HONOUR AND SHAME:
PROBLEMS IN THE COMPARATIVE
ANALYSIS OF MORAL SYSTEMS

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Mediterranean value-systems have been presented as classifications of 'honour' and 'shame'. Apart from the issue of whether 'the Mediterranean' necessarily or usefully constitutes a discrete cultural zone, 'honour' and 'shame' are inefficient glosses on a wide variety of indigenous terminological systems. Fresh ethnographic evidence from two rural Greek communities illustrates two necessary procedures: (a) to examine each terminological system as an independent whole in its local setting; (b) to elucidate the relationships between such systems within each linguistic area before proceeding to wider cross-cultural comparisons. The various taxonomic systems examined do nevertheless exhibit a common concern, not simply with absolute moral or economic criteria for social evaluation, but with the ability to live up to already existing expectations. This general characteristic, however, is by no means exclusively Mediterranean.

Introduction: methodological difficulties

Since the beginning of systematic anthropological research in the Mediterranean lands, the terms 'honour' and 'shame' have been used to represent an enormous variety of local social, sexual, economic and other standards. The significance of these values in each culture should not be minimised. It is, however, reduced and obscured by the apriorism, circularity and ethnocentrism inherent in the use of such inefficient English-language glosses for the purposes of cross-cultural analysis.

To date, little effort has been directed towards the comparison of usages within each linguistic tradition, or towards a critical appraisal of the assumption that indigenous terms mean much the same thing wherever they occur. Yet without a series of such internal perspectives, the cross-cultural comparison of concepts to which our only effective access is through local usage makes little sense. It would therefore be useful to attempt a comparative analysis of local usage within one language area, and this I do for the Greek-speaking world, after first setting out some theoretical issues in more detail.

The earliest systematic collection of essays (Peristiany 1965) on Mediterranean value-systems avoided facile correlations through its scrupulous attention to the details of particularistic ethnographic description. The question of cross-cultural comparison was addressed, not begged. Mediterranean anthropology has nevertheless been faulted for its 'failure' to adopt a comparativist position (Davis 1977: 5). Such a criticism raises the logical difficulty which the

Man (N.S.) 15, 339–51.
ethnographic accounts largely escaped: it presupposes that there exists within the circum-Mediterranean region something which is both worthy of cross-cultural examination and yet somehow 'less' characteristic of other areas.¹

While this criticism does not necessarily require the adoption of a crudely undifferentiated culture-area concept, the overall impression of homogeneity is attributed to 'contact...for millennia' (Davis 1977: 12-13). That a primarily geographical entity has to be defined by historical criteria, however, only compounds the difficulty of fitting so nebulous a concept as 'honour' to it. Another approach (J. Schneider 1971: 2) has the Mediterranean as 'all regions surrounding the [Mediterranean] sea in which great emphasis is placed on the chastity and virginity of women'. Here, however, since the defence of female chastity is equated with 'honour', any attempt to correlate 'honour' with a geographical distribution must necessarily be circular. Once again, the definition relies on an implicit quantification of the unquantifiable—this time, the 'emphasis' on chastity.²

Moreover, whether 'honour' is defined as an index of female chastity or of economic stratification (Davis 1977: 89-101; 1978: 472), such concentration on a single well-defined variable suggests that the term 'honour' may itself be redundant. Its use has already introduced an element of nominalism. This is especially apparent in Davis's (1977: 99) complaint that Bailey (1971), who prefers the unambiguously etic 'reputation', does not then explain why 'honour' might be 'inappropriate'. If 'most of the behaviour described by Bailey as "competing to remain equal" (1971: 19) is in fact honour-oriented behaviour', that fact originates in Davis's definition of 'honour' rather than in the indigenous categories.

