this was vital in providing some basic information to the spectator about the situation of this family.

People have frequently asked me how I chose this family. Actually it was the sole family in Ano Ravenia which was living through a split-family situation and I had already established a good relationship with the grandfather in the first film. I had also been to Zurich to see his parents and their apartment, long before starting the film.

This film was shot in an air of intimacy and confidence because of our shared friendship. This becomes clear, in particular, during the third round of shooting in Zurich, to the extent that some audiences think that the film is fiction. In fact, I had to put a title at the beginning of the film to confirm that it was, in fact, a documentary!

I was also hoping to make a film about the return to the village of migrants who had left many years previously. The father of one family who was coming back with his two children aged 18 and 19, said to me, "Leaving is not easy but coming back is possibly more difficult". The two children, a boy and a girl, were training to become hairdressers in Janina and so, I started to restore my links with them and get to know them better. When I suggested making a film, the father initially accepted, but when I started shooting, he started to cancel our appointments on different pretexts. I put the question to him, therefore: "Was the idea of making a film about your return a bit too difficult for you?" He replied, "Yes", and we gave up that filming project.

It was as a result of this — wanting to replace this film and because we had some film stock left — that we started to film a wedding day with hardly any preparation at all. This became *Let's Get Married*, a film about a marriage between a young Greek girl, living with her godmother in the USA and the son of the former Priest of Kato Ravenia, the neighbouring village.

The wedding was decided upon very quickly: the young girl was eighteen and the boy wanted to emigrate to the USA. We decided to mock the style of TV reportage and pose banal questions to the parents and guests.[22]

I had known most of the participants at this wedding over many years and although we had not spent much time doing research for the film, it filled in one missing part of the puzzle and provided different insights into the issues surrounding desertion and emigration.

Fig. 11 Eleni and Dimitrios, 1983.

The next film, *A Hard Life...!* is about one woman's life. Kalliopi, a woman born in 1900, and married at 14, tells her life story to a friend of mine from Janina, Eleni Pangratiou-Alexaki. Kalliopi had never left the village but her family was dispersed throughout Eastern and Western Europe as well as North America.

For this film, I used a model created by Jean Eustache[23] in his film, *Odette Robert*. I had already filmed Kalliopi in the first film and she was an amazing woman, spontaneous, a compelling narrator and someone who had lived through the century and its turbulence. She could tell stories of the Turkish occupation as well as her relationship with the Italians in the Second World War.

Fig. 12 Kalliopi,1983.

She was a witness to her nation's history as seen from the simple vantage point of a villager. *As with Thread of the Needle*, this is a film that allows us to penetrate her mentality and understand how she perceives the world since there is no action in the film. What is interesting to observe here is her turn of phrase and mode of expression.

The last film I made in the series, *Charcoal-Makers*, was not related at all to village out-migration nor to my research topic: a village deserted by its inhabitants. The people of Ravenia were at the root of it. For the first time in their lives, they had witnessed the charcoal makers at work. Astonished by what they were doing and how they were doing it, they convinced me to go and make a film about these charcoal makers who had come from another area, a village situated about 200 kilometres south of Ano Ravenia. They had come just for seasonal labour, and as a result I did not know them at all. Mitsos, in the meantime, had become the mayor and Takis, the grandfather in *My Family and Me* was able to introduce me and explain to the charcoal-makers who I was and what I was doing.

Fig. 13 Eleni, 1983.

It was the first time that I had set about making a film about a technical process, and I realised that I could not make it without including some kind of text to describe that process. Having rejected the use of commentary, I had to work out a filmic device which would permit some explanation of the process and yet not detract from my relationship with the charcoal makers.

I asked Eleni, one of the charcoal-makers, to describe the process of charcoal making while she was making bread and recorded this, filming only the start and the end of the operation. I was then able to insert this commentary into the film, matching it up with the images.

The charcoal-makers were settled six kilometres from the village. The site was not accessible by road and they had to bring their water up a stony track. The shooting took place over two mornings in April and two in August.

For this film, I had the good fortune and advantage of collaborating with a Greek woman living in Paris at that time, Electra Venaki, who was a chief editor. Thanks to her excellent work, the film received a professional award for excellence from the Centre National de la Cinématographie (CNC) in France.

At the same time as *Charcoal Makers*, we filmed material intended for use in other films. One was to be *Greek American Summer*, designed to show Greek-Americans from Ano Ravenia who had become settled in the USA, coming home in the summer on holiday.

The other was *The Village, Fifteen Years Later...* That film was to be made at the very point in time at which fifteen years had elapsed, after all the changes I had recorded had taken place in the village, and at the same time, it was going to give the people of Ravenia a chance to talk about my work.

These films were never finished. A 'rough cut of 55' (15'+40') could be screened but only to a Greek audience as they were never subtitled.

