

2010

Mirroring the anthropologist: Reflex-ions of the Self: The gendered, indigenous, reflexive self

Kotsi, F.

Kotsi, F. (2010) 'Mirroring the anthropologist: Reflex-ions of the Self: The gendered, indigenous, reflexive self', *Journal of Tourism Consumption and Practice*, 2(2), pp.83-105.

<http://hdl.handle.net/10026.1/11552>

Journal of Tourism Consumption and Practice

University of Plymouth

All content in PEARL is protected by copyright law. Author manuscripts are made available in accordance with publisher policies. Please cite only the published version using the details provided on the item record or document. In the absence of an open licence (e.g. Creative Commons), permissions for further reuse of content should be sought from the publisher or author.

Research Notes:

Mirroring the Anthropologist: Reflex-ions of the Self The gendered, indigenous, reflexive self

Filareti Kotsi

Introduction

This paper was originally prepared for the ASA Conference which took place in London in 2007 at the panel 'Researching Tourism: Reflexive Practice and Gender' and originated from my doctoral thesis entitled *The enchanted communication. A reflexive anthropology of religious tourism around Mount Athos, Greece* (Kotsi, 2003). My doctoral research aimed to explore the enchanting experiences of the pilgrims and tourists while visiting the pilgrimage site of Mount Athos, a Christian Orthodox monastic peninsula situated in the northern part of Greece. During the writing-up phase, the ethnography turned out unquestionably into a reflexive anthropology, as its title denotes, due to a series of interconnected and overlapping factors. The fact of doing native anthropology, being a woman and above all disclosing my fieldnotes to my male supervisor while in the field, led me to spontaneously and impulsively focus on the implications of my personal identity in a reflexive manner. I can, therefore, speak of my research as being an auto-ethnography, unifying the two aspects of the term, which refers '...either to the ethnography of one's own group or to autobiographical writing that has ethnographic interest' (Reed-Danahay, 1997: 2). The autobiographical part became central to my ethnography and as a result it set off a series of reflections concerning not only the necessity of reflexivity as an ethnographic tool and as the outcome of the gendered fieldwork process but also shaped a series of power relations and revealed a multitude of social relationships in the field. After having spent some years in Belgium for my post-graduate studies, I found myself working in my own country and by having found ways to distance myself from what I thought as familiar, I rediscovered the Greek culture and

the orthodox religion as well as gender issues, looking at them through the anthropological lens.

This paper aims to evaluate how the interconnected factors mentioned above, (being an indigenous woman, anthropologist who disclosed her fieldnotes to her male supervisor) led me to reflect on reflexive anthropology and how they influenced my approach to adopt a reflexive stance. Firstly, I testify the effect of the disclosure of my fieldnotes and the outcome of the originality of being 'observed' while observing. Secondly, I highlight the dilemmas I faced regarding the choice of the field and I examine what it means to be a native anthropologist. Given the fact that my research concerns pilgrims, I look briefly at another aspect of my identity, my belonging to the orthodox religion. Thirdly, I examine the consequences of being a woman, and more specifically a single woman, and whether this fact facilitated, impeded or modulated the conduct of my research.

Reflexive and disclosed fieldnotes

The most important factor which favoured the distancing and objectification of my data was the original and unexpected way in which I wrote my fieldnotes. The particularity of the way I kept my diary led me to the writing of reflexive fieldnotes and put me straight away in the heart of reflexivity, gendered issues and what is regarded as public and private self. I had to confront myself from the first day of fieldwork; I had to reflect on the self and the woman anthropologist I was. Every evening, I wrote my diary and then directly emailed it to Yves Winkin, my doctoral supervisor, who was at that time between Philadelphia and Paris. He had proposed this idea to me 'à la Margaret Mead' (Mead, 1977) and a constitutive epistolary relation started spontaneously in 1998 when I stayed in Ouranoupolis, the village situated at the border of Mount Athos, continuously for eight months and ended in 2000 with my return to Belgium.

Had I not been committed to sending almost daily my fieldnotes to my supervisor, my diary would not have been written with such perseverance and excitement, nor would it have been so detailed and filled with explanations and emotions. My notes would have mostly concerned my research on tourism and pilgrimage whereas now the specificity of the Greek culture and the whole aspect of quotidian life in Ouranoupolis equally emerged as can be seen from this very small excerpt from my diary:

I know already where one can buy tomatoes without hormones, the best cucumbers, who is ill in the village, the best beaches, which women were authorized to visit the Russian monastery, how many times one has to roll a leaf of eucalyptus to scare away the mosquitoes (Diary, 1 July 1998).