Many of the local terms for moral values correspond closely to English-language cognates; obvious examples include onore, rispetto and egoisimos. Similarities of this sort, which are not necessarily matched in the semantic domain, make it particularly hard to abandon the habit of assuming virtual equivalence.³ In fact, the semantic disparity between English and Mediterranean cognates is often obvious from the careful descriptions of ethnographers. A single instance will suffice to make the point here. Some of Brøgger's (1968: 232, n. 2) south Italian informants 'maintained that honour (onore) only concerned the sexual conduct of the female members of the household as reflected on its male members, and they would use the term respect (rispetto) in other contexts'. This statement only makes sense when we realise that the 'translations' of the Italian terms are unavoidably inexact. South Italian onore clearly operates in a manner markedly different from the Victorian English sense of 'honour' as a man's ideal comportment towards unrelated women.⁴

Peristiany (1965), Bailey (1971) and their collaborators similarly avoided linguistic reductionism by reporting each terminological usage in its own ethnographic context.⁵ They have in effect provided moral taxonomies—systems, that is, for the ranking of one's fellow-citizens according to a set of ethical criteria. Treating these taxonomies collectively as 'stratification' reduces the non-material aspects of social classification to reflections of an economic ordering.

Nor must alternative interpretations necessarily be expressed in terms of
belief’. Davis (1969: 69) decries the early emphasis on moral criteria as merely ‘a technique which treats beliefs as sui generis phenomena’. But all the authors just cited correlate local terminologies with several variables (including wealth), without awarding any single variable an unwarranted logical priority. Nor were those writers primarily concerned with ‘belief’ in the strict sense of the word. Moral taxonomies have to do with the public evaluation of behaviour, with degrees of conformity to a social code, rather than with hypothetical inner states.

Thus a Greek egoistis is not really demonstrating the rugged individualism which has for so long been upheld (e.g., d'Istria 1867) as the cornerstone of his 'national character'. On the contrary, by his very insistence on having respect paid to him, he is exhibiting conformity to a socially sanctioned ideal. Egoismos is neither a form of belief nor a condition of social isolation, but an evaluative description of public behaviour. As such, it may have much less to do with a person's actual wealth than with the extent to which he is treated as a privileged individual. Since the other indigenous terms which have been translated as 'honour' and 'shame' are similarly categories of public evaluation, it may be no less inappropriate to refer to them as indices of absolute economic standing.

Egalitarianism: literal or normative?

The narrow definition of 'honour' as a primarily economic phenomenon conflicts with the claim, frequently voiced, that Mediterranean societies are in some sense egalitarian (Davis 1977: 81–9). But the claim of egalitarianism has largely originated in the mouths of indigenous informants. Thus, the more it seems to depart from literal economic facts, the more its conceptual significance demands explanation (cf. also Pitt-Rivers 1978: 321–2). Greek villagers, for example, are usually reluctant to admit to internal status differentiation in speaking with outsiders, since such an admission would imply the presence of lesser individuals in their community. Their concern is with reputation writ large, egoismos in the defence of the whole village rather than just of the household. In this sense, what has been called 'honour' is actually inimical to the expression of differentiation by wealth. The fact that such differentiation is ideally denied does not mean, of course, that it cannot exist, or that it cannot be covertly recognised. The Greek proverb, 'the fingers are not all [the same]', describes just this tension between any kind of internal differentiation and the need to display unity before outsiders.

Economic differentiation undoubtedly exists, though in varying degrees, throughout the Mediterranean. If 'honour' is treated as a normative form of internal ranking, however, it seems inconsistent to stress its importance while at the same time ignoring that other, outward-directed norm of 'egalitarianism'. In order to reconcile these concepts, we clearly cannot go on treating them as literally and absolutely economic in focus.

Thus, for example, the Alculeños do indeed exhibit far greater economic differentiation than the Sarakatsani (Davis 1977: 89). Yet both societies
apparently possess concepts of ‘honour’, although in Alcalá the señoritos interpret it very differently from the peasantry: upper-class women do not have to guard their chastity with the severity encountered among labourers. Davis argues from this that, in effect, since wealth is status and also releases women from the absolute requirements of chastity, the primary determinants of ‘honour’ must be economic. Yet this would apply only if the sole basis of status were economic, and there is clearly more to being a señorito than money.

