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and immobility, *regeneracionistas* were prone to blame similar Spanish ills on “the centuries of Habsburg rule.”

Yet Sicilianist ideology is not only ethnic. It has also been a class ideology, serving the interests of local dominant classes most conspicuously by legitimizing the mafia (which was instrumental in the repression of peasant and worker movements) but also by promoting patriarchal and masculinist values as authentically Sicilian. Hence another task undertaken by the Schneiders is to substantiate the “class basis” of an alternative, “non-Sicilianist” culture which reemerged in the important citizens’ antimafia movement of the 1980s and 1990s. (Here, again, comparison with similar movements taking place at the same time, for example, those of Central and Eastern Europe, might prove rewarding.) I have to admit that, although not unfamiliar with their work, I was genuinely surprised by the proposition that the early social base of this alternative culture was the artisans of the interior agro-towns. The argument is largely based on their ethnography of the town of “Villamaura” and relies heavily on the recollection by local artisan and peasant families of their past life stretching back to the end of the nineteenth century. It is certainly an intriguing suggestion, but it remains to be examined in more detail. Why did the peasants so easily accept the leading role and “civilizing mission” of their artisan leaders? Given that the Schneiders themselves provide some evidence of the artisans’ contempt for agricultural work and peasant life, was this relationship always so unproblematic?

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Schneider and Schneider offer us a clear and thought-provoking text that deepens our understanding of cultural processes in Sicily past and present. Their essay may also be read as a tribute to their teacher Eric R. Wolf, as a token of their admiration for the achievements of the antimafia movement, as a retrospective of four decades of involvement in Sicilian ethnography, and as a presentation of promising ideas regarding the role of craftsmen in the emergence and consolidation of a cultural counterpoint.

In their brief discussion of the concept of culture, they point to Wolf’s recurrent worries about its potential for abuse, in particular cultural determinism and the essentialization of difference. This led him to conclude his two most substantial books with afterthoughts on the notion of culture. While some anthropologists (Kuper 1999) find in Wolf’s critical statements support for abandoning the concept of culture altogether, the Schneiders appreciate his attempt to make it more flexible and open-ended and link it to power. Wolf gave a basic reason for rethinking, rather than abandoning, the concept of culture: “It is precisely the shapeless, all-encompassing

quality of the concept that allows us to draw together—synoptically and synthetically—material relations to the world, societal organization, and configurations of ideas” (Wolf 1999:289). This is an echo of the old ideal of holism that inspired his teacher Ruth Benedict, albeit in a different way.

In their overview of the mafia, discussion of the construction of the myth of Sicily, and elaboration of an alternative view of the mafia’s emergence and hegemony, Schneider and Schneider come very close to Blok’s (1973) study (which, oddly, they neglect to mention) of the rise, expansion, heyday, decline, and reemergence of the rural mafia. Blok’s antiessentialist approach also owes much to Wolf’s work, in particular to the latter’s view of the links between local community and wider society. Evoking Wolf’s notion of tactical power, Blok hints at the role of artisans in providing leadership and a program for the peasant movement that had emerged by the end of the nineteenth century. Artisans combined their relative autonomy and literacy with the development of extended social networks. Peasants and farm workers had less access to these sources of power.

This takes us to the core of the two-pronged argument put forward in this paper: the coexistence of contrasting cultural models and practices represented by mafiosi as opposed to artisans, for instance, with regard to notions and practices of gender, sexuality/procreation, literacy, time, work, home, and sociability, and the continuity in terms of social background, organizational expertise, and values between the artisanal counterculture and the antimafia movement that emerged in the 1980s. The extremely interesting continuity that the Schneiders suggest needs, I think, more documentation. There is evidence from Andalusia that supports the assertion of an artisanal counterculture. This should not come as a surprise, since the structure of Andalusian agro-towns is in many respects similar to that of their Sicilian counterparts (Blok and Driessen 1984). In Andalusia the presence of a wide variety of crafts also made possible the “civilized” lifestyle of the gentry and bourgeoisie. Artisans played leading roles in the anarchist and socialist movements. The workshops of these “men with ideas” were foci of male sociability in which they preached moderation in drinking and sex as well as equality between the sexes (Mintz 1982).