This imaginary interaction with my supervisor, sometimes inhibitory, made my text clear, organized, live, vibrant and comprehensible to someone who is from a different socio-cultural background. As a result my diary had a double function, besides being the instrument of taking down notes. By means of disclosing 'the secret life of my fieldnotes' (Sanjek 1990) to my Belgian professor enabled me to achieve some distance from my experiences.

I could not use the Greek language to write my diary due to the fact that my supervisor could not read it. Having to choose English as the language of narration helped me distance myself from the data and aided me to come out of my cultural universe. When I could not find a word in English due to its socio-cultural connotation, in my attempt to explain it by paraphrasing it, the whole socio-cultural background hidden in the word would emerge directly on paper. A denaturalization of local knowledge was taking place at the same time of writing my diary. My notes were filtered in relation to their 'Greekness' long before the analysis of the data had even begun. This explicit way of writing led me to understand how I perceived the Greek world. Being obliged to translate and search for explanations on cultural patterns made me reflect on Greekness. The identity of the reader played a fundamental role on the

way I edited my fieldnotes and as a result my electronic journal permitted me to elude the pitfall of the evidence that entails indigenous research.

I had a much smaller diary as well, which I carried with me for jotting down notes in Greek, almost simultaneously with fieldwork, before transcribing them in detail in English. All interviews are also written in Greek in an attempt not to lose the authenticity of the words of the interviewees and due to lack of time, these interviews were never translated into English nor were they incorporated into the English diary. Reading in retrospect the Greek diary as well as the interviews, I have the sentiment of being really involved, feeling very close to the people I was writing about. For example, when I read the interviews of the women pilgrims, I identify with them; I feel like their close friend in whom they confided their personal worries. On the contrary, reading through my English diary, it feels like reading a text written by someone else. It feels as if moving away from the events, as if they are seen through a frame. I can reflect on my anthropological life as if in the third person. The English version of my diary helped me situate my anthropological life without being emotionally involved. It gave me the possibility to put a distance between my writing and myself.

Paradoxically enough, my first diary, written during a two-week stay in Ouranoupolis in 1997, was in French and for personal use only. I will never forget my first day of fieldwork. I returned to my hotel, I opened my brand new notebook, I ordered a cup of coffee and I started writing my first fieldnotes with joy and pride. But this French diary had a drawback. It was very rigid, lacking emotions and reflections, regarding exclusively the specific pilgrimage I was researching and deprived from its socio-cultural environment in which it was occurring as if it were a secluded act. Nothing was mentioned from the rest of the day. Fieldwork and fieldnote-taking took place only during my participation in the pilgrimage¹. Nevertheless, the positive outcome of this

¹ This research more specifically explores the floating pilgrimage that takes place in the sea where women have the opportunity to see the monasteries of Mount Athos from a 500 metre

short diary is the condensed and rich ethnographic data on the specific act. During the writing of the auto-ethnographic part of the thesis, I comprehended that taking notes in French (which is the language I feel less comfortable with) gave me the false impression of being the 'foreign' researcher/anthropologist who came from Belgium in order to accomplish a research regarding Greece. On one hand, I had not yet reconciled with the idea of doing research at home, as if indigenous anthropology was not respectable anthropology. On the other hand, by writing in French, as if distant from my own culture, as if achieving the supposed objectivity, I was identifying to the western anthropologist working on the margins of Europe, underestimating the south-eastern European woman I was.

Another issue that made me consider the frontiers between subjectivity and objectivity and helped me objectify the subjective process of self-consciousness was the fact of being observed. I became an observed - by my male professor - observer and the revelation of my fieldnotes to him made me reflect on the nature of the anthropologist who was at the same time 'observed' while observing. Yves Winkin had the possibility to visualize my research in its subjective state, before I was in the position to filter and objectify my results. A double work of reflexivity had to take place. Not only had I to analyse the way I reacted to my own observations, but also to my own observations observed. I had to discern with honesty and audacity my counter transfer, as the ethnopsychanalyst Georges Devereux refers to the way the observer of human facts reacts as a human being to his own observations (Devereux, 1980: 16), but also discern to my counter transfer observed.