The values glossed as ‘honour’ rarely appear in the ethnographic literature as a simple matter of economic primacy. Brügger (1968: 232) reports that onore ‘is the privilege of all men’; one tries to retrieve its loss through threats or direct action. According to the Schneiders (1976: 100–2), onore may even compensate a poor Sicilian for his otherwise humiliating position of economic dependency. Conversely, excessive wealth in ‘unworthy’ hands may provoke socially negative evaluations of those who own it. Davis (1969: 80) himself shows that major status differences were so bitterly begrudged in Pisticci that they might even lead to homicide on occasion. Sarakatsan males, otherwise eager to boast in accordance with the demands of egoismos, generally preferred to minimise the extent of their wealth in order to avoid envy and the tax-collector (Campbell 1964: 229, 238, 284).

Display of self-regard is thus not a reliable indication of wealth. A man’s reputation does nevertheless depend upon his ability to live up to the expectations which he creates about himself. Davis (1969: 70–1) has argued that these expectations, which constitute ‘honour’, are a function of economic standing. But what of the disapproval meted out to the errant rich, or of the various ways in which ‘honour’ has been found in conditions of great poverty? In the Cretan village of ‘Glendi’ (see below), the definitive case of filotimo was held to be that of the desperately poor woman who provided unexpected guests with bread, a few olives and some water—a supremely humble offering, but acknowledged by all to be the best she could manage. In Vergadi (Peloponnese), again, a family’s filotimo is not diminished if its female members work in the fields ‘when public opinion recognizes the necessity for it’ (Bialor 1973: 412). Each family tries to act according to a public evaluation of its current means, and it is success in this relative sense that filotimo conveys. The so-called egalitarianism of Mediterranean societies (and others as well)9 is thus a nominal equality of access to moral resources—the privilege, in Brügger’s south Italian utopia, of all men.10

Ethnographic amplification: Pefko, Glendi

We now turn to field data from Pefko (Rhodes) and Glendi (Western Crete) for further ethnographic illustration from within the Greek-speaking world.11 The most striking difference between these two communities lies in their respective attitudes to the law. While the Pefkiots pride themselves on their sobriety and their respect for the law—they managed a total of one suspected and one confirmed case of theft over an eight-year period (1967–74)—the Glendiots engage in systematic sheep-stealing, illegally gamble for high stakes
in public, carry and use firearms, and indulge in a wide assortment of petty infractions which the local police usually consider it politic to overlook. It is only to be expected that these two communities will also differ radically in their use of morally evaluative terms; Pefkiot values harmonise, at least superficially, with those of the civil and religious authorities, while the Glendiot attitude is perhaps best summarised in the assertion that ‘we’re free Greece here!’

In both communities, social ‘worth’ is denoted by *timi*, the specific referents of which may be provisionally listed as social responsibility, female chastity, and commercial value. A proverb (‘*timi* has no *timi*/and joy to him who has it!’) plays on its double meaning as something supremely ‘valued’ and as the definitively ‘invaluable’. A ‘love of *timi*’, the *filotimo* so familiar from the ethnographic literature (Campbell 1964: 294–5; Dubisch 1974), is thought in both communities to be particularly well expressed through hospitality. *Filotimo* means not so much the financial ability to entertain lavishly as the clearly communicated desire to do so as best one can. Indeed, *noblesse oblige*: a wealthier man’s *filotimo* may actually be at greater risk than that of his economic inferiors. *Filotimo* is demonstrated through the adequate recognition of a social obligation. It is thus shown, for example, by a foreign visitor who later sends a postcard to thank for a villager’s hospitality. At every turn, *filotimo* is assessed in terms of a changeable context of expectations.

