

1 ABOUT RURAL LANDSCAPES: THE INVENTION OF THE MEDITERRANEAN AND THE FRENCH SCHOOL OF GEOGRAPHY

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INTRODUCTION

The discovery of new scenery is always a fundamental experience for people. For Goethe, aesthetic emotion was exalted by the Mediterranean: *Kennste du das Land wo die Zitronen blumen?* For most people coming from North-western, Northern or Central Europe, travelling to the Mediterranean was the main opportunity for discovering strangeness.

The first painting from the Renaissance that gives us the feeling of a Mediterranean environment is a watercolour, the small *View of Arco* (Paris, Louvre). It was not the work of an Italian artist. Dürer travelled to Venice in 1494. After passing Trente on his way to the South, he came across the Mediterranean environment in Arco, 6 km to the North of the Lake of Garda: he stopped and painted the hillock, with its fortress which is still there, and the olive trees and the vines in the foreground and on the slopes. The leaves of his olive trees are not green: their colour is a mixture of green and grey, which is so strange for someone coming from the North.

The reflection of geographers was often fuelled by their confrontation with new sceneries. For French geographers in the late 19th century and early 20th, the Mediterranean lands played a central role.

THE CHANGING CONCEPTIONS OF THE MEDITERRANEAN

The Mediterranean, strangeness and exoticism

Touring to the Mediterranean countries was a long tradition in European countries: in the Middle Ages, people went to Jerusalem or Rome as pilgrims. From the Renaissance, young British aristocrats travelled to Venice, Florence and Rome in order to discover fine arts, beauty, the ruins of Rome and the paintings, sculptures and architectures of Italian artists. The emphasis was not on nature, but on culture. The Northern half of the Italian peninsula and Provence in France were the only Mediterranean countries to be included into the Grand Tour.

A double change occurred during the 18th century: (i) because of the new infatuation with sublime landscapes, the Alpine ranges North of the Mediterranean countries began to attract visitors, especially in Switzerland, Savoy and Austria; (ii) because of the progress of archaeology, the Southern end of Mediterranean peninsulas, the Kingdom of

Naples in Italy, and Greece, were incorporated into the Grand Tour. Such an extension had important consequences, since travellers to Athens and other Greek sites discovered at the same time the Turkish Empire.



Figure 1: DÜRER, Albrecht (b. 1471, Nürnberg, d. 1528, Nürnberg) View of Arco, 1495, Watercolour and gouache on paper, 221 x 221 mm, Musée du Louvre, Paris.

In the first decades of the nineteenth century, the Mediterranean was valued both because it had hosted the classical civilisations of Antiquity or the Renaissance, and because it offered the possibility to discover Orient and the Moslem World. Painting reflected this double sensibility: French artists like Corot still acquired a part of their training and their sensibility to ruins and landscape when in the Villa Medici in Rome; others travelled to Algeria (Eugène Fromentin), Morocco (Eugène Delacroix) or Egypt to paint more colourful civilizations. They paralleled the interest of Bonington in orientalism.

What was central in these curiosities was the search for exoticism. People discovered it either in the archaic forms of Ancient civilizations or in the Moslem part of the Mediterranean. Scholars, especially in Germany, reinterpreted classical Greece: Athens was praised because it was both the cradle of democracy and a place where utterly original forms of behaviour, art and religiosity were expressed.

Until the 1870s or 1880s, the Mediterranean was conceived as a kind of container where it was possible to discover quite different forms of scenery and civilization. All the countries of the area shared some common attributes: the quality of their light, their hot summer. It was not enough for transforming the Mediterranean into a coherent entity.

The transformation of landscape painting which occurred during the second half of the nineteenth century did not start in the Mediterranean: in France, realists like Courbet, the School of Barbizon, the early impressionists drew their inspiration from the rural areas of temperate France, or from the shores of the Channel. Some of the pre-impressionists, as Frédéric Bazille, or impressionists as Paul Cézanne came from Mediterranean France, but the Mediterranean light was too strong and stable at a time when people saw pictural truth in the reflection of the sun on water or the nuances of shades (Rewald, 1955; *Varii Auctores*, 1985).

The Mediterranean as an entity: a late nineteenth century theme

Attitudes changed rapidly at the end of the nineteenth century. New movements, for which light played a different role, replaced impressionism: it ceased to be appreciated mainly because of its mobility. It seduced because of the strength it gave to colours. It was in the 1870s that Mediterranean landscapes began really to attract French painters: most of the Mediterranean landscapes by Paul Cézanne, either the Estaque gulf or the Sainte-Victoire Mountain, were painted in the 1880s and 1890s. Claude Monet's *Antibes, effets d'après-midi* (Boston, Museum of Fine Arts) was painted in 1888. Paul Signac discovered Saint-Tropez and Collioure during the 1880s (*Collioure. Le Clocher*, 1887, Oterlo, Kröller-Müller Museum). Pierre-Auguste Renoir travelled to Bordighera and Antibes in the 1880s visited French Riviera regularly in the 1890s and settled in Cagnes-sur-mer in 1903.