At first many questions tormented me. Where should I note the observations of my counter transfer? Should I keep a more personal diary with the emotional or sentimental situations, the failures, the pleasures or the

distance and meet the monks who come on a little boat from their monasteries with the relics of various saints (Kotsi, 1999).

ensorships? If so, it would be complicated to set the border line. At which point would I pass from one diary to the other? At which point would the personal narrative stop being part of the research? Would I reveal the difficulties I encountered? Did I want to show an image that was not close to reality? In that case, what would be the aim of the principal diary, a supposed objectivity? These questions weighed on me. Added to the fact that talking of myself by myself seemed arrogant. Although in the beginning of the research, I had difficulty in choosing what to include and what to exclude in my fieldnotes –since they would be read by my male supervisor– and I questioned myself on the line between my personal life and my life as an anthropologist, I soon realized that these two aspects could not be separated during the research. As such, I succeeded in inserting my personal life through an anthropological frame and did not keep a second diary. I equally realized that the backstage events, which are more than often left out of the ethnography, are of the same importance as the frontstage ones. At the course of writing the diary, I excluded the alienation to the private factor and including myself in the fieldnotes came naturally. Had I not had a reader, I would not have included myself in the narrative text at all (as was the case with my first French diary). For this reason I also became ‘object’ of my research, and including myself in the narrative I became the ‘other’. I became an integrant part of my study and I learned to use myself as an ethnographic tool since the writing of my diary but also to be reflexive from the very start of the research and not only during the writing of the final ethnographic text. ‘Reflexivity implies a shift in our understanding of data and its collection – something that is accomplished through detachment, internal dialogue, and constant (and intensive) scrutiny of ‘what I know’ and ‘how I know it’ (Hertz, 1997: viii). That was my case.

Indigenous anthropologist

As time was approaching for my departure for the field, my anguish for choosing the actual place of fieldwork was evident and I was vacillating between a series of tourist destinations. Possibilities for research in Belgium,

where I was studying at that time, were surely possible but not accomplished, and in retrospect I wonder how different a research I would have conducted as a south-eastern European in north Europe. Would gender, reflexive practice and in that case non-indigenous anthropology have taken up such big space? Nevertheless at that time, being influenced by classical anthropology I visualised a distant and remote place, in order to resemble anthropologists, like Margaret Mead or Claude Lévi-Strauss whose experiences at the Samoa and Brazil made me look upon them with admiration. Bali, reputed as a tourist paradise, seemed to me as the ideal place for an anthropologist working on tourism. It had to be, not less than an exotic place where I would be proud of being a 'real' anthropologist in search of the familiarisation of the exotic. Financial constraints made me acquire a more conformist spirit and consequently as time was approaching for my departure, I had the timid idea of going to Greece. Undertaking a research there, would mean for me going home after a four year absence and it felt like 'going back' without though accomplishing the goal I had set. Undertake research in my natal town Kastoria situated in the north of Greece, near the Albanian border, felt as if not doing fieldwork, due to being literally 'at home', so it was excluded. Materialized by a doctoral proposal, which I myself later rejected, I decided to lead my research in the south of Crete and only while writing about it retrospectively in my doctoral thesis, I realised that the choice of the small village of Sfakia situated at the extreme opposite end of my natal town, closer to north Africa than the rest of Europe, was haunted yet again by the classic image I had of anthropology and a persistence towards non-occidental societies.

Working on a theory of the production of enchantment in tourist sites made me actually travel to the island of Santorin (situated again in the south of Greece and not far from Crete) to examine the potential for fieldwork. I had fallen into the trap of wanting to study the notion of enchantment in an enchanting place. While being in Santorin for a week and having not found a possibility of working as a guide for the needs of participant observation and

financial aid for the research, I dropped the idea of travelling to a distant place. At that point, a simultaneous feeling of 'paradoxical contempt' for the tourist (Urbain, 1991/1993: 90) and an interest for studying pilgrims, influenced by the work of the American anthropologist Jill Dubisch (1995), who also did her research at the Greek shrine in the island of Tinos, provided my inspiration for studying the amalgam of the tourist/pilgrim. Suddenly, not being defined anymore by its geographical distance, the exact place of my research was revealed as if by divine inspiration: the sacred site of Mount Athos.

The choice of the field had troubled me so, that it had to be processed. Unconsciously I had chosen three islands (Bali, Crete and Santorin) possibly considering that insularity would offer me the symbolic space I needed for searching the exotic. I believed that being on a far way island, even if that was within Greece, would justify my anthropological status. I thought that if I had cultural and geographical distance it would guaranty me certain objectivity. When I abandoned my fascination with the exotic and turned my attention on my own society, I stopped sharing the idea of the first anthropologists that 'the proper object for anthropological study was determined by its cultural distance from the West' (Davies, 1999: 33). Judith Okely in her book *Own or Other Culture* proposes to see the West as exotic and rediscover it (Okely, 1996: 5) and the experience in the field made me acknowledge that proposition. Going back to Greece after having lived in Belgium, I shared the feelings of strangeness like those described by Alfred Schütz's for the *homecomer* referring to the returning veteran, the traveler who comes back from a foreign country and the emigrant who returns to his native land (Schütz, 1944a: 369-376). 'To the homecomer home shows – at least in the beginning – an unaccustomed face. He believes himself to be in a strange country, a stranger between strangers, until the goddess dissipates the veiling mist' (Schütz, 1944a: 369).