*Filotimo* is revealed, above all, in socially appropriate behaviour. In a settled village community, where overt aggression is often perceived as disruptive, the term is used in connexion with dignified self-restraint (cf. also Dubisch 1974). Where self-restraint is seen as tantamount to cowardice, however, *filotimo* is not the appropriate term. Just what constitutes appropriate behaviour is, of course, open to debate in each situation as it arises. ‘*Filotimithika* (I’ve done all that you can reasonably expect of me),’ remarked the son of a Pefko coffee-house proprietor when he made my order of coffee but chose not to bring it over to my table. Other villagers did not see his general behaviour in such flattering terms, and criticised his habitual indolence.

This aspect of fulfilling expectations is crucial to the definition of *filotimo*. In both Pefko and Glendi, it is particularly apparent in regard to the ‘word’ (*logos*) or verbal assurance which a man gives of his eventual intentions, especially where these concern a woman’s chastity (*timi*). Nowhere else is one’s *filotimo* so clearly offered for judgement, because it is here that one has the greatest control over the expectations which one creates about oneself. While a jilted woman is thought ‘adulterated’ through her betrothal, and consequently may never get another chance to marry, her ex-fiancé is regarded as lacking in *filotimo*. Usually the only strategy open to him for dealing with such opprobrium is to claim that the woman had herself turned out to be morally flawed.

Sometimes expectations originate less in a voluntary ‘word’ than in the role of co-villager. When a water-shortage became acute in Pefko, villagers were asked to exercise restraint in their use of irrigation-water. When two or three individuals nevertheless continued to take more than their fair share, the village mayor told the entire community (over the public-address system) to
'show filotimo [verb]' by subordinating selfish to collective interests. Filotimo was again enjoined upon all villagers when the State agricultural authorities failed to deliver sufficient sulphur-dust, urgently needed for treating the vines against a recurrent pest. Those who persisted in taking all they could get were condemned as 'anti-social' (grousouzis: see below). Filotimo here emerges as a 'brake' (freno) on aggressively competitive behaviour. But if competition and the 'word' are predominantly male modes in rural Greece, a woman may also be regarded as filotimi in so far as she lives up to her social and moral obligations. Conversely, dropi, which is conventionally glossed as 'shame', may be regarded as a positive virtue in men as well as in women under appropriate circumstances. As a sense of restraint, a 'brake', it can indeed be equivalent to filotimo, rather than its opposite as the honour-shame dichotomy implies.

Egoismos, the self-regard which the Sarakatsani (Campbell 1964: 281) and the Glendiots view as a manly virtue, is treated by law-abiding Pefkiots as a virtual antonym of filotimo. As an aggressive form of social disruptiveness, egoismos may differ from filotimo 'as the day from the night'. The Pefko villager who drew this analogy, and who also described both filotimo and dropi as a 'brake', was an in-marrying husband with a strong sense of his dependence upon the locally-born Pefkiots' sufferance. His viewpoint underlines a facet of rural Greek morality which seldom appears in the ethnographic accounts (but see du Boulay 1974: 75–6; Dubisch 1974), and which is doubtless attenuated in the more dramatically competitive communities.

Given the great variety of ecological conditions, economic patterns and forms of social organisation to be found in rural Greece, some degree of variation is only to be expected in the moral code also. Egoismos has obvious virtues when, as among the Sarakatsani, each household has only to defend its particular interests against all comers. When, however, there are recurrent practical reasons for communal responsibility and solidarity, the positive sense of egoismos becomes more questionable. The distaste felt for those who take more than their fair share of water or sulphur may then extend to others who indulge in more harmless forms of self-aggrandisement. A Pefkiot schoolteacher was criticised as an egoistis, for example, because his lofty affectations violated the egalitarian pretensions of the community. Only in the entirely hypothetical case of blood-vengeance for close kin might some Pefkiots assimilate egoismos with filotimo.

