

‘What use is the turtle?’:  
cultural perceptions of land, work, animals  
and ‘ecologists’ in a Greek farming community.

THESIS SUBMITTED IN FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS  
FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Dimitrios Theodossopoulos

LONDON SCHOOL OF ECONOMICS AND POLITICAL SCIENCE,  
& UNIVERSITY COLLEGE LONDON



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## **Abstract.**

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This thesis examines the cultural features of landholding and cultivation, as well as perceptions of domestic and wild animals in a community on the island of Zakynthos in southwest Greece. Vassilikos, the community in question, is renowned for its persistent resistance to ecological conservation, as manifested in a ten year long dispute over the local people's right to control parts of their land designated to become a conservation area for the reproduction of Loggerhead sea-turtles.

The legislative regulations of turtle conservation allow for the establishment of a marine national park in the area which restrains some inhabitants of Vassilikos from building on their land and engaging in tourism-related enterprises. The particular conservation dispute serves as the common uniting theme of several topics explored in this thesis, all related to the relationship of Vassilikos' people with their physical environment and the animals living in it. In fact, the entire thesis is an attempt to illuminate the cultural matrix behind the local farmers' resistance to ecological conservation. For this reason, the thesis provides a thorough ethnographic analysis of the following six themes: the significance of land ownership for the local farmers, their working relationship with their environment, the relationship between the farmers and their domesticated animals, local attitudes to wild animals, the position and classification of non-human living creatures in Greek Orthodox cosmology, and the passionate involvement of the local farmers with hunting. The thesis concludes by combining the conclusions of these themes to attempt to unravel the pragmatic relationship between the farmers of Vassilikos, their animals and the natural world.

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**Chapter 1:**  
**The village and the ‘ecologists’.**

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**a. Introduction.**

This thesis examines the cultural features of landholding and cultivation, as well as perceptions of domestic and wild animals in a farming community on the island of Zakynthos in southwest Greece. The thesis provides a thorough ethnographic analysis of the following six themes: the significance of land ownership for the local people, their working relationship with their environment, the relation between farmers and domestic animals, local attitudes to wild animals, the position and classification of non-human living beings in the religious cosmology, and the passionate involvement of the local people with hunting. The thesis concludes by combining some of the conclusions on those themes, in a final attempt to unravel the pragmatic, practical relationship the farmers of Zakynthos have with animals and the natural world.

Vassilikos, the community I studied in Zakynthos, provided me with an ideal context for approaching the relationship between people, their animals and cultivation. The inhabitants of Vassilikos, to whom I will refer as Vassilikiots, are involved in a dispute over environmental conservation, protesting against the campaigns of environmentalists who wish to establish a national park on the island. Vassilikiots juxtapose to the environmentalists’ practices and ideals their own traditional relationship with the land, cultivation, wild and domestic animals. They stress their own ‘household-focused’ priorities in their relationship to their immediate environment, which is understood by them as the field of daily work, toil and constant, hard labour.

During its early stages, my research was concerned with

environmental politics: my first pilot fieldwork and the research proposal subsequently leading to this thesis were focused on the interaction of Vassilikiots with the environmentalists and the particulars of the local dispute over conservation. On the island, groups of environmentalists campaign for the protection of rare species of animals, such as the loggerhead sea-turtle and the Mediterranean monk-seal, and the establishment of a marine national park incorporating areas of the local coastal environment. Four communities on Zakynthos, and particularly the community of Vassilikos, are affected by conservation measures which imply that a number of the inhabitants will be restricted in building for and developing tourism on their own land. Those individuals affected by conservation measures, and the majority of the local population, were repelled by the presence and actions of the environmentalists, and vigorously protested against the establishment of a national park and the conservation legislation.

Approaching the conservation dispute from the anthropologist's point of view, I attempted to account for the environmental conflict in terms of the local culture. My impetus was founded on the axiom that an understanding of the indigenous culture was a necessary step towards an understanding of the conflict. Despite this, however, my initial account was based on a material explanation, the one espoused by almost everybody in the particular ethnographic context: "The interests of the local people are affected by the conservation measures", "the local people are angry because conservation stops them developing tourism and make a significant profit out of it..." The local rhetoric, which depicts the anger of the local people against the environmentalists, was interpreted by me as a smoke-screen hiding the material self-interest of the conservation-afflicted Zakynthians. I was criticized, consequently, for my materialist interpretation, according to which, "culture" was translated "as an environment or means at the disposition of the 'manipulating individual'" (Sahlins 1976: 102).

Conscious of my reductionist initial approach, I arrived for my

major fieldwork in Vassilikos in the summer of 1992, and I remained until December 1993. For several months I was trying to record fragments of 'cultural reason' - to use again a term of Sahlins (1976) - instances where the conservation dispute could be explained in terms other than the mere economic utility of the disputed land. My informants, however, were reluctant to give me the relevant information. For them material explanations emphasizing the value of their property were the most appropriate way of articulating the conservation dispute. Although my collection of data on environmental politics was progressing in the first months of my fieldwork, I knew that I would be dissatisfied with a thesis on those politics. My persistence was only rewarded when I started participating in the farming tasks, working along with the local farmers, as much as my physical condition permitted. Gradually, through daily participation, working in cultivation and on local farms, I became initiated into the 'farming way' of relating to the natural world, my informants' own unique form of understanding their natural environment. Being unaccustomed to manual labour in the countryside, I left my fieldwork site in poor health, but satisfied at having successfully participated in the working culture of my informants.

A consequence of the difficulties I encountered in my fieldwork was a tactful shift away from my original focus of investigation. Instead of concentrating the core of my writing on environmental politics, I have devoted most of this thesis to exploring the data which I found more difficult to acquire: the culture of the Vassilikiots' with respect to their land, cultivation, and both wild and domesticated animals. This is why the contribution of the thesis to anthropological enquiry is primarily an ethnographic one. Vassilikiots, although frequently discussing politics, rarely refer to their relationship with animals and the particulars of their labour in cultivation. Similarly, landlessness and feudal dependence upon landlords are topics which my informants themselves rarely discuss and scholars writing about Zakynthos - most of whom are interested in



tensions arising between the bourgeois and the aristocrats - carefully bypass. In these respects the ethnography presented in this thesis includes original and in some cases, hard-to-obtain information.

The thesis as a whole adds to the anthropological study of rural Greece, as founded by the monographs of Campbell (1964), Friedl (1964), du Boulay (1974) and Loizos (1975). It further relates to more recent anthropological approaches to modern Greece, some times directly (Papataxiarchis 1988,1991,1995, Loizos and Papataxiarchis 1991) and at other times indirectly (Stewart 1991, Gefou-Madianou 1992). The analysis of particular themes examined in different chapters of the thesis relates to anthropological considerations focused on Greece and the Mediterranean; my chapters on land, work and hunting being examples of this kind. Other themes examined in the thesis relate to the general anthropological enquiry on subjects such as attitudes to animals and animal classification. The working relationship Vassilikiots have with their land and cultivation and their practical, 'household-focused' orientation towards the natural environment, constitutes a particular expression of anthropocentric pragmatism, permeating the local attitudes towards animals and the cosmological classification of all living beings.

Non-anthropologists, finally, like conservationists or other specialists who work on environmental projects, could find my reference to turtle conservation in Zakynthos directly instructive. The thesis, apart from being a coherent ethnography of Greek farmers and their culture with respect to animals and the environment, is the first step to understanding the resistance of a particular farming community to ecological conservation. The general theme of the conservation dispute however, will remain the common factor, if sometimes hidden, unifying the chapters that follow. In fact, it was in terms of the environmental dispute that the whole project was accomplished. It constitutes a five-year long effort to comprehend the cultural perspective behind some farmers' resistance to ecological conservation.

In the following two sections of this chapter, I will present some introductory information on the community and the background to the conservation dispute. The first section will be devoted to a concise account of the island's and the village's history, with emphasis on those past social conditions that are more intimately related to the present. This will conclude with reference to the recent introduction of tourism over the last fifteen years. The second of the remaining sections of this chapter provides a brief sketch of the Vassilikiots' resistance to environmental conservation, and the environmental groups involved. The incidents described occurred over a period of approximately ten years, preceding my fieldwork. Having established a link between Vassilikos' past and the present, I will proceed to the main body of the thesis, comprising six chapters each exploring a separate theme.

Chapter Two examines the relationship of Vassilikiots to their land. The long and painful efforts of individual Vassilikiot families to acquire 'land of their own' are described, along with the recent social history of the village. The inhabitants of Vassilikos were once, thirty or forty years ago, landless labourers working on the estates of landlords, and 'land ownership' was their most consistent aspiration. In the same chapter, I illustrate how the introduction of tourism brought additional significance to land ownership, and how the tourism economy and traditional farming activities relate to different forms of land valorisation, alternatives being represented by two distinct discourses. In Vassilikos, both discourses are reconciled and expressed simultaneously as a united and inseparable whole in the local actors effort to retain control over the property affected by conservation legislation. Chapter Two concludes with a review of the perceptions of the value of land in the literature of Mediterranean and Greek anthropology. The ethnographic evidence suggests that differing manifestations of the symbolic and material valorisation of land are often expressed within particular ethnographic contexts, while separating them is likely to distort the validity of ethnographic presentation.

Chapter Three is an ethnographic account of agricultural work. It describes the engagement of Vassilikiots in cultivation and their particular agricultural tasks, and elucidates the importance of 'household self-sufficiency', the household being the elementary economic 'work' unit of the village. The relationship of agricultural work and tourism enterprises is further examined, with ethnographic evidence to illustrate that tourism is more complementary than antagonistic to the farming way of life. Special attention is paid to olive cultivation and harvesting, which comprises the most representative agricultural undertaking in Vassilikos. The remnants of a feudal system of regulating olive cultivation are closely examined, along with the willingness of some present day Vassilikiots to accept cultivation arrangements according to those unfavourable regulations. The gender division of labour during the olive harvest is subsequently described and the importance of female participation in it, a form of investment in the household's well being, illustrated with ethnographic examples. The chapter concludes by highlighting the farmers' perception of work in the fields as a 'struggle', a 'contesting' agonistic attitude to agricultural work which informs aspects of the Vassilikiots' relationship with their immediate physical environment.

Chapter Four is a detailed ethnography of the Vassilikiots' relationship with 'their' animals. Vassilikiots, like most other rural Greeks, maintain that they 'like animals, because animals are useful', but 'usefulness' in this context, as du Boulay (1974: 86) has accurately noticed, is not "sheer utility" but a necessary qualification for membership in the rural household; even human members are expected to be 'useful'. The animals receive 'care' (*φροντίδα*) from the farmers and the farmers expect, in turn, their animals to respect the 'order' (*τάξη*) of the farm. 'Order' in the farm environment is defined and maintained by the farmers and relates directly to the organization of the household as an autonomous self-sufficient unit. The meaning of 'punishment' and 'usefulness', as well as the 'farmer-animal' relationship as a whole, are better understood when placed in the context of 'care' and 'order', to which all domestic animals

are introduced. Apart from examining those areas, which will touch upon the subsequent arguments of the thesis, chapter four describes small-scale animal husbandry on the farm, the specifics of shepherding large flocks of animals, and the farmers' control of their animals' reproductive biology.

Chapter Five, examines the relationship of Vassilikiots with wild animals in contexts other than hunting. It presents examples of the rare instances where Vassilikiots discuss wild animals, and portrays the 'sorrow' of Vassilikiot farmers in instances where wild animals prey upon domestic ones. Vassilikiots think of non-domesticated animals in terms of their own established presence in the local environment, and their position as guardians of the welfare and order on their farms. They are concerned with the potential 'harm' (ζημιώ) or 'use' (χρησιμότητα) wild animals can 'cause' to their own households. Vassilikiots' perceived authority over animals of all kinds is axiomatic and can be accurately described as anthropocentric. Thus the chapter devotes some considerable attention to an overview of the writings of some anthropologists and social historians on issues related to human attitudes towards animals and anthropocentrism.

Vassilikiots' perceived authority over non-human living beings is underpinned by an elaborate religious cosmology which emphasizes the human God-given 'dominion' over the natural world. Chapter Six provides an insight into religious beliefs concerning animals and plants as reflected in the *Hexaemeron*, the work of St. Basil the Great, one of the most influential holy fathers and theologians of the Greek Orthodox patristic tradition. The *Hexaemeron*, a series of homilies on the creation of the world, is presented as a coherent religious discourse, subjected - like ethnographic data - to the readers critical approach. This is followed by an extensive analysis focusing on animal classification, as this is reflected in the work of St. Basil and paralleled by my informants' perceptions.

Chapter Seven, the last chapter of the thesis' main body, examines hunting, a celebrated 'passion' of the people of Vassilikos. The first

section presents ethnographic information on the Vassilikiots' preoccupation with hunting in both the past and the present. It shows how the local hunters boast of their guns, their hunting posts and their skill in shooting. The opposition of the local hunters to hunting restrictions and the 'ecological' discourse is subsequently discussed as further evidence of the Vassilikiots' resistance to the 'ecologists' and conservation. The relationship of hunting to the farming way of life is illustrated with emphasis upon the complementarity of hunting and the ideal of household self-sufficiency. The chapter concludes focusing on male bonding and male identity as these are realized in hunting performances and narratives. Hunting is approached as an all-male context, as with Papataxiarchis' (1988,1991) description of the Greek coffee-house, but one more positively attuned to the domestic concerns of the rural household.

Chapter Eight, is a short conclusion to the thesis. It utilizes the conclusions of the themes examined, in chapters two to seven, in order to provide a cultural account of Vassilikiots' resistance to ecological conservation. Vassilikiots' interaction with their immediate environment is informed by a cultural tradition which emphasizes practical considerations centred around the needs of the rural household. For them, resisting the conservation regulations is the most sound expression of their concern for the well-being of their households. The agonistic approach of Vassilikiots to conservation is part of a well-documented continuing 'struggle' to safeguard the interests of their households against threatening external forces, a contest enacted on the fields of action and everyday work.

I will end this introduction with a methodological remark. My reference to actual names in the course of my ethnography is often discreetly avoided. In other instances pseudonyms are applied, for example the name 'Dionysis', which is the most commonplace and representative male Zakynthian name. Frequently, however, I name my informants with their actual first names. These are the cases where I know that my informants would like their names to be explicit. Several

Vassilikiots expressed their desire 'to be in' my book. I believe that I fulfilled their wish by letting them speak in their own words as much as possible. Finally, for methodological accuracy, I state that I am a native Greek, coming from an urban background differing in many respects from the Vassilikiot way of life. As a Greek, however, I was obliged to comply to the local codes of respect and conduct, being subjected to village gossip as much as any other inhabitant of the village.



### **b. Vassilikos: past and present.**

The peninsula of Vassilikos lies on the southeast corner of Zakynthos. When the horizon is clear, both the Peloponnesse and the neighbouring island of Cephalonia can be seen.<sup>1</sup> Mount Skopos is the backbone of Vassilikos' peninsula. From its summit down towards the plains of Vassilikos, the habitable strip of land between the sea and the mountain becomes narrower and more fertile. This is Vassilikos proper, but the mountainous region of Skopos and the area called Xirokastelo adjacent to it are part of the 'community of Vassilikos' (*κοινότητα του Βασιλικού*), and the people living in the area identify themselves as people of the same community.



The land of Vassilikos has been inhabited since antiquity.

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<sup>1</sup> Zakynthos lies seventeen nautical miles west of the Peloponnesse and fourteen south of Cephalonia. Its overall size covers 406 square kilometres and its population is approximately 400.000 inhabitants (Toumbis 1991).



Archaeologists have identified the remnants of Neolithic and Mycenaean settlements and artifacts from later periods (Sordinas 1993, Kourtesi-Philipaki 1993, Kalligas 1993). According to Herodotus and Thucydides the first settlers of the island arrived from the Peloponnesse.<sup>2</sup> Homer maintains that Zakynthians, as subjects of the state of Ithaca, participated in Odysseus' campaign against Troy and flirted with Penelope as potential suitors. Mythology portrays Artemis, the goddess of hunting and the wild, enjoying wandering in the woods of Zakynthos, and there is evidence that she was honoured and venerated by ancient Zakynthians, much as modern Zakynthians nourish a great 'love and passion' for hunting.

During historical times, Zakynthians as citizens of an independent city state were involved in the Peloponnesian wars in the 5th BC, helping Kerkyra (Corfu) and Athens in their campaigns against Corinth and Sicily respectively (Toubis 1991, Sidirokastriti 1993, Kalligas 1993). Later the island was ruled by Macedonians and Romans, and during the late Roman period it was subjected to endless incursions by 'barbarian' hordes and pirates: Visigoths, Huns, Vandals, Saracens and Normans based in South Italy (the de Hautevilles) destroyed whatever was left to be destroyed on plundering expeditions to the western borders of the Byzantine empire. During the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries the island was controlled by two Frankish families, the Orsini (1185-1375) and the de Tocci (1375-1479), subjects to the Kings of Naples. Their inefficient rule was followed by a violent Turkish plunder of the island (1479) which devastated the remaining population and its material resources (Konomos 1981).

Soon after the Turkish raid, the Venetians, who observed the dramatic events of 1479, negotiated with the Turks for the proprietorship of the island. For the Venetians, control of Zakynthos was an objective they had planned carefully long before 1485, the year their official rule commenced. But the Venetians found the island in a state of complete

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<sup>2</sup> The former claims they were Arkadians and the latter Achaeans.

desolation. Most of the lands were deserted and the cultivated fields covered with wild vegetation due to neglect. The Venetians immediately issued proclamations to all neighbouring Venetian provinces in mainland Greece welcoming new settlers on the island. Thus, the island was repopulated and a long period of relative prosperity began under the moderate rule of the 'Venetian Democracy'.

In the collective memory of present day Vassilikiots, the years of depopulation which followed the Turkish plunder are depicted as the time when 'the land was deserted'. Present day Vassilikiots narrate:

"The island was deserted (έρημο). Two families came from Peloponnesse, two families with sheep... They came to Zakynthos to escape Turkish rule.

Then the Venetians made an announcement (βγάλαν φερμάνι) and noblemen (άρχοντες) came to settle on the island.

Here in Vassilikos there was only a monastery, the monastery of Akrotiriotissas. The monastery was taking payments from Venice to save shipwrecked people (τους πνιγμένους)."

"Vassilikos was deserted. No one wanted to live here, because of the Saracens (Σαρακινοί). Then one came,.. another one followed... This is why we have different names. It is not like Cephalonia, where everybody's name ends with '-atos'.

You see, at this time it was not forbidden to cut trees (λόγκους) and bushes (θάμνους). If you could find deserted land you could settle on it..."

The historical consciousness of the people of Vassilikos stretches back to the 'time of the Venetians'. Vassilikiots point to the large olive trees (ντόπιες) on their land and say: "those trees are there since the old times, the time of the Venetians! They are planted in rows equi-distant from each other. Venetians used to do that". Referring to a placename, 'Tis Martas t' aulaki' [the trench of Malta]<sup>3</sup>, Vassilikiots explain:

"There used to be a long trench here. In the old times the Venetians were trying to make a passage (πέρασμα) to avoid the cape of Gerakas. They wanted to pass their ships

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<sup>3</sup> See also, Maria Sidirokastriti (1993).

through it. They were digging and digging, but they never managed it (δεν τα κατάφεραν)."

As a consequence of the long Venetian occupation many words of Italian origin can be identified in the Zakynthian dialect. My older informants frequently use some of them:

"We've got those words from the Venetians, in the old times. You see, unlike the rest of Greece, we had no Turks living here.

When the Italians came to the village in the [second world] war, we understood several of their words. With those words and gestures we managed to communicate with them..."

The Venetians ruled Zakynthos for three hundred years (1485-1797). During that period, the capital of the island expanded out of its fortified medieval settlement, the population increased, architecture and commerce flourished. Wealth and prosperity, however, were the privilege of an elite: The *nobili*, a tough feudal aristocracy, emerged as the dominant class of Zakynthian society and its members were recorded in the *Libro d'Oro*, the Golden Book. In Zakynthos, unlike other Venetian territories such as Cephalonia, membership of the *Libro d'Oro* was strictly limited to approximately 374 members (Zois 1963). This, as a consequence, excluded the growing urban middle class from the benefits of various political and economic privileges, and culminated in social unrest. The most wealthy merchants and artisans of the capital encouraged the poor of the islands' capital - those who were scornfully referred to as the *popolari* (common people) by the aristocracy - to rise in rebellion. This became known as the 'rebellion of the Popolari' (1628-32).<sup>4</sup> The rebellion ended with a victory for the aristocrats, who further secured their privileged status, and whose power remained unchallenged for the next three hundred years.

During the rebellion, the poorest strata of Zakynthian society, the *sembroi* (peasant serfs), fought bravely on the side of their feudal masters,

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<sup>4</sup> Maria Sidirokastriti (1993) and several other Zakynthian scholars claim that the 'Rebellion of the Popolari' was the first social revolution in European History.

the same aristocrats who systematically exploited them. The *sembroi* were peasant labourers working on the Zakynthian feudal estates. They were often recruited as soldiers to accompany their masters on Venetian military campaigns. It is said in Vassilikos that the Zakynthian landlords 'had rights of life and death' over their *sembroi*:

"The master was the one to grant permission for a *sembros*' marriage. The master was the one to sleep first with a *sembros*' wife on the first night of the marriage. The master was the one to decide about everything."

Mylonas (1982) describes that when the feudal right of 'taking the maidenhead' (παρθενοφθορία) was abolished (he does not exactly say when), the *sembroi* men, on the second day of their marriage, used to hang their trousers from a tree and shoot at them. "That was the proof that the first night of marriage was theirs...", the same author maintains and concludes, "this custom was practised in Zakynthos until our days" (Mylonas 1982: 86-7).

For the three hundred years following the 'Rebellion of the Popolari' the feudal aristocracy remained in power, and the peasant serfs continued to obediently serve their feudal lords. But the inhabitants on the mountainous west side of the island managed to escape feudal exploitation, as their land was not fertile enough to attract the interest of the aristocracy. Those mountain people, proud of their independent spirit, still call the Zakynthian villagers of the plains and the people of Vassilikos 'faithful-to-the-master serfs' (αφεντόπιστοι σέμπροι). The *popolari* of bourgeois origin, like the mountain villagers, retained their desire for self-determination and in the eighteenth century identified with the ideals of the French Revolution. When the French army arrived on Zakynthos, ending Venetian rule in 1797, the *popolari* celebrated with enthusiasm what they believed to be the end of an oppressive regime, and publicly burned the *Libro d'Oro*. Their celebrations however, were in vain, as the French did not remain in power for long. After a brief period of Russian sovereignty (1799-1807), the island became a British protectorate and the power of the aristocrats was restored (Konomos

1983,1985).<sup>5</sup>

It was only after 1864, when Zakynthos was incorporated into the new Greek state, that the power of the aristocracy was drastically limited. By the turn of the 20th century, the Zakynthian middle class had gained a dominant position in local political and social life. The union with Greece enhanced the political and social position of the middle class but led, at the same time, the island into a period of cultural and economic decline. In the twentieth century commerce deteriorated and cultural activities gradually declined, while the once renowned capital of Zakynthos, which had developed over the centuries its own distinctive cultural and social identity, became a mere Greek provincial town.

Unlike the Zakynthian middle class, which ended successfully its centuries-long battle with the aristocracy, the peasant serfs living in the islands' countryside remained dependent on the landlords until as recently as the second world war, and in some isolated areas like Vassilikos, until even later. While novelists and local historians have devoted considerable attention to the struggle between the bourgeois and the aristocrats,<sup>6</sup> the *sembroi* of the countryside and the conditions they lived in, remained a topic of inquiry overlooked by Zakynthian scholars and writers. During my fieldwork I once visited an elderly Zakynthian woman, the wife of a prominent Zakynthian writer of aristocratic descent. When I tried to explain that I was studying the farmers of Vassilikos and their way of life, she looked at me with amazement and added: "What will you find worth writing about there..?"<sup>7</sup>

Until the 1960s, most inhabitants of Vassilikos were *sembroi*

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<sup>5</sup> During the years 1807-9, Zakynthos fell under the control of the imperial France of Napoleon.

<sup>6</sup> Xenopoulos 1945, 1959a, 1959b. Romas 1967, 1971, 1973, 1975, 1980. Konomos 1981, 1983, 1985, 1986. Zois 1963.

<sup>7</sup> To give some credit to this lady, I have to admit, that for any social scientist to be able to interview her would have been an astonishing and priceless undertaking. A generation of Zakynthians of her age are vanishing, along with valuable unrecorded life histories and memories, capable of illuminating varying aspects of Zakynthian life at the early part of this century.

working on the estates of landlords. One of the landlords was the descendant of an old aristocratic family with land rights to the area since the Venetian times. He owned most of the land in Vassilikos and I will be referring to him in this thesis as 'the big landlord'. The rest of the landlords were Zakynthians of bourgeois origin, living in the island's capital but owning landed property in Vassilikos. All those landlords were referred to by their *sembroi* as 'masters' (αφέντες); the big landlord being often called by his aristocratic title, the *Count* (ο κόντες). The *sembroi* were entrusted by their landlords with parcels of land to cultivate, and were entitled in return to a small portion - usually approximately one fourth (*quarto*) - of the agricultural produce. The particular form of the rules managing the economic relationship between landlords and peasant labourers (κοπιαστές) were called in Vassilikos *sembremata*. As I will describe in the following chapters, different modes of *sembremata* regulated different kinds of cultivations. *Sembremata* arrangements also applied to animal husbandry in those cases where the labourer was herding the animals of the landlord. Undertaking an agricultural project according to a particular pattern of *sembremata* is called in Zakynthos, *serbia*.

Nowadays, many Vassilikiots continue to undertake *serbia* arrangements, but a greater portion of the produce is now allocated to them. As I will describe in Chapter Two, most of the local people have 'land of their own' and their dependence on the landlords has decreased significantly. The descendants of the 'old time' landlords - some of them still owning considerable areas of land - are still treated with respect by the majority of the local people, but present day Vassilikiots make all important decisions concerning their lives and their economic ventures with total independence. Their freedom in choosing between a variety of possible occupations is enhanced by the recent rise of the tourism economy, and in most examples they engage in more than one economic activity.

Before the introduction of tourism in the late '70s and early '80s,

most Vassilikiots were 'poor farmers' confined by a declining agricultural economy. Tourism, however, was to become the panacea for Vassilikiots' economic problems. It gave new impetus to the existing economic enterprises and gave rise to several new ones. To illustrate this, more than thirty tavernas or restaurants operate in Vassilikos during the summer, while the permanent population of the village does not exceed six hundred residents. Car rentals, renting canoes and sun-umbrellas on the beach, mini-markets and, most importantly, 'rooms to rent' - almost every household has 'spare' rooms - complete the catalogue of typical tourist enterprises in the village.

What is more important, however, is that tourism did not make redundant the pre-existing agricultural economy. Although most Vassilikiots make more profit from tourism than from agriculture, they do not appear determined to sever their involvement in traditional farming activities. Vassilikiots perceive their relationship with their land and its cultivation as a source of security, an assurance against fluctuations in the tourist industry. While some Vassilikiots still wonder how to take full advantage of the benefits of tourism, others carefully invest their earnings from tourism in building houses or buying land; the latter being a 'more secure' investment, which can potentially provide the basis for both tourist development and further involvement in cultivation or animal husbandry. As I will illustrate in Chapter Three of this thesis, the relationship of tourism to agriculture is complementary rather than antagonistic. Tourism revitalized the village economy by providing a ready market for several farming products, new economic incentives for young Vassilikiots to remain in their native village, and an invitation for those who had migrated to urban centres to return.

To complete my introductory portrait of Vassilikos, I will briefly sketch the perceptions outsiders have of the land. Here is an extract from a popular tourist guide, reflecting the tourists' point of view:

"The main road continues at some distance from the sea. Here, as at other points on the island, the vegetation consist largely of cypresses growing in among other trees - a



combination which is one of the principal features of the Ionian Island landscape and is indeed one its chief beauties.

Although we have theoretically entered the village of Vassilikos, visitors expecting to see a concentrated settlement will be disappointed. As elsewhere in Zakynthos, Vassilikos is more of a concept than a place. The houses are spread over a considerable area, in among the greenery; the fields and orchards are watered by the abundant streams and there are many good beaches" (Toubis 1991: 92).

This quotation nicely depicts the dispersed character of Vassilikos' settlement. To be more accurate, the beaches are not 'good', but extremely beautiful. The 'abundant streams', however, have dried up over the years!

"Dream of getting-away and relief for the sad man, is the enchanted Vassilikos" describes a Zakynthian scholar (Konomos 1979) in a literary portrait of the land's natural beauty. His perception reflects the view of the town dwellers of the island's capital, those who traditionally regarded Vassilikos as the countryside, the place to visit on May Day for a pic nic close to nature. Similarly, other outsiders reflect on the other features of Vassilikos' physical environment. A non-local hunter, for example, will emphasize the presence of turtledoves to be hunted, and a conservationist, the reproductive cycle of the sea-turtles on the local beaches. An anthropologist, finally, will reflect on the wet climate in the winter and the exhaustion of working with 'your informants' in the fields.

Getting to know Vassilikos from its inhabitants' point of view takes time. As an informant rhetorically explains, "you have to live and work on this land to 'feel' it". To testify to my initial perceptions of "naturalness" on a highly "worked-upon" and "lived-in" landscape - in terms borrowed from Barbara Bender (1993: 1-7) - I will conclude with three extracts from my fieldnotes, describing the same location during three different stages of my fieldwork. A month after I had arrived at Vassilikos, was too soon to be sensitive to the "embedded politics" inscribed on the local landscape (Bender 1993):

"Today I was walking on the land of the 'big landlord'. 'It is all his land', I realized. I was surprised to look at his

mansion. I couldn't see the buildings behind the tall white wall. The place looked uninhabited although not deserted. Everything was clean and orderly. I was told that the landlord and his family traditionally live on an other property closer to the town. I was attracted by the deserted buildings around the mansion. One of them is a deserted olive-press. The others are small squat houses made of brick. Most are completely ruined, but two of them are renovated and have been transformed into beautiful cottages like the those rented to tourists. I noticed the row of huge trees around the mansion, mostly eucalyptus. I enjoyed walking the rounded path parallel to the trees with its beautiful view. 'Time added an element of mystery and aesthetic beauty to those ruins', I believe, gathering an old rusty tin of sugar from the ground..."

A few months later, being more intimately attuned to the life of the village, I noted:

"Considering the main road in Vassilikos is the artery of the village's social life, the mansion is located some distance from the road, yet not that far away. This means that it is possible to be ignored by the tourists and visitors. I could imagine though, that here in the past, was the centre of social and economic life. Considering the scattered pattern of settlement in Vassilikos, the area around the mansion would have been populated by many peasants in the past, poor people living in small dank cottages. The landlord's mansion would have been the focus of activity, or even the locus of managing the village resources."

Helping a local man shepherding his sheep, I crossed the same area for a third time, a year after my arrival in Vassilikos. This time I was not merely contemplating the features of the landscape; I was working, like the local shepherd who accompanied me. I recorded in my fieldnotes:

"While we were herding the sheep across the landlord's land, Old Dionysis pointed to the landlord's mansion (αρχοντικό). He talked about the warehouses, barns, the animals (τα ζωντανά), the carts and couches (κάρα και καρότσες για ανθρώπους), the 'many horses'. 'There used to be several hamlets around the mansion', old-Dionysis said and pointed to the ruined, small houses I had noticed before: 'There, the landlord used to organize workers from other villages and his own *sembroi*. He had fifty families of *sembroi* living on his land!'"

Vassilikos has been always portrayed by outsiders as 'beautiful countryside'. It was visited by Venetian lords on their hunting expeditions and by nineteenth century bourgeois for 'a day out' in the countryside. It is now visited by thousands of tourists from mainland Greece and Northern Europe who revere its 'beautiful beaches and nature'. Even, 'ecology activists' from Greenpeace, the WWF and various other organizations will visit Vassilikos to care for the local wild fauna. They have all been interested in Vassilikos as a hunting ground, a pic nic site, a tourist resort, or a rare natural ecosystem, but never a place where people live. The task of describing Vassilikos as a place where people live was left to the anthropologist, and it will be examined in the following chapters.

### **c. Vassilikiots, 'ecologists' and rare species of animals.**

During the 1980s, the material circumstances of most Vassilikiots underwent a drastic improvement due to the impact of the tourist economy. Along with tourism and prosperity however, a new set of problems arose for some inhabitants of the village. When Margaritoulis, a physicist from Athens, first recorded that the beaches of Zakynthos were a major breeding site for the Mediterranean Loggerhead turtle (*Caretta caretta*) in 1977, no one anticipated that a lasting ecological dispute was about to begin. Surprisingly, no Zakynthians had ever paid special attention to the ancient reptiles. Vassilikiots had no particular reason to regard or disregard the turtles. They simply 'couldn't ever imagine' these 'wild' animals to be 'worthy of so much attention'. According to my informants: "the turtles were not harmful or useful to anyone, so they didn't bother anyone!"

"But soon", Vassilikiots describe, "things were about to change". Margaritoulis' discovery gave rise to the establishment (1983) of a specific society for the study and protection of the Loggerhead turtles, the 'Sea Turtle Protection Society' (STPS). Several young scientists, most of

them graduates in biology from the state universities of Athens and Thessalonika, joined the society and contributed on a semi-voluntary basis to the double objective of 'studying' and 'protecting' the rare reptiles. Ecologically oriented projects, like those undertaken by the STPS, were rare in Greece at that time, and the first supporters of the society, as some of the same individuals remember, felt they were "participating in something new and important". Soon after its foundation, a growing urban public of ecology-aware individuals identified with the objectives of STPS. Students or graduates seeking summer work experience and an opportunity to demonstrate their ecological beliefs, generously offered their time and labour to the society, while volunteers from several Western European countries - Britain, Germany and Austria, among others - participated in projects organized by the Greek members of the STPS.

The campaign for the conservation of the Loggerhead sea-turtles begun by STPS, soon found support from more powerful and well-known allies. WWF International was among the first promoters of STPS's projects, and later established its own presence on the island with programmes for the protection of another marine species, the Monk Seal (*Monachus-monachus*). In the '90s, WWF deposited a large amount of money as compensation for the disputed land in Vassilikos, facilitating the establishment of the Marine Park in Zakynthos. Greenpeace, an ecological organization renowned for its controversial interventions, made its presence felt in the early '90s with the visits of various 'eco-ships', manned by committed pro-activist crews. Both Greenpeace and WWF International established their own headquarters in Athens, and a significant degree of cooperation was achieved between the two organizations for first time in their respective histories, for the sake of the Zakynthian sea-turtles.

Right from the start of their campaigns on the island the conservationists' received valuable support from various Zakynthian ecology- friendly individuals. Lykouresis, a Zakynthian architect, who

had already devoted considerable energy to the preservation of the island's traditional architecture, emerged as the leader of a group of Zakynthian 'ecologists'. Several young educated and, in most cases, relatively 'leftist' individuals joined Lykouresis in his 'ecological' endeavour to protect the island from the dangers of pollution and uncontrolled tourist development. All these individuals supported the 'cause of the turtle' wholeheartedly.

During the late '80s, Lykouresis' uncompromising and polemic attitude became a source of friction within the group of Zakynthian ecologists, and turned him into a hate figure in Vassilikos where he lived. During my fieldwork, some Vassilikiot men openly described their desire to 'cut Lykouresis head and limbs off', but the majority of the local people appeared much more tolerant, and Lykouresis was free to roam the island on his huge motorcycle in his quest to safeguard the island's environment. The local Zakynthian ecologists, as people who live on the island, are bound to their neighbours by relations of obligation and reciprocity, and political disagreements rarely lead to overt hostility. This is something the Zakynthian ecologists stress when they frequently criticize the mistakes made by the non-local conservationists:

"we are the ones living on this island. You come here in the summer... then you return to your comfortable homes in Athens, leaving us to deal with the problems... If we were not here to support the 'case of the turtle' as local (*ντόπιοι*) Zakynthians, the rest of the locals would have thrown you off this island..."

All those groups of conservationists and ecology-friendly individuals described so far are collectively referred to by the people of Vassilikos as 'the ecologists'. The word 'ecology' itself is treated in the village as form of verbal taboo. On the sound of it, most of my informants will react with a grimace and will complain of the 'troubles caused by them'. When the television news reports on the actions of 'ecologists' around the world, and particularly the activities of WWF and Greenpeace, names they recognize, most men in the local coffee-houses will interrupt their card playing and conversation to join in collective

booing.

Here are a few examples of my informants' views on the 'ecologists':

"The people of the village are very angry about the ecologists. At the beginning a few of them came. We gave them hospitality. We welcomed them on our land. They said they were counting the turtles... Then they kept on coming. More and more of them, every summer. They said we couldn't build on our land. We couldn't do this or that... All this because of the turtle..."

"We don't want the ecologists on our land. They only cause trouble. They did harm (ζημιά) to several people here. They try to tell us what to do with our property. What to do in our own fields. We didn't go to their place to tell them how to run their own homes. If the ecologists care for the turtles, then why they don't take them on their own property?"

"You see, some people of our fellow villagers are affected by 'the ecology'. They had property close to the beach. But they were poor... not like those in Kalamaki and Laganas, who built hotels and made a profit out of tourism..."

Then the ecologists came and said 'you shall not build'. But this is unfair. Because those in other places are making a lot of money because of tourism..."

"We are poor farmers. My father and grandfather bought this land with his sweat... The ecologists promised compensations. We have been waiting and waiting... We are still waiting... We lost our patience..."

When the members of the STPS arrived on the island for the first time, Vassilikiots approached them with curiosity. It was quite surprising for them to see young educated people 'caring so much' for an animal 'like the turtle' (σαν την χελώνα). At first Vassilikiots did not perceive any particular threat; they simply expected those strange researchers to finish their measurements and leave. But the STPS left the island briefly and returned again the following year. They returned every summer more numerous and better organized.

In 1983 a Presidential order prohibited any building construction on the land adjacent to the turtle reproduction sites. This was achieved through pressure exercised by STPS members in Athens. The news of the

Presidential order alarmed those landowners affected by the prohibition and they began treating the 'ecologists' suspiciously. In spite of their concern however, they hoped that either the ban on building activity would be rescinded or satisfactory compensation would be paid by the government.

Three years later neither had happened. By contrast, new legislation in 1986 saw the creation of a marine conservation park. It was then that relations between the 'ecologists' and Vassilikiots became seriously strained. Vassilikiots considered the 'ecologists' responsible for the conservation prohibitions and realized that their presence on the island would only be a source of troubles for them. The Greek government appeared reluctant to pay compensation for the lands to be conserved, while the conservation legislation prohibited any form of development on those same lands. The affected landowners found themselves owning land which they could not control, while other Zakynthians in neighbouring areas were developing tourism on their own land and making a great deal of profit.

Some Vassilikiots vented their 'anger' and 'disappointment' by threatening the STPS volunteers at every opportunity. The STPS members responded to this challenge by displaying an ever greater commitment to their environmental objectives, initiating information programmes for the general public, especially tourists. Between 1987 and 1989 Vassilikiots started organizing on a collective basis. Groups of local men and women descended on the turtle-beaches in an attempt to evict the STPS researchers and volunteers from their camps. Some of the 'ecologists' vividly remember the incidents:

"'We don't want you in our land' the local crowd used to cry. They were breaking thermometers and other valuable equipment, pushing us into the sea with all our clothes and things! We had to escape by sea since the local roads were controlled by angry Vassilikiots. Our boats were filled with clothes and equipment and we were almost drowned in the waves of Laganas Bay."

Paradoxically, the Vassilikiots had succeeded in giving the 'ecologists'



what they wanted: they turned them into heroes in the eyes of the Greek public, and not for the last time. Similar incidents took place over the next three summers, almost on a monthly basis. The 'ecologists' learned how to circumvent the demonstrations of the villagers and their conservation efforts became more persistent and even 'heroic'...

In 1990, Vassilikiots combined with several other individuals from neighbouring communities who had a shared interest in fighting the 'ecologists'. Hoping that the victory of the Conservative party in the general elections would initiate a positive solution to their problems, they declared war on the 'ecologists' and violently expelled them from the village. Vassilikos became, for a short period, an ecologist-free zone, but its inhabitants soon realized that the Greek government was insensitive to their demands. While the local authorities and individual members of the parliament were often sympathetic to the Vassilikiots' cause, ministers and senior officials in Athens, under continual pressure from the Athenian press, conservationists and the EEC, had attempted to appear environment friendly. They were not, however, prepared to pay the cost of environmental protection. The landowners affected by the conservation measures in Vassilikos remained uncompensated, while the media portrayed them as a violent backward people, caring only for profits from tourism.

The culmination of the Vassilikiot resistance in 1990 induced the 'supporters of the turtle' to become better organized, professional and persistent in their efforts. The WWF and Greenpeace became further involved in Zakynthian politics and film-crews from foreign television channels visited the island frequently. A few Vassilikiot families were sufficiently compensated by WWF money, devoted to the purchase of 'land to be conserved'. Others continued their resistance by engaging in building constructions close to one of the turtle-beaches of the conservation scheme in the Marine Park. In 1992 and 1993, while I was conducting my fieldwork, my informants frequently reported incidents such as the following:

"The people down in Dafni [a turtle-beach] are very angry with the 'ecologists'. Bulldozers from the town came down the beach to demolish their building sites. But the locals told them to go away. Some had guns. The drivers [of the bulldozers] were scared and left!.."

"One of the land owners approached the bulldozer with his hunting gun. 'This is my land', he said to the driver and the civil servants from the town. 'This is my land, and you'd better go away..' He was so angry that he could have even committed a murder. The people from the town saw that he was 'determined' (αποφασισμένος) and left."

By the early '90s, the turtle dispute in Vassilikos had already become a never-ending saga. The 'ecologists' through a series of complex negotiations regained their research stations on the local beaches, and the affected landowners directed all their efforts into building as much as possible on the land where it was forbidden. As I will further illustrate in the following chapters, law enforcement of the restrictions related to the conservation legislation, or even hunting regulations, is very ineffective in Vassilikos. The local spirit of resistance, dramatically displayed in stances of 'performative excellence' - to quote Herzfeld (1985: 16) - successfully undermines the reluctant efforts of the local authorities to impose the legal conventions.

Until 1994, when I visited Vassilikos for the last time, the tourists, the turtles and the 'ecologists' were visiting the village on a regular basis. Lykouresis was frequently heard on the local radio station instigating 'ecological' action, and the people of Vassilikos continued their resistance to what they understood as the 'imposition of ecology onto their lives'. The chapters of this thesis illustrate the Vassilikiots' own way of relating to their land and animals, a relationship shaped by the practical necessities of daily work in the fields and a well-established cultural approach to the physical world. The significance of land ownership for all the inhabitants of Vassilikos, independently of how much they are affected by conservation, will be examined in the next chapter.

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## **Chapter 2:**

### **Land**

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#### **a. Introduction.**

Access to land and land ownership are issues of great importance for any people whose livelihood has been traditionally dependent on agriculture and animal husbandry. For the community I studied however, those issues have an additional significance, due to particular social conditions in the past and rapid economic development in the present. Thirty or forty years ago, land ownership in Vassilikos was restricted to a few privileged families and access to land for peasant labourers was controlled by powerful landlords, who were the heads or heirs of those families. Nowadays, most of the local people hold small pieces of land, but the traditional dependency on landlords has been replaced with one upon the tourist industry. Ecological conservation and the establishment of a national park however, threatened local people with serious government restrictions on their freedom to develop their land. These newly established restrictions are the terrain on which traditional ideals about land ownership collide with and have to be reconciled to more recent perceptions of land as a valuable resource for the development of tourism.

In this chapter, the significance of land for the people of Vassilikos will be thoroughly examined in its traditional and less-traditional, recent form. In the first section, a short overview of the social and material circumstances faced by my informants in the recent past will be provided. The local people will describe, in their own words, their long and painstaking efforts to gain access and ownership of land. The second section will address issues related to the central theme of this chapter: the varying perceptions of the value of land in Vassilikos. Related to this theme, is the recently introduced economy of tourism, and

the consequent dispute over ecological conservation. The latter will provide an ethnographic example of how dissimilar perceptions of land, are simultaneously expressed by the local people in their efforts to retain control over their property. In the long conclusion of this chapter, further examples of the differing perceptions of land's significance will be discussed within the context of the Mediterranean and Greek rural ethnographic literature. It is an objective of this chapter to account for the material and symbolic expressions of the value of land, not as separate entities, but as an indispensable and inseparable whole and this approach will be closely followed by the presentation of the ethnographic material.

#### **b. Landlessness and land acquisition.**

For the last five hundred years Vassilikos, like other rural areas in Zakynthos was subjected to a feudal system of rules applied to the cultivation of land and animal husbandry. The local people refer to these rules by the term "*sebremata*". *Sebremata* was a fixed system of reference defining the percentage of agricultural products allocated to peasant labourers (κοπιαστές) working on the estates of the landlords. Specific arrangements between landlords and cultivators were defined according to that system and its rules. The particular arrangements were termed "*sebries*". When a villager in Vassilikos declares that he "has the *sebria*" for a particular piece of land owned by a landlord, he means that he is responsible for cultivating the land, harvesting the produce and offering a specific amount to the landlord. The percentage of the produce given to the landlord - in the past, this percentage was as high as 3/4 or 4/5ths! - as well as the general terms of the arrangement (particular rights and responsibilities), were defined according to the standardized system of *sebremata*.

In the period before and after the Second World War, two thirds of the cultivated land in Vassilikos were part of an old, single estate. The legitimate heirs of this estate were two brothers, members of an old,

noble Zakynthian family. The older brother was named and referred to by the villagers by his title, *kontes* (count). He was the master (*αφέντης*) of the land and the landless peasants (*sebroi*) were exclusively dependent upon him. In the sixties, his property was inherited by his nephew, an educated man who disapproved of the noticeable remnants of feudalism in the village. He sold plots of land at relatively low prices to local people, who had been working as peasant serfs (*sebroi*) on the estate of his father and his uncle for many years. Despite this disposal he still owns most of the land in the area, since by being the only heir of the estate, he inherited a huge amount of land. Most of the villagers - but especially the senior ones - still treat him with a kind of respect which is highly reminiscent of the feudal past.

The remaining third of the cultivated land in Vassilikos was owned by landlords of high middle class origin, wealthy people living in the capital of the island. I recorded at least five names of individuals belonging to this class. During the last three decades, some of them lost or sold their land in Vassilikos. Their landed property was divided into smaller plots inherited by numerous descendants. Those smaller landlords, in the past, despite their bourgeois origin, employed the pre-existing system of rights and regulations (*sebremata*) for the cultivation of their land. Their land was cultivated by peasant serfs (*sebroi*) according to methods identical with those used by the feudal aristocracy in the past. Like the aristocrat landlords, this second category of land owners were approached by the peasant serfs with a combination of respect and fear. The serfs referred to these bourgeois landlords by the term "master" (*αφέντης*), while their attitudes and manner of interaction with them was indicative of deference.

Most of my informants in Vassilikos have vivid memories of the time when they were landless peasants working and living as serfs (*sebroi*) on the land of powerful landlords. This is how a seventy-year-old informant talks about that time:

"Most of the time, the landlord used to place you on some

piece of land (χτήμα), according to the size of the family you had, for example, how much land you could cultivate. Some times, the landlord would replace his serfs; for some reason he may not want them to stay. In this case he could give them three months notice to find another place. Sometimes, though, one family could have stayed in the same place for many years; take Spitheoi [a nickname for related local people] for example..."

A younger, forty-year-old informant, further explains:

"Many families were staying on the same plot of land for years. Often, sons were cultivating the land which was previously cultivated by their fathers. But this was not their land. It was the landlord's land. He used to ask them to sign a contract every four years, declaring that they just arrived on his land. In this way they couldn't claim ownership of the land."<sup>8</sup>

In the area of Xirokastelo, an area which is administratively part of the modern community of Vassilikos and is geographically adjacent to it, land ownership in the past was somewhat dissimilar to Vassilikos. The land in Xirokastelo, compared with the plains of Vassilikos, is mountainous and less suitable for intensive cultivation. This fact contributed to the relevant lack of interest by the large landlords to retain or incorporate parts of this land into their estates.<sup>9</sup> Some land was - and still is - monastic property, owned by the Monastery of St.Dionysios. Monastic land was traditionally cultivated by peasant serfs (*sebroi*) according to the feudal system (*sebremata*) practised elsewhere on the island. But the peasant serfs who have worked the monastic land, all admit, that monks were "much more lenient" than "masters" or landlords on the plains of Vassilikos.

Unlike the landless serfs (*sebroi*) living on the plains of Vassilikos,

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<sup>8</sup> According to state legislation if one is "using" [i.e. cultivating] someone else's land for a period longer than twenty years he may claim ownership of the particular piece of land (χρησικτησία).

<sup>9</sup> The monastery of Scopiotissa on Mount Scopos and the land adjacent to it were in the past the property of the aristocratic family which possess most of the land on the plains of Vassilikos. The land is still owned by some descendants of this family, who, however, were separated from the aristocratic patriline. Consequently, they are not considered to be "masters" (αφεντάδες) by their fellow villagers. Most of them are engaged in peasant jobs and activities and are treated by the local people as being ordinary villagers.

peasant people in Xirokastelo were enjoying a more privileged position with respect to land ownership. According to the description of the local people: "*the families in Xirokastelo* (particular names are stated), always (από ανέκαθεν) had land of their own. Their land used to be scrub (λαγκάδια) and they cleared it (τα ξεχέρωσαν). No one knows exactly how they got this land."<sup>10</sup> The land obtained by this method of clearance, was not very fertile. Despite this fact, the families living in the area had an opportunity to escape landlessness or total dependency upon landlords for access to land. If this kind of land was not enough to provide one with a livelihood, cultivating monastic land according to the established feudal system (*sebries, sebremata*) was a possibility.

In the area of Vassilikos which is contiguous to Xirokastelo, I recorded the older cases of peasant people owning land in Vassilikos. Those lands were located in the hilly area of Ntoretas. This is what the local people say:

"Dimareika (a placename) used to belong to one man and then it was distributed to his descendants. The land was obtained as a *quarto*; it was one fourth of the land he was cultivating."

The Italian term *quarto* is indicative of the origin of the system of rules relating to land cultivation, as established by the Venetian aristocracy. This particular rule refers to the landlord donating a small piece of land (a quarter of the land the serf was entrusted to cultivate) to a faithful serf, who had "served him well" for many years. According to my informant's narrative, some additional families obtained land in the same way:

"*Some related families* (particular names are cited) in Potamia (a placename) had land of their own. They got their own land as a *quarto* in the past. Still, because their land was not enough, they had *sebries* (arrangements) with our landlord."

Referring to another group of related people:

"In an area close to Potamia *some related families*

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<sup>10</sup> An informant, further, explained: "Nowadays, it is forbidden to cut scrub. In the past they used to find empty stretches of scrub-land and they clear them (τις ξεχέρωναν); as did the people of Xirokastelo for example."

(:nicknames are cited) had some little land. Those people were *sebroi* (serfs) of a local landlord (one of high middle class origin) and they acquired a little land as a *quarto*. This landlord was very rich. He had plenty of land in the past and then he acquired more by swallowing land plots belonging to poor peasants."

Obviously the mechanism of *quarto* was operating within a context of long-term patron dependency. Some families of faithful serfs were rewarded for their services with some land which, in most cases, was not enough to provide them with a livelihood. The peasants had to resort to their landlord to obtain *sebries*, the right to cultivate additional plots of the landlord's land according to the established system of *sebremata*. Consequently, land donations of the *quarto* type, were strengthening, rather than undermining, the relationship between patron-landlords and peasants. Complete landlessness was avoided, but the villagers were further enchained by "obligation" to the landlords.

In the years following the Second World War, there was increasing pressure on landlords holding big estates to sell or distribute plots of land to landless peasants. This situation had an effect on Vassilikos which was, due to geographic isolation, less attuned to the social changes occurring in other parts of the island, going back to the beginning of this century. Some of my informants refer to incidents in which landlords were murdered in other Zakynthian villages in the late '40s. The civil war which took place on mainland Greece between the Left and the Right, contributed to the creation of an atmosphere of general confusion, within which social tensions at the local level were resolved by murder. Landlords were killed by exploited landless peasants and vice versa. My informants in Vassilikos referred to the murder of a 'leftist' landlord, the only landlord who appears to have been a leftist!:

"This man made a lot of money in America as a migrant worker. He came to Vassilikos and bought an estate with a beautiful country mansion from an old landlord. He had learned about communism in America and he was 'educating' the peasants. The other powerful people didn't like this. He was shot on his way to the village at a turn of the main village road [in an ambush]."



During the same period, the most powerful landlord in Vassilikos was attacked and shot unsuccessfully, this time by peasants presumed to be leftists:

"A man approached him while he was sitting in the barber's chair, in the island's main town. Somebody placed a pistol on his temple and shot once."

Miraculously, the landlord survived because, as my informants explained, the pistol's barrel was touching his head and the bullet had not enough power to penetrate the landlord's skull: "The bullet was jammed in the bone!"