To my surprise many times throughout my research I had a sentiment of unusual exoticism. I narrate briefly one example:

A dinner party was arranged by the Papadopoulos family because they were adding an extension to their house. A cock was killed on the new foundations and the constructor and his family was invited to the party as well as friends. I gave a ride to Eleni who was invited at the party, and the hostess insisted that I stayed for dinner even though they had just met me. There were two enormous wooden tables and the garden was candle-lit. The cock was prepared in a wine sauce and was placed on the tables together with ouzo, retsina and other mezedes (Diary, 7 August 1998).

I noted in brackets that I had the impression of doing my research within an exotic tribe! The killing of the cock on the foundations of a house was something I was already familiar with even before I went to the field, but the complex context in which I experienced it gave it another dimension. I participated in an event that has mostly stopped taking place in Greek towns and I was found in the unfamiliar situation of writing about it in my diary. Up until the moment of going to the field I thought of it as an ordinary event: we kill a cock for good luck, for happiness. No one asks more questions. Its cultural particularity and its 'Greekness' emerged while writing about it in a detailed way in order for it to be understood by my supervisor.

This experience of strangeness upon my return to Greece was reinforced by the fact of undertaking the research in a village of approximately 500 permanent residents and was sometimes accentuated since Ouranoupolis is enormously influenced by the existence of the sacred world. I was unaccustomed to some behavioral patterns. I returned 'home' for the research, but 'home' represents Greece and the Greek culture in the wider sense. Ouranoupolis, linked to a superficial knowledge, since my childhood, as a place of vacation, was, nevertheless, a new space for me with its proper particularities. As Alfred Schütz rightly puts it, in his article regarding this time, the *stranger* that meets a new culture

...the culture of the approached group has its peculiar history, and this history is even accessible to him. But it has never become an integral part of his biography, as did the history of his home group (Schütz, 1944b: 502).

Ouranoupolis was never an integrant part of my biography. My return to Greece made me at the same time a homecomer and a stranger. On one hand, the familiarity with the Greek culture and language allowed me quicker cultural access but on the other hand, due to the induction of new socio-cultural patterns I had acquired by living in Belgium, I equally felt as a stranger to my own culture. Going back and forth to the two countries gave me a double and mixed identity, belonging at the same time 'by half' to both of them, thus making me a *halfie* anthropologist, neither exclusively indigenous nor exclusively stranger. This double identity helped me out in various circumstances during fieldwork and I could accentuate either the one identity or the other depending on the situation at hand. This hybrid status made me an *insider* at some context and an *outsider* at other.

Although I had worked out procedures to defamiliarise the familiar concerning 'Greekness', I was in the difficult position of distancing myself from the orthodox religion. It came gradually and belatedly. Hale Bolak points out that 'while a foreign researcher runs the risk of being culture blind, an indigenous researcher runs the risk of being blinded by the familiar' (Bolak, 1997: 97). During the women's pilgrimage, everything was so natural, so self-evident, that I often omitted to take down notes. I could not see the obvious. Like most Greeks, I am officially Christian orthodox but not personally involved in religious practices, not a church goer. I above all celebrate Christmas and Easter and participate in religious rituals, showing an interest in the rites of passage as in baptisms, marriages and funerals. The first time I realized that I could not see certain aspects of my world of reference regarding the orthodox religion was while comparing myself to Jill Dubisch. For the American anthropologist, Greece is 'a different place' in that it is 'seen as both the

cradle of Western civilization and at the same time Oriental and hence somewhat mysterious' (Dubisch, 1995). According to the author

...although Greeks are Christian..., they are Eastern Christians, whose religious beliefs and practices may confound, and sometimes outrage, Western notions of religion' (Dubisch, 1995: 254).

The writer was confronted with practical problems during her search at the shrine of Tinos and did not know if she should kiss the icons or if she should make the sign of the cross while genuflection was antithetical to her American notions of self and dignity. Her hesitation to make the sign of the cross signaled me the difference that separates me from a non-orthodox anthropologist and triggered me to start noticing that which was supposedly simple and obvious. I was redefining and objectifying the 'self' through the research of the 'other'. As the Greek anthropologist Dimitra Gefou-Madianou points out, studying the others, anthropologists become reflexive for their own 'collective self', their own culture. In order to be in a position to see their 'collective self', in other words to become reflexive, they have to distance themselves from their 'self' (Gefou-Madianou, 1998: 398).