In addition, on my last trip there in 1998, I filmed the village and some conversations with villagers in which we resurrected some memories together, but this time, I filmed it for myself on DV Camera. I also visited the house I lived in with Maria in 1974. The owners of the house had retired and had come back to settle in the village. It was a nostalgic film shooting for all of us.

Naturally, in the course of all these film shoots, there have been power struggles. The first took place during the shooting of my first film, *Every day is not a Feast Day*. The priest declared that he would agree to our filming in the church only on the condition that we would not use any lighting. With 16mm film, this was not possible and I told him so. He then asked me to consult with the six members of the Presbytery Council and obtain their agreement. I did this. It was easy because each person agreed with this individually and then the others also agreed.

The second conflict took place in the course of filming *My Family...* when Thanasaki's parents were on holiday in the village. His father wanted to stop the film. We were filming his wife's family at the time and he felt somehow deprived of his powerful role as head of the family. He told us that he was on holiday and did not wish to be pursued by the camera.

I arranged a formal meeting with him alone and told him that he was entirely right and "If it were me, I would not like to be filmed either". But on the other hand, the film had to go ahead since a substantial amount of financing had been raised to fund the film. From that moment onwards, we avoided putting him in the frame. But in the third shoot, over Christmas in Zurich, when we proposed going to the zoo with the whole family minus the father (because he had not wanted to be filmed), the father was actually the one who asked, "Who can go to the zoo?" I answered him: "All of those who want to and if you come, you can show us how to get there". He came with us and had a lot of fun with the monkeys. It is likely that on realising that the end of the film was approaching, he felt some regret at not having been included in it.

This is always the way I have found difficulties to be resolved: a frank explanation, respect for the other person and a good solid friendship.

As a Sort of Conclusion...

My principal interest in doing this work, which spanned a period of fifteen years, was not solely to witness changes in the village and the modernisation of the habitat, in particular, but above all, to show how these six films dealing with diverse aspects of village emigration

overlap with each other in certain ways. One meets 'actors' in one film who appear in another film, perhaps in different roles, and in this way, we are able to gain knowledge of the people and the area through the passing of time.

In anthropological cinema, the time that is devoted to the production and to sensitisation is a determining factor in a film's success. Film and text are diverse but in fact, complementary means of transmitting understandings about people.

It is clear that one cannot transmit or analyse complex data such as genealogies in a film. A spectator is not a reader. One chooses film to express that which cannot be written in a satisfactory form, and in particular, that which is 'experienced': human interactions, the conflicts and emotions they generate.

This is why films most highly regarded by anthropologists are often those made by professional film-makers who know how to use the language of cinema. These film-makers, also are interested in the problems experienced by other human beings and are sensitive to the people from other cultures. These filmmakers devote sometimes many years, living and filming in a place, and still do not claim to understand that society fully, and yet, ironically, they make the most satisfying anthropological films. This shows that understanding the language of cinema and knowing how to tell a story through film is absolutely essential.[24]

Since filming, I have maintained good relations with the people of Ravenia from the village and elsewhere.[25] And when I sent off the DVDs of all the films to them, they were very happy, made copies and organised a distribution network in Greece through their own association. Now that the majority of the 'actors' are dead, these films are for them, living memorials of families and relatives to whom they are very attached.

Twenty years after the last filming, some friends from the village living in Athens asked me to participate in the writing of a large book about the village and its environment.[26] In this was to be included an article complete with photographs. The author of the book is Tanassis X. Bakalis (2009), the child whose baptism I filmed in 1980!

My experiences in Epirus have caused me to reflect upon my work. Anthropological books live out their existence in libraries and in the best case scenario, contribute to the intellectual development of generations of students and researchers. A small number of those will be read and used by the communities and individuals who are the subjects of research. Far beyond my work and what I have researched and discovered in filming, the fact is that our films are witnesses to social and family histories of, and for, our 'actors', and these artefacts will become more and more precious to them as time goes on.

I have screened my Epirus film series in universities and festivals in twenty-four different countries: nineteen in Europe and the rest in the USA, Canada, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa. I have shown them to Greek communities in foreign countries where adults were very happy to be able to show their children what village life had been like for their grandparents.[27] These films have, no doubt, contributed greatly to a deeper understanding of contemporary life in rural Greece. As they have been purchased by audio-visual centres abroad, like books, they will continue to have their own 'life' and make people aware of the past as it was indeed lived.

My experience in Ano Ravenia (1974-1988) as elsewhere,[28] has taught me that nothing can replace Time, our one objective ally, and its profound influence on our exploration of how human beings live.[29]

Notes

* This is the first time that a paper on my work in film has been published in Greek and in Greece. This explains the inclusion of certain details about the locality.