My informants believe that those incidents made the landlords insecure enough to start selling their land. This argument rests on the popular assumption that, the more landless peasants that existed in the village, the greater the likelihood for dissatisfaction culminating in social unrest. In the years after the war, people's growing demand for land ownership became overwhelming. Some landless serfs in Vassilikos became increasingly aware that land feudalism was not to be tolerated in the mid-twentieth century, and they started criticizing their fellow villagers for being "faithful-to-the-master" (*αφεντόπιστοι*). These are the words by which an informant refers to this period:

"The Landlord was compelled (*αναγκάστηκε*) to sell land to the people at reduced prices, for example, twenty thousand drachmas instead of a hundred thousand. He sold the farmland (*χτήματα*) which I bought, and the farm land that all the others hold in this area. If he had done otherwise, they would have killed him (*θα τον τρώγανε*). His uncle (the previous landowner) was unsuccessfully shot three times (*τρεις σμπάρες είχε φάει ο θείος του*).

Nowadays, many people think that they benefited from him (*τους ωφέλησε*) and they pay respect to him. But still, he has so much land! Vassilikiots were among the most 'faithful-to-the-master' (*αφεντόπιστοι*) people on the island."

Another, younger man, locally known by the nickname 'Ringo' (the nickname is a caricature of his overt masculine character and behaviour) was fearless enough to admit:

"This land that I have - it is not even one *strema* [1/4 of an

acre] - it was given to me for free (μου την χαρίσανε). I told them, either you will give me little land or I will become a thief. This is how I got this little land."

Unlike Ringo, most of the people in Vassilikos had to work hard in order to secure a minimum amount of cash to buy some land. The following narrative by a sixty year old informant illustrates this point:

"My family originates from Volimes [a mountain village in Zakynthos]. They were forced to leave Volimes and went to live in a marshy, poor area in Kalamaki [at the Zakynthian plains]. This area, now, is the centre of tourism. Some bullying tough shepherds (τσαμπουκάδες βοσκοί) with guns, were trampling down their crops and forced them to leave and become *sebroi* (serfs) on Batelis' [a landlord] land in Vassilikos. This is where I was born, at Kotronia. My father and his brother didn't succeed in buying land and they got separated. My father went to Xirokastelo. He worked as a *sebro* on the Saint's land.<sup>11</sup>

But since making a living was hard at the time, my father went to mainland Greece to work as a gardener. Zakynthians, you know, used to be renowned for their skill in gardening. My father made some money in this way.

We bought this land from the landlord in '53 with 60000, drachmas then paid in English pounds (σε λίρες). It was important that this money was in pounds.<sup>12</sup> The landlords [he refers to the two brothers] were in need of cash. They were both gambling (τζογάραν) at the Casino, hoping that they may win; but they were always losing! *Another landlord* [he refers to a well known rich Zakynthian] found them in difficulty and he bought land from them (τους βρήκε σε δυσκολία και τους πήρε γη). Then my parents heard that land was for sale in Vassilikos, at 'Ampelia' [the vine trees: a placename]. They rushed back to Zakynthos to learn more about it. I was crazy from happiness when I saw this piece of land (τρελάθηκα απ' την χαρά μου). We started planting olive trees."

During the 50s' and the 60s' some villagers managed to secure plots of land, while others persistently failed to do so. Some had a few

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<sup>11</sup> He refers to Saint Dionysios, the patron saint of the island. I have already mentioned, some land in *Xirokastelo* is monastic property. Part of this land is cultivated by local peasant people, who deliver a proportion of their produce to the monastery, according to the system of *sebremata*. The local people maintain that the officials of the Monastery have always been less exploitative than the lay landlords. "The Saint is a good master" the local people say.

<sup>12</sup> English pounds were perceived to be a stable form of currency at this time.

opportunities, but, as they explained, their hesitation to obtain land stemmed out of their fear or respect for their landlords. Others failed to acquire land due to a variety of reasons relating to their passion for gambling, drinking or other personal indulgences. The following narrative, by a sixty-year-old informant, refers to this:

"At this time Tsagkaris [a nickname] bought some land in Vassilikos. He already had some land as a *quarto* at Ntoretos [a placename]. He had a lot goats and animals of this kind. They worked hard and they managed to buy some more land. They were among the first Vassilikiots to have land of their own.

Most of the people were offered some land by their masters but they didn't want to accept it. They were afraid. They used to say: 'Is it right, my master, for me to have land? How I will be able to look you in the eye'?<sup>13</sup>

Those people were very faithful to their masters. They were denying themselves, not stealing, not even one *ogia* [a weight unit] from their master's olive oil. For example, if the olive oil was 31 *ogies*, they were saying 31, not 30. They used to say: 'Shall I steal from my master?'.

To some others, like the father of Michalis who was the overseer (*επιστάτης*), the landlord was offering a little piece of land. He was always refusing to accept it. He said: 'I live on your property, master, you feed me and you keep me alive, why shall I need land (of my own)'?<sup>14</sup>

Probably, those people were afraid because of those stories about the '*narkova*' (a kind of pit): It was said that sometimes in the past the peasant serfs were told by their master to come to the town so as to be given some land. They were going to the town for the contract, but they were thrown into a deep pit (*χαυτάκι*), which was covered like a trap. They were told [by the master], 'come here' and they were falling into the pit. Then, the master would say that the dead serf had gone to America as a migrant, or the master would ask (:pretending) 'where is he?', I was waiting for him, to give him some land'."

A fifty-year-old informant reflects on the same theme:

"My father, although he was a communist, he did not achieve any prosperity (*δεν πρόκοψε*) [he didn't buy any land]. He was talking 'ideologies' all the time. But I am not

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<sup>13</sup> "Είναι σωστό, αφέντη, να 'χω εγώ γη; Πως θα σε κοιτώ στα μάτια μετά;".

<sup>14</sup> "Αφου ζω στα δικά σου, αφέντη, με θρέφεις και με ζεις, τι να την κάνω την γη;".

satisfied with my own progress, as well. When I was younger, I could have done more (acquire more 'land'), but my wife was always stopping me... she was asking me not to wear myself out... When I was younger I could wring water out of a stone. I worked so hard and I deserved more."

And here is a further example:

"Veniamin [a nickname], Mimis' father, lost the money which he and his wife were saving for years in order to buy some land. They sold cattle and animals so as to collect the required amount of money. Then, he went to the town to sign the contract. But he was tempted to gamble with money and he lost it all (τα έπαιξε στο τζόγο)."

A sixty-year-old female informant, finally, refers to acquiring land in the following way:

"We bought our farmland (χτήμα) forty years ago [:in the '50s]. We were among the first people, not to say the first, who bought land in Vassilikos. Noone of our neighbours had bought any land at this time. Nowadays however, only one man is completely landless. He pays rent to the landlord for the house he lives in. It seems, that this house is somewhere where it is unsuitable for the landlord to sell it. And he is such a hard-working man (δουλεφταράς). It is unfair not to have a piece of land. My children cannot realize how lucky they are for having inherited land from us."

As is implied by the last comment of this female informant, the younger people having been raised in relatively comfortable economic conditions, do not always acknowledge the strategy of exhausting manual work employed by the older generations during their lifelong efforts to secure their own plots of land. Referring to a middle-aged man, who works extremely hard in his perpetual effort to buy further pieces of land, a young man comments:

"He makes his life less comfortable (μιζερεύει την ζωή του), the clothes he wears for example, so as to buy every year more land from the Landlord."

The person criticized by the young man offered me a different perspective. He maintains that he feels a great deal of injustice about the inequality in land distribution. On several occasions he pointed out to me

land neighbouring his own which was the property of the landlord. He compared his painstaking efforts to "make use" [:cultivate] of every small piece of his own land, with the relative under-utilization of the landlord's large amount of land, which is cultivated less intensively. Finally, he explained to me that having been born landless, his success in escaping from "the fate of the serf" (τη μοίρα του σέμπτου), was an event of great personal significance to him.

All the examples presented in this section illustrate the importance attributed to land ownership by the people of Vassilikos. For some of them, acquiring land of their own was the realization of a lifelong goal and the result of persistent effort. Within a period of forty years, they emerged out of a situation of complete landlessness, to a comparatively comfortable economic position. Nowadays, almost every villager possesses some land suitable to be used either for cultivation and animal husbandry or as the basis for small-scale tourist enterprises. Many villagers still cultivate land owned by landlords or the landlords' descendants, according to patterns of *sebremata* which have been modified so as to allow greater profit for the peasant labourer (κοπιαστή). Most of the local people wish to expand their land holdings so as to allow for more productive economic activities, related either to animal husbandry or tourism. For them the struggle to acquire land is a process which has not yet been fully completed.

### **c. The value of land, tourism and ecological conservation.**

The people of Vassilikos talk about the value of their land in varying and distinctive ways. Frequently, the character of their statements is highly rhetorical, always dependent upon the particular context in which the discussion takes place. It reflects differing identities, often employed by the same people in different situations or social settings. For example, the local people constantly switch their peasant identity with one of the tourist entrepreneur. But as this analysis will shortly demonstrate,

the value of land remains equally significant for both identities.

As has already been described in the previous section, the great majority of the peasant labourers in Vassilikos acquired land of their own with painstaking effort, over the last thirty or forty years. Before this, fertile, cultivated land in this area was a precious, scarce resource, available only to a few privileged families. Prolonged landlessness and dependence on landlords for access to land infused the local meaning of land ownership with powerful emotional and symbolic content. For most people in the village, land ownership used to be a lifelong aspiration, the major objective of their hard-working life. Having realized this ambition, Vassilikiots greatly appreciate their land and recognize in it two kinds of significance. Land is for them an economic asset which guarantees material wealth, as well as, the realization of their persistent and hard-working effort to escape from poverty and complete dependence on the landlords. Their land is simultaneously a field for economic activity and a sign of their recently improved economic and social status.

The people of Vassilikos are accustomed to a strong tradition of patrilocality according to which land should be inherited by the male descendants of a family, carrying the name of the family. A fifty year old informant clarifies the issue:

"Girls were never expected to inherit the land of their father (πατρογονική). If land was to be given to them as dowry - this could have happened in the case where the groom had no land - land was bought for them. But family land (πατρογονική) had to remain in the name of the family."

I was surprised to find such a strong emphasis on patrilocality in a community where land acquisition was a relatively recent phenomenon. I soon realized however, that in Zakynthos a strong patrilocal ideology has been dictating the rules of land inheritance since the period of Venetian rule. Native novelists and historians have repeatedly referred to some Zakynthian aristocratic families which allowed only one of their male descendants to marry and procreate in order to prevent the division of the family's landed property. My elderly informants in Vassilikos described

similar customs practised by peasant families in the mountainous villages of Zakynthos:<sup>15</sup> "the people in the mountain villages used 'to marry off' only their younger brother because they hadn't enough landed property". Vassilikiots consider this kind of inheritance stipulation to be relatively obsolete. They do however, clearly express their distaste for matrilocal residence:

"Being *sogabros* [an im-marrying son-in-law] is considered shameful. Even poor men prefer to live away from their parents-in-law."<sup>16 17</sup>

When I was conducting fieldwork, I recorded some instances of girls inheriting landed property. Some men in the village were felt threatened by those instances. Once, I heard one young man saying to another: "you burn our fingers (*μας έκαψες*), by giving land to your sister". A middle-aged woman explained to me that the complaining young man had a sister as well. He was pressed to accept the possibility of his sister inheriting some family land. This example demonstrates that bourgeois patterns of neolocality infiltrate into the local society, dictating new forms of land inheritance. In the past, most of the local girls received money or other forms of movable property as dowry, while land was mostly inherited by men. Numerous recent exceptions to this rule however, indicate that Vassilikos is undergoing a change in respect to this issue. According to the model offered by Loizos and Papataxiarchis (1991: 8-10), Vassilikos can be accurately described as a community in transition from patrilocal rules of residence, with a strong emphasis on agnatic descent, to neolocality and bilateral rules of inheritance.

Ideas and practices of land inheritance directly relate to the present

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<sup>15</sup> In the mountain villages of Zakynthos poor peasant families were holding land of their own, since the feudal landlords of the plains had no interest in incorporating mountainous land into their estates.

<sup>16</sup> "*και φτώχος να είναι κάποιος, προτιμά να μένει μακριά απ' τα πεθερικά του!*"

<sup>17</sup> Women express a similar dislike for patrilocality. Old and young women described to me the psychological "pressure" (*πίεση*) they experienced, when they realized that they "had to" abandon their paternal household in order to "live with" and "put up" with the oddity (*παραξενιές*) of their parents in law.

discussion on the significance of land-owning in Vassilikos. According to the traditional view of patrilocality, land ownership enhances the marriageability of young men, since it provides spatial and economic independence from one's affines. Even under the new, 'somewhat bilateral' patterns of postmarital residence, landed property is considered to be a primary, fundamental resource, upon which the married couple can base a new family. But independent of its vital economic value, land ownership is important as a factor relating to the establishment of a strong local identity. To have access to landed property in Vassilikos is one step on the way to becoming a Vassilikiot. To reside or work on one's property over a long period of your life is a second. To be able to trace cross generational kinship links in the area, is a third and more significant step. Thus, a sense of symbolic continuity is created by the perpetual presence of the same inhabitants on the same plots of land.

The strong association of land with 'the name of one's family', fashions the local environment into plots of land where the presence of particular families is synonymous with the land itself. In this way, the legitimacy of land ownership in these areas is further reinforced, and any possible lacunae in the formal documentation of landed property is easily refuted.<sup>18</sup> Additionally, being fully Vassilikiot with well-established kinship roots in the area, is a criterion that renders access to a further set of resources, those related to tourism. This does not mean that strangers are completely excluded from tourist enterprises. Various non-local people find their way into the business of tourism, due to their close relationship (kinship or friendship) with the locals or their own personal skills (knowledge of foreign languages, music, bars, or other forms of entertainment). However, for a local, entry into the economy of tourism carries an aura of legitimacy; it is anticipated to an extent that it occurs almost spontaneously. This is because tourism makes permanent residence in the village viable and justifiable. It is perceived as a benefit, a reward

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<sup>18</sup> Such lacunae are often the products of peasant illiteracy combined with the inefficiency of the State bureaucracy in the past.



for comforts or economic resources that the village life lacks. Land ownership, like local identity, entitles one to access this benefit.

Nowadays, tourism provides the greater source of income for most of the inhabitants of Vassilikos. This fact does not diminish the earlier material significance of land for the local people. On the contrary, any villager aspiring to enter the tourist industry by means of any form of legitimate or reliable enterprise, needs access to landed property. Consequently, the value of land has been increasing along with the development of tourism. Plots of land closer to the beach or to the village main road gain additional value, since they provide ideal settings for various tourist enterprises. This is what one informant remembers:

"In the past, we used to say 'they gave us just a bit of sand', suggesting that land close to the sea was given to an unlucky person by his relatives. This kind of land has sandy earth, where nothing can grow.

But now the terms have been turned around. Now, some people see what happened and pull their hair out!".

Regardless of the particular location however, almost all land in Vassilikos is potentially suitable for the development of tourism. Even the most isolated areas lie within reasonable driving distance of the main beaches, which are the focus of tourist activities. Consequently, it is not surprising that the owners of this kind of relatively unapproachable land, retain realistic but unrealized aspirations of developing their land in one touristic way or another. Landholding in Vassilikos embraces the claim for participation in the business and benefits of tourism.

Independent of the economic benefits of tourism however, the majority of people in Vassilikos continue to identify themselves as peasants. When the tourist season is over, the focus of their attention is concentrated on cultivation and small-scale animal husbandry. Those activities provide the villagers with an income which is not insignificant. According to the taxation system and the state's classification of economic activities, the vast majority of Vassilikiots are registered as 'peasants', receiving a considerable amount of state or EU benefits, given to encourage agriculture and animal husbandry. Apparently, the local people

have considerable material incentives to encourage their involvement in traditional peasant activities. These kinds of economic activities require access to land. This is how a young shepherd clarifies the situation:

"Having land, a lot of land, is a necessary requirement to have animals. Otherwise, you cannot "make it" financially (αλλιώς δεν βγαίνεις). I have a lot of fenced-off fields, but this year, because there is not much rain, I am going outside to find pastures elsewhere (:in the landlord's land)."

Some individuals in Vassilikos openly declare their preference for the peasant type of work. The majority of those people are the oldest members of the community. They often accuse young men, and especially their sons, of neglecting the cultivation of their land. "The young people (οι νέοι) don't like the life of the agriculturalist", they maintain. This is how a seventy year old informant elaborates the same point:

"The young men (οι νέοι) have deserted the fields, they don't bother digging the land. Nowadays, it is tourism. One has a shop, the other one a smaller shop, a third one has rooms to rent."

Similarly, anti-tourism sentiments are expressed by several young or middle-aged people in the village. "We are independent (ανεξάρτητοι) of obligations to other people", they say, after comparing their personal involvement with agriculture, animal husbandry or the building professions with the demands required by tourist enterprises. According to this form of logic, tourist entrepreneurs are the "slaves" or "servants" of foreigners, having to "put up" with all kinds of eccentricities and satisfy various, unpredictable demands. This is why some local people express their antipathy for the uncomfortable "socialization" required by tourism, with comments like: "We have our land and our animals. We don't have to serve other people."

Numerous Vassilikiots recognize that tourism, although able to provide significant profits in relatively short periods of time, entails elements of uncertainty. Many villagers complain about their helplessness in controlling the input of tourists in their locality. Economic success or failure in any particular tourist season seems to depend on factors external

to the immediate environment of the village. According to the local discourse which emphasizes the negative aspects of tourism, land ownership offers the local people the potential for an alternative income, and a strong sense of independence from any uncontrollable external forces affecting the tourist economy.

But the local perceptions of tourism are not confined to negative criticism and pessimistic declarations. Several young people strongly identify with the new role-model of the tourist entrepreneur, while at the same time, reproach those villagers who retain the lifestyle of the 'old agriculturalist'. Those villagers were described to me as people who "spend their life in misery" or "make their life miserable", deeply engaged in laborious agricultural activities which bring "little profit".<sup>19</sup> The young supporters of tourist economy point out that even those Vassilikiots who emphatically express their dislike of tourism, do eventually engage, to a greater or lesser degree, in various economic activities related to tourism. It is matter of common consensus in the village, that tourism has benefited the local economy. If it was not for tourism, many young people, especially those with insufficient landholding, would have emigrated elsewhere to make a living. A sixty year old informant illustrates this point:

"I am glad to see young people of our village stay. We had a struggle (αγώνα) to come back [:from the places we migrated to out of poverty]. Nowadays, Vassilikos is in the best of its times (στην καλύτερη του). A little more (houses, tourist development) could be built; but we don't want too much. Vassilikos maintains the whole of Argasi."<sup>20</sup>

Evidently, two separate conflicting discourses about tourism and agriculture exist in Vassilikos. The first epitomizes the advantages of traditional peasant economic activities and underscores the disadvantages of tourism. The second argues for the reverse; the discomforts of the

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<sup>19</sup> "Χάνονται μες στην μιζέρια", "καλούν την ζωή τους μίζερη".

<sup>20</sup> The beaches of Vassilikos attract the tourists residing in Argasi, a neighbouring tourist resort which is overdeveloped.

peasant lifestyle are emphasized, while the benefits of tourism are highlighted. Between those two ideological poles, represented by some older people who consistently express their nostalgia for the vanishing peasant mode of life and some young men who persistently criticize the lifestyle of the old-fashioned agriculturalists, exist the great majority of Vassilikiot men and women, who are perfectly capable of contributing to both discourses, at different instances, provoked by different economic or social dynamics. For example, a tourist season which is not particularly profitable, or various incidents of tourists behaving 'improperly', could instigate a discussion in which the negative aspects of tourism are vividly elaborated and the old peasant ideals revered. The same rhetorical fervour is often expressed at the disappointment of a poor olive harvest or a prolonged drought; but this time it is the "misery" of peasant life which is portrayed, and unrewarded agricultural labour that is overstated.

Those two separate discourses represent the ambivalence of the local people between two kinds of economic activity: agriculture and tourism. But, while agriculture is well accommodated to the moral universe of the villagers, tourism is not yet fully embraced by the local moral code. Following the model proposed by Parry and Bloch (1989), prolonged involvement of the villagers in the short-term sphere of exchanges, associated with tourism, can be interpreted as a threat to the moral order and the long-term reproduction of the community. Contradictions stemming out of the short-term, profit-oriented character of tourist transactions, and the local emphasis on the tradition of hospitality, culminate in rhetorical demonstrations which temporarily challenge either one form of economic strategy or the other.

The majority of the local actors constantly shift between the two alternating identities of the farmer and the tourist entrepreneur, with surprising ease and spontaneity. The economy of tourism provides them with exciting financial opportunities; those who own land in the vicinity or have well-established roots in the community are supposed to be the first to legitimately exploit the new resources. However, lack of

experience with the new forms of enterprise, make the local people feel uncomfortable or insecure. When difficulties in the tourist sector arise, they find consolation in the well-established and morally safe peasant identity. This is why land ownership epitomizes security in the material sense, while at the same time it provides the villagers with a moral and psychological shelter, a remedy for complications hidden behind the short-term transactional character of the tourist industry.

As we have already seen, land holding gives access to both the traditional peasant activities and the new enterprises of tourism. It is the key qualification which enables the villagers to freely negotiate a double identity, as farmers or tourist entrepreneurs. It is also the ground on which two forms of economic activity are realized and their conflicting symbolic or moral properties reconciled. To illustrate this, I will refer to a further ethnographic example, concerning the dispute over environmental conservation which directly affects the community of Vassilikos.

During the last ten years a series of presidential decrees and state laws dictated the creation of a marine conservation national park in Zakynthos. The park includes the south coast of the Vassilikos' peninsula, the most underdeveloped part of the community. The Park's major objective is to safeguard the reproduction of the loggerhead sea turtles.<sup>21</sup> The species is threatened with extinction, since there are few hatching sites left for the turtles to lay their eggs. The warm and sandy Zakynthian beaches are the last important resort for the mediterranean subgroup of the loggerhead turtle. For the egg-laying of the turtles to take place, the requirements are a minimum of noise and light pollution on the land surrounding the 'egg-laying beaches' and virtually an absolute lack of human presence on the beaches themselves. This is why the conservation legislation imposes serious restrictions on tourist development, or any

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<sup>21</sup> Loggerhead Sea Turtle, *Caretta caretta*.

kind of development, on the particular beaches and the surrounding land.

Several families in Vassilikos, related by kinship ties, own land which is affected by the conservation legislation. This land is relatively unapproachable and, unlike the north side of Vassilikos' peninsula, little tourist development has taken place. In addition, the morphology of the area is steep and does not allow for intensive cultivation. During the last two decades however, the local landowners realized that an improvement of the earth-road could lead to possible development of the area, especially since the local beaches are of substantial natural beauty. Thus, small-scale tourist enterprises in the form of fish-tavernas and umbrella and canoe renting started to establish themselves from the '80s onwards. The local people lack the capital to invest in grand projects, but having tasted the profits of tourist-related enterprises, they visualize the future development of their land as being indispensably joined to tourism.

The marine national park constitutes a serious obstacle to the fulfilment of the local land-owners' visions for economic development. The conservation legislation prohibits any building construction on the land adjacent to the park. In addition, tourist enterprises on the turtle-beaches are supposed to be constrained and any human presence on the beach during summer nights is strictly forbidden. However, those measures were never properly imposed in Vassilikos. In the last decade, most of the local people, consistently and demonstratively ignored the conservation laws. They kept on building illegal constructions next to one beach or renting sun-umbrellas on the other. After waiting in vain to be compensated for their appropriated property, they collectively declared their opposition to the national park and harassed the various groups of conservationists attempting to gain a foothold on their land.

Since the mid-'80s, various groups of conservationists, including well-known organizations such as Greenpeace and WWF International, exercised continuous pressure on the reluctant state authorities to impose the conservation measures. On several occasions the police and other civil officials attempted to stop the erection of illegal buildings constructed on

the conservation area. They always returned to their headquarters triumphantly unsuccessful. The local people appeared determined to exercise their will, which is locally perceived as a 'right' to "do whatever they want to do with their own land". Narratives like the following were often heard in the village, during the time I was conducting my fieldwork:

"They tried to pull down the new building constructions in Dafni today. But *one of the owners* (:his name is explicitly stated) was waiting for them. He went down the road with a gun and he stood in front of the bulldozer and the Public Prosecutor. He said: 'Get down, if anyone dare (*όποιος είναι άντρας ας κατέβει κάτω*). You will not pull down my house on my land, which I own with legal papers. Come on, give me back the taxes for the purchase. Why didn't you stop me, when I was paying the taxes?."

In the early '90s, WWF International succeeded in buying the land surrounding one of the three turtle-beaches in Vassilikos at a significantly high price. The owners of this land declared that they didn't wish to sell their land, but being tired by the long and vain hope of receiving appropriate compensation, they had eventually to accept the offer and sell their land at a decent price. "Anyway", they said, "what's the purpose of keeping land, if we are not allowed to have adequate control over it?" Other local people owning land in the conservation area, disapproved of selling land to the conservationists. One of them told me:

"I will never sell my land. Look at *this man* (:a particular name is stated). He sold his land to WWF and now comes to my place to fish and moor his fishing boat."

The same man who declares that he will never sell his land, will probably sell it if he is offered the right amount of compensation for it. Most of the landowners affected by the conservation restrictions, reside on and own plots of land in other, less marginal areas of Vassilikos which are not included in the national park. It is unlikely, therefore, that they will ever remain landless or homeless. Fair compensation will free them from anxiety, uncertainty and the endless struggle with the conservationists. On the other hand, in the absence of any form of compensation, and under the continuous intervention of outsiders on their

property rights, the land owners affected by conservation measures in Vassilikos, have every reason to oppose legal restrictions and retain control over their land. To justify their resistance and underpin the symbolic and economic value of their land - of which they may be deprived - they resort to concepts related to their new identity as tourist entrepreneurs and to the old one of peasant agriculturalists. This is how two different discourses, which contradict each other in some contexts of everyday life, in the particular battle over land conservation, unite and reinforce one another.

According to the tourist economy, the local people can easily demonstrate their material loss of being prohibited from fully exploiting the potential of their land for tourist development. Furthermore, comparisons with other areas of the island, where tourism was overdeveloped, even at the expense of the turtles' biosphere, raises ethical considerations about a kind of legislation or state policy which preferentially allows access to prosperity.

According to the older, peasant prototype, the local people can rightly protest about being denied control over their land, which is the product and the rationale of their agricultural labour. The bond of the peasant labourer to the land is emphasized along with the symbolic significance of inheritance and kinship ties. The conservation law contradicts the local definition of property and what is 'right'. For the people of Vassilikos, land ownership entails the complete and undisputed right of the owner to control the land and manage all its potential economic or symbolic resources.

I will conclude this section with an extract from a report written by a group of Vassilikiot landowners affected by the conservation legislation. The report is entitled "*Memorandum of the owners of landed property at Gerakas, Dafni and Sekania in Vassilikos Community*" and is referred to the Prefect of Zakynthos:<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Gerakas, Dafni and Sekania are the disputed turtle-beaches in Vassilikos.



"This land which we possess today belongs to us. It was bought by our grandfathers and our parents in 1955. They didn't usurp this land from somebody else. Nobody gave this land to us for free. This land is the outcome of the labour and sweat of three generations, who lived and toiled all their lives, having as their only dream to possess this land, their land..."<sup>23</sup>

...We believe that the land which is owned by any villager, who is a Greek [citizen], belongs to him... Or do you think [a rhetorical question] that his land belongs to the State, so as to be under the State's control and under the control of anybody chosen by any government in power?"

#### d. Conclusion.

"Land has more than purely economic uses. It is still an important component of marriage settlements, and it is an element of prestige; it can give independence of employers and it is security for a man attempting upward mobility" (Davis 1973: 73).

This quotation from Davis refers to Italian peasants and suggests the rather obvious point, that for Mediterranean agriculturalists there is much more to land than its mere material utility. Such a position does not necessarily underestimate the instrumental value of land as a vital economic resource since, as I would like to argue here, symbolic and material aspects of the land's value are mutually connected and interrelated. Trying to isolate the material from the symbolic, in this particular case, would result in an inaccurate and completely decontextualized form of ethnographic representation. To demonstrate this, I will refer to some Mediterranean ethnography and present some further examples of peasant perceptions of land.

The peasant inhabitants of Pisticci studied by Davis, 'value' the cultivation of their land for it provides them with a sense of self-

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<sup>23</sup> "Η γη αυτή που σήμερα έχουμε μας ανήκει. Είναι αγορά από τον πάππο και απο τους γονείς μας από το έτος 1955. Δεν την άρπαξαν από κάποιον. Κανείς δεν τους την χάρισε, είναι ο κόπος και ο ιδρώτας τριών γενεών που έζησαν και μόχθησαν με αποκλειστικό όνειρο την κατάρκτηση αυτής της γης τους."

sufficiency. They say: "I produce my own food. I don't stand under anyone" (1973: 94). Trying to maximize landholding is locally perceived as a step towards 'independence'. Davis interprets this kind of independence in the double sense of "economic and sexual honour." He explains that the control of a wife's or daughter's sexuality is associated in Pisticci with the ability of a man to provide for them, and at the same time, to be independent of powerful 'others', employers or economically superior men, who are traditionally perceived as potential seducers of economically inferior men's wives (ibid: 94-5). Pisticcesi's inhabitants with a successful entry into the 'non-agricultural' economic sectors, primarily perceive land as a symbolic asset, rather than an economic one; for them the land's symbolic value lies in "the ability to make conveyances to match the various relationships of parent and spouse (ibid: 161)." Pisticcesi, with a temporary and insecure involvement in the non-agricultural economy, perceive land as 'security'. Like the Zakynthian peasants, who recently entered the tourist industry, they perceive land as "a firm base from which to take risks, and something to fall back on if the venture fails" (ibid: 161).

Lison-Tolosana (1966) in his study of Belmonte de los Caballeros, a Spanish town in Aragon, refers in detail to the significance of land ownership for the local population. In this town land is praised as the "most highly esteemed possession", the value and yield of particular pieces of land is among the most common topics of conversation and the people have a great deal of knowledge about the history and productivity of each field in their area (1966: 15,16). The bond between land and landowner is so close, that loss of one's land is an unbearable experience and leads the owner to emigration (1966: 16). Lison-Tolosana maintains that land ownership is a "fundamental criterion of stratification" (1966: 62). He illustrates that during the years of the Spanish civil war, political affiliation and religious attitudes of the local people were determined by the size of landholding (1966: 47,48). In addition the author demonstrates the importance of land in marriage. Land holding is an important

marriage prerequisite for young men in Belmonte de los Caballeros (1966: 16,155). Married men or women who contribute land to their new household, strengthen their position in it and are better equipped to face accusations or criticism by their in-laws (1966: 158-9). Fathers who own plenty of land are able to prevent the emigration of their sons and safeguard the solidarity of their families. Disagreements about the inheritance of land can cause severe enmity between siblings who have already created families of their own (1966: 162-6). But as Lison-Tolosana clearly underlines, land is the terrain upon which the cohesion and unity of any given nuclear family is established and maintained (1966: 155,165).

The close relation of peasant people with their land is also emphasized by Pina-Cabral (1986) in his ethnographic account of two Portuguese villages in Alto Minho. The different hamlets in those two communities are described as intimately related, almost synonymous, with the land they are located upon (1986: 3). Collective identities, representing groups of people - as opposed to outsiders - are defined in terms of commonly inhabited tracts of land (1986: 126). Similarly, individual peasant identities are dependent upon the relationship of people and land (1986: 152-3). Land and household are intimately connected and "working the land" justifies the headship of a family (1986: 67). Landless people can not form permanent households, since they lack a stable relation with the land. Landlessness is locally perceived as an indicator of laziness, irresponsibility, loose female sexuality and illegitimate births (1986: 29,55,63,152-3). The "proper", permanent relationship with the land signifies wealth, prestige, respect and responsibility, and "working the soil" is perceived as a source of power, vitality and good health (1986: 25,152-3,208).

When Pina-Cabral describes different socioeconomic groups in Alto-Minho, he inevitably refers to terms denoting the size of landholding (1986: 29,152). Similarly, landownership is seriously taken into account by the local people when they plan their household composition strategies

(1986: 53). In this context, the author demonstrates, it is not inappropriate at all to allow economic logic to penetrate the domain of the family (1986: 57). Access to plenty of land permits the formation of extended families, in which related individuals join forces to maximize common resources and realize the ideal of self-sufficiency (1986: 63-5). This process is described by the author as a positive expression of the household composition strategy, a prerequisite for it is an abundance of land (1986: 63-5). In intermediate situations where landholdings are small, nuclear-family households are formed, while in the case of landlessness the more negative expressions of the household composition strategy occur. In those instances, marriage is rare or unstable, single parent households are common, male membership is reduced and illegitimate births are frequent (1986: 65).

Some similar insights have been drawn by some other ethnographers studying rural communities in Greece. For example, the Cretan mountain villagers studied by Herzfeld (1985), strongly associate particular pieces of land with particular patrigrups. They prefer to sell land (the word 'give' is used instead of sell) to their agnates, rather than to outsiders, since they consider land as the "conceptual property" of their patrigrup (1985: 57-8). A similar ideal, according to which land must be preferably "kept inside the village", is expressed by the villagers of the Greek Cypriot community studied by Loizos (1975).<sup>24</sup> The same author further argues that the size of landed property, along with education, are the major criteria determining the social status and the relative political power of the villagers (1975: 43-47,311). Additionally, Loizos explains that the occupation of a full-time farmer (γεωργός), implies self-sufficiency, and is therefore more respectable and dignifying than the

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<sup>24</sup> Notice however, that while equal partible inheritance is practised in both communities, in the Cretan village the rules of inheritance are virilocal but in the Cypriot neolocal [although formerly patri/virilocal] (Herzfeld 1985: 72, Loizos and Papataxiarchis 1991: 9,10).

occupation of a labourer (εργάτης), a position associated with dependence on other people (1975: 50,61). Security and independence are clearly associated with land and Cypriot villagers rarely enter marriage without any land at all (1975: 48,61). Households with little land may have to resort to their women labouring for strangers, a situation particularly undesirable, since women working for outsiders are believed to be "easily tempted", putting the household's honour and men's reputation as good providers under serious risk (1975: 55).

In one more ethnography, the *Portrait of a Greek Mountain village* by Juliet du Boulay, there is extensive reference to the interdependence between the land and the rural household (1974: 21,32). The author recognizes the close association between the land, the house, the farmer, the farmer's labour, the produce of the land, the link between land and the bread given in the liturgy, the projection of the family values on the land, the inseparability of the land and the food produced on it which is often symbolically consumed by the family as "an act of communion" (1974: 37,53,54-5). The farmers in the village studied by du Boulay, insist on spending most of their time and energy on the cultivation of their land, although a systematic exploitation of a resource provided by the forest - the resin of pine-trees - could have been more profitable for them (1974: 30,34-5). But the farmers explain their adherence to self-sufficiency ideals with arguments like: "why should I buy my bread when I can grow it myself?" (1974: 35).

Du Boulay maintains that the villagers' consciously think about their land in exploitative ways, backed by a religious cosmology which emphasizes man's dominion over the earth but, at the same time, their understanding of the land's significance goes further, beyond "material considerations" (1974: 139,140). Land is linked with the history of the family and is perceived as "undying", representing stability "against the fluctuations of the political and economic world". The fields cultivated by a man are not simply a kind of property received through inheritance; they embody the toil of his forefathers (1974: 139,140). This is why

selling land to unrelated outsiders is sometimes heavily criticized (1974: 161). But the author perceives some change taking place in the village's traditional standards of "social worth". In the past, being a landowner was synonymous with being a householder (*νοικοκύρης*), "a person of status". Nowadays possession of land is not the most important criterion for achieving an "effective social ranking". Personal achievement, access to cash, and in some instances dissociation from village life are for some villagers more appealing than the traditional farming lifestyle which was based on a close relationship with the land (1974: 176,251-2).

While in the past, land was the primary measure of prestige among Greek agriculturalists, in the decades following the second world war, urban standards of wealth and status infiltrated the rural society, rendering social distinctions very complex and disputatious. Du Boulay describes an inclination towards the abandonment of "the farming way of life" and a weakening of the traditional peasant criteria defining achievement and respectability - such as land ownership. Paul Sant Cassia (1982), in an article about marriage strategies in Cyprus, observes that while in 1920 the most valued 'dowry component' was land, nowadays education and urban employment are considered as more important 'resources' in marriage arrangements. Similarly, the people of Naxos studied by Charles Stewart (1991), long that their children will not have to make 'their living from the land'. For Stewart, education and patterns of consumption operate as 'new symbols' of distinction, in a 'struggle for identity', taking place in a newly formed social space, a space which was once marked by a 'margin of difference' between peasantry and bourgeoisie (1991: 126-7).

Here, I have to clarify the following point. By referring to the recent introduction of powerful bourgeois ideals into the rural Greek society, I don't claim that pre-existing peasant prototypes were eradicated. Traditional, peasant perceptions of the value and symbolism of land, coexist with the newly introduced urban social standards, some times antagonistically - as in the situation of 'ambivalence' between the two respective sets of ideas described by du Boulay - and at other times

peaceably or even constructively. Furthermore, it appears to be the case that in some regions of rural Greece and Cyprus, where the agricultural economy thrives, or is at least prosperous, traditional notions relating to the value of land, continue to provide powerful statements about the identity of the agriculturalists. In such contexts, landownership is still treated as an important standard of status and wealth. For example, Madianou (1992) refers to the "close ties" the people of Messogia have with their land and their vines. Vineyards in Messogia, a wine producing area in Attica, are intimately related to social identity and stratification, representing material wealth, as well as symbolic continuity between the members of the community and their predecessors. The real, 'true' inhabitant of Messogia, the author continues, is locally perceived as being a 'land and vineyard owner', a person who - unlike landless labourers - can produce his own household wine (1992: 114). Similarly, profitable citrus fruit cultivation on the fertile plains of Cyprus, contributes to the picture of peasant prosperity portrayed by Loizos (1975), and to the political and symbolic power attached to the value of land in the particular community.<sup>25</sup>

In Rethemnos, a Cretan town studied by Herzfeld (1991), the expanding economy of tourism provides to the value of landed property additional economic weight, facilitating the realization of traditional ideals associated with marriage and dowry. Traditional beliefs concerning ownership and inheritance are enacted by the local people in their efforts to confront archaeological conservation, imposing constraints on their right to control their property. The ethnography presented in the earlier section illustrates a similar example. On the island of Zakynthos, economic enterprises related to tourism increase the value of land, and under the threat of ecological conservation, tourist-favouring arguments merge with

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<sup>25</sup> I have to make clear here, that Loizos explicitly describes education, rather than land ownership, as the highest prerequisite of status. The same author recognizes however, that "land is still highly valued, even when men earn their living in other ways, and this is chiefly because agricultural land is profitable in the region (1975: 45)."

traditional peasant ideas to celebrate local rights over land and property. This is a case of constructive coexistence of traditional and recently introduced, modern ideas related to the value of land.

As all those examples demonstrate, the significance of land for peasant people, like the Mediterranean agriculturalists, can be expressed in varying ways. Ownership of land is perceived to imply security, independence from affines or employers, identification with the local physical and social environment. Land is the basic prerequisite for realizing the ideal of self-sufficiency and establishing the peasant household. It provides the grounds for avoiding female paid labour and thus safeguarding female honour. It is the vital resource uniting the economic activities of family members, the spatial terrain on which the coherence of the household is maintained. Status, respect, political power, and stratification are all related to land ownership, and marriage strategies seriously take it into account. Finally, cross-generational inheritance, labour and cultivation of identical plots of land provide symbolic connections between landowners and their ancestors, generating perceptions of continuity between past and present village life.

Those multiple manifestations of symbolic capital ascribed to land and land ownership, along with the traditional peasant lifestyle upon which they are founded, are challenged by recently introduced urban definitions of status, wealth and personal achievement. According to the ethnographic evidence presented in this chapter, new urban prototypes coexist in parallel with the older, traditional configurations, and become employed by local actors, critically, selectively, and in some instances jointly, in order to safeguard particular collective or individual objectives in varying contexts of social and political life. This becomes particularly obvious in cases where land provides the grounds for viable economic exploitation or development, the dispute over land conservation in Vassilikos being such an example.

Concluding this chapter, I wish to return to a point made earlier.



At the beginning of this section I argued that trying to separate the symbolic from the material aspects of the land's value, will be an unproductive and an aimless venture. Overstating the importance of material considerations hidden behind the multiple expressions of the symbolic significance of land, is an equally ill-considered approach. The fact that traditional or modern values related to land and land ownership are enacted by local actors, like the Vassilikiots affected by conservation, to pursue their material, economically-oriented interests, does not mean that symbolic representations of land are completely dependent upon, or take the place of, material pursuits. Attributing symbolic significance to land and land-ownership is not a process spontaneously developed in the context of the conservation dispute. As I will present in the chapter to follow, the symbolic valorization of land is intimately related to a process of the long-term investment of human action on it: the practice of 'cultivation'.

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### **Chapter 3:**

## **Work in the fields.**

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#### **a. Introduction.**

This chapter is an ethnography of agricultural work in Vassilikos. Here, my objective is to present a thorough account of my informants' engagement with agriculture and the specifics of the work itself. 'Work in the fields' is examined, not merely as an economic exercise, but as an important part of my informants' life, related to their identity as 'farmers' and active members of the community. My presentation of the material starts with an examination of agriculture in Vassilikos, its relationship with the prosperous economy of tourism, and the attitudes exhibited towards it by different generations of local men. I proceed to describe the local culture related to olive cultivation, the rights and obligations of the cultivators in the recent past, and the olive harvest, which is the most representative collective agricultural enterprise of the locality. The gendered division of labour at the olive harvest provides a context for a discussion of women's economic position in the household and their relative engagement in agricultural activities. The concluding section of the chapter elucidates some important aspects of the relationship between farmers and their environment. 'Work in the fields' is treated as a particular area of human experience which directly informs this relationship. The labour of the cultivators, which is perceived by them as 'struggle' (αγώνας), is indicative of a 'contest' between any given human actor and the surrounding environment or 'nature' (φύση).

Before I proceed to the presentation of the ethnographic material, I want to clarify the meaning of a term which is used extensively in the following sections. In reference to "the conception that a household survives by its own means", Pina-Cabral employs the term 'subsistence

prototype', which is extended to account for a range of local 'images' related to the welfare and reproduction of the household or even to the reciprocity and equality among different households. A similar but less inclusive meaning, denoting a household's economic independence, is attached to the term 'self-sufficiency' by anthropologists writing about rural Greece (du Boulay 1974, Loizos 1975, Herzfeld 1985). In this chapter, I equally employ the term 'self-sufficiency' to refer to my informants' preference to utilize any possible resource available in their given environment, as opposed to purchasing readily available goods at the market. According to the same logic, my informants try, whenever this is possible, to perform any job or task by means of their own labour, instead of employing wage-labourers. Some tasks demand the collective undertaking of all or several household members, while relatives or neighbours may help on the basis of generalized, almost-symmetrical reciprocity. Although, the term 'subsistence prototype', as it is defined by Pina-Cabral, appears more efficient in accounting for reciprocity between neighbouring household units, I prefer to refer to '**the ideal of self-sufficiency**' instead, out of appreciation of its more restricted, but more meaningful associations.

#### **b. Agriculture, tourism, young and old agriculturalists.**

"The basic products of Zakynthos are oil, wine and raisins; but in Vassilikos we basically do oil." This is how the older Vassilikiots laconically refer to agricultural production on their land. "We also used to do wheat and hay straw" they add. Nowadays, unlike in older times, wheat is rarely cultivated, but some fields are ploughed and sowed to produce fodder. Some of those fields are fenced and flocks of sheep are allowed to enter and eat the fodder in the dry season, when food is not available elsewhere. On farmland situated in proximity to domestic units, the villagers cultivate vegetables, including tomatoes, aubergines and beans, in green-houses or outside in the open fields. Melons and water

melons are cultivated in fields where the soil retains some moisture and does not have to be irrigated. But most of the cultivated land in Vassilikos is covered with olive trees. The harvesting of olives is the most intense economic agricultural project of the area, and olive oil the most widely and copiously produced agricultural product.

The inhabitants of Vassilikos admit that tourism provides the most significant income for most of the families in their village. But the majority of the villagers define themselves as ‘**farmers**’ (αγρότες) and devote the greater part of their time throughout the year to activities related to cultivation or animal husbandry. Their yearly cycle can be roughly divided into two periods. The first is the tourist season, which starts in mid-May and ends in mid-September. During this period, Vassilikiots try to respond - as much as they can - to the economic opportunities provided by tourism, and at the same time to satisfy the minimum requirements of their farms or cultivation. The second period covers the remainder and greater part of the year, during which economic activities in the village are more relaxed and the majority of the local people devote most of their attention to traditional peasant activities. The culmination of this period is the olive tree harvest which takes place in November and early December.

Before I look more closely at the local ethnography of olive cultivation, olive oil and olive groves, I wish to refer briefly to the remaining cultivation undertaken in Vassilikos. My initial consideration is introduced by a claim expressed by my older informants, namely that "the younger people have abandoned the cultivation of the land" and are "solely preoccupied with the business of tourism". Admittedly, those statements reflect the transition from an exclusive reliance on traditional peasant economic activities, to a new situation where tourism-related enterprises provide the greater percentage of people's income. For the older villagers who spent the early part of their life working the land and utilizing any available resource provided by it, the new generation of

Vassilikiots who often neglect the fields they inherited "from their fathers", appears as somewhat "sluggish", or at least "unappreciative".

However, these kinds of statements expressed by my older informants do not accurately portray the economic reality of the village. The transition to an economy which is not solely dependent on agriculture, did not force a complete "abandonment" of agriculture. On the contrary, most of the economically active villagers in Vassilikos continue to engage in traditional peasant activities, especially when they feel that a decent profit can be made out of them. Unlike their fathers they have a greater choice of cultivation options, prioritizing jobs which guarantee a sufficient profit for the minimum of invested labour. Their 'relaxed' attitude, contrasts sharply with their forefathers' traditional dependence upon agriculture. In other words, 'self-sufficiency', as an ideal code, enforcing the maximization of all subsistence resources that one's land can provide, does not exert the same kind of pressure on the younger generations of Vassilikiots. Furthermore, it is hard to attain a clear divide between the representatives of the 'younger' and older generations of Vassilikiots. Most of the forty, fifty and sixty year old villagers participate dynamically in a wide variety of agricultural tasks. Some are successful in recruiting their sons' labour, others are not. But the tension arising from such disagreements is not particularly serious, especially when the sons have already successfully entered the sector of tourist-related enterprises. When put in this perspective, the complaints of the "old folks" about the "young people's neglect of the land" are better understood. Here, I offer an example:

"Look at my vineyard. My son, although he learned the skill from me, does not do much work on it. Kostas had the best vineyard in the area, but he got older, and the vineyard was lost because his son is *akamatis* (:lazy)."

Vine cultivation in Vassilikos is not intended for commercial

profit.<sup>26</sup> In addition it requires significant labour. This is why some of the already existing vineyards are neglected by the younger men who do not have enough incentives to perform the annual 'pruning', 'cleaning' and 'weed-removal' that a vineyard requires.<sup>27</sup> But this doesn't happen to be always the case. For example, the son of the old man whom I quoted above, is retaining his vineyard, although he is not doing as "much work on it" as his father expects. His vineyard is small, like all other vineyards in Vassilikos, but for a restaurant owner like him, producing some wine of his own appears as an additional benefit in the social arena. As there are as many as forty tavernas or restaurants in Vassilikos, the aura of tradition associated with locally produced wine, appears as an extra incentive for the younger, tourism-oriented Vassilikiots to engage in some vine cultivation. This is an example where tourism reinforces agricultural folklore, adding new value to the traditional significance of home-made-wine consumption; the latter has been well-demonstrated ethnographically by Madianou (1992).<sup>28</sup>

When the tourist season in Vassilikos is over, agricultural activities

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<sup>26</sup> An informant explains:

"My vineyard is only for wine. Vines for raisins [:a traditional Zakynthian product] exist only on the plains (στον κάμπο). There are too many vineyards and the kind of wasps which eat the raisins are eliminated [:by systematic use of pesticides].

Here in Vassilikos, people have vineyards only for wine. The earth is weaker and the quantity of the fruit in each vine smaller. But the degree of alcohol higher (%of alcohol by volume)... as much as, thirteen or fourteen! Some times we dilute it with water. There are four more vineyards like mine in Vassilikos."

<sup>27</sup> This is how an informant differentiates between 'pruning' and 'cleaning':

"Pruning (κλάδεμα) the vineyard is not the same as cleaning (καθάρισμα). In cleaning one just has to subtract a few brunches (κλαδιά). The right time for pruning is at the end of February or the beginning of March, before the leaves come out. Cleaning (καθάρισμα) can take place now [:it was late January]. There are some buds (μάρτια), as you can see, but nobody knows, how many of those will survive the frost (τον πάγο). This is why pruning takes place, after the peak of the winter, because pruning is done by taking the buds into account, those which survive the frost."

<sup>28</sup> Apart from Madianou's most extensive work on the vine cultivators of Messogia, in Attica, there is a short description of viticulture by Friedl, in her classic ethnography about Vassilika in Boeotia (1965).

regain part of their significance in terms of locally expressed concerns and priorities. This does not mean that during the tourist season cultivation is completely neglected or abandoned. Tourism and agriculture are less antagonistic than is usually thought. The flourishing tourist economy nourishes the rural community and makes its long-term future viable. In the short term, tourist consumption provides an easily available market for the immediate sale of some of the locally produced agricultural goods. The cultivation of vegetables and water melons is such an example.

As I have already mentioned, the people in Vassilikos cultivate vegetables in gardens (*μποστώνια*) located, in most cases, close to their dwellings. Some of them construct green houses. They prepare the greenhouses in early spring, aiming to provide the local market with tomatoes by May or June. The price of the early tomatoes grown in this period is high and the cultivators are usually satisfied with the profit. Later it falls, as tomatoes planted in the open fields enter the market. Other vegetables, like beans, cucumbers and aubergines are cultivated along with tomato plants in the greenhouses or outside. The main vegetable product however, is considered to be tomatoes, celebrated by locals and tourists alike in the form of "Greek salads".

Vassilikiots usually produce the seedlings for the tomatoes they cultivate themselves. The seeds, however, are acquired from the Department of Agriculture, and are supposed to be monitored biotechnologically so as to ensure maximum productivity. The villagers plant the seeds in primary seedbeds, where the tomato seedlings grow unhindered, until they are finally replanted in the greenhouses or in the gardens out in the open fields. Those seedbeds are covered with transparent polythene sheets. The greenhouses are covered with the same material, and the greenhouse frame is constructed of reeds and wooden poles, like cloches. Parts of the same material may be used for the construction of a new greenhouse the following year. The ethic of 'self-sufficiency' rules here, and the villagers utilize whatever resource exists already on their farms, buying new materials only when they have no

choice.

Here is how some of my informants talk about the tomato seedbeds and greenhouses:

"In my seedbed, I am using seeds from America; they are 'regulated' (ρυθμισμένοι) by the Agricultural Control. I was given those seeds by the agricultural Cooperative (συνεταιρισμός) in the town. The soil I am using for the seedbed is 'special' (ειδικό), 'with vitamins and elements (στοιχεία)'. Not like the old times when people had to weed all the time (να ξεχορταριάζουν όλη την ώρα)!"

"It is thirty years now, since we started using greenhouses. They were first used in Crete.

In the old times we made [selected] the seed ourselves. We had tomatoes only in their normal season. So, we used to cut them into halves, dry them in the sun and put salt on them. In this way, we had tomatoes for cooking during the winter."

And here is an extract from my fieldnotes:

"Today I was working with a local man. He was constructing a greenhouse. He was building the frame of it with reeds and wood already available on the farm. He said: 'I planted the reeds myself, those ones you helped me to cut yesterday. At first they were a few roots, now there are so many that others come and take them.' While we were working, he was talking about the weather, past events or current local issues."

The soil in some fields in Vassilikos is suitable for successful melon and water melon cultivation. As my informants proudly demonstrated:

"If you dig a little you will be able to see this yourself. It looks dry at the surface but it is not. Here, the soil retains some moisture. This moisture is enough. The whole yield of water melons is sustained by that. We don't usually water them. We water them only once or twice, at the beginning, when we plant the seedlings."

A local variety of melons, the 'Zakynthian water melon' was cultivated in the past, but not any more. The people in Vassilikos argue that, "those melons are tasteless and they don't bear any profit. This is why we replaced them with the smaller ones, the ones you can see now everywhere". Planting melons and water melons in the field is quite an



exhausting task. In comparison with the work in the greenhouses - where the hot temperature dictates a slow rhythm of work - the work in the open fields is often more intensive.