This confrontation with the American anthropologist, together with various encounters in the field, with people from different religions, made me conscientious of the relation sameness/difference. For example, during an interview with Ian, a Dutch protestant priest, I was confronted with an opinion, concerning the veneration of the saints' relics, that I was not aware of before undertaking the research:

I find it very strange. I would never do it myself and I could not imagine other people kissing a part of my leg, was I to become a saint. But on the other hand, people also like kissing their favourite pop-stars, so it must be a kind of need (Diary, 17 July 1998).

I am not a stranger to orthodoxy to the point of not knowing how to make the sign of the cross, as in the case of Jill Dubisch nor finding it strange that

pilgrims venerate the relics as in the case of Ian. Encounters like these, aided me in treating the familiar as anthropologically strange, suspending my preconceptions towards the orthodox religion and looking at it through the eyes of a non-orthodox. The reactions of non-orthodox, researchers or not, were a way of assuring distance and detachment.

Gendered anthropologist

The particularity of the pilgrimage site of Mount Athos consists in the fact that only men are allowed to enter this 80 kilometres long peninsula at the total exclusion of women and the entry permits are only issued to male applicants. The bibliography that concerns Mount Athos is written mostly by men, being the only ones that have access to it and the existing works are conducted mostly by byzantinologists, archeologists and geologists. Anthropological works are limited. A woman anthropologist studying women pilgrims can only engender misunderstandings. -Being a woman- and choosing Mount Athos as a subject of research created some complications concerning my gender. People often assumed I was a male researcher as shows the following e-mail communication with an American anthropologist.

Sorry, for the confusion regarding your sex! I, too, had made the assumption that since you were working on Athos that you were a man. It wasn't clear to me that you weren't actually working on Athos but on its margin (Diary, 10 September 1998).

Being a woman I was led to work outside Mount Athos, at the village of Ouranoupolis. Borders separate the sacred world from the secular world. - Being a woman- next to Mount Athos intimidated me in the beginning. I always had to justify the reasons I did not choose another pilgrimage site where I could easily have access. I was frustrated and thought of it myself as a disadvantage, often considering the things I could not do and not the things that I could. Being a woman and working so close to Mount Athos, I was often proposed to secret visits to the monastic peninsula or at least to transgress

the borders. “*Find a moustache and a hat... and we’ll give it a try during the harvesting of the grape*” a captain once proposed to me.

The subject of interdiction and the eventual transgression of Mount Athos was something I heard of constantly. During one of the multiple cruises I had participated in, which the tourists have the possibility to see the monasteries at a 500 metre distance, I was found among 80 Serbs, all men. I was the only woman onboard with mixed feelings as if I was on the boat for Mount Athos. Captain Dimitris was so eager that day to transgress the borders that he approached at a five metre distance from the rocky mountains to show me the piece of wood with which the monks raise their provisions. He was very proud for having taken such a risk, transgressing 495 metres of interdicted space. A series of blurred photos that I instantly took prove my actual ‘being there’ and I cannot forget my ‘thrill of transgression’ as David Sibley calls the exhilarating experience that can be provided by the crossing of boundaries in *Geographies of Exclusion* (Sibley 1995: 32). Besides being thrilled, I mostly regarded as a handicap the fact of not being able to enter Mount Athos during the time of fieldwork and had not taken into account how the fact of being a woman could influence my research. Only, while writing-up the autobiographical part of the ethnography, the reflexive capacity revealed that my feminine identity was going to be constructive and lead me to important insights.

Being a woman who was neither a tourist nor working at the tourist industry and coming to live in Ouranoupolis without a family (whether parents or husband) was an unprecedented event. For some, it was never understood. During my stay in the village, I participated at the XIV International Sociological Congress in Montreal and in the course of my absence, two young couples, relatives of mine, stayed at my house. When the landlord, realized this, he presumed they were unmarried couples and as a result illegitimate sexual relations had taken place at his rented house, demanded that they pack and leave, which they did. On my arrival from Montreal, not

believing my participation in the congress and insinuating that my trip was connected to drugs traffic, my landlord asked me to move out. I was in a state of total shock! The psychological stress that awaited me since my return from Montreal, the lack of hospitality towards my relatives, the search of a solution in the case of moving out, the impatience to see whether the community was to be in my favour or not, created a very painful experience for me.