Schneider and Schneider claim that artisans viewed themselves as bearers of a civilizing mission and that they furthered Sicily’s cultural diversity. How does this self-perception and variation relate to the general notion of *civiltà* (or *cultura* in Andalusia) celebrated by agro-urban elites? Is it part of the urban ethos which scholars have linked to the compact agrarian settlements of southern Europe? Did artisans indeed prop up the urban way of life in the countryside? In a recent study of artisans in the Cretan town of Rethymnon, Herzfeld (2004) documents a rich variety of artisans’ workshops in which apprentices are forced to learn their trades by harsh training. He argues that this practice reinforces the stereotype of artisans as rude and uncivilized, as bearers of a backward tradition threatened with obsolescence by factory

production and globalization. Has this also been the fate of artisans in Sicily and Andalusia? In preindustrial times Cretan artisans were respected and their crafts a source of worth. Herzfeld does not mention the role of craftsmen as pioneers of the labor movement. Did they perhaps play a different political role in Crete? Schneider and Schneider have tapped a rich source for further research into cultural diversity and its connections with power.

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For several decades the work of Jane and Peter Schneider has offered a welcome corrective to the influential strands of American social science writing about southern Italy which have emphasized the prevalence of "amoral familism" (Banfield 1958) and the lack of "civil consensus" (Putnam 1993). In place of essentialist generalizations about Sicily, the Schneiders have paid attention to the changing political economy of the island: both internal structures of production and power and the wider dependencies. Their oeuvre is an outstanding application of the anthropological vision of Eric Wolf, and it is highly appropriate that they should have been invited to deliver the present contribution as a public lecture in his honor.

The arguments are persuasive. In this comment I concentrate on the vocabulary in which they are developed, in particular the use of the term "culture." It seems to me that the Schneiders, along with Wolf before them, fail to resolve the perennial dilemmas surrounding this concept. They open by citing their teacher's antiessentialist perspective: "A culture is thus better seen as a series of processes that construct, reconstruct, and dismantle cultural materials in response to identifiable determinants" (Wolf 1982:387). While this approach may indeed be viewed as an "alternative" to the vision of Ruth Benedict, Wolf's own teacher, it amounts arguably to little more than a restatement of the mainstream Boasian perspective. As the Schneiders note, Wolf's last major work of 1999 was very much a celebration of "anthropology's inexorable romance with cultural variation." But, having drawn attention to the cultural variation to be found *within* Sicily, the Schneiders theorize this at the end of their article as a case of "plural cultures": does this not risk contradicting the Wolfian definition cited above of "a culture"?

The danger of the singular usage is clear: in this case it plays into the hands of all those, including staunch and creative critics of the mafia, who wish to hold on to the idea of a deep and pervasive spirit of *Sicilianismo* (it is not made clear what status, if any, the term "culture" has in local discourse or whether Leonardo Sciascia himself uses it in explaining the *realtà Siciliana*). The Schneiders contest this "essentialist totalizing conception of culture" by drawing attention to the material

foundations and institutional structures which shape conflicting worldviews and practices. In the end, however, they retain the concept by identifying a second culture, exemplified by artisans, which stands in opposition to the dominant culture and "myth" of the island's elites. But how far can this method be pushed? Instead of calling for pluralization and raising the question of how many cultures Sicily might possess, could the Schneiders' case be more effectively made by dispensing with this term altogether? What would be lost if the noun or adjectival form were simply omitted in phrases such as "The antimafia had genuine cultural roots in Sicily"; "less mafia-friendly cultural tradition"; "They presented contrasting cultural models to their local community"; "the rationalizing culture of rural-town artisanry"; "a cultural borrowing from outside"; "an indigenous cultural milieu"?

The article raises a few issues that seem to need fuller investigation. That the artisans' clubs established around the turn of the last century have had an influence on the antimafia movement of recent decades is asserted rather than proven. The Schneiders attack one "myth of Sicily," but in places they might be accused of constructing an alternative myth—that of the modernizing artisans, the transmission mechanism for all good things from socialism to coitus interruptus and "companionate marriage." Why exactly has the other myth apparently been more easily disseminated and internalized in the long term by the island's inhabitants, as evidenced by the recent strength of anti-antimafia sentiment and the popularity of Forza Italia in Sicily? How exactly is the "submerged history" of earlier struggles passed on? Some of these questions are of course addressed in the Schneiders' recent book (2003), where I note with pleasure that the term "culture" is not considered significant enough to appear in the index.

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The Schneiders offer a good example of a new kind of materialism which could become the "post-postmodernism" anthropological paradigm. They do not entertain the illusion of being able to return to the idyllic era of "pure facts," but they also do not subscribe to the idea that every attempt at the study of Mediterranean culture is just a phantasmagorical act of "Mediterraneanism" (Herzfeld 2005:63). By analyzing cultural data as hybrids (Latour 1999), moving back and forth between anthropological and auto-stereotypes and between the raw facts of socioeconomic organization and historical conjecture, they direct our attention to the processes that "construct, reconstruct, and dismantle cultural materials." They present evidence of Sicilian cultural ambiguities which allow the development of both mafia and anti-mafia behaviour. Especially their description of their experience with the liminal situations of a series of bur-