I still remember my exhaustion on a hot sunny day in early May, when I was helping in the planting of melons along with two senior informants. We had to dig holes and bend down to plant the melon seedlings into the soil. Then we carried water in big buckets for some considerable distance, to water - for the first and probably last time - the seedlings already planted. But the stamina of the two sixty year old farmers I was working with was remarkable. They often had cramps in their legs from bending down, and they frequently complained of the hot sun. But the complaints were expressed in a cheerful manner. The sun was personified, and their old age was treated as a topic of humorous well-intended self-ridicule: "old man you 've forgotten how to do the job, and the sun is laughing at you!". One of the men was wage labouring for the other. The latter was careful to communicate his remarks indirectly, through jokes (*μπαρτζολέτες*), in respect of their long friendship and the labourer's age. Myself, "the young lad", obviously exhausted by the hardship of manual labour but too proud to appear weaker than the older men, I was consoled by an abundance of ethnographic riches in the form jokes exchanged and other pointed comments. Ultimately, I was promised a taste, a flavour of the melons as a reward for my labour.

The harvesting of the melons coincides with the tourist season, and the produce is readily appropriated for the local demand. The tourists pay well for local products like melons and vegetables, which are displayed at the local mini-markets and all-purpose shops. This further illustrates the relative complementarity between the tourist economy and some traditional peasant activities. Although the tourist economy thrives during the summer months, the local people do not radically sever their relationship with the land. In a similar way, during the winter season, several Vassilikiots devote some time to preparing their summer tourist-enterprises, through renovating facilities and equipment 'for rent', or even

building and acquiring additional ones.

### **c. Olive cultivation and peasant rights.**

Unlike the kinds of cultivation examined already, olive oil production is relatively independent of the tourist economy. Olive cultivation and the harvest take place outside the tourist season, and the olive oil produced is not merely absorbed by the local tourist industry. It is part of a more general, large-scale agricultural production, which is frequently affected by agricultural policies and fluctuations of the national and the European market. In addition, apart from being part of a purely 'agricultural' realm, olive cultivation is a purely 'traditional' peasant form of work, having a long history on the island and a large area of 'culture' associated with it. The 'olive cultivation culture' includes words and terms indicative of the specifics of the cultivation, material objects or equipment used, specific roles assigned to the cultivators and harvesters, stories and memories, the cumulative experiences evocative of local social and economic life.

An Austrian traveller, the Archduke Ludwing Salvator, who visited Zakynthos in 1901 and 1902, published in 1904, in two huge volumes, an account on various aspects of the island's folklore and economic life. My informants recall stories they heard from their fathers and grandfathers about "this foreign aristocrat, who was wandering around the island, drawing pictures of houses and landscapes...". Salvator writes about the olive harvest:

"The harvesting of the olives starts in mid October. At this time the locals start beating the leaves with sticks, while a few men use ladders to reach all the branches, even the higher ones. They spread large sheets of hessian on the ground and then they gather the olives in big sacks which are transported to the olive-mill by cart...

The harvesting of the olives starts after the estimates or *stimes* [:evaluations of the produce] have taken place. The olives which fall on the ground before the estimates belong

to the peasant serf or to anybody. After the estimates the local people begin to harvest the olives. The people who do the estimating are called *stimadoroi*...

In Zante (:Zakynthos) there exist several kinds of olive-trees. There are the renowned *ntopies* (:local) olive trees, which become black very quickly and the well-known *koroneikes*, which come from Koroni and remain green for a long time. Both those kinds of olives are used to make olive-oil (Salvator 1904).<sup>29</sup>

A few things have changed in the olive harvest per se since Salvator's time. Although the villagers use tractors for the transport of the sacks, the method of harvesting by the use of sticks and olive-sheets remains the same, as will be further illustrated in the next section. Until twenty years ago, 'estimates' of the produce at those olive fields which were cultivated and harvested by peasant serfs, were commonplace in Vassilikos, and even nowadays are not completely abandoned. The kind of the olive trees found in Vassilikos are the two 'well-known' varieties described by Salvator. The younger trees belong almost exclusively to the *koroneikes* variety, but the locals still point to some fields with huge, old olive trees of the *ntopies* variety and say: "These trees are very old. They are here from the time of the Venetians."<sup>30</sup> This is why they are planted in this order." The trees are indeed arranged uniformly, in parallel lines and at wide intervals from each other. In contrast, olive trees which are planted in more recent times, are positioned at a closer distance to each other, so as to save space and intensify production.

Before the Second World War, the majority of olive cultivators in Vassilikos were landless serfs (*σέμπροι*) living and working on the estates of landlords (*αφεντάδες*). In the three decades following the war, most of the peasant cultivators gradually acquired plots of land of their own and planted olive trees on most of them. The majority of those people,

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<sup>29</sup> This text was translated from German to Greek by Ageliki Apergi and Tasia Kolokotsa, and then translated into English by myself.

<sup>30</sup> As Salvator notes, the 'Venetian Democracy' promoted the cultivation of olive trees, offering for any tree planted a small payment (Salvator 1904).

however, continued to cultivate the olive fields of landlords, since their land holding was not enough to provide them with a living. In fact, villagers who had been working as serfs (*sebroi*) on the estate of a given landlord, continued to cultivate the olive fields of the same landlord. The landlord was 'expected', as a good patron, to allocate the cultivation of a field to the man whose family had traditionally cultivated the field for the last two or three generations. Such an arrangement between a landlord and a peasant labourer is called in Vassilikos *sebria*, entailing a kind of informal agreement about the terms of any given cultivation.

In the previous chapter, I referred to the system of practices applied to the cultivation of land and animal husbandry, which is known in Vassilikos as *sebremata*. Particular patterns of *sebremata* are applied to olive cultivation to regulate the terms of the cultivation and the allocation of the produce. In the past, the two most widespread patterns were *tritarikes* and *ana pentis*. When a peasant labourer (*kopiastis*) "had a *sebria*-arrangement for olive trees as *tritarikes*", he was expected to cultivate the field, harvest the olives, and deliver two thirds (67%) of the produce to the landlord. According to this arrangement, the cultivator was entitled to one third (33%) of the produce and this was his reward for the labour spent on its cultivation and harvesting. A *sebria*-arrangement of "*ana pentis*" had in general the same requirements, but the percentage of the produce allocated to the labourer was slightly higher. The olives harvested were divided in five parts (στα πέντε), three of which were given to the landlord (60%) and two to the cultivator (40%). My informants explain:

"*Sebries ana pentis* were [given] to mountainous or sloping fields, where harvesting was harder and the produce lower. Most of the olive trees on good fields (στα καλά χωράφια) were [given as] *tritarikes*."

Those two patterns of *sebremata*, applied to olive cultivation, operated in the past as fixed points of reference, saving the landlords from the uncomfortable task of negotiating and renegotiating the terms for each particular arrangement. In addition, a third party called a

*stimadoros*, which literally means an ‘estimator’ (ektimitis), was involved in any *sebria* arrangement.<sup>31</sup> The job of the *stimadoros* was to estimate the ‘expected’ produce of particular olive groves. That was rendered necessary because the productivity of olive trees varies from one year to another, being dependent on the climate and the biological cycle of the trees themselves.<sup>32</sup> The *stimadoros* was always an outsider. Being "a man from within the village" he would have been suspect to partiality, on the grounds of favouring the labourer due to kinship connections or the landlord due to obligation. Here is what my informants said about a *stimadoros*:

"The *stimadoros*, was estimating (στιμάριζε) the produce of a field. He used to say, for example, ‘I work out that this grove makes a hundred *vatselia*’ (*vatseli*: half a sack). If you make more, that is profit of your own. But if you had made less... In a season with bad weather you could lose (έμπαινες μέσσα)."

"A *stimadoros* was also a *geometris* (land-estimator), something like a civil engineer, he could measure and estimate the value of land. Some of them had learned their skill by long years of practice. *Stimadoroi* were always outsiders."

"The master himself was going along with the *stimadoros* to the fields, but the *stimadoros* was the one to make the decision. In case the labourer was disagreeing with the estimate - he could say ‘they are not’ (δεν είναι) [:as many as you say] - the master could arrange for an observer (*παραστάτης*) to be present during the harvest. But this was rare."

"... - ‘*Stimadoros*’ you said. Yes, *stimadoros* and *geometris*; this is what those people were called... Hmmm! (a pause)... A few of them were good, but some were devils..."

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<sup>31</sup> Since the Ionian islands were under Venetian occupation for more than four centuries, a lot of Italian words - especially related to commerce, law and government - penetrated the local vocabulary and became hellenized by acquiring Greek endings. ‘*Stima*’ (evaluation, estimation) and ‘*stimaro*’ (to evaluate/estimate), come from the Italian terms *stima* and *stimare*.

<sup>32</sup> For example, the olive production is always higher in one season and lower the next one. The alternate harvesting season with the greater productivity is called in Zakynthos *ladia* (λαδία).

My informants were feeling relaxed about the relative impartiality of the 'estimators'. This was, because most of them were able to test the estimation themselves, a knowledge anyone can acquire by experience. Some of my informants demonstrated this skill to me. "This field will make an X number of sacks" they figured out. And their estimation was always highly accurate. In the past, they explained to me, if they were in disagreement with the *stimadoros*' estimation, an 'observer' (*παραστάτης*), who was usually the landlords' overseer, arranged to be present at the harvest. The observer, was present to measure the actual number of sacks harvested and to make sure that the distribution of the produce was taking place according to the shares established by the *sebria* arrangement, which was, in most of the cases, two parts for the landlord and one for the labourer. An informant remembers:

"In the old times there were overseers. For example, one of them could take a villager [:he is naming a local man we both know] to the court, as though he had stolen, although everybody knew that he didn't. The overseer used to say to the judge: 'Give him a small punishment, I just wanted to scare him'.<sup>33</sup>

and another one:

"The wives of the two big masters [the masters were brothers] were sitting with their embroidery and their magazines, to attend on us. They were constantly repeating: 'distribute well, distribute well'. They used to say this, even when it was about **just** a bucket of extra olives."

The latter informant refers to events that took place as recently as early 1960s. The labourers (*κοπιαστές*) were constantly reminded of the 'right', 'three to one' analogy of produce distribution. Until that time, poverty was so intense that even an 'extra bucket of olives' would have a difference. However, most of the *sebroi* (serfs) in Vassilikos were renowned for being 'faithful-to-the-master' (*αφεντόπιστοι*), to an extent that they would have never 'cheat', even when there was no one present to observe them. This criticism is expressed by Zakynthians' living in

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<sup>33</sup> "Βάλτου λίγο, να τον τρομάξω ήθελα."

neighbouring villages, but most frequently from Vassilikiots themselves. Numerous informants of mine are able to recall instances of local people - in most cases they are in a position to state particular names - expressing their 'faithfulness-to-the-master' with words like: "To cheat on my master! Rather to cut off my hand instead".

But this state of complete faithfulness-to-the-master did not last. As soon as the landless peasants obtained land of their own they became progressively less dependent on their ex-landlords. As a first step, they managed to persuade their landlords to cover the cost of fertilizers or to give them new *sebria*-arrangements, *ana-pentis* instead of *tritarikes*. After the introduction of tourism in the late '70s, the majority of peasant labourers found alternative forms of income in the tourist economy, and the few remaining landlords had to lower their expectations. This is the point where the intervention of a *stimadoros* became redundant. Nowadays, the produce can be divided into equal parts (*misakes*), and in some instances the labourers can achieve even more profitable arrangements. A seventy year old informant explains:

"*Sebries* of olive fields were never *misakes* (halves). *Misakes* are nowadays, sometimes. But even now... they are rare. Nowadays, most often they are *ana pentis*."

But a fifty year old informant makes a different estimation:

"Now, you can find *misakes* olives. Now, you can even find [an arrangement] where you can take even sixty percent. Especially in rough places. In rough places, you lose time until the sheets (λίμπανα) are set properly and in the long run you harvest less sacks."

During my fieldwork, I noticed several cases of peasant labourers (κοπιαστές) negotiating the working terms of *sebries* relationships with the landlords. This kind of negotiation was, and still is, a slow process. The peasant labourers are content to achieve minor improvements concerning particular terms for cultivation every two or three years. Some times they are willing to "put up" with a disadvantageous arrangement due to 'obligation' to their landlord. A forty year old man, for example, "has the *sebria* of an olive grove" which was cultivated by his father

before him. He is still cultivating the grove with a *sebria* arrangement of *ana pentis*. The man admits that this percentage is "low by today's standards". It happens to be the case, however, that the master provides him "with other benefits" (άλλες αβάντες) related to pasture for his sheep. "This is why I still tolerate the *ana pentis* arrangement", he explains, "but this is going to change soon".

Similar complaints are expressed by the landlords. A descendant of a family of landlords, for example, always gives his olive grove to be cultivated by people who used to be *sebroi* (serfs) of his father and his grandfather. He says:

"I am giving those olive trees to them as 'halves' (μισακές), which is supposed to be a good deal for them. The profit is small for me. I just earn enough money to maintain the field. It covers the cost of tractor-ploughing and the necessary fertilizers. This is all. The price of olive oil is too low."

The fall in the price of olive oil and the alternative economic opportunities provided by tourism made some local people reluctant to continue undertaking *sebries* arrangements for olive cultivation with the old, traditional, standard patterns of the *sebremata*. Anger at the fall in the price of oil, is repeatedly expressed. "I will not do it again if the prices are like that; it isn't worth the effort", they argue. But at the end of the day they do harvest the olives. They are even capable of selling the olive oil higher than the lowest price, and the next year, they are ready to renew their *sebria* arrangements.

Some of my informants criticize their fellow villagers for their habitual dependency on *sebria*-arrangements. One of them said:

"Nowadays there are some good *sebria*-arrangements for the *sebroi* of the big landlord. But they are stupid. They gamble their money and never have property of their own. Then, they are in need of him again."

The man who made this sharp comment managed to minimize his dependency on the landlords after years of hard-working effort. Others are still undertaking *sebria*-arrangements to supplement the profit they



make from tourist enterprises, or by the cultivation of their own land. During the long winter period income yielding opportunities outside of agriculture are rare. The mere existence of olive groves owned by landlords signifies a kind of economic challenge for some local men - even though olive cultivation, when compared to tourism, offers little profit for a lot of hard work. But for peasant people like my informants "land should not be wasted".

Vassilikiots are conscious of the exploitative conditions of *sebremata* arrangements in the past. They are equally perceptive of the disadvantages of *sebria* arrangements in the present. But, although the price of the olive oil is low, and the percentage of the produce allocated to the landlord is still high, the cultivators always manage to make a profit. Two prerequisites make this possible. The first is related to the cooperation of the whole family unit in harvesting, a practice dependent upon the traditional perception of the household as a single economic unit. The second is related to an ideal of "self-sufficiency" which regulates the management of cultivation through all available means. According to this logic, the olive groves, by their mere existence, appear to be a resource which should never be wasted. These two issues will be further elaborated in the following sections.

#### **d. Work on the olive harvest and gendered division of labour.**

Men and women work together during the olive harvest, but the gendered division of labour is clearly defined, at least in principle. Men are supposed to beat the olive trees to make the olives fall to the ground. The olives fall on the olive-sheets (λίόπανα) which are set under the trees by the women. In the past the olive-sheets were made from old pieces of cloth or hessian. Women would frequently repair the sheets since they were not easily replaced at the time. Nowadays, most olive-sheets are made from plastic tarpaulin, are lighter and easier to carry and are easily available at the market.

Two implements are used to beat the olive trees, which are called a *loros* and a *katsourdeli*; they are simple, easy to make and made by men. A *loros* (λόρος) is a two or three metre long wand which is used by the men to beat the olives to the ground. A *katsourdeli* (κατσουρδέλι or κατσουριδέλι), is a short cleft stick used for beating the olives from closeby. A *loros* and a *katsourdeli* are supposed to be used mainly by men. Women use a *katsourdeli* some times but hardly ever use a *loros*.

The man who performs the job of beating the olives off the tree is called the *tinahtis* (τιναχτής). A *tinahtis* must always be a man. "A good *tinahtis* does not do the other kinds of jobs" the villagers say.<sup>34</sup> "Other kinds of jobs" are mostly done by women. They carry the sheets and set them under the tree as to ensure that the olives will fall on them and not on the ground. This job is not as easy as it sounds. It involves frequent bending down, stretching over ditches full of thorns and dealing with bushes or rough, uneven terrain. In addition, the sheets, which may be already heavy from the weight of the fallen olives, must often be carried some short distance to the next olive tree which is about to be harvested.

When a considerable quantity of olives has been accumulated on a sheet - enough to make the sheets too heavy to be carried around - the women have to "put the olives in the sacks" (να σακιάσουν τις ελιές). But the olives on the sheets are mixed with *tsimes* (τσίμες). These are small pieces of wood or even larger branches, which were broken off during the harvesting or cut by men on purpose, in order to prune the tree and hasten the process of harvesting. The women kneel on the ground and remove the *tsimes* by hand. They beat the larger branches with a *katsourdeli* forcing any attached olives to fall on to the sheets. Then they place the olives in baskets and throw them in sacks. One woman holds the mouth of the sack open and another fills up the basket and pours the olives in to the sack. Usually the older woman is expected to hold the sack, and a younger one with a stronger back to lift up and empty the

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<sup>34</sup> "Ο καλός ο τιναχτής δεν κάνει τις άλλες δουλειές..."

basket.

Occasionally some men may have to interrupt the beating of the olive trees and help the women with the setting of the sheets. This happens frequently when there are not enough women in the working team to manage the sheets. The beating of the olive trees is treated as the most important and difficult job by both men and women. When there are enough women present, men continue to beat the olive trees almost ceaselessly. The ideal of the working party is to harvest as many trees as possible, and anytime a man stops 'the beating' in order to help a woman to 'do' the sheets or the sacks, the interruption is unanimously interpreted as a 'delay'.

My informants maintain that the ideal harvesting team is composed of four men and three women. They say:

"A good team for the olive trees has four men and three women. The men do the beating. A good *tinahtis*, does no other kind of job. He goes on beating the olive trees. Then you need two *liopanides* and one *katharistria*".

*Liopanides* are the women who set the olive-sheets (*liopana*). The *katharistria* is a woman who separates the fallen olives from the *tsimes* (*katharizo* means 'to clean').

In practice, harvesting teams of the ideal size described above are rare. Most working groups consist of four or five, men and women, preferably members of the same household. Those households which are capable of forming harvesting teams without recruiting additional wage labourers are considered to be the luckiest. This is a further manifestation of the ideal of 'self-sufficiency'. Many households, however, cannot form an adequate harvesting team - that means they fail to recruit a minimum of four working members - and often have to resort to hiring one additional wage labourer. Some times the wage labourer is an 'experienced' *tinahtis*, usually a fellow villager whose ability and skill is guaranteed, and his wage is as high as 7000 or 8000 drachmas per day. At other times the additional labourer is a *liopanida*, a middle-aged

woman who basically performs the 'female part of the job' and her wage is as low as 3000 or 4000 drachmas. But in the last three or four years Vassilikiots were able to hire 'Albanians', migrant wage labourers, who were paid the minimum wage of 3000 or 4000 drachmas per day but were able to perform most of the required tasks.<sup>35</sup>

Children are rarely present at the olive harvest, because the harvest takes place during the time when they are supposed to be in school or doing their homework. Nowadays, children's education is prioritized over work in the fields, and most villager's foster high ambitions for their children's education - and especially for their male offspring. But it happens to be the case that boys, more often than girls, during their high school years, might make clear to their parents that they don't wish to pursue a higher education. In this case, their involvement in the olive harvest is expected, and in fact encouraged, because the rural household "cannot afford to carry non-working members, except for the very old, or the ill, and even these do what they can" (du Boulay 1974: 86).<sup>36</sup>

In the past, however, and in accordance with the axioms of 'self-sufficiency', children did take part in the olive harvest, performing the simplest secondary jobs. Some children, or even young women, used to collect olives from the ground, the ones which had fallen due to a strong

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<sup>35</sup> Vassilikiots, like most other villagers in rural Greece, hold contradictory attitudes towards Albanian wage labourers. When they talk of them, as an all-encompassing category, they resort to generalizations and emphasize several negative characteristics: "Albanians are thieves", they most often say and recall numerous incidents of burglaries inflicted on Zakynthian "properties". But when they refer to specific individuals, the local evaluations are based on particular traits of the individual's personality and skills.

"My Albanian", they often say, "is not lazy like yours. He knows about olive-trees and all kinds of work. Tomorrow I don't need him and I can send him to you, if you want him. I will give him three thousand for the olive-harvesting, and he doesn't hang around like the others...".

<sup>36</sup> The expression quoted from du Boulay (1974), is part of a discussion about the inclusion of domestic animals into the rural household. I recognize her statement as an 'ethnographic truth' which is not merely confined to the animal-human relationship.

wind, and sell them for a little money.<sup>37</sup> Nowadays, nobody bothers to engage in such a desperate and trivial enterprise! A young married woman remembers:

"When we were small kids (*μικρά*), me and my brother used to gather olives from the ground, those struck by the wind. We were selling them. Nine drachmas for a kilo(gram). We used to put earth and fat-olives together [*χοντροελιές*: not the ones appropriate for making olive oil] to make the bag heavier!"

During my presence at Vassilikos I closely attended the olive harvest for two consecutive seasons. For me, working voluntarily with some harvesting teams was an opportunity for informed discussions with the villagers, who particularly enjoy talking during the long hours of the harvest. Several working teams, composed of families I was already well acquainted with, were willing to accept my voluntary help. To further illustrate what work on the olive harvest is like, I present a few examples from my field experience:

Today the working team was formed of Dionysis, a sixty year old man, his wife, his daughter-in-law and a paid labourer, Spiros. Spiros is an experienced *tinahitis* and is paid seven thousand drachmas per day to beat the olive trees. The two women will not let him do 'other kinds of jobs' out of respect for his skill in beating the trees. 'He is one of the best *tinahites* of the village" they said. 'Furthermore', they explained, 'it is a waste to pay somebody so much money for such a trivial task, such as laying down the sheets.'

The two women try to work as much as possible, even the older one, the wife of Dionysis. A strong work ethic predominates. The younger woman, Tasia, is worried about her toddler son who sleeps at their house nearby. She knows that when the child will eventually wake up and her mother-in-law will go to 'care for him'. Tasia, being much younger than her mother-in-law, prefers to stay with the harvesting team and 'work'.

Most of the time they talk while they are working.

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<sup>37</sup> Salvator records in 1904: "The olives on the ground fallen after the harvesting has taken place, belong to anyone who happens to pass by and takes them, and those people are usually children or women who gather the olives in their baskets."

Sometimes there is a short silence and one can hear the overwhelming sound of the olives falling, like rain, on the sheets, under the rhythmic beating of the sticks. The topics of the conversation are various but most are about recent local news.

Today for example, they were talking about 'a good bride' lost by one local man due to the 'the stupidity of his head'. She is now getting married to a man from the town, who has a job in the civil service. 'They will have a comfortable life (θα περνούν ζωή και κότα)', Dionysis comments. And Spyros adds: 'The father of that girl, produced (έβγαλε) good girls'. 'They are a good family. Nothing bad (τίποτσι κακό) was ever heard about them', Tasia remarks.

The discussion extends to various local women. They make evaluations about their degree of involvement in the 'work in the fields'. In the context of this discussion, both women and men praise those young women who work in the fields, in traditional peasant jobs. The bourgeois attitude of detesting manual labour in the fields is seriously criticized. On the contrary, women who work in the fields appear as having a kind of quality that makes them 'a better kind of person'. Tasia explains that although she has a good excuse for abstaining from the harvest - her toddler son - she does not like to "sit at home doing nothing, like some other women do". Her mother-in-law and the two men highly praise her attitude towards work.

Then the discussion shifts to a village road which is about to be constructed, and the rights of private road usage. People who were driving on the main village road close-by were waving to the working team, greeting the two men or making jokes."

Myself, being relatively inexperienced with the olive harvest, I was confined to help the women with the sheets, the 'cleaning' of the olives and the filling of the sacks. I found out that those jobs were very tiring, and I became progressively annoyed by the older men's pejorative attitude towards them. The youngest of the two women explained:

A good *tinahtis* has nothing to do with the sheets and separating *tsimes*. It is considered to be a skill (*tehni*: artistry) to beat quickly and well. It is a matter of honour for the *tinahtis* to do no other jobs. A good *tinahtis* does not deign to become dirty (δεν καταδέχεται να λερωθεί). The low jobs, - moving liopana around and separating the

tsimes - make you dirty, [:from the oil]. These are jobs for women and children."

As I slowly came to realize, the sexual division of labour in the olive tree harvest revolves around two dimensions. The first is related with the differentiation between the jobs that make one 'dirty' - like the setting of the sheets and the 'cleaning of the olives' - and the most honourable but 'more difficult' task of beating the trees, in which one does not come into contact with the fallen olives and the ground. A further differentiation involves the beating of the tree from the ground, which is called in the local dialect *hamoloi* (χαμωλόι), and the beating of the tree from a ladder or by a man who has climbed on the tree itself. The latter kind of beating is called *panoloi* (πανωλόι) and is never done by women. Every harvesting team in Vassilikos respects these two dimensions of the gender division of labour. Sometimes, and only if this is necessary, a man interrupts the beating to help the women with the sheets. In the same way, some women take a *katsourdeli* (the smaller stick) and beat the trees for a while, provided that they have already set the sheets and placed the harvested olives in sacks.

The basic objective of the harvesting team is to proceed with the harvesting in the quickest and more efficient way possible. And the most efficient way is always the quickest one. Rain or strong winds can delay the harvest. Furthermore, an unpredicted storm can knock the olives to the ground, and in this case, the harvest may be "lost".<sup>38</sup> The farmers can never be sure of their immediate environment and appear in a constant hurry to finish the job as soon as possible, working even on Sundays if the weather permits. In cases where a family hires a wage labourer the necessity to minimize the number of working days becomes more important. In order to comply to the ideal of 'self-sufficiency' and

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<sup>38</sup> Here is what Salvator writes about the effects of bad weather on the olive harvest ninety years ago: "Sometimes, when the weather of the autumn months is bad (at September or October) the whole produce is destroyed. As a result of this, the agriculturalists lose a lot of money. In 1901 the harvest was very poor both in terms of quality and quantity, and it can only be compared with the harvest of 1859 (L.Salvator 1904)."

race against time, the men have to continue harvesting the trees without interruption and the women help them as much as possible. But the women never undertake *panoloi* - they avoid climbing trees or ladders - and always beat the tree from the ground. In addition women rarely use *loros*, the longest of the harvesting sticks. Similarly, men hardly ever 'clean the olives' and help in the laying of the sheets only when there are not enough women in the harvesting team.

As a forty year old female informant puts it:

"In the olive harvest, men do the most difficult part. What the women do - this is putting the olives in the sack and moving the sheets around - is a hard job as well. But the woman cannot climb on the tree and beat the olives constantly (*ασταμάτητα*)."

My initial resistance to accept the local idea that 'men do the most difficult part of the harvest', decreased when, after spending some time on the harvesting fields, I was allowed to try the 'purely' male share of the work: to beat the olive trees continuously. The next day my hands were suffering from serious blisters caused by the friction of the wooden stick on my palms. Waiting for my wounds to heal, I regressed back to the 'setting of the olive-sheets', helping the women with all the 'female jobs' and staring at the senior males with envy and admiration. They were beating down from the olive trees an avalanche of olives from the higher branches. "*Panoloi*", I said to myself, "offers the labourer a greater feeling of satisfaction: watching yourself bravely perched on the high branches of a huge olive tree and beating so many olives to the ground, you feel that you really do an important job!!!"

#### **e. Work, agriculture and gendered division of labour.**

In this section I will extend my ethnographic research on the gendered division of labour and agriculture, taking the cue from Pina-Cabral's work in the Portuguese rural province of Alto Minho. On gender roles and agricultural tasks, Pina-Cabral notices a differentiation between



"products of the air (things which grow well above the ground level)" and "products of the ground (things which grow in or near the soil)", the former being under the responsibility of men and the latter of women (1986: 83).<sup>39</sup> "Males look up, females look down" comment the Portuguese farmers when they collectively participate in agricultural work that involves the cooperation of both sexes (ibid: 84). A similar relationship between women and "ground work" is apparent in the olive harvest in Vassilikos, as has been already documented in the last section. Vassilikiot women are expected to avoid *panoloi*, which requires climbing trees and ladders, while at the same time devoting most of their energy to tasks which take place close to or on the ground, like separating the olives from the branches and setting the sheets.

In Vassilikos, like Alto Minho, women's care and attention is mainly devoted to work close to the domestic domain, like caring for poultry or vegetable gardens, while men are more likely to look after larger animals, vines, olive trees, and external bureaucratic affairs. Sometimes, the latter group of responsibilities are assumed by women, to fill the vacuum of those men who engage in wage labour within or outside the community. Vassilikiots, like the Portuguese farmers studied by Pina-Cabral, praise highly those women who managed to 'hold' (*να κρατήσουν*) their households together - that is, to perform both domestic and agricultural labour tasks well - while their husbands are 'working away'. Many distinguished examples of female diligence and perseverance can be found among the older generation of women, whose husbands, during "the fifties and the sixties", often had to seek "wage labour" elsewhere.

From female informants, a fifty year old woman claimed:

"Women could do even ploughing and *panoloi*, but only when their husbands were absent. When the men are away, women can do everything. Only shopping in the town and driving tractors was never done by women. But as you see,

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<sup>39</sup> "*Produtos do ar*" and "*produtos da terra*".

nowadays women do a lot of shopping in the town. The younger even drive cars.

But the older women still don't go out. Which one among the older women in this village goes out?.. Almost none. Only the wife of the man who has the all-purpose shop stays out late, and this is because of the shop."

And a younger, forty year old woman, further explains:

"In the past women used to do all the work. Old ms Popi managed to hold her household together without her husband, and she did well. But if the man does not work, or if the man does not work enough, there is no wealth (*προκοπή*) in the household. A woman cannot produce the same results as a man.<sup>40</sup> Look at the olive harvest, for example..."

A third, thirty year old woman explains:

"The fact that women had to do a lot of heavy male work has to do with the fact that a man had often to go away to earn day-wages, in order to bring more income to the household.<sup>41</sup>

The heaviest jobs were always shouldered by men (*πήγαιναν στον άντρα*). Women, can dig and thresh and do those jobs well. But in the olive harvest, men do the most difficult part. What the women do, putting the olives in the sack and moving the sheets around is a hard job as well. But the woman cannot climb on the tree and hit constantly (*ασταμάτητα*)."

And a sixty year old woman:

"Caring for the poultry is mostly a woman's job. It is not right for the man to pick up the eggs from the nests on the ground. We used to laugh at those men. A man who picks up chicken eggs is called *kotofolos* [*κοτοφώλος*: chicken-nested man]!... (she laughs)."

Pina-Cabral connects the 'up' and 'down', or 'above' and 'below' dimension in the division of agricultural labour tasks with further cosmological analogies, like "heaven/hell, spirit/body, purity/corruption", all emphasizing the superiority of men over women (1986: 84). In his ethnographic example, the relative superiority of men and the

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<sup>40</sup> "Η γυναίκα δεν κάνει το ίδιο αποτέλεσμα με τον άντρα."

<sup>41</sup> "Το 'τι οι γυναίκες κάνουν βαριές, αντρικές δουλειές, έχει να κάνει με το ότι ο άντρας πήγαινε για μεροκάματο, για να φέρει παραπάνω εισόδημα στο σπίτι."

susceptibility of women to impurity, is demonstrated by reference to the myth of Adam and Eve. Similar cosmological rationalization is often applied by my informants in Vassilikos, to explain the 'naturalness' of male preeminence. Every time my informants are faced with a child's or an anthropologist's persistent inquiry of "why work is divided like that", they initially offer examples demonstrating the endurance (*αντοχή*) and strength (*δύναμη*) of the male physical body, and eventually conclude with statements like: "this is the way God created the world", and "this is the natural way (things are)". As I will illustrate in the subsequent chapters of this thesis, both statements represent a tautology: the "way God created the world" is believed to be "the natural way".

But what initially attracted me in Pina-Cabral's analysis was a parallel between my work and his; the observation that women in a traditional rural setting like Alto Minho, where "production is carried out at the level of the household" appear to have more economic power than women of the bourgeoisie (1986: 84-7). This observation appears to coincide substantially with my ethnographic material from Vassilikos. In the previous section I presented a young woman, Tasia, who prefers the hard manual work of the olive harvest to the more relaxed caring of her toddler son at home. Tasia is conscious that:

"The people here in the village respect working in the fields more than staying home with the children. They say: 'she sits (*κάθεται*) all the time at home'.

As I have already described, women who 'sit' at home and avoid manual labour in the fields are sharply criticized by fellow-villagers of both sexes. Vassilikiot women who participate in economic activities which are jointly undertaken by their household are praised as 'real' members of their household and their husbands are said to be 'lucky'. This can be easily interpreted as a manifestation of an ideology supporting traditional gender roles and ideals as 'self-sufficiency', a term I have repeatedly used in this chapter. But what came to me as a surprise was the recognition that local women who stay at home and are not participating in the collective-household enterprise, will eventually lose

their relative power and prestige, in both the household and the village. "The peasant women who adopt urban mannerisms in order to increase their short-term prestige, are in fact abdicating an age-old position of relative power and independence" (Pina-Cabral 1986: 86). Several young and middle aged Vassilikiot women, echoing Pina-Cabral, realize that avoiding manual labour in the fields or in the family-run tourist enterprise will result in not only confinement in the home, but criticism by fellow villagers, and most importantly, a weakening of their ability to have any economic clout in their household. Here is a young married woman:

"I prefer to go to the olive harvest in November or work at our taverna in the summer. We have olive trees, we also have a taverna. Why should I let others work and stay at home alone, pretending to be a lady?"

In fact, women are conscious of the importance of their labour's contribution, which is understood as a form of investment in the household economy, deserving recognition by husbands, fathers, brothers and in-laws. Such claims for recognition are more clearly expressed by women themselves in relation to the labour they have invested in their parental household before marriage. A sixty year old woman argued:

"I did a lot for my father. A lot of hard work. But I was never given as much as I deserved for my dowry. I did all the jobs. On my knees, I was hoeing the soil on my knees. This is why my knees can not hold me now."

And a twenty-five year old:

"I was working for years for my father. I was working in the restaurant and in the fields. But he doesn't give to me. He always helps my brothers. He doesn't give to me or my sisters enough. Now I work in our own [property], but my husband does not refuse me (*δε μου χαλάει χατήρι*)."

In Vassilikos, where a strong patrilocal influence was, until recently, regulating postmarital residence patterns, this form of resolute identification of a married woman with her husband's household is frequently referred to. This shift was probably facilitated by the dispersed pattern of the village's settlement, which inhibited regular communication between married women and their affines, discouraging the formation of

matrifocal groups. Nowadays, distance between households is minimized by young women's access to cars or mopeds, while patrilocality is also threatened by local girls who marry outsiders willing to settle in the village and who ally with their affines. Women however, still engage in collective economic activities undertaken by their households - work on farm, fields or tourist enterprises - and regard their work as an important indicator of their role in household affairs.

#### **f. Work as 'struggle'.**

"...the winning of bread from the rocky fields is, as the villagers say, 'an agonizing struggle' (αγωνία). For the year nature, if not actually hostile to man, is at least relatively intractable. Day after day the farmer wears himself out in clearing, burning, ploughing, double-ploughing, sowing, hoeing, weeding; all through the year there are risks from hail, floods, drought, locusts, diseases... (du Boulay 1974: 56)".

'Work in the fields' is a constant process of investing labour in the land through cultivation (καλλιέργεια). But the people of Vassilikos rarely refer to the term 'cultivation'. They prefer to use the word 'work' (δουλειά), instead. In fact, 'work' is synonymous with the image of manual labour, toil and bodily sweat. During my desperate attempts to participate in cultivating the fields, I often encountered informants on the village main road, who having noticed my cloths being covered with mud and dust, used to ask one word: "douleyes? (were you working?)". According to their perception of 'work' as one of physical strain, 'writing a book about the village' - my self-presentation as an anthropologist - did not include enough bodily effort to be considered as 'work'. White collar occupations, although they are referred to by local people as 'jobs' (δουλειές), which is the same term as 'work' (δουλειά), are deprived of the aura of real manual labour in the fields. This does not mean that white collar jobs are perceived as inferior to agriculture work. On the contrary, they are judged to be more comfortable and privileged occupations,

associated with status and financial security. But there is something special about manual labour, a quality of striving and endurance, which is met with silent respect and appreciation by my Zakynthian informants.

This highly appreciated quality of 'work' is not merely associated with the symbolic attributes of working the land, but it is extended to any kind of task which involves physical toil, like 'building work' or shepherding. It is better described by the word 'struggle', a term acknowledged by anthropologists who have studied rural communities in Greece (Friedl 1962, du Boulay 1974). The farmers in Vassilikos refer to their work in the fields, or to any other activity which is physically exhausting, as "struggle". They will typically reply to the question "how are you?", with the stereotypical expressions: "we are struggling (παλεύουμε)" and "[we are] in the struggle (στον αγώνα)". Accordingly, they see the process of cultivating the land as a process of struggle, a contest with the physical limits of both the labourer's body and the environment.

'Cultivation' in Vassilikos is an act of 'struggle'. It is a matter of observation and experience for the farmer to realize that manual labour and effort is needed in order for the land to become fruitful and its productivity fully realized. This empirical fact is explained by religious cosmology, with the metaphor of 'Man's fall' and God's imperative: 'you shall gain your bread by the sweat of your brow' (Genesis: 3,19). Like the first man in Genesis, the Vassilikiot farmer, right from the instant he acquires land of his own, becomes engaged in a continuous process of 'struggling' with it. This contest begins with the transformation of bush into cultivated land, and/or the 'safeguarding' of the cultivated fields from returning to wilderness. The cultivated fields, as part of nature (φύση), contain a potential for constant regeneration. They yield vital products under the farmer's gaze, and weeds, thorns or undergrowth if they are neglected.

By use of fire, pruning-shears, scythes and sickles the people in

Vassilikos constantly try to keep undesirable vegetation under control. They have to struggle, in ditches close to their homes, in the fields, or even on land adjacent to their tourist enterprises. Modern machine-saws or other mechanical devices for pruning are sometimes used in this process, but most often the villagers control the 'wild' vegetation (αγριάδα) with the most traditional equipment mentioned above; and this effort requires a lot of hard manual labour as I was able to experience myself. 'Cutting wild vegetation' well deserves to be accounted as a 'struggle', since most of the weeds or thorn bushes exhibit a remarkable ability to resist extermination: they prick, have hard stems and roots, multiply and grow rapidly.

Ploughing the fields with tractors is another way of controlling 'wild' vegetation. The local people claim 'their lives were eased' by the introduction of ploughing machines in the '60s.<sup>42</sup> Ploughing the fields with cattle, horses or donkeys, a job traditionally performed by men, involved a lot of hard physical effort. The same was true for the task of un-clothing the soil, a job performed usually by women. Nowadays, the tractors plough the ground around the olive trees at least twice a year, and the farmers seem content with the efficiency and speed of the process, as well as the aesthetic appearance of their well-ploughed farmland. "Look how it looks now!", they say with pride and contentment, "the wild-vegetation (αγριάδες) is gone, and the whole place becomes more tamed (ημέρεψε)!"

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<sup>42</sup> Here is what my informants say about ploughing and agricultural machinery:

"In the '50s the wooden plough was still used in Vassilikos. The iron ploughs 'came' into the village a few years later. Stelios was ploughing with a wooden one until the '70s. The iron plough was expensive and he was poor. He still has one at his place. Lefteris, your friend, knows how to make them. That was the job of his father: he was making things of this kind..."

"Tractors appeared in the village in the '60s and after. In 1953 the first threshing-machine came to the corner of Porto-Roma. Now, life is much easier with those machines. But I still reap a tough piece of my land by hand."

The farmers at Vassilikos are constantly engaged with an additional, archetypical form of 'struggle'. This is their contest with the climate. During prolonged droughts they all become anxious about the yields of their fields, or the pasture for their animals. Often their 'worry' (ανησυχία) reaches the extent of a generalized pessimism, a deep disappointment with their life and the nature of their work. They feel that their labour is 'wasted' (πάει χαμένος) or 'lost' (χάνεται), and their low morale weakens their desire to struggle. As an informant vividly explained: "If it gives back, you work hard and do not feel it".<sup>43</sup> Strong storms or winds 'do damage (ζημιώ)' to the greenhouses and the gardens, but most often the lack of rain, is the most undesirable kind of weather my informants most frequently complain of.

To end this section, I will allow a forty-five year old informant to illustrate his own 'struggle' with the wind and the drought:

"Get angry my '*palikari*' [:brave youth, the wind], take everything with you to blow, to feel relieved. Blow, blow!"<sup>44</sup>

Will it be rain again, or not?... the olives will be lost... everything will wither... Lemons? What lemons? The lemon trees dried out... The olives... look at the olives... [:the olives like the lemons were a little bit thinner then usual!].

I'll tell you about this weather. This weather is called *dinamaria* [:from *dynamis*=power]. The *dinamaria* is when the weather [:the clouds] blows elsewhere. Notice the wind and the clouds... This is strong weather. But it will not rain here, it will burst out elsewhere. Here, it will only be a drought!"

## **g. Conclusion.**

Contrary to the widespread belief in Zakynthos that tourism facilitated the abandoning of agriculture, the overwhelming majority of Vassilikiots continue to engage in traditional farming practices of one sort

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<sup>43</sup> "Αμα αποδίδει, δουλεύεις και δεν το καταλαβαίνεις!"

<sup>44</sup> "- Θύμωσε παλικάρι μου, πάρτα όλα να ξεθυμάνεις, να εκτονωθείς. Φύσα, φύσα!"



or another. The old or middle-aged villagers appear reluctant to abandon the 'farming way of life'. Independent of their success with the tourist economy, almost all of them define themselves as 'farmers' (αγρότες). Utilizing any productive resource their farm-land can provide, is for them an imperative, an ideal which is described by the anthropologist as 'self-sufficiency'. Young Vassilikiots, although their involvement with agriculture seems more opportunistic when compared to their fathers', gradually realise that tourism and the farming lifestyle are somehow interrelated. Tourism provides an immediate market for locally produced agricultural goods, while simultaneously the folkloric aura of traditional agriculture revitalizes the image and marketing of the tourism industry. It is not surprising, that while the 'old folks' continue to believe that tourists come to Vassilikos solely attracted by its beaches and the landscape, their sons or daughters rediscover old agricultural instruments, like ploughs or mill-stones, to decorate their bars and tavernas. Furthermore, owning and working the land, as I have already illustrated in Chapter Two, legitimatises an individual's claim to local identity and any rights - like the right to enter the tourist economy - which stem from it.

My data in Vassilikos contradict Franklin's pessimistic prediction that European peasantry's "survival is unlikely" (1969: 219). What seems to be 'unlikely' in Vassilikos is that a complete abandonment of farming activities will ever take place. The majority of my informants, confident by their engagement in various tourism enterprises during the tourist season, take advantage of any resource or benefit stemming out of traditional farming; EU subsidies for small-scale animal husbandry or the immediate absorption of local vegetable products by the tourist market are examples of resources of this kind. In addition, small-scale tourist enterprises, like the ones ran by Vassilikiots, presuppose constant labour and caring for the surrounding environment, the same kind of labour or 'struggle' devoted to farming activities. As my informants clearly describe, labouring for tourism and labouring for the farm are processes which can not be radically separated:

"Having 'rooms for rent' in a olive grove, requires both the rooms and the olive trees to be well-cared off. You have to work constantly on your land... You have to 'struggle' (*να αγωνίζεσαι*)... Even tourist jobs have toil!"

Even nowadays, when most Vassilikiots own olive groves of their own, some villagers undertake unfavourable arrangements of olive cultivation, a relic of the traditional system of *sebremata* regulating the allocation of the produce between landlords and peasant labourers. Such an undertaking can be understood as a manifestation of the ideal of 'self-sufficiency', and the idea that a readily available resource must never be wasted.<sup>45</sup> 'Self-sufficiency' is further demonstrated in the recruitment of household members for the olive harvest. This kind of harvest is the sole part of the cultivation, in fact the only one, which is still immune to agricultural technology. The traditional method of harvesting by the use of sticks and sheets survives today in its original customary form, along with a particular division of labour between women and men. The work-tasks in the olive harvests are divided into work performed above the ground by men, and jobs performed on the ground by women.

Most women in Vassilikos understand that participation in collective household projects strengthens their position and status in the household and the community. They tend to ridicule those women who dislike 'work in the fields' and prefer to 'sit' isolated at home, doing nothing apart from caring for the children. Vassilikiot women, like men, do not radically distinguish between agriculture and tourism: they frequently use resources and produce derived from their farms to sustain their tourist-related enterprises and vice versa. Vassilikiots interpret their 'work' in both economies as an investment in the household's well-being.

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<sup>45</sup> A farmer's willingness to accept an unfavourable *sebria*-arrangement, may be partially dependent upon a previously established 'obligation', involving various kinds of resources or advantages the farmer has previously received from the landlord. The farmer, however, will attempt to account for the conditions of this relationship, and the requirements of the particular cultivation, by mobilizing the labour of his household, and will eventually incorporate the benefits and the resources received, into his/her household's economy. The ideal of self-sufficiency rules here, and determines the farmer's economic strategies.

'Work in the fields' itself, like any kind of hard manual labour, is locally perceived as a form of 'struggle'. The image of life as 'struggle', is more than a mere metaphor to the local people: it represents an agonistic attitude towards life, one of challenge towards the elements of the physical environment. To speak in crude anthropological terms, **between 'nature' (φύση) and 'culture' (πολιτισμός) or 'society' (κοινωνία), lies a large intermediate terrain, the 'cultivated land', which is at the same time part of both 'culture' and 'nature'.** Replacing the abstract word 'culture' with the local term 'community' (κοινότητα) or 'village' (χωριό), cultivated land can be understood as 'cultivated nature' (καλλιεργημένη φύση), an extension of the village itself. And 'cultivated land', although it entails the potential to regress back into wilderness (λόγκος), is legitimately part of 'culture'. Cultivation, the farmer's constant 'struggle' in the fields keeps that part of 'nature', which is simultaneously part of 'culture', within the limits of a comprehensible human 'order'. 'Order', here, being the establishment of the farmer's sense of control over his/her immediate environment. The concept of 'order' and its importance for the farmers of Vassilikos will be further illustrated in the following chapter, the ethnography of domestic animals and their relationship with their owners.

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**Chapter Four:**  
**Domestic animals**

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**a. Introduction.**

*The people in Vassilikos say that they 'keep' animals 'on their land' because animals are 'useful'. They also say, that they 'keep' animals 'on their property' because 'they always did', that is, because 'they are used' 'to having' animals and 'they like' to do so. But as they say, they "like to have animals because their animals are useful".*

The concept of usefulness is central in most local rationalizations concerning animals and animal husbandry. Several Vassilikiots claim that they prefer to work 'on the' animals (στα ζώα), rather than working on building construction (στην οικοδομή) or 'for the tourists' (για τους τουρίστες); but they immediately rush into clarifying that the latter kind of jobs offer better economic rewards, and 'this is why' they often 'have to' prioritize them over animal husbandry.

Indeed, Vassilikiots' relationship with 'their' animals has some intrinsic value for them, one however, which is never explicitly stated or offered as a justification for their engagement with small-scale, relatively unprofitable forms of animal husbandry. The farmers of Vassilikos briefly admit that they 'like' or 'love' animals, but after a short silence, they add an explanatory phrase starting with the word 'because': "because... it is good to have animals", "because animals are useful".

"A distinction must be made... between mere appreciation of the work the animal does, and the love of an animal because it is useful" argues du Boulay writing about Greek rural people and their relationship with animals (1974: 86). Du Boulay explains that animals are not loved for their 'sheer utility' but because they are 'useful' members of the rural

household. And the rural household rarely includes "non-working" members. Thus animals, by means of their inclusion or membership into the household, enter a relationship of "mutual" or "reciprocal obligation", according to which, like any other household member, they are expected to contribute to its welfare, being entitled in turn to the necessary 'care' needed for their maintenance (ibid: 86-89).

I believe that du Boulay, by recognizing the inclusion of animals in the rural household, and in fact, their positioning at "the lowest position" in it, sets the initial parameters for deciphering the expectations rural Greeks have of their animals and the meaning they attribute to the term 'usefulness'. Starting from this point, I am about to explore the ways Vassilikiot farmers 'care' for their animals, the ways they punish or complain about them, the repetitive, simple but exhaustive tasks of their everyday interaction with them. It is my objective in this chapter, to situate the relationship of Vassilikiots with their animals in the context of 'order' (τάξη), which is applied by the farmers themselves and rules over any object, being or activity in the environment of the farm, rendering concepts such as 'care', punishment and 'usefulness' meaningful.

The following section is an ethnographic presentation of the animals in question, that is, the animals 'kept' by the average household in Vassilikos. Some reference is made to the basics of their husbandry and their locally defined 'usefulness'. Then, in the subsequent section, I proceed in examining the local 'flocks of animals' (sheep) and the specifics of this form of animal husbandry. Following this, I clarify, by means of further ethnographic examples, the meaning of 'order' (τάξη) and 'care' (φροντίδα), two local concepts regulating the relationship of the farmers to their animals. 'Order', in particular, is a central concept of my work, since it embraces and directs the content of several other concepts examined in this chapter. The last section of the chapter is devoted to an additional exploration of the local conception of 'order' as is manifested by the Vassilikiots' control over their animals' reproductive cycles.

## **b. The animals.**

Vassilikiots use the word 'animals' (ζώα) to refer to 'their' animals on 'their' farm. This does not mean that 'wild', undomesticated animals are not entitled to the term 'animal', but Vassilikiots are mainly concerned with their own animals, 'their' farm animals. In a similar way, while all animals on the farm as a group are called 'animals' by their owners, the term 'animals' is more often applied to sheep and goats. For example, a farmer in the context of a particular conversation will refer to chickens and dogs, with their generic names, 'chicken' and 'dog', and to sheep and goats, even cows sometimes, with either their generic name or simply as 'animals'. Here, the generalizing term 'animals', does not indicate negligence or disregard for the animals in question, on the contrary, it suggests an implicit recognition of their value or 'usefulness' to the farmer.

Sheep and goats are typical examples of what the local farmers consider to be 'useful' farm animals. They are common, present on almost every farm, and form an indispensable unit of animal stock held by the average household in the village.

"In the past, four goats and four sheep were usually kept by every family. Some families even had a cow for milk. Nowadays, its more or less the same. We all keep, at least, a couple of goats. Even, an old man, like myself".

As the words of this elderly informant suggest, the number of sheep or goats a household holds depends upon the age of, or the energy devoted by its members to care for them. While most of the households in Vassilikos do not maintain 'flocks of animals', the great majority of them 'keep' (κρατούν) a small number of female goats or sheep, which can be easily watched, grazing and loudly calling to each other on the farmland adjacent to the domestic domain. The adult ones are tied with a five metre long rope, tethered to an iron stake, which is poked into a different piece of land everyday. The animals graze on this piece of land within the

diameter of the five metre rope. The young animals, kids or lambs, are left free to gambol and graze around their mothers. Before sunset the villagers 'gather' (μαζεύουν) the 'animals' back on to the farm.

Special state benefits encourage this kind of small-scale animal husbandry. The benefits are designed to subsidize animal husbandry, and farmers consider them to be an important incentive for 'keeping' a minimum number of seven or eight sheep or goats on their farmland. In addition, the sale of kids or lambs at Easter provides some extra cash to the household's economy. One of the kids or lambs however, is always expected to be consumed within the household on this religious occasion. The villagers are proud to be in a position to consume the meat of animals they raised themselves. The quality of the meat is referred to as being 'superior', and the household's self-sufficiency as a productive unit is directly or indirectly recognized by both guests and the family members themselves.

All the Vassilikiots I know, unanimously, declare their 'preference' for sheep over goats. Having read John Campbell's classic ethnography about the Sarakatsani several times before I went to the field, I couldn't help thinking about his remarks on the same topic every time my informants compared sheep with goats. For the Sarakatsani, sheep are "God's animals"; they are "docile, enduring, pure and intelligent" (Campbell 1964: 26). Goats, by contrast, are associated with a wide array of negative features: "[they] are unable to resist pain in silence, they are cunning and insatiate feeders... although Christ tamed these animals the Devil still remains in them" (Campbell 1964: 31). In Vassilikos, although goats are not despised to the same degree, they are often blamed for their 'disobedience' and their 'untamed' nature, while, at the same time, sheep are praised for their submissive and benevolent character. "Sheep are more obedient" and "more mild (ήρεμα) animals", Vassilikiots claim. Watching the kids playing and fighting with each other, they make comments like:

"Look how unruly (άταχτα) the kids are. They are strong

and grow well, but they don't stand still not even for a minute. The lamb is not so frisky (ζωηρό) like them. The sheep is a blessed animal! (είναι ζώο ευλογημένο).

But at the same time, the farmers cannot hide their secret admiration for the kids' strength and good health. Goats, by being 'wilder' than sheep, are expected to be 'stronger', more 'resistant' to disease or harsh environmental conditions. This is how a local man puts it:

"Lambs are good animals but weak. They are very weak in comparison with goats. Last year I lost a few ewes because of an illness. I rarely lose goats to an illness.

But you see, I make cheese and I need to have all those animals. In order to make cheese you need sheep, otherwise the cheese is not good."

The milk of sheep is better suited to cheese production and this is why Vassilikiot flocks are composed of sheep instead of goats. However, villagers who are not seriously involved in animal husbandry, prefer to 'keep' some goats on their farmland, investing the minimum of care and worry in exchange for the meat, milk, or state benefits, bestowed by those animals.