1. In 1961, Henri Mendras directed a research project on Greece entitled 'Six villages', published by UNESCO.
2. ευεργέτες
3. The word *xenos* means a foreigner. The status of a foreigner in Greece has been rather ambiguous: one is welcomed warmly — Greek hospitality is not a myth — but then people approaching you attempt to control you at the same time. This is a vast subject and one I addressed in my Philosophy diploma (Paris Sorbonne 1954)
4. A pomace brandy, more commonly known as *raki* in Turkey.
5. Jean Rouch was a French anthropologist, Africanist and filmmaker (1917-2004) who produced more than 100 films: anthropological documentaries and works of fiction and 'ethnofiction'.
6. These shots appear in the unedited film, 'The village, fifteen years later'.
7. In 1975, I borrowed another Beaulieu camera, this time, an electric one from the University of Paris which seemed to me clearly more comfortable to use. However, it was not well maintained by the university, and as a result, it also broke down. That time, the photographer in Janina could do nothing: it was clearly a much more sophisticated instrument for he told me, 'It comprised more than 400 parts!'
8. The system of documentary production imposed by television in France (but equally elsewhere), requires the producer not to submit a idea for a film, but rather a script with the 'actors' already identified, named and their actions carefully described in advance.
9. A marriage ceremony, for example
10. David MacDougall is a brilliant American filmmaker and professor, living in Australia, who has made remarkable films in every continent and is considered one of the best anthropological filmmakers alive today. He has distinguished himself by conceptualising documentary cinema and of opening up new directions in anthropological film.
11. The most well known series are*: Conversations with the Turkanas by David and Judith MacDougall* (1974-1981), *The Yanomami* by Timothy Ash and Napoleon Chagnon (1975), the films of John Marshall in the Kalahari Desert (1955-1971), the Netsilik Eskimos series, supervised by the anthropologist Asen Balikci (1965). Later, there was also the trilogy of Bob Connolly and Robin Anderson with the Ganiga of Papua New Guinea (1983-1992).
12. *To Live with Herds* by David and Judith MacDougall, for example.
13. The texts written and films made about the Dogon in Mali, for example.
14. This has increased even more since my first shoots using 16 mm film. The use of video technology, computers and the fact that distribution formats were being constantly modified, meant that I had to make new copies of all my films in three languages (the original version in Greek without subtitles, another with French subtitles and a third with English subtitles), every time a new format was invented.
15. For a detailed description of the filming of *Everyday is not a feast day*, please see Piault, C. (1998).
16. At that point in filmmaking, the film was on two reels, that is, sound and picture separate from each other, to be synchronised on a double system film projector. Only television studios had equipment like this.
17. This is clearly confirmed by them in the rough cut of *Fifteen years later in the Village* (1990).
18. This was my first important film and I had not realised that the fact that there were two successive festivals taking place in the film created problems for the audience, as David MacDougall pointed out to me when my film was presented at the Cinéma du Réel Festival (1981), noting that the film had 'two heads' ...'
19. Ozu is a Japanese filmmaker specialising in films about the family. His film, *Tokyo Journey* (1953), in which he tells the story of the visit of aged parents to their children in the city, impressed me very much.
20. I remember one scene: to answer a telephone call from his parents, a young boy climbed up the mountain and arriving at the cafe out of breath, grabbed the phone and asked, "When are you coming?" When his parents answered that they were not, he dropped the phone ... and ran out of the cafe.
21. Various ill-timed events marked that day which caused the participants to say that they were hardly a good omen for this marriage. First of all, the wedding was delayed because a child suffered a bad bite from a dog, a storm disrupted the events and finally, leaving the party, one of the cars of the family

had an accident which meant that the godmother of the bride had to go to hospital from which she emerged with a broken arm in a cast! And in fact, the marriage was not a happy one, the groom found the work in the United States a little demanding and so they came back to his village and there, the young woman had to manage in a difficult environment, one completely different from that of a young girl living in the USA.

22. Jean Eustache (1938-1981), a French cinematographer who died a premature death, produced high quality fiction and documentary films, all of which became well known. One, in particular, was shot about his grandmother, *Odette Robert* consisting only of ten minute takes. In 16 mm, this corresponded to one canister of film. He never stopped filming except to change the reel.
23. The idea that anyone could pick up a camera and make a film is flawed. Surely, anyone is able to use a pen or a camera but only those who know the language will be able to write a paper or make a film.
24. When I was on a visit to Canada, in Toronto, in order for me to be able to present my films to the Greek communities and Epirus émigré associations there, children of the Ravenia community organised the screenings and arranged my accommodation.
25. These screenings were only made possible because the films were still in their original Greek.
26. In France in 2010, I returned from making a film, *Return to Brouck* in the North, forty years after making my first film in 1970 with the same community. It was actually in the local area, to the families who knew the actors, that the two films, packaged together in a single DVD case, were sold and appreciated most of all.
27. I am grateful to Dr Genevieve Hoffmann for her constructive remarks, Dr Elizabeth Wickett for her careful English translation and Dr Gilbert Lewis, for his keen supervision.

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