In his recent and polemical review of the state of Mediterranean anthropology, John Davis is especially critical of achievements in the study of family and kinship, decrying throughout the looseness and vagueness which pervade the subject and particularly so when reference is made to 'the importance of the family'. Indeed, so ill does Davis take the imprecision of accounts dealing with the family's importance that he proposes largely to ignore that question, concentrating instead, for purposes of comparison, on the 'kinds of family, kinds of kinship, kinds of family-like tie' to be found in the Mediterranean, and defining such 'kinds' by reference to modes of residence and inheritance and, in general, to the structural variants of Mediterranean family and kinship organization.  

Since the two best books on Greece, John Campbell's Honour, Family and Patronage (Oxford 1964) and Juliet du Boulay's Portrait of a Greek Mountain Village (Oxford 1974), could both fairly be described as essentially concerned with family and kinship, or rather, with the household (and it is a significant ethnographic fact that in northern Mediterranean societies family and kinship tend to reduce to the latter), some may feel Davis' judgement to be a little harsh. Nevertheless I think he has a point. The imprecision of which Davis complains results not only from the professional inadequacies of Mediterranean ethnographers, but also from the actual nature of Mediterranean kinship and the part it plays (or fails to play) in social organization. For while it is an easy matter impressionistically to register the importance of the family and of family ties within Mediterranean

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1 Text of a paper delivered at the Institute of Social Anthropology, Oxford, on 17 October 1980.
societies, it is by no means so easy to specify what part they play in determining social behaviour or in structuring social life.

There can be little argument with Davis' suggestion that there are differences to be found between the 'experiences' of people whose domestic arrangements are variously nuclear or extended, uxorilocal or virilocal, or who inherit at marriage or at the death of parents. What is more problematic is whether these 'experiences', as they relate to kinship and family, are either exhausted by, reducible to, or comprehensible predominantly in terms of, 'the application of rules of residence and inheritance', or whether we must enter somewhat murkier fields. In fact it is arguable that Mediterranean kinship studies appear to lack the precision and perhaps even the interest of those conducted in, say, South America or South-East Asia. This is for a combination of reasons which are partly relative, partly absolute, but which in both cases result from the limited extent to which Mediterranean kinship is capable of being viewed in terms of rules, or of structure: relative, in that the familiar bilateral kindreds and descriptive cognitive terminologies of Mediterranean Europe do not allow us to dwell on the formal aspects of kinship with the same degree of fascination as that aroused by the alien intricacies of, for example, Crow-Omaha terminologies, or the practice of asymmetrical exchange; absolute, in that the general absence of any kinship-based corporate groups other than the nuclear or extended nuclear family, and equally the paucity of positive rules regulating or determining conduct between various categories of kin beyond those which might better be seen as a series of predispositions in accordance with a shared notion of 'good behaviour', effectively prevent the identity of kinship organization and social organization of the sort often claimed for 'primitive' or 'tribal' societies.3

And yet family and kinship remain important, both phenomenologically to the members of Mediterranean societies themselves, and, objectively I think, for any understanding of the nature of Mediterranean societies. But in that case what one is dealing with is predominantly a series of values, attitudes, and even to use a word not popular in anthropology - sentiments, rather than a series of social rules or a variety of social structure. And whilst these may exhibit regularities (indeed, if they did not we should have to admit that they lay outside the bounds of sociological analysis), they are nevertheless by their nature uncertain, labile, and sometimes, from context to context, contradictory. Thus, although I would claim that Campbell, du Boulay, and others have described them quite successfully, it is not surprising that they have also generated those 'loose

and vague remarks about which Davis justifiably complains — for the attempt to specify with precision (or at least with brevity) things which are not precise is bound to lead to generalizations which are either vacuous or trite. On the other hand, to ignore the accretions of sentiment in favour solely of an account of modes of residence, inheritance, and whatever else can unequivocally be described, seems to me to leave the better part of what constitutes Mediterranean kinship unsaid, and consequently to leave a great deal of what constitutes Mediterranean societies unsaid.

Let me now turn to some few ethnographic observations, perhaps in themselves quite trivial, but which will, I think, illustrate the difficulties involved in studying Mediterranean kinship — at least I find them difficult to deal with.