There are not too many cows in Vassilikos, although in the past, 'there used to be more' my informants maintain. "Cows were for milk, but for ploughing as well (ήταν για γάλα αλλά και για ζευγάρι)", they add. Nowadays, the old, local variety of cows, which was used for both milking and ploughing, does not exist any more. It was replaced by a hybrid breed of local cows and 'cows from abroad'; the latter are described by my informants as "those ones which produce more milk". A thirty five year old female informant describes:

"The cows we have now, are 'improved local ones' (βελτιωμένες ενχώριες), with three generations of foreign blood. The local variety (ντοπίες), unlike these ones which are black and white, used to be grey or even brown. In the past we had those cows for both milking and ploughing (για γάλα και για ζευγάρι). People used to replace oxen with cows, so as to have milk at the same time. The older variety of cows were strong but they didn't produce so much milk as the modern ones."



The local variety of cows is portrayed as having greater ‘endurance’ (αντοχή) or ‘strength’ (δύναμη), adjusted perfectly to the requirements prescribed by the local understanding of a cow’s ‘usefulness’ and the local ideal of self-sufficiency. The introduction of tractors in the ‘50s and ‘60s, altered those ‘usefulness’ requirements for cows. Milk production became more essential, and the ‘foreign’ varieties of cows appear as more productive. But the older, local variety of cow was not simply replaced; it was interbred with the new animals. As I will illustrate later in this chapter, Vassilikiots understand cross-breeding as adding to the ‘strength’ of their animal stock, and usually prefer to interbreed a newly acquired ‘foreign’ (ξένο) animal with those being already present, instead of replacing the older variety completely.

Poultry are ubiquitous among the animal life of the average Vassilikiot farm. House yards and the nearby cultivated fields overflow with poultry of all kinds, but primarily chickens and turkeys. All these birds are left free to roam around the farmland and the olive groves preying upon worms, fallen olives, and any possible food they can uncover. In the evenings, they return back to the farm to be sheltered and fed by the farmers. They crowd around their owners, who throw to them some corn, wheat or other kinds of grain as an additional supplement to their diet.

Although Vassilikiots do not worry much about the safety of ‘grown up’ chickens and turkeys - predators like foxes do not exist on the island - they do devote a lot of time and concern to ‘caring’ for newborn chicks. Most hens lay their eggs unobserved in various hidden places on the farmland, but as soon as the farmers notice their newborn chicks, they collect them and put them in cages along with their mother or a foster mother. There, the chicks are protected and fed well for a couple of weeks, until they are old enough to care for themselves successfully. During their first days of their life chicks are considered to be at risk (κινδυνεύουν). They may become ‘lost’ (μπορεί να χαθούν), be killed by

rats or die in a sudden storm.

Contrary to chickens, which are capable of 'hatching their own eggs', the turkeys are believed to be 'stupid'. "They are clumsy and often destroy their own eggs", the local people explain, "they always go and lay their eggs away from the farm, where the eggs will definitely be damaged by rats". This is why the farmer will follow the turkeys to their nests and return their eggs back to the farm. "The turkeys are so stupid, that they keep on returning to the same spot to lay another egg the next day" the villagers remark. When enough turkey eggs are collected the farmers will 'set a nest' for the turkey to roost, or entrust the turkey eggs to a hen who is presumed to be "a better mother". Turkeys' reproduction is believed to be so problematic, that nowadays many farmers prefer to buy turkey chicks which are reared in an incubator.

Turkeys are raised in order to be sold at Christmas, when they bring a significant profit to the household. In the late autumn months, Vassilikiot olive groves are filled with turkeys and their characteristic voice call can be heard everywhere. Unlike turkeys, chicken are valued for both their meat and eggs and are consumed throughout the year, in celebrations or other special occasions, and especially when the household members wish to honour a guest. As I have stated before, Vassilikiots always feel proud to consume their own animals.<sup>46</sup>

Geese and ducks are disliked by many farmers in Vassilikos. Here I quote some of the negative characteristics attributed to them:

"Geese can warn you, nothing is missed [:by them]. But their excrement is a terrible thing and no one in the village really wants them. They eat like elephants and make the water of the other animals dirty. They don't let the chickens eat, unless you stop them..."

"Ducks are *monandera* [:with one gut]; they eat and shit

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<sup>46</sup> Friedl's comments about chickens, in her classic ethnography about Vasilika are comparable to my own:

"The chicken is most significant for the part it plays in Greek village hospitality. The villagers will say, 'come to our house for a proper meal (*trapezi*). We'll kill a chicken for you'. And that is quite literally what they do (Friedl 1962: 31)."

(τρώνε και κανούνε)... I never kept any on my farm and I don't want them. Their meat smells. Even the wild ones which are killed by the men were smelling a kind of fishy smell. They are all day in the mire and the mud."

In spite of all those negative attributes there are a few farmers who keep a few of these birds on their farms. Geese and ducks' singularly identified 'use' is their meat, but their owners enjoy 'keeping' them on their farms, either because they feel that "a farm must have all kinds of animals on it" - a variant of the self-sufficiency ideal - or because they "got used in raising them all those years...!"

Like poultry, rabbits are numerous on some Vassilikiot farms. A few are left free to roam around in a semi-wild condition. But most of them are reared in cages and fed by the farmers with special care.<sup>47</sup> "Rabbits are weak animals", the villagers maintain, "those ones which are free, eat any kind of food and often die by disease". Rabbits are raised for meat, which is consumed, throughout the year, in celebrations or when guests are present. Vassilikiots boast about their '*stifado*', a particular way of cooking rabbits or hares. During the summer, rabbits and chickens raised on the local farms are cooked in the local tavernas or restaurants. In most cases, the same households which own tourist enterprises are in position to raise chickens and rabbits on their farmland. In this sense, tourism and farming, as was repeatedly argued in the previous chapter, appear as complementary manifestations of an economy centred around the household.

Pigs, like turkeys and rabbits are raised solely for their meat. Like turkeys, the time of their death is well specified in advance. As soon as a young piglet is acquired, it is prescribed to be killed on a particular occasion. The rest of the pig's life will be a period of continuous fattening. If pigs have a particular privilege over other animals on the farm, it is that they are expected, and indeed encouraged, to 'get fat'. But

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<sup>47</sup> Rabbits enclosed in cages are fed with *kounelini*, which is a manufactured nutrient bought in the town, and semi-dried fodder which is locally produced.

unlike turkeys and rabbits, which fulfil a more integral and central role in a farm's yearly cycle, pigs are never found in great numbers and rarely multiply on the farm. The farmers avoid long-term pig breeding for the reason stated here by an informant:

"Raising pigs can be profitable. They bear a lot of young ones, even fifteen sometimes, and you can raise them and sell them for fifteen thousand drachmas each. But they smell... They smell a lot!.. Some years ago I had a few. But then, because of tourism... If you rent rooms and have tourists close to your farm, you can't have many pigs."

Dogs are present on any Vassilikiot farm, signalling the appearance of strangers with their persistent barking. They are simply described as 'useful' animals by their owners. "Dogs do work", Vassilikiots maintain and acknowledge the conventional role of dogs as guards. But an individual dog, is primarily evaluated in terms of its contribution to hunting. "It is a good dog, it hunts", the local men say in order to justify the special attention and 'care', they devote to particular animals.<sup>48</sup> In contrast, dogs which are unsuccessful in hunting, are relatively neglected: they are only fed or spend endless hours tied up. However, the farmers even have a few good words to say about these less fortunate animals. A dog, more than any other animal on the farm, meets the expectations of a farmer in respect to the idea of 'order' (τάξη). For the villagers, obedience and devotion are not mere stereotypical qualities assigned to canine behaviour, it is what one expects from every animal on the farm, but what one very rarely gets.

To end this section, I will briefly refer to horses and donkeys, animals which were traditionally considered 'useful', but were left without any 'use' over the last thirty or forty years. It is trivial to refer to the contribution of horses and donkeys to transport and ploughing - even

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<sup>48</sup> In the local coffee-houses discussions about hunting dogs are heated, like those about politics or sport. I will refer to the particular relationship of Vassilikiot men to their dogs in the ethnography of Zakynthian hunting, in Chapter Seven.

donkeys were used for ploughing in Vassilikos - in the past. The older people talk about the mansion of the local landlord and the abundance of horses and carts based on its premises. They vividly recollect transporting locally produced goods to the town with carts, a five hour long journey on a dusty earth-road. They equally remember their labour and 'sweat' in the fields, 'doing *monaletro*': which means ploughing with one animal, a horse or a donkey. Nowadays, all these activities hardly exist and the few remaining horses in Vassilikos were made redundant thirty years ago. However, horses, even stripped of their instrumental 'usefulness', are still referred to in Vassilikos with a tone of restrained nostalgia. Men are particularly delighted to talk about them, since, as they explained to me, "riding horses and knowing about horses was the concern of men". Since there were not enough horses left, it was hard for me to investigate the relationship of men and horses in practice; I met, though, several thirty and forty year old men who advertised their experience or knowledge 'about horses':

"...with carts we grew up, with horses. This is why we know how to saddle a horse and many other things that a horseman (αλογάρης) knows..."

Recently, tourism provided a few new economic incentives for some people to maintain horses on their farms. This is related to the passion of tourists for riding and the commercial success of 'folkloric' images, associated with the 'traditional', 'peasant' lifestyle. My informants illustrate this in the following quotations:

"I have this old mare, as you can see. She is old and unable to conceive. She is of no use any more (δεν χρησιμεύει σε τίποτα πια) and her food is costly..."

In the summer I gave her to those people who organized a riding school for the tourists. They made some money but they gave us nothing. They promised me a new saddle, but..."

"We had a horse, as you probably remember, but we gave it away because it was 'a lot of hard work'. It was a strong animal... but it can't be of any use, any more..."

On the plains, they keep a lot of horses for the tourists to ride. There you can see a lot of horses..."

" - You remember the old Michalis' donkey, don't you... That miserable old one who spent the whole winter in the olive grove opposite your house [see the **photograph bellow**]. I bought him for very little money, I washed him and fed him. He became young again! You wouldn't have recognized him..."

Then, I organized this 'Greek night' at my bar. A lot of people came, and a lot of tourists. Then, one was dressed in *tsolias* [:traditional male costume with the characteristic white shirt] and rode on the donkey. He rode all the way through the village. The people were cheering and the female tourists were fascinated!"



[Michalis' old donkey before engaging in his career as a tourist attraction].

### c. The flocks.

"There is plenty of pasture in Vassilikos, but in the recent years the flocks were few. There was a big flock in Xirokastelo, one in Potamia, one or two on the plains of Vassilikos. Now, the flocks are increasing again. A few people who had twenty animals or so enlarged the size of their flocks."

Some small flocks of ‘animals’, sheep and goats, were always maintained on the land at Vassilikos. Their average size was between sixty and a hundred animals. In the last thirty years the people who were willing to maintain flocks of animals were few, and shepherding was considered to be among the poorest occupations one could have. Nowadays, new economic incentives, like state benefits and the growing (tourist) demand for locally produced cheese, make animal husbandry attractive to several Vassilikiots. As my informant, who is quoted above, suggests, more and more people are increasing the size of their animal herds. Most families in the village already ‘keep’ a few goats and sheep on their farmland, and the transition to the stage where the animals form a ‘flock’ (κοπάδι), takes place gradually and slowly, as the farmers decide to kill fewer lambs each season and, thus, increase the size of their flocks.

Vassilikiots owning ‘flocks of animals’ are locally referred to as people who ‘have flocks’, and only rarely as ‘shepherds’ (βοσκοί). Most local people ‘know’ about ‘animals’, and have some on their farms. A farmer’s decision to form a flock and devote most of his attention, time and energy to ‘caring’ for it does not sever his relationship with other kinds of farming activities, like the keeping of other farm animals or participation in the olive harvest. The household oriented village economy makes this feasible, since the farmer’s wife or other members of the family can take ‘care’ of additional ‘farming’ responsibilities, while a man is out in the fields shepherding the flock. If the farmers realize that their venture with flock husbandry is economically unprofitable and ‘they can not make it’ (δε βγαίνουν), they will simply sell most of their animals and resort to other forms of farming, or even tourism.

Until thirty or forty years ago, the time when most Vassilikiots were landless, most flocks of animals were owned by landlords. The labourers (κοπιαστές) who were in charge of the flocks, were entitled to some proportion of the animal products: cheese, milk or cash from the lambs killed at Easter. The exact ratio of the labourer’s share was defined

by *sebremata*, a set of rules defining the economic relationship between landlords and peasant labourers living and working on a landlord's land. *Sebremata* on animal husbandry, like those on agriculture (see chapters two and three), were particularly harsh upon the labourers, allowing few opportunities for them to accumulate wealth. In the case of flocks, for example, a labourer was responsible for a number of sheep, or 'heads' of animals (κεφάλια). The labourer had to manage the number of lambs killed at Easter, so as to maintain or 'keep' the original number of 'heads' entrusted by the landlord. Any loss of animals, due to accident or illness, was charged to the labourer, because, as my informants vividly recollect, it was blamed on their lack of 'care' or 'concern' for the animals in question: "Any time an animal was lost, the landlord used to say: 'it's your fault, you didn't care for the animals well enough!'" . A sixty-five year old informant remembers:

"I always 'kept' animals. Thirty of the master and not even one mine. When I asked the master to keep a ewe-lamb (μηλιώρα), he said: 'Not even a cockerel of your own will you have as long as you live on my land.'

In the '70s I got land of my own. Now, I have land and animals, but I can't do much. In the past I could do a lot, but I had nothing..."

Some landlords, those portrayed by the local people as 'the good ones', used to 'allow' the labourers to 'keep' some animals of their own in addition to the number of 'heads' entrusted to them in the first place.<sup>49</sup> As soon as the landless labourers started acquiring land of their own, they became more independent, and succeeded in negotiating better terms in the *sebremata* arrangements. 'Having animals as *misaka* (:half ownership) was such a relatively favourable arrangement. But nowadays, although all people who maintain 'flocks' depend upon - to a greater or a lesser degree - a landlord's land for the grazing of their flocks, the animals comprising the flocks are their 'own' property. As a forty year old informant maintains:

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<sup>49</sup> "Μας άφηναν να κρατάμε και μερικά δικά μας ζώα".



"Why should I spend so much effort to 'keep' those animals, if I have to have them as *misaka*! Only somebody stupid would have done so!"

Although goats are present on almost any farm in Vassilikos, very rarely are they numerous enough to form flocks. The 'flocks of animals' are all flocks of sheep.<sup>50</sup> The reason for this is that the milk of sheep is necessary for the production of cheese. As a local man with a 'flock' explains:

"The sheep makes less milk than the goat. But the milk of the goat is not good for making cheese. When you make cheese with a lot of goat's milk the cheese smells."

This is why only a small amount of goat's milk is mixed with that of the sheep in cheese production. The local variety of cheese, *ladotyri*, is a traditional Zakynthian product, and it is popular, not only among the local population, but among tourists, both foreign and Greeks from the mainland. Vassilikiots owning 'flocks' are seriously engaged in *ladotyri* production and the profit from it is a serious incentive for maintaining the flocks.

An elaborate variety of names is used by Vassilikiots to refer to their 'animals', sheep and goats. These are locally standardized names denoting particular animal characteristics, like their colouring and other physical features. They facilitate the identification of particular animals in a given flock of sheep or goats. They further facilitate conversations about animals between fellow-villagers, since they directly portray the appearance of the animals in question. To my knowledge, similar sets of standardized names of sheep and goats exist in most provinces of rural Greece. Particular animal names, like *Giosa*, *Liara* and *Bartsa*, are widespread and commonly used in many places, but the majority of names 'for goats' (για τα γίδια) or 'for sheep' (για τα πρόβατα) represent innovative expressions of local culture and are influenced - at

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<sup>50</sup> There is only one flock of goats in Xirokastelo, the mountainous region adjacent to Vassilikos.

least in the Zakynthian case - by regional dialects. Table 1 lists a catalogue of these names as I recorded them in Vassilikos.<sup>51</sup>

TABLE 1

Names 'for sheep' (για πρόβατα) refer to either gender (Ζυγούρι/κριάρι: a ram or προβάτα: an ewe) and age (αρνί: a lamb or Μηλιώρα: a lamB-ewe) of the animal in question or other physical characteristics, like small ears (Τσίπα) or possession of horns (Κουρούτα). But the majority of the names 'for sheep' refer to the colours of female sheep (προβάτες: ewes). Here is a short catalogue:

Λιάρα - a white ewe with black spots.

Μπελίτσα - a completely white ewe.

Μουρτζίνα - a white ewe with white and black spots on her face.

Γαρδέλα - a white ewe with various colour patterns on her face.

Μαυρομάτα - a white ewe with black coloured-spots around her eyes.

Κάτσενα - a white ewe with brown coloured patterns on her face.

Λάγια - a completely black ewe.

Similarly, names 'for goats' refer to features like lack of horns (Σούτα), small ears (Τσίπα) or horns that are raised backwards or upwards (Πισωκέρα and Ορθοκέρα). Most names 'for goats' refer to the colour patterns of she-goats and are comparable - often identical - with the one's applied 'to ewes':

Λιάρα - a white goat with black spots.

Λάγια - a completely black goat.

Μώρα - another name for black goats.

Μπάρτσα - a white and grey goat, which is 'rather white' (ασπρουλιάρα) on the front or middle part of her body and black at the back.

Γκιάσα - a white goat with a grey markings on her body.

Κούκια - a cinnamon-coloured goat.

Χιόνα - a completely white goat.

Κοκκίνω - a goat of a reddish colour (κοκκινοπή).

Μπούτσικα - a goat with grizzled colour patterns on her face (ψαρή στο πρόσωπο).

Ρούσα - a somewhat reddish or yellow goat, and rather large.

There is a special local breed of sheep in Zakynthos, called 'the Zakynthian sheep or simply the 'ntopia (local) sheep'.<sup>52</sup> Ntopia sheep are larger than those from mainland Greece, have longer necks and curved noses, and are locally considered to be more beautiful. However, ntopia sheep are frequently interbred with sheep from mainland Greece, or even

<sup>51</sup> John Galaty in an article referring to cognition and livestock identification among Maasai pastoralists, presents elaborate tables of names for cattle based on "status, colour, pattern, horns and distinctive characteristics" of particular animals (1989: 219-25). Evans-Pritchard in the Nuer presents a similar description of terms depicting cattle by reference to colour, shape of horns, sex and age (1940: 41-5). I was struck by the similarity between those 'cattle descriptives' and the names used by my Vassilikiot informants to identify individual sheep or goats in their flocks.

<sup>52</sup> In Chapter Three, I referred to a local variety of olive trees in Vassilikos, which are similarly called 'ntopies-olive trees'. The term ntopies is further employed to describe the 'local' breed of cows, as I have already described earlier in this chapter.

with foreign varieties, since their milk production is not considered to be sufficient enough. "The *ntopies* ewes don't do so much milk. The *mpastardemenes* (μπασταρδεμένες) are the best ones" the local people maintained. *Mpastardemenes* means 'bastard', or of 'mixed breed'.

Vassilikiots, as I have already mentioned in the previous section, prefer to interbreed newly introduced breeds with the animals of their flock, instead of replacing the old breed with a new one.<sup>53</sup> In this way they feel that they can better test the results of interbreeding: particular attributes like the animal's milk production, 'strength' and physical characteristics. They carefully observe their animals and remember particular traits and characteristics. All Vassilikiot men 'with flocks' are in a position to recognise the 'animals' of neighbouring flocks. Particular individuals argue: "I know about all sheep in Vassilikos, their history, which was their mother, to whom they belong."

Here, I will let some Vassilikiots present their flocks and their engagement with them, in their own words. Petros is about forty years old, married, with children. In the summer period he rents sun-umbrellas and canoes on a beach, which the environmentalists consider part of the marine conservation park. This is what he says about his flock of animals:

"I love animals [:sheep] and I have a flock. I have sixteen *stremmata* [*strema*:1/4 of an acre] of land and a hundred more as a *sebria* of the big landlord. This makes enough pasture for my sheep. My father takes them out when I have to work at the beach with the tourists.

I would have had more animals if it was not for the tourism. The animal work is a kind of job I like. But tourism brings a lot of profit. I feel insecure with my job on the beach because of the 'ecologists' and all the trouble they cause us. I would have liked to have a few rooms to rent and plenty of time to work with the animals. With the animals and your own property you are independent. But I

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<sup>53</sup> This tendency of Vassilikiots to cross-breed foreign breeds of animals with their local ones, fits with Long and van der Ploeg's understanding of endogenous development in European farming, a process which enhances heterogeneity and contains "a specific balance of 'internal' and 'external' elements" (1994: 1-4).

don't have the capital I need to make (να φτιάξω) my life [as I want it be]."

Mimis is about sixty years old. He shepherds the flock on fields he has as a *sebria* from a landlord, or even rents access to more fields from other people. His flock and his sheep-fold (στάνη) are portrayed in the photograph below. He says:

"I have about seventy sheep. I don't leave the lambs at home; they follow their mothers. I can't do more because my wife is sick. My daughter helps me with milking. She makes the cheese, as well. I love this job, but if you are old..."



Stathis is twenty-five years old, married, with one child. He refers at length and in detail to his engagement with 'flock' husbandry:

"I have forty sheep. Small built ones from Pinia. Look, the *mpastardemena* 'animals' are the best. I don't like the big local ones, but not even the German ones which don't move at all!

I like the size of my flock. I want it just a little bit larger. I kept ten ewe-lambs for life (για να ζήσουν). So next year there will be fifty. Next year sixty. But I don't want more..."

Some years ago, I had three cows, but I couldn't make it [financially]. The cheese merchant was buying my milk for fifty drachmas per kilo. This was not enough. You see, then, I couldn't make cheese.

In order to make cheese you need sheep. You need, let's say, a hundred kilos of sheep's milk and thirty kilos of cow's milk, or goat's milk.

Now I have sheep and I can make cheese by myself. The milk is not so profitable. In the Peloponese it costs two hundred drachmas per kilo. Here it is bought by the merchant for one hundred and fifty because this is an island, and the merchants count the cost of the ferry-boat.

In the summer I do extra work in the restaurant of my family. In the past I used to collect the garbage of the village and I was paid for that by the community. Now, I can't do the restaurant, the garbage collection and the flock at the same time. So, I stopped the garbage collection.

Some years ago I had some animals but I was not satisfied with them. They didn't make much milk. In 1990 I went to an old man who had a lot of sheep but he was too old to retain his flock. He let me milk his sheep and I saw that the animals were good. I bought them for eighteen thousands per head. Now I live mainly by my flock and I enjoy this job. It is much better than working on the building construction (στην οικοδομή).

Now I know everything that I need to know. I know about illnesses. I walk with an injection in my pocket. If a sheep starts to develop mastitis I do the injection immediately."

Georgos is about thirty years old, married, with two young children. He is respected by his fellow villagers for his knowledge in animal diseases and treatments. They often call him to various farms to give relevant advice or help, when particular 'animals' are in trouble. He is confident and enthusiastic about his involvement with the 'flocks':

"I love this work. But it is difficult. It is a tiring job (κουραστική). I have about a hundred sheep, which is a lot for an area like Vassilikos. I bring sheep from the mainland, not just for myself, but for others as well. I brought the German ewes to Vassilikos. Look at this one, she is a German one. She feels hot (καψώνει). Here in Zakynthos it is too hot for her... she is suffering... She is not like the Greek ones which don't have wool under their bellies. But she has more meat...

Some time ago I had cows (γελάδια) as well, but I

couldn't made it financially (δεν έβγαίνα).

The goats (γίδια) want to run a lot, they are unruly (άτακτα) and often do damage. This is why I have sheep. I do cheese as well... so I need to have sheep...

I know a lot about grasses (χόρτα). *Xinohorto* (sour grass) causes them problems. This is why I move them up and down, so they can eat the best they find. If they stay in one place and they eat the good grass, they will, eventually eat the bad weeds as well.

This is why in the winter I move about a lot. In the summer almost everything is dry, so the sheep don't move, looking for the best kind of grass they can find. So, in the summer I can have a rest under the shade of a tree. But now in the winter there is so much walking, look how many kilos I lost!..."

I have a lot of land and enclosed fields. Without land you can't have animals. But when the weather is dry like now, I have to go out with my flocks to find pasture like the others [:the more unfortunate shepherds who don't have much land of their own]."

Two very important factors determine the economic viability and success of 'flock' husbandry. The first is related to the availability of household members to contribute to the 'care' and labour related to the flock. A wife will provide valuable help in milking and cheese production, while a father will replace the 'flock' owner in shepherding the sheep, in case of an illness or an absence. As became apparent from my informants' comments, the younger 'flock' owners, feel confident about animal husbandry and are optimistic about the future of their flocks. They all have young wives and active fathers, who offer valuable help to them. But, my older informant is constrained by the illness of his wife and relies on the help of his daughter. In all cases however, the existence and welfare of the 'flocks of animals' in Vassilikos is based upon the very nature of the household economy: the willingness of the household members to cooperate, realize 'self-sufficiency' and maximize the household's resources.

Access to land for pasture is the second major prerequisite needed for the maintenance of flocks of animals. Since none among the flock owners in Vassilikos has enough land to satisfy his animals' appetite all

the year round, all of them have to secure pastures on other people's land, through generalized networks of obligation (in case of a landlord's land) or reciprocity (in case of a fellow farmer's land). The access to those pastures could be one of a long term nature, like the example of a *sebria*-arrangement traditionally 'given' by a landlord to individuals of particular families, or even of a temporary nature, like the following:

"I prune Lefteris' olive trees and my 'animals' eat the leaves of the cut branches (τσίμες). In this way we both have some benefit... I feed my sheep and he has his trees well pruned..."

In most instances, the local people carefully respect agreements related to the pasture of their animals. In cases of trespass the tension arising is, most of the time, ephemeral and the villagers always find a way to maintain their friendly or 'good' - as they say - relationships. Here is an example from my fieldnotes:

"Mimis the shepherd came to me to complain about Lefteris' horse. Lefteris, my adopted father, tethered his horse in an olive grove which belongs to the big landlord. It happens to be the case, however, that this olive grove is traditionally given to Michalis as a *sebria*-arrangement by the landlord. In other words, Michalis is managing the olive grove's cultivation and resources. Mimis rented the grove for the pasture of his sheep for forty thousand drachmas. He noticed Lefteris' horse in the field and went to Michalis and complained.

But Michalis didn't want to threaten his 'good relationship' with Lefteris. Thus, he told Mimis: "Go to Lefteris' and tell Lefteris about the horse. But similarly, Mimis was reluctant to threaten his own 'good relationship' with Lefteris. So he approached me and asked me to speak to Lefteris. And this is what I did.

Lefteris didn't like the fact that these two men hadn't told him directly their complaint. But after giving a second thought about the matter, he figured out that they were hesitant out of respect. 'They didn't come to tell you because they count on you (γιατί σε υπολογίζουν)' his daughter-in-law said."

Milking the sheep is a demanding task the flock owners and their wives do twice a day, early in the morning and in the evening before

dark, from November until May. Then, in late May and June they milk only once every day, preferably every morning. As one of my informants explains:

"I am milking the sheep every morning and every night. In the morning I wake up at six. In the afternoon I milk at five or six o'clock, after coming back from the fields. I order the ewes into two groups, the pregnant ones and those ready for milking. Milking the female sheep is the most difficult job because your fingers become stiff."

The milking period coincides with the cheese production period and Vassilikiots use the milk of sheep - in fact this is the major incentive for them to maintain 'flocks of sheep' - in order to 'make cheese'. This is why they try to manipulate the reproductive cycle of the ewes and 'make them become pregnant' early in late April, May or June. In this way, the ewes will bear their lambs early enough for the milk and cheese production to be well on its way in November and December. "For the cheese, it is better (the ewes) to deliver early. The earlier the better", the local people say. But some flock owners are careful not to allow the ewes to become pregnant for a second time in the same year. "This makes them become exhausted (*αυτό τις εξαντλεί*)" they argue, and add: "We let the ram be with them from March until October. Then we keep the ram separate. You need one ram for thirty ewes."

Most ewes give birth to two lambs. The 'flock' owners will 'keep' some lambs 'for life' (*για ζωή*) and 'give' most of them 'for meat' (*για κρέας*). The way they refer to the management of their flocks reflects precision and well designed 'order' (*τάξη*):

"If you have sixty ewes (*προβάτες*), you will get one hundred and twenty lambs. Then you keep twenty for life and the rest are given for meat, especially at Easter."

Giving away lambs for meat, like cheese production, brings a significant profit to the 'household owning the flock'. The lambs suckle from their mothers and receive 'additional' food from the 'flock owner'. During the day they are kept in a separate shelter called a *tsarkos*. This is how Mimis defines the *tsarkos*:



"*Tsarkos* is where the young lambs are enclosed. The others [:the younger shepherds] put their lambs in the *tsarkos*. They do that because they have the help of their wives. They feed the lambs *thirama* [:manufactured food] and they grow much faster. Lambs suckle normally for two months but if they take additional food they can be ready [:weaned] in one month.

But my wife is sick. So when I have to go out with the flock I take the lambs with me."

Unlike Mimis, the younger 'flock owners' put the lambs in the *tsarkos*' (τσαρκώνουν τα αρνιά). George is the most systematic among them:

"I put the lambs in the *tsarkos* and I have no losses. The lambs are for the whole night with their mothers but in the morning I put them in the *tsarkos* (τα τσαρκώνω). The small lambs stay all day in the fold because there is danger of them sleeping in the grass and getting lost. They also gain more weight when they stay back in the *tsarkos*."

This is how I describe in my fieldnotes a typical evening at his sheep-fold (στάνη):

"Before dark George takes the flock back to the fold. At the moment he opens the doors of the *tsarkos*, the lambs run out like a big white wave to search for their mothers. For a few brief moments there is noise, bleating, dust and confusion. Giorgos will separate the pregnant ewes from those which are about to be milked. He lets the lambs suckle from their mothers, but since the lambs had 'additional' food during their day-long enclosure in the *tsarkos*, they leave plenty of milk for their owner to retrieve.

Giorgos has a few orphan lambs. He is feeding them with a bottle and a teat made of rubber, at the same time the other lambs suckle from their mothers. 'I'll keep those ones for life', he said, 'they are very tame, they will grow up and remain very tame because they were fed by me'."

As has been already illustrated by the informants themselves, putting the lambs in the *tsarkos* and feeding the 'flock' with 'additional' food (συμπληρώματα), contributes to making animal husbandry more efficient and productive. "In this way", the local people maintain, "the animals become stronger and healthier and produce more milk and meat." Some of the fodder given to the 'animals' is locally produced; the 'flock'

owners plough some fields with tractors to sow fodder. But *thirama*, the food given to the lambs in the *tsarkos*, is bought from the Agricultural Cooperative in the town. It is manufactured and comprises a number of nutrients. Stathis, further explains on the issue of ‘additional’ food:

"Not only the lambs receive ‘additional’ food (συμπλήρωμα); the ewes do as well, at some times of the year.

From April to August, I don’t give to them ‘additional’ food. But during the other times of the year I do. Oat, barley, maize, make good kinds of fodder.

The sheep also need salt. I put salt in their food. I mix it with oats and bran.

I give a special *thirama* to the lambs, with a variety of ingredients (ποικιλία). It has barley, maize, bran, clover, it has all those in it. This is because the animal doesn’t want just one kind of food. A *thirama*, in order to be good must have variety [.:of ingredients]."

‘Feeding the animals with ‘additional food’, epitomizes the Vassilikiot understanding for ‘caring for a flock well’. The old men look with admiration at the young people’s animals, and comment on the *prokopi* (prosperity out of diligence) of the flocks. One of them, pointing to his son’s flock, said:

"In the old times there were not animals like those. In the old times the animals were suffering (βασανίζονταν). They were weaker, thinner...

We have a few places here, a few dry places... In order to have animals, you need ‘waters’, to sow maize, to sow clover. The soil is good, it just needs water..."

#### d. ‘Care’ and ‘order’.

The farmers at Vassilikos usually enjoy showing visitors around their farms. Walking on the farm and talking about the farm is a form of conversation with a distinctive dynamic: the participants communicate about beings or objects lying just in front of their eyes, and the discussion is often stimulated by the physical presence of those objects or beings. The farmer will discuss with the visitor vegetable gardens, animal shelters, and animals of all kinds, emphasizing the labour and ‘care’

needed for their maintenance. If the visitor has come many times before to the farm, the farmer will concentrate on recent changes, newly acquired/born animals, and projects currently being undertaken. The same applies if the visitor is a neighbour and a fellow farmer, but here, the discussion is more likely to focus on instrumental aspects of animal care or cultivation. A visiting fellow villager and the host farmer will almost always exchange some comments about their animal's behaviour, information about animal diseases, or ideas about more efficient animal shelter construction. Vassilikiots appear eager to share their knowledge or experience with their neighbours and, in fact, any new ideas or information related to animal husbandry or cultivation are disseminated around the neighbouring farms with amazing speed and efficiency.

In the context of such a conversation, the host farmer will straightforwardly demonstrate his pride and satisfaction for the well-being of the farm. The orderly arrangement of animals and constructions on a farm is understood as the farmer's personal achievement. Visiting fellow farmers being in a position to appreciate the host farmer's accomplishments, express their admiration with praise and recognition. The conversation will eventually concentrate on issues of the organization of the farm and the projects to be undertaken in the near future. At any point in time, the farmer encounters specific problems relating to the practical requirements of running a farm and the 'care' of particular animals. Those considerations are expressed in the farmer's words while he is walking around, or working on the farm in the presence of a second person. For the visiting fellow villager, such conversation is informative and instrumental, for the anthropologist it supplies an abundance of ethnographic insight.

Any time the farmer is discussing his farm, past and future are reflected in the present. The farmer narrates the older stages of the farm's development: what was the state of the farmland when it was bought from the landlord, how and in which order was every feature of the farm developed, how much 'struggle' or effort was required for the present day

ordered state of 'things' to be achieved. But while the present is filled with the satisfaction of achievement, the realization of the farmer's effort, the future is already upon them. In the words of a farmer, the present order is intimately linked with future plans about the organization of the farm, new cultivation to be undertaken, more or less animals to be 'cared for'. The farmer points to empty plots of land and describes new shelters for animals which are not yet born, vegetable gardens to be better 'fenced and watered' than the present ones. I wrote in my fieldnotes:

"Observing a farmer's bodily movements as he describes his plans for the future, I feel as if he is already touching the new animals or buildings with his hands, placing them in the appropriate, 'right' place for them to be. He is ordering the future beings and objects dramatically, like a little Creator who plans the genesis of his own private universe!"

Safeguarding 'order' on the farm is a constant responsibility for the Vassilikiot farmer. 'Struggling' against undesirable vegetation, is a preoccupation of this kind, as I described in the previous chapter. Cleaning and fixing animal shelters, maintaining the fences of vegetable gardens, repairing all material constructions subjected to wear due to animals' activity or the weather are, similarly, typical repetitive practices for preserving 'order' on the farm. But more than ever, 'order' on the farm is defended against the chaos of its animal members. The farm animals are considered to be prone to disorder if left unattended. In this sense, domestic animals are treated by the farmer like young children; as being too immature to survive without the farmer's 'caring' presence, intervention and control. They are punished for violating the farm's order, rewarded for complying with it. The following ethnographic examples will illustrate this in detail.

During my presence in the field, I kept on helping several local farmers with 'caring' for their animals. Every afternoon those Vassilikiots who do not retain 'flocks of animals' had to 'gather' the household's sheep and goats, which were tethered down on various parts of their

farmland. This job can be particularly tiring - at least for the older individuals - not simply for being repetitive, but because it requires walking across rough or unlevelled ground, and pulling the 'animals' by their ropes [see photograph below]. The 'animals', and especially the younger ones, are always disobedient enough to add some extra difficulty to the job. They may refuse to get in the pen and remain at their appointed 'place' within it. Most of the farmers expect the 'animals' to 'learn' (*να μάθουν*) their 'right place' in the pen and are punished for refusing to stay in it.



Punishment consists of beating and shouting at the 'animals'. "Why don't you stay in your place", they cry out with pain and tiredness, "how many times I have to teach you your right place!" Young animals are expected to disobey and are, thus, punished more often. "After some time they learn", the farmers repeatedly explain, "if you don't beat them they don't learn!" Goats tend to 'disobey' the farmer more often than the sheep, and are, consequently, more frequently punished. While beating their goats, the farmers tend to compare a goat's disobedience with a sheep's submissiveness: "Look how the ewe knows its place. Goats are not like her. Neither is the lamb-ewe, but she will learn in time".

Orphan kids and lambs in Vassilikos are suckled by foster mothers, goats and ewes. Some of them accept the foster kid or lamb and care for it, but others, especially those which already care for their own

young, strongly resist suckling orphans. The farmers recognize that it is "every mother's instinct to feed her own child", but at the same time they maintain that all animals in the farm 'must' receive 'proper care'. This is why, goats and ewes which deny the teat to orphan kids and lambs are punished for their resistance, while those which 'accept' to feed and foster orphans are praised by the farmers for being 'good mothers' and 'good animals'. The latter animals, fully comply to the local ideals of 'order' and 'self-sufficiency', since they succeed in providing the maximum 'care' with the means already available on the farm.

Like du Boulay (1974), I did not witness deliberate cruelty in the punishment of animals by their owners. Punishment, in the form of beating and shouting at the animals, takes place always in the context of safeguarding 'order' on the farm. Examples of animal misbehaviours which are most often punished consist of intrusion into forbidden places, such as vegetable gardens or barns, physically harming another animal or eating its food. The villagers appear particularly distressed when they 'have' (έχουν) to punish their animals, and almost always they talk to them while they mete out punishment. They explain to them their demeanours and scold them like parents do to their children: "I am rearing you! Why you don't listen? Why you don't learn your place?" (Εγώ σας ανασταίνω! Γιατί δεν ακούτε? Γιατί δεν μαθαίνετε το μέρος σας?). Some animals often refuse to be confined in their shelters (goats or pigs) or cages (hens with newborn chicks), and the farmers become particularly agitated by the animals' inability to 'understand' that their confinement aims primarily to protect them from predation or bad weather. The words 'I am rearing you' (εγώ σας ανασταίνω), repeatedly shouted by the farmers in Vassilikos, still ring in my ears.

It is a matter of personal pride or "a point of honour" - to quote du Boulay's expression (1974: 86) - for all farmers in Vassilikos, male or female, wealthy or poor, "to care for their animals well" (να φροντίζουν τα ζώα τους καλά). 'Caring well' means to provide food, shelter, and

medical care. Absence of adequate animal 'care' is synonymous with disorder. This is because 'caring' for animals 'well' is a further prerequisite for 'order' on the farm. 'Order' (τάξη) and 'care' (φροντίδα) are concepts intimately linked and often impossible to separate.

All farmers store some quantity of 'food for animals' in their barns. Part of it is bought in the town and it is specifically manufactured to fit the needs of particular animals, like *kounelini*, the food given to rabbits and *thirama* the 'additional' food for young lambs. The remainder is locally produced, like fodder which is often cultivated in the local fields. Sacks with bran (mostly given to pigs), corn and wheat (given to poultry), which in most cases are bought in the town, complete the food provision of every barn. Most farm animals receive portions of the 'stored' food as a supplement to their daily diet, which is basically composed of what they can scavenge from the land. Dogs and cats, by contrast, are fed with the remnants of the people's diet and bread. Special food for cats and dogs is very rarely bought, and the notable exceptions concern hunting dogs from rare breeds.<sup>54</sup>

It is a matter of common sense in Vassilikos that all animals on the local farms have 'somewhere' to sleep. Shelters for animals which are considered to be more vulnerable to disease, like cows or rabbits, are more carefully designed, while more resilient animals, such as chickens and dogs, are usually sheltered in more temporary or rudimentary constructions. Sheltering animals adequately is an important constituent of 'order' on the farm. Farm animals wandering around the farm at night signify disorder, and the farmers become particularly distressed at the sight of domestic animals freely wandering in the dark.

Most of the larger mammals on the farm are entitled to some basic form of medical care. In case of a serious illness they receive vitamins or antibiotics in the form of injections or capsules which are mixed with

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<sup>54</sup> As I will describe in detail in Chapter 7, hunting dogs receive special 'care' and attention from Vassilikiots. Most Zakynthian men refer to hunting, and all activities, objects or animals related to it, as a "very important part of their life".

their food. Smaller animals, like chickens or rabbits, subjected to disease or accidents, are most often killed. This is understood as a means of relieving those animals from unbearable pain. The local people talk about those cases like this:

"Do you see this rabbit that I caught? It is one of the free-ranging ones. It is sick, with a problem on his brain. This is an illness rabbits often get, especially if they are free to roam around and eat whatever kind of food they find. This is why I have to care about what kind of food my rabbits eat. This is why I keep them in cages. You see... Now, I have to kill this rabbit (πρέπει να το χαλάσω), what else can I do..."

The farmers claim that they 'know about' (γνωρίζουν) the most frequent or common diseases their animals suffer from, and rarely resort to veterinarians. Although they confront the most serious animal diseases with medication they obtain from the town, in the less critical situations they apply traditional remedies handed down from their forefathers. My informants had little to say about those modern medicines but they were pleased to explain to me the ingredients of the traditional remedies. They used stereotypical phrases like the following ones: "camomile and oil make the ewe's stomach move again" or "ash from reeds mixed with water makes a horse's wound heal".

Killing animals, like punishment, is a critical point in the relationship of the farmer with the animal members of the household. It is the point when 'order' on the farm dictates the demise of the long established process of 'care'. An animal's death is understood by the farmers in Vassilikos in terms of the animal's contribution to the farm's economy and wellbeing. The farmers are conscious that their animals cannot exist outside the context of security, 'care' and 'order' provided by the farm environment and themselves. In this context, the death of farm animals is interpreted as a kind of reciprocation on the animals' part for the 'care' received in the past. Du Boulay recognized this kind of reciprocity and described the relationship between animals and animal



owners as a "mutual" or "reciprocal" one (1974: 86). Extending her work one step further, I understand both 'care for' and 'death of' an animal as different phases of the 'order' on the farm.

"If you have animals, you have to kill them, as well... There is no other way... how are you going to get the food to feed the rest of animals" the farmers in Vassilikos repeatedly argue. Here, the practical necessity - dictating an animal's death - is stated in terms of the mutual interdependence between the farm's constituent parts. From this understanding, the farm appears to operate as a closed system managed by a household-centred economy and according to the ideal of 'self-sufficiency'. The farmers, being at the top of the household's hierarchical organization, are in position to decide the expected life-expectancy of particular animals: "this chicken will die in eight months, this tree in a thousand years", the local people explain and add, "there is a time for everything to die".

The farmers in Vassilikos refer to the emotional stress in killing their own animals as 'sorrow' (στενοχώρια). "This is not a pleasant job", they say, "but it is a 'necessary' one (απαραίτητη)". They often try to rationalize their feeling of 'sorrow' with jokes and humour. In addition, they hire other villagers to "do the slaughtering" (το σφάξιμο) of their "own animals". A few men in the village are particularly competent in performing this task. They are locally respected for "knowing how to kill an animal quickly", that is 'painlessly', and for having the 'skill' (τέχνη) to identify, name and extract, particular parts of an animals anatomy.<sup>55</sup> However, smaller animals like chickens and rabbits are always killed by the farmers themselves.<sup>56</sup> Both men and women know 'how to kill'

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<sup>55</sup> Vassilikiots appear to be particularly interested in the dead animals' anatomy. They carefully observe, and compare each animals' internal condition. Once, while I was participating in the killing and skinning of two rabbits, a male and a female, I recorded the farmer saying: "Look at the fatness of the female. The male one, although had the same age, was thinner. This is because it mates all the time (γιατί βατεύει συνέχεια)!"

<sup>56</sup> Every time Vassilikiots kill a rabbit, they hit the animal two times on the shoulder with the handle of their knife, "in order to anaesthetize it (για να ναρκωθούν)". But this techniques, "does not work all the time" they observe.

animals of this sort, but plucking is done primarily by women, probably because it involves the use of kitchen utensils like casserole dishes. Chickens and rabbits are killed on the spot, at any time their meat is required; this can be an unexpected visit of a friend or a family celebration planned in advance. Here is an extract from my fieldnotes referring to killing chickens:

"Lefteris was asked by his daughter-in-law to kill a chicken. She was expecting some visitors from the town. It was still midday, but since her child was sleeping, this was the best time for her to do the plucking.

During daytime, chickens roam freely around the farm, and Lefteris had to take his gun with him. He explained: 'It is easier at dusk (σούρουπο)', when chickens come back to the hen-house to sleep. At this time, you can catch them by hand.'

After choosing the right chicken to kill, he shot it. Then, I took the chicken to his daughter-in-law. After placing the dead chicken in a casserole dish full of hot water, she explained: 'In this way the feathers come out easily. Here, you can see the chicken's gizzard (η μάμα της). This is where its food goes... My father-in-law feels sorry for killing them (στενοχωριέται που τα σκοτώνει), you see, he cares for them every day...'"

Having already examined 'order' on the farm, in its particular manifestations of punishing, caring and killing farm animals, I will now focus my ethnographic investigation on a particular set of examples. The following section is devoted to examining, how Vassilikiot conceptions of 'order' on the farm and 'care' for the farm's animals, are manifested in a farmer's control over the reproductive cycles and instincts of farm animals.

#### **e. 'Order' and animals' reproduction.**

The farmers in Vassilikos claim that they 'know a lot' about their animal's reproductive cycles and they plainly attribute their knowledge to empirical observation and their farming life-style: "We know about these

things because we always had animals", or "if you have animals you have to know about these things". And 'these things' are presented in a simple straightforward way:

"Donkeys and horses bring forth their young (γεννάει) in May. Rabbits, from November until August. They just stop for two or three months to have a rest. Only humans, the woman for example, are constantly ready to make children. The only animal that competes with the woman is the chicken, and this is because it lays an egg everyday."

As this example suggests, the villagers enjoy drawing comparisons between the reproductive cycles of different animals. They state the facts of animal biology in an instructive, generalizing style of speech which is characteristic of the way people communicate about the well established facts of everyday life. The human self, and more specifically, 'the woman', becomes central to the comparisons, to serve as a fixed point of reference and add some additional humorous flavour to the flat, informative discourse. Zakynthians, and especially Zakynthian men, are renowned for the sharpness and the delicate irony of their comments.

Here is a similar comment on the same theme:

"Look at my ewe and goat.. they are pregnant. They need five months. But the cow does nine, like the woman. The mare needs twelve months and the female donkey thirteen."

The fecundity of different animals is similarly compared by the farmers of Vassilikos. In general, the ability of a farm animal to produce a host of offspring is considered a positive attribute. In this respect, the expectations of Vassilikiots are not met only by pigs and rabbits, the most prolific among farm animals, but even by animals which are normally supposed to give birth to one or two young each time. Several goats in Vassilikos are in a position to drop three and four kids in each litter. And their owners, being proud and delighted at their fertility, try to 'retain' and multiply their 'stock' (γενιά) on the farm. However, there is a single exception to the local preference for multiple offspring litters. As an elderly informant secretly informed me: "If a horse drops two foals in one litter it is a big misfortune. I know of such a case. But for a cow it is

good to make two calves (δαμάλια)."

During my fieldwork in Vassilikos, the farmers kept on showing me 'animals', ewes and goats, with many kids or lambs. They couldn't hide their pride and satisfaction at 'having' or 'keeping' such animals on their farms. Goats and ewes usually give birth to one or two offspring in each litter, but "some ewes drop three lambs at the time, and some goats three, or even, four kids!". Vassilikiots 'keep' some of those kids or lambs 'for life', since 'animals' produced in multiple litters are expected to bring forth many offsprings as well. A farmer who has established a long tradition of 'keeping' goats which are successful in producing triplets and quadruplets, explains:

"I had many 'good' goats in the past. They were giving birth to many kids each time: Three, and sometimes even four. They were all strong, and most of them were able to give birth to many kids themselves. The goats I have now, come from this stock/ancestry/breeding? (γενιά).

'Animals' that drop many young each time are good. This means that if I keep two or three goats during the whole year, I can sell six or nine kids at Easter, with the same [amount] of effort..."

According to this logic, the extra kid or lamb produced by those multiple litters is perceived as an extra benefit for the farm or household in question. The farmers are, thus, 'pleased' and talk about the fecundity of their 'animals' as being 'good luck'. And indeed, this is an exemplary realization of the 'self-sufficiency' ideal, since the maximum outcome is realized, by means or resources already available on the farm and under the minimum of invested 'care' and effort.

Apart from carefully controlling the breeding (τη γενιά) of their 'animals', Vassilikiot farmers carefully manage the reproductive cycle of their sheep and goats, in order to succeed in initiating the milking period at the most convenient period and "have the young kids and lambs ready for Easter". This has already been demonstrated in section c. in my discussion about 'flocks of animals', but it further applies to farmers who do not retain 'flocks'. Here, is how a couple of them express this:

"I will take my *kourouta* [:an ewe with horns] for mating next

year. This animal is young. I want her to develop to full size, like her mother. She has to be almost two years old when she mates for the first time. Otherwise she may stay weak (λειψή)."

"I have five female animals, goats and ewes. They are all pregnant, now, and I expect them to start giving birth after a couple of months. They are going to give birth, each fifteen days after the other. This is because I was careful (πρόσεξα) to take them for mating, in this order (μ'αυτή την σειρά)."

Local knowledge about animals' procreation and reproductive biology is founded on the farmers persistent efforts to manipulate their 'animals' productivity, in order to fit the requirements of the farm and enhance the efficiency of animal husbandry - that is, to maximize their invested 'care' and achieve 'self-sufficiency'.

To further illustrate how 'order' on the farm is extended to control over animal biology I will examine the husbandry of rabbits. As I have already described in an earlier section, rabbits in Vassilikos are 'kept' in cages. The males are 'kept' separately from the females, except for the time they are allowed to mate. The farmers say that they 'let' (αφήνουν) the rabbits mate 'often' (συχνά). As soon as a female rabbit is separated from her young, it is 'put' in the cage of a male rabbit. The two animals are 'left' together for five or six days. The bucks (κούνελoi) which are chosen for 'mating' or for being 'epivitores' (stallions!), are selected on the basis of their "good" qualities. Before arriving at this decision the farmers carefully examine attributes like body size and weight, strength, colour, and their relationship with other male rabbits which were proved to be 'good', and were 'strong' *epivitores* in the past. Any time they want to enrich the bloodstock of their rabbits, Vassilikiots will also get a male animal from a nearby farm, after carefully discussing with their neighbour the animal's ancestry (γενιά).

The farmers' interest in animal reproductive biology is evidently concentrated on instrumental concerns, like qualities that enhance the animals productivity and make animal husbandry more efficient and effective. But there is an exception to this rule of instrumentality.

Vassilikiots pay a lot of attention to the external appearance of their animals: colour, size, shape of particular anatomical features, are all characteristics taken in consideration when the farmers try to decide which animal they will 'keep' 'for life' and which they are about to kill or give away. Particular individuals have different preferences concerning their animals' appearance, and define an animals 'beauty' from their own personal aesthetic criteria. In general, the farmers wish to have animals that represent a variety of possible phenotypes a species of domestic animal can have. For example, although white animals - sheep, rabbits or roosters - are in general perceived as 'beautiful' (ὁμορφά), a 'flock owner' may distinguish (ξεχωρίσει) a sheep with black spots [a *liara*, see table 1], among the uniform flock of white animals, and devote special attention and 'care' to this particular animal. In a similar way, the farmers kill rabbits and chickens selectively, so as to ensure that most colours or other features of their animals, have a good chance to be represented in the generations to come. In other words, the farmers appear to reinforce variety in form, as opposed to uniformity, and provide special 'care' to animals which have a rare appearance, encouraging their breeding in the farm and, thus, the reproduction of the characteristics in question.<sup>57</sup>

When I was conducting my fieldwork, I once noticed an unusual characteristic in the appearance of some chickens on a farm close to my dwelling. It was a little fringe of hair (τσούφα) on their head. Soon afterwards I asked the chickens' elderly owners for more information, and was told that those chickens are called *tsoufates* (*tsoufa* is a wisp). They added:

"We used to have many of them, but then we lost them.  
Last year we borrowed some eggs from a neighbouring

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<sup>57</sup> Vassilikiots interest in maintaining variety in form and appearance among their animals resembles the concern of the Mogbuama farmers in Sierra Leone to preserve a number of rice varieties "by careful selection of planting material" (Paul Richards 1986: 140,131-146).

farm... and now, we have a few of them, as you see, and they will become more soon..."

And then, the husband took me for a walk around the farm and further explained:

"Look at this young cock, his white and *tsoufatos*. I'll let him live and make nice chicks, *tsoufata* like him.

Look at my old big rooster, he is fat and slow, but the younger one is quick. He is chasing hens all the time. He is fertile (*καρπερός*).

You can distinguish the young cocks from the crown and the build. This one is the child of the big rooster. You can see the colours. That one is a child of the younger one.

You can see this yourself, don't you?"