At the same time though, this event taught me how to transform an unexpected disaster into an anthropological analysis. I became aware that following a situation of conflict, the anthropologist is in a position to discover many things that he/she would never have found out in normal situations. In retrospect, this experience produced a rich source of data and introduced me to various insights since it was part of the milieu I was studying. Firstly, the dimension that the incident took implied that I was an integral part of the community of the village. I had to fight to keep up a positive image of myself. If the village was not in my favour, it could have been fatal for the continuation of my research. Secondly, the landlord's comportment aimed at accentuating the religious character of the village which is situated in the proximity of Mount Athos, wishing to show that he was part of it. There definitely exists a conservative character concealed behind the mask of tourism but it cannot be generalized to the point of saying that the community of Ouranoupolis is that rigid and austere. Thirdly, he wanted to raise the rent, menacing me that if I do not move out, he would triple it. If I was a male researcher, I believe all this would not have taken place. My reaction was dynamic and firm and at the hearing of consulting my lawyer, he did not disturb me again. Moreover, I had the pleasure to see a big movement of solidarity by the locals in my favour. Being a native anthropologist, it was significant for me to have good relations with them in order to be able to return to the village without being stigmatized.

Being a single woman it was natural that the locals wanted to situate me in a family context since family is a very important institution for Greeks. "*And your parents, why aren't they here with you?*" asked a local woman soon after my

arrival in Ouranoupolis. Of noticeable importance was the two-week visit of my mother which at least, removed some doubts concerning my origins. I noted in my diary: *'I am not a strange person, who came from nowhere to their village, but I have a family and a mother'*. (Diary, 29 August 1998).

My mother played also an important role during the boat pilgrimage. I was not regarded as a solitary woman by the other pilgrims, and it was even easier to start a conversation when accompanied by her. The various captains and crew were happy to meet her and find out more about my origins. Apart from accentuating my respectability, the presence of my mother facilitated the deepening of some social relations. It was with her that I confronted the first foreign tourists for interviews, something that I kept postponing for the following day. She was, on the other hand, initiated to anthropology and demystified the reason her daughter had to actually live in a different place than home for her research.

Being a single woman at the age of twenty-nine, still at university and not having children was worrying for my informants.

Are you never going to finish this university? When you die and meet St. Peter, are you still going to take exams? I think that you must not wait the age of fifty to have a baby. Enough with studying. It's time for a family
(Diary, 7 August, 1999)

This particular informant had by that time become a close friend and still is ten years later. I even had indirect marriage propositions, coming from the fathers or mothers, like the following example that took place during a pilgrimage in the beginning of my stay:

Captain Petros asked me how many languages I speak and if I was engaged. I was a bit perplexed at this double question, but he continued. I have a son who is not married and half of this boat belongs to him.
(Diary, 27 June 1998).

The same person, four months later said to me

Come to see us. I have a daughter who is 22, married with two kids. My son is 27 and he is not married yet. (Diary, 21 October, 1998).

Another discussion with a local woman was led to an additional marriage offer. Questioning on my origins and my age, she proposed me to become her daughter-in-law:

We have many houses, many studios which we rent land as well. The house for our son is ready, it even has a washing machine. My daughter-in-law has to simply take off her shoes and enter. Even her underwear, she does not need them. (Diary, 1 October 1998).

Apart from the harmless marriage proposals, I had to be positioned towards rumors concerning imaginary sexual relations. Two months after I had departed from the village, I received a telephone call from one of my informants with whom I had not lost contact: "*Giannis died of cancer and the secret will not be revealed.*" The secret would be the name of a monk with whom I had a supposed relation, according to the resident. My informant continued: "*In a small society, things like that can happen. I think that some men did not like your liberality. It disturbed them; they prefer that women wear the veil.*" (Diary, 14 February 1999). Another rumor insinuated again a supposed relation I had with a captain for six days and six nights on his boat with my family searching for me in vain. The incidents sounded amusing at first, but soon they annoyed me. Sometimes simply talking to men was sufficient to lead some people to the conclusion that I was related to them. These rumors had disturbed me. Fieldwork had an effect on me and reciprocally I had an effect on it. The anthropological research is not done independently of the researcher and it is not possible that the anthropologist observes from the outside. I was included at every moment.

Being a woman may be a potentially limiting factor in the female researcher's efforts to work in societies characterized by a high degree of sex segregation,

as is pointed out in the introduction of *Arab Women in the Field: Studying Your Own Society*. Gender restricts exploration mainly to the world of women (Altorki & Fawzi El-Solh, 1988: 5). This appears to have been also true of relatively less sex-segregated societies like rural Greece, but the authors of this edited volume refer to researches done by Ernestine Friedl and Juliet Du Boulay in the 70's. Certainly the situation has changed forty years later. Not only was it not true in my case but quite on the contrary. I share the remark made by Lakis:

If you were a man, it would not have been possible to do the research. There would have been rivalries all the time with other men, and moreover you would not have been able to have access to houses and speak with women or have coffee with them. (Diary, 4 May, 1999).