The real turning point in the attitude of painters towards the Mediterranean was the short period 1886-1888: the main phase of impressionism was over. The success of Seurat's and Signac's pointillism testified to the rise of new curiosities. It was in 1886 that Pont-Aven began to attract young artists looking for new perspectives. Gauguin left Pont-Aven, in oceanic Brittany, to spend a few months in Arles in 1888, where Vincent van Gogh stayed from 1887. In Vincent's paintings, light gave a heroic strength to the gold of sunflowers or the wheat burnt by a mad Sun. The Mediterranean as an entity came to birth because it revealed through its light the deep quality of things and beings (*Varii Auctores*, 2000).

The idea that the Mediterranean was not only a container, but owned a deep unity encountered many echoes at that time. It was first the result of the growing attention

given to Ancient Greece, its religion and its institutions. At a time when Christianity began to be criticized for its condemnation of sex, Greek paintings and writings spoke of a country where nudity was praised, the human body exalted by the practice of sport, and where religion showed a deep harmony with nature. For Western people, it offered one of the ways to explore radical forms of estrangement (on this quest of all the forms of exoticism, see Staszak (2003). As an echo of these themes, naturism began to flourish among the German, who moved to submediterranean Italian Swiss or Northern Italy to live freely, without any garment, during the long hot summer. The Olympic Games were reintroduced by Pierre de Coubertin in 1893. Tourism, for long aimed at the discovery of classical places and civilizations, turned to the simple pleasures of living in the sun, and increasingly, sea-bathing. The development of the French Riviera, and to a lesser degree the Italian one or the coast of Roussillon, accelerated from the 1890s onwards.

The idea of the Mediterranean as a fundamental cultural unit took advantage of the progress of colonization: European powers were taking control of the Southern shores of the Mediterranean Sea: Algeria (from 1830), Tunisia (in 1881), Morocco (from 1900), Egypt (1881), Cyprus (1878), Libya, (1912), Crete (1912). With colonization, the romantic dimension of orientalism disappeared: the Southern and Eastern countries appeared increasingly as impoverished societies, with splendid monuments, but dirty and polluted urban environments. Many French visited Algeria, Tunisia and Egypt as tourists: they enjoyed Egyptian and Greek ruins in Egypt, the Roman ones in Tunisia, Eastern Algeria and Morocco. The fine colours of some villages, the "Andalus" ones in Tunisia, in Sidi bou Said for instance, enraptured them. Most of the tourists came back, however, with the conviction that the only true civilization was the Western one. Oriental exoticism had lost a good part of its appeal.

Ethnographers were discovering the deep similarities existing between the rural societies on both sides of the Mediterranean. Kabyl people in Algeria still used the Julian calendar. The relation to the land, the role of familial ties, a moral of honour were often similar in Christian and Moslem countries. Hence the idea that in the near future the Mediterranean will recover the unity it had in the Roman times.

There is, North of Barcelona, a marvellous sea resort that was planned for the Catalonian bourgeoisie around 1900: San Agaro. The idea was to offer to the new elite a "true" Mediterranean environment. The result was achieved through the incorporation of Greek and Roman features in the architecture (colonnades, pediments), but also of vernacular forms (pergolas, for instance). The atmosphere of the place evokes some of the paintings of Puvis de Chavannes (*Massilia, colonie grecque*, in Washington, Phillips Collection, 1868; *Doux Pays*, in Bayonne, Musée, 1882; *Le Bois sacré cher aux arts et aux muses*, in Lyon, Musée, 1884): San Agaro was a place to live dressed in a light Greek tunic. It was not conceived as a Christian community, but as a place for worshipping both Apollo and Dionysus (as shown in *Au temps d'harmonie* of Paul Signac, 1893-1895, Mairie de Montreuil in *Euridyce* of Maurice Denis, in Berlin,

Staaliche Museen, 1903-1904; or in *Scène antique* of Kerr Xavier Roussel, Paris, Petit Palais, 1920-1925).

New ways of travelling

The experience of the Mediterranean also changed in the second half of the nineteenth century because of the new facilities offered by railways. Until the mid-nineteenth century, most people used stagecoaches, and when possible, boats. They moved slowly, but the conditions of comfort and visibility were such that they could not really enjoy the rural areas they went through. They did not stop to look at the local churches, convents or castles. Travel guides of the first half of the nineteenth century focused on cities, with a few natural wonderpoints in between, such as a lake, a waterfall, a cave...

Some travellers preferred to ride their horses: it was the case of Arthur Young visiting France just before and during the French Revolution: hence its sensitivity to the French landscape. The poorest part of the population had to move afoot. It is one of the reasons why Jean-Jacques Rousseau, a fantastic walker, was more open to the charm of the countryside than most of his contemporaries. In the mountainous areas, especially for getting over a pass, people had either to walk or to ride a mule: it was one of the reasons why travellers became aware of the nature and beauty of alpine environments earlier.

Travelling by rail offered totally new conditions for enjoying landscapes: it was possible to look at them comfortably seated through clean windows. Thanks to slow trains, you could stop at any station and walk in the neighbourhood. Because of the multiplication of hotels or beds and breakfasts, you could stay for a while in most areas. Landscape painting owed much to these new facilities. Geography as well.