Some months later, a white turkey chick was born on a neighbouring farm. The chick attracted one's attention, being the only white turkey chick on the farm, and in fact, in the whole locality. It received special 'care' by its owner, who told me after some months had passed:

"At the beginning, I was not certain, as you probably remember, about it... I couldn't tell if it will live. But it grew up and is strong like the other ones. Look how beautiful it is, now.

Petros, [a fellow-villager] is asking for it for a long time, now. He wants it on his farm. He wants [to breed] more birds like this. I made up my mind: I'm going to give it to him next week."

But if appearance, a non-instrumental attribute, often attracts the concern of Vassilikiots, 'strength' is a characteristic which is valued, admired and sought after in Vassilikiots' management of animal reproduction. And 'strength' (*δύναμη*) in a farm's animal stock is related to cross-breeding and the concept of the 'bastard'. Bastard animals - goats, dogs or mules - are stereotypically associated with ugliness (*'είναι άσχημα'*) and external characteristics like dark colour, longer horns, smaller, but more heavily built bodies. In the case of goats or rabbits, 'bastard' (*μπασταρδεμένο*) is almost synonymous with semi-wild. A bastard goat or rabbit is cross-bred, or has "blood from" semi-wild animals, mountainous goats or free ranging rabbits. Here are two examples:

"Look at my billy-goat! He is a bastard. It is a very strong animal. This is why he endures the drought so well. He was from a litter of four or five kids. The goats that he makes pregnant do two, three or even four kids each time."

"Today, Lefteris and I caught one rabbit from the free ranging ones. Lefteris checked if the rabbit had its male genitals intact. 'They are, often, caught by a bigger male rabbit', he said. Then, after confirming that the animal's genitals 'were ok', he placed the semi-wild rabbit in the rabbit cages to breed with the enclosed ones. 'I like its colour and strength', Lefteris said, 'this kind of rabbit is stronger. He will do strong children...'"

In a similar way, 'bastard' or 'semi-wild' male animals when compared with pure bred male animals, are considered to be more reproductively potent; their sperm is somehow perceived as "more strong". Vassilikiots explain:

"You put a bitch to mate with a good dog, a good hunting dog. But she is getting away and goes one time with a small bastard, miserable (*μίζερο*) and wretched (*συφοριασμένο*) dog. Then you see that all the cubs that she whelps took from it [:took the characteristics of the bastard parent]! The sperm of the bastard dog is stronger than that of a pure-blooded one.

It is the same with the goats. You put a goat to go with a good billy-goat many times,... a white one, *soutiko* [:without horns] and big. But she goes one time only with a mountain one, a grey, wretched (*συφοριασμένο*) one. Then you see that the kids take from the mountain one. They are born with horns, brown, grey and wretched! But they are strong and tough (*ανθεκτικά*), like their father."

And a similar analogy is applied to donkeys and horses. In the crossbreeding of the two species, donkeys are considered to be better stallions than horses. Donkeys, like mountain-billy goats, are portrayed as ugly, dark in colour, short, strong and enduring hardship. An informant clarifies the issue:

"The Zakynthian donkeys (*οι Ζακυνθινοί γάιδαροι*)[:a local breed] used to be bigger than usual, being able to mate well with a mare and produce strong mules. When the donkey is male and the horse female, the mule will grow up to be a strong mule, otherwise [:when the mule's father is horse and its mother a donkey] the mule is not so strong.



Human intervention in the farm animals' reproductive behaviour is further illustrated in an example of forced 'foster mothering'. Vassilikiots, always make certain that lambs and kids are evenly and orderly allocated to different goats and ewes. As an informant puts it:

"If I have a goat with many kids and another one has just one, then I take one kid and I give it to the other goat, the one which hasn't got many kids. She may have less kids because they died or because they were sold or given away. After some days the goat accepts the new kid as hers."

The foster mothers, ewes or goats, are initially reluctant to adopt an unrelated lamb or kid, but as another informant explains, "in most of the cases they start caring for the young one in time...":

"We put orphan kids to a foster mother-goat or sheep. At the beginning we force the kid to feed from her. It may take about ten days for a foster mother to accept the kid, but if she does, she may become the best mother! Look at this ewe how she looks after her lamb. It is not hers. I've put it to her after she lost her own."

The foster goat or ewe mothers do not always adopt the kid or lamb in question. This is more likely to happen when they already have a young kid or lamb of their own. In those cases the farmers force one or several different goats or ewes, or even both ewes and goats, to suckle a motherless young animal. Vassilikiots compare the nourishment of an ewe's milk with the milk of a goat. They say:

"A kid may survive by feeding from an ewe. It suckles from her by force because the female sheep will never accept a kid as her own, but the kid will grow well. In the opposite case, when we 'put' a lamb to a goat the lamb does not develop so well, because a goat's milk is not so nutritious as a sheep's."

In order to force goats and ewes to feed motherless kids or lambs the farmers hold the 'animals' by their horns - if they have any - or their collar, trying to make them stand still and enabling the young ones to feed. If they disobey, the farmers resort to punishing them, as I already explained in the previous section. Here 'order' and 'care' are intimately linked to a degree that a goat's or ewe's punishment reflects an infant animal's survival. A farmer's intervention on an animal's mothering

instinct is at the same time an expression of 'care' for another animal. The farmers feel responsible for safeguarding 'order' and manage the 'care' of their animals in the best possible way. The following extract from my fieldnotes further illustrates how this is done in practice:

"Mimis gave a new born lamb to Dionysis, one among three other lambs just born by the same ewe. 'I had given him animals in the past, a dog for example', he explained. The two men allowed the lamb to drink *goulistra*, the first milk, from its mother. '*Goulistra* is like a medicine for a lambs ... (stomahi)', they said. Then Dionysis took the lamb to his farm and placed it at the pen with the other animals. He forced his ewe and the two goats to suckle the newborn animal. 'First, the ewe and then the goats' he said, delivering 'order' to his reluctant 'animals'. He punished the *liara* [:black and white] goat because she was not standing still to allow the new lamb to suckle from her. 'She is out of her head (*κάνει του κεφαλιού της*)' he said. Dionysis, 'keeps' the older lamb, away from its mother, in order to prevent it from taking too much milk. He saves the ewe's milk for the newborn lamb."

Newborn chicks, like lambs and kids, are frequently removed from their own mother and entrusted to a foster mother, a sitter which 'cares' for the chicks of several hens. The sitter with the adopted chicks is usually enclosed in a cage, until the chicks are old enough to feed and shelter themselves efficiently. The farmers spend a lot of effort chasing newborn chicks which are born in chicken nests hidden on their farmland. They also spend a considerable effort to ensure that the doors of the cages are safely closed every night, and the chicks properly fed. Tired from those repetitive tasks and the young chick's constant hyperactivity, the farmers often accuse chickens of 'stupidity', in failing to understand that the farmers 'care' and 'struggle' for their benefit. I end this section, with three short descriptions of three Vassilikiot farmers, 'struggling' to order and arrange the adoption and 'care' of newborn chicks born on their farmland:

"He gathered some newborn chicks born somewhere on his farmland by a free-ranging hen. He 'put' them in a cage, along with other chicks from other hens and said: 'there is always a hen in the cage to care for them, but most of the

chicks are not hers. If you don't care for them they will be eaten by martens or they will die in the rain.'"

"It was about to rain and Dionysis was very worried because he knew that one hen had brooded new chicks. 'I am worried that they will die in the storm' he told me. He was looking all over the farm to find the new chicks. In the end he located them, hiding under some thorny bushes. He caught them and with a lot of effort and put them in a well-protected cage."

"Lefteris was running after the small chicks born next to my house. He put them in a box and took them to the farm. He will place them in a cage under the protection of a sitter which has chicks of the same age. He keeps the chicks and the sitter in the cage to protect her from the rats. A hen, the mother of the chicks, was making a terrible noise frustrated by the loss of her chicks. She couldn't be with them because the chicks were now entrusted to the care of the sitter in the cage. Both Lefteris and I were equally frustrated by the sound of the despairing hen. Lefteris stared at me and explained without being asked: 'if they are left outside the cage, they will be devoured by the rats in a few nights time. I have to take them to the cage and care for them'. Then he fed the newborn chicks with some breadcrumbs."

#### **f. Conclusion.**

"Animals are not loved for themselves as members of the animal kingdom with their own beauty and peculiarity, but nor are they thought of in crude terms which involve only total exploitation of their productivity" (du Boulay 1974: 86, referring to Greek rural people and their relationship with animals)."

In chapter one, I described how groups of environmentalists have penetrated the Vassilikiot political scene, in a fifteen-year-long effort to protect rare species of animal and establish a National Marine Park in the locality. The environmentalists, who are ironically called 'the ecologists' by the local population, present themselves as people who 'care' (νοιάζονται) for 'nature' and its living constituent parts, the animals. They proclaim that - to use the words of du Boulay quoted above - they

love animals as *members of the animal kingdom with their own beauty and peculiarity* and accuse Vassilikiot farmers for thinking of animals *in crude terms which involve only total exploitation of their productivity*. The 'ecologists', having obviously neglected to read du Boulay's ethnography and being ill-advised about the form of the relationship rural Greeks have with their animals, became particularly unpopular in Vassilikos and the surrounding communities.

But, even an anthropologist, Ernestine Friedl, in her classic ethnography about a Greek rural community, Vasilika, seems to underestimate the relationship of local people with their animals. "The villagers do not give their animals individual names", she argues, "they take no particular care to keep them physically comfortable" (1962: 30). Friedl refers to the 'beating' and 'kicking' of animals at work and the children's 'teasing' them. She recognizes that dogs and other animals "are not considered pets", but she describes the local peoples' attitude towards them as being "completely utilitarian" (ibid: 32).

Unlike Friedl, Campbell, in his well-known detailed study of the Sarakatsani shepherds, acknowledges the importance of the human-animal relationship, which according to his view "must be seen not only in terms of utilitarian satisfaction or social function" (1964: 34). For the Sarakatsani, "shepherding has intrinsic value"; their conception of time and the organization of their life revolves around the movements and needs of their flocks. The main concerns in the life of the Sarakatsani are "sheep, children and honour", explains Campbell, and underlines the identification of the shepherds with their sheep, the latter being "a prerequisite of prestige" (ibid: 19,30-1,35). The Sarakatsan shepherds, like the Vassilikiot 'flock owners' discussed in section c, are in position to relate to the particular history and qualities of individual sheep and for this purpose they have developed "an extensive descriptive vocabulary of sheep terms". Sarakatsani 'care' for sick animals with 'compassion', Campbell finally remarks; without being 'sentimental', "an evident solidarity" exists between them and their animals (ibid: 31).

The significance of sheep for Sarakatsani is obviously related to their shepherding way of life. But most of Campbell's observations relating to the non-utilitarian, 'intrinsic' character of the relationship between animals and their owners, are in accordance with du Boulay's work (1974) and my own detailed study. As I have already mentioned in the introduction and in several other points of my ethnographic presentation, du Boulay recognizes animals as lower members of the rural household, subjected, like human members, to obligations and privileges of "total loyalty and mutual support", superimposed by a household-centred organization of the village economy (1974: 16,18,86-89). She makes clear that animals "occupy the lowest position" "in the order of things" and in times of hardship are often expected to suffer more than, or at least as much as, the humans do, being the first to become sacrificed for the benefit of the household to which they are attached and bound by links or "reciprocal obligation" (ibid: 86-89).

My ethnographic description of the relationship of the people of Vassilikos to 'their' domestic animals in this chapter, further supports the view that the relationship in question is understood as a 'reciprocal' one. The animals receive 'care' (*φροντίδα*) from their owners and the farmers expect in turn, from the animals, respect for the 'order' (*τάξη*) of the farm, and even to sacrifice their own life for its maintenance. The farmers clearly express in conversation the expectations they have of their animals and often talk to the animals themselves, despite their confident assertion that animals don't have reason. They try to explain to them the 'order' of the everyday activities which directly concerns them, even the fact that their confinement into this 'order' is for their own benefit... The farmers of Vassilikos maintain that animals 'learn' (*μαθαίνουν*), through repetition and punishment, their expected position in space and time, and from my own observations most animals 'learn'...

'Order' (*τάξη*), as I repeatedly illustrated in this chapter, is the prevalent central concept underlying most aspects of the human-animal

relationship in Vassilikos. Punishment, 'care' (*φροντίδα*) and the termination of the process of 'care', the slaughter of an animal, are all different expressions of 'order' on the farm. Placed in this context, 'order' is directly related to the organization of the household as an autonomous self-sufficient unit in opposition to both other households and the environment. 'Order' holds household members, animals or humans, and the activities those members are involved in, well-attuned to the self-interest (*συμφέρον*) of the household. Self-interest (*συμφέρον*), here, as Peter Loizos (1975: 66) and du Boulay (1974: 169) demonstrate, instead of being an expression of individualism, concerns the family or the household as a whole.

In the farm environment, 'order' is ideally maintained by the male head of the household, in a way that significantly resembles the responsibility for safeguarding family 'honour'. Similarly, in the domestic domain, 'order' is the primary concern of the *nikokyra*, 'the mistress of the house' or 'the female householder', as is illustrated by Dubish (1986), Salamone and Stanton (1986), Loizos and Papataxiarchis (1991). Men in Vassilikos, more often than women, punish animals and take decisions concerning major issues related to animal husbandry and temporary or permanent buildings on the farmland. But women usually are responsible for poultry, and participate in milking and various everyday tasks on the farm. In their husband's absence or illness, women are capable of undertaking most jobs associated with animal 'care', even those related with the larger animals of the farm which are locally expected to be a male concern. Consequently, the distinction between male and female spheres of responsibility on the farm represents the ideal of 'order', rather than its actual application, in a way that resembles the lack of "isomorphism between gender roles and the domestic and public spheres" as it is argued by Dubish (1986: 19), and Salamone and Stanton (1986: 98).

The farmers in Vassilikos are engaged in the repetitive, everyday tasks of 'caring' for their animals and 'keeping' their farms in 'order'.

They feel they are themselves responsible for the wellbeing of their animals and their cultivation, and openly express the belief that "without them" and "their struggle" everything would collapse into disorder. They design, define and safeguard 'order' on their farm and their right to do so is hardly ever questioned. It is well-supported by an elaborate religious cosmology which places human beings at the top of the hierarchy of living creatures. This religious theory about the creation and position of animals and human beings in the world will be discussed in detail in Chapter Six. What I want to emphasize here is that the farmers consciously present themselves as the indispensable, irreplaceable providers of 'care' and guardians of 'order' on their farms. They understand their role in relation to their farms and animals as being that of the ultimate 'caring principle'. This is why they express apprehension and bewilderment, when they are accused by 'ecologists' or other urban dwellers, of being 'utilitarian' or 'exploitative' towards their animals.

Like the 'ecologists', the inhabitants of Vassilikiots strongly insist that they 'care' for animals (*νοιάζονται για τα ζώα*), 'their animals' (*τα ζώα τους*). In their turn, they accuse the 'ecologists' of being unable to "understand the struggle that [caring for] animals requires" (*δεν καταλαβαίνουν τον αγώνα που έχουν τα ζώα*). "The ecologists don't know about animals", the Vassilikiot farmers explain, "they talk about animals all the time, but they don't know about animals".<sup>58</sup> "We have animals and we know about animals" (*εμείς έχουμε ζώα και ξερούμε από ζώα*), Vassilikiots argue and add: "we live with animals and we know how to care for them".<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> "Όλο μιλάνε για ζώα, αλλά δεν ξέρουν από ζώα".

<sup>59</sup> "Εμείς ζούμε μαζί τους και ξέρουμε πως να τα φροντίζουμε".

## Chapter 5:

### Wild animals.

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#### a. Introduction

Τσιπουδρέλο λιαναρή  
που πατείς την γη και τρίζει.

*Tsipourdello (Robin) you are so slightly built  
you step on the Earth, and (the Earth) is cracking.*<sup>60</sup>

Collecting data on wild animals and birds in Vassilikos is not an easy task. During my fieldwork, when I had some information of this sort, I used to share it with as many villagers as possible, hoping - as usually was the case - that each individual would add something new to my enquiry. This is why, after I proudly rehearsed this small couplet about the Robin, I hastened to share it with Lfteris, my adoptive father at Vassilikos. Lfteris replied:

- 'Who told you that?'
- 'Adas [a nickname] did, at the coffee-house', I said eagerly.
- 'I see that you are learning well. Do you know why "the Earth is cracking"? Because when the Robin lands on the ground he moves his body up and down like a spring (σούστα). This is why!'

We both laughed. Then Lfteris continued, adding more information of the kind I was eagerly pursuing:

- 'We sang the couplet when we were kids. We used to set traps made of reed. Sometimes we would catch fifteen of them or even more!'
- 'Is that bird edible? I didn't know it', I remarked.
- 'Yes, it is. If you catch a lot of them. Nowadays nobody cares. It is such a small bird, but does no harm (δεν κάνει κακό). It just needs moisture and worms. So it is easily deceived by the worm which is attached to the trap. Other times we used to turn up the ground a little so as to entice the Robins into the trap'.
- 'Are there plenty of them in Vassilikos? I haven't noticed any'.

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<sup>60</sup> Robin, Κοκκινολαίμης, *Erithacus rubecula*. In Zakynthos is called Τσιπουδρέλος.



- 'There are. Tsipurdeloi [Robins] are gone during the summer (είναι φευγάτοι). They go to Bulgaria, Romania..., not like the sparrows who are locals (ντόπιοι)'.<sup>61</sup>

Rarely do Vassilikiots' refer to wild animals and birds in contexts other than hunting. The imminent attacks of small predators on the farm stock, or the occasional encounters with wild animals during their daily activities in the fields, are the rare exceptions. They usually respond to questions about wild animals by evaluating the animal's qualities: such evaluations concern the presence or absence of potential benefit or harm by the animal in question. They often start by examining the possibility of harm and finish by considering the possibility of benefits. Most of these discussions are bound to centre around the issue of whether the animal or bird is edible or not, and its role as prey. The vast majority of Zakynthians find any discussion about hunting particularly fascinating.<sup>62</sup>

In this chapter however, I shall try to approach the relationship of the people of Vassilikos to wild animals as this is expressed in contexts other than hunting. During my fieldwork, I experienced great hardship in trying to collect data of this kind. In general, my informants were reluctant, to say the least, to talk about wild animals per se. Unable to instigate such a discussion, I often had to wait for unsolicited remarks to be made, or long my informants' responses to the rare sight of wild animals. It was in instances like these that I would grasp the opportunity to ask further questions. Even then, however, their answers were brief. Local people saw no sense in the idea of providing a detailed description of animals with no apparent 'use'. They would instead shift the discussion to hunting if that was applicable to the specific animal.

To facilitate my subsequent presentation of the most representative ethnographic examples of local people talking about wild animals, fish or

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<sup>61</sup> Robins do actually migrate but for much more northern destinations.

<sup>62</sup> The remarkable devotion of Vassilikiots to hunting will be examined in Chapter Seven.

birds, I will introduce a term of my own, the 'criterion of usefulness'. The term refers to the tendency of Vassilikiots to evaluate wild animals according to their perceived 'use', lack of use, or even 'harm' for the farming community. My choice of applying the term 'usefulness' instead of 'utility' is made in order to emphasize the potential for practical 'use' that the term 'usefulness' contains. At the same time, I attempt to distinguish between the rigid sense of utilitarianism, implied by the term 'utility', and the more flexible and negotiable form of relationship, practised by my informants. The following sections will illustrate this further.

#### **b. Vassilikiots talking about wild animals.**

Fifteen years ago the people of Vassilikos became acquainted with a scheme for sea turtle conservation, a practice applied by outsiders. Bewilderment was their initial reaction; "What use is the turtle?", the local people wondered.<sup>63</sup> <sup>64</sup> This is a question they still pose, despite the persistent messages from the mass media and elsewhere<sup>65</sup> stressing the ecological significance and uniqueness of the particular animal species. The local people's attitudes towards the sea turtles, before the appearance of the environmental groups locally referred to as 'ecologists', were characterized by a passive and silent indifference. A fifty year old informant remembers:

"The turtles were never disturbed by the local people. When I was 14 years old I was passing through Gerakas [a beach where the turtles lay their eggs] leading animals, goats or even cattle, but nothing bad (κακό) ever happened to the turtles. There were many of them at that time. Sometimes the waves could wash ashore a dead one which was giving off a stench."

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<sup>63</sup> "Σε τι χρησιμεύει η χελώνα;" or "ποιά είναι η χρησιμότης της χελώνας;".

<sup>64</sup> Loggerhead Sea Turtle, *Caretta caretta*.

<sup>65</sup> The general efforts of the environmentalists to 'educate' the public about the necessity of turtle conservation (through various leaflets, information kiosks, etc).

Other villagers stress that people on Zakynthos do not eat that animal; "the Italians do" they utter with disgust.<sup>66</sup> "The turtles were of no important significance for the life of the people", a more reflective informant explained to me. "They didn't do any harm, they were slightly useful, one may say... their eggs were food for the dogs".<sup>67</sup>

The view of Vassilikiots on another rare marine species, the monk seal, which is similarly a target of ecological conservation, is more clearly expressed.<sup>68</sup> "This animal does harm" (κάνει κακό) they declare with indignation, while they lift up their damaged nets for everyone to see. Large holes in the nets are the proof of the damage (ζημιώ) caused by seals. During my fieldwork, I recorded two incidents of Zakynthian fishermen attempting to shoot seals despite the severe prohibitions imposed by the conservation laws. It may be true that recent attempts to shoot the seals represented a form of challenge to the 'ecologists' presence on the island. Despite this possibility however, most villagers in Vassilikos express their resentment for this particular marine mammal: "seals are and always were (in the past - prior to the ecologists' arrival) undesirable (ανεπιθύμητες)".<sup>69</sup>

Talking about birds of prey, the people of Vassilikos, emphasize the "harm" (το κακό) those birds do to chickens and the small animals on the farm. They differentiate between 'edible' birds of prey and 'not edible ones'. The peregrine (Περίτης), the sparrowhawk (Ξεφτέρι) and the

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<sup>66</sup> The Italians do not in fact eat Loggerhead turtles. Some Italians do eat an other species of marine turtle, the Green turtle (*Chelonia Mydas*).

<sup>67</sup> "Δεν κάνουν κανένα κακό, ήταν λιγάκι χρήσιμες θα μπορούσε να πει κανείς... τα αυγά τους ήταν τροφή για τα σκυλιά..."

<sup>68</sup> The Mediterranean Monk Seal, *Monachus monachus*.

<sup>69</sup> Having conducted fieldwork in Alonnessos, another Greek island, where seals exist in larger numbers and the local people depend on fishing to a greater extent than on Zakynthos, I recorded similar accusations about the seal. Like my Zakynthian informants, the people of Alonnessos emphasized the damage caused to their fishing nets by seals. The fishermen admit that they often had to shoot them before the establishment of the conservation law, while some older men could remember that "in the past people were using the seal's fat for lighting and the seal's skin for making *tsarouhia* [:a folkloric but very practical and efficient kind of shoes shepherds and people in the countryside used to wear until twenty or thirty years ago, and in some remote areas still do]".

goshawk (Μπαρμπούνι), are all edible birds of prey. They mostly feed on birds that they kill while flying. This is what my informants call "clean food" (καθαρή τροφή) and explain:<sup>70</sup>

"The peregrine (Περίτης) is very, very proud. He **only** eats what he can catch in the air. If his prey were to drop to the ground, he would not fly down to pick it up."

They further refer to some of the criteria rendering a bird of prey edible:

"You examine if the bird's meat stinks, or if the meat is tasty, or if the bird is big enough. But what is more important is to see what the bird eats. Does the bird eat mice or carcasses or garbage? This is not clean food (καθαρή τροφή)."

Other birds of prey, like the Lesser Kestrel (Κικινέζι) and the Black Kite (Λουκαΐνα) are not considered edible for the reasons stated already.<sup>71 72</sup>

Vassilikiots are capable of naming nearly all the birds living permanently or migrating on to their land; they, even, recognize those birds which fly over their island for a short period on their migration route. They use local names, characteristic of the Zakynthian dialect, or names common throughout Greece. Although women do not hunt, they are equally capable of recognizing and naming birds, especially women over 35 years of age. They have a close practical experience with hunted birds, since plucking and cooking is locally considered to be 'a woman's job'. While preparing the birds for cooking they often find small animals or nuts in the birds' intestines and gain additional knowledge of the birds' diet. Pairing this further task with their observations of what birds eat in nature, they can better distinguish between what birds 'to eat' and 'not to eat' or - and this is an issue of great importance for men - which birds to hunt and not to hunt.

Those birds, animals or fish which are not regularly hunted or

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<sup>70</sup> Peregrine, Περίτης, *Falco peregrinus*. Sparrowhawk, Ξεφτέρι, *Accipiter nisus*. Goshawk, Διπλοσάϊνο, *Accipiter gentilis* (in Zakynthos called Μπαρμπούνι).

<sup>71</sup> Lesser Kestrel, Βραχοκικινέζο, *Falco tinnunculus* (in Zakynthos simply referred to as κικινέζι). Black Kite, Τσίφτης, *Milvus migrans*; in Zakynthos it is called 'Λουκαΐνα'.

<sup>72</sup> One of the few brief comments my informants made about the Black Kite was: "Loukaina eats sick chickens" (η Λουκαΐνα τρώει άρρωστες κότες).

fished appear less frequently in conversation. The villager's comments about them are concise, comprising of one or two stereotypical attributions. Here I present a few examples:

"The sharks are tasty, they can be caught", "the flying fish (Χελιδονόψαρο) is a fish with a tail and gills! It is edible (τρώγεται)", "the bat (νυχτερίδα) has breasts and she delivers babies like the goat. If you go close to where she keeps her children she can make you blind (μπορεί να σε στραβώσει)", "the Raven (κόρακας) used to eat chicks and turkey-chicks. There are not any Ravens left nowadays, but we still say 'The place of the Raven' [a place-name: Η θέση του κοράκου]".<sup>73</sup>

Three different species of nocturnal birds of prey are recognized and named by the people of Vassilikos. These are the Little Owl (Κουκουβάγια), the Eagle Owl (Μπούφος), and the Scops Owl (Γκιώνης).<sup>74 75</sup> An old woman explained to me why *Gionis*, the Scops Owl, produces the strange sound after which it is named:

"Gionis is calling the name of his brother, Antonis. He killed Antonis by accident while they were working together at the fields. Ashamed to return home and face his mother, he kept wandering until late at night, crying out "Antonis" in despair, and in the end, he became a bird. He is still calling Antoni, Antoni, Antoni, (the old woman imitated the voice of the bird) gioni, gioni, gioni!"

Explanations of this type, referring to a particular bird or animal as being "once human" (ήτανε κάποτε άνθρωπος) and being transformed into the species in question, for one reason or another (God's punishment or a mother's curse), are widespread in rural Greece. But, I was surprised to

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<sup>73</sup> Raven, Κόρακας, *Corvus corax*.

<sup>74</sup> Little Owl, Κουκουβάγια, *Athene noctua*. Eagle Owl, Μπούφος, *Bubo bubo*. Scops Owl, Γκιώνης, *Otus scops*.

<sup>75</sup> The people of Vassilikos talk of a bird they called *Striglopouli* (the bird with the screaming voice). "It is not the owl (Κουκουβάγια)" my informants told me. Despite persistent efforts I failed to identify the bird's standard name. It is said in the village that "every time Striglopouli sits on the roof of a house and screams, somebody from that house will die." Some friends of mine, who are experienced ornithologists speculate that *Striglopouli* probably is the Barn Owl (Πεπλόγλαυκα, *Tyto alba*).

find only few of these stories in Zakynthos.<sup>76</sup>

Large predatory mammals are absent from the island. Not only wolves, but even foxes, which are plentiful on mainland Greece, do not live on Zakynthos. Both animals appear as protagonists in some fairy tales which I retrieved with difficulty from a couple of elderly women. The wolf and the fox in those fairy tales incarnate human characters, who work together, but cheat each other in sharing the spoils. The fox appears deceptive and canny, while the wolf is innocent and stupid. These fairy tails, do not tell much about the local perceptions of wild animals. Instead, they allegorically portray considerations on the working partnerships between farmers, and on the allocation of particular tasks between men or women. I will not attempt to further describe and analyze those tales, here, since, as my informants maintain, "they are out of use" and "nowadays, no one bothers to tell these stories to children". Furthermore, they diverge from the everyday, practical conceptions of wolves and foxes as real animals, which are negative and violent like the following description of the wolf by an informer:

"The wolf is a greedy (άπληστο) animal. When he gets in a flock of sheep he kills a hundred and one sheep until he bursts (μέχρι να σκάσει)...

The wolf catches the donkey with the greatest ease in the world (με την μεγαλύτερη ευκολία του κόσμου). He lies down on his back. The donkey goes to see by curiosity and the wolf grasps the donkey by the nose."

### **c. Predation on domestic animals.**

Since foxes do not exist on the island, the farmers of Vassilikos let poultry, and sometimes rabbits, roam freely around the farmland in search of food. But some smaller mammals attack and prey upon poultry and rabbits. "Martens and hedgehogs take small chicks from their nests, they cause damage (ζημιά) to us" the farmers maintain. But more often than

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<sup>76</sup> I often heard my informants telling me, "you may find 'things' of this sort [folkloric tales] up in the mountain villages. We don't remember those 'things' any more."

martens or hedgehogs, huge rats attack and kill unprotected chicks or rabbits. As an elderly female informant describes:

"the rat (ποντικός) slaughters (μακελεύει) the small chicks; he stifles (πνίγει), and beheads (αποκεφαλίζει) as many as he can find, even when he does not eat them."

On several occasions I witnessed discussions between women and men in small groups, sharing their sorrow (στενοχώρια) over losses of their animals because of rats. Here, is a typical discussion:

*Two women from neighbouring farms have their coffee while chatting in the late afternoon. The husband of the host woman returns home. He immediately complains about the rats, and talks about the young dead rabbits he pulled out of the rabbit cages that morning. His wife adds to his description by noting the grief (στενοχώρια) of the mother rabbit. The other woman and the farmer proceed to making assumptions about where the rats come from. They refer to the nearest wood (λόγκος). Both the woman and the farmer share a similar view: they have seen the rats disappearing into the wood; they "know" (ξέρουν) that "this is where the rats come from". The female neighbour proceeds to a colourful description of recent rat attacks on her own farm. She tells of the day she saw a rat with his frightening teeth, and how she ambushed (παρραμόνεψε) and scalded him with a dish full of hot water. Also how her husband "watched for the rat (του έστησε καρτέρι) with his gun, after he had realized that the rat was coming every morning to the same spot and the chickens were disturbed [by the rat's presence]". They all refer to the sorrow or sadness (στενοχώρια) they feel from the attacks by the rats. "It is not that I care about the loss of one or two chickens [she means their value in money] but I feel sorrow (στενοχωριέμαι) that I lost them" the female neighbour explained, while everybody moved their heads in agreement.*

The grief expressed, claim the farmers of Vassilikos, is not for the monetary value of the lost animals, but mainly over the daily labour they

invested in caring for the young chicks or rabbits. This task involves 'caring' and feeding them; special attention is given to ensuring that small chicks are fed, since adult chickens can consume the young chicks' food in seconds. In addition, in the late afternoon, the farmers must collect all their chicks into crates or small cages to protect them from rat attacks. To confine the young and active chicks is not easy, especially for the older farmers. When the rats succeed and they often do, the villagers feel very disappointed and are pessimistic about the nature of their work. They think that their labour is not adequately rewarded and express their resentment in comments such as: "it isn't worth so much toil" (δεν αξίζει τόσο κόπο), or "our work is lost" (ο κόπος μας πήγε χαμένος).

Vassilikiots talk about "lost" labour (χαμένο κόπο). They also refer to their "sorrow" (στενοχώρια) for the "lost" (χαμένα) domestic animals. The farmers in Vassilikos do not distinguish between the care and labour spent on their animals and any sentiments of affection they show for them. For the local people, affection is expressed through caring, labour and rewarding or punishing an animal. As I have already described in the previous chapter, the ultimate death of a farm animal is incorporated into the greater body of services offered by any member of the farm towards the common goal of sustaining and maintaining the farm itself. Far from being an alienating process, the villagers perceive the exchange of animals for money to be the ultimate form of service offered by an animal to the farm. That service is interpreted as the animal's contribution to the welfare and benefit of the farm, the reciprocation of the care and protection the animal received on the farm.

Conversely, the sudden and unrewarded death of farm animals to unpredictable circumstances such as the attack of a wild animal or the appropriations of a greedy landlord, provokes grief and a general state of helplessness and victimization.<sup>77</sup> In this case, the dead animal is

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<sup>77</sup> The traditional system of rights and duties on animal husbandry between a landlord and a labourer (κοπιαστή) - a system practised in the village until the 1960s - included the following obligation: the labourer would be credited with a specific number of animals to



considered as being 'lost' (χαμένο) because it dies in inappropriate circumstances. The affective process of 'caring' (φροντίδα) for the domestic animal is interrupted, while the death of the animal does not contribute to the welfare of the farm or household in question. The 'loss' of domestic animals entails the loss of all 'care' (φροντίδα) invested by the farmer through persistent "labour and toil" (κόπο).

Predatory attacks by wild animals on domestic animals can be understood as a violation of the established "order" (τάξη) of the farm which, as I described in the previous chapter, the farmer tries to maintain through a persistent lifelong effort. This is how a man from Vassilikos felt after pursuing a dangerous stray dog:

"One day I saw a liariko [piebald] dog attacking the goats of Tzanetos family.<sup>78</sup> I shot once to make it go away from the goat, and with the second shot I wounded it (το λάβωσα) in the back. Somebody else found the same dog on a bench and he finished it off. I felt I was doing a service (λειτουργηµα) [:to the village] because I was protecting the animals of the people (τα ζώα των ανθρώπων). This dog may do harm."<sup>79</sup>

Here, the villager does not simply evaluate the wild animal according to the criterion of usefulness. The stray dog, like the ferret or the rat, was demonstrably harmful. The task of the villager is to maintain and protect the 'order' of the farm from attacking predators. This is part of the farmer's persistent effort to establish and defend his position in a constantly changing, regenerating, and often threatening environment, which physically surrounds him.

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'care' for each season. The landlord would attribute the loss of animals as a result of illness or accident to the labourer's inadequate 'care' for the animals. The labourer would then be expected to replace the value of the lost animals at his own expense.

<sup>78</sup> "Μια μέρα είδα ένα λιάρικο σκυλί να βάζει κάτω τις κατσίκες των Τζανέτων".

<sup>79</sup> "Ένοιωσα ότι έκανα λειτουργηµα γιατί προστάτευα τα ζώα των ανθρώπων. Αυτό το σκυλί μπορεί να κάμει κακό."

**d. Flexibility in the practical application of the ‘criterion of usefulness’.**

As has been illustrated in the previous sections, when the people of Vassilikos talk about wild animals, they emphasise evaluations based on the ‘criterion of usefulness’. This emphasis colours most local references or narratives about wild animals. In practice however, the relationship of man to wild animals often evades the narrow constraints of utilitarian reasoning. Independently of the ideal, local evaluations based on the criterion of usefulness, there exists a potential for a relationship in which the protagonists, man and the wild animal, contest and display their individual characteristics. In this relationship man is considered to be the legitimate dominant partner and rarely experiences ambivalence regarding his/her position in respect of the animal or the animal’s fate. The human authority over the wild animal is taken for granted and is even considered to be recognized by the animal itself. The wild animal, however, may possess certain attributes which could possibly offer it some advantage in its relation with the human protagonist. Such an advantage may be its potential to harm, its ability to deceive or the animal’s own beauty.

A farmer’s decision concerning the fate of a captured wild animal, could possibly diverge from the dominant utilitarian prescription. The farmer may punish, give mercy, and on some occasions even exhibit care, and through care, affection. Here I present some ethnographic examples which are indicative of what I attempt to describe.

It was one day in early February when I found myself walking in the fields of Vassilikos with Lefteris. We were on our way to collect the scattered ‘animals’, sheep and goats, and lead them back to the pen. At one stage, Lefteris suddenly told me to "stand still" (στάσου). There was a hare looking for cover (λουφαγμένος) in the thick grass. Lefteris seized it with his hand! He was holding the hare by the ears, the same way he holds the rabbits, but his face was now shining with the excitement of

success. He brought the hare back to the farm and put it in a small cage. Then he announced that if it was a female hare he would allow it to mate with his rabbits. He explained to me that the wild qualities of the hare could revitalize the blood stock of his tame but weak rabbits. His wife disagreed and commented that it would be better to eat it. "Otherwise others will eat it or it will die out of sadness", she said.<sup>80</sup> They were both looking at the hare in the cage with pride and amazement, commenting on the hare's beauty. For the remaining afternoon, the hare in the cage became the object of public display.

Lefteris and I kept on retelling the amazing story to everybody we met. "To catch a hare with one's hand" happens to be a Greek proverb emphasizing one's alertness.<sup>81</sup> The hare was eventually killed since it turned out to be male. "It will receive an unfriendly welcome from the male rabbits of the farm", Lefteris explained. However, as this example illustrates, the human protagonist was charmed by the hare's wild qualities and beauty, and the hare had a good chance to remain alive as a semi-wild animal on the farm. It is important to notice here, the flexible application of the 'criterion of usefulness', as is revealed when the farmer, being reluctant to kill the animal, readily declares an alternative 'use' to account for the hare's right to life. The farmer chooses between a context specific application of 'use', the animal's potential "to mate with the rabbits on the farm", and a more general sense of "use" relating to the edible and tasty nature of the hare's meat.

Turtledoves (*τρυγόνια*) are regarded as the most important game on the island.<sup>82</sup> Although Vassilikiots exhibit exceptional passion and devotion to hunting every bird of that species flying over their land, I noticed a few examples of people keeping a turtledoves in large cages near their houses. Those cages were made of thin wire netting which were

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<sup>80</sup> "Θα σκάσει απ' την λύπη του".

<sup>81</sup> "Πιάνει λαγούς με το χέρι".

<sup>82</sup> Turtle Dove, *Τρυγόνι*, *Streptopelia turtur*.

fitted on huge concrete bases painted with lime. The captured turtledoves were birds that had been slightly wounded by hunting guns. Their keepers argued that since the birds fell "in their hands" (στα χέρια τους) alive and in good condition, yet unable to fly, they let them stay on the farm for decorative purposes (για ομορφιά). This is how the personal wish of the farmers to keep the wild but beautiful birds alive, was paired with a more reasonable "use or function". It would have been inappropriate for a farmer and a turtledove hunter to declare that he kept turtledoves alive out of love or appreciation of their right to exist; "only a city dweller or an ecologist would have argued so"... But the farmers adherence to the code of 'usefulness' is flexible enough to allow for shifts in practice and interpretation, and to accommodate alternative forms of 'usefulness'.

The cases of the dolphin and the seal provide a similar example. Both animals cause considerable destruction to fishing nets and the damage they produce is the same: big holes in the nets which are either restored with great difficulty or remain irreversibly damaged. The seals, however, are more frequently blamed for this destruction than the dolphins. Vassilikiots comment on the appearance and behaviour of the two animals in order to explain their different attitudes towards them. They maintain that "the seal is ugly (άσχημη), while the dolphin is an animal you look at with admiration (το καμαρώνεις)". Others recognize signs of 'friendly' behaviour exhibited by dolphins, when they frequently approach and follow fishing boats from a close distance. An older informer remembers:

"They [the people of the village] used to consider the dolphin as the most benign animal of the sea. It saves shipwrecked people (ναυαγούς). But at that time they didn't use fishing nets (δεν ρίχναν δύχτια)!... [so as to get angry with the damage caused on the nets]."

Dolphins are portrayed as friendly, benign and beautiful. Seals are considered as "less friendly" since they cannot be approached with the same ease. The 'social' portrait of the dolphin is contrasted with the 'wild' and 'distant' character of the seal, thus the local people expressed

their sympathy for the dolphins. In addition, reference is made to some 'use' on the dolphin's part - that is, saving shipwrecked people - to further validate Vassilikiots' preference for that animal. Here, the prevailing code of 'usefulness' is presented once again, but it is not the single criterion employed in determining the local people's evaluations.

The marten (κουνάβι) is the largest predator on the island and represents a great threat for free ranging chickens.<sup>83</sup> I was once astonished to see a collection of stuffed martens in the house of an elderly female informant. She explained that her husband, like other men in the village, had persistently hunted martens. "They do harm to chickens" she said and continued:

"There was a time, though, that one marten was caught on a snare (δόκανο). We decided to keep it in the cage and the marten became tame. When we let it free again it was hanging around my yard".

Allowing a marten to prowl among poultry is risky and it appeared to be quite implausible, but my informant insisted. She rationalized her decision to keep "a wild animal" in her garden on the grounds of an alternative 'use or function'. "Martens kill snakes and rats" she explained...

In trying to summarize, I will refer to a final example. Crabs (καβούρια) and small conches (κοχύλια) often tangle in the nets of those Vassilikiots who fish.<sup>84</sup> They later spend a lot of time and effort to comb out those crustaceans from their nets and, despite their efforts, there is always some damage. I frequently witnessed my local informants almost cursing those sea creatures for the damage they caused, but soon afterwards throwing them back into the sea. "I throw them back into the sea, although they do harm to my nets", one informant explained. It may be the case that throwing the crabs back into the sea is the easiest thing to do; killing them would have involved extra effort. However, three important comments can be made about comments of this kind. First, the

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<sup>83</sup> Beach marten, κουνάβι, *Martes foina*.

<sup>84</sup> Vassilikiots do not eat small crabs and conches.

people of Vassilikos reserve for themselves the right to decide a captured wild animal's fate; second, the primary, most widely applied criterion leading to such a decision is the degree of usefulness of the animal in question; and, third, the human agent is allowed to violate the strict application of the 'usefulness or punishment' rule, this exception relying on the free will of the individual.

#### **e. Attitudes to animals and anthropocentrism.**

In the previous sections I referred to Vassilikiot attitudes to wild animals, and the importance of the 'criterion of usefulness' in shaping local evaluations of the island's fauna. In the previous chapters I examined the relationship of Vassilikiot farmers to 'their' domestic animals, and the importance of the notion of 'order' as a fundamental principle permeating every aspect of this relationship. Both 'order' and 'usefulness' are concepts defined by Vassilikiot farmers themselves according to their households' priorities. In other words, the local perceptions of 'order' and 'usefulness' are intrinsically dependent on the well-established central position of the farmers in 'their' local environment. Considering anthropocentrism as the tendency to approach, understand, classify and treat animals as beings peripheral to a centrally positioned human self, or as beings existing in order to serve and satisfy human needs, it is fair to label Vassilikiot attitudes to wild and domestic animals as anthropocentric.

Here, I will interrupt my own ethnographic account of human-animal relations to discuss briefly some other writings on the same theme. To begin with, I will make an obvious observation: the relationship of particular people to animals, wild or domestic, is a topic well-recorded in anthropology. Eugenia Shanklin, describes anthropological studies on animal symbolism as 'a thriving field', and notices that "what people think about their animals is still something that the ethnographer, armed with notebook and pencil, must record in much the same way the turn-of-the-century ethnographer did" (1985: 379). Shanklin, further, recognizes

the significance of data presented in older ethnographic accounts, which are potential sources of insight for modern analysts. She examines three directions in anthropological studies of animal symbolism, *metaphor*, *taxonomy* and *sacrifice*. Of these three, the first and the last do not directly relate to the concerns of my thesis. The second, that is the anthropological fascination with systems of animal classification, is thoroughly discussed in this thesis in the next chapter, which is devoted to the analysis of a particular example of classificatory discourse.

I continue with a less-obvious observation: the relationship of a particular people to animals, wild or domestic is, indeed, a theme well-recorded in anthropology, but it is not a well-studied one. Most anthropologists record ethnographic information on animals in order to answer questions other than the human-animal relationship per se. Being concerned with animal categories as reflections of the 'categories among men' (Durkheim and Mauss 1963), or with animal/natural categories as metaphorical statements of the relationships between humans (Levi-Strauss 1962, 1966), or with animal categories as indicative of ethnobiological classification (Berlin 1988, 1992) and human cognition (Atran 1990, 1993), anthropologists have treated the relationship of people to animals, not as an end in itself, but as an analytical tool serving more general theoretical preoccupations. An example of this was my own work in its initial stages. My interest in local perceptions of animals was instigated by my efforts to explain a particular environmental dispute over animal conservation. But in the process of the research I became progressively interested in the investigation of the human-animal relationship itself, attracted by the difficulty I faced in collecting relevant data as opposed to the abundance of information on environmental politics. Trying to illuminate some concerns arising directly out of my own ethnography, I will discuss the work of some anthropologists and social historians writing about human attitudes to animals and referring to the subject of anthropocentrism. I start with the most recent example, Brian Morris' article on the 'animal estate' in Malawi (1995).

Several scholars in the last decade have identified a distinct contrast in attitudes towards animals between agricultural societies and hunter-gatherers (Morris 1995: 301,303). The agriculturalists are prone to exhibit antagonism, domination and control towards the natural world, while hunter-gatherers usually treat animals and nature in a more egalitarian way. Morris recognizes this contrast between hunter-gatherer and agricultural 'cultural attitudes' to animals (ibid: 303). He further acknowledges that the farming way of life has an 'antagonistic' orientation towards animal life (ibid: 304). But Morris is sceptical about the abrupt grouping of diverse cultural attitudes towards animals into two rigid categories: the pre-literate cluster of societies with the "egalitarian, sacramental" viewpoint of nature, and the Western cultural traditions characterized by a mechanistic, dualistic and controlling approach towards the natural environment (ibid: 302-3). "Many scholars", he argues, "write as if historically there are only two possible 'world-views', the mechanistic (anthropocentric) and the organismic (ecocentric) (1995: 303)." This generalizing tendency obviously underestimates the diversity and changing character of Western traditions - which includes a multiplicity of different ontologies and historically specific understandings of nature - and fails to account for particular cultures, such as the Malawian one, where those two kinds of contrasting attitudes, the antagonistic and the egalitarian one, coexist in complementary opposition (Morris 1995: 301-12).

Morris' critique on generalizing scholars best applies to Tim Ingold who, in a series of publications, examines a broad range of issues related to animals and the natural environment (Ingold 1980, 1986, 1988, 1994). In Ingold's work the contrast in human-animal relations between hunter-gatherers and pastoralists/agriculturalists becomes a well-established distinction. The terms appropriation (1986) and domination (1994) are employed to describe the relationship of pastoralists and farmers to the natural world. 'Trust', a term denoting "an active engagement with the agencies and entities of the environment" describes



the kind of relationship hunter-gatherers have with "their non-human environment" and "their attitude towards one another" (1994: 14). Ingold relates hunter-gatherer attitudes towards the physical world with their mode of subsistence which varies markedly from that of agriculturalists and pastoralists. "There is something distinct about hunting and gathering societies in general", Ingold maintains, "they share the social character of immediate-return systems" (1986: 216). Instead of exploiting their environment, hunter-gatherers "keep up a dialogue with it" and recognize personal autonomy in human and non-human agents (1994: 11,13).

The sympathy of Tim Ingold for hunter-gatherers is obvious in his writing - in fact, too obvious - and their attitudes towards nature and animals are presented as the most evident cultural alternative to Western European anthropocentrism and ethnocentrism. In the preface of *What is an Animal* he argues that many non-European cultures entitle non-human beings to personhood, and offers this as a critique of the Western ontology which separates humanity and nature (1988: xxiii). Like hunter-gatherers and other non-Western people, Ingold understands "humans and non-human animals" as sharing "the same existential status, as living beings or persons". He perceives animals as conscious, intentional agents "who act, feel and suffer", but he is careful - as most anthropologists usually are - not to equate their cognitive skills with those of humans (ibid: 8,96). This is why Ingold disagrees with the philosopher Midgley (1978, 1988) who credits animals with intellectual skills. Ingold argues that animals do not think because they don't have language, which is for Ingold's Chomskian position, a necessary instrument for the generation of thought (1988: 6-8,94).

Richard Tapper, in the most interesting article in the same volume edited by Ingold, deliberately sharpens his criticism of Midgley and the pro-animal moral philosophers. Midgley's *Beast and Man* (1978), which is a well delivered attack on Western negative representations of animals, is targeted by Tapper as a representative example of 'ethnocentrism', where 'humanity' is systematically equated with the "20th-century, urban

middle class" (1988: 57-9). Tapper provocatively declares that trying to answer questions like "how animal is man" or "how far animals are conscious, social, moral, cultural or articulate" - issues that seriously trouble philosophers like Clark and Midgley in *What is an Animal*, and the editor Tim Ingold - is not what anthropologists usually do best (ibid: 47,49). What Tapper calls anthropological 'detachment' is manifested in debates concerning these questions:

"Our detachment [as anthropologists] is perhaps due to a sensation of *deja vu*: when we hear the arguments, we are reminded of experiences in the field, of debates we have witnessed or in which we have participated, in some New Guinea men's house, or huddled around a smoky fire in a felt tent on top of a mountain in Iran; debates about whether dogs understand what people say to them, whether bears can talk, whether camels bear grudgers, how wolves learn to attack from both sides of the flock at once....What interests anthropologists about such debates is less the 'scientific accuracy' of the answers than the context of the discussion and the relevance of the terms of the debate to human social relations (1988: 49)."

This might be why Ingold's work, although remarkably rich in insight, does not directly relate to my own experiences in Vassilikos. To offer an anthropological account which does approach human-animal relation "in both social and historical terms" (to use Tapper's words), and is simultaneously informative for my own work, I will refer to Gisli Palsson and the Icelandic world-view on fish and the sea.

Palsson, in *Signifying Animals* (1990), a volume arising out of the same conference as Tim Ingold's *What is an Animal*<sup>85</sup>, attempts a diachronic analysis of the symbolism of aquatic animals in Iceland. In the Icelandic past, as early as the time of settlement, and later, in the course of Icelandic history, the Islanders' approach towards the aquatic environment was permeated by passivity, a sense of respect and lack of control quite similar, I would say, to the non-dominating profile of Ingold's idealized hunter-gatherers. Small-scale subsistence production

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<sup>85</sup> Elsewhere in this thesis I refer to *The Walking Larder* edited by Juliet Clutton-Brock, which is a third volume from the same conference, the World Archaeological Congress in Southampton (1986).

and patron-client labour-service contracts between landowners and landless people provided a limitation, 'a kind of ceiling', on the degree of appropriating natural resources. During that period, folk-tales, mythology and fish symbolism, as Palsson carefully demonstrates, reflect the importance and relative power of aquatic creatures, real and imagined, in the lives of Icelandic people. But later, at the beginning of this century, a great change took place in the Icelandic attitudes towards fish and the marine environment, parallel to the advent of capitalist fishing and the commercial large scale exploitation of aquatic resources. The older symbolic representations of fish and the sea became outdated and novel world views emerged, portraying humans as active and dominant agents and the ocean as a passive and exploitable resource.

Roy Willis, in his introduction to *Signifying Animals* (1990), notices a "new sensitivity to indigenous ideas of continuity between human and non-human nature", ideas which are commonly found in traditional societies and sharply contrast with the Western, Cartesian, emphasis on separation (1990: 6,7,20,247). Non-hierarchical approaches to non-human beings and nature, like those characteristic of many small-scale 'tribal' societies, provided a source of inspiration for followers and theorists of the modern Euro-American ecological movement. Willis points out that:

"the sense of interconnection between nature and culture, between human and animal, social and religious institutions, which Victorian anthropology saw as a fascinating error of primitive man, a view that Levi-Strauss in turn dismissed as an erroneous misreading of primitive protoscience, has now been rehabilitated in Western scholarly thought as an accurate reflection of existential reality (1990: 6)."

Those considerations lead Willis into depicting the new ecological world view as 'neototemistic', a characterization which I find particularly inventive and descriptive.

At the beginning of this discussion I referred to the distinction between agriculturalists' and hunter-gatherers' attitudes to animals, a

distinction which is treated by some scholars, as Morris legitimately remarked, as a crude generalization. Willis' considerations of the 'neo-totemistic' ecologists suggests a second generalizing distinction between the "primitive, archaic, tribal or premodern" cluster of cultures on the one hand, and the "modern.., Western" world view on the other (Willis 1990: 20). The later has been generally associated with utilitarianism and anthropocentric hierarchies which are presumed to be opposed to the ecologists' and 'tribal' people's *balanced, reciprocal, interdependent, holistic* approach to their natural environment. My own ethnographic account clearly depicts the ethnocentric disposition of this distinction. The traditional relationship of the people in Vassilikos with wild animals is permeated with a pragmatic, practical utilitarianism, and stable cosmological anthropocentric hierarchies which, as I will illustrate in the following chapter, have remained virtually unchallenged over a long historical period.

Willis, in an earlier work (1975), compares attitudes towards animals from three African examples: Evans-Pritchard's Nuer, M.Douglas' Lele and the Fipa, agriculturalists in south-west Tanzania, studied by himself. He remarks that the Nuer, well known for their attachment to their domestic cattle, dislike wild animals, while the Lele regard with disdain and contempt their domestic animals and are much more positive about hunting, an activity they invest with prestige and mystical meaning (ibid: 44-6). But the Fipa attitudes to both wild and domestic animals is described by Willis with the terms: 'utilitarian', 'irrelevant', 'neutral', 'businesslike' and 'down to earth' (ibid: 45-50). "What is the use of that to us, the human community?", the Fipa wonder when confronted with animals and objects of the external world, and their 'ashamedly pragmatic' evaluations closely resemble my own informants bewilderment about the 'use' of the turtles and the monk seals (ibid: 50). Both Fipa and the Vassilikiot pragmatism sharply contrast with the idealized ecological depictions of pre-modern world-views.