When I arrived in Spartohori — one of the three villages on the tiny island (pace its name) of Meganisi, a dependency of the Ionian Island of Lefkas or Lefkada in Western Greece — I started to collect genealogies; or, if genealogies is too high-flown a word, since what I collected have no generational depth, and the Spartohorites themselves do not keep genealogies, I set about finding out who was related to whom and how. I did this partly as an act of faith — that something interesting might come of it; partly because I did not know what else to do and it seemed an anthropological sort of thing to be getting on with; but mostly because, whatever the intrinsic value of the exercise, I thought it not a bad idea to find out as quickly as possible who everybody was.

The task was not as easy as I had been educated to assume. First, politeness imposes in a Greek village roughly the same constraints on inquisitiveness that it does in our own society. One cannot expect to sit down for a drink with somebody and demand to be told the number of his siblings, the age of his spouse, and the extent of his cousinhood. At the very least it does not make for sparkling conversation and one is either a bit of an irritant or a bit of a bore. But, secondly, I have said 'roughly' the same constraints. In fact they are greater for in rural Greece information is collected continually, but it is never collected innocently. When matters touch on oneself or one's own, evasion is an almost instinctive reflex. Lastly, and somewhat more specifically, if people seemed generally less than enthralled at the prospect of recounting all their numerous cousins, nephews and nieces (I do not mean to imply that such matters were unimportant; they were very important, but reference to them occurred in what we might call 'strategic circumstances'), or if they seemed less than enthusiastic about revealing details

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concerning their immediate family, in some cases and with refer-
ence to some categories of relative (notably fathers and married
brothers), responses were so dismissive as to make me think that
what I was encountering was the particular avoidance of certain
subjects rather than the generalized suspicion of all inquiries.

In the light of these difficulties I began to supplement
increasingly indirect questions with direct observation - simply
noticing who regularly associated with whom, and then checking
on a presumed relationship when some conveniently casual oppor-
tunity arose. In the process I came across what seemed to me a
rather odd phenomenon. The one exception to the general reluct-
ance to talk spontaneously about family matters was to be found
in connection with direct descendants. People were always ready
to talk about their children, or rather about their sons. Old
men continually regaled me with accounts of their offspring's
virtues and of their worldly success (the two were not unrelated).
And yet I suddenly realized that no amount of observation of public
behaviour alone would ever have led me to suspect the existence
of most father/son relationships. I would be told by some fond
parent that his son, Georgos, was shortly to return from the
ships; that he was an incomparable boy; and that certainly I
should make his acquaintance. Days would pass. The old man
would still be sitting in the kapheneion with his old cronies,
or, more significantly, even with younger men; but no Georgos.
'Is your son back yet?' I would enquire. 'Yes, days ago,' would
say the old man. And then, very quietly, 'That's him over there,'
discreetly indicating someone at the other side of the room.
'Why don't you go across and talk to him?' But no effort was ever
made actually to introduce me, and the father and son seemed to
maintain a curious distance.

This sort of situation occurred so frequently that eventua-
ally I was led to ask a number of my old friends why it was that
they never associated with their sons of whom, quite obviously,
they were so proud. Interestingly, my assertion that they did
not was always denied. On some occasions I persisted and adduced
enough evidence of their avoidance to provoke some more elaborate
reply. Generally this consisted of two remarks: inasmuch as
they did not publicly associate with their sons, make a parea,
a 'company', with them, then this was because (a) they saw quite
enough of each other at home anyway, or (b) no doubt their sons
preferred to form a parea with friends of their own age. All
very reasonable too.

It is difficult for me to judge how far the first remark
might be correct. Domestic arrangements in Spartohori vary
greatly. Once, patrilocal residence and the importation of
wives under the paternal roof where all lived as an extended
family had been the rule. Nowadays neolocal residence upon
marriage is the more common arrangement. But all sorts of perm-
utations exist in-between: a single house from the outside
internally divided into separate spitia; a new house built next
door to and adjoining the paternal spiti; an entirely separate
residence at the other end of the village. Degrees of commen-
sality also vary accordingly. Certainly when sons were unmarried and living with their parents, then no doubt they did see a lot of each other; but equally, there were many married sons who, so far as I could gather, saw precious little of their fathers even in the privacy of their respective homes.

