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Paul Sant Cassia and Constantina Bada

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## Introduction: history, family and the 'other' in Greece

Anthropological research on the Greek world, as elsewhere in the Mediterranean, has long concentrated on the family, the household, the transmission of property (especially the dowry) within the family, and more recently on the construction of gender identities and power relations in rural areas. From various accounts we are now aware of significant variations in all these practices. Yet we know very little about the historical evolution of the Greek family and the processes which have contributed on a wide variety of fronts to its formation, its ethics and its patterns of property transmission in the forms we recognise today.

These important gaps in our knowledge are due to a number of factors. The Ottoman period has left us a relative poverty of historical documentation and archival material such as household censuses, matrimonial contracts and documents of all sorts, which would enable us to construct a picture of the family in past times in Greece, as scholars of other southern European societies (Spain, Italy, Portugal, France, all notarial cultures) have been able to do. Few Ottoman archives survive in Greece and the prospective scholar is faced with the daunting prospect of working on Ottoman archives in Turkey, many of which deal with fiscal matters rather than the family. Church records in Greece, the source of many reconstructions of family life elsewhere in southern Europe, are uneven and disjointed. A second factor is the particularly tumultuous history of Greece since the Turkocratia, the period of Turkish rule in the eighteenth century where war and radical and extensive population movements have been a constant feature. Such disturbances and the incorporation of new populations and refugees as Greece progressively extended its national frontiers hardly contributed to the ordered accumulation of data so necessary for historical research on the family.

Yet the study of the evolution of the Greek family does merit atten-

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tion by anthropologists and historians for both general and particular concerns. On a general level it is now almost a received orthodoxy among anthropologists that the Mediterranean is in some sense a 'cultural unit'. This notion has a long and complicated history which is intertwined with the development of anthropology itself and the territorial redirection of its interests in the period of decolonisation. The unity of the Mediterranean also received a powerful stimulus from the work of historians, notably Fernand Braudel (1975), and demographers and historians of the family (Hajnal, 1965; Laslett and Wall, 1972; Laslett, 1983; Wall, 1983). Whilst Braudel was interested in the interaction of men within a commonly defined mental and geographical framework that formed and stamped their experiences, Hajnal and Laslett were more concerned with the differences between north and south, west and east, in Europe. Yet the precise nature of southern Europe in these schemata was less specified, and indeed the criteria often selected as the differentiating features between the various areas of Europe (age at marriage, family forms, patterns of property transmission, residence patterns, and the like) were perhaps developed more to highlight the specificity of northwest Europe. The thrust of most of the argument was to explain why this part of Europe was different from the rest of Europe and hence provide a fuller context for the emergence of industrial capitalism, 'individualism', and so on.

Such comparisons, while useful, nevertheless tend to construct arguments along certain lines. To begin with, the type of data required is not always available. Even more seriously, perhaps such approaches risk bypassing the question of whether it is suitable to apply such universalistic criteria to other societies. Furthermore, they do not address the critical questions of why and how we construct such models, as well as where and at what level this 'unity' of the Mediterranean lies, if at all?

Jack Goody (1983) has recently offered a historical explanation. In a wide ranging survey of the development of the family and kinship in Europe, especially in its western regions, he shows how historically both northern and southern shores of the Mediterranean had many common features. Continuous intervention by the Church, however, on the 'rules' of marriage had the result of transforming the family and kinship along lines we recognise as distinctly 'European'. This point has been taken even further by Alan Macfarlane (1978, 1986) who sees English society as having long differed from the rest of Europe. Should we follow this lead and view all Mediterranean societies as different from each other? Or should we move sideways away from the lines of enquiry proposed by historians of the family and try to specify other areas for comparison? Recently a noted historian of the Tuscan Renaissance

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family signalled her dissatisfaction with the conventional models proposed to typologize the European family patterns by asking:

Does [the Tuscan model] provide evidence – happily preserved through Florentine documentation – of a medieval phase in the evolution of family and marriage of which we only know later forms in northern Europe? Or should we see it as a typically Mediterranean model, closer, in the last analysis, to central and eastern European structures than to those of north-western Europe? From what some studies – all too few of them – have told us about marriage and domestic structures in the modern period, the second hypothesis seems preferable.