In Glendi, few reservations are entertained about the positive sense of egoismos. The Glendiots, some of whom are still transhumant pastoralists, sanction displays of aggressive male behaviour as well as the brazen flouting of official authority. Just as a man may be kala klefis, 'good at [animal-]rustling', so, more generally, may he be kala egoistis. The adverbial kala ('well') implies performative ability, rather than simply an innate capacity. Echoing urban prejudices, a few self-conscious Glendiots decry the Cretans' notorious, collective egoismos, but this conceit is evidently tailored to external consumption. Most Glendiots, most of the time, proudly describe egoismos as one of their definitive traits. They associate it, not only with the defence of household and village, but also with the assertiveness that goes with being a member of one of the larger agnatic lineages which still, uncharacteristically
for Greece as a whole, play a large part in the conduct of municipal elections and of feuds. Like the familial notion of self-interest (Loizos 1975: 66), *egoismos* is not egocentric in the sense suggested by its English cognate. Indeed, its effectiveness actually increases with the size of the solidary unit on which the actor can count: the expectations which he raises about himself are correspondingly safe from challenge.

*Privatives*

This public and relative aspect of moral evaluation is perhaps more strikingly evident in the negation of *timi* and *filotimo*. A Pefko field warden claimed that his absentee-landowner brother was lacking *filotimo* because the latter would not pay him in cash for tending his vines. Actually, although brothers do engage in commercial relations in the extremely fragmented social nexus of Pefko, ‘lack of *filotimo*’ is not something which a man who himself possessed *filotimo* would attribute to his immediate kin before outsiders. It was thus consistent for the field warden to be regarded as a notorious *grousouzis*—a co-villager who nevertheless lacked the ordinary decency meant by *filotimo*. Here lies the rub: *atimia*, the definitive and total absence of *filotimo*, is something which may only be attributed to outsiders—criminals, Turks, political enemies, and in some contexts, non-kin within the community, but most certainly never one’s own brother! The warden, by thus inverting normative usage, was living up to his unenviable reputation as a grousouzis—one who is ‘without luck’ (Turkish *ugursiz*), hence a socially polluting agent of misfortune, a morally defective insider. An insider (defined according to context) cannot be *atimos*. On the other hand, both *atimia* and *grousouzia* are, in their respective contexts, antonyms of *filotimo*.

One characteristic form of grousouzia is the alleged possession of the evil eye. This is a mark of jealousy or overweening curiosity; since it is mostly one’s fellow-villagers who have the sustained opportunity for prying, the evil eye is rarely if ever attributed to outsiders. An envious man negates fortune, and this affects those around him (cf. also Campbell 1964: 339–40). Evil eye accusations thus attach to those whom one ‘knows’, people who are in some clear sense fellow-insiders, but whose behaviour suggests ‘outsider-like’ tendencies. The field warden, for example, was a locally-born Pefkiot, but his position gave him a discomfiting licence to interfere in the affairs of his fellow-villagers, while his inquisitive mien and (by local standards) excessive friendliness to visiting tourists violated conventional boundaries.

More generally, grousouzia is a moral taint within the community. A Glendiot regards stealing a co-villager’s sheep as grousouzia (or *goursouza*); yet he will condone, perhaps participate in, a raid on flocks from another village. The East Cretan lowlander, by contrast, may use this label of distaste for all forms of animal-stealing. Not only is he nowadays only the victim and never the beneficiary of such raids, but he views them as an internally destructive force; ‘the community’ is here the whole island of Crete, rather than just the speaker’s village.
While the grousouzis is deficient, he is at least known to be so. By contrast, the atimos, as an outsider, is inherently unpredictable. The Turk is described as atimos, because he lies in wait 'like a wolf' to pounce on the unsuspecting Greek. There are other uses of the term in which unfulfilled expectations seem to be the key component, rather than the absence of 'honour'. Hence, for example, the atimo die or card which lets one down in a game; the atimo weed of tobacco, which is capable of doing one inestimable harm; the atimo garlic crop, which rewards hard work with an uncertain yield; atimo vetch, which sometimes spoils before it can be harvested; and atimo frozen chicken, which has an insipid taste because it has been force-fed with hormones. The logic which unites these highly varied usages is that what comes from outside the range of one's immediate social control is by definition unpredictable, perhaps harmful; it therefore lacks that certainty of repute which is essential to timi.