The second comment, that sons preferred to associate in public with friends of their own age, was a very plausible evasion. On the whole it was true, and not surprising, that younger men had their younger friends and older men their older friends; but on Meganisi there is no radical generational split. Nor is there, as Margaret Kenna reports for 'Nisi' in the Aegean, an old men's cafe and a young men's cafe. In any case, what generational split one does find is between unmarried men and those who are married with a family, not simply between young and old on a purely age basis. Married men of thirty and married men of sixty or seventy would drink together happily, and this spans the ages of fathers and sons who nevertheless avoided each other. Indeed, when a group of younger men - say, in their thirties - decided really to celebrate, to make a parea and to pile the tables with beer (which frequently they did), then there very often was an older man with them, who appeared to be in every sense 'one of the boys', who laughed with them, joked with them, drank with them, danced with them, and who was their very intimate. Almost invariably this older man would be one of the company's fathers-in-law. The fathers, if they were there at all, would be at other tables. At the most they would look on indulgently. But they were never part of the proceedings. The contrast between the two, between parent and affine, between father and father-in-law, could hardly have been greater.

Now we can widen the context of this in the most general way. It is one of the commonplaces of Greek anthropology that the nuclear family, or the extended nuclear family, more simply the spiti, the house, containing a married couple, their children, and perhaps a grandparent or -parents, is the basic social, economic and moral unit of rural society. But for all the much vaunted closeness of this unit, public exhibition of family solidarity is minimal. Indeed, external appearances would almost deny it; for however close and closed the family might be behind its doors (and certainly I am not denying this), in public it immediately fragments. Family unity is replaced by other orderings and groupings virtually as soon as the house's threshold is passed - and the more public the context, the greater the degree of family dispersal. Conventions of the public realm seem almost the converse of the private.

The pre-dawn caique from Meganisi to LeFKada provides a convenient setting. Families exit from their houses together. They even walk together through the night down the steep zig-zag road

cut into the face of the cliff on which Spartohori perches to the molos, the quay, some three or four hundred feet below. Passing families greet each other. But once the caique is reached, which, for a couple of hours becomes a sort of floating microcosm of the village, another ordering takes effect. Sexual division, of course, is primary. Even with fifty people packed into a fifteen-metre caique one never finds husband and wife together. The women con­

egrate in huddled groups, knitting, gossiping, or being sea-sick; the men sit or stand together, talking, smoking cigarettes, or pacing from one end of the boat to the other. Little children pass between. But if the caique compresses the village into the confines of a few feet so that the two worlds of men and women, the kaphenetion and the door-step, are revealed with fresh clarity as a result of their proximity, so too are other divisions. Brothers will congregate; brothers and brothers-in-law will con­

gregate; fathers-in-law and sons-in-law will congregate, all as part of the general male mêlée. But, once again, one will never find father and son together. Somehow they contrive to be at opposite ends of the boat. Only when it docks in Lefkada will there be a reformation as the family reunites to go about its (commercial) business.

We might note briefly in passing that there is a sense in which the church contributes to these separations. In fact the Spartohorites are not church-goers and are staunchly anti­

clerical. Only a handful of old women attend regular services. But when there are full or reasonably full congregations - at weddings, baptisms, or at Easter - then, in accordance with tradi­

tional Orthodox practice everywhere, men and women are separated in the body of the church, even entering by separate doors. Equally there tend to be separations within the sexes: young unmarried men, older married men, matrons and maidsens, gather apart. Despite the fact that so much of Orthodox ritual, symbol­

ism and morality is directed towards the maintenance and sanctity of the family, the church itself, belonging to the public sphere, is not a place of united worship. A family that stays together nevertheless prays separately.