Lakis is a male non-local photographer, an 'outsider' informant, who witnessed a fight between me and Giorgos, a local employer at the pilgrims' office. It was one of the extremely rare incidents where I was treated with disrespect while coming back to the field the following year. The employer, insisting that it is forbidden to take photos at the port, wished to confiscate my camera and went as far as wanting to arrest me. It was one of the rare cases where there was an explicit discontent towards me as a researcher and as a woman.

I had a double advantage in the world of women as well as in the world of men. With the passing of time and with a certain detachment I realized I was very close to women and equally close to men if I chose; on the contrary for a male researcher it would have been more difficult to be that close to women. Principally, I had an almost unlimited access to the world of women, especially during the pilgrimage where ninety percent of the participants were women. It was so natural to start a conversation with them, and our contact was so friendly that the crew thought these women were on each occasion old friends I met accidentally onboard. Katina, my principal woman informant, introduced me to spaces frequented by local women, spaces whose entrance

is more difficult to men: friends' houses during morning hours for coffee, visits at the hairdresser's, shopping at mini-markets, church ceremonies, funerals or commemoration of the dead. Her age of thirty eight allowed me to meet people from her generation, as well as her parents' generation and through her two children I met the younger generation. I became that person to whom women could talk to, confide in and find relief. For all these women, whether local or pilgrims, it was less inhibitory to talk to another woman than if I were a researcher of masculine sex. As for men, they almost always want to talk to a woman. I had no problem in approaching them and they not only responded to my questions regarding the tourist industry and pilgrimage (since mostly men worked at places that had a connection with these two fields) but also took the initiative to talk about their personal life. Without doubt, there had been games of dominance and power from both sides. Nevertheless exploiting and profiting of my feminine identity, no place was excluded to me and people were open and available.

Conclusion

Modern Greece led me to the enchantment I felt for indigenous and reflexive anthropology, as opposed to the English anthropologist Michael Herzfeld, who was led to anthropology by the enchantment he felt for modern Greece (Herzfeld, 1998: 3). Doing research 'at home' was a wonderful and constructive experience for me at a scientific as well as at a personal level. My indecision regarding the choice of the field, in the beginning of my doctoral thesis, was defined by the classic and traditional image by which the anthropologist should travel away from his homeland. I had not, at that time, been influenced by the shifting of the anthropological interest and the result of new epistemological researches that consider all societies capable of becoming objects of analysis (Hastrup, 1998: 339). My decision to include myself in the ethnographic text was influenced by auto-ethnography. The autobiographic/auto-ethnographic way convoked inevitably the notion of reflexivity as well as my being indigenous. My writing of the final ethnographic text was, thus, influenced by reflexivity and 'reflexive knowledge' as Rosanna

Hertz calls the outcome of reflexive social science. I placed the importance on the 'statements that provide insight on the workings of the social world *and* insight on how that knowledge came into existence' (Hertz, 1997: viii).

According to Myerhoff and Ruby (1982) reflexivity is the process by which an anthropologist understands how her social background influences and shapes her beliefs and how this self-awareness pertains to what and how she observes, attributes meanings, interprets action and dialogues with her informants (Hertz, 1997: 152). Nevertheless, several of the authors in Hertz's collection *Reflexivity and Voice* admit that revealing oneself is not easy. The crucial question they pose is how we set the boundary between providing the audience with sufficient information about the self without being accused of self-indulgence and how much of ourselves we want to show in print (Hertz, 1997: xvi). I always had in mind not to reach beyond these fragile frontiers of talking of myself and talking of others. I analysed the ordinary and quotidian events with a distanced eye and inserted in my ethnographic text the perturbations that I provoked in the community, and 'treated the perturbations as the most significant data', as Georges Devereux points out regarding the perturbations (Devereux, 1980: 16).

I surely committed errors, going to the field with my personal beliefs, being a rather more cosmopolitan woman compared to the other locals. I also committed some errors despite the fact that I am Greek and a member of the Greek culture but that brought me a lot of insights. It was however, important for me to keep my 'honor' intact, since Ouranoupolis is not a small exotic and far away village on the map, but a place where I often go back to. I could not avoid the social responsibilities.

I proposed the perspective of a woman insider, practicing reflexivity. My aim was to evaluate the inconveniences and the advantages that derived from my indigenous identity and my gender as well as the role it played for the various insights I had. Due to reflexivity and engendered fieldwork my ethnography

was not only committed to tourism and pilgrimage but reflected the social organisation of the Greek village of Ouranoupolis through the multiple relationships developed in the field. Another perspective, of someone who is male or new to the Greek culture could contribute pertinent results but it would be even more pertinent were he to exteriorize his reflexive capacity. The two possibilities would contribute to make a progress in the literature of this domain.

References

- Altorki S, and El-Sol, C.F, (eds.) (1988) *Arab Women in the Field: Studying Your Own Society*, Syracuse: Syracuse University Press.
- Andriotis, K. (2009) Sacred Site Experience. A phenomenological study. In *Annals of Tourism Research*, Vol. 36, 1, 64-84.
- Bell, D., Caplan, P. and Wazir – Jahan, K. (eds.) (1993) *Gendered Fields: Women, Men and Ethnography* London and New York: Routledge.
- Bolak, H. (1997) Studying One's Own in the Middle East: Negotiating Gender and Self-Other Dynamics in the Field' in Hertz, R. (ed) *Reflexivity and Voice*. Thousand Oaks: Sage.
- Bourdieu, P. (1992), *Réponses. Pour une anthropologie réflexive*, Seuil: Paris
- Davies, C. (1999) *Reflexive Ethnography: A Guide to Researching Selves and Others*, London: Routledge.
- Denzin, N.K. (1997) *Interpretive Ethnography*, Thousand Oaks: Sage.
- Devereux, G. (1980) *De l'angoisse à la méthode dans les sciences du comportement*. Paris: Flammarion
- Dubisch, J. (1991) Gender, Kinship, and Religion: 'Reconstructing' the Anthropology of Greece' in Loizos, P. and Papataxiarchis, E. (eds.) *Contested Identities: Gender and Kinship in Modern Greece*. Princeton: Princeton University Press
- Dubisch, J.(1995) *In a Different Place: Pilgrimage, Gender, and Politics at a Greek Island Shrine*. Princeton: Princeton University Press
- Gefou-Madianou, D. (1998) Anastohasmos, eterotita kai anthropologia oikoi: Dilimmata kai antiparatheseiss. In Gefou-Madianou, D. (ed) *Anthropologiki theoria kai ethnographia: Sughrones taseis*. Athina: Ellinika Grammata.

- Golde, P. (ed) (1986) *Women in the Field: Anthropological Experiences*, Berkeley, University of California Press.
- Hastrup, K. (1998), 'Ithagenis anthropologia: mia antifasi stous orous.' In Gefou Madiannou, D. (ed) *Anthropologiki theoria kai ethnographia: Sughrones taseis*, Athina: Ellinika Grammata.
- Hertz, R. (ed) (1997) *Reflexivity and Voice* Thousand Oaks: Sage.
- Herzfeld, M. (1998) *I anthropologia mesa apo ton kathrefti. Kritiki ethnografia tis Elladas kai tis Europis*, Athina, Alexandreia. Traduit par Astrinaki, R. (1987) *Anthropology through the Looking Glass : Critical Ethnography in the Margins of Europe*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Kotsi, F. (1999) The Enchantment of a Floating Pilgrimage. The Case of Mount Athos', Greece. In *Vrijetijdstudies* 17, 2, 5-20.
- Kotsi, F. (2003), *La communication enchantée. Une anthropologie réflexive du tourisme religieux autour du Mont Athos, Grèce*. Unpublished PhD, Ecole Normale Supérieure, Lyon.
- Loizos, P. and Papataxiarchis, E. (eds) (1991) *Contested Identities: Gender and Kinship in Modern Greece*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Marcus, G. and Fischer, M. (1986), *Anthropology as Cultural Critique: An Experimental Moment in the Human Sciences*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Mead, M. (1977) *Letters from the Field, 1925-1975*. New York: Harper and Row.
- Nash, D. (1981) Tourism as an Anthropological Subject' in *Current Anthropology*, 22, 5, 461-481.
- Okely, J. and Callaway, H. (eds) (1995), *Anthropology and Autobiography*, London: Routledge.
- Okely, J. (1996), *Own or Other Culture*. London: Routledge.
- Reed Danahay, D.E. (ed) (1997), *Auto/Ethnography: Rewriting the Self and the Social*, Oxford: Berg.
- Sanjek, R. (ed) (1990), *Fieldnotes: The Makings of Anthropology*. Ithaca and London, Cornell University Press.
- SANJEK Roger (1990), 'The Secret Life of Fieldnotes', in SANJEK Roger (eds.), *Fieldnotes: The Makings of Anthropology*, pp. 187-270.

Schütz, A. (1944a) The Homecomer. In *American Journal of Sociology*, 49, 6, 369-376.

Schütz, A. (1944b) The Stranger: An Essay in Social Psychology. In *American Journal of Sociology* 49, 6, 499-507.

Sibley, D. (1995) *Geographies of Exclusion*. London: Routledge.

Steier, F. (ed) (1995) *Research and Reflexivity*. London: Sage.

Urban, J. D. (1993), *L'idiot du voyage. Histoires de touristes*. Paris: Payot

Filareti Kotsi teaches at the Hellenic Open University