Two other innovations contributed to the growing interest in rural areas: (i) people started to ride bicycles to explore rural roads by the 1890s: they experienced in this way a new form of freedom; (ii) postcards fixed the features of small villages or modest landmarks, and diffused them among all the components of the population.

Geography reflected the evolution of Western sensibility and technologies: at the time painters invented the Mediterranean landscape as a form of dreamed beyond, Vidal de la Blache provided a synthetic interpretation of the unity and diversity of the Mediterranean landscapes, mainly rural. We wish to trace back the genesis of Vidal de la Blache's interpretation.

FRENCH GEOGRAPHERS AND THE INVENTION OF THE MEDITERRANEAN LANDSCAPE: THE FIRST STEP

A special relation to the Mediterranean

For about one tenth of its area, France is a Mediterranean country. Portugal, Spain, Italy, Slovenia, Croatia, Serbia, also straddle the boundary between Mediterranean and Oceanic or Continental climates – but in France, the bulk of the country is non-Mediterranean and the dominating culture is not a Mediterranean one.

Travelling through the climatic divide between non-Mediterranean and Mediterranean regions was as meaningful for Frenchmen as for German, English or Scandinavian people, but the existence of a Mediterranean France was a real problem for them: how was it possible to be a Frenchman and to live in so different an environment? What was the specific contribution of Provence, Corsica or Mediterranean Languedoc to the French culture and civilization?

These questions became truly significant during the nineteenth century because of the increased mobility: the proportion of people with a direct experience of the diversity of France and the contrast between its Mediterranean and non-Mediterranean parts grew rapidly from the 1850s, when the railway network really began to operate.

French geographers in the Mediterranean

Many French geographers had personal reasons to be interested in Mediterranean questions. Some were Mediterranean.

Paul Vidal de la Blache was born in 1845 in Pézenas, a small city in the Mediterranean part of Languedoc. His father later bought a second home in Lauraguais, the transition between the Mediterranean and the Atlantic part of Languedoc. For Vidal de la Blache it was the home of the family: he visited it every year. His wife and children spent the summer holidays there, while Vidal visited France and the countries around it.

Vidal was sent to Paris when he was 10 years old in order to benefit from the best secondary schools in France. Later, when leaving the *École Normale Supérieure*, he was appointed to the *École Française d'Athènes*, which was (and still is) an institution for the development of historical and archaeological research. He spent four years in Athens and travelled all over Asia Minor in order to prepare his Ph.D. on Roman funeral inscriptions. He was still an historian, but became a geographer thanks to volume by Carl Ritter on this part of the World.

The first paper by Vidal de la Blache, written in 1873, is an essay on geopolitics: "La péninsule européenne. L'Océan et la Méditerranée". During forty-five years, he visited again and again the Mediterranean countries and wrote on them: in his paper on "Des rapports entre les populations et le climat sur les bords européens de la Méditerranée" (1886), in his book on *Etats et Nations d'Europe. Autour de la France* (1889), in his *Tableau de la géographie de la France* (1903) and in his paper on "Régions méditerranéennes" (1918), the year of his death (the paper was incorporated into *Principes de géographie humaine*, 1922). It is possible to follow the evolution of his ideas by comparing these texts.

Fernand Braudel was born in 1902 in a small village of Eastern France and raised in Paris. He discovered the Mediterranean when appointed as a young teacher to Lycées in Algeria, Constantine first and then Algiers (1923-1932). His second wife was a Frenchwoman from North Africa: her parents were settlers in Tiaret, on the high plains of Algeria. When Braudel was a prisoner of war in Germany during World War Two, his wife and children stayed in Tiaret. Braudel worked on his doctoral dissertation: *La*

Méditerranée et le monde méditerranéen à l'époque de Philippe II from the early thirties to 1949 and stayed for months in Spain, Italy and Yugoslavia at that time (Braudel, 1949). The Mediterranean remained for the rest of his life one of his major interests (Braudel, 1977; 1989; 1996-1997; 1998).

Many other geographers developed special links to the Mediterranean. **Jean Brunhes** chose to study irrigation in North Africa and Spain. **Jules Sion**, born in Northern France, had prepared his Ph.D. on Normandy, but was then appointed to the University of Montpellier, where he stayed for his entire career. He developed a strong interest in Mediterranean France (Sion, 1934, 2nd ed. 1941), Italy and Greece (Sion, 1934-1935). **Max Sorre** also came from Northern France, but for his doctoral dissertation chose to work on the biogeography of the Eastern part of the Pyrénées both in France and Spain (Sorre, 1913) and became a specialist of Spain (Sorre, 1934). **Pierre Birot** discovered the Mediterranean when working on the geomorphology of the Eastern part of the Pyrénées, and developed his interest through his long visits to Portugal and Spain (Birot and Dresch, 1953). Daniel Faucher, the first geographer in France to be considered a specialist in rural geography, was born in the Mediterranean part of the Rhone valley, and worked mainly in Toulouse, close to the Mediterranean part of Languedoc (Faucher, 1927). From the 30s, the number of theses on the Mediterranean kept growing (George, 1935; Le Lannou, 1942).

How to define the Mediterranean?