Only on quite exceptional public occasions does the family present itself to the world as the unity it doubtless is: at the panayiria, the festivals celebrating one village saint or another, or at Christmas. Then the family is on show. In or outside the kaphenetion generally reserved for men, families now sit in groups, each at its own table, the women dressed in their best, their children ranged around then, one family sending bottles of beer to another, but always through the medium of the waiter who names the donor to be acknowledged across the room. The men may become a little boisterous as drinking and dancing progress, but it seems that the more staid the proceedings manage to remain, the more people congratulate themselves afterwards. 'It was a very nice panayiri. All the families together. This is politismos, "civilisation".' I suspect that this attitude is in part a result of Spartohori's growing embourgeoisement.

Nevertheless, in a more low-key way, formality is of the essence of Spartohorian social life. This may not be immediately
evident, for it does not consist of pomp and circumstance. But, throughout, an undeniable etiquette is in force. The constitution of the *parea*, the group of friends drinking together, is a case in point. There are some seven places in Spartohori where one might drink, referred to simply as *ta magazia*, 'the shops', and in a village where, to be frank, there is not usually a great deal to do, sitting in the shops approaches for many a full-time occupation. Men casually drift from one to the other throughout the day. But not so casually. In fact, on entering a shop, only one of three things can happen: either there is an empty table, in which case one may sit down; or else those already seated at a table will cry 'katse na pioume' ('sit down [with us] that we may drink'); or else, if all tables are occupied, even by one man, and no invitation is forthcoming, one must leave. I do not mean to imply that this last alternative creates a continual series of social impasses. Since people are always wandering in, wandering out, standing in doorways, rocking on their heels and walking in small circles as the day slowly passes, no obvious social embarrassment is caused (though in fact the degree to which one is or is not invited, greeted or not greeted, does enter into the never-ending computation of one's social worth). But what is certainly the case is that on no account may one simply sit down with others uninvited. Such behaviour will not seem entirely strange to us. But in Spartohori the etiquette is carried further, or never relaxed. There are, after all, only about two hundred adult males permanently in the village, all of whom have known each other from birth, sometimes for seventy years; further, they may have been drinking together elsewhere not half an hour before. But on each occasion the invitation must be extended - and one of the resultant oddities is that one may enter a shop to find a dozen tables and a dozen men, one man at each table, all joined in mutual conversation, but everyone with, as it were, his inviolable space around him. It is this situation which makes so apparent the associations and avoidances of certain categories of kin. Father and son may well be at the same time in the same shop. They may even be engaged in the same conversation. But they will never be at same table. And if one analyses the composition of the larger *parees*, then they are very likely to consist of brothers, brothers-in-law, and sons-in-law and fathers-in-law.6

6 In the light of the discussion which followed the original presentation of this paper it is perhaps necessary to clarify a possible confusion. If a man will not make company with his father, then it follows that he cannot simultaneously make company with (a) his sister's husband and (b) his sister's husband's father-in-law, since that father-in-law will be his own father. He can, however, make company simultaneously with his sister's husband and his own father-in-law. Merely to put matters the other way round, he cannot simultaneously make company with his wife's brother and his own father-in-law, but he can simultaneously make company with his wife's brother and his wife's brother's father-in-law.
The fragmentation of the family in public, the etiquette by which it is apparent, forms the most general context for our purposes. But let us now consider what Davis emphasizes: the rules of residence and inheritance. The Spartohorites adhere to an arrangement quite familiar, though not absolutely standard, throughout Greece. Daughters receive dowries, usually monetary, at the time of their marriage; sons inherit the paternal property by equal division at the time of their father's death, of which the most important element is the family house. Furthermore, as I have mentioned, in the past sons brought their wives under the paternal roof until the time of their father's death and the division of the estate. This practice is dying out as neolocal residence on marriage becomes more the norm, and it was always, I think, a practice modified by the exigencies of poverty and emigration. But, as Davis suggests, the arrangement is a recipe for tension. Sons tended to remain economically dependent on aged or ageing fathers well into the time when their own families were making economic demands on their resources; they remained to an extent under his authority well into the time when, as grown men, their desire to assert their independence was imperative. Brothers, equally, found themselves with conflicting interests as their respective families grew. Resentment bred.