Even in the case of the Western European tradition, where the attitudes towards most animals has been primarily economic and exploitative, there is a notable exception to the predominant utilitarian rule: pets and pet-keeping, a subject studied thoroughly by James Serpell (1986, 1989, Serpell and Paul 1994). Pets are by definition animals loved for "no obvious practical and economic purpose" and, as Serpell persuasively argues, sheer material utility is not a valid model for explaining the human tendency to keep pets (1986, 1989). After systematically discrediting popular stereotypes and explanations on why humans keep pets, Serpell - compelled to answer this question himself - underlies the importance of social and emotional functions of pet-keeping. Despite these functionalist implications however, his work provides further evidence that cross-cultural categorization of human attitudes to animals according to *utilitarian:Western* versus *non-utilitarian:traditional* dichotomies is untenable. Serpell demonstrates methodically and by use of abundant ethnographic examples - although he is not an anthropologist - that pet-keeping is widespread in numerous pre-modern societies. In some of these societies animals are treated in a strict utilitarian manner but, at the same time, some of them - even animals of the species which are in general mistreated - are kept as pets, independent of any material considerations (1986: 56-7, 1989: 13). In this sense, pre-modern or traditional societies are not markedly different from the 'Western-modern' ones: utilitarian attitudes to animals and unconditional care some times co-exist within the same culture, the same village, or even the same farm.

Like those already mentioned in this discussion, Serpell (1986) contrasts hunter-gatherer's respect for nature with the farmers' attitude of superiority and dominance. In the concluding chapter of *In the Company of Animals*, his comparison of the pre-Neolithic hunter with the post-Neolithic farmer is implicitly evolutionary. Attitudes to animals are related to the shift from hunting to farming, while the orientation of historical civilizations towards dominance and supremacy over the natural world is treated as a rather 'unfortunate' development (1986: 174-80).

Despite those weaknesses, Serpell's description of the farmer's antagonism to nature is particularly illuminating:

"The farmer has no choice but to set himself up in opposition to nature. Land must be cleared for cultivation, and weeds and pests, which would otherwise restore his fields to their original condition, must be vigorously suppressed. Domestic livestock must be controlled and confined, using force if necessary, to prevent them wandering off and reverting to a wild state, or being eaten by predators" (1986: 175).

This description, phrased with simpler terms, could have been among many similar ones expressed by my informants in Vassilikos. As I have repeatedly noted in the present and previous chapters, the constant 'struggle' with weeds, pests, predators and unrestrained farm animals figures prominently in the discourse of Vassilikos' farmers. But Serpell, unlike my own informants, perceives the farmers as experiencing guilt in their attempts to 'subjugate', 'manipulate' and 'enslave' - to mention some of his morally charged terms - the living creatures of their immediate environment. To resolve this guilt-ridden conflict, farming societies, according to Serpell, formulated appropriate supporting ideologies: "ideologies that absolved farming people from blame and enable them to continue their remorseless programme of expansion and subjugation with clear conscience" (Serpell 1986: 175)...!

However, if we subtract several apparent 'animal-rights' oriented evaluations, most of Serpell's historical reflections are indeed fair. Despite the fact that notable exceptions can be drawn from the following generalization, ancient Greeks and Romans have, at least in most cases, approached nature as "a fearsome opponent to be mastered and avoided", and Serpell demonstrates this with several examples (1986: 175-7). The Aristotelian natural hierarchies and Plato's emphasis on the power of human reason, were historically succeeded by Christian anthropocentrism and the biblical human 'dominion over every living thing' (Serpell 1986: 122-3, Serpell and Paul 1994:132). Serpell's presentation of the dominant Christian world view, which emphasized human superiority and animal subordination, carefully accounts for several exceptions, such as the

friendly attitude to animals exhibited by St. Chrysostom, the Franciscan Order and, even, the medieval heresy of the Cathars (1986: 122, 126). Without neglecting to refer to Bacon's anthropocentrism and Descartes' mechanistic perception of animals, Serpell attempts a short review of anthropocentric attitudes to animals in Western European history (1986: 121-35), a task similarly accomplished by a more concise section in a subsequent article (Serpell and Paul 1994: 132-4).

The anthropocentric spirit of several scholars in the Western European tradition is elegantly discussed by Keith Thomas in *Man and the Natural World* (1983). Thomas, a historian, demarcates his account to a particular context and period, early modern England from the sixteenth to the eighteenth century. He does not hesitate, however, to go back to Aristotle and the Bible, in order to illuminate the roots of several anthropocentric conceptions which were popular in the period he examines. But unlike Lynn White, who in a powerful essay<sup>86</sup> - influential in popular ecology and to an earlier stage of my own work - blamed the Christian religion for its overt anthropocentrism, Thomas carefully observes that ecological problems and anthropocentric perceptions of the natural world are not merely confined to the West and the Judaeo-Christian tradition. Furthermore, Thomas distinguishes between the rather 'ambivalent' attitudes of Christian religion, oscillating from 'domination' to 'responsibility' towards non-human beings, and the evidently anthropocentric - and often religious - orientation of several individual scholars in the early modern period (1983: 23-4). Human uniqueness, in the eighteenth century, apart from the Biblical justifications, was usually grounded on three particularly human features: speech, reason and religious instinct (ibid: 32). The dominant anthropocentric distinctions of Aristotle and Aquinas, became further sharpened by the Cartesian perception of animals as machines, a doctrine anticipating "much later mechanistic psychology" and physiological

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<sup>86</sup> "The Historical Roots of our Ecologic Crisis" in *Machina ex Deo: Essays on the Dynamism of Western Culture* (1968).

explanations of human psychic life (ibid: 33). Thomas, further describes how the sharp distinction between humans and animals was paralleled by how the superior classes visualized subordinate or marginal groups and - here, he directly draws from Mary Douglas - outsiders. In early modern England, the Irish, the poor, the mad, even infants and women, were portrayed as acting/living like 'beasts' or as being in an animal state/condition. "Once perceived as beasts", Thomas explains, "they were treated accordingly" (ibid: 41-4).

Andreas-Holger Maehle, another historian, studying the ethics of the man-animal relationship at approximately the same period as Thomas, equally notes on the anthropocentric views of the eighteenth century thinkers (1994: 89). Like Thomas and Serpell, he recognizes how perceived animal inferiority was "substantiated with the authority of the Bible", and how influential was the Cartesian conception of both animal and human bodies as automata (ibid: 82,86). During the eighteenth century, Descartes' 'beast-machine' theory gave rise to long-lasting debates concerned with the problem of animal souls (the Cartesian opposition being pioneered by the Leipzig philosophers Winkler and Meier), a problem anticipating later ethical and juridical considerations of cruelty to animals and animal rights (ibid: 86-98).

Harriet Ritvo (1987, 1994), focusing on a period succeeding the one studied by the two historians mentioned above, unravels in a stimulating way the complicated character of Victorian attitudes to animals. "This incoherence", she argues, "spreads in both directions, implicating not only the category of 'Victorian attitudes' but also that of 'animals'" (1994: 114). Vivid examples of this chaotic multiplicity of views and information are portrayed in Ritvo's account of colonial hunters narrating stories to their Victorian arm-chair audiences about subjugating wild exotic beasts, or the 18-19th century bestiaries "echoing anthropocentric and sentimental projections" on animal characteristics and dispositions: the 'noble' horse, the 'vicious' boar, the 'docile' elephant! (1987: 7-30, 1994: 113-115). Categorizing and describing animals



according to distinctions such as, '*edible-inedible, wild-tame, useful-useless*' - an approach often followed by my own informants in Vassilikos - was gradually succeeded by a growing concern for 'systematic' classification, a commitment undertaken by specialists, the 'naturalists'. But despite the criticism and contempt of the 'naturalists', "the serious students of nature", for the unsystematic bestiaries and folk-taxonomies - what anthropologists call indigenous knowledge - natural history, like the earlier, religious versions of anthropocentrism, placed humanity at the apex of the newly founded classificatory hierarchies (Ritvo 1987: 13-4, 1994: 115).

The complex character of ideas relating to the natural world identified by Ritvo, is not a phenomenon confined to Victorian Britain. Morris (1981) in an article in the *Ecologist*, while tracing the change of views on nature from anthropomorphism to anthropocentrism, and contrary to most writers already mentioned, concentrates on the anthropomorphic, animistic perceptions of ancient Greeks to the natural world, rather than the hierarchical and anthropocentric. This is an example of the dangers underlying both historical and cross-cultural generalizations. Morris is correct in stressing the holistic, animistic world-views of Plato, and other scholars (Serpell and Thomas) are equally correct in crediting the ancient philosopher with enhancing the dichotomy between man and animals with his veneration of human reason.

Bearing in mind the problems inherent in generalizing accounts investigating complex issues, such as the human attitudes to animals, across broad historical periods and cultures, Ritvo argues:

"Once nature ceased to be a constant antagonist, it could be viewed with affection and even, as the scales tipped to the human side, with nostalgia. Thus sentimental attachment to both individual pets and the lower creation in general - a stock attribute of the Victorians - became widespread in the first half of the century. These developments were echoed in literature and art, where a highly ordered aesthetic was replaced by one that valued irregularity and lack of restraint. Wilderness became attractive rather than ugly, wild animals, like the peasants and exotic foreigners with whom they were increasingly classed, might evoke

sympathy rather than scorn (1987 :3)."

Ritvo in this short paragraph skilfully depicts the decline of use-oriented, anthropocentric attitudes to animals and their replacement by attitudes of respect and idealized admiration for the natural or exotic world. In the twentieth century those ideas found their most refined and coherent expression in the ecological movement and its holistic, considerate - and, some times, apparently anthropomorphic and totemistic - views of the ecology theorists. But as Morris observes, in the same article in the *Ecologist*, the modern ecological approach "although it represents a break-away from the mechanistic conception in theory, its main impetus was *ethical*" (1981 :137). It is derived out of an implicit anthropocentric concern that the unconstrained exploitation of the natural world will result in the destruction of the human race itself.

To narrow the scope of this discussion and come closer to the concerns of my own ethnography, I will conclude with an anthropological example highly critical of the ecological discourse, which stems, for one more time, from the Icelandic context. Einarsson (1993), examines the conflict between conservationists and fishermen, and the 'ecocentrism' of the former and the 'anthropocentrism' of the latter. The conservationists in their campaigns project human motives and humanized images on to whales, a moralizing device accurately depicted by Einarsson as anthropomorphic. Like my informants in Vassilikos, the Icelandic fishermen, understand the environmentalists as "fundamentalists and extremists"; the ban on whale-hunting threatens the fishermen's way of life, while the ecological anthropomorphic discourse on cetaceans sharply contradicts the "utilitarian and anthropocentric" - and, I would suggest, realistic and pragmatic - views of the fishermen (ibid: 75-6). The tales narrated by conservationists portray cetaceans as saving people's life, but the stories told by the fishermen describe whales as destroying boats, causing deaths, and consuming the fish caught in the nets. The similarity between the Icelandic fishermen's attitude towards 'useless' aquatic beings and the Vassilikiot's descriptions of turtles and seals - as were presented

in earlier sections of this chapter - becomes apparent from the following quotation by Einarsson:

"I was fishing with another fisherman when a strange, shark-like fish appeared on the longline... The fisherman did as he did with all fish that he could not sell, returned it immediately to the water. He had never seen such a fish either, but it was worthless, he said. I never found out what kind of fish it was except that it was classified as *drasl*, which in Icelandic means 'rubbish' or 'waste'... (Einarsson 1993: 76)".

#### **f. Conclusion.**

The short theoretical discussion on human attitudes to animals in the previous section suggests that anthropocentrism and anthropomorphism, antagonism and veneration of animals and nature, can hardly be confined to general categories spanning broad historical periods and cultural-regions, and sometimes can hardly be distinguished in the world-view of particular cultural traditions or within the writing of specific individuals. Attempts to categorize different attitudes towards animals according to large clusters of cultures named with terms like *modern*, *traditional* or *Western-European* are in general unsuccessful, and the terms themselves are equally misleading. None of them can be accurately applied to the community I studied and to its *modern*, but still *traditional*, European, but uncertain about their *Western* identity, inhabitants. The most serious objection to those terms will arise from my informants themselves, since most of them frequently shift their rhetorical 'self-definitions' from one category to another with surprising ease and exhilaration. Vassilikiots are Europeans living in a modern era, aspiring to acquire some modern comforts, and faithfully adhering to several traditional values. Their relationship with animals and the natural environment is an example of the latter, fundamentally traditional orientation. Most of my informants, although seriously engaged in tourist enterprises, feel comfortable to call themselves 'farmers' and their village a 'rural' community. Practical considerations, arising from their farming

way of life, are organized and expressed in a local discourse through concepts such as 'usefulness' and 'order', which in turn, inform a pragmatic, realistic relationship with animals and the natural world.

In the previous chapter I cited anthropologists writing about the man-animal relationship in rural Greece. Their references to animals - domestic animals - are only part of their broader ethnographic monographs, like the ones written by Friedl (1962), Campbell (1964) and du Boulay (1974). The latter offers a more contextual analysis of the particular topic, by recognizing the inclusion or membership of domestic animals into the rural household, and the pragmatic, rather than utilitarian, attitude of their owners towards them. My extensive ethnographic account, in the previous and present chapter, further supports du Boulay's observations and justifies my persistence in examining local concepts such as 'order', 'care' and 'usefulness'. The preoccupation of rural Greeks with an animal's usefulness can only be understood against the template of care and order in the farm environment. In the context of the rural Greek, household-based economy, self-interest has familial or household oriented connotations (du Boulay 1974, Loizos 1975), and 'usefulness' is similarly defined in relation to the needs of the household, a unit including both animals and human members. In the narratives of my informants, the 'usefulness' or 'harmfulness' of wild animals are not mere reflections of a crude positive or negative utility, but expected and, in some cases, realized outcomes of a dynamic interrelationship between two practically opposed environments, the rural household and the surrounding wilderness. By stating this, I am not trying to undermine the utilitarian attitude of my informants - people who celebrate the practical, functional character "of things" - but rather to locate the man-animal relationship of Vassilikos in an appropriate context of daily practice: one that emphasizes household priorities over self-centred, individualistic aspirations.

The relationship of Vassilikiots to wild animals, as this is expressed by the farmers themselves, is a one-way relationship.

Vassilikiots perceive non-domesticated animals in terms of their own established presence in the local environment. They refer to wild animals in relation to their own point of view, their position as guardians of welfare and order on their farms. They are concerned about the potential 'harm' (ζημιά) or 'use' (χρησιμότητα) wild animals may 'cause' to (κάνουν), or 'have' for (έχουν) their own households, that is, themselves and all the domesticated plants and animals on their farm. Their attitudes towards wild animals are expressed in accordance to criteria of 'usefulness' and usually follow three general tendencies. First, lack of benefit or harm done by the wild animal in question results in indifference. Second, the edibility of a wild animal renders it a legitimate target for hunting - a positive characteristic - and justifies its predation. Since hunting is, in general, celebrated in the narratives of the local people, Vassilikiots are eager to talk about the 'hunnable' animals and share their knowledge and experience of hunting them. Third, animals locally portrayed as causing "harm or damage" (ζημειά) are persecuted with anger and resentment. Harmful animals are an obvious threat to the farmer's persistent efforts to establish a form of 'order' in the farm environment.

Predation by wild animals on domestic animals arouses sentiments of sorrow (στενοχώρια) and anger (θυμός) in their owners and caretakers. The process of "caring" (φροντίδα) is interrupted and a significant amount of effort and labour is "lost" (χάνεται) along with the dead animals. The villagers express their disappointment in these unpredictable circumstances in ways similar to other reactions to natural calamities (eg. bad weather or epidemics). In practice, however, they do not confine themselves to pessimistic statements but they actively protect the animals of the farm from intruders by employing guns, poison or other means. In this respect the farmers' antagonism to the wild aspect of nature is expressed in a direct and explicit form.

The criterion of 'usefulness' is expressed as a fundamental consideration in the local people's evaluations of wild animals and

instructs their direct relationship with them. Despite this general attitude, the villagers do not always apply a strict utilitarian sense of justice towards wild animals. Although they would normally kill 'harmful' (βλαβερά) animals whenever possible, I recorded a few cases in which the farmers kept wild animals in captivity and/or allowed them to remain alive. In those cases, characteristics of wild animals other than their practical 'use', such as their beauty or their friendly behaviour, were the rationale for keeping them. However, unlike "city dwellers or ecologists", Vassilikiots never justify their protectionist attitudes towards wild animals in terms of affection. A wild animal is not introduced into the context of everyday 'care', which justifies feelings of this kind. Instead, the villagers would think of alternative forms of 'use or function' to rationalize their not-utilitarian decisions concerning wild animals. Rationalizations of this kind reflect the people's concern to be consistent with their criterion of 'usefulness', but at the same time indicate their personal freedom to negotiate their relationship with wild animals and apply their personal decisions at a practical level.

Local beliefs that inform the relationship between people and wild animals in Vassilikos are also consistent with an additional idea: the axiom of human authority over physical organisms of all kinds. Without ever being ambivalent, my informants exercise their perceived right to decide upon the fate of every wild animal they encounter. They feel absolutely confident in applying their own personal conceptions of order and justice to all the creatures to be found in the physical environment. This attitude of my informants towards wild animals is in accordance with the beliefs of the Orthodox Church which reinforces a conception of the physical world as revolving around its human protagonists. As I will demonstrate in the following chapter, religious cosmology in respect of the natural world portrays humans beings as having the authority and command - the biblical 'dominion' - to utilize physical resources for their own benefit. According to this view, animals and plants are created by God in relation to man and for man's benefit. This culturally specific

anthropocentric perspective of natural organisms is expressed both at the theological level of reasoning and in the local people's everyday discourse and practice. It constitutes a coherent, pragmatic approach towards the physical world which remained virtually unchallenged until the recent appearance of environmentalists and conservationists on the island.

The environmentalists - who are locally referred to as the 'ecologists' - exercise pressure on the state authorities to enforce the conservation of endangered species, such as the Loggerhead turtles, the Mediterranean monk-seals and a few species of birds, such as the turtledoves which are threatened by unrestrained hunting. As I have already described in my introductory chapter, the 'ecologists', in their campaigns, emphasize the uniqueness of wild animals as independent organisms participating in an interdependent natural ecosystem. According to this view, turtles or seals have an inalienable right to exist in nature, sharing its resources with humans beings. To ensure the endangered species' survival, the 'ecologists' demand constraints on the human population and their activities on the local environment. But as this chapter has made clear, the priorities of the 'ecologists' and the local people do not coincide. For my informants, wild animals, such as the ones to be protected by the 'ecologists', occupy a peripheral position in the physical environment; their existence is defined in terms of the farmers' established presence on the land and the welfare of farming households. To prioritise the perceived needs of neighbouring fauna would seem to my informants not only ludicrous but a perversion of the natural order of things.

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## **Chapter 6:**

### **Religious cosmology and the interpretation of Genesis.**

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#### **a. Introduction.**

During my long presentation of the human-animal relationship in Vassilikos, in chapters four and five, I repeatedly referred to the local perception of human authority over non-human beings. This authority was most prominently expressed in the farmers' perceived entitlement to organize and impose 'order' on the farm-environment, and the farmers' power to decide upon the fate of domesticated animals and captured wild animals. In the previous chapters I have also implied that my informants' perception of dominance over animals and physical nature is supported, and actually reinforced, by an elaborate religious cosmology. Here, I will attempt to shed some light on the principles underlining this cosmology, thus providing the background for a more comprehensive understanding of the relevant perceptions held by the farmers in Vassilikos.

This chapter focuses on religious beliefs about non-human living beings and their role and position in the cosmology established by Greek Orthodox dogma. Instead of summarizing various religious documents related to this subject, I have decided to present, in depth, a particular religious text, which I consider to be the most representative. In this way, I hope to avoid generalizations, and present, at the same time, a complete coherent religious discourse subject, as with ethnographic data, to the reader's critical approach.

Among the various religious discourses relating to human-animal relations, I have chosen one which is known - although the author didn't gave it a title - as the Hexaameron (the Six Day Period) or Homilies on the Hexaameron. The author is St.Basil the Great (Μέγας Βασίλειος), one of the most prestigious and venerated holy fathers (Άγιοι Πατέρες) of



the Orthodox patristic [:of the fathers] tradition.

The *Hexaemeron* is composed of nine consecutive homilies delivered by St.Basil in Caesarea in Cappadocia around 370A.D.. Caesarea was an important cultural and political centre in the Eastern Roman and Early Byzantine empire. The majority of the audience at whom the homilies were aimed would probably have comprised manual workers, listening to a homily in the morning before departing for work, and to a second in the evening as they returned home (S.Sakkos 1973, Papoutsopoulos 1992). In addition, the presence of some educated people in the audience can be inferred by some comments by the author. The nine homilies on the *Hexaemeron* were delivered within five successive days in the period of fasting before Easter (Lent\Μεγάλη Τεσσαρακοστή).<sup>87</sup>

The author defines his primary objective in the *Homilies on the Hexaemeron* as an interpretative one. The nine homilies are an interpretation (ερμηνεία) of the first chapter of Genesis, although human creation is excluded.<sup>88</sup> St.Basil attempts to explain the meaning of Genesis in a way comprehensible to a wider Christian public. Like most prominent Christian thinkers of his time, he was engaged in fighting heresies and establishing standards for the dogmatic interpretation of Holy Scripture.<sup>89</sup> St.Basil distinguishes sharply between his interpretation of Genesis and the work of pagan philosophers or heretics who apply allegorical interpretations to Holy Writ (νόμους αλληγορίας, τροπολογίαις).<sup>90</sup> <sup>91</sup> Being a man of learning, educated at the

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<sup>87</sup> S.Sakkos remarks that it is customary in the Orthodox Church for Genesis to be read during the fasting period before Easter (1973: 16). St.Basil's *Hexaemeron* appears to be part of this practice.

<sup>88</sup> In the last homily of the *Hexaemeron*, St.Basil announces his intention to examine the topic of the creation of man in a future discourse. This task, which was never accomplished by St.Basil, was carried out by his brother Gregory of Nyssa.

<sup>89</sup> The establishment of a unifying and coherent dogma was a primary concern of the Holy Fathers during the first centuries of the Christian Era.

<sup>90</sup> Page and paragraph references of St.Basil's homilies in this presentation are abbreviated in the following way: ibid: + page number of the greek translation by S.Sakkos (1973), followed by a capital letter signifying the number of the respective homily (E,Z,H,Θ), the letter "p" abbreviating the word "paragraph", and the number of the respective paragraph of the ancient original text. For readers wishing to refer to an English

"Philosophy School" of Athens, St.Basil was well acquainted with the works of the ancient Greek scholars. In the nine homilies of the "*Hexaemeron*" St.Basil directly or indirectly alludes to Aristotle, Ploutarhos, Origenis and others<sup>92</sup>. His knowledge of the extensive and systematic work of Aristotle on plants and animals is also apparent from the text. St.Basil even uses some of Aristotle's examples. However, he persistently declares at every given opportunity his dissatisfaction with the approach followed by the ancient philosopher.

Subsequent and contemporary theologians have been immensely influenced by St.Basil's interpretation of Genesis in the *Hexaemeron*.<sup>93</sup> In an acknowledgement of his work, the Church service in his honour includes a hymn in which St.Basil is venerated as "one who studied and interpreted the nature of beings".<sup>94</sup> These interpretative doctrines, properties of the *Hexaemeron*, as well as the authority of the author, account for my use of this work as an illustration of religious perceptions of non-human beings. The text of the *Hexaemeron*, and particularly homilies 5, 7, 8 and 9, will be presented as a piece of ethnography containing valuable insights into contemporary knowledge, attitudes and popular beliefs regarding flora and fauna.

I begin with a presentation of St.Basil's material and then go on to focus on animal classification as this is developed in the *Hexaemeron*. Beforehand, however, I single out four points which were originally recognized by Durkheim and Mauss in their *Primitive Classification*

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translation, I add "\*" followed by the respective page number of the english translation by Sister Agnes Clare Way (1963).

<sup>91</sup> *ibid*:341-3Θp2-4,\*:135-6.

<sup>92</sup> Plato, Plotinus, Aratus, Theophrastus, Herodotus (Sister Agnes Clare Way 1963: xi).

Ailianos, Diogenis Laertiou, Diodoros Sikeliotou, Opianos, Dioskouridis, Filonas o Ioudaios and Ipolytos (S.Sakkos 1973: 18).

<sup>93</sup> St.Basil's work is highly venerated by two other "Holy Fathers", St.Gregory of Nyssa and St.Gregory of Nazianzus.

<sup>94</sup> "Των ὄντων εκμελετήσας την φύσιν..." and "...την φύσιν των ὄντων ετρανώσας", meaning that "first you studied well and then you interpreted the nature of beings, the world and the universe (S.Sakkos 1973, :13)".

(1963), and which inform my analysis significantly.

First, according to Durkheim and Mauss, instead of "facilitating action", systems of primitive classification explain "the relations .. between things" and are therefore, "in continuity" with "first scientific classifications" (Durkheim and Mauss 1963: 81). When the authors state that the mind "feels the *need*" to connect ideas and concepts, "to unify knowledge", they seem to echo both Aristotle's claim that "all men *desire* by nature to know" (*Metaphysica* 980a21, quoted in Atran 1990: 88), and anticipate Levi-Strauss's similar claim in *The Savage Mind* (1962). Second, Durkheim and Mauss maintain that the classification of things entails information about the social relations between human beings. This approach has been fruitfully developed in the work of Levi-Strauss, Leach, Douglas, Tambiah, Bulmer, et al, who have identified social relations in animal classifications. In this project however, I employ the information derived from the animal classification in the *Hexaemeron* to explain the particular relationship between people **and** other life forms, rather than simply concentrating on relationships exclusively between human beings.

Third, Durkheim and Mauss argue that "every classification implies a hierarchical order" (Durkheim and Mauss 1963: 8). While agreeing with Roy Ellen that not every social system is necessarily articulated with hierarchical classifications (1979: 25), concepts such as 'hierarchy' and 'order' are very useful in approaching the meanings embedded in the animal classification of St. Basil, and particularly in understanding human - animal relations in a Greek ethnographic context. Fourth, the same two authors maintain that classificatory thought is "not the spontaneous product of abstract understanding" but "the result of an entire historical development" (ibid: 7,8). This statement, permeated as it is with social determinism, is probably unsatisfactory for the majority of contemporary cognitive scientists. In my particular inquiry, I will not enter into the debate on cognitive universals. I do however, observe that as far as animal classification in a Greek speaking ethnographic context is

concerned, hidden universals concerning human cognition cannot be easily identified, while persistent well-established ways of comprehending the physical environment have remained influential over a long historical period.

**b. *Hexaemeron*, the classification and the hierarchy of species:  
presentation of the text.**

St.Basil in the *Hexaemeron* states that it is not his intention to produce a systematic classification of flora and fauna, analogous to the method of the pagan philosophers - he obviously has Aristotle in mind.<sup>95</sup> His primary intention is to praise the wisdom of the Creator, how divine Providence lies behind the diversity of living beings. However, in spite of his contempt for non-spiritually oriented scholarship, St.Basil's orderly description of living species in fact entails a form of classification.

In his description of fauna and flora, St.Basil explicitly and implicitly groups the living beings into categories. Variation in animal and plant species is treated as the means of ordering his description and illustrating the meaning of Creation. In this process, peculiarities of individual species are dealt with as the criteria for establishing variation among living organisms. Stability in variations of species in successive generations is understood as the perpetuation of 'order' in the universe, a form of 'order' introduced by the Creator through his commandment.

Homily E is a discourse about the creation of plants. Plants were "brought forth" out of the earth by his commandment, St.Basil explains, "first the herb, then the trees".<sup>96</sup> In three different parts of this homily, the author emphasizes the correct order of the plant's generation and reproduction until the "present time". First there is germination, "for,

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<sup>95</sup> See the following works of Aristotle: History of animals, Parts of animals, Movement of animals, Progression of animals, Generation of animals, On plants (in *The complete works of Aristotle*, (ed.) J.Barnes 1984).

<sup>96</sup> *ibid*:173Ep1,\*:67.

germination is the beginning of every herb and every plant".<sup>97</sup> Then follows the generation of the "green shoot", the stage at which the plant is a "seedling". Third, the plant becomes "a grass" or, in the case of the more complicated plants, the "green foliage" is developed. At the last stage the fruit comes to maturity and the "perfection" of the seed is completed.<sup>98</sup>

Apart from the initial distinction between herbs and trees, which is directly implied by the text in Genesis, St.Basil categorizes plants in respect of their use by people:

"first, deserved to be mentioned those plants which mostly contribute to our lives, those destined to meet man with their fruit and prepare for him a rich diet  
(ibid:193Ep32/translation altered according to the Greek text)."

St.Basil distinguishes plants according to ability to bear fruit, suitability for building shelters or ships, and potential for being used for fuel.<sup>99</sup> He also refers to the plant's decorative role, medical properties and their nutrition for animals.<sup>100</sup> "There is not one plant without worth, not one without use", St.Basil argues, "either it provides food for some animal" or it serves as a medicine for people (ibid:185Ep20,\*:72).

Even in cases where plants are "useful for the other living creatures", the author illustrates that "the profit they receive passes over to us" (ibid:175 Ep5,\*:68). The text of Genesis allows St.Basil to assert that the creation of flora took place in order not only to meet the needs of herbivorous animals, but, | also , to satisfy the needs of human beings:<sup>101</sup>

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<sup>97</sup> Some authors give to the fifth homily of the *Hexaemeron* the title "The germination of the Earth". See, the 1963 translation by Sister Agnes Clare Way, which is used in my text.

<sup>98</sup> ibid:173Ep2,\*:67 :175Ep6,\*:68 :181Ep14,\*:70.

<sup>99</sup> ibid:197Ep38,\*:77.

<sup>100</sup> ibid:207Ep52,\*:81.

<sup>101</sup> "God also said, 'I give you all plants that bear seed everywhere on earth, and every tree bearing fruit which yields seed: they shall be yours for food. All green plants I give for food to the wild animals, to all the birds of the heaven, and to all reptiles on earth, every living creature' (The new English Bible 1970, Genesis:29,30)."

"Was food, then, prepared for the cattle (*δια τα κτήνη που βόσκουν*) beforehand, while our race appeared deserving of no forethought? Well, most certainly, he who prepared pasture for the cattle and horses provided wealth and pleasure for you. In fact, He who sustains your flocks increases your assets of life. And what else is the production of seeds except a preparation for your subsistence (*ibid:175 Ep4,:\*68*).

St.Basil's description of plant species is guided by reference to their appearance and physical attributes. The shape and formation of roots, trunks and branches, as well as the shape, colour and flavour of the fruit or the formation of the foliage, are treated by St.Basil as indicative of the variations among different species of plants.<sup>102</sup> The "countless" magnitude of variation is interpreted by him as an illustration of divine wisdom. St.Basil explains that, nature (*φύσις*), which in this context is synonymous with the divine order, provided plants with their appropriate characteristics and shapes, fitting them for survival. A stalk of wheat, to refer to one of St.Basil's examples:

"is encircled with nodes, so that they, like some bonds, may bear easily the weight of the ears, when, full of fruit, they bend down to the earth... nature has strengthened the wheat with these bonds, placing the grain in a sheath so as not to be easily snatched by grain-picking birds; and besides, it keeps off any harm from small insects by projecting a barrier of the needlelike beards (*ibid:183 Ep17,:\*71*). "<sup>103</sup>

The functional character of plant structure, is for St.Basil, an illustration of divinely inspired order and causality. In another paragraph he clearly states: "Nothing happens without cause; nothing by chance; all things involve a certain ineffable wisdom (*ibid:203 Ep46,:\*79*)."

While St.Basil elaborates on the variety of characteristics in plants, he, simultaneously, presents examples of his contemporaries' understanding of botany and agriculture. For example, he refers to the

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<sup>102</sup> *ibid:197-203Ep39-45,:\*77-79.*

<sup>103</sup> An other similar example is used by St.Basil: "How is it that the leaf of the vine is serrated? In order that the bunch of grapes may both withstand injuries from the air and may receive plentifully, through the openings, the rays of the sun (*ibid:203 Ep46,:\*79*)."

numerous varieties among fruit trees, the great variety of fruit types among the same species of tree, the distinctions made by gardeners between male and female fruit produced by male and female trees of the same species:

"They divide even palms into males and females. And at times, too, one may see the so-called female among them letting down its branches, as if with passionate desire, and longing for the embrace of the males, at which the caretakers of the plants throw upon the branches a certain kind of seeds of the males, called 'psenes'. Then, as if it is consciously perceptive of fruition, it again raises its branches erect and restores the foliage of the plant to its proper form (ibid:199 Ep42,.\*78).<sup>104</sup>

The author further refers to "the water in the plants", their juices, the different tastes of the juices in different parts of a plant's structure (leaves, branches or fruits) or the difference in the taste of the fruit they produce. He indicates different kinds of tastes produced by different varieties of trees, or even different shades of the same taste provided by the fruit of different or similar species of tree.<sup>105</sup> All this diversity is attributed to the initial divine command ("let the earth bring forth vegetation"). St.Basil explains that the command is still "inherent in the earth" and "impels (the earth) in the course of each year to exert all the power it has for the generation of herbs, seeds and trees" (ibid:209 Ep55,.\*82).

If we consider plants as ornaments of the Earth, St.Basil maintains in homily Z of the *Hexaemeron*, aquatic animals are ornaments of the

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<sup>104</sup> According to Aristotle's description in the *History of Animals* [5.32 (557b)], the psen is believed to be an insect, which exists initially in a grub form and after deserting its husk, it enters the wild-fig and contributes so as the wild figs do not fall from the tree. This is the reason, Aristotle explains, farmers tie wild figs on the domesticated fig trees or plant wild fig trees close to domesticated ones. This same example is repeated by St.Basil who is well acquainted with Aristotle's work. Since it was believed that psenes played a similar role for the reproduction of palm trees, at some historical point in antiquity the flowers of the palm trees were named psenes, and this the meanings attached to the word psen by St.Basil (he means the flowers of the male palm trees) (N.Sakkos 1973: 201).

<sup>105</sup> ibid:203-4Ep47-50,.\*79-80.

waters. All forms of water - sea, rivers, lakes, even slime and ponds - became productive, after the divine command, producing all sorts of animals able to swim (πλωτά, νηκτικά). Those beings, produced by the divine command through the medium of water, are not only fish. "Frogs and mosquitos" and "amphibians" like "seals, crocodiles, hippopotamuses, crabs" are all considered to belong to the same general category.<sup>106</sup> St.Basil clarifies this point: "Even though some of the aquatic animals have feet and are able to walk..., yet the ability to swim is antecedent (ibid:267Zp3,\*,106)".

More important than any other characteristic, the relationship of aquatic animals with water, the medium they live in and were produced from, is the primary criterion for grouping those animals together. The author defines:

"Every creature able to swim, whether it swims at the surface of the water or cuts through its depths, is of the nature of crawling creatures, since it makes its way through a body of water (ibid:267Zp3,\*,106)."

St.Basil, in his following homily, will demonstrate the importance "crawling", as a method of moving in a medium like water or air, as indicative for classifying swimming and flying animals in one general category. In homily Z, however, he is merely interested in establishing the relationship of aquatic animals to water. For this purpose, the author examines an internal part of the fishes' structure, their organs for breathing.<sup>107</sup> He accurately contrasts the respiration of fish by the "dilation and folding of the gills" with the human respiration by lungs and demonstrates why fish can not remain alive away from water, the medium from-and-for which they were created.<sup>108</sup>

The author proceeds in his orderly description of aquatic animals

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<sup>106</sup> Here, the term "amphibian" is used with its original ancient Greek meaning, denoting a being which able to live on both land and water.

<sup>107</sup> In contrast with modern taxonomy, internal systems of the animal's body structure are rarely used by St.Basil as criteria for ordering animals into categories of related species or genera.

<sup>108</sup> ibid:269Zp5-6,\*,107.



to size, habitat, lifestyle, method of procreation and external characteristics of body structure or appearance. Aquatic animals are subsequently differentiated to those which live in the open and deep sea and those which live close to the shore,

"those which cling to rocks, those which travel in shoals, those which live solitary, the sea monsters, the enormous, and the tiniest fish (ibid:267 Zp5,\*:106)."

Aquatic beings which bear live offspring (*vivipara*), like sharks, dogfish, seals, dolphins, rays ("the majority of cetaceans and cartilaginous fish), are grouped separately from those beings which produce eggs (*ovipara*), like most kinds of fish. The later category is further subdivided into "scaly and horny scaled" fish, "those which have fins and those which do not" (:267-71Zp4-8,\*:106-7). The author maintains that "fish have a specific space to live in, a characteristic nature, a distinct feeding and a peculiar mode of life (ibid:269Zp6,\*:107 translation altered according to the Greek text)".

In the Greek translation of Genesis and the *Hexaemeron* the word *genus* (γένος) is used instead of the words "kind, species and class" used by the English translations (let the waters bring forth crawling creatures of *different kinds* = *different genera*).<sup>109</sup> The following categories of animals are termed genera by St.Basil: testaceans (mussels, scallops, sea snails, conchs etc), crustaceans (crayfish, crabs etc), and soft fish (polyps, cuttlefish etc). The ovipara and vivipara (like most cetaceans) constitute different genera, in the same way that cetaceans (big aquatic animals) and tiny fish are beings of separate genera.<sup>110</sup> According to St.Basil, "every genus has a particular name, food, shape, size and quality of flesh; all genera are distinguished by great differences and are divided into different species (:271 Zp9/my translation)".

Appearance, mode of reproduction and behaviour, are

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<sup>109</sup> The term "genus" (γένος) is also used by Aristotle. In his notes of *De Partibus Animalium I*, D.M.Balme explains: "The root meaning is kinship-group. It is Aristotle's usual word for a type of animal, at every level from infima species to major genus. But he uses it for genus as opposed to species when he requires this distinction... (Balme 1972: 74)".

<sup>110</sup> ibid:269-71Zp7-9,\*:107-8.

indiscriminantly used by St.Basil as criteria for grouping aquatic animals into different genera. The author is not concerned with particular details leading to a systematic classification. He clarified this point in the previous homily. He is categorical, however, when the distinction between different beings is implied by the text of Genesis. For example, plants are not mixed with swimming or flying animals. However, when the grouping of living organisms is not directed by the Holy Scripture, St.Basil employs a variety of criteria to arrange his descriptive account of the various genera of animals. His purpose is to establish the distinctions between different categories of aquatic animals and ensure that the character or nature of each species or category remains unchanged through generations.<sup>111 112</sup>

In homily Z, St.Basil states that aquatic creatures are the first beings in the Creation to possess "life and sensation". The author sharply contrasts aquatic animals with plants:

"plants and trees, even if they are said to live because they share the power of nourishing themselves and of growing, yet are not animals nor are they animate (ibid:255Zp3,\*:106)."

This is the first basic distinction drawn by St.Basil, the one between inanimate plants and animate beings. Aquatic animals, are animate beings, but according to St.Basil's interpretation their life is in some sense imperfect; they lack the ability to "speak or reason", "be tamed" or "endure the touch of the human hand". Using the example of fish

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<sup>111</sup> St.Basil describes: "The majority of the fishes do not hatch out the young as the birds do, nor do they fix nests or nourish the young with their own labours; but the water, taking up the egg when it has been laid, brings forth the living creature. And the method of perpetuation for each species is invariable and is without mixture with any other nature. There are not such unions as produce mules on land or such as of some birds which debase their species (:273Zp10,\*:108)".

<sup>112</sup> St.Basil, being in deep admiration of the great variety of aquatic beings, admits that even somebody who grew "old around the shores and beaches" is unable to inform other people with all the knowledge about every kind of fish. Additionally, he accounts for cultural variation in the people's knowledge about aquatic animals in different regions of the world (islanders, Mauritians, fishermen in the Indian Ocean or in the Egyptian Gulf) (ibid:273Zp10,\*:108).

migration, the author illustrates that since aquatic animals "do not have reason of their own... they have the law of nature strongly established which shows what must be done" (ibid:269-283Zp6-22, \*:107-112). With these words the author anticipates his subsequent distinction between different orders of animate beings.

In the following homily (H), St.Basil offers more information about the spiritual state of animals. He begins by comparing the lives of swimming creatures and animals of the land. According to the text of Genesis, aquatic animals have life, while animals of the earth are living creatures. This distinction renders the animals of the earth superior. The author discusses this in detail stating that aquatic animals have a rather imperfect life, since "they live in the dense element of water". He demonstrates this point by referring to the limitations of their senses: their hearing is poor, their sight is dim, they are unable to remember, imagine and recognize the familiar. Due to these limitations in their perception, St.Basil infers that among the aquatic beings, the life of the flesh directs the motives of the soul.<sup>113</sup> The author describes fish as creatures which are, "voiceless, but also incapable of being tamed or taught or trained for any participation in the life of man (ibid:301Hp4-5, \*:118)."

In contrast, St.Basil argues, the life of land animals is more perfect and for this reason their soul has hegemony over the body. The sensations of the land animals are more accurate. Most of the quadrupeds perceive the events happening in present time with acuteness and remember past events with precision. This is why, the author concludes, in the case of land animals it was commanded [by God] a soul to be created which will shape the body. The animals which live on the land possess somewhat more vital power. For St.Basil, although land animals are irrational - this is treated as an undisputed fact - they have a voice and can express sentiments with it. They express happiness and sadness, and recognition and hunger and numerous other states, which St.Basil calls

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<sup>113</sup> ibid:301Hp3-4, \*:118.

emotions - and a behaviourist psychologist would call drives. All these reasons, demonstrate the superiority of land over aquatic animals.<sup>114</sup>

Having established the superiority of land animals over animals of the sea, St.Basil clarifies the limitations of the land animal's state of life. He considers it very important for his audience to be conscious of the contrast between the animal and the human soul:

"hear about the soul of the irrational animals. Since, as it is written (in Lev.17.11), the life of every creature is its blood, and the blood, when congealed, is wont to change into flesh, when corrupted, decomposes into earth, reasonably, the soul of animals is something earthy (ibid:303Hp7,\*:119)."

St.Basil cannot hide his contempt for those philosophers who argue that the soul of animals is more ancient than their body and remains undissolved after the decomposition of the body. He detests their assertions of equality between human and animal souls and ridicules the claims of their being "at some time" women, bushes or fish in the sea.<sup>115</sup> In order to identify the quality of animal souls, the author refers to the relation between the soul and the blood, the blood and the flesh, the flesh and the earth. Then he follows the reverse sequential order. Starting from the relation of earth to flesh, flesh to blood and blood to soul, he demonstrates by algebraic logic that "the soul of beasts is earth"(ibid:303Hp7,\*:119).

While St.Basil is talking about animals of the land in homily H, he realizes that he has completely omitted one of the three parts of animal creation, the flying animals. After apologizing for his mistake he immediately proceeds to examine the animals flying in the air (πτηνῶν), starting from a comparison between them and the animals of the sea (πλωτῶν). Both "cut" or "move forward through" an ethereal or liquid medium like water or air, assisted by their tails, fins or wings. This

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<sup>114</sup> ibid:301Hp4-5,\*:118.

<sup>115</sup> Here, St.Basil defends the Christian dogmatic dismissal of the concept of reincarnation.

ability comes out of their common origin, St.Basil explains:

"since one characteristic common to both is swimming, one certain relationship has been provided for them through their generation from waters (ibid:307Hp11,\*:121)."

However, there is some difference between birds and fish because "none of the winged creatures is without feet". Feet was given to birds in order for them to subsist, since they find nourishment on earth.<sup>116</sup>

The author, being faithful to the text of Genesis, presents flying creatures as deriving from waters, like aquatic animals. Although he does not explicitly compare flying animals with animals of the land, I presuppose that the former are inferior to the latter for the reasons already stated, in the comparison between aquatic and land beings (:both swimming and flying creatures came out of water and "have life" but are not "living creatures").

Insects and birds are incorporated into the same general category, the flying creatures (*πτηνά*). This does not mean that St.Basil is ignorant of the structural difference between birds and insects. At some point in his homily he explains that creatures like bees and wasps are called "insects", because "they appear cut into segments all around", as the etymology of their name denotes [*:έντομα*]. He, further, explains that insects do not breath, neither have lungs but they absorb the air through all points of their bodies.<sup>117</sup>

St.Basil's admiration of the variations among flying creatures is similar to that for the variations among plants and aquatic animals. For him variation is a proof of the magnitude of divine care and wisdom. He states that if flying beings are examined according to the detailed way he previously examined the aquatic animals, one can find that, although the term "birds" is one, their variety in terms of size, form and colour is

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<sup>116</sup> ibid:307Hp12,\*:121.

<sup>117</sup> St.Basil demonstrates his point about the respiration of insects with an example borrowed from Aristotle (8.27.605b). He describes that if insects are "drenched with oil, they perish, since their pores are stopped up; but, if vinegar is immediately poured on them, the passages are opened and life is restored again (ibid:331Hp38,\*:131).

countless and the differences in their mode of life, actions and habits are difficult to be described.<sup>118</sup> But St.Basil is determined not to facilitate his description of flying beings by the use of artificial names, as others did - apparently he is referring to Aristotle - who invent terms like Schizoptera, Dermoptera, Ptilota or Coleoptera.<sup>119</sup> He prefers to use the common names of those creatures or the distinctions made among them by the Scriptures.<sup>120 121</sup>

St.Basil orders his description of the flying creatures by reference to criteria such as nourishment, physical appearance, mode of life and group organization. He divides the flying beings into the 'genera' of carnivora, seed-picking and omnivorous birds and explains that their physical construction is analogous to the food they eat and the kind of life they have. Among the omnivorous birds, he argues, there are many subdivisions. Some birds prefer to live in flocks, others have chosen a collective form of life.<sup>122</sup> Among the later, some are autonomous, without any superiors, while some others accept the command (headship) of a leader. St.Basil states that more variation can be found in the former category, since some birds are permanent residents of a particular place and others migrate to distant lands before winter.<sup>123</sup>

The author further remarks on the difference in habitat among the flying creatures. Some birds prefer the wilderness, while others "accept" to live with human beings in the same dwellings. St.Basil maintains that

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<sup>118</sup> *ibid*:309Hp13, \*:121.

<sup>119</sup> See Aristotle, *History of Animals* 1.5.490a.

<sup>120</sup> For example, the distinction between clean and unclean, the one examined by M.Douglas in *Abominations of Leviticus* (1966).

<sup>121</sup> *ibid*:309Hp13-4, \*:121-2.

<sup>122</sup> Here, the distinction between the "gregarious birds" and the ones preferring a "collective form of life" is not made clear by St.Basil. S.Sakkos suggests, by studying carefully the context, that the former category includes those birds living in pairs within large flocks, while to the second group belong those birds which live in flocks without a direct correspondence of males and females (in opposite array) (Sakkos 1973:310).

<sup>123</sup> *ibid*:309-11Hp14-5, \*:122.

most birds, if they are domesticated from an early age, become tame.<sup>124</sup> In his earlier comparison between land and water creatures, the author regards the voice of an animal as indicative of emotions and various states of the soul. In his discussion about birds, however, he avoids linking the subjects of sound to emotive states. He is confined to comment in detail about the differences in the songs of birds.<sup>125</sup> In defence of the virgin birth of Christ, St.Basil indirectly makes one further distinction. He argues that "many kinds (genera) of birds" do not need an involvement of a male individual of the species for reproduction. He illustrates this view with the example of the vulture. However, in other kinds of birds, he explains, "eggs produced without copulation are sterile" (ibid:325Hp31,\*128).

One, final distinction drawn by St.Basil among the flying creatures, is between the nocturnal genera of birds (*τα νυχτερόβια γένη τῶν ορνίθων*) and the those which "fly about in the light of the day".<sup>126</sup> On the former category he includes bats, owls, the nightingale, and night ravens. He remarks on the peculiarity of the bat which is both a quadruped and a flying being (*πτηνόν*). The bat, St.Basil states, is the only bird to use teeth, bares live offspring and flies in the air, not by use of feathered wings, but by means of a skin membrane.<sup>127</sup>

St.Basil concludes his discourse about the flying creatures with a lengthy discussion on the attributes and the character of various birds. Parallels and metaphors are drawn out of the lives of the flying animals for the purpose of making the audience contemplate moral qualities or values. This practice is employed by the author in all the homilies I have

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<sup>124</sup> ibid:311Hp15,\*122.

<sup>125</sup> In his discussion about birds St.Basil makes the following comments about the sounds of birds: "The greatest difference is the peculiarity in the tones of each (bird). Some of the birds twitter and chatter; others are silent. Some birds have melodious and varied tones; others are quite inharmonious and without song. Some are imitative, either being naturally able to imitate, or acquiring the ability by training; others utter one sole and unchangeable sound (ibid:311 Hp16,\*123 English translation slightly altered to fit the Greek text)."

<sup>126</sup> See, Aristotle, *The History of Animals* 1,1 (488a).

<sup>127</sup> ibid:327Hp33-4,\*129.

examined, but the attribution of anthropomorphic characteristics becomes more frequent in the discussion about flying creatures and culminates later in the description of land animals. "Some irrational creatures are like members of a state" (ἐστὶ δέ τινα καὶ πολιτικά τῶν ἀλόγων), he comments, in an example about the organization of bees (Hp17,\*123). "The conduct of the storks is not far from reasoning intelligence", the author argues, and congratulates their care for the aged members of their species (Hp23-4,\*125-6). Similarly he praises the responsibility and orderly flight of the cranes (Hp22,\*125), the companionship of bats (Hp34,\*130), the vigilance of geese (they once saved the imperial city of Rome!) (Hp36,\*130), and the love of the crow for its offsprings (Hp30,\*128), just to mention a few of St.Basil's vivid examples.

More anthropomorphic examples are mentioned by St.Basil in his Θ homily on "land animals", the last homily of the *Hexaemeron*. The author refers to the firmness of the ox, the sluggishness of the donkey, the horse's "burning desire for the mate", the untamed nature of the wolf, the deceitfulness of the fox, the timid character of the deer, the industrious traits of the ant, and the gratefulness and faithfulness of the dog.<sup>128</sup>

St.Basil maintains that each animal, as soon as it was created, received a distinctive natural property or virtue (φυσικὸν ἰδίωμα). Along with the lion, for example, was brought forth (born) the lion's anger, the lion's pride, and its solitary and unsocial mode of life. Additionally, St.Basil maintains that the bodies of the animals were created as analogies of the innate characteristics of their souls (τῆς ψυχῆς κινήμασι συνεπόμενον - τὸ σῶμα). For example, the leopard was given an agile and light body, suitable to realize the urges of its soul. The bear received a stiff, heavy, not distinctly articulated body which resembles its lazy, insidious and

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<sup>128</sup> ibid:347Θp9,\*138.



secretive character.<sup>129</sup>

This idea has been already stated in homily H, where the author explained that land animals were created with a soul able to shape their body.<sup>130</sup> The close relation of land animals with earth was demonstrated in the same discussion. In his last homily St.Basil further elaborates on the same topic. According to Genesis, land animals "were brought forth out of earth". The initial commandment which produced land animals out of earth still remains in it, St.Basil explains. He illustrates that even at the present time, some animals, like eels or mice and frogs, come out alive from the earth.<sup>131 132</sup>

The distinction between land animals and human beings is very important for St.Basil. "The beasts are earthy and they watch towards the earth", he declares.<sup>133</sup> Human superiority in "the value of the soul" is evident in the construction of the body. The etymology of the Greek word "*anthropos*" - *ano throsko*: I look/watch upwards - is indicative of St.Basil's argument. Human heads "stand erect toward the heavens", human eyes "look upward", the author states rhetorically. Similarly, the configuration of "quadruped" animals signifies their close relation with the earth. The author observes: "their head bends toward the earth and looks toward their belly and pursues its pleasure in every way (ibid: 345 Θp8,\*138)."

St.Basil holds the position that land animals, being illogical creatures, have one kind of soul, characterized by lack of reason (αλογία).<sup>134</sup> They differ from each other however, in terms of distinct

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<sup>129</sup> ibid:348Θp10,\*:139.

<sup>130</sup> ibid:301Hp4-5,\*:118.

<sup>131</sup> At this point of homily Θ St.Basil falls in a contradiction. He maintains that during rainy seasons the earth produces countless species of tiny flying creatures (:kinds of insects) or even frogs and mice. According to same author's interpretation, in homilies Z and H, frogs and flying insects belong to the categories of swimming and flying creatures respectively, and are supposed to be originally created out of water, not out of earth.

<sup>132</sup> ibid:345Θp6-7,\*:137.

<sup>133</sup> ibid:345Θp8.