(Klapisch-Zuber, 1985; 20)

This study on the evolution of the Greek family indicates strong similarities and parallels to the Tuscan material, both in 'form' (settlement patterns at marriage, the 'dowry', men and 'houses', etc.) and on a deeper and more subtle level less open to statistical analysis, in 'cultural content' (women 'as' gifts and women 'with' gifts at marriage, the symbolic role of clothing and its relation to the construction of the person, etc.). This lends some credibility to the notion of a 'Mediterranean model', but it also raises the problem again in sharper focus. How can one compare two (or even more) societies distinct in space and time without for example reviving the old schemata of cultural unity (such as 'honour and shame', private and public spheres) explored by the first generation of Mediterraneanists and with which there is now uncomfortable dissatisfaction?

Such themes may now have to be analysed as part of the northern European construction of 'the other', yet intimately linked and incorporated into northern European perceptions of itself. For 'the Mediterranean' is an insidious category and it has been held up in anthropological and historical discourse not to indicate what we are not (as in more 'exotic' societies), but what we 'were'. Even Braudel's masterful survey of the Mediterranean concentrates on its 'Golden Age' – which is where its interest is presumed to lie; after that what is 'interesting' and 'significant' and has to be 'explained' occurs in the North, where industrial capitalism and Protestantism emerged. Yet, while northern Europe 'overtook' the Mediterranean, these societies are preserved in a historical discourse which posits them as representing an earlier stage in the evolution of European culture. As Herzfeld (1987) has aptly remarked, Mediterranean peoples are now held up as the 'aborigines' of Europe. Put differently, the 'other' is the past, the 'self' is the future.

What we mean by this is that in many Mediterranean societies the issue of 'time and the other' (Fabian, 1983) becomes particularly problematic. To begin with, the 'other' in the Mediterranean context does

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not merely inhabit the epistemological frame in Western anthropological discourse of allochronicity ('other time'), i.e. 'the science of other men in another time' (Fabian, *ibid.*; 143). Rather, to coin another neologism, Mediterranean societies occupy an ambiguous position in time and space. On one level they are allochronic, but they also occupy an idiotopic (same space) frame within Europe. From the Encyclopaedists, Shelley, Byron and Chateaubriand, to Walter Pater, Winkelmann and Bernard Berenson, Mediterranean societies were held to represent 'our ancestors'. Indeed so pervasive initially was this view that in the early nineteenth century Greeks were believed to be the direct descendants of the ancient Hellenes, prompting Shelley to rhetorically invert the distinction between time and the other by proclaiming 'We are all Greeks . . .'

Increasingly the West's disenchantment with its inability to fit the products of its imagination with the irreducibility of 'the other' resulted not in a rejection of the West's perception of itself as the 'heir' to Graeco-Roman-Christian civilization and culture, but a denial of the identity of 'the other' in the Mediterranean. Scholars such as Fallmerayer attempted to disprove that modern Greeks were descended from the ancient Greeks. The effects of this disjuncture were far reaching. The Greek state, which had largely emerged through the West's support based partly upon such beliefs, became increasingly concerned with reappropriating the past in order to gain legitimacy. Indeed Greece experienced particular problems in secularising the state and its ideology (nationalism) as well as in naturalising time. The Church, which had been cast in the role as the carrier of the ethnos (national and ethnic sentiment) subscribed to a very distinct Judeo-Christian pre-enlightenment notion of time which did not lend itself to a secular nationalism. Instead the state adopted an ideology of religious nationalism which had been mainly formed by the Church. The War of Independence, embedded as it was in Western European desires to liberate the Christian descendants of the ancient Hellenes from Muslim oppression, implied not only the appropriation of the (Greek) past by the West as its own history, but also assumed the nuances of a war of religious and ethnic liberation for the Greeks themselves. Religion and ethnicity became inextricably linked. And because the new Greek state started off only with the Peloponnese, and many Greek-speaking areas were still under Ottoman control, irredentism became a powerful force in Greek politics and culture until the catastrophe in Asia Minor of 1922. The state's expansion to incorporate all Greeks within its boundaries, their liberation from 400 years of 'slavery' and 'darkness' became a sacred and political imperative. In effect the whole process of

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liberation of Greeks outside the confines of the kingdom represented an attempt to transcend the poverty of the present and recover the lost glory of Greece. The 'future' could only be achieved by recovering the lost glory of the past, and a past, moreover, which the West was increasingly appropriating for itself as the heir to classical civilisation and denying modern Greeks their identity as descendants of the ancient Hellenes.