Geographers of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries shared the general enthusiasm with the Mediterranean. It was perfectly expressed in many of their texts. Describing Liguria, Reclus wrote:

"The shore spread out from cape to cape through a succession of curves with regular profiles, but all different by the thousand details of rocks, beaches, cultures, forms of settlement... Here, one follows the beach in the shade of tamaris with pink flowers, and the flow which breaks, close to the road, traces its hem of foam; elsewhere, one rises from curve to curve on rocks that farmers had transformed into terraces of vegetal earth, and one sees, faraway, through the enlaced branches of the olive trees, the bluish circle of the sea moving back each time further to the horizon, until the vaporous profile of the mountains of Corsica. From the ridge of the cape, one follows with his eyes the rhythmic oscillations of the coast, which succeed one another around the gulf, with all the gradation of light and hue, which rays, shades, haze and space give them" (Reclus, 1883: 391).

Jules Sion remarked in the same way:

"The enchantment which seizes the traveler coming down from the North towards the shore of the Mediterranean Sea is one of those impressions men never get tired of. The transparency of the atmosphere, the serenity of the violet sea shimmered by the breeze, the nobleness of mountains, instil in us a feeling of

happy fullness, and ban from our soul everything which is not harmony and beauty. He who departs from these shores always keeps a nostalgic memory of them" (Sorre-Sion, 1934: 2).

As their contemporaries, geographers liked the Mediterranean but had a problem in defining it. The example of Vidal de la Blache is particularly clear. In "La péninsule européenne, l'Océan et la Méditerranée", he presented mainly the Mediterranean as a container open to the competition of the great powers of the time. He had, however, the feeling that he was missing an essential part of the reality when proceeding in this way. He thus added:

"The vine, the olive-tree still compose, in spite of the devastation brought in by deforestation, the characteristic finery of the Mediterranean shores. The similarity of the vegetation of these opposite coasts expresses the unity of the theatre where the historic life of Ancient people unfolded" (Vidal, 1873: 13).

What was behind this unity? The light as an expression of the climate and as a factor of human behaviour? Vidal de la Blache pondered over this question: "It is difficult to evaluate what the clearness of the sky, the drought of the air might have put in the constitution and the soul of its inhabitants", but concludes: "The science of these relations is not made" (Vidal, 1903: 349). He relied on a more material element: the new understanding of the Mediterranean nature brought by the research of the German climatologist Th. Fischer (1879-1880) and the French botanist Charles Flahaut (Flahaut, 1886). "The European shores [of the Mediterranean] have a climate which, even in Southern Europe, is characterized by very special characters" (Vidal de la Blache, 1886: 401). The long summer drought is the main specificity of this area. The apparent generosity of nature is an illusion. It is hard to extract from such an environment all that human beings need for food. Hence Vidal de la Blache's interest in the rural component of the Mediterranean landscapes: in order to understand the way Mediterranean societies were built and functioned, geographers had to start from them. They had to acknowledge a fundamental fact: "In order to make nature propitious and productive, the farmer of the shores of the Mediterranean sea had [...] to work very hard: to root out a tenacious bush, clean the soil and purify it by providing a way out for water and preventing the formation of marshes that the heat of the sun render stinking and unhealthy" (Vidal de la Blache, 1886: 413).

The Mediterranean rural landscape and its significant units according to Vidal de la Blache

At the time Vidal de la Blache stressed the significance of Mediterranean rural landscapes, geographers had no efficient tools to analyze them – the notion of agrarian system and landscape still had to be developed. Vidal de la Blache chose to focus on the techniques and practices used by Mediterranean farmers to cultivate their environment. In order to cope with the summer drought, they had to resort to grains which could be cropped early in spring, to trees with roots long enough to draw water from deep

reserves, or to a pastoral life which relied on transhumance or nomadism to provide flocks and herds with good pastures any time in the year.

Vidal de la Blache observed:

"The physical nature lent itself well, in the Mediterranean region, to types of activities which have a very diverse influence on population: the culture of cereals such as barley and wheat, the culture of small trees, initially vines, fig-trees and olive-trees, and pastoral sheep- or cattle-raising" (Vidal, de la Blache, 1922: 81).

Each milieu was exploited according to a specific *genre de vie*. For Vidal de la Blache, the diversified solution to the fundamental ecological problem people had to face in the Mediterranean World had two important consequences: (i) each form of agricultural exploitation generates a rural landscape associated with a particular natural environment: the fields of grain growers on the plains, high plains and plateaux; vineyards and orchards on the hills and high piedmonts; pastoral land both in the mountains grazed by sheep and goats during summer, and in the marshlands of low plains used in winter time. (ii) Mediterranean nature was avaricious; none of its rural landscape units was able to meet the needs of its population. As a consequence, migrations and trade developed, and were responsible for the development of higher scale solidarities and the rise of States.

Vidal de la Blache's vision of the Mediterranean rural landscape was central to his interpretation of the Mediterranean countries: Mediterranean civilizations were based on the local units which provided Mediterranean populations with the grains, fruits, meat and cheese they needed, but always on a restricted scale. In order to develop wealthier and more complex societies, people had to rely on long distance economic relations, the activity of cities and the organization of political structures.