<sup>134</sup> ibid:347Θp9,\*:138.

properties or virtues, like the anthropomorphic ones I have already described. St.Basil maintains that God compensated the land animal's lack of reason by providing them with superior sensory abilities and further demonstrates his point with examples.<sup>135</sup> The lamb can recognize the tone of its mother's voice among countless other identical sheep due to a form of perception which is more acute than the human one.<sup>136</sup> The dog, an animal without reason, has sensory facilities equivalent to reason, claims St.Basil in another example. When the dog is following the tracks of a wild beast and examines various possible routes, it locates the correct way by the process of elimination. The dog was taught by nature, what the "so-called" wise people discovered with a lot of difficulty by drawing lines in the dust, notes St.Basil, taking one more opportunity to speak ironically of the pagan philosophers and mathematicians.<sup>137</sup>

Contemplating the creation of the natural world, St.Basil anticipates some elementary observations of modern ecology; he recognizes that those animals which are captured easily reproduce at a higher frequency. On the contrary, predators like the lion, have very few offspring.<sup>138</sup> But for St.Basil, all manifestations of the creation show the wisdom of the Creator. Divine Providence did not deprive any being of what was 'necessary' or 'useful' for its survival, nor add anything 'superfluous' or 'unnecessary'.<sup>139</sup> The author demonstrates this idea by examining the body structure of animals, in a fashion reminiscent of Lamarck:

"The camel's neck is long in order that it may brought to the level of his feet and he may reach the grass on which he lives. The bear's neck and also that of the lion, tiger, and the other animals of the family, is short and is buried in the shoulders, because their nourishment does not come

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<sup>135</sup> *ibid*:355Θp18, \*:142.

<sup>136</sup> *ibid*:355Θp18, \*:142.

<sup>137</sup> *ibid*:357Θp20, \*:142-3.

<sup>138</sup> *ibid*:359Θp22, \*:143.

<sup>139</sup> *ibid*:359-61Θp23, \*:144.

from grass and they do not have to bend down to the ground (ibid:361Θp24,\*:144)."

Nobody can accuse the Creator of creating animals which are poisonous, destructive and hostile to human life, St.Basil maintains. Doing so, it would have been like accusing a pedagogue for putting delinquent youth "in order" by means of punishment ("rods and whips!"). The author, throughout the homilies of the *Hexaemeron*, consistently supports the idea that dangerous or harmful organisms serve to educate people and test the power of their faith.<sup>140</sup> For St.Basil the creation of animals, like the creation of plants, has a non-random, intentional character. The features of individual species are designed by a divine source in order to fulfil a two-fold purpose: to facilitate and perpetuate the life functions of the particular species and simultaneously benefit, directly or indirectly, mankind. I will conclude this section with an extract from St.Basil's description of the elephant, where you can observe those two kinds of causality, based respectively on a functional and an anthropocentric logic:

"But what is the reason for the elephant's trunk? Because the huge creature, the largest of land animals, produced for the consternation of those encountering it, had to have a very fleshy and massive body. If an immense neck proportionate to his legs had been given to this animal, it would have been hard to manage, since it would always be falling down because of its excessive weight. As it is, however, his head is attached to his backbone by a few vertebrae of the neck and he has the trunk which fulfils the function of the neck and through which he procures nourishment for himself and draws up water.

... As we have said, the trunk, which is serpent-like and rather flexible by nature, carries the food up from the ground. Thus the statement is true that nothing superfluous or lacking can be found in creation. Yet, this animal, which is so immense in size, God has made subject to us so that, when taught, it understands, and when struck, it submits. By this He clearly teaches that He has placed all things under us because we have been made to the image of the Creator (ibid:361-3Θp25-8, \*:144-5)."

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<sup>140</sup> "The wild beasts are proof of our faith (ibid:365 Θp31,\*:146)."

**c. *Hexaemeron*, the classification and the hierarchy of species:  
analysis of the text.**

Taxonomic inquiry is often associated with Mary Douglas, Edmund Leach, taboos, pollution and prohibitions. Both anthropologists, during the 1960's, approached animal classification from a similar perspective.<sup>141</sup> In their work, different animal categories operate as units of 'order', and their respective boundaries are charged with pollution, negative prohibitions or even extremely positive, almost sacred, associations. Both authors concentrate on the powerful conjunctions of diverse categories, the instances in which particular animals fit criteria defining separate categories. What I find interesting in this form of analysis, is not the apparent preoccupation with anomalies, but the idea of 'order' itself: how different levels of 'distance' from the human self - to use a schema applied by Leach - reflect the order of relations between different categories of animal species and human beings. Animal classification defines an 'order' of hierarchies and priorities between organisms, in which the human self holds a dominant position.

In Leach's and Douglas' work, the idea of 'order' appears to be a central concept for understanding systems of animal classification, as much as it is for St.Basil's *Hexaemeron*. The verb 'to classify' is almost synonymous with the verb 'to order'; in Greek, the equivalent verb is 'ταξινομώ', where 'τάξη' means order. But if 'order' for St.Basil is synonymous with the 'divine order', for Douglas and Leach, 'order' is something similar: it is primarily 'social order'. And in as much as 'divine order' in St.Basil's interpretation is a basic assumption rather than a mere methodological tool, several well-known anthropological studies in the 1960's treat 'social order' as an animated entity embodying classification.

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<sup>141</sup> See "Animals in Lele religious symbolism" (1957), "Purity and Danger" (1966) by M.Douglas, and "Animal categories and verbal abuse" (1964) by E.Leach.

Levi-Strauss's structuralism was immensely influential on animal classification studies produced during this period, although some anthropologists, like Mary Douglas, would vigorously deny Levi-Strauss' ascendancy. What is of direct interest to my work however, is that the concept of 'order' is equally important for the work of the French anthropologist. Reading 'order', or identifying 'order', in classificatory systems is elevated into something greater than a simple prerequisite for establishing the existence of structures. In *The Savage Mind* (1962), the concept is developed into a 'demand for order', it becomes an underlying principle of the human mind. Classification does not simply reflect the structuring of social relations; it is the product of the human mind's need for order. This allows more space for human agency: for *The Savage Mind*, the stimulus structuring classification is not social order but human beings attempting to make sense of their environment.

For Levi-Strauss, the dynamic character of the concept 'species' is dependent upon the structural tensions between opposing categories. A species of animal has something to tell us, but only if it is placed against a definitional background of other species (1962: 136). St.Basil's homilies do not acknowledge this kind of argument. In the *Hexaemeron*, different species or genera of animals acquire meaning independently of their given relationship with other species or human beings. Their relational value is pre-determined by well-established religious hierarchies and priorities; meaning is ascribed to them at the very moment their position in the cosmological hierarchy is defined. The emphasis given to dichotomies and oppositions between different categories (Levi-Strauss), or mediators (Leach), or anomalies (M.Douglas), provide little help to my project, since I am directly concerned with the relationships between different orders of animals, and the relationship between animals and people.

In the homilies of the *Hexaemeron* human beings are not defined in terms of animals, neither animals in terms of human beings. A comparison of this sort would have been unthinkable for St.Basil, or my contemporary informants on Zakynthos. The opposition between man and

animals, and between animals and inanimate beings (plants), which are clearly expressed and stressed in the *Hexaemeron*, are defined in terms of an anthropocentric perspective superimposing predetermined hierarchies. This kind of classificatory logic represents levels of distancing the self from other natural categories - the conceptual schema applied by Leach (1964) and Tambiah (1969) - but on a vertical axis, where superiority or inferiority is taken for granted, being established in the first place in a rather self-conscious fashion. Tambiah describes Levi-Strauss as "using natural models of differentiation to express social relations" (1969: 165). St.Basil performs the reverse: he consciously applies a theocentric model of differentiation in order to account for *natural* relations.

In Bulmer's essay 'Why the Cassowary is not a Bird' (1967), there is a short, interesting discussion on the criteria by which the Karam classify animals. I consider this discussion to be, in comparison with Bulmer's greater concern with the cassowary and the preoccupation of his time with anomalies, a more constructive approach to animal classification. For example, Bulmer discusses the 'broadest groupings' and 'smallest units' in Karam taxonomy, being interested in the logic permeating these two levels of classification. Furthermore, he observes, that at the lower small-scale taxonomic level, classification is based on a 'detailed', 'highly accurate' knowledge of 'natural history' comparable with the observations of the 'scientific zoologist'.<sup>142</sup> Those 'objective biological' criteria, however, lose their relative importance at the 'broadest', 'upper' scale of categorization, where classification is determined by cultural priorities. Bulmer's observations can be further expanded to animal classification in the *Hexaemeron*.

Morphological characteristics, behavioral patterns, means of procreation, habitat, nutrition, and lifestyle are criteria employed by

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<sup>142</sup> "The general consistency with which, in nature, morphological differences are correlated with differences in habitat, feeding habits, call-notes, and other aspects of behaviour is the inevitable starting point for any system of animal classification, at the lowest level" (Bulmer in (ed.) Douglas 1973: 169).

St.Basil in his categorization of different species into genera.<sup>143</sup> All those criteria are used interchangeably to group species according to common properties. If the categories defined accordingly overlap, it is not of any particular significance for St.Basil. The notion of 'order' employed by him is not threatened by minor inconsistencies of this kind. Since Holy Scripture does not provide any definite criteria for such a categorization, the religious scholar applies a broad range of classificatory criteria based on contemporary empirical knowledge. Examples are drawn, even from Aristotle, whose categorization for the sake of systematization is anathema to St.Basil.

Categorization according to genera in the *Hexaemeron* does not affect the implicit hierarchy between animate and inanimate beings. Furthermore, it fails to offer suitable ground for moral precepts. It is not surprising therefore, that St.Basil treats this level of classification as being relatively insignificant. For him it is important to demonstrate that all species occupy a place in creation and reproduce themselves in a way that preserves the identity of their 'kind', as is stated in Genesis.

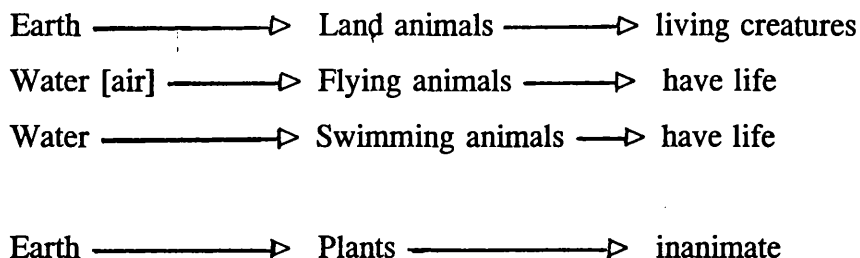
In contrast with the lower scale of classification, the initial distinctions between animate beings are explicitly defined in Genesis. Three major categories of aquatic, 'flying' and land animals, have been recognized as classificatory categories in the anthropological literature by Douglas (1975:263-5) and Leach (1969). St.Basil offers more information, from the point of view of a faithful Christian and a dogmatic theologian. Aquatic and flying creatures, for example, are presented as having a common ancestry in the water, and are a form of life which is somewhat 'imperfect'. The way these creatures move their bodies in a medium like water or air - flying is presented as analogous to swimming - is used by St.Basil as a standard for establishing their identity. Land animals were 'brought forth' out of earth and are portrayed as superior to

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<sup>143</sup> Internal body structures, which are an important classificatory criteria for modern taxonomy, have little classificatory importance for St.Basil and only in one instance is there a recorded reference to them (see *Hexaemeron*: 269Zp5-6, \*:107).

aquatic and flying creatures, yet demonstrably inferior to human beings. The 'motives' of their soul, like the construction and origin of their physical body, are described as being 'earthy'.

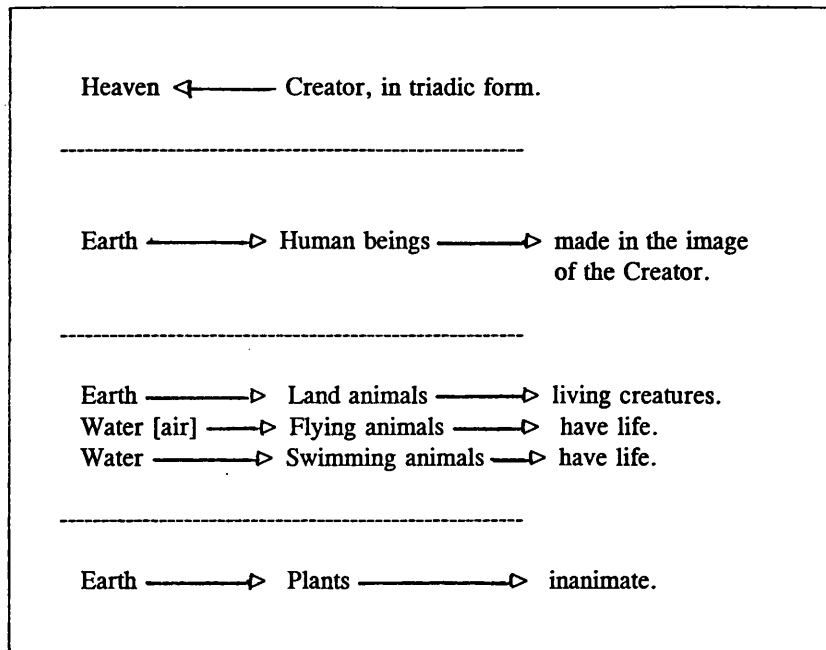
Plants, finally, like land animals, were 'brought forth' out of the earth. But plants are believed to be inferior organisms, they are not even considered 'animate' beings. In fact, the phrase *plants are inferior organisms*, reflects my own perception of plants as *organisms*, not a judgement by the author. For St.Basil plants are, simply, 'inanimate', they belong to a different, inferior order; this is why the process of dichotomizing animate beings in the *Hexaemeron* begins with the distinction between aquatic, flying and land animals. The following diagram portrays the association of physical elements, with respective categories of animals, as well as the vertical hierarchy of their respective states of life, as expressed in the *Hexaemeron*.



Animal classification in the *Hexaemeron*, reveals an implicit hierarchy between organisms of different orders, occupying different space and having different roles in the universe. What makes the above diagram more complete is the addition of human beings at the apex of the hierarchy, since it is in relation to the human social self that the hierarchy is made meaningful. In the following diagram, lines separate categories of absolute boundaries, represented by the distinctions between plants and animate beings or between human beings and "beings with no reason". The addition of an extra absolute dividing line, between the Creator of the



universe (in triadic form) and the created beings, concludes this schematic representation of the cosmology in the *Hexaemeron*.



In St.Basil's homilies, the relationship of plants and animals to a physical medium or element like earth, water or air operates as a primary conceptual association which directly informs their categorization and place in a hierarchy of relationships. Comparing animal classification in the *Hexaemeron* with my own ethnographic experience on Zakynthos, I notice that similar classificatory criteria operate in both cases. The exercise of defining primary categories of animal classification according to media or elements "on" or "in" which different categories of animals live, is a commonplace classificatory strategy employed by the farmers in Vassilikos. My informants, in their oral accounts of the local fauna, utilize identical distinctions between sea, land and flying animals. This observation does not imply that Vassilikiots consider seals and sea-turtles as fish. Rather, it suggests that a form of animal classification based on the animal's habitat is a convenient, practical strategy by which rural Greeks describe animals of a given environment and locate their selves within it.

To further demonstrate that animal categorization into groups of land, water and flying beings is a popular cognitive classificatory strategy in this particular ethnographic context, I will describe a children's pre-school game, popular in modern, (rural and urban) Greece. A group of children form a circle so they are able to face each other. One of them initiates the game by throwing a handkerchief to another child, naming loudly one of the three words, 'land', 'sea' or 'air' and then counting to ten. The child who receives the handkerchief has to recall an animal belonging to the respective habitat, land, sea or air, before the count reaches ten. Children who fail to identify an appropriate animal within this time have to leave the circle, while the rest of the children continue to throw the handkerchief until only one child remains.

By referring to this example, I do not wish by any means to argue in favour of a kind of universal cognitive disposition capable of determining animal classification. This complicated task concerns cognitive scientists, such as Scot Atran, who in his exploration of the *Cognitive Foundations of Natural History* (1990), remarks:

"...before some rigidly minded Greeks arbitrarily decided their world was the one and only right one, there were presumably no absolute hierarchies, no underlying natures, no natural distinctions between the artificial and the living, no facts of the matter to separate the natural and the supernatural... (1990: 215)".

This chapter, however, is concerned with the 'absolute hierarchies' of the 'rigidly minded Greeks', and its scope is modestly confined on what was 'after', rather than 'before' their arbitrary, culturally biased, formulation. This analysis suggests that animal classification in respect of physical elements like earth, air and water has deep roots within a particular ethnographic and historical context. The tendency to attribute special significance to physical elements of this kind, was characteristic of a long tradition of ancient Greek philosophers and scholars. For the Greek speaking audience of the *Hexaemeron* (in the fourth century AD), the system of classification proposed by St.Basil was in no sense a completely new conceptual schemata.

The synthesis of contemporary folk natural history with Christian ideas is evident in the homilies of the *Hexaemeron*.<sup>144</sup> As I have already mentioned, St. Basil consistently employs folk natural history to fill the taxonomic gaps in the religious cosmology, especially at the lower level of classification. Charles Stewart remarks that "synthetic religions, such as Greek Orthodoxy, ... traversed a period of active syncretism in the past but have now emerged as unified theological structures" (1991: 7). My present day Zakynthian informants, being practically unaware of historical processes of religious synthesis in the past, face their local natural environment fully equipped with a coherent religious cosmology that guarantees their given dominance and authority over non-human beings. Their understanding of the human-animal relationship parallels the hierarchies identified in the *Hexaemeron*, and their general attitude towards the physical environment is indicative of a well established anthropocentric tradition.

#### d. Conclusion.

St. Basil's homilies in the *Hexaemeron* were delivered with the intention of providing an interpretive theology. In the four homilies discussed in this chapter, the author's double objective is the explanation of animal and plant creation as defined in Genesis, and the development of relevant moral examples or metaphors which inform correct Christian conduct. Regardless of the author's intentions however, homilies E, Z, H and Θ, comprise a coherent classificatory discourse. They reflect an analytical cosmological exegesis based on conceptual categories and hierarchies according to which relationships between living beings are organized.

The work of St. Basil in the *Hexaemeron* is not a mere interpretation of Genesis; it is an interpretation of the physical world

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<sup>144</sup> Here, the term "synthesis" is deliberately employed by Stewart, instead of the problematic term "syncretism" (refer to C. Stewart and R. Shaw 1994).

according to the criteria established by Genesis. When the author systematically examines the characteristics of animals or plants he 'sees' proof of divine causality. Religious faith and the text of Genesis provide the initial assumptions, a kind of model according to which an understanding of the physical world is constructed. St.Basil is organizing his material with the intention of identifying the underlying 'order' of the natural world. He responds to a given 'demand for order' - to facilitate his audience's understanding, to establish dogmatically a correct way of perceiving natural creation - but he responds to this 'demand for order' consciously. Here, we are talking about structuring classification according to a given socially defined system of 'order', in a way which is too deliberate and too conscious to fit either Levi-Strauss's or Durkheim and Mauss's model.

A modern taxonomist, after comparing Aristotle and St.Basil, would have been disappointed with the latter, noticing that the religious thinker is undermining the systematic analytical criteria for classification established by the philosopher. But, if we take into consideration that "interpretative techniques depend on things which might seem irrelevant", as Tanya Luhmann argues in her work on magic, it becomes evident that St.Basil's interpretation of Genesis when compared with Aristotle's *History of Animals* differs in terms of the initial premises underlying the process of explanation, rather than in terms of sophistication and analytic detail. Echoing Levi-Strauss, one could claim that the two approaches represent 'parallel modes of acquiring knowledge' (1962: 13).<sup>145</sup>

St.Basil's initial assumptions are provided by the Bible and are taken unquestionably for granted by the author, when he refers to the higher more inclusive classificatory categories. The resulting form of categorization, which is culturally prescribed, may seem irrelevant to the empirically oriented naturalist. It was, however, historically relevant for

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<sup>145</sup> It is worth mentioning here that Aristotle's description of the natural world, despite its naturalistic empirical outlook, is permeated by anthropocentric culturally prescribed hierarchies, similar to the ones prevalent in *Hexaemeron*.

the audience listening to the *Hexaemeron* and thus, directly informative for the enquiry of the historian and the anthropologist.

But, the lower, less inclusive level of animal categorization in St.Basil's discourse is dramatically emancipated from the religious constraints which bind the initial conceptual dichotomies between animals of the sea, air and earth. This is in accordance with Scot Atran's observation that 'basic level' taxonomic categorization is founded on 'absolute' knowledge, grounded in empirical reality rather than cultural considerations (Atran 1990: 214,5-6,29,56 1993: 57-9,64); the same point being made by Bulmer (1967, 1970) some twenty years earlier. The multiple criteria shaping St.Basil's orderly description of the animal world at this 'lowest' or 'basic' level depend on animal morphology and behaviour, as well as a wide array of folk-zoological information and beliefs. It is here that Aristotle's naturalistic-empirical observations appear in St.Basil's text, despite the latter author's implicit antipathy for the former, which culminates in a deliberate avoidance of mentioning Aristotle by name.

Brent Berlin would notice the prevalence of the more empirically oriented, morphological and behavioral criteria in the lower level taxonomy of the *Hexaemeron*. In his work, he has been repeatedly arguing for the relative importance of perceptual and empirical classificatory criteria, and his demonstration is indeed well delivered, borrowing ethnobiological data from Aguaruna and Huambisa, the Amazonian communities studied by him and his colleagues (1988, 1992, Berlin and Berlin 1983). But, Berlin is not merely confined to the exhausting task of demonstrating the universal perceptual foundations of classification. He systematically undermines the relative importance of practical, use-oriented criteria accounted for by ethnobiological classification, creating thus, an unfruitful polarity between what he calls 'intellectualist' and 'utilitarian' approaches to classification.

Eugene Hunn, although he was among the first to underline the perceptual basis of ethnobiological classification (1976), recognised that

"practically motivated reasoning" was underestimated or taken for granted by anthropologists who overstress the 'intellectualism' of their informants (1982: 830-6). Hunn came to the defence of the 'practical significance' and 'purposiveness' of folk classification and dared to admit that "pragmatism is no sin" (1982: 830-6); he was subsequently criticized by Berlin (Berlin 1988, Berlin and Berlin 1983) for this position. Morris (1984) was similarly criticized by Berlin (1988) for stressing the 'pragmatic concerns' inherent in the folk biological classifications of the Chewa people of Malawi.<sup>146</sup> The Chewa have a life-form category (*Chirombo*) which accounts for 'useless' organisms, a category which would have been perfectly understood and appreciated by my own informants in Vassilikos. As Morris maintains, "to understand Chewa folk concepts, one has to accept that they have a pragmatic dimension, and that such taxonomies are not conceptually isolated, as a domain, from other aspects of Chewa culture" (1984: 48). The importance of 'contextual considerations' "rooted in particular situations" is similarly emphasized by Ellen (1986b: 83-91) in an article arguing against general taxonomic theories of categorization, as espoused by Berlin and American ethnoscientists.

In St.Basil's *Hexaemeron*, as much as in my informants everyday discourse, use-oriented practical evaluations of animals exist side by side with morphological descriptions. As I have already stressed in the previous chapter, criteria based on usefulness consistently shape the Vassilikiots' understanding of non-human beings. In the *Hexaemeron*, animals are presented as *... serving to bring benefits to man ...*. Even particular animal characteristics, morphological and behavioral, are understood as serving, directly or indirectly, mankind, because as it is plainly stated in the *Hexaemeron*, all beings created by God are useful. St.Basil repeatedly argues that even useless and dangerous animals serve a

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<sup>146</sup> Here, the word 'pragmatic' is used as a more efficient alternative to the words 'utility' and 'function', which gave Berlin (1988) the impetus to group several anthropologists under the label 'utilitarians' or even 'Neo-Malinowskians'.

function: they teach men moral lessons. What Berlin would have called 'a utilitarian' explanation, predates here, the recognition of the perceptually recognizable physical reality. In fact, the culturally determined explanation embraces the practical use-oriented one and the perceptual recognition merges, as secondary evidence, with antecedent well-established anthropocentric priorities and hierarchies.

Vassilikiots, like the Aguaruna and Huambisa studied by Berlin, are equally 'astute' - to use the latter author's characteristic term - to the perceptual stimuli of their physical environment. As Paul Richards maintains in his account of the Mende people in Sierra Leone, "ideas about animals, even if cultural constructions, up to a point, are also shaped by systematic scrutiny of the behavioral similarities and differences between humans and other animals (1993: 145)". The Vassilikiots' skill in deriving empirical information out of observation of the natural world parallels the Mende people's "capacity for objective natural history" (ibid: 157), but their acute perception, like St.Basil's naturalistic observations, are spontaneously related to a cosmological tradition with deep cultural and historical roots. The classification of animals into sea, aerial and land categories is not merely a practical perceptually-based conceptual tool, but a well-established strategy of categorization, employed by the average actor in Vassilikos who has no reason to challenge or alter it. Similarly, the farmers of Vassilikos have no obvious reason to challenge the cosmologically given anthropocentric hierarchies they received from their forefathers. These practically oriented anthropocentric priorities match perfectly the requirements of their everyday life. Confusion and unrest in their local relationship with the environment arose only after the arrival of the environmentalists and with respect to the environmentalists' own ecocentric priorities.

Over the last fifteen years various groups of conservationists have arrived on the local Zakynthian political scene. Their objectives are the protection of rare species of wildlife, such as the Loggerhead sea turtles or the Mediterranean Monk seals, and the overall protection of the natural

ecosystem. The conservationists, who are locally referred to as the 'ecologists', criticise the local people for their utilitarian attitude towards animals and nature. Their argument is based on an apparent anthropocentrism, which permeates the discourse of the Zakynthian villagers as much as St.Basil's interpretation in the *Hexaemeron*. The 'ecologists' portray the indigenous people as amoral, preoccupied individuals, who exploit natural resources for their own personal short-term benefit.

Under the impact of popular ecology, the official Orthodox Church has recently responded with a certain sympathy towards the ecological movement. The Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople, "keeper and proclaimer of the centuries-long spirit of the patristic tradition", published (with the assistance of WWF international!) a collection of religious writings with the title *Orthodoxy and the Ecological Crisis*. The Patriarch's pro-environmental position, however, reflects an anthropocentrism that in many ways resembles St.Basil's discourse seventeen centuries earlier. According to the Patriarch, 'contemporary man' has 'abused' "his privileged position in creation", which derives from "the Creator's order to him to have 'dominion over the earth' (Gen.1,28)" (Ecumenical Patriarchate 1990: 1). 'Man', "...the prince of creation" misused his "privilege of freedom", and environmental destruction is the result of this (ibid: 1). The Patriarch makes an effort to move closer to the pro-environmental position; he is however, confined by the same anthropocentric principles which shaped St.Basil's classificatory account in the *Hexaemeron*. | All this would seem to

suggest that my Zakynthian informants, peasant people from a cultural background deeply permeated by the ideas of the Orthodox Church, share the same basic assumptions as St.Basil and the Patriarch. Their attitudes towards the natural world reflect hierarchies in human-animal relations which are formally depicted in the *Hexaemeron*. They look at animals and plants through the lenses of their cosmologically ordained superiority. For them, the non-human beings of the natural environment are perceived to



offer benefits - either material or moral - to man. St.Basil's attempt to interpret the natural world, according to a system of religious order, is paralleled by my informants' daily endeavour to impose on their environment their own sense of order and priorities, an everyday struggle illustrated in the preceding chapters.

However any such conclusion which ignores centuries of intervening time and diverse readings of the whole range of patristic sources in the Orthodox tradition would have to be qualified in a number of ways. St.Basil does not interpret 'usefulness' in quite the same way as my Zakynthian informants, since many of his examples are concerned to instil moral lessons and elicit admiration of the creator, rather than point to material uses of creatures. I have claimed that St.Basil is representative of the patristic tradition but there are of course many patristic sources on creation and there is a live modern debate in Orthodoxy about how they should be interpreted. Finally, I have not attempted to trace the way in which religious teaching may have been passed down from Orthodox teaching institutions through local clergy or lay teachers, nor have I considered which elements of Orthodox teaching tend to be selected by villagers as particularly relevant to their situation. This is not a treatise in history or theology, and the present thesis can do more than suggest that there are similarities between the world view of my Zakynthian informants and the early Christian Fathers who formed their Orthodox tradition, but that there are also differences which still remain to be explained.

The emphasis on the function and utility of particular organisms given by St.Basil in the *Hexaemeron*, or by my informants in their daily-life, is paralleled in the contemporary cosmological explanations offered by ecologists. The ecological cosmology places living beings in an interrelated ecosystem, where every single organism is indispensably 'useful' for the existence of the totality. The 'ecologists' feel uneasy with the pragmatism of the people in Vassilikos, in the same way that Berlin is uneasy with the work of some anthropologists who studied communities with an 'utilitarian' - and I would have preferred to say 'practical' - orientation towards the natural world. The emphasis on function and utility, however, is characteristic of both the ecological discourse and St.Basil's interpretation in the *Hexaemeron*. What makes the two approaches distinctively dissimilar is the perspective of interpretation. St.Basil and my Zakynthian informants begin their cosmological explorations by placing '*anthropos*', the human self, at the centre of earthy creation. The 'ecologists' start from other assumptions...

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## Chapter 7:

### **Hunting.**

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#### **a. Introduction.**

Introducing the theme of hunting, I will present a poem I recorded in the field, which refers to an old hunter, his gun and his grandson. The peculiar structure of the poem - conjunctions and articles are eliminated - does not represent a precise folk or literate technique. It is rather the author's purposeful invention. By shortening the narrative, he added an enigmatic, rather humorous flavour, which is characteristic of the Zakynthian satirical but self-critical temperament. The poem relates to several themes I wish to examine in this chapter.<sup>147 148</sup>

Πίσω Αγίου Νικολάου Ντόπια  
κουφάλα ελιάς, μόσχου παλούκι, μελισσοσυκιά.  
Πάω σπίτι, παίρνω ντουφέκι διπλό,  
μπούκες δύο, βέργα μία, Αγγλος, ματάκια δύο,  
νέα εφεύρεση.  
Πάω πίσω Αγίου Νικολάου ντόπια, αγκονή,  
πουλί επανώ... Μπάμ!...  
Πέφτει χάμου ο κοκαρέλος, πέφτει χάμου κι η  
μισή ντόπια.  
Πάω Αγίου Νικολάου Καλόγερος,  
συχώρεση ο Άγιος, δεν το θέλα, το ντουφέκι  
το 'καμε.  
Πάω εκεί σπίτι, πουλί δεν γνωρίζει.  
-Νόνο μην είναι κότσυφας;  
-Ανε ξεραϊλα και φάε κι άλλο ένα!  
-Νόνο μην είναι πάπουζας;  
-Ανε ξεραϊλα και φάε,  
το καιρό που ήμουν μικρό παιδί σαν κι εσού,  
με μαθαίνανε οι γονέοι μου τάξη.  
Δεν έχεις αράδα να μιλήσεις μεγάλου.  
-Νόνο μην είναι κούκος.

Behind St.Nikolas's old olive tree, (there is) the  
hollow of an olive tree, a stake (made of) fig-tree  
wood, a grey bird, a cuckoo.

I go home, I take the gun, bought from an  
English (man), the double barrelled, two  
muzzles, one ramrod, two eyes to see, new  
invention.

I go behind St.Nikolas' old olive tree at the  
corner, the bird is above. Bang! The cuckoo  
falls down. Half of the olive tree falls down as  
well.

I go (to) St.Nikolas' monk (he means the  
monastery), to be forgiven (by) the Saint, I didn't  
want it, the gun did it!

I go there to the house (his home), no one  
recognizes the bird.

-Granddad, that is a blackbird, isn't it?

-Hold your tongue and eat (your food).

-Granddad, is that a hoopoe?

-Hold your tongue and eat ...

At the time I was a small child like you, my  
parents taught me to behave (in an orderly

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<sup>147</sup> For ease of translation, I have left in some of the articles and conjunctions.

<sup>148</sup> Blackbird, Κότσυφας, Turdus merula. Hoopoe, Τσαλαπετεινός, Upupa epeps. In Zakynthos is called Πάπουζας. Cuckoo, Κούκος, Cuculus canorus.

-Ναι, ναι καλὰ μιλεί μικρό παιδί κάπου κάπου.

Ερχεται δεκαπέντε Αυγούστου,  
κάνει την ουρά του ...  
έτσι, κυρίας Βεντουλέτας!

Μμμ! ο κώλος του παχιός!

fashion). You don't have the right to speak to an adult (person).

-Granddad, is that a cuckoo?

-Yes, yes, sometimes the small child speaks well. Here comes the fifteenth of August, (the bird) moves its tail (the narrator moves his finger right and left to demonstrate) (like) the madam with the fan.

Mmm! its bum is so fat!

It was at the end of a hard day's work in the fields when an informant unexpectedly recited this poem to me. It refers to a particular place in Vassilikos, a specific tree, with the hunter being the actual protagonist. This same hunter, who is both the poem's author and protagonist, is now dead. My informant is probably the last person in the village to remember the poem in its complete version.

After recording the poem, I read it to several local people in the coffeehouses and in their homes. Most Vassilikiots had heard the poem before and they had related memories to recall. They were particularly pleased with me for recording "something of their village" which was "about to be forgotten". They all agreed that the poem was created because the author wanted to communicate his hunting experiences to his fellow villagers.

My informants commented upon the hunter's excitement upon meeting a bird, the cuckoo. "He is like most of us", they said, "he immediately ran back home to pick up his rifle". "Notice how he refers to the characteristics of the gun", they add, "it was a beautiful gun, bought from an 'English' man". Compared with the other hunting guns in the village, "it was a technologically advanced gun, 'a new invention'" my informants further explain.

The scene of the shooting produces laughter in the local audience. Beyond the comic antithesis - the fall of the small bird, the collapse of the huge olive tree - lies a statement about the gun's power: the author wants his audience to notice that his gun was powerful enough to knock down such a huge tree.

In the following scene the protagonist appears to be a religious

man, feeling some guilt for the damage caused to monastic property. The hunter displays his guilt by apologizing to a monk; "it was not my fault, the gun caused the damage". At this point the local audience laughs again - not for the hunter's craftiness in dealing with people of the church - but for his irresistible urge to praise the power of his gun one more time. The villagers are receptive to this message, since they have vivid memories of the generation of old hunters who proudly boasted about their hunting guns.

The final act of the poem takes place in the hunter's home. As the brief dialogue between the hunter and his grandson suggests, the importance of hunting in strengthening the relationship between adult men and young boys is immense. In the poem, the old hunter is persistently interrogated by his grandson about the dead bird. It is taken for granted among the local audience that young boys are interested in hunting. The old hunter further instigates the child's curiosity by denying the young boy's right to talk about the bird. To further stimulate the child's interest, he implies that "hunting is for men, not for young boys." The hunter's satisfaction is noticeable when his grandson comes up with the correct answer. In order to reward the boy the old hunter offers further information. He explains that after the fifteenth of August the bird is moving its tail in a characteristic way [the hunter demonstrates this by moving his finger], which imitates the ways of an aristocratic lady holding a fan.<sup>149</sup> When the bird moves its tale upwards, you can see that its rear is fat. The hunter suggests that this is the best time to hunt that particular species of bird. Men in the village become excited whenever they can demonstrate their hunting knowledge. They gain even more satisfaction through "teaching" their sons or grandsons, in which case they reveal secrets about hunting, such as ideal spots where game is

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<sup>149</sup> Aristocrat women of the highly stratified Zakynthian society were famous for their elegant dress, which was always in touch with latest fashion in Europe. Their dress contrasted sharply - and produced equally sharp comments! - with the way 'traditional' village women dressed.

abundant. For young boys, hunting offers opportunities to identify with the male role model and be progressively introduced into the manhood.

The satisfaction experienced by the old hunter at the moment his grandchild identifies the bird is similar to the hunter's pride in his special gun. Both guns and male offspring are related to male strength and pride. According to the interpretations of my local audience, the author's intention was to amuse his fellow villagers and to simultaneously refer to "things which please every man", such as his special gun, his hunting skills, and his relation with a grandson.

This poem, apart from being the initial step in approaching the subject of hunting in the field, was the starting point of the present discussion. The remainder of the chapter is divided into three sections. In the first I will be presenting further ethnographic examples of hunting in Vassilikos. Following this, I shall examine the relation of hunting with ideals of masculinity and manliness, and finally, I shall attempt to relocate hunting within the general context of peasant ideas about nature and daily life.

#### **b. Hunting in Vassilikos.**

"Turtledove hunting is the most important hunting for the people of Vassilikos, for it is the only basic (*βασικό*) hunting they can do. They are all waiting during the whole year for the April hunt to come. In the past, only the rich could afford to go hunting. Poor people had no right to abandon their jobs and participate... so, they would wait for Sundays and other holidays... Some *sembroi* [peasant serfs] would raise (*σηκώναν*) the birds for the rich to kill, but they were not allowed to hunt them themselves."

This informant, an old man from the village, maintains that turtledove hunting has a special significance for the local people. Three to four hundred years ago, at a time when Vassilikos was scarcely inhabited, the monks of *Skopiotissa* Monastery (on the local mountain), hunted turtledoves and then preserved them in vinegar (*ξυδάτα τριγόνια*). Vassilikos was traditionally described by the town's people as "the

countryside" (η εξοχή) and many aristocrats would visit it to hunt turtledoves or other game.<sup>150</sup> As the centuries went by, guns became an available commodity and hunting became widespread among the poor. My older informants, having experienced themselves the remnants of a feudal form of economic dependency upon powerful local landlords, remember how they "often had to hide their hunting prey, turtledoves or hares, under their shirts so that the master would not notice it". The landlord might have asked them to hand him their prey as a gift for allowing them to remain on his land.

"At this time, there were few opportunities for us, the *sembroi* (serfs), to hunt because we all had hard work to do and a lot of services [to perform] for our masters", the older Vassilikiots describe, "this is why there was little spare time left for hunting". Despite practical limitations however, Zakynthian people have always considered hunting as a "passion" (πάθος) or "mania" (μανία), characteristic of their temperament. A senior informant further explains:

"Everybody is hunting on this island. Everybody has a gun in his house; you cannot find a family without a gun. The Zakynthians have a mania for hunting.

When I was a child, I use to wander in the fields with my sling, shooting whatever I could find. We used to hunt turtledoves, mistle thrushes, woodcocks, hares or even robins.<sup>151</sup> We were using bird limes for Robins and other tiny birds (λιανόπουλα). We had snares (βρόχια) for turtledoves made of hair from a horse's tale. The turtledoves, tired (κουρασμένα) from their long journey, were falling on the snares which were placed on the trees, anywhere where there was space for the birds to stand."

By use of snares, lime-twigs and other kinds of traps, Vassilikiots

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<sup>150</sup> Additional information on hunting at Vassilikos during the seventeenth and eighteenth century is provided by the novelist, Dionysios Roma. Roma was a prominent Zakynthian citizen and politician. Being the last descendant of one of the island's most prestigious aristocratic families, he devoted the last years of his life writing *The Periplous* (1967, 1971, 1973, 1975, 1980), a literate chronicle of a Zakynthian aristocrat family through the centuries.

<sup>151</sup> Mistle Thrush, Τσίχλα - Τσαρτσάρα, *Turdus viscivorus*. Woodcock, Μπεκάτσα, *Scolopax rusticola*. Robin, Κοκκινολαίμης and in Zakynthos called Τσιπουρδέλος, *Erithacus rubecula*.

successfully hunted turtledoves, small birds and hares. Several informants of mine referred to their skill in improvising and inventing new kinds of traps, by use of wood, leaves and stone, suitable to the requirements of hunting particular game in particular places. Since guns and bullets were scarce and expensive, traps were an alternative means for catching wild animals or birds, a valuable source of meat for poverty-stricken families. Most domestic animals entrusted to the 'care' of peasant serfs (*sembroi*), were property of the landlord, and had to be 'kept' alive either as working animals or as capital to be maximized. Consequently, the trapped prey was valued by the rural household as a supplementary subsistence source. Even tiny birds, like the robin, when caught in sufficient numbers, would provide the peasant family with an extra meal.<sup>152</sup> One informant notes:

"Had the old time people not been crafty, they would not have made it. They had no money for bullets, but they caught a lot of birds with traps."<sup>153</sup>

Traps were usually set by young boys who were eager and impatient to exercise their hunting "passion", but were unable to buy a gun. Adult men were also interested in traps; for instance, the snares for turtledoves were mostly set by adults. I was surprised to find out that these traps were in fact, highly effective techniques for capturing wild birds. In Vassilikos and Keri (another village) great numbers of turtledoves were caught in the past by use of snares. Nowadays, this type of hunting is prohibited by state legislation and is abandoned in both places. Most Vassilikiots appear in general, disinterested in setting traps, although they still enjoy narrating the 'trapping exploits' of their youth.

Hunting-guns in the past, like traps, required a lot of preparation and *meraki*, a word that could be roughly translated into English as artistry or good taste. Here an informant of mine elaborates on this,

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<sup>152</sup> See, also, chapter five.

<sup>153</sup> Αν δεν είχαν πονηριά οι παλιοί θα χανόσαντε. Δεν είχαν λεφτά για φυνέγκια. Πιάναν πολλά πουλιά με παγίδες.

arguing that a great deal of time had to be spent on the preparation of bullets:

"At that time we had one-barrelled rifles (*μονόκαννα όπλα*). We had to load bullets with gun-powder and pellets. There was a special instrument used for this job. Those guns were dangerous; you could loose an eye, or a finger in the detonation."

and another informant adds:

"I have been hunting since I was a child; I was then using muzzle loading guns (*κυνηγούσα από παιδί με τα εμπροσθογεμή*). There were few bullets at that time. One had to sit down and make the bullets oneself."

At this time, most serfs (*sembroi*) in Vassilikos would regard hunting guns as the most valuable possession. They were objects of display, signifying one's hunting skill and involvement in hunting. During my fieldwork I often heard the villagers commenting upon the importance of hunting guns for the "old-time hunters". They said:

"Those people were carrying their guns to the coffee shops, holding them on their knees or placing them upright by their side. They used to bet on their ability to aim at various targets (*στο σημάδι*). The "old-time people" (*οι παλιοί*) were terrific (*τρομεροί*) hunters!"

Carrying a gun, especially a unique one, was a statement about the self as a hunter and one's ability to hunt. The owner of the gun should, ideally be prepared to demonstrate his shooting skills whenever challenged by others. An informant told me the following incident:

"Once, I was hunting down at Longos [a wood]. A man from the town approached me. He was driving a motorbike. He noticed my gun and challenged me: 'Why are you carrying this gun, since you do not know how to shoot (*αφού δεν ξέρεις σημάδι*)!' I told him 'throw your chain with the pen-knife on the air and if I miss, I will give you a hundred drachmas!' Adas the shepherd was around with his sheep and said to the man from the town: 'take the key of your motorbike out of your chain. Otherwise you will not be able to return back to your home.' The man from the town was hesitant (*δισταχτικός*). Adas insisted and eventually the man from the town took his key off the chain. I hit the chain with the core of my shot (*σμπάρο*) and nobody saw the chain again. It was thrown up, with



force towards the wood. Then this man told me: "do you really want me to give you a hundred drachmas? Do you know how much the chain and the pen-knife cost?"

The people in Vassilikos talk about the old-time hunters with awe. They comment upon the intrepidity (*παλληκαριά*) of those men and their hunting skills with admiration. In the context of all male gatherings, hunting skill is acknowledged to be a source of respect, an integral part of a man's socially defined identity. Some men relate events like the following:

"My father and his younger brother, Barmba-Giannis, were both great hunters. Barmba-Giannis though, was the best hunter in the village. He could shoot a chick-pea or a *mirtokouki* [another seed] out of the air. Other men were betting on his skill.

One day both brothers were sitting in Shourpou's shop [a coffeehouse] with their guns at their knees (*στο γόνα*). A quail came and sat on a fence nearby.<sup>154</sup> The two brothers started arguing about who will shoot the bird. Everybody in the coffeehouse argued that my father should have a go since he was the older brother. Barmba-Giannis bitterly agreed and said: 'but be careful not to lose it.' My father shot at the quail but he missed. Barmba-Giannis didn't speak to him for a year!..."

Unlike the past, when the villagers were constrained by poverty and feudalism, the present day Vassilikiots have plenty of time to devote to hunting. In fact, they arrange their agricultural activities, so as to secure enough free time to participate in turtledove hunting. Nowadays there is an abundance of technologically advanced guns. The hunters no longer spend time preparing bullets or setting traps. Present day hunting involves more action and less preparation. But still, as in the past, and this is the most important fact, hunting is considered to be a central feature of men's life in Vassilikos.

The favourite discussion in the coffeehouses, where men gather in the late afternoon after work, is about hunting. It is more popular than

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<sup>154</sup> Quail, *Ορτύκι*, *Coturnix coturnix*.

politics, for a political discussion is bound to cause a quarrel, whereas the hunting discourse has a unifying effect. Discussions focus on subjects such as the number of birds killed at particular hunting spots, hunting guns and dogs, or specific kinds of game. Real events during hunting are described in detail. The protagonists of this narrative are local people who display their hunting skill or other traits of their personality. Men, while being in the coffeehouse, enjoy discussions about people they know; they make jokes and tease each other with sharp comments about success or failure in hunting. In this social context, the hunting skill of each hunter is constantly assessed and reassessed, while individual hunting experiences gradually become shared by the village.

Turtledove hunting is a major issue in the village. Most men look forward to the two seasons of this hunt. The first is in April and the second in mid-August and September. Given that the numbers of turtledoves had been decreasing in recent years, the state authorities and the Zakynthian Hunter's Society have come to a mutual agreement to forbid the April hunt. In practice however, despite the severe prohibitions, turtledove hunting is not constrained at all. Some Zakynthian hunters are brave enough to walk with their guns in front of the Prefect's headquarters in the island's capital to demonstrate their refusal to adhere to the laws constraining hunting. "Although there are not many turtledoves left" the hunters admit, "we will be go on hunting, because this is an important part of our life". "Nobody will ever dare to stop us", they say while enjoying the relative security of male solidarity in the coffeehouse.

Vassilikos is one of the most important hunting sites on the island. It is the first meeting place for turtledoves on their migration route over Zakynthos. Every year, some days before the April hunt, an air of excitement spreads all over the village. One can feel that something important is about to happen. Soon comes the day when men of the village take their positions in their hunting posts, armed with guns. Turtledove hunting has started. Along the main road of the village, in the

olive groves, deep in woods (λόγκοι) and higher on the rocky hills, hunters can be seen waiting patiently with their guns for the long awaited turtledoves to appear. On those rare occasions when the patrol car of the forestry department approaches the village, the hunters, whose presence was previously conspicuously manifested, now disappear. Every car that heads towards Vassilikos on the single village road can be viewed from the neighbouring houses and the message is easily spread by telephone or other means.<sup>155</sup>

The house I was living in during my fieldwork was situated in an olive grove right at the centre of the turtledove hunting field. In April 1993, I had the privilege of experiencing the turtledove hunt at Vassilikos 'at close quarters'. Here I will present some extracts from my fieldnotes:

*"Tired from the repetitive noise of hunting guns I was on my way for a walk in the fields nearby. 'Ringo' [a nickname] was positioned on a wooden roofless platform on the top of an olive tree.<sup>156</sup> Covered with leaves, and dressed in an army uniform, Ringo was shooting for the whole day at the passing turtledoves and the pellets from his misses were falling on the roof of my house. He tried to appear talkative -a serious compromise of his reticent style - to measure my reactions. He started talking about a documentary he saw on the television about 'those black people in Africa'. Being proud of himself for watching a documentary [of an educational character], he appeared eager to share it with me, who as an educated man I was expected 'to know about those things'. He described to me - what else! - scenes of hunting in Africa. He talked with admiration about a huge black hunter who was killing lions; the African hunter was tall and muscular (με κάτι μύεις να!) and Ringo waved at me his own impressive muscles*

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<sup>155</sup> Rumours say that some of the hunters have connections in the forestry department, or in the police headquarters, and are therefore in a position to know well in advance about an imminent inspection patrol.

<sup>156</sup> Ringo, as his nickname suggests, is a popular persona in the village, renown for his masculine performances in a variety of contexts.

*to illustrate his point. He further commented on the poverty of those African people and 'the conditions under which they live'. He ended - and that was his intended message - by stating the popular local scenario about African people 'destroying the turtledoves'.*

*'People in Africa poison the turtledoves to safeguard their cultivations. They are poor people who starve. This why there are so few turtledoves!' Ringo concluded. He appeared apologetic for hunting turtledoves as there are so few left, although I didn't try to make him feel guilty about this fact.<sup>157</sup> At the same time he was expressing his anger for having so few turtledoves to shoot at.*

For many subsequent days hunters continued to shoot over my house. The neighbouring olive grove was hired by hunters from the town. They constructed a primitive shelter made of tree branches and leaves. They waited in their shelter for turtledoves to approach. I could hear their conversation and jokes. I wrote in my fieldnotes:

*Although today is Easter Day, the most important religious celebration in the country, hunting still goes on. I am surprised by the fact that so many men leave their families - women, children and old men celebrating at home - in order to come hunting for the whole day. A group of hunters is shooting thirty or forty meters away from my front door and the noise is particularly annoying. Myself and some relatives of mine are hiding indoors, being afraid of gunshots coming from all possible directions. We can, even, hear the sound of pellets falling on the roof and in the garden. The hunters appear to me to be intoxicated with a distinctive Bacchic fervour. I am able to guess the time each group of turtledoves approach the area by the sound of guns shooting from various distances and the various acoustics. They cry when they shoot: "I've got one" (το 'φάγα το να), and I can hear a second voice*

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<sup>157</sup> During my fieldwork I deliberately avoided moralizing about the consequences of unrestrained hunting on animal species because my informants believe that comments of this kind are typical of 'ecologists' or unfriendly city dwellers.

*replying, "I've got one as well, four-five of them have just passed" (κι εγώ έφαγα ένα, πέρασαν τέσσερα - πέντε). Every time Ringo fails to kill a passing turtledove, he warns his companions that the bird is approaching; "One is coming to you" (σου έρχεται ένα) he cries. I admire the cooperation between local men during hunting. Yet, my degree of empathy has by now been exhausted.*

In the same afternoon I stood outside my door with my young son. A hunter from the town attempted to shoot a turtledove which was flying over our head. Being angry with him for aiming his gun towards us I dared to complain. My neighbour, Ringo, who was equally annoying me with his shooting, came to my defence. He screamed with his masculine deep voice at the hunters from the town: "you shoot at a house? People live in it" (το σπίτι βαράτε; άνθρωποι ζούν μέσα).

The hunter from the town, who aimed his gun in my direction, had hired a piece of land to use as a hunting spot from Michalis, a key informant of mine. The land was the property of a landlord of noble origin, but Michalis, being the landlords serf (*sembros*), was responsible for its' cultivation (*sembria*). Although Michalis was a valuable informant and I was reluctant to endanger our friendly relationship, I expressed to him my complaint about the particular hunter from the town. Michalis had already been informed by the hunter and had prepared his argument beforehand. He said that Nelos (the man whose house I had rented) was "hunting as well". "Nelos can have no control (δεν μπορεί να κάνει κουμάντο) over the neighbouring property because he has built houses so close to it!", Michalis argued. From this I could tell that he already had a discussion with Nelos, who complained on my behalf. Michalis tried to reassure me, in the presence of other men in the coffeehouse, that "the hunters were aiming at the birds, not at people". He explained to me that falling pellets were not dangerous since they had lost their force. However, Michalis refused to accept my complaints about the noise of the guns; "complaining about the noise is too much" he argued decisively.

The competition among hunters for securing suitable hunting

positions during the turtledove hunt is subject to local rules of conduct and respect. The local hunters exercise their prior right over the allocation of the most desirable 'hunting posts'. They retain hunting posts on their land, in cultivated fields which are the property of a landlord, and in a local wood which belongs to a foreign corporation. In the first case, they feel sufficiently confident in their claim to the hunting posts to rent these hunting posts to outsiders or invite friends to hunt; especially those friends to which a favour or obligation is owed. I remember a friend in Vassilikos commenting about a fellow villager:

"Look how many people hunt in Dionysis' place; they are all friends of his from the town. They shoot all day and cause trouble (μπελά) to him and his wife. But what can poor Dionysis do about this? He owns a restaurant, as you know... you understand, he cannot turn away the friends who impose themselves on him (που του φορτώνονται)."

Hunting posts on the landlords' land are managed by the villagers who have the *sembria* of the land in question. These are the people who are allocated by the landlord as responsible for the cultivation of particular parts of his land. Most of the *sembria* rights are distributed to local families which served the landlord as peasant serfs (*sembroi*) for many years in the past. This explains the distinctive level of identification of some people with the land they cultivate as *sembria*, and their confidence in their right to invite other people to hunt on it. The discussion I had with Michalis about the hunters from the town shooting over my house illustrates this point: "Nelos can have no control (δεν μπορεί να κάνει κουμάντο) over the neighbouring property because he has built houses so close to it!"

Rights over hunting posts in the local wood (λόγκος) are established by the active presence of the local hunters in the area and the frequent use of the hunting posts by them. This land was bought by Club Mediteranne a couple of decades ago with the intention to be developed for tourism. However, this development never took place due to doubts on the legal status of the transaction. The landlord who previously owned the wood is now claiming it back. In the meantime, local men settle their

own 'hunting claims' on this disputed terrain by use of their own local code of 'hunting conduct'. A young Vassilikiot hunter who hunts frequently in the local wood elaborates:

"'Η Μαλιαρή Πέτρα, Ο Παλιολιμός, Τα Ξερά, Η Ομπρέλα' [placenames] are hunting posts (πόστα). These are only a few; there are much more than those...