In this way Greek culture and society became progressively locked in a world view where time and space were not naturalised or secularised. Time was not naturalised because the evolution of the Greek state was perceived in terms of a recovery of the glory of ancient Greece. Space was not secularised because the world was divided into those areas liberated from Ottoman rule, those areas where Greek 'brothers' were waiting to be liberated (especially 'the City', Constantinople, the centre of national and religious aspirations which had to be recovered as the embodiment of Hellenism's 'golden age' before 'the Fall' to the Ottomans), and finally those areas beyond the pale which included both the West (Europe) and the East (Asia). In many respects Greek nationalism was as much anti-Western as anti-Oriental. Expansion in space, bringing the light of Hellenic Christian culture to areas under Ottoman rule, implied salvation through a transcendence of time, and a recovery of lost grace. It was a view of time and space, and ultimately of identity, which had to recapture the past in order to achieve the future. If, as Fabian has suggested communication is about creating shared time, Greece communicated in a very distinctive way with both the West and the East. With the West its communication was via the past; with the East the shared time was denied by being characterised as 'slavery' and 'darkness' under Ottoman rule.

Thus for many Mediterranean peoples, history and identity hold very distinct values. Because Mediterranean peoples were incorporated into a northern European discourse about itself in a manner different from 'exotic' societies, and because they often shared the 'same history' with the West, the 'self' often lies in the past to be reappropriated, or even held up as an ideal as to why they are now different (and sometimes 'better'), although certainly part of the discourse on knowledge and identity dominated by northern Europeans. One form this has taken lies in the construction of national cultures. Nineteenth-century Greeks tried to discover links and continuities with the classical past in order to establish a national identity; twentieth-century Italian Fascism evoked the glories of Ancient Rome and its domination of the *mare nostrum* to place Italy on an equal footing with the Great Powers, while in less belligerent contemporary times the Renaissance is held up as a model of

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Italian inventiveness and 'style'; the Arabs recall the ideal theocracy of the first community of believers and develop a vocabulary of justification to explain their fall from grace (Gellner, 1985). 'Grace' in the modern world is of course linked to power through commodity production and display, in product innovation and so on.<sup>1</sup> As we shall try to show, this concern with the past as a means to discover identity had particular implications for the family and its emotional life.

The semi-incorporation of Mediterranean societies within European discourse as representing the past within the present may even extend to the categories we employ. Terms such as 'dowry', 'dower', 'marriage' and the like, embedded as they are in western legal concepts and classifications, may appear unequivocal to us. Yet while they were often incorporated in official state legal systems in countries such as Greece and may therefore appear unproblematic to us, they may also hold different additional significances and meanings at the grassroots level (Herzfeld, 1980). This is not to deny that such institutions may be suitable for comparative purposes, but their uses and significances at the grassroots may well be different and deserving of analysis. At the very least examination of their semantic significances for the actors themselves may help shed light on and inform us how we should construct our comparisons and affect our conclusions.

This problem is even more acute when we examine notions which are both anthropological abstractions and appear in everyday discourse, such as 'honour', 'shame', 'private', 'public', and so on. As ethnographers who had previously lived and worked in different parts of the Mediterranean, we were struck as much by the differences as by the similarities between the 'customs' and *mentalités* of 'our' respective societies, not only at similar points in time, but also across time. How can we explain such deceptive similarities and differences without making any evolutionary assumptions? Clearly we need to move to other levels of analysis and perception which are not limited to statistical data. These would include a consideration of other aspects of culture, a hidden logic of constructing the world, the person, and exchange. Mediterranean societies may well share a 'common aesthetic' in a manner similar to that claimed by Marilyn Strathern for Melanesia (1988; 341). Such an approach would take cognizance of both similarities and differences between different societies.

On a more particular level, the study of the development of the Greek family also merits attention. Of all the southern European societies Greece is especially distinctive in its social evolution. To begin with, until the early nineteenth century it formed part of the Ottoman world. It was perhaps less subject to the changes experienced in southern

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European societies, including the Napoleonic wars, the sweeping away of *anciens régimes*, the imposition of new legal codes, and internal revolts. Yet Greece was certainly exposed to the brisk new winds of change blowing from the West, although the extent to which the new climate of liberalism was actually genuinely felt in Greece has been hotly debated by historians and by the Greeks themselves. The country was the first Ottoman province to wrest its independence from its Muslim masters, and a 'modern' nation-state was established forty years before the Italian Risorgimento, for which it was an inspiration. De Pouqueville's *Story of the Greek revolution of the events 1740–1824* was translated into Italian in 1829 and not surprisingly published in Piedmont, where it exercised considerable influence on Italian nationalists.