Just like the artists who were discovering "the Mediterranean" at that time, Vidal de la Blache started from the prevalence of blue skies and a fantastic light all around the inner sea. But this fundamental unity was also responsible for Mediterranean diversity. The Mediterranean was a mosaic of rural landscapes specific of its different environments: low and often unhealthy plains, pastoral mountains, densely inhabited hills or low *plateaux*, rivieras. Each of these milieus was exploited in such a way that it contributed to resolve the same universal problem: the long summer drought. Vidal de la Blache's interpretation was in harmony with the dominant perspective at that time: a vision of the Mediterranean as immutable scenery, where history unfolded without introducing major changes; the idea of a fundamental unity, too.

The bases of Vidal's interpretation of rural landscapes were laid down in the mid 1880s (Vidal de la Blache, 1886; 1889). They were accepted and progressively enriched by his followers. This type of interpretation pre-dated the idea of agrarian landscape.

AGRARIAN STRUCTURES AND THE ANALYSIS OF MEDITERRANEAN RURAL LANDSCAPES

The discovery of agrarian structures occurred late in French geography: it dated from the publication of Marc Bloch's "Les Caractères originaux de la France rurale" (1931) and Roger Dion's "Essai sur la formation du paysage rural français" (1934). The interest in agrarian landscape was in fact older for Mediterranean landscapes than for other ones – but it had taken another form: it was based on evidence provided by Ancient authors.

A permanent reference to Ancient Greek and Roman interpretations

Vidal de la Blache and most of the Vidalians shared the idea that the forms of exploitation that can be observed in the Mediterranean were developed a long time ago. In order to understand the diversity of the rural organization of the Mediterranean, Vidal de la Blache looks towards classical literature:

"This classification [into grain farming, arboriculture and pastoral life] lay on a very old distinction: it is present in Cicero, as an old dictum (*De Republica*, 5, 2: *ager, arvus, arbustus, pascuus*). Between "the land of seed" and the "land of trees", the distinction was a current one among the Ancients [...]. For pastoral life, it involves not only a differentiation, but an opposition. It is the basis of an antagonism which had struck all the observers from Thucydides to Strabo, and had persisted, in a softened way, until today" (Vidal de la Blache, 1922: 82).

Jules Sion noted:

"In most Mediterranean regions, the farming technique varied so little that the scenes represented on the shield of Achilles are present in *Mireille* [a poem of Frédéric Mistral, 1859]. The light swings plough of Homeric times still scratches the soil in many places" (Sorre-Sion, 1934: 38).

Sion wrote also: "Ancient Greece practiced the two-year crop rotation system, one year of wheat and one year of fallow. Modern Greece remained faithful to it" (Sorre-Sion, 1934: 38). Twenty years later, Birot remarked: "Concerning the fundamental techniques, all in all they varied very little since the time of Virgil and Varro" (Birot, 1953: 95).

The references to Roman texts had a deep significance: they showed that the Mediterranean agriculture was based on two "trilogies": first the "trilogy" of the cultivated plants, wheat, olive tree and vine; second, the trilogy of land uses as represented by the Roman terms of *ager*, *saltus* and *silva*. It expressed the existence of Mediterranean *infield/outfield* structures.

Maurice Aymard stressed this structural dimension of the Mediterranean agriculture:

"From Rome to the present, the same division of land remained broadly valid. On the one side, the cultivated fields: the *ager*. On the other side, the uncultivated land, a mixture of trees and poor grass, of copses and rocks, a domain of charcoal burners, shepherds and domestic and wild animals: the

saltus. But the *ager* itself needed long periods of rest and was used one year out of two or two out of three for sheep, which, when the crop was over, invaded the stubble fields and were glad to stay there, while they were severely excluded from the gardens and vineyards" (Aymard, in Braudel, 1977, quoted after 1985 reedition: 192-193).

The reference to Antiquity helped understand the structural properties of Mediterranean rural landscapes. The tilled part of land, *ager*, was made both of the "land of seed" and the "land of trees", *arvus*, *arbustus*. Outside it, the Mediterranean shrub, *maquis* or *garrigues*, or the Mediterranean dry forest, the *monte* of Spanish Estremadura or Portuguese Alentejo for instance, was used as rough grazing area. Fire was extensively used for regenerating edible grass, and prevented the *saltus* to revert to forest. The third part of the landscape, the *silva* or forest, was also the more fragile, since it was permanently threatened by the inroads of shepherds using fire to increase the areas that could be grazed. It was the domain of woodcutters, charcoal burners and hunters.

This structural organization is fundamental when studying Mediterranean landscapes. It had to be completed by a lower scale analysis – that of the field system itself.

Mediterranean field systems

Marc Bloch and Roger Dion were conscious of the inadequacy of the tools they had invented for Northern, Central or Western Europe when dealing with the Mediterranean landscapes. They noted the prevalence of a two-year crop rotation, with a fallow every two years. When comparing the open fields of Northern France with those of the Mediterranean region, Jules Sion discovered analogies, but important differences as well:

"The cadastral maps of Southern France do not offer this regular disposition that is seen in Northern France, the long and parallel fields, with strict regulations concerning crop rotation and communal grazing. Here, lots have more varied forms and dimensions; they are distributed in a haphazard way around the village" (Sion, 1941 [1934]: 124).