The effects of these traditional rules of inheritance are, I think, well documented. But before one asserts, following Davis, that such rules are always the crux of the matter, one should note that they have the effect they do only because they are at odds with something else less tangible but equally powerful (and of which, to be fair, Davis is fully aware): the desire of each man to stand independently at the head of his own household in a community of isolated individuals and equals where everyone is striving to be more equal than anyone else. The rules of inheritance and residence hold together by force what otherwise would fragment, and does fragment, as soon as the constraints are removed. The situation is paradoxical because each 'nuclear' family, whose integrity is writ large by accepted morality, contains within it the seeds of other nuclear families which must burst it asunder. The son is father to the man.

But one must not see this simply in terms of a conflict between 'practice' on the one hand and 'ideology' or 'values' on the other, as if the former were merely a doomed attempt to embody the latter. Values themselves are contradictory; or at least, since 'values' cover a multitude of sins, one would want to distinguish between values in the sense of what is held to be right, proper, and good, and values in the sense of what continually inform a person's apperception and expectancy of the world. It is right and proper that fathers and sons should be close and cherish each other. 'To love someone like a son' is a standard simile. An uncle may say it of his nephew. Similarly, brothers are held to be the paradigm of the affectionate masculine relationship of equality. 'Imaste philoi; imaste adherpha,' 'We are friends; we are brothers,' is a standard coupling. And yet on other occasions men have little compunction about ruing the
absence of daughters, for a daughter will always care for you, while as for sons - what are they good for? Only the house and the name. And while brothers do fulfill their role as mutual friends and companions when younger, everyone waits for them to fall out. A screaming match takes place in the village over the infringement of property, and an old woman simply shrugs her shoulders and comments, 'Hah, brothers again!'

At this point it is worth recalling that all my informants at first denied that they did not keep company with their sons, for whatever it is that the rules of residence and inheritance create, it is not a set of ritualized, rule-governed actions or unambiguous concepts of social roles and requirements. Rather, they create a set of tensions and predispositions - sentiments which find their concrete expression within the possibilities supplied by the norms of good conduct or social etiquette. This being the case, the old men were not necessarily lying to me. There was no rule, there is no rule, concealed from me which states that father and son must not sit together or drink together or associate in public together. Rather, they feel a certain unease in each other's presence, an unease borne of a contradiction which, in public, places them simultaneously in both a hierarchical and an equal relationship: hierarchical in that they are father and son, equal in that they are both adult males of the village. This sensitivity to the situation, which, like a sensitivity to language, always exceeds the comprehension of its underlying structure or grammar, drives them to adopt a stance, or perhaps we should say a chair, whose isolation is already sanctioned by the daily practices of social intercourse. The assertion 'You never make company with your sons' could thus be denied, because there was no explicit formulation, no 'collective representation', which matched the generalization I had arrived at by the process of observation. If reflection on what I had presented to them as an account of their behaviour could in the end result in a modified form of assent, it was nevertheless modified because it might seem to challenge what was a deeply held moral idea - that fathers and sons should enjoy a close relationship. After all, the counter-instances of amity and cooperation within the household and even, on certain occasions, the public presentation of the family in its unity, could always and truthfully be adduced, even if, in other cases, tensions, quarrels and bad-feeling were real enough.

The existence of observable regularities on the one hand, and on the other hand their failure to congeal into a set of codified practices or explicit ideological statements of the sort we are pleased to call 'collective representations' is what, to my mind, makes the study of Mediterranean kinship both difficult and uncertain. For these regularities are but the manifestations of certain collectively-held and collectively-endorsed emotions, persuasions, predispositions, which, however much they may be nurtured within a particular social structure, are neither its necessary consequences nor, as organizing or basic 'concepts', its integral parts. The question of father and son, for example,
can be taken the other way around from the point of view of the latter. If traditionally, and as in so many parts of Greece, young men on Meganisi do not smoke in front of their fathers even within the house, nowadays many are beginning to do so, asserting all the time that they 'respect' their fathers and that it is precisely the closeness of their relationship with their father and his confidence in their affection and respect which allows them to do so. In the relationships between kin one approaches a morality which, like any morality, manifests itself in behaviour; but one does not encounter a series of rules which categorically determine the precise forms of that behaviour. If a father is offended by his son's smoking, then no good son will smoke in his presence; but if he is not, then smoking is permitted. What remains basic is the question of respect. And further, while there may be a definable 'concept' of respect, it is not the concept, but the sentiment, which informs behaviour.