Filotimo, the presence of timi, thus has two distinct antonyms, and the resultant discriminations can be expressed formally:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{ATIMIA} &= \text{unpredictable danger of outsider} \\
\text{FILOTIMO/TIMI} \\
\text{GROUSOUZIA} &= \text{predictable taint of insider}
\end{align*}
\]

The 'honour-dishonour' gloss does indeed 'gloss over' these essential properties of social demarcation.

Conscience or custom?

Filotimo is often equated with sinidhisi, 'conscience' according to the formal lexicon, in both Peiko and Glendi. The grounds for this are that 'you feel for' (sinesthanese) those to whom your behaviour shows filotimo. More often, however, the /dh/ of sinidhisi is devocalised, giving a term (sinithisi) which suggests 'custom' rather than 'conscience'. Such a semantic shift is fully consistent with rural Greeks' habitual reluctance to judge a person's inner state (du Boulay 1974: 84), filotimo itself being largely concerned with the protective concealment of everything internalised in a person or society (cf. Lee 1959 [1953]).

In Glendi, sinithisi is cited as a reason for not reporting sheep-stealing incidents to the State authorities; for repaying the generosity which others show one in the coffee-houses; and for voting in municipal elections for one's lineage or sub-lineage representative according to segmentary principles of choice. Theoretically, ballot-boxes are secret, so that this last use of the term would seem to refer to conscience qua inner state. In fact, however, one's personal voting habits are usually well-known in the home community, although intentional deceit (tapa) is retrospectively invoked to explain failure at the polls.

More generally, moreover, a man whose public actions violate village canons is said to lack sinithisi, or even sinithio (the usual word for 'custom').
Since filotimo is often explicitly equated with sinithisi, both terms clearly refer to public evaluation. ‘Having a weight (varos) on one’s soul’, the closest analogue of ‘bad conscience’ in both Pefko and Glendi, is not directly associated with sinithisi by informants.

In Glendi, sinithisi is rarely far from egoismos: by showing hospitality to a guest one brings credit on one’s entire household, while a vote for one’s lineage-mate is a similarly sanctioned index of reliability. In Pefko, by contrast, sinithisi is clearly antithetical to egoismos, since it demands a measure of cooperation among households. In contrast both to this participatory ideal and to its deliberate violation, grousouzia signifies abstention through some innate condition; this may be incapacitating sickness (as when a deaf and blind old man is called a grousouzis in commiserating tones), or it may be miserliness, or the possession of malign properties such as the evil eye. One is thought to cast the evil eye ‘without intent’ (athon tou); it cannot be admitted that insiders would intentionally harm their fellows. Yet the effects of grousouzia are no less disruptive for all that. One Pefkiot who was accredited with an outstandingly dangerous eye was so stingy that he would not even provide his labourers with clean food; his behaviour was thus both socially and physically unclean. The eventual result was that he could not find labourers in Pefko itself any more, and so had to recruit them elsewhere, thereby transgressing the introverted Pefkiot social code. He was thus an internal deviant, rather than an external threat; he was a villager without filotimo or sinithisi.

This man was relatively wealthy by the pre-war Pefkiot standards by which he was judged. The higher one is raised, the harder one may fall; such is the ambiguous relationship between material and spiritual worth encapsulated in the word timi. Once a grousouzis, always a grousouzis; or, as the villagers say, ‘it’s better to lose your eye (lit.: that your eye come out) than your [good] name.’

The evidence for this damning condition, moreover, may be perceived in more than behaviour alone. ‘Grousouzia from God’, for example, is the Pefkiots’ label and explanation for childlessness, a punishment for sins assumed to have occurred in the past. Pefkiots also say that ‘many children are wealth’, despite the fact that a large progeny reduces the property available for each child. In the Pefkiot context, therefore, it makes poor logic to argue for a literal interpretation of the proverb, although the earning-power of male children has seemed a persuasive factor in other contexts (cf. J. Schneider 1917: 18). The proverb seems, rather, to state a moral equivalence, since both wealth and children potentially raise one’s timi. Conversely, a wealthy miser and poorly-raised progeny both immediately invite the charge of grousouzia. Economic factors are thus relevant to timi in terms of the expectations which they generate. It is only in a person’s repetitive, predictable and normatively acceptable behaviour that peers can discern filotimo and sinithisi, and can thereby attribute high timi to the individual and his family alike.