French geographers had to work hard to decipher the field structure of Mediterranean regions during the 30s and 40s. It soon became apparent that in many areas the categories imagined in Northern and Central Europe could be used: Mediterranean agrarian landscapes could be analyzed as *infield/outfield* systems, *ager versus saltus* or *silva*, even if the structures of their *infields* and *outfields* differed from those observed elsewhere in Europe.

Openfields were present in many high plains with open landscapes. In the late 40s and early 50s, Xavier de Planhol worked on the transformation of nomadic tribes into sedentary farmers in Central Anatolia (Planhol, 1958). They were creating new openfield systems, with compulsory rotations. The specificity of the high surfaces devoted to wheat and barley growing - high plains (or plateaus) of Anatolia, Algeria or Spain, Moroccan *meseta*, Spanish Castiles - was acknowledged for the first time.

New categories had to be developed concerning other areas. Jules Sion stressed this fact for Italy:

"A common feature to most Italian rural areas is the extent of *coltura promiscua*, especially in their richest regions. Allowing for exceptions, fallow lands signal either a backward farming system (inner Sicily) or a pioneering one (recent polders); 'specialized vineyards' are small, except in Montferrat, Puglie and Sicily. As a consequence, people normally find not the monotony of Beauce or Languedoc, but this variety of nice details, this feeling of multifarious wealth, which charms around Pistoia or Perugia. There are a thousand ways to lay down trees and conduct vine. Either it creeps among wheat, or remains low, as in Languedoc, or it fastens up to reeds or more or less high poles; sometimes it is spread out on vine arbours; more often, married to elm, maple or poplar trees, it runs from one to the other as a curtain of greenery or vine branches" (Sion, 1935: 247).

By the mid 50s, Pierre Birot proposed a complex typology of Mediterranean rural landscapes: he distinguished 16 categories on his map of land uses in the Mediterranean countries (Birot & Dresch, 1953: 104-105). In order to make its presentation clearer, he proposed to derive the diverse modes of land use from "two fundamental combinations", which were the more often realized:

- (i) Intensive polyculture associated with fields with many trees, dispersed farms, small ownership or long leasehold tenancy, no collective regulations.
- (ii) Cereal monoculture and extensive cattle or sheep-raising, specialized orchards when tree-culture exists, villages, great farms, or small short leasehold tenancy, frequent openfield" (Birot and Dresch, 1953: 114).

Such an opposition allowed for a simplified view, but the impression of a very complex reality did not disappear completely. As a result, many geographers preferred to stick to the Vidalian model, which at the same time offered an interpretation of landscapes and regional organization. It had however to be adapted to the Southern and Eastern part of the Mediterranean: Vidal de la Blache had mainly reasoned on its Northern shores.

THE SECOND GENERATION OF FRENCH GEOGRAPHERS AND MEDITERRANEAN RURAL LANDSCAPES

Vidal de la Blache was aware of the contrast existing between the Northern and Southern sides of the Mediterranean Sea. He considered that it was an imported character:

"The work of the Arabs, which survived their domination, has [...] contributed to the reinforcement of the Southern character of the Mediterranean. In these countries, which, in their primitive state, appeared to Oriental people as a land of forests and pastures, it succeeded in bringing to the foreground the orchard and

the garden, the proliferating life of which owed much to the delicate art that Persians and Arabs had pushed to perfection" (Vidal de la Blache, 1918: 93).

Vidal de la Blache never stressed the role of nomadism in the Southern part of the Mediterranean. The second generation of French geographers was fully aware of its role and produced modified versions of the Vidalian model adapted to the specificities of the Southern and Eastern Mediterranean environments.

Emile-Félix Gautier and the role of nomads on the Southern shores of the Mediterranean

The French geographers who worked in North Africa relied on the typology of landscapes provided by Vidal. There were strong societies of farmers in the coastal hills of North-Eastern Tunisia and Algeria. Mountainous areas differed in a way from their equivalent in the Northern Mediterranean countries, since they were mainly oriented toward the production of grains and fruits, and practiced only local ways of sheep and goat raising. The open high plains were mainly devoted to wheat or barley growing. The main difference came from the role of nomads: instead of transhumant flocks of sheep and goats guided by some shepherds, whole tribes moved from the Northern edge of the Sahara in winter to the marshy coastal plains in summer.

Emile-Félix Gautier spent his entire career at the University of Algiers. He was a geographer, but like many other French geographers at that time, he was also an historian. He was fascinated by the Roman ruins, which testified of the development of typical Roman forms of agriculture in Tunisia, most of Algeria and Northern Morocco. He had an equal interest in Moslem times: his most famous book covered the *Siècles obscurs de l'histoire du Maghreb* (Gautier, 1937). He relied heavily, in his interpretation, on the ideas of Ibn Khaldoun, the great Arab historian who lived in Tunisia in the 14th century. Ibn Khaldoun distinguished three main social groups competing for space and power in the Maghreb: the farmers of the coastal plains or mountainous areas, the nomads of the South or high plains, who moved to the North, often to the shores of the Mediterranean Sea, in summer time, and the urban dwellers.

Nomadism did not play an important role at the time of Rome. Its success resulted from the domestication of the dromedary, which occurred during the first centuries of our era. Thanks to the dromedary, the mobility of nomadic groups increased substantially. When riding their horses or dromedaries, they were efficient warriors.