You cannot take the hunting post of a local man. A local man, however, can rent his hunting post to strangers (ξένους). He can do that if he is feeling confident (σίγουρος) of his hunting post. One secures his hunting post if he goes there frequently.

The non-local hunters have always to respect the local ones. They have to adjust to their rules. They can't do otherwise!"

The use of the local wood as a hunting terrain, like a few other mountainous parts of Vassilikiot land, is not strictly controlled by property titles or *sembria* arrangements. Yet, the active presence of Vassilikiot hunters is significant enough to establish claims over particular hunting spots. As my informer already explained, those claims are exercised to the extent of renting the hunting spots to outsiders. Considering the fact that the April turtledove hunt is officially an illegal activity, the legitimization of the local hunting status-quo and the over-confidence with which the local hunters control their hunting resources, is a conspicuous example of the celebrated local defiance of the law and the power of State authority.

Hunting posts, guns and game are issues that fascinate most Vassilikiot men. "These are things that please every man" the local hunters maintain. A related topic of conversation which is considered to be of equal importance is discussion about hunting dogs. In chapter five I mentioned that dogs in Vassilikos are in general considered as benign, 'useful' animals. "Dogs are useful animals", the local farmers say, "they guard and hunt". However, dogs that merely guard are provided with the minimum 'care' required for their subsistence; they are often fed with bread and water and are tethered down for several consecutive days. But dogs which excel in hunting are looked after conspicuously well. Their

owners feed them well, worry about their health and overall condition, and most importantly, talk about or 'take pride in' (καμαρώνουν) them at every relevant opportunity.

Here are some examples:

"While we were all working at the olive tree harvest, Moros, one of Lfteris' dogs, was roving around untethered. His owner started talking with pride about it:

'Someone offered me a lot of money for this dog. It was really a lot of money but I didn't give it away. It is very obedient. It is a good animal. It comes and drops the bird at your feet.'

Spiros, a fellow villager was obviously very interested in this conversation. He commented: "I love the dogs as well" (αγαπώ και εγώ τα σκυλιά).

The conversation (κουβέντα) continued for a long time. Both men were excited. They were more excited than they had been before, when the discussion was about local politics. The two women who were present remained silent but they seemed similarly interested in the conversation. They obviously had met all those dogs which the men were talking about and they met the men's comments by moving their heads with affirmation. Most of the comments were evaluations about the dog's skill in hunting.

Although everybody was tired, the excitement of the conversation about dogs provided the working team with a new impetus. We succeeded in harvesting several consequent olive trees and then we had a break..."

"While Mimis was shepherding his flock he was talking about hunting dogs. 'I love dogs because I love hunting so much', he said. Some hunting dogs, I was told, cost as much as 600.000 or a million drachmas.

'-I had a lot of good dogs but they [some other people in the village] poisoned them (τα φαρμάκωσαν). I had a grey German hunting bitch which was carrying the hare by the ears. Another one I had was called Rokos. He was the father of Lfteris' Moros. Rokos was poisoned. They poisoned all of them. They did it on purpose, because of envy (φθόνο)."

Most Vassilikiots, however, disagree with Mimis. "Dogs are not poisoned because of envy", they say, "they are killed by accident (κατά τύχη)". An older informant explains:

"Some people put poison in milk to attract and kill snakes. Others use poison for rats. The dog may happen to eat the



poison and die, especially if you keep letting it free to roam around'."

This is why Vassilikiots 'worry a lot' about their hunting dogs. They are very disappointed when they 'lose them' from poisoning. They feel 'bitter' about their loss, and some, like Mimis, may blame their fellow villagers for it. Vassilikiots recognize the monetary value of 'good' hunting dogs and talk about it - or, if they own the dog in question, 'boast (καυχιόνται) about it' - in any relevant conversation.

Dogs, and in fact, hunting dogs were the only animals in Vassilikos I recorded as being referred to with the verb 'to love'. The local farmers maintain that they 'like animals', or 'care' about them. But the word 'love' is never applied to describe the relationship between a farmer and an animal. Vassilikiots are in general, reserved in expressing sentiments with words. In the context of hunting however, this practice is manifestly, and in fact, rhetorically transgressed. The hunters in Vassilikos do not ever hesitate to express their 'love' for dogs, in as much as they never lose an opportunity to declare their great 'love' for hunting. "Hunting is something very important for us", the local hunters rhetorically argue, "it is a great love, it is a passion".

### **c. Hunting under the threat of the 'ecologists'.**

During the period of the turtledove hunt the dominant topic of conversation in the village is about - what else - turtledove hunting. The major concern of the villagers is the reduction in the number of birds in recent years. Mimis, the shepherd, while pasturing his sheep in the fields of Vassilikos, was eager to comment on turtledove hunting:

"the turtledoves are few, the guns are many. I took my gun with me twice but then I left it behind. At noon a few turtledoves arrived, exhausted by the heat. They shot them

at once! In the past the olive groves were full of them."<sup>158</sup>

Another informant reflected on the same topic:

"There are few turtledoves left. Hunting must take place only in August... **but** because there is no other important game on the island the authorities are tolerant (όμως επειδή στο νησί δεν έχει άλλα κυνήγια, οι αρχές κάνουν ανοχή)."

However, most men in the village do not consider hunting as responsible for the reduction of the turtledove population. They propose an alternative discourse which I call the 'pesticide rhetoric'. The argument that pesticides are to be blamed for the decline of game is a popular one among hunters in modern Greece. In Vassilikos, people are conscious that pesticides and other chemicals can have devastating consequences on the local fauna. A couple of decades ago agricultural advice was inefficient, and the introduction of pesticides in the village was accompanied by mistakes in the management of dosages. An informant remembers:

"The big landlord, instead of ploughing the land, threw 'poison' [φαρμάκι: he means pesticide] on it to get rid of weeds. He found all the birds and insects dead on the ground. He felt sorry and he didn't do it again. Another year he made a similar mistake. He put more 'medicine' [φάρμακο: he means again pesticide] for *dakos* [a disease affecting olive trees] on the olive groves. All those birds which came and sat on the trees died. He is now careful on giving the correct dosages (δοσολογία)."

Most villagers, in fact almost all villagers, blame pesticides for being the most important factor in the decrease in the number of wild birds. If they are asked about the relevance of unconstrained hunting on the same issue, their typical response goes like this:

"There are a lot of guns in the village, more than every other time... but there used to be many birds as well...

There were many birds in the past. The turtledoves were clouding over the olive groves. Now, can you see any? People were always hunting on that island, but the birds were always plenty."

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<sup>158</sup> "Τα τριγόνια λιγοστά, τα όπλα πολλά. Εγώ το ντουφέκι μου το πήρα δύο φορές, μετά το άφησα... Το μεσημέρι έφτασαν λίγα, ξελιγωμένα απ' την κάψα και τα χτύπησαν αμέσως. Αλλά χρόνια ήταν γεμάτοι οι ελαιώνες."

"Look at the sparrows", some people say, "think of how many they used to be in the past! Why are there so few of them now?" After a small pause which adds greater validity to their rhetorical question, they add: "The sparrows were mowed down by the chemicals [pesticides]".<sup>159</sup>

The pesticide rhetoric is grounded on empirical evidence. No one can deny the fact that pesticides eradicate many species of insects which provide the wild birds with food. Moreover, some pesticides directly poison grain-eating birds. The pesticide rhetoric however, acquires its' real significance when it is placed in the context of the widespread conflict between hunters and conservationists. The 'ecologists', to use the local generic term for the conservationists, have succeeded in establishing a novel set of moral categories concerning hunting and the protection of wild animal and birds. The ecological 'ethos' is championed by the media, where moralizing about the protection of fauna and flora, "the national natural heritage", is an everyday occurrence. The 'ecological' discourse is well received by the general public - especially urban dwellers - and ecological morality, which in most cases is taken for granted, is promoted in schools and educational establishments.

The hunters of Vassilikos have reason to feel threatened by the rise of ecological discourse, not because the 'ecologists' have the power to constrain hunting in practice - as I have already described, hunting legislation is demonstrably ignored at the village level - but because the practice is deprived of its positive moral connotations. Hunting, a traditionally positive 'social' area of the traditional society is treated by the 'ecologists' as an undesirable, destructive behaviour and a negative moral stigma is now attached to it. The hunters, being particularly agitated by the ecological discourse, react with their own alternative rhetoric which is aimed at the national and the village level.

The national rhetoric in support of hunting is championed by

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<sup>159</sup> "Τους θέρισαν τα χημικά!"

educated urban-based hunters who defend the practice of hunting ideologically. Their arguments are derived from popular beliefs, historical sources, or even 'ecological' studies and statistics, creatively interpreted or misinterpreted. Educated urban hunters publish their views in newspapers and specialized journals and magazines. In 'Κυνήγι & Σκοποβολή' (*Hunting and Shooting*), a specialized journal of this kind, one can read detailed articles on hunting dogs and hunting guns, "things that please every man!" as my informants in Vassilikos would have said. In addition, the journal provides a forum where many anonymous or eponymous hunters express their dissatisfaction with ecological publications, produced by academic biologists, and anti-hunting allegations published in journals of popular ecology.

More systematic attempts to establish a coherent pro-hunting discourse (Kampolis 1991, editorials in 'Κυνήγι & Σκοποβολή') employ a selective variety of data from anthropology, history, or even psychology, in a generalized attempt to argue the importance of hunting as an indispensable part of human life. The fervent and politicised nature of the pro-hunting arguments parallels the moralizing discourse of the 'ecologists'. In fact, the former is instigated as a response to the latter. Pro-hunting articles in newspapers and specialised journals typically start with a reference to particular allegations made by the 'ecologists' (οικολόγοι), the 'pro-ecology-advocates' (οικολογούντες), or even particular ecology theorists (names are mentioned). The structure of the arguments aims at demonstrating that hunting and 'man the hunter' are not responsible for the decline of Greek fauna - as the 'ecologists' 'unjustly' proclaim - but other factors, such as pollution, industry, pesticides and unwise measures taken by the 'ecologists' are instead the cause of environmental degradation. Those publications have two targets: first, to confront rationally the arguments advocated by ecologists and, second, to strengthen and reinforce the practice and ideology of hunting among the hunters themselves.

The village level rhetoric in favour of hunting, compared with the

urban alternative already described, although it is evidently less structured and systematic, nevertheless follows a similar course. The emphasis is again on the moral defence of hunting and arguments of a 'spreading the responsibility' type prevail. Pesticides or 'foreigners' are made responsible for the reduction in number of the wild birds. The scenario about African people who 'destroy' the turtledoves, expressed by Ringo in the previous section, is in fact a very popular explanation of the turtledoves decline among Vassilikiot hunters. The pesticide rhetoric, locally referred to as 'poison' (φαρμάκι) or 'chemicals' (χημικά), is another popular version of accounting for the drastic reduction in numbers of all kinds of game over the last decade. Correlations between the increase in hunting guns and the decrease in wild birds, although accounted for in the local discourse, are treated by Vassilikiot hunters as fortuitous.

Arguments emphasizing the importance of hunting for Vassilikiots' life are additionally employed. They are expressed however, in a very rudimentary form: "we always used to hunt" or "you cannot take this [hunting] from us" is what the local people claim, practically unaware of the power this kind of cultural valorization can have. Although Icelandic whalers (Einarsson 1993) and North American Indians (Ellen 1986) have successfully championed their cause against conservationists, by reference to arguments of the 'our-way-of-life' type, Vassilikiots remain unconscious of the relative power of this kind of argumentation. They prefer to accuse the 'ecologists' of having their own faulty morality and unrealistic assumptions.

The reference of the local people to the 'ecologists' as an "opposed to hunting moral force" becomes particularly emotional and polarized, since Vassilikiots are in general agitated by the 'ecologists'' involvement in the local environmental dispute over the conservation of rare species of animals. The presence and activity of environmentalists on the island provides the local people with a concrete set of unfortunate experiences, examples of which they can creatively draw upon to reinforce their

arguments in favour of hunting. For the people of Vassilikos, the ecological discourse is not a vague and abstract threat, but is understood as stemming from real people who try to impose their own philosophy on the local environment.

I conclude this section with the words of a local hunter. His reference to peasant life and 'care' (*φροντίδα*) for the farm animals is the perfect union of the present discussion with the following section, where I examine the relation of hunting to peasant life. This is what the local hunter said:

"I feel sorrow for the bird I kill (*το κλαίω το πουλάκι που το σκοτώνω*). I feel sorrow for every bird I kill but this is how life is. Look at this chicken [he points with his hand at some chicken roaming around his yard]. It will die in eight months.

I care for this chicken. I feed it, I provide water for it (*το ποτίζω*). In eight months it will die. This is its nature. It has a life, a good life. I provided everything for it.

It has a good life. A natural life. It grew up and lived. And then it is the time to die. Where else should the chicken go?

Chickens reproduce. This is why they make so many chicks. There is no place for more. It is natural for them to die.

I raised the chicken [in the first place], it gives life to me now. It is the same with the turtledoves. But the African people (negroes: *αραπάδες*) poison (*φαρμακώνουν*) millions of them.

What will ecologists do about this? The ecologists do not deal with the threats (*κινδύνους*) to nature. The ecologists are only concerned with their pockets.

Look at this beauty around you [he points at the cultivated land and olive groves]. This is ecology. Who cares to maintain this..."

#### **d. Hunting and the farming way of life.**

In chapter four I examined the importance of the notions of 'care' (*φροντίδα*) and 'order' (*τάξη*) as concepts governing the relationship between the Vassilikiots and their animals. In chapter five I demonstrated how the farmers in Vassilikos do not distinguish sharply between care and

labour spent on their 'own' animals and any sentiments of affection towards them. Animals incorporated into the context of 'care and order' established by the farmers - even animals which were once wild - are entitled to the farmers' protection as members of the rural household, and bound to it with ties of "reciprocal obligation", to quote du Boulay (1974). However, animals which exist outside the context of 'care and order', in most cases are treated with detachment or hostility.

Wild birds and hares however, which in Vassilikos are the only available game, unlike harmful or non-useful animals, are evaluated positively. "These are useful animals", Vassilikiots say, "they are edible (*τρώγονται*)". 'Huntable' animals, like domestic animals, have a common characteristic: they are both evaluated as 'useful', that is, they can both contribute to the welfare of the rural household. But 'huntable' animals, unlike domestic animals, exist independently of the context of 'care and order' established by the farmers, and the farmers feel unconstrained to appropriate their 'usefulness' whenever they are in position to shoot them.

In Vassilikos, the actual process of killing and consuming hares and wild birds, does not differ drastically from the process of killing and consuming free-ranging rabbits and poultry. In both cases men are expected to kill the animals and women to prepare the killed animals as food. In both cases, friends or relatives of the household, or people to whom the household owes an obligation (*υποχρέωση*) are invited and the meat consumed is valued as being 'special' (*ξεχωριστό*). Where domestic animals are killed, the farmers communicate to their guests their pride at being in a position to consume food produced on their 'own' farm. Where of hunted game is consumed, the farmers praise the quality of the 'wild animals' meat and the skill of the particular hunter.

The following ethnographic example will illustrate the similarities between killing and consuming wild birds and domestic free-range chickens:

"Lefteris was about to kill a chicken. His daughter-in-law was in a hurry. They were expecting guests from the town and she had to do the plucking because Lefteris' wife was

absent. Lfteris took his gun and ask me if I wanted to join him.

‘- Why are carrying the gun’, I asked him, ‘I thought we are about to kill one of the farm-chickens’.

‘- They can’t be caught during the day. Try if you want!..’, Lfteris replied.

We walked around his farmland at a slow, purposeful pace. Lfteris was trying to find an appropriate chicken to shoot but this task was not easy. The chickens were hiding at the sight us, being in position to understand that we were after them. I felt we were out for a real hunt. There was a strong feeling of expectation in the air. Lfteris appeared to enjoy all this.

At last, he found a suitable chicken. ‘Silence’, Lfteris told me and with the agility of a young man he shoot at it. I gathered the dead chicken and I took it to his daughter-in-law to pluck it in hot water. She expressed her satisfaction with the particular chicken ‘because it was big and young’ and started the cooking preparations."

A few months later I participated in a similar event. I followed Lfteris on his way to hunt his ‘own property’ (his chickens) on his ‘own property’ (his farmland). This time he was accompanied by his hunting dog Moros. He killed two chickens with the same shot in a way that resembles killing several wild birds with one shot. He said "with one shot, two turtledoves" which is a common Greek proverb about realizing a double objective with a singular effort.<sup>160</sup> One of the dead chickens fell on a bench and Lfteris commanded his dog to collect it. The chicken hunt was like a proper hunting expedition.

In chapter five I described an incident at which the same protagonist had caught ‘with his hands’ a hare hiding on his land. The farmer was well experienced in ‘grasping’ free-range domestic rabbits roaming on his farm. He carried the hare around the farm, holding it by the ears in the same way he carried his rabbits. Then, he announced that in case the hare was female [male hares are expected to behave antagonistically towards male rabbits] he would ‘keep’ it alive and let it mate with his tame rabbits. But since the hare proved to be male, Lfteris

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<sup>160</sup> "Μ' ένα σμπάρο, δύο τριγόνια".



was induced by his wife into killing it. Lfteris and his wife enjoyed the hare's meat with friends of the family the next day, while everybody praised Lfteris for his skill in catching a wild animal with his hands.

As those examples illustrate, hunting and killing domestic animals on the farm cannot be seriously differentiated in the context of daily life. Hunting often takes place on the farm and several Vassilikiot men carry their guns around while executing their various daily farming tasks. Vassilikiot women welcome the hunted birds in the home in the same way they accept killed poultry: they pluck them and plan about 'how to cook them' and 'whom to invite' to the prospective meal. As the following description demonstrates, wild birds and domestic chickens are often consumed within following day, both kinds of meal being considered as meals fitting to a special occasion:

"Dionysis just arrived home. He was returning from hunting. He patiently stayed on Mount Skopos all morning waiting to shoot any birds. He managed to bring back about ten birds: a few blackbirds (κοτσύφια) but mostly thrushes (τσίχλες).

'- Thrushes stay in Zakynthos from November to March' he explained, 'they are very tasty! Why don't you come tomorrow to eat with us at noon...'

He gave the wild birds to his wife to pluck them and prepare them for tomorrow's meal. His wife offered him one of 'their own chickens' cooked in the oven with potatoes. She said, 'we kill chickens on our farm, quite often; it is good that the chickens we eat are our own chickens. We killed this one to celebrate our son's name-day.'"

Having emphasized the apparent similarities between hunting hares or wild birds on the land around Vassilikos and killing poultry or rabbits on the farm, I want to emphasize the fundamental difference between those two sets of activities. The difference is rooted in the importance of the context of 'care and order' to which the domestic animals are introduced. Vassilikiot farmers are highly selective about which farm rabbit or chicken to kill. Before arriving at such a decision they consider the gender, age, stage in the reproductive cycle, behavioral traits and appearance of the animals in question. Often the animals to be killed are

identified well in advance, being in most of the cases young male rabbits or cocks, or even old female animals/birds that have already fulfilled their reproductive potential. In other words, decisions concerning which animal to kill are dependent upon the 'criterion of usefulness' and the ideal of the household's self-sufficiency. According to the farmer's understanding, the farm animals to be killed have already received the appropriate 'care', are destined by the 'order' of the farm to die. As the hunter quoted in the previous section vividly explains: "I raised the chicken in the first place, it gives life to me now!"

Killing wild birds however, is an activity independent of the constraints of 'care and order' on the farm. Hunting those birds fits perfectly the 'criterion of usefulness' and the ideal of the household self-sufficiency but, unlike the case of the domestic animals, the availability of wild birds is determined by their natural periodical migration, rather than the timing and 'order' established by the farmers. As parts of a domain that exists independently of the man-made 'order', wild birds like harmful animals, drought, storms, weeds and unconstrained vegetation can be legitimately appropriated by the farmers of Vassilikiot, people who, as I have said in chapter three, confront their natural environment with an antagonistic attitude towards the 'struggle'.

#### **e. Conclusion.**

"Hunting is perhaps the biggest, most potent symbolic expression of masculinity for Cypriot men" argues Sheena Crawford in her ethnographic account of Kalavassos, a Greek-Cypriot village (:97). Crawford's brief description of hunting in Kalavassos and men's enthusiastic involvement in it, perfectly fits with my own experience of hunting in Zakynthos. In Vassilikos the "importance of hunting for the local people's life" is a statement expressed by Vassilikiot men themselves. Vassilikiot women, although they do not participate in hunting and are obviously less emphatic, do not contradict the men's

claims. Neither does the ethnography presented in this chapter. Hunting does indeed figure as an important yearly activity in Vassilikos. It has existed in the area since Medieval times, but then it was largely the prerogative of the rich and powerful, who had the time and means to enjoy it. In this century however, hunting became popular among the poor, although guns, until twenty or thirty years ago, were rare valuable possessions, available only to the most committed and esteemed hunters in the village. When my older present day informants were young, a generation of Vassilikiot hunters were the pre-eminent protagonists of the local narratives and poems, recited at family gatherings or in the little all-purpose premises which served as coffee shops. 'Old-time' hunters were respected for their shooting skill and renowned for their 'boasting' (καυχησιές) over their guns and hunting achievements. Their 'boasting' was tolerated by women and friends with some humour and their skill was admired by young boys and younger hunters.

However, since then, hunting in Zakynthos has been drastically transformed from an aristocratic pastime to a celebrated 'passion' shared by the vast majority of the male population. Guns multiplied, game decreased, and hunters became more emphatic about their commitment and involvement in hunting. Confident and proud of their engagement with hunting, present day Vassilikiot hunters arrange their farming or tourist business so as to secure the time required for the pursuit of their hunting objectives. Neither their wives, who do not appear threatened by their husbands' engagement with hunting, nor the legislation which aims at curtailing hunting activity, have decreased the local hunting 'passion'. During the turtledove hunting season, especially during the prohibited April hunt, Vassilikiot hunters make their presence felt with their guns, their collective power and their masculine performance.

To conclude my own account of hunting as a well celebrated male endeavour, I will focus on male unity and male identity as they are realized in hunting performances and narratives. I will further stress the complementarity of hunting with the practical demands of the farming

lifestyle and the rural household.

Hunting is an activity undertaken solely by men.<sup>161</sup> It can be accurately described as comprising a 'context of action' including and concerning men, an all-male domain not unlike the coffee house. The anthropological study of the coffee house was initiated by Papataxiarchis (1988, 1991), who underlined its importance as an alternative domain to the female domestic realm dominated by the presence of related married women. While relationships and alliances between clusters of related women in the matrifocal neighbourhoods of Lesbos studied by Papataxiarchis are governed by kinship, male solidarity in the coffee house is ruled by friendship and commensal equality (Papataxiarchis 1991, 1995). In Papataxiarchis' writing the coffee house is distinguished as an egalitarian, almost anti-structural (if kinship is taken here as 'structure') social context, in which masculine identities are shaped and reinforced. The egalitarian character and the masculine-identity formation potential of commensal all-male gatherings is further recognized by Madianou (1992:11-2). Loizos (1994:77), in agreement with Papataxiarchis' description of the coffee house as a 'domain', similarly comments upon its less structured and less hierarchical constitution when compared to hegemonic institutions, such as the church and the state.

Like the coffee house, hunting, as I have studied it in Vassilikos, can accurately be described as a specific context among others - to follow the approach offered by Cornwell and Lindisfarne (1994) and Loizos (1994) - where male identity is asserted and reinforced. Herzfeld, in *The Poetics of Manhood* (1985), refers to the importance of the 'performative' aspect of being a man: "what counts" for the Cretan villagers studied by

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<sup>161</sup> My informants remember an aristocrat woman from the island's capital, who frequently hunted on their land with a 'light' (ελαφρύ) gun, which was specially designed and manufactured for her. "She was the only woman that ever hunted on our land", Vassilikiot hunters maintain and add, with a conspiratorial tone of voice, "you see, she was a lesbian and she didn't make the slightest effort to hide it; she was living in a big mansion with her girlfriend!". My older informants remark that "this woman was the first woman ever to appear in Vassilikos wearing trousers" and unanimously attribute her preference for hunting on her 'male' tastes and temperament.

him is "a sense of shifting the ordinary and everyday into a context where the very change of context itself serves to invest it with sudden significance" (Herzfeld 1985: 16). According to this perspective, an animal theft performed by a Cretan villager and its subsequent narration, aims at a demonstration of the quality of the act itself and the skill of the protagonist (ibid: 16-8). Here, I understand hunting as a context of action, a terrain where personhood and manhood can be contested. It provides opportunities for the Vassilikiot hunters to articulate their masculinity, to compete with each other and outsiders, to perform and to recount their achievements. Boys are given a chance to fail, to try again and to succeed. Men can seize the occasion and excel by becoming more successful men. Their masculinity as it is portrayed in hunting will eventually become recognized and celebrated by local hunting narratives as part of the local history.

But if the similarity of hunting and the coffee house as contexts where masculine identities are articulated, tested and in most of the cases reinforced, is easily demonstrated, the egalitarian, unifying character of the coffee house is not paralleled, at first glance, by the competitive, 'contesting' constitution of hunting. Vassilikiot hunters' compete about the number of birds killed on a hunt or about their claims on particular hunting posts. They contest with the state authorities, the forestry department, the 'ecologists' and any group or individual wishing to restrain hunting. They have been vividly portrayed in my ethnography as people who repeatedly boast about their guns, hunting dogs and shooting skills. Vassilikiot hunters compete as much as being a man involves contest, or, to use Herzfeld's words (1985: 16,47), as much as 'being good at being a man' involves a good performance.

According my fieldwork experience however, competition between Vassilikiot hunters is confined, in most of cases, to the performative level. The local actors are satisfied in performing their skill, and their audience, the fellow hunters, are equally satisfied to watch, listen and evaluate the performances in question. Cases where competition in

hunting skill can lead to a serious quarrel between two fellow villagers are rare. The incident of the two brothers who didn't speak to each other for a year, because one of them missed in shooting a quail, is remembered by present day Vassilikiots as a rare example of exaggerated aberration. And exaggeration, in most of the hunting narratives, is well received by the village audience. Vassilikiots, both men and women, enjoy listening to the 'boasting' of local hunters and the exaggerated hunting stories. Narrators themselves employ their mastery in exaggeration in a self-critical humorous manner, conscious of its performative character.

Small groups of men hunting together, joking and enjoying the all-male company, are visible to any observer in the fields of Vassilikos. When hunters miss shooting a passing bird they warn their comrades, who are waiting in neighbouring hunting posts, of the imminent approach of the bird. At the end of a successful hunt, a group of hunters may retire to the house of one of the hunters, where part of the game is jointly consumed and the hunting achievements of the day are recounted. Hunting, in all these examples, unites rather than divides the local protagonists, who celebrate male solidarity much like men in the commensal atmosphere of the coffee house. As with Sofka Zinovieff's informants, who hunt foreign women instead of birds, Vassilikiot hunters can be described as enjoying "the planning, the discussions, and the competitive equality that form the base of the activity" (1991: 206).

This form of relationship however, does not take place between local hunters and outsiders. Most Vassilikiot hunters treat hunters from the island's town or other villages antagonistically. Other Vassilikiots make it an opportunity to rent to the outsiders some of the hunting areas they control, and thus make some profit. Exceptions to this are cases where the outsider is a relative or an individual to whom an obligation is owed. But even then, the community of the local hunters, who do not share these particular obligations, perceive non-local hunters with antagonism.

The opposition between village men and outsiders becomes even more evident in conflict over hunting prohibitions administered by the state authorities. As I have already noted in this chapter, those prohibitions are never thoroughly enforced in the face of local resistance. In fact, every aspect of competition or discord with outsiders further reinforce the solidarity between village men at the local level. The patrols of the state authorities and the forestry department are met with a collective excitement, being an opportunity for individual masculine performances of autonomy and deviance to the law.

The local disregard for legal restrictions on hunting parallels the resistance of Vassilikiots to the establishment of a national park on their land. Vassilikiot hunters blame particular ecologically inclined individuals or groups for the imposition of hunting prohibitions, as much as they do for the restrictions stemming from the conservation legislation. In the local discourse, 'ecologists' are treated as a generalized category, a hostile source from whom anti-hunting arguments and their implementation arise. For my informants in Vassilikos the 'ecologists' are those people who "cause trouble", and against whom they are collectively opposed, as "local hunters" or "local people" with their own distinctive hunting tradition and farming lifestyle.

Although Vassilikiots do not systematically apply culturally-based arguments of the 'our-way-of-life' form to confront the 'ecologists', they argue that hunting is an indispensable part of their life, "something natural" (*κάτι φυσικό*) for those "who live in the countryside". As has been illustrated in earlier chapters, Vassilikiots perceive their farming way of life as a constant 'struggle' (*αγώνας*) with the natural environment and its animals. Wild animals or birds, which exist outside the context of 'care and order' established through the farmers' 'struggle', are not credited with the privileges and responsibilities that membership of a rural household entails. Their hunt is not constrained by the orderly cycles of life and death to which domestic animals are subjected. In fact, hunting wild birds or animals provides the rural household with an additional

resource: the hunted game provides the farmers with an extra meal and an occasion for inviting guests and enhancing sociality.

Vassilikiot women appreciate the contributions hunting makes to the household economy. They receive the game of their husbands with pleasure and proceed in making plans about cooking and the guests to be invited to the meal. Although, they frequently complain about the presence of their husbands in the coffee house, they rarely complain about the involvement of men in hunting. The presence of men in the coffee house is often delayed until late at night, a time when women cannot readily enjoy the company of other women and are destined to remain isolated in the home, in front of the television.<sup>162</sup> Furthermore, the coffee house is associated with 'dangers' (κινδύνους) related to the men's potential involvement in gambling - another traditional 'passion' of Zakynthian people - and excessive drinking. Drinking and gambling in the coffee house are described by Papataxiarchis (1991) as "characterized by the absence of significant economic functions", and understood by Vassilikiot women as a 'waste' (σπατάλη) of the households' financial resources.

Hunting, like the coffee house, and unlike the rural household, is a gendered context appropriate for male performances. It exalts male identity and male solidarity. But compared to the coffee house, hunting is a context more complementary to the concerns of the rural household and the farming lifestyle. These comparisons however, are a mere exercise in ethnographic analysis. The three contexts of action discussed here do not consist of disconnected social arenas, but rather exist in a continuum of action. A hunting project is often planned in the coffee house by a group of male friends and more frequently concludes in the home of one of the hunters, where his wife is cooking the game and the fellow hunters recite

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<sup>162</sup> The households in Vassilikos follow a widespread spatial pattern of settlement, and the community follows a long patrilocal tradition; the sense of isolation faced by Vassilikiot women differs markedly from the confidence and sense of solidarity experienced by women in the matrifocal neighbourhoods of Lesbos, studied by Papataxiarchis (1988,1991,1995).



their hunting achievements. Hunting narratives are celebrated within the coffee house and the household alike. Hunting performances often become part of the local tradition; their protagonists and their hunting practices are an indispensable part of Vassilikiot life. All my informants agree: "Vassilikiots have a great love for hunting, a great passion!"

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**Chapter 8:**  
**‘What use is the turtle?’**

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**a. Conclusion.**

"- I am asking you to tell me what's the use of the turtle..? What kind of good can a turtle do to a human? Why do we have to pay so much attention to them?

Here, the turtle did great harm (ζημιώ) to the people. It went against the interests of the people.

I'll tell you something. If you came here to make the turtle stronger (να δυναμώσεις την Χελώνα), you'd better go away. But if you came to write about the people, then I'll tell you as much as I know..."

Indeed, 'the turtle' is of no practical or symbolic importance to the people of Vassilikos. On the contrary its conservation created a great deal of 'trouble' to some of its inhabitants. But the individuals who protest against conservation measures are not merely the ones who have been 'harmed' (ζημιωθεί). It is the great majority of Vassilikiots, those related to the protesters by ties of kinship or obligation, and people who simply fail to comprehend the priorities of the conservationists. The ethnography suggests that Vassilikiot resistance to environmental conservation cannot be attributed merely to the economic self-interest of particular individuals, but is related to the total 'way of life' of Vassilikos' inhabitants.

"The ecologists and the journalists who talk about the protection of nature don't live here. What do those people know about protecting this land? What do they know about living in the countryside?", my informants frequently argue with a note of agitation in their voices. Considering that journalists and 'ecologists' "don't live" in Vassilikos and "don't know much" about the Vassilikiots' way of life, it is perfectly understandable that they tend to explain the local people's resistance to ecological objectives in terms of economic interests, this being the most

obvious feature of local discourse. The "ecologists and journalists" can easily amplify the Vassilikiots' own words - "the interests of the people are harmed by the turtle", "our interests are threatened by 'ecology'" - to portray the Vassilikiots as amoral individuals concerned only to maximize profits.

But if the outsiders' understanding of Vassilikiot motives is circumscribed by the formers' limited or superficial experience of "life in the countryside", the local people's insistence on emphasizing their practical 'interests', despite the negative media portrait this tendency generates, is more difficult to explain. It was, in fact, one of the most pressing questions I was confronted with during my fieldwork. Why do Vassilikiots so emphatically insist on their own self-interest in their anti-conservation arguments? Why they underemphasize culturally oriented arguments, which would had been more successful in enhancing their cause and their public profile? To answer these questions, I will bring together several issues raised by my ethnography and discussed in the conclusions of the preceding chapters.

Conservationists, journalists and other urban dwellers understand Vassilikiots' interests as a calculated pursuit of their individual self-interest. But for the Vassilikiots, the use of the same term, has a different interpretation. Anthropologists (du Boulay 1974, Loizos 1975) have demonstrated that Greek-speaking farming communities interpret the term 'self-interest' (*συμφέρον*) as referring to the welfare of particular households. 'Self-interest' among Greek-speaking farming communities, like Vassilikos, refers to how individuals ally with other individuals to form corporate social entities, such as the rural household, rather than to the mere calculation of material gain or loss. A Vassilikiot farmer who neglects the 'interests' (*συμφέροντα*) of his household, is anti-social, one who violates his commitments to his family and related individuals. This is why Vassilikiots appear so eager to rationalize their actions in terms of their household's 'interests'. In doing so, they fulfil their public role as responsible members of their households and their community.

Five years ago I had prematurely criticised Michael Herzfeld (1991) for underestimating the calculative manipulation hidden behind his informants' discourse. The case was one of archaeological conservation affecting the inhabitants of Rethemnos, a town in Crete. Rethemniots were deprived of the right to demolish, rebuild or modernize their old homes, as much as my Vassilikiot informants were denied control over their landed property. As Herzfeld carefully noticed, in Rethemnos the homes to be conserved constitute a traditional form of dowry and the conservation restrictions touch upon several culturally significant values, being a threat of the locally portrayed need for autonomy, an intrusion of external forces into the private domestic domain, a challenge of male assertion over matrifocal property and more importantly, an obstacle to meeting the obligations of marriage. The sum of those more subtle justifications constitute a cultural exegesis more meaningful than merely economic or even political forms of interpretation.

Although they do not speak so explicitly, Vassilikiot farmers, like the inhabitants of Rethemnos, "have daughters to marry", a cultural statement irreducible to practical reasoning. Marrying both daughters and sons in Vassilikos is a demanding responsibility. Failure to meet the demands for material contributions to a daughter's marriage - an explicit use of the word dowry in contexts other than gossip is avoided - carries a loss of prestige greater than the value of the material contribution itself. Similarly, young men are pressured by the Zakynthian tradition of patrilocality to do anything to avoid matrilocal arrangements. As I have described in Chapter Two, several Zakynthians pay particular emphasis to "keeping the land in the name"<sup>163</sup> of their family and bequeath most of their landed property to their male offsprings, provided they have any. Young men who inherit land are secure against the relative shame of becoming a *sogabros*, that is an in-marrying son-in-law. The cost of having to accept "this sort of compromise" is judged by several

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<sup>163</sup> "Κρατάνε την γή στ' όνομα".

Zakynthian men as greater than "any dowry received in marriage".

Several anthropological monographs have emphasized the multiple significance land has for farming people in the Mediterranean. As Davis (1973: 73) argues, "land has more than purely economic uses", and these are, in fact, numerous. It influences marriage strategies, strengthens ties of unity among households, and constitutes an imperishable part of a households' history and a households' collective identity (Tolosana 1966, du Boulay 1974, Pina-Cabral 1986). It signifies self-sufficiency, security, status, political influence, and the independence of household members - especially female ones - from disreputable paid labour (Davis 1973, Loizos 1975). A working relationship with the land is synonymous with responsibility, power, vitality and good health (Pina-Cabral 1986: 25,152-3,208). All the above benefits of land ownership are recognized by the people of Vassilikos, who share two additional justifications for cherishing their land. First, the land most of the people own was acquired twenty or thirty years ago after a long history of landlessness and dependence on landlords. Land ownership in Vassilikos signified the end of a period of poverty and insecurity, and the start of a new era of independence and relative emancipation from servility. Second, by being an important prerequisite for entering tourism, land ownership does not merely relate to a household's history; it signifies the household's aspirations for a better future. Vassilikiots through their identity as those who have property in the village, share a locally perceived right "to fix their lives the same way their neighbours did" by participating in the business of tourism. Additionally, by means of their landed property, they can successfully venture into the tourist economy, confident that they can resort to farming if tourism turns out to be a failure.

Despite the plethora of significance attributed to land ownership in Vassilikos, the conservationists and the state expect the Vassilikiots to surrender their claims to their landed property without compensation, which would have helped heal the loss in symbolic, social and practical value. This appears to be a paradox for the local land owners. Even,

those Vassilikiot families who recently sold parts of their land to WWF International, facilitating the creation of the marine National Park, express dissatisfaction with this form of arrangement. They claim that they would have rather preferred "to not sell their land by any means", provided that they had an alternative to safeguard the practical interests of their households. One of them explains:

"We gave our land to the WWF for money... we were also given a higher building allowance for our remaining land. Now, I can build and compensate for some of the time I lost, unable to take advantage of tourism. I would have preferred though, to keep my land instead...

All these [he points at his new building constructions] can not compensate for the worries I had those ten years with the 'ecologists'. To tell you the truth, I would have kept my land if I had a chance to do something with it. But I had no other choice. I've had enough with the 'ecologists'."

Other Vassilikiots owning land affected by the conservation measures did not receive an offer from the WWF to sell. They still 'struggle' against the ecologists and insist that:

"The 'X family' did wrong in selling land to the 'ecologists'. But I can't blame them for that... They lost their patience, you see, waiting all those years in [a state of] injustice. One can say they did the right thing for their families. But I wouldn't have done it. I can't see the land of my father being sold to foreigners and especially to the 'ecologists'... I want to keep my land and make something nice on it. I want to make progress on it.

Look at the 'X family'... They don't have where to keep their boat. Now, they come to my own place to fish!.."164

The speaker is loosing in terms of material profit but is gaining in terms of symbolic capital. The majority of the Vassilikiots are sympathetic to his cause and join him in resisting the 'ecologists'. But everybody in Vassilikos admits that if the man in question was offered substantial compensation - an arrangement, which apart from the monetary reward allows him to build on other parts of his land - he might have been persuaded to sell land to "the ecologists and their Park". Such a course of

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<sup>164</sup> Fishing is a leisure activity for the family in question.

action would have been a sensible practical solution and Vassilikiots, as I have already underlined, are expected to prioritize the well-being of their families and dependants. Maintaining however, that their attachment to the land - "a land that means so much" to them - can be understood in purely material terms, is a fallacy.

Some Vassilikiots, tired of waiting in vain for compensation or favourable changes in the existing legislation, have chosen a more dynamic course of action. They developed small-scale tourist enterprises of a rather temporary nature in areas supposedly designated as part of the national park. Despite the conservation legislation, small tavernas operate in close proximity to one of the turtle beaches and their owners are 'determined' (*αποφασισμένοι*) to insist on running those places despite the repeated warnings of the authorities. Like most Vassilikiots, the taverna owners are farmers by vocation (*γεωργοί*) and combine their income from tourism with their more traditional annual farming activities. In Chapter Three, I demonstrated that tourism and farming are not mutually exclusive or antagonistic, but exist side by side and in several instances support one another. For the rural household, a taverna on its land is an additional resource which "must not be wasted". "Not working the taverna on your land" is a violation of the ideal of household self-sufficiency, at least as much as not working an olive grove which is on your land. The owners of the tavernas in question left these resources dormant for several years due to the conservation restrictions and this is something they greatly regretted. "We left our property to become deserted for the sake of the turtle..." they argue.

Other Vassilikiots interrupt their yearly farming activities to establish temporary "canoe and umbrella hiring" kiosks on Vassilikos' beaches. Two of those beaches are part of the conservation park and the environmentalists strongly object to the presence of tourist enterprises next to the turtle reproductive sites. But the local people have a different point view. One of them explains:

"I prefer working with the animals on my farm than being

the servant of tourists on the beach or fighting with the authorities and the 'ecologists'. But my income from the animals and olive cultivation is not enough. You see that I still take unfavourable arrangements in working the landlords land, but this still is not enough...

We are poor people here. I can't leave the beach unused for the sake of the turtle. I'll work on the beach for a few more years, whatever the 'ecologists' say... I'll work on the beach until I build a few legal rooms to let to the tourists... I'll be working with my animals for the rest of the time..."

The most characteristic feature of the Vassilikiots' connection with the local environment is that they are engaged in a 'working' relationship with it. The Vassilikiots' environment is where the Vassilikiots 'sweat' and 'struggle' in a daily battle of utilizing available resources. As I have already stressed in the third chapter, the image of daily work as a 'struggle' is more than a mere metaphor for the Vassilikiot farmers: it represents an agonistic attitude towards life, a contesting relationship with the physical environment. The natural world is perceived to be resistant to human action upon it, and the worker is expected to extract the required resources from it or to make the existing resources productive through repetitive hard labour. "Everything is achieved with hard toil", a local man argues, "even tourist jobs are toil". "The 'ecologists' forget that people live and work this land", a local woman adds, "they forget that we care for this land by working it".

Unlike the conservationists, the people of Vassilikos do not perceive of their physical environment as being in need of protection. They understand it as a terrain of energetic and vigorous action. They are closely attached to it by being involved in a constant relationship of 'acting upon it'. Their action is synonymous with the 'struggle' to keep their environment 'in order'. An environment 'in order' is a productive terrain upon which the results of human labour are materialized for the benefit of the rural household. The concept of 'order' has been approached in Chapter Four as one of the most central notions pertaining to the organization of the farm environment. 'Order' is defined, created



and safeguarded by the farmers upon an environment perceived as reluctant to accept and retain it. This is why the imposition of 'order' requires constant hard labour.

Safeguarding 'order' on the farm is exercised by both male and female farmers, but the greater part of this responsibility is ideally for men, who 'struggle' against the more wild vegetation and control the larger domestic animals. Women care for the poultry and those animals 'kept' close to the house. Keeping those animals in 'order' is an extension of their responsibilities in the domestic sphere. "Caring for animals well" is ensuring that one's domestic animals are not in physical pain or danger, are well fed and well sheltered, and "kept in order". Those animals which systematically fail to comply with the 'order' requirements set by their owners are punished. While punishing their animals, the farmers talk to them, scolding them like children. Vassilikiots believe that animals can "learn their place on the farm", and most domestic animals do learn "in time" how to respect to that 'order'. If they are left unattended, however, they are believed to regress rapidly into a state of anarchy. This is why the 'care' (*φροντίδα*) of animals is believed to be a constant 'struggle'. "Animals can't understand what is good for them. You must have an eye on them all the time. You have to care for them constantly", Vassilikiots explain.

Punishing animals in Vassilikos is perceived as a part of 'care', and 'care' as the enactment of 'order' on the farm. The slaughter of animals is similarly understood by Vassilikiots as 'caring' for the farm as a whole. "What will we give the other animals to eat if we don't kill some of them", the farmers argue emphatically, "how are we supposed to buy the food for the rest of them". Vassilikiot farmers often elaborate on the difference (*διαφορά*) in attitude on this issue between themselves and the 'ecologists'. Here are two examples:

"The lady from the town came to me to complain because I kill my animals. 'I love animals', she said, 'I am an ecologist'.

'When I kill it you complain', I told her, 'but when you

go and buy it from the butcher you like it'. People like her want to buy meat in plastic packets, like they do in supermarkets. This is how they love animals... It is us who love animals because we raised them..."

"Then, you have the 'ecologists' who come to you and say why do you kill your own animals... They say we don't care for animals..."

We care for those animals everyday... We raise them... The ecologists get the meat from the supermarkets. Then they come here to tell us how to run our farms..."

It is in fact true that the environmentalists, although particularly successful in unravelling the subtle interrelationships between living beings in natural ecosystems, appear less eager to comprehend the ties of reciprocity between animals and their owners in a farm environment. Furthermore, they accuse Vassilikiots of being cruel to their animals and only interested in their animals' utility. Vassilikiots respond to the 'ecologists'' criticism with indignation: "the 'ecologists don't know about animals", they say, "they just talk about animals, but they don't know what having animals means."

Vassilikiots' views on animals are expressed from the point of view of daily interaction with them. The local farmers stress the responsibility they feel for their animals' 'care' (*φροντίδα*) and the hard labour this 'care' implies. They explain the fundamentals of animal husbandry by a simple rule: domestic animals receive 'care' from their owners and are expected in return to respect the 'order' of the farm and the sacrifices that this order implies. Du Boulay (1974) has described domestic animals as the lower members of the rural household, subject like its human members to reciprocal obligations and privileges. As I have illustrated in the Chapter Four, this reciprocity takes place in the context of 'care and order' to which domestic animals are introduced.

Wild animals, in contrast to domestic ones, exist outside the context of 'care and order' established on the farm. This helps explain why Vassilikiots, freed from obligation towards them, exploit their potential 'usefulness' like any other resource provided by their physical environment. The most obvious example of this is the 'usefulness' of wild

birds as game. Vassilikiot hunters shoot game birds at any given opportunity, that is whenever they see the birds and have a gun with them. As I have described in detail in Chapter Seven, Vassilikiots theatrically display their disregard for the hunting restrictions imposed on some particular hunts, like the turtledove spring hunt, and claim that the authorities cannot prohibit hunting on their land. Hunting is for them a celebrated 'passion' and a further opportunity to demonstrate their opposition to the 'ecologists' and their conservation ideals. Hunting performances and narratives focus on male bonding and male identity and, in this respect, the gendered context of hunting is similar to the world of the coffee house described by Papataxiarchis (1988, 1991). But unlike the coffee house, which is in some respects antagonistic to the concerns of the household domain, the practice of hunting parallels the practical demands of the farming lifestyle and the rural household. Although hunting takes place outside the domestic domain and its participants are strictly male, the consumption of hunted prey usually takes place in the commensal atmosphere of the household, constituting a special occasion for invited friends and relatives to participate in. Considering that hunting in Vassilikos is an activity firmly rooted in the local culture, it seems highly unlikely that the vigorous criticism of the environmentalists will ever undermine the 'passionate' involvement of the Vassilikiots. A Vassilikiot argues: "Hunting is a tradition for us, an important part of our lives. The ecologists will never succeed in making us give it up. We will be hunting on our land for ever, like we always did..."

The attitude of Vassilikiots towards animals that cause 'harm' (ζημιά) to their households, by destroying crops or preying upon domestic animals, is one of thorough-going enmity. Destroying harmful animals is for the local farmers a further expression of their 'struggle' with the physical environment. They confront them with guns, traps or poison and express their anger (θύμος) and sorrow (λύπη) for the domestic animals 'harmed' by them. Predation by wild animals on their domestic animals is a violent interruption to the process of 'care and order', established by the

farmers through persistent hard labour. The harmed domestic animals being referred to as 'being lost' (χάνονται), and the 'care' invested in them as equally 'being lost' (χαμένη). It is not surprising then, that ecological conservation is locally referred to as a source of "loss" for the Vassilikiot households. Those participating in it, the 'ecologists', are locally referred to as causing 'harm' (ζημιά) to the village. This is in fact, the same expression used by Vassilikiots to refer to predatory wild animals...

As I have described in Chapter Five, Vassilikiot farmers evaluate wild animals in terms of the 'harm' or 'usefulness' the wild animals can potentially cause or bring to their households. In those cases, where the local farmers decide to 'keep' captured wild animals alive on the farm, they immediately hasten to rationalize their decision by assigning alternative forms of 'usefulness' to them. These rationalizations attempt to justify the individual's desire to keep wild animals on the farm and to demonstrate that by doing so one does not act against the interests of the household. Keeping a wild animal alive without any obvious practical justification - "what the ecologists like to do" - is prioritizing the life of the animal over the needs of the household, a strategy understood by Vassilikiot farmers as totally unacceptable.

The strong 'household-focus' ethic of my informants informs their relationship with the natural world, a relationship that can accurately be described as an anthropocentric one. The needs of 'anthropos', the human actor, are prioritized over the needs of other creatures in the local environment, while any alternative approach, like the ecocentric worldview of the environmentalists, is understood locally as a inversion of the natural 'order of things'. Such an anthropocentric, or in the case of Vassilikiot farmers, 'human-household-centred' perception of the physical environment and its living constituents, is supported and, ideologically reinforced, by an elaborate religious cosmology. The anthropocentric orientation of Christianity in its approach to the natural world has been emphasized by several anthropologists and historians (White 1968,

Worster 1977, Morris 1981, Thomas 1983, Serpell 1986, Ritvo 1987, Ingold 1988,1994, Tapper 1988, Willis 1990, Davies 1994). The particular perceptions of Greek Orthodox dogma were illustrated in Chapter Six, where I presented a particular example of a religious discourse focusing on Genesis and the 'creation' of the natural world. The discourse presented, the *Hexaemeron* of St.Basil the Great, reflects a hierarchical classification of plants and animals, with the human self positioned at its apex. The higher more inclusive animal categories of the *Hexaemeron* are organized according to sociocultural priorities, the criteria provided by the Scriptures. There are 'living creatures', the animals which 'came out' of the earth, flying and swimming animals with 'life' which 'came out' of water and plants which are simply 'inanimate'. The lower, less inclusive categories of the *Hexaemeron*, however, are based on "empirical observation" (Bulmer 1967, 1970, Atran 1990, 1993, Richards 1993), and the "practical", "pragmatic" considerations concerning the "usefulness" the organisms in question have for humans (Hunn 1982, Morris 1984).

The chapters in this thesis have unravelled the kind of relationship Vassilikiots have with their land, cultivation and wild and domestic animals. This is a 'working' relationship based on a pragmatic view of the natural world and its living constituents. Pragmatism, for the people of Vassilikos is not merely the most sound expression of their concern for the well-being of their households; it is a well-documented cultural approach to the environment representing a long history of interaction with it on the land and in everyday work. Like the environmentalists, who champion the conservation of rare animal species because they perceive those animals as 'useful' to the total ecosystem of the island, the inhabitants of the land 'care' for some other animals because they are 'useful' to their total way of life. The emphasis on utility by both sides expresses commitments to differing priorities. The environmentalists feel responsible for the ecosystem, whereas the Vassilikiots carry a heavy obligation towards their households.

Studying the culture of a people who resist conservation, is a prior step to the study of the conservation dispute in question. This thesis, apart from being a coherent ethnography of Greek farmers and their culture in respect of animals and the environment, is the first necessary step to understanding the resistance of a particular community of Greek farmers to ecological conservation. Endless pages on the specifics of the environmental dispute in Vassilikos can be written, a project that my data may allow me to accomplish in the future, but such a venture will be meaningless without the support provided by the present inquiry into the local culture. The projects of the environmentalists, whose objectives focus on the applied practical concerns of conservation, can be facilitated equally through a thorough study of the Vassilikiots' practical concerns. This is an example of how anthropology can be 'useful' - to apply the term my informants so frequently use - to non theoretical projects and undertakings. Those to whom my informants refer to as 'ecologists' will benefit by understanding that the pragmatic emphasis of the Vassilikiots' discourse is not merely an expression of economic, calculative materialism, but rather an articulated expression of a well-established cultural tradition. The Vassilikiots' 'cultural reason' - to use the term of an anthropologist (Sahlins 1976) - is expressed in practical terms: it constitutes a cultural tradition of pragmatism. The people of Vassilikos pose a rhetorical question, but never attempt to formulate an answer: 'What use is the turtle?' they wonder. This thesis did not attempt to answer that question, instead it attempts to illustrate the cultural perspective from which this question constantly arises.

I allow my informants to have the last word:

"When we were children there were masters (*αφεντάδες*), big and small landlords. They used to tell you, 'do that', 'don't do this'.

Nowadays, you have the ecologists. They come and tell you, 'don't hunt' 'don't build', 'don't kill your own animals'! It is because of the turtle, they say...

Look at those fields around you. Who cares about this land?..

Man (*ο άνθρωπος*) has to care for the world around him,

to maintain it. Caring about the land and the animals is hard work. It is a struggle (αγώνας).

The ecologists talk theory (θεωρία), we talk action (πράξη)."

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