In other respects the evolution of Greek society, its polity, economy and institutions, has been singularly distinctive. In contrast to that other 'geographical expression', Italy, the establishment of the nation-state was not due to the incorporation of the society under the hegemony of a regional Kingdom (Piedmont) which established its control over the rest of society. Nor was it achieved through the shedding of an empire and the working out of internal political processes as in Spain. Rather, the state was created through a somewhat sporadic nationwide revolt, politically not well co-ordinated, and reliant upon external European assistance. This reliance and a healthy suspicion of European motives indelibly influenced the construction of national identity. As Legg has pointed out, 'in Greece, the power to unite the State came from outside, there was barely sufficient common identification, much less solidarity, to create the nation-state' (1969; 89). Nor were its territories fixed, a fact which contributed to regular and massive influxes of refugees and the destitute at regular intervals for a hundred years since the state's establishment in 1830 to the catastrophe in Asia Minor in 1922, when Greece's ill-fated attempt to capture Asia Minor from Turkey (areas of Greek settlement for millennia) resulted in defeat and the forcible settlement of over a million refugees in Greece (Pentzopoulos, 1962). In one very crucial way the new Greek nation-state was the first post-colonial state in Europe, foreshadowing in its experiences the irredentism of European countries in the 1930s and the often obligatory repatriations of millions of Europeans and Russians in the twentieth century.

Other, related factors were perhaps of more significance for the evolution of the family in Greece. In contrast to many other Mediterranean societies, there was no continuity in elites and ruling groups across time. The old elite of primates, *arkhontes*, formed under the Ottomans, were for various reasons bypassed and discredited in the nation-state and they merged with a new rising urban bourgeoisie

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formed primarily by the growth of the state and its bureaucracy. This was a peaceful replacement but in the last decades of the eighteenth century and early nineteenth century it involved a wide variety of factors, including the Church and its attempts to regulate the manner of property transmission within the family. Nor were there competing elites in the modern Greek state, as with Spain, where one regionally based elite (in Catalonia) was 'politically overrun' by Castile. Indeed for a considerable part of the nineteenth century the Greek elite, which was mercantile-based, was concentrated not in the Greek kingdom but in Greek cities under Ottoman control (Smyrna and Constantinople). Within Greece, the growth of the State's bureaucracy, which had to be established *ex nihilo* after the Ottoman departure, attracted rural notables to the cities, the new centres of power, and increasingly the dispersed mercantile elite. The lack of a common national culture, because of different regional ones whose only common element was the Greek language, and a despoliation of the departed Ottoman overlords, meant that a new culture was to emerge in a rapidly expanding urban setting which indelibly influenced the ethics of the family and the significance of kinship in relations between family groups.

This is not to say that the old elite of *arkhontes* lost all its previous power in one fell swoop in 1833, as did the Russian nobility in 1917. Rather, the *arkhon* class ceased to operate as an administratively defined class concerned with defining and defending its privileges and wealth according to certain Ottoman-imposed criteria. Many families, especially in certain Peloponnesian regions (such as the Barbitsiotei and the Mavromichaelei in the Mani) retained their wealth, extensive landholdings and power in spite of the attempts by the first Prime Minister Capodistrias to the contrary; in certain cases many even managed to extend their holdings and influence in the new Greek kingdom due to extensive networks of rural patronage pledged to urban politicians. But increasingly the old *arkhon* class in Athens and later elsewhere merged with a new and emerging urban middle class defined predominantly by participation in the state administration whose ethics and family organisation were formed mainly out of a dialectical and selective rejection of the past (i.e. the Turkocratia system of privileges, defined erroneously as *feudarhismo*, or 'feudalism', thus incorporating Greece within Western historical categories) and attempts to 'Europeanise' themselves and the wider society. In contrast to Tsoukalas (1981) and Burgel (1976) we do not believe that the *arkhontes* retained its pristine identity as a class in the nineteenth century by means of heavily patrolled borders, control over the means of production and a specific distinct rationality. As McNeill has observed: 'during and immediately



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after the war of Independence a central issue was whether or not leaders of the revolution would be able to convert their social position into land ownership on the model of the Turkish pashas whom they had massacred. In the end, the “Christian Turks” as their enemies called them, failed’ (1978; 57). As the magnet of Athens increased its pull over the countryside and its slowly expanding incorporated territories, social and geographical mobility became progressively common, albeit with distinct regional biases.<sup>2</sup> Even in the twentieth century, with some distinct regional exceptions (such as Thessaly), class sentiments have been remarkably absent in most parts of Greece, rendering class analyses particularly problematic. Education and wealth, the two being largely synonymous in modern Greece, and a transformed custom largely transcended social differences. In fact the term *morfomenos anthropos* means both a formally educated man and a ‘Europeanised’ man. It also includes the notions of being ‘shaped’ and ‘cultivated’, and having the knowledge and facility necessary to deal with the outside world. ‘Culture’ which ‘forms’ individuals is thus presented as coming from the ‘outside world’, not the village, and is available to and recognizable in anyone regardless of his social origins.

The absence of a landed aristocracy had far-reaching implications for patterns and styles of leadership, and moulding of aspirations, as well as the perceptions of individual and family mobility. No social group or class, with the possible exception of the Ionian aristocracy (of whom Capodistrias was a member) had a ‘mission to lead’, and the latter lost their homogeneity after 1864 when Britain handed over the Ionian islands to Greece.<sup>3</sup> Instead, a peasant-type ‘Weberian’ competitive culture was carried over to the city, a source of many aspirations to political leadership. Within the city, education increasingly became one of the main means of social mobility as the aged but prescient tamed mountain warrior Kolokotronis had predicted in the early nineteenth century. Indeed education became identified with the city, with *politismos* (a distinctive Greek notion of ‘civilisation’ and the ‘civilised’ life), and it evolved into one of the safest means to stabilise the seesaw changes in family fortunes which inevitably characterised the tumultuous city-based political life of the new Greek nation state. In contrast to their counterparts in France, Italy and Spain in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, Greek peasants as peasants never entered the political stage; rather they did so as urbanites, actual or potential.

Urbanisation and the political and economic significance of the city are perhaps the main keys for an understanding of the evolution of the Greek family, its ethics and its concerns from the nineteenth century,

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even in rural areas. This marked a radical redirection from what had previously been the trend for the two hundred years of Ottoman rule where there were generally progressive movements away from the city to safer highland areas. Thus in one basic sense Greek society, its politics, economy and culture, are 'new' products of the growth of the nation state, paradoxically much 'newer' than the younger states of Italy and Spain where there has been a far greater continuity in ruling groups, regional cultures and identities with a long history of political autonomy and representation.

The society was young in its economy, bureaucracy, law, and national and cultural identity. After the departure of the Ottomans, the rural economy had to be created anew, in the wake of centuries of neglect, and the physical environment required reclamation by man from nature. Slaughter and Kasimis note of Boeotia: 'The dry language of social-economic analysis, to the effect that post-Revolution Greek agriculture suffered above all from lack of capital, cannot convey the enormity of the task facing these communities. Without implements, with very few draft animals, even with many of the best young and active men lost in the fighting, and with no money, they set about making a living with their bare hands' (1986; 112). Small peasant holdings predominated partly because the state subscribed to this ideal and partly because it was unable or unwilling to resolve the land question until well into the end of the nineteenth century. Yet because land was distributed on an auction basis and credit was not readily available, peasants were dependent upon money lenders and merchants. They also lacked secure property titles. Because the state required revenue which could only be obtained through taxation, the actual state of affairs for a considerable part of the nineteenth century was in effect no different from the Ottoman system it had supplanted, and Greece entered the twentieth century as an under-developed country (Mouzelis, 1978; McNeill, 1978). In the north, Arta and Thessaly, the areas of large landholdings *ex-chifliks*, a by-product of Ottoman rule, entered the Greek kingdom in 1881. Yet while the big landowners of Thessaly were prominent in Greek politics, investment in their estates remained low, and liberalisation of land distribution had to wait until 1917–28. Large landowners moved to Athens and increasingly sold off their land in order to finance the education of their offspring and to enter into lucrative state employment or politics. Small peasant holdings and the legal insecurity of tenure in the countryside, as well as regular influxes of refugees and the lack of resources supplied by the state for agricultural improvement, contrasted sharply with the politically and economically expanding towns. Steady urbanisation in the nineteenth century, which shot up in the twentieth century, populated