The relation between shepherds and farmers was always difficult. In North Africa, the whole balance of force changed with the introduction of long-range nomadism, especially after the arrival of the Bedouin Hilalian tribes, in the tenth and eleventh centuries. Most of the farmers of plains had to accept the domination of nomadic tribes. Tilled land was often transformed into rough pasture. As a result, the open landscapes of steppe extended to the North, often to the seashore. Nomads were, however, unable to conquer mountainous areas – partly because the feet of their dromedaries were hurt by

rocky soils. They were also unable to dominate the coastal hills with their rich farming and city life.

In this way Emile-Félix Gautier introduced a historical dimension into the Vidalian interpretation of Mediterranean rural landscapes. They do not reflect only the diversity of Mediterranean natural environments. They were the product of a history, during which the boundaries between the different types of humanized landscapes expressed the relative strength of the groups as much as the characters of environments.

Jacques Ancel and the Balkans

Vidal de la Blache had worked mainly on the Northern part of the Mediterranean, but was more familiar with Southern France, Italy and Greece than with the inner Balkans.

Jacques Ancel discovered this region when serving in the French Orient Army, during World War One: based in Salonica, the troops of Franchet d'Esperey fought mainly in Macedonia, Albania and Serbia. After the war, Ancel prepared a Ph.D. on Macedonia and travelled extensively all over the area (Ancel, 1923; 1926).

In his interpretation of the Balkanic landscapes, Ancel relied both on the Serbian geographer Jovan Cvijic and on Vidal de la Blache. The latter was conscious of the role of the upper part of the inner basins in the history of the area: he noted, concerning Drama, along the old Roman *via Egnatia*, in Macedonia: "There, just like in Sérés, a rest of urban life, stuck to the mountain, is a sign of a latent power which asks only to prosper when the time comes" (Vidal de la Blache, 1922: 91).

When reading Cvijic, the role of the contact zones between plains and mountains appeared central in the dynamics of settlement (Cvijic, 1918): mountains served as refuges; they allowed the development of transhumance; there were, however, generally too poor to become the centre of powerful political systems. The plains were rich when a long period of peace allowed for the drainage of marshes – but with insecurity, they could be only exploited as winter pasture for the transhumant flocks coming from the mountains.

In-between, the piedmonts, *podgornie*, offered good soils, the possibility to rely on grain growing, the fruits of their orchards, cattle or sheep rising. They offered good conditions for urban life, even on a restricted scale most of the time.

The Vidalian model of rural landscapes was perfectly efficient when dealing with the coastal zones of the Balkans – there were *rivieras* in Dalmatia just like in Catalonia, Provence, Liguria, or Greece. It had to be completed in the inner areas, where upper piedmonts played a central role. The introduction of *podgornie* transformed the interpretation since it stressed the role of power relations: piedmonts drew a good part of their forces from the mountains above them, but could only prosper when controlling the plains.

Jacques Weulersse, Xavier de Planhol, the Middle East and Asia Minor

Vidal de la Blache used his model when describing the Middle East: concerning riviéras, he wrote:

"Maybe it is in Syria, along this stretch of seashore extending South of Tripoli to the Mount Carmel, that its prototype had to be sought. There, from Byblos to Tyr, all the series of Phoenicians cities unfold, breeding-ground of colonies which scattered on all the sea-shores" (Vidal de la Blache, 1922: 86).

The rural landscapes of the Middle-East had to be interpreted in the same way as North-African ones: as the result of a permanent confrontation between nomads and farmers, with the same kind of mountain-refuge in Mount Liban or Kabylia. During the 30s and early 40s, Jacques Weulersse succeeded in this way in extending the Vidalian model to the whole area between Mesopotamia and the Mediterranean Sea (Weulersse, 1946).

The only part of the Mediterranean World for which the model still had to be adapted was Asia Minor. Just as in North Africa or the Middle East, the whole history of the area was made of successive waves of invasions and permanent confrontation between nomads and farmers. There was a major difference, however, between the nomadism diffused by the Arabs and the nomadism practiced by the Turkish people: the latter was based on the camel of Bactria. The dromedary dislikes rocky soils, coolness and humidity. The camel has no problem with hard surfaces and cold. In Asia Minor:

"A decisive factor was certainly the facility with which the newcomers, with their camels of Bactria more or less crossbred with dromedaries, submerged the steppes of the high plateau and the mountains, where they found their summer pastureland. It was there that they settled first, noticeably on the inner side of Pontic ranges, close to the mountainous blocks which offered them summer pastures (*yayla*) with abundant running waters, and provided them with the coolness that these nomads coming from fresh steppes sought above all" (de Planhol, 1975).

As a result, mountains did not play, in Asia Minor, the role of refuge they had in the Middle East and North Africa. In order to escape the inroads of nomads, the only solution for farmers was to settle on the hyper-humid and densely forested slopes overlooking the Black Sea.