Such sentiments are, as I have been ready to admit, nurtured within the context of specific social structures, within, for example, the rules of residence and inheritance. The degree of their autonomy, however, might be considerable. One can at least argue that they are capable of persisting historically beyond the desuetude of those rules. As I have already mentioned, neolocal residence upon marriage is now the norm; furthermore, except in very rare instances, on Meganisi sons are no longer economically dependent on their fathers or on their inheritances. They are now wealthy in their own right, and wealthy from an early age, as a result of their employment in shipping. It is their fathers, the generation of agriculturalists and fishermen, who are the poor, and very few young Meganisiotes have any intention of returning to their parents' way of life. Such an economic shift has its social correlates, notably a remarkable drop in the age of marriage, which, in turn, might be construed as involving a change in the nature of the relationship between father and son. For it is not only the case that men are now financially secure enough to marry young, but also that they feel the right to choose their own bride rather than to attend their father's choice. There is little doubt that some old men thus feel their authority to have been eroded and that some young men are frankly embarrassed by their fathers, but 'respect' for one's father, along with the habits of distance that I have described, still remain the idiom of the relationship. And if at times an element of hypocrisy on the one side and of self-deception on the other side have crept into that relationship, one might hazard that respect is somewhat easier to feign than love - which, of course, might always have been the case.

But for all that, it is not difficult to construct a quite plausible and neat explanation in terms of traditional social structure and the rules of residence and inheritance for the contrasting relationship of a man and his father-in-law. First, except in slightly abnormal instances, the case of the 'sogavros, the man who marries an heiress, a brotherless daughter, and works her land and resides in her family's house, men were neither
economically dependent on nor under the authority of their fathers-in-law. Actually, during the nineteenth century and earlier part of this century the number of 'sogamboi' must have been quite high, for one of the ways in which Meganisi's population built up was the gradual settlement there of shepherds from the mountain villages of Lefkada who seasonally transferred their flocks to the little island for winter pasturage. Such settlements seem usually to have involved a marriage. But in most cases of 'sogamboi' which I know of, the father of the girl (or girls) was already dead by the time of the marriage. In any case it seems unlikely that the number of 'sogamboi' would ever have been sufficient to alter the prevalent pattern of inheritance and residence, which was, of course, the importation of brides into the paternal household or, to put it another way, the exchange of women between agnatic households. Further, not only was a man not economically dependent on his father-in-law for his long-term wealth, his inheritance; he was also the recipient of an immediate prestation from his father-in-law: to wit, a dowry.

But there are, I think, factors more important than this, though still pertaining to the traditional 'social structure' of the village; for it would be a somewhat shaky general sociological law that proposed inheritance from a father to engender a distanced relationship while the immediate effect of receiving a dowry would be to create a relationship of affectionate and familiar amity. After all, why should not one feel beholden to one's father-in-law for both dowry and daughter, that feeling also being translated into a public attitude of respect? Rather, I think, we must reconsider the independence, economic and moral, of each male-headed spiti or household.

All Spartohori's village ritual of marriage, from the wedding songs and the pattern of after-service feastings to the bride's formal reception at the door of her new house by her father- and mother-in-law (a somewhat faked procedure these days given the prevalence of neolocality), not to mention the weeping, spontaneous enough, of the bride's mother, stresses the bride's departure from one closely-knit world, that of her parents' spiti, and her entry into a new and strange one, that of her husband's family. In fact the whole shift might be considered rather more 'conceptual' than actual, since the move might be no more than twenty-five yards down the road, and daughters continue to have a very close relationship with their natal family, both parents and siblings. Younger sisters turn out to be ideal baby-minders, and, as I have already mentioned, it is one of the clichés of at least one genre of discourse that daughters are better than sons because they continue to care for their parents while sons often do not. That mother and daughter never become estranged is a firm belief, and true also - for all I know. Indeed kinship reckoning is thoroughly bilateral, and with respect to the terminology, more so than our own. In practice, grandparents dote on and see as much of their daughters' children as of their sons' children, and the purpose of the dowry is often explained in terms of a benefit to one's daughter's children.
There is perhaps something of a contradiction between the bilaterality of Greek kinship reckoning and the agnatic composition of the individual spitia. Nevertheless, there can be no doubt that marriage is seen as representing the departure of a woman from one household and her entry into a new and 'foreign' one.