Conclusions and implications

The evidence presented in this article demonstrates that the precise
interpretation of moral-value terms requires a clear perception of their linguistic and social context in each community. If there is indeed a 'false coherence' (Davis 1969: 69, following Gellner 1962) in the study of Mediterranean values, it lies not in the indigenous terminologies nor in the conceptual schemata which these represent but in their summary conflation as 'honour' and 'shame'.

The Greek taxonomy of values outlined here expresses the matching of performance with expectations. Italian peasants, too, apparently employ a usage which departs significantly from the chivalrous and psychological implications of the English word 'honour': 'To maintain his honour intact a Pisticcese has to conform to the expectations his neighbours have about his domestic behaviour' (Davis 1969: 80). The Pisticcesi thus share the Greeks' concern with relative and changing expectations. Reputation is clearly the common theme. It is true that Pitt-Rivers's ideas on honour 'are found useful by people who have not worked in the so-called Mediterranean culture area' (Davis 1969: 69); the one non-Mediterraneanist (Wilson 1969) cited in this connexion, however, used Pitt-Rivers's scrupulously detailed ethnographic evidence to connect culturally localised 'honours' with the theoretically less ambiguous concept of reputation.

The present analysis has thus become more general. At the same time, however, freed from the presuppositions which the glosses of 'honour' and 'shame' demand, we can more fully appreciate the significance of intra-cultural and intra-linguistic variation. The reading suggested here for filotimo, as the quality of conformity to socially positive expectations, lends itself to a comparison of behavioural norms within a common terminological tradition. To the concepts of filotimo, sinithisi and egoismos can be added the demonstrative eccentricity known as khoui, which is treated with disdain by the Sarakatsani (Campbell 1964: 45) and by settled villagers who use the term (du Boulay 1974: 80), but which Glendiots view as a possibly extreme form of egoismos and therefore as something to be highly valued. The various concepts are arranged here in terms of their locally perceived equivalences:

GLENDI  
khoui = egoismos = filotimo = sinithisi

SARAKATSANI  
khoui ≠ egoismos = (filotimo) (?)

PEFKO  
(khouti) ≠ egoismos ≠ filotimo = sinithisi

The three communities represent points on a continuum. The relationship between them is further strengthened by the fact that the Glendiots and Sarakatsani share a predominantly pastoral mode of subsistence, whereas the Sarakatsani and the Pefkiots place greater emphasis on the cognatic kindred (as opposed to the agnatic lineage) in the domain of kinship modes.

Thus, a Glendiot of powerful lineage need not fear the consequences of eccentric self-aggrandisement (khouti). In the Sarakatsan social universe, with its greater fragmentation, such flamboyance is more dangerous and therefore discouraged. The Pefkiots adhere to an extreme avoidance of conflict, preferring covert malice to open aggression under any circumstances.
Interestingly, this schema resonates with J. Schneider’s (1971: 11, 22) proposed continuum between pastoral communities with large, politically independent groups at one end, and fragmented, sedentary agricultural societies at the other. The present analysis, however, has been kept within a single language-tradition, through a strategy of matching local patterns to a base term (filotimo) denoting socially appropriate behaviour. There does seem to be a systematic connexion between moral, ecological and kinship variables, and it is easier to demonstrate this within the specific limits of a single language-area in the first instance. More such localised analyses are needed, and there seems to be no good reason to confine these to the Mediterranean lands.16

Massive generalisations of ‘honour’ and ‘shame’ have become counterproductive; their continued use elevates what began as a genuine convenience for the readers of ethnographic essays to the level of a theoretical proposition. When indigenous terminologies are taken from a single language, as in the data discussed above, we may be reasonably sure that they are in some sense comparable. When they are taken from different language-traditions, however, that comparability has to be demonstrated before it can be used as an analytic base. The summation of our understanding in the form of ‘translated’ terms offers no such assurance. It is rather in ethnographic particularism that we should seek, without any sense of paradox, those theoretical insights which the reductionist generalisation of glossing can never yield.