From a cyclic to a linear view of the history of Mediterranean rural landscapes and societies

In his analysis of the Mediterranean, Vidal de la Blache did not ignore time: he drew his examples from classical Antiquity, the Middle Ages, the Renaissance as well as Modern Times. The dominating feeling provided by his analysis was, however, more of permanency, with cyclical variations, than of major changes occurring in the geographical setting of the area! Most of the features he described dated back to Homer and Hesiod!

His model, as completed by his followers during the first half of the twentieth century, gave a different ring. For them, the landscape units were not based only on natural

features. They expressed evolving technical and organizational solutions to the problems of agriculture – hence the significance of the openfield system. They derived from the competition of different groups, farmers *vs.* nomads. The introduction of long-range nomadism appeared as the major event in this evolution – by far more significant than the conversion to Islam of the Southern and Eastern half of the Mediterranean. Along these lines, the interpretation that Pierre Birot provided of the Mediterranean rural landscapes opposed the regions which were devastated and conquered to those which benefited from a long tradition of sedentary farming (Birot, 1953).

BRAUDEL'S INTERPRETATION OF THE VIDALIAN MODEL

Braudel knew the results of the analysis of agrarian structures in the interpretation of Mediterranean rural landscapes, but preferred to resort to Vidalian ones.

In the first part of “La Méditerranée et le monde méditerranéen à l'époque de Philippe I”, he distinguished (Braudel, 1949): (i) the mountainous areas, with their reliance on transhumance to complete their too scarce farming resources; (ii) the hills and low plateaux, with farmers producing wheat and barley, and a preference for arboriculture, wine-growing, olive- or fig-trees; (iii) the high piedmonts of the inner basins in the Balkans, with their *podgornie*, which offer another variety of this type of landscape; (iv) the low plains, with their marshy areas and the permanent threat of malaria, which resulted in the alternance of periods of prosperity and decadence; (v) the high plains, with their steppe landscape, their openfield systems and the many problems stemming from the cohabitation of farmers and transhumant nomads; (vi) the *rivieras*, which added to sophisticated forms of tree-cultivation, fishing and coastal navigation; (vii) the islands, which shared with the low plains a succession of periods of prosperity, when navigation was safe, with no piracy, and long phases of isolation.

The three first categories and the fifth copied those of Vidal. Braudel added two categories: (i) the open landscapes of high plains and (ii) the islands. The high plains, with their openfields, clearly reflected recent research on agrarian structures.

Braudel was not an historian of rural life and landscape. He based his analysis of the Mediterranean on the categories of landscapes - and rural landscapes - imagined by Vidal de la Blache, because they showed for what reasons agriculture and sheep- or cattle-raising always involve, in the Mediterranean World, the development of a life of relation. *Rivieras* differed from the other hilly areas because of the facilities their small ports offered to sea-faring and trade. The high plains were interesting not only because of the grain they produced and the flocks that pastured them: they offered easy conditions to mobility and trade. Braudel insists on the carts or packmules that frequented their tracks or roads. Islands differed from other Mediterranean countries by the succession of periods of participation in sea-trade and periods of closure.

The main advantage of the Vidalian analysis of Mediterranean rural landscape was to provide a view of the whole mechanics of traditional Mediterranean societies. Vidalian

time was mainly cyclical. Braudelian was linear: in this way, geography became an essential part of historical explanation. Through the dynamics of humanized environments, Braudel introduced long duration in the writing of history.

The Vidalian analysis of rural landscapes had another quality: it was open to aesthetic considerations. When analyzing Italian landscapes in the 30s, Jules Sion noted for instance:

“Each region takes care of its planting according to its method: and it does not appear that it derives directly from technical necessities or the natural environment. [...] In Tuscany and Umbria, each farm is proud of its few pines and cypresses, and the hills of Arno are lined with files of small cypresses, just like in a painting of the *Quattrocento*. In spite of their inutility, the Tuscan wished to give, thanks to them, finery to his land and to almost compose the landscape in which he worked. This quest for beauty happens rather seldom; one has the feeling, nevertheless, of discovering something like a local style, relatively free from nature, in this way of organizing the works and aspects of these humanized rural areas, which reveal a bit of the soul of their people” (Sion, 1935: 247).

It may be wise for geographers to be sensitive to the quality of landscapes, just as Vidal de la Blache and his followers were a century ago.

CONCLUSION

For long, the Mediterranean was mainly conceived as a useful container for dealing with history or politics. It was only at the end of the nineteenth century that it came to be conceived as a fundamental unit: post-impressionist painters then discovered the strength of its light, which revealed for them the true nature of things and beings.

The discovery of the fundamental unity of the Mediterranean by French geographers occurred at the same time. As shown by Vidal de la Blache, Mediterranean peoples always had to solve the same problem: how to cope with the long summer drought? Their *genres de vie* answered this question, and explained the diversity of the Mediterranean humanized landscapes. For two generations, French geographers developed the Vidalian interpretation of the Mediterranean.

As conceived by Vidal de la Blache, the unity of the Mediterranean was rooted in nature and did not change throughout time. The reality described by his followers was different: the Mediterranean landscapes had a history. It meant that the idea of the Mediterranean as fundamentally a geographical unit was also a historical construct: it appeared at a time when Western countries controlled Mediterranean countries, and when Western civilization began to doubt its Christian tradition and sought out a substitute in Greek or Roman paganisms.

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