Taking that situation at face value, one could, in the best structural-functionalist tradition, see the amity between father-in-law and son-in-law as an attempt to deny, or at least mitigate, the loss that the one household and the gain that the other household have incurred. Their friendship forms, as it were, a bridge between their respective and self-contained families, between two of those independent economic and moral unities which Peristiany has termed 'social isolates moving in a field of common values'.

The antagonism which always exists not far beneath the surface between one family and another, between one spiti and another, is ostentatiously suspended by the formation of a relationship which, though it overlays one of kinship (for the respective parties are, after all, affines, sympetheroi), nevertheless must take on an additional social form in order to unite entities whose isolation in general takes little account of the extensiveness of bilateral kinship: namely, the form of 'friendship'.

Here we should note that despite the manifold importance of kinship in many contexts, there is a strong and often articulated feeling that, at least as soon as one moves beyond the confines of the household, 'friends' are better than relatives. This lauding of friendship over and above kinship has as its basis the fact that one can after all choose one's friends, whereas one is stuck with one's relatives. However, if only to disconcert the literal-minded, the idiom of kinship shortly reappears. I discovered that two old men, fast friends throughout their lives, were in fact related. I reproached them for never having mentioned this fact, and was told that the omission was entirely justifiable since what was important was that they were friends, not that they were in some way related. 'Why, we're friends,' they said. 'Indeed, we're brothers.' By a permutation of the logic of this discourse, one could perhaps claim that affines, fathers-in-law and sons-in-law, can, owing to the weak nature of their actual kinship connection (for it extends beyond the household), thus approach through 'friendship' that ideal egalitarian relationship of 'brotherhood', whereas fathers and sons are doomed to be what they are: i.e. you can be a brother to your wife's father, but you're always just a son to your dad. Admittedly I never did hear things taken quite so far, but that a larger drinking parea, it will be recalled, did often comprise precisely brothers, brothers-in-law, and a father-in-law.

Indeed, in this context we might note the usage of some further extended or honorific kinship terms. For if it would be

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frankly impertinent to greet a stranger as a brother (that would be to imply indecent familiarity), one can greet a stranger, as I myself was greeted on a number of occasions, with the words 'Koumbare mou' or 'Sympethe mou', 'my godfather' or 'my affine' - both kinship terms of course, but both implying or proffering friendship, and implying or proffering friendship not, I think, only as a reflection of the actual state of affairs, i.e. that one usually is on good terms with a god-parent or affine, but, to reverse the logic, because both godparenthood and affinity are by definition contractual relationships, relationships of choice; and in Greece at least, one neither baptizes nor marries one's enemies. In fact it was always said that, in the days before young men and women made up their own minds about such matters (something dubiously stressed to me in the interests of 'modernism'), it was the father-in-law who chose his son-in-law. They were the contracting parties. So if by definition one gave one's daughter to a 'friend', even nowadays, or in the face of what I suspect always to have been the truth of the matter - that women played the major role in match-making - one might still be well-advised to be a friend to one's daughter's husband. Indeed, in a society where there are no systematic marriages and no prescribed marriage partners, but where marriage is still deemed to involve more than the romance of a couple, affinity is the interface _par excellence_ between friendship and kinship.

Such then, I hope, would be a plausible account of the relationship in traditional anthropological terms. But in the end I cannot help wondering if there is not yet more in play: further murky areas into which we are advised not to stray and about which, in any case, my villagers would not conceivably talk - the feelings that a man might have towards the person who sleeps with his daughter; even perhaps his own feelings towards the daughter herself. Less dangerously, our own saying at marriage might be even more apt for the (Meganisiote) Greeks: 'Don't think of it as losing a daughter, but of gaining a son'; that a man might enjoy with his son-in-law precisely the relationship which is at once enjoined and denied him with his son.

ROGER JUST