NOTES

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1 Clarke’s (1968: 28–9) strictures on the careless use of notions of typicality in archaeology are also extremely germane to social anthropology.

2 For a more recent and significantly modified statement, however, see J. & P. Schneider 1976: 86–102.

3 On category variation within a single language-tradition, see especially: Faris 1968; Stoddart 1974. Just (1978: 84) interprets the difficulty experienced by Mediterraneanists in seeking a sense of cultural distance as one of what Ardener (1971: xvii) has called ‘critical lack of fit’. That cultural differences may be smaller, or disguised linguistically, does not necessarily make them more trivial.

4 Cf. Pitt-Rivers’ (1977: 13) insight that ‘the early anthropologists might well have translated the word mana as honour’.


6 Nor does egiosis denote an innate selfishness; Greek moral terminology, as will emerge later in this account, is little concerned with inner states. Cf. the use of khrissianos (‘Christian’), which means, not a ‘believer’, but a socially acceptable human being, one who observes the appropriate social and ritual norms (cf. Kenna 1976: 33). Italian usage is very similar (Boissevain 1966: 19; Davis 1973: 93).

7 Dhiafores, ‘differences’ (of status, but also of opinion), are hidden from kseni (outsiders to any reference-group).

8 This version of the proverb was recorded in Pefko. Du Boulay (1974: 106–7) describes the application of a similar proverb to the ideal that female children, though effectively inferior, should ideally be loved as much as their brothers.

9 Among Guyanan Indian plantation workers, for example, ‘a claim to superior prestige made by a person who belongs in all respects to the group frustrates the expectations of his fellows’ (Jayawardena 1963: 71).
This does not invalidate Loizos's (1975: 85) observation that in fact villagers compete to become as unequal as possible. It does mean, however, that any villager, no matter what his real economic resources, must try to live up to the expectations which his peers already have of him.

Pefko is a depopulated, prescriptively (i.e. normatively) endogamous, agricultural community of some 160 inhabitants in the coastal lowlands of western Rhodes. Since houses form a part of the bridal endowment, there is a tendency to matrifocal clustering. Glendi is situated in the foothills of Mt Ida, in western Crete; it has a fluctuating population of approximately one thousand, including a now dwindling proportion of transhumant shepherds. Village and large-lineage endogamy is preferred, but not mandatory, although there have been many exceptions in the last decade. At marriage, a house is provided by the groom's father. Fieldwork was conducted in Pefko between December 1973 and July 1974, and in Glendi between December 1974 and May 1975, in July 1976, and between August 1977 and May 1978. 'Pefko' and 'Glendi' are pseudonyms.

Cf Pitt-Rivers's (1977: 19) comment on los sin vergüenza.

Danforth (personal communication) has pointed out, however, that a man may describe a friend affectionately as ton atimo.

Dhiki mas (‘insiders’ of ‘our’ reference-group) are distinguished from kseni by being those whom—in an entirely relative sense—we ‘know’.

Significantly, the form sinithisi does not appear in any standard dictionary of Modern Greek. Cf. sinithia, ‘custom, habit’ (Glendiot sinithio), Classical Greek syn+ethos); sinithizo, ‘become accustomed (to)’; sinithisi, ‘conscience’, = New Testament synideis, < syn+oida (‘know’) (Latin conscientia, < con+scio).

The terms sinithisi and grousouzia may have escaped ethnographers’ attention so far because of their seemingly close approximation to, respectively, sinidhisi and matiasma (‘evil eye’); or they may not be in equally common use throughout Greece.

In the Caribbean context, for example, Wilson's (1969: 79) discussion of the relativity of reputation and the absolute character of State-sanctioned respectability suggests immediate parallels with Mediterranean